



NORWOOD NEWS

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MORE ADD-ONS FOR NORWOOD SHELTER

News of new drug treatment at shelter draws concerns



Photo by José A. Giralto

CONSTRUCTION HAS STARTED on an outpatient clinic on the first floor of the Jerome Avenue Men's Shelter (pictured) at 3600 Jerome Ave. that will provide medical, psychiatric, and substance abuse care to both current and formerly homeless persons. The doors under the blue awning on the left will be the main entrance to the clinic.

By **JOSÉ A. GIRALTO**

Last July, the Jerome Avenue Men's Shelter (JAMS), managed by BronxWorks, opened at 3600 Jerome Ave. a

block from the Woodlawn station of the 4 train. The location was chosen after Norwood parents, local officials, and Community Board 7 (CB7) pro-

tested the original site on Webster Avenue across from PS/MS 20, a K-8 school on the other side of Norwood.

At the latest meeting of

Community Board 7's Housing, Land Use & Zoning Committee, members learned of the addition of a permanent clinic

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IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

State Legislature Passes Rent Reform Laws. How Will This Impact You?

By DAVID CRUZ

New layer of protections to safeguard about one million rent stabilized apartments in the city, with a majority of them in the Bronx, have now been hammered out after the State Legislature announced reforms to the state's existing rent laws. The measure was signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo several days later.

The measures aim to prevent deregulation of rent stabilized apartments, which are much more affordably priced than market rate apartments priced beyond \$2700. Deregulation has long been blamed for aggressive displacement of low-income tenants, a problem that's very familiar for the Bronx, which is experiencing massive change. Over the last few decades, tactics have been employed by landlords that, whether intentional or not, have caused many low-income tenants to leave New York City while making apartments across the city less affordable.

"This will strengthen the Bronx. The Bronx has the highest number of rent stabilized units in the city, and were in danger of losing these stabilized units, which are critical to the Bronx because it's what keeps low- and middle-income people in place," Sally Dunford, executive director of West Bronx Housing, a housing rights group, said. "So this will slow down gentrification. It won't eliminate it, but it will certainly slow down gentrification. That is not a bad thing because it means fewer people will get hurt."

The list of rent law changes with greatest impact on the Bronx include:

Rent Laws in Perpetuity: Keeping rent regulation laws permanent without having to revisit them every four to eight years as has been the case for decades. The move to re-visit the rent laws will now take an act from the State Legislature.

Rent-Regulation Stock: It used to



Photo by Adi Talwar

AGGRESSIVE RENT REFORM measures are the law of New York, and the Bronx stands to benefit the most. Pictured is Norwood as photographed from Tracey Towers, home to a bulk of rent stabilized apartments.

be that a rent-regulated apartment will be deregulated after it hits a certain financial threshold. Now, even if an apartment goes beyond that threshold (usually \$2700) it will still remain in the rent-regulated system. Deregulation led to roughly 300,000 units removed from the rent-regulated stock, creating the affordability crisis so many low-income tenants and housing groups have blasted.

Vacancy Bonus & Longevity Bonus Repeal: Abolishes vacancy bonus provision that allows landlords to raise rent as high as 20 percent each time a unit becomes vacant while stopping the Rent Guidelines Board from reinstating vacancy bonuses on its own. The vacancy bonus was blamed for incentivizing landlords to deregulate the apartment at a faster rate.

Preferential Rents: Mandates landlords to keep preferential rent, which is the rent that falls below the considerably higher legal rent, permanent even after lease renewal. Landlords would impose a legal rent upon lease renewal, which made it very difficult for families to af-

ford. The bill also stops landlords from instituting the legal rent on a brand new tenant should a former tenant leave their apartment.

"That's really quite good. What it means--there'll be fewer preferential rents, which is going to be hard for people in the beginning, but it will keep people from moving in and being astonished when their rent jumps by a huge amount," said Dunford.

Rent Review Expanded: Gives tenants more time to see if the rent they're paying is actually what they're supposed to pay. It used to be tenants only had four years to see if they had a rent overcharge. Now it's six or more years. For years tenants would have a rent overcharge and not be aware of it until they saw their rent history form they receive from the state Department of Housing and Community Renewal, which keeps the rent histories on file.

"It's certainly an improvement," said Dunford, who had preferred they be removed altogether.

(continued on page 18)

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 will hold its monthly general board meeting on June 25 at 6:30 p.m. at the New York Botanical Garden; Ross Lecture Hall, 2950 Southern Blvd. CB7 committee meetings are held on the following dates at 6:30 p.m. at the board office, 229A E. 204th St., or unless otherwise noted: Economic Development Committee meets on June 26; and Veterans Affairs Committee meets on June 27. For more information, call (718) 933-5650. **Note:** This is the last general board meeting until the Board resumes in September following its yearly summer break.

The **52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meets June 26 at 3225 Reservoir Oval East from 7 to 9 p.m. **Note:** This is the last community council meeting until the council resumes in September following its yearly summer break.

NEWS BRIEFS

By **CHRISTY RAE AMMONS**

'Justice for Junior' Sentencing

The five men charged in the killing of 15-year-old Lesandro "Junior" Guzman-Feliz, inspiring the campaign "Justice for Junior," were found guilty by a Bronx jury on June 14. Lesandro's brutal killing by suspects wielding machetes, was caught on video. The suspects were alleged to be linked to the Trinitarios gang. "Junior's family, and in fact our entire city, has received a measure of justice," said Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. Sentencing is set for July 16.

Civic Engagement Via Art

The city is starting a new initiative to involve young people in civic engagement through art. The goal is to provide opportunities for young people to engage in civic learning and discussion by becoming involved with local arts productions. The Civics and Arts Fund begins with Broadway's What the Constitution Means to Me. Through the Mayor's Office, the Civics and Arts Fund is starting out with \$25,000 in funding from the Association for a Better New York and other private partners, and will work with art and performance institutions across the city. The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City along with DemocracyNYC, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA), and the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment (MOME) are coordinating the project.

Car Wash Workers Bill

The State Legislature passed a bill to end the sub-minimum wage for car wash workers. Deborah Axt, co-executive director of Make the Road New York, celebrated the change, saying, "Our members have fought for years for equal treatment and fair pay for car wash workers, and we're thrilled that the visionary workers who took to the streets to fight for a better industry have won this critical victory." Car wash workers receive about \$9.05 per hour. The bill would bring up their hourly

Norwood Bank Branches Face Pending Closures

By **DAVID CRUZ**

Norwood's East 204th Street commercial strip is currently home to four banks. By October, that will whittle down to two, making it a little tougher for residents to cash checks, deposit monies, or get a certified bank money order. It also adds to the ongoing trend of a borough that's unbanked.

Two of the banks—the Chase Bank at 311 E. 204th St., and Bank of America at 299 E. 204th St., occupying a baroque-influenced storefront just near Bainbridge Avenue—will close their doors, a move where low foot traffic and relatively closer banks are to blame.

Bank of America customers will fare the worst after the bank closes in August. Notices went out last month, with a sign for everyone to see expected to be posted at the bank's front doors, according to a Bank of America spokesperson. The spokesperson added that lower foot traffic is one of the key reasons the banking giant decided to close the branch.

The ATM machines will be kept until two years from now, when the bank will remove the ATMs there. The bank is currently modernizing its 16,400 ATMs, packing them with the latest technology. Another Bank of America is less than a mile from the East 204th Street branch at 3424 Jerome Ave., though it offers only ATM service.

The Bank of America spokesperson said customers can try the 700 Allerton Ave. branch, a financial center, that was recently renovated. The center—offering services that range from taking out a loan to planning for retirement—is two miles away, which could be a major drag for customers forced to take the bus.

One customer named Zuri said she's now "going to have to close my account." She conceded that while there's a Bank of America branch in

pay to the state's minimum wage of \$15 for larger employers and \$13.50 for small employers, and would go into effect in a month should Governor Andrew Cuomo approve and sign the bill.

R. Clemente Park Renovated

Governor Andrew Cuomo unveiled the newly renovated Roberto Clemente State Park. The park's redesign features a waterfront, gateway entrance, and new ballfields. Since 2011, the park's improvements have totaled

Fordham, she advises customers "you don't want to go there too much."

For Chase customers, the blow may not be as bad since another Chase Bank is at 3169 Bainbridge Ave., off East 206th Street, a mere five minute walk up the street's hilly terrain from the soon-to-close branch. A representative for Chase told the *Norwood News* that customers can expect the East 204th Street branch to close on Oct. 25.

Some Chase customers like Nicole Edman of Norwood were caught off guard over the closure. It's perhaps because notices haven't gone out yet. Although they're expected to sometime during the latter part of July, ac-

nearly \$100 million, making the park more inviting and substantial. At the unveiling, Cuomo announced another \$44 million will go to support the state's Summer Youth Employment Program, which will provide training for low-income youth.

Candidate Training for Upcoming Elections

For anyone interested in running for city office in 2021, the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB) is launching its five-borough tour to

cording to a Chase representative. "It's hard to walk up that hill," said Edman, worrying the disabled who bank will have a harder time trudging up the hill.

With the closures slated, this continues the borough's trend of being the most un-banked across the city, often forcing residents to head to nearby check cashing places that often charge extra fees just for cashing a check. A 2015 report by New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer found the Bronx had the "lowest concentration of bank branches per household of any county in the nation."

Additional reporting by Sha-Nia Alston and Christy Rae Ammons.



Photo by Sha-Nia Alston

THE BANK OF America at 299 E. 204th St. is slated for closure come August.

provide an overview on the expectations and demands of running in any election. Training sessions will be held on Saturday afternoons in each borough throughout the summer. Each off-site training will be offered in a public library, as CFB partners with the New York Public Library, the Queens Public Library, and the Brooklyn Public Library. The "New to the CFB" seminar is geared toward first-time candidates and campaign staff, and provides resources and one-on-one guidance.

INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week we asked readers their thoughts on the sweeping new rent laws passed last week in Albany, and if these new laws will affect and protect local residents.



The new rent laws are very good; I mean, rent is too exorbitant now. It's a serious problem. You need two people, [each with a job], just to pay the rent, otherwise you can't survive. The new laws will protect people from being thrown out by a landlord, so it's good that the new laws protect us.

Teddy Equal
Norwood



I have been looking for an apartment and I've got my voucher, but with all this chaotic stuff going on with landlords, I kind of know how it is. I don't think the new laws are good for the community; landlords shouldn't be allowed to raise the rent at all. It's bad enough now they want at least \$1,200 for a one bedroom, when you can go out of state and get a one bedroom for \$300. And the way the apartments are in the Bronx, they're crap. They also say all these new buildings are low-income, but you have to make a minimum of \$25,000 a year. That's not low-income.

Shavonda Lewis
Riverdale



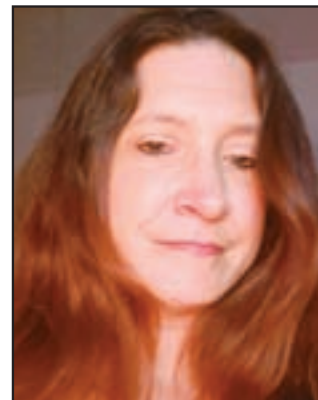
Well, I know, for the longest time in New York City, the courts pretty much sided with the landlords and now if there's a change, it's got to be working better for the tenants and people in general. Greed is the whole problem in a nutshell. If you don't pay, you've got to go, and the problem is with all of these one-shot deals that welfare gives people, landlords are getting money from every angle and they're not fixing anything.

Ed Stolz
Morris Park



The privilege that these landlords thought they had--raising rents and putting all of these families in a bad situation, because everyone has different circumstances and problems -- it's been hard. Right now, what I hope can be done is that they start to increase the rent at a slower pace than inflation and that will prevent a lot of families from being evicted.

Joanna Colon
Kingsbridge Heights



Well, if these laws favor residents, that's good, but I'm not sure what's going to happen. We're just going to have to see what happens and see how the new laws are enforced. I'm on the fence with it, because so much is going on at the same time.

Tracy Travis
Bedford Park



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Future of Aqueduct Walk

Advocates offer takes to fix rundown Bronx park

By SÍLE MOLONEY

"Love your Park" were the three simple words greeting about 40 local residents arriving for an envisioning forum at University Heights Presbyterian Church on June 10. Each resident was armed with concrete plans for the revitalization of the historic Aqueduct Walk, stretching from West Tremont Avenue to Kingsbridge Road and Aqueduct Avenue.

The evening was organized by Carlos Acosta, Pilar Maschi, and Ted Enoch from Partnership for Parks, a public-private partnership between the city Parks Foundation and the city Parks Department. The group supports and champions neighborhood volunteers and equips them with the tools to advocate and care for their neighborhood parks and green spaces.

"Some parks get a lot of money and attention," Enoch said. "But when people get involved in their park and when people know that those people are committed, parks can transform and amazing things can happen, and parks can become the backbone of the community."

He encouraged those present to imagine success. "We have programs and small grants to support the community," he said, as ideas including coffee mornings, walking groups, community gardening, dog-walking, and arts projects involving youth groups flowed from residents.

Dr. Jim Fairbanks is a member of the Aqueduct Walk Group, which works to beautify the Aqueduct. "I don't think the Highline has anything on us," he said of the Manhattan tourist attraction. "It's [the Aqueduct], a Roman aqueduct and it brought the 41-mile water down to Manhattan, the first water in the Bronx and Manhattan, because by the mid-19th century all the wells were poisoned so it's a grand, grand beautiful thing."

Fairbanks previously led a successful campaign to re-open the Highbridge at a cost of \$65 million, years after funding to the Bronx had been cut during what he describes as leaner times.

He said he hopes folks from the New York Botanical Garden can help design the walk and get the resources together to beautify it. "You look at all the cultures in the South Bronx. Could you imagine the diversity in the community?" he said. "Gardens and the flowers and plants from people's home countries? Ah, that would be special."

Acosta is confident that some of the group's ideas can be materialized in the next couple of months, and not four years from now. "We don't have big needs now as far as funding," he said. "In the future, we will have bigger needs for more park staff, for events that require paying artists. That's something that we want to empower these people to be able to ask for."

Maschi was skeptical of transforming the park into a tourist attraction. "Displacement is real," she said. "I don't want to do it for the other people who are not here yet. I want to do it for the people who are here now."

She said parks are for kids and teenagers and she is liaising with local schools in an effort to get them more involved. Her other target group are the homeless, including drug users who frequent the park. "I want them in the leadership too. They have just as much of a right to be in these rooms as anyone else - homeowner or not, homeless or not," she said, confirming that she, herself, is someone who once lived that life.

"Yes, they occupy the park. That is their home and I feel that they are entitled to that. Just like we did back in the day - we saw land, we claimed it, and we lived on it. That's what we do when we have nowhere to go."

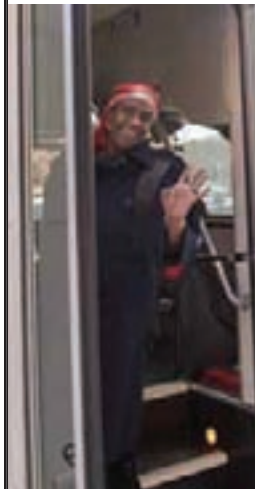


Photo by Síle Moloney

FILIP CONDEESCU, A resident of Burnside Avenue takes part in an envisioning forum for the Aqueduct Walk at University Heights Presbyterian Church on June 10.

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Children Unaccompanied at US-Mexico Border To Be Housed at University Heights Home

By DAVID CRUZ

A social services nonprofit is slated to operate a federally-funded home in University Heights that'll house unaccompanied children found illegally crossing the US-Mexico border, the Norwood News has learned. The move caught every elected official representing the neighborhood by surprise.

In a letter intended for Community Board 7, but initially sent to neighboring Community Board 5, Catholic Guardian Services (CGS) will look after a maximum of 24 kids aged 12 to 17 at a residential three-family home at a sleepy section of University Heights. The letter does not indicate when the children will be placed.

Such an announcement is rare for CGS. The group, which routinely places children in the foster care system and much like social service firms contracted by the federal government, is not obligated to alert anyone of its intent to operate a home. For this particular home, no elected official representing the district overlapping with the home knew anything about it.

Currently, there is also no written policy for elected officials on the federal level to be apprised of the opening of these homes, repeating a practice last year when more than 200 children separated from their families at the US-Mexico border were shuttled to New York City. Local elected officials at the time knew nothing about it. While it's unclear what the daily activities will be for the children, existing policies show they will receive round-the-clock supervision and home school education, as mandated by the federal government.

In the past, social service groups have come before CB7's Housing, Land Use, and Zoning Committee, said Jean Hill, chair of CB7 who once led the committee. Without mandated notification of this type of home, there are plenty of unanswered questions for Hill.

"Yes, we live in a multi-language community, but even so, you're just a stranger person coming from a whole other state being dropped off in New York and the Bronx. Really? And nobody says anything, and you don't even notify the community because you're the federal government and you could do what you want?" said Hill. "We want to know these children are taken care of. Do they have communication with their family? I mean, how does [their] system work? Are you feeding them, clothing them, taking care of them, making sure they're getting medical coverage? Because I watch the news



Photo by Sile Moloney

THIS HOME IN University Heights (pictured) is currently being prepared to house a maximum of 24 unaccompanied minors found crossing the US-Mexico border.

like everybody else and I see some of these children have died in some of these facilities. That's not good."

The only work permit filed through the city Department of Buildings was for the installation of a sprinkler system.

CGS, an offshoot of the New York Archdiocese of New York which spent \$7.1 million from June 2017 to June 2018 housing unaccompanied children, receives funding through the federal government's Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) Program, established in 2002 by the Bush administration that mandates children unaccompanied by families or guardians illegally crossing the border be under the care of the federal government. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services contracts with social service nonprofits to look after the children.

"The program will provide a safe and nurturing home during their transition to reunification with family or foster care system," Harry T. Bavaria, assistant executive director of CGS, wrote to the board in his May 30 letter.

CGS wasn't required to send a letter to CB7 detailing its plans for the home, but did so as a courtesy. These types of projects are not required to be presented to the board for any advisory recommendations nor has the group ever alerted elected officials of its plans, unlike the city, which is legally mandated to alert the community and its elected officials of any upcoming projects. This includes homeless shelters, albeit with very short notice.

The news, once again, spotlights



Photo by Sile Moloney

A WORKER CUTS wood on a portable table saw on the porch of the University Heights home.

a program that received intense media scrutiny last year after President Donald Trump, through an executive order, separated undocumented children from their families and sent them to these homes, scattering the children across the country and drawing derision from Democrats and Republicans. Mr. Trump has since rescinded his executive order, though the program, operating 168 facilities across 23 states, remains in effect. Children typically stay an average of two months before being placed with family members in the U.S. as they await their hearing in Immigration court in Lower Manhattan.

Local elected officials who have been critical of Mr. Trump's immigration policies, were not alerted of the home.

State Sen. Gustavo Rivera, whose 33rd Senate District represents University Heights, said he did not know about the home but questions whether

the children are designated "unaccompanied" or actually separated from their families.

"From the start, I have been skeptical of the veracity of the information, or lack thereof, provided by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) about the UAC program," said Rivera in a statement. "That's why my colleagues and I proudly voted in favor of Senator Brian Benjamin's SCAR Act which would allow our State to accurately account for these children and help reunite them with their families."

Rivera's colleague, Assemblyman Victor Pichardo, who also represents University Heights, was surprised by the news.

"I was not made aware of the opening of this house by the Unaccompanied Alien Children Program, by either the federal government, or any other agencies," said Pichardo, who chairs the Task Force on New Americans. "It is deeply disturbing that the federal government continues to create more victims in the name of our nation."

Councilman Fernando Cabrera wasn't told about the move either, and called on the federal government "to make every effort to connect these kids with family members in the United States."

"We need to make sure that these children receive all the help and support they need--counseling, education, social services, medical care, and the love, attention and guidance of caring adults in our community," he said.

Congressman José Serrano, who also represents the district, said he was unaware of facility but has assured he will be following up "and ask Health and Human Services for more information on their new facility and operations in the Bronx."

CGS operates other homes in the Bronx, though it's unclear how many. Last year, at the height of the crisis that drew massive media attention, CGS and another social services nonprofit, Lutheran Social Services, were one of the groups which took in children following Mr. Trump's family separation policy. At that time, Bronx elected officials were stonewalled on the whereabouts of the migrant children, many of whom were housed in the borough, creating confusion.

Bavaro, the assistant executive director of CGS who wrote the letter to CB7, was at the home when the *Norwood News* visited, and referred all questions to CGS' executive director, Craig Longley. His office did not return a message from the *Norwood News* as of press time.



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After Spate of Elder Abuse Cases, Officials Highlight Senior Resources

By **CHRISTY RAE AMMONS and DAVID CRUZ**

In response to recent assaults on the elderly, city and borough officials are making a greater effort at underscoring the litany of resources and safety tips for seniors.

“We know that in recent weeks here in the Bronx, in the city of New York, in the media we have seen horrific, horrific examples of abuse, of violence, of assaults, harassment towards our senior population. And what we are here to say is,” said Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. at a news conference, “we are here for you. We are here to help you.”

Diaz mentioned a specific incident in late January where Gerald McMillan, a 64-year-old man, had his jaw broken while taking out his trash in Morrisania. In March, a 78-year-old woman was kicked in the face by a young man on the north-bound 2 train. Diaz also stated that his own mother is afraid to go outside after dark, showing that many seniors are affected by the attacks.

“We are talking about a rape where a young man proudly says, ‘I enjoy raping older women,’” NYC Department for the Aging (DFTA) Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez said, appalled.

Despite an elder abuse task force being in place for over 20 years, attacks and incidents are still occurring, the nature of them becoming more violent. “We don’t know what the causes are, but we do know it’s getting stranger and more violent,” Cortés-Vázquez told the *Norwood News*.

In the Bronx, there are approximately 168,000 senior citizens. According to Daniel Reingold, president and CEO of the Hebrew Home in Riverdale, one out of every 10 people over the age of 65 is a victim of abuse, making elder abuse more rampant than domestic abuse.

At the conference, several programs and tips were provided for senior citizens to help them feel safer. Neighborhood SHOPP (Self Help by Older Persons Project) has a Violence Intervention and Prevention Program, and Deputy Inspector Jessica Corey presented tips like how to properly carry

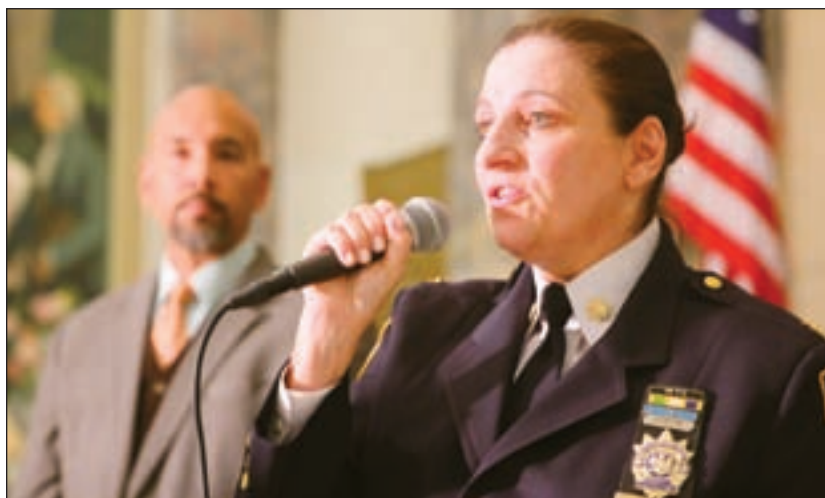


Photo by Síle Moloney

NYPD DEPUTY INSPECTOR Jessica Corey speaks at a press conference as Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. looks on at the Bronx Court House on June 13. Corey provided tips to seniors present on how to properly carry a bag to minimize harm, if assaulted.

a bag and to minimize what one carries. It was also mentioned that seniors can call 311 to reach an elderly abuse resource center.

The Bronx District Attorney office is

also fighting against elder abuse through its Economic Crimes Unit, which investigates embezzlement cases of seniors.

But it’s not just the elderly’s responsibility to look out for themselves. “I think everyone in the community has a responsibility,” Cortés-Vázquez told the *Norwood News*. “Be attentive. Don’t stand idly by.”

Diaz suggested increasing the penalties for elder abuse. He also had a message for all of the “cowards” that abuse the elderly. “The NYPD is gonna get you,” he said.

Feds Dismantle \$7M Drug Network With Links to University Hts. and Kingsbridge Hts.

By **SÍLE MOLONEY**

The Bronx District Attorney’s Office indicted 18 people – with at least two suspects connected to Kingsbridge Heights and University Heights – on charges of dealing heroin and enough fentanyl to “kill the population of New York” in the South Bronx following a drug seizure on May 28 worth \$7 million. The arrests come as portions of the Bronx continue to grapple with a deadly heroin epidemic.

Those charged have ties to the world’s most powerful drug organization, the Sinaloa Cartel, which was formerly headed by Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán until his arrest. Fifty pounds (23 kilos) of fentanyl, a semi-automatic rifle, and 189 rounds of ammunition were recovered from an undisclosed location in the borough during the takedown.

The charges follow a 20-month joint investigation by Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Homeland Security Investigation, and state and local authorities. The investigation involved the dismantling of traffickers who law enforcement say flooded the Bronx with fentanyl and heroin from Mexico via networks in California, Chicago and the Dominican Republic.

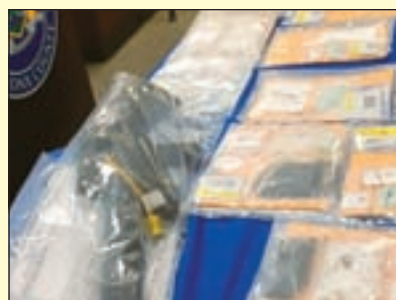


Photo by Síle Moloney

FEDS SHOW OFF the cache of drugs, a semi-automatic rifle, and ammunition rounds they seized during a raid on May 28.

The defendants were part of two different groups of 11 members that trafficked several kilograms of fentanyl and heroin monthly, selling it in bulk to distributors in the Bronx, Philadelphia, Albany and other cities. The drugs wound up on the streets in 10-dollar packets.

Ray Donovan, DEA Special Agent in Charge, said the amount of fentanyl was enough to “kill the population of New York City.” He added, “Today’s fentanyl is deadly and it is real.”

Carlos Miguel De Leon, 28, of Walton Avenue in Mott Haven, and Kelvin De Leon, now deceased, distributed their narcotics to University Heights, Kingsbridge Heights and Concourse

neighborhoods. On Jan. 6 Kelvin De Leon died of acute heroin intoxication in his home where it is believed he stored narcotics.

Clark said the investigation began with a probe into dealing in the McKinley Houses when defendant, Charlie Rodriguez, 45, of East 163rd Street in Mott Haven, allegedly headed up a group that sold glassines of heroin marked “PAID,” and glassines of heroin and fentanyl mixed and stamped “PRICED.”

According to the investigation, two suspects, alleged to have attended drug treatment programs, may have used them to cultivate vulnerable people as heroin customers or re-sellers.

Drug-related incidents account for the deaths of 20 Bronxites per month, according to Clark. “As with any fentanyl dealer investigation, we will investigate whether there are connections between several fentanyl overdose deaths in the Bronx and with this case,” she said.

Norwood News asked if this implied that the 22 defendants could potentially be charged with additional crimes such as manslaughter or murder charges as a result of those overdose deaths. A representative of the DA’s office said, “Some of them could be.”

E-Bike Stolen, Suspects Sought



Police have released a video showing two people who stole an e-bike that was locked to a fence in Norwood on May 13, according to the 52nd Precinct.

Grainy surveillance video shows two suspects in front of 3171 Rochambeau Ave. in Norwood at around 10 p.m.

Anyone with information in regard to the identity of the persons is asked to call the NYPD’s Crime Stoppers Hotline at 1-800-577-TIPS (8477) or for Spanish at 1-888-57-PISTA (74782). The public can also submit their tips by logging on to the CrimeStoppers website at WWW.NYPD-CRIMESTOPPERS.COM, on Twitter @NYPDTips.

—David Cruz

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NORWOOD NEWS

S N A P S H O T S



Photo by José A. Giralt

ON JUNE 8, EAST 204th Street between Hull and Decatur avenues was closed for the East 204th Street & Bainbridge Avenue Merchants Association's Weekend Walk in Norwood, an event aimed at drawing residents to the commercial strip. Tents line the street as people mill around.



Photo by Miriam Quinones

A CAREFUL WATER balloon game between father and son (foreground) captured during the annual Bronx Family Day Olympiad on June 8, where families spent the day bonding over athletic events.



Photo courtesy Good Shepherd Services

STUDENTS DANCE AT Lehman Stages on June 6 for the 8th annual Good Shepherd Scholars Services' Salsa Program's end-of-season Salsa Congress. Over 140 Bronx students from Good Shepherd after-school programs came together to show what they've learned this year.



Photo by José A. Giralt

(L-R) DIMITRI DOVER, pianist; Leah Hawkins, soprano; Joseph Lim, baritone; and Mario Bahg, tenor from The Metropolitan Opera, take a bow after performing at the free Summer Recital Series at Williamsbridge Oval Park in Norwood on June 15.



Photo by José A. Giralt

DR. STEVEN SAFYER (center, holding scissors), president and CEO of Montefiore Health System, prepares to cut the ribbon at the opening of the Montefiore Musculoskeletal Center at the Hutchinson Campus in Pelham Bay on June 11. Dr. Safyer is surrounded by other hospital administrators and NYC Councilman Mark Gjonaj (far right).



Photo by Miriam Quinones

THIS COUPLE TAKES advantage of the free salsa and tunes out everything else at Williamsbridge Oval Park, which was converted into a salsa venue on June 7. Salsero Edwin Perez held the concert co-sponsored by Councilman Andrew Cohen and the Bronx Arts Ensemble.



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Mosholu Library Launches Summer Reading Program

By SÍLE MOLONEY

The sound of tambourine jingles and soft bongo drum-beats rang out from the small, colorful play area of Mosholu Library as an energetic and inquisitive bunch of happy kids sat cross-legged in a circle and gazed intently at Norbert Goldberg, their percussion instructor for the afternoon.

Goldberg, part of the Urban Stages group that promotes different artists in the schools and libraries, was there to demonstrate different percussion instruments as part of a special educational musical workshop to mark the launch on June 6, of the library's annual summer reading program.

The program aims to encourage kids to continue reading over the summer, while also helping other kids who may be in danger of falling behind.

"The summer slide is when kids either stay at the same reading level or go back a reading level so we really try to encourage them to read more," said Katie Loucks, the children's librarian at the Mosholu Library.

Blank game boards have been integrated into the program this year. "They can write in the number of minutes they read each day, and then, at certain points, they can add up all their minutes and can win a prize," said Loucks.

Prizes range from bookmarks, pencils, to even a backpack. Loucks said the recommended reading time is 20 minutes per day, although kids can set their own goals too. When *Norwood News* asked if they get the weekends off, Loucks smiled and said, "It is Monday to Friday, but we do encourage



Photo by Sile Moloney

MOSHOLU LIBRARY LIBRARIANS, including branch manager Jane Addison-Amoyaw (2nd from right) and children's librarian Katie Loucks (c) hail the launch of this year's Summer Reading Program, decked out in T-shirts saying so.

them to read on the weekends too."

The suggested reading list is linked to the program's annual theme which, this year, is outer space. Indeed, each library staff member was wearing a navy-blue T-shirt bearing this year's motto, "Summer Reading 2019 Blast Off," alongside an image of a space rocket.

"We actually have another performer here next month who is doing a presentation on alien homes so we're going to be building different alien homes next month," said Loucks.

Reading levels are divided by grade and while the program caters mainly to kids, and teenagers, adults are also welcome to participate. Many of the suggested book titles are on the space theme. Last year's theme was music.

In the spirit of the science-related theme, and perhaps given the ever-growing climate change awareness among the world's youth, the reading list also includes non-fiction books and Loucks said the library always aims to include titles that are up-to-date.

Loucks said the library is also hoping to get their early literacy learners program, which is an after-school program, integrated into the summer program as well.

Despite the general surge in online media, the library's latest available annual attendance figures were 195,361 as of Fiscal Year 2014. Geidy Flores is one of the library's regular attendees and was at the workshop with her two daughters, 9-year-old Hailey and 6-year-old Juliette.

"I've been waiting for the summer reading program which they usually do at the library. I think it's great so I usually check the library calendar," Flores said. "They like the music.

They like to play instruments and dance and listen to music too."

Bronx Librarian Recognized For Public Service

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

At the end of 2017, the Mosholu Library was desperately searching for a children's librarian to fill two vacancies. After a months long search by the New York Public Library, Bronx borough director Gesille Dixon hired two librarians and received many thanks from appreciative Norwood parents who depend on the library for education beyond regular schooling.

For Dixon this was just another day at the office serving the nearly 1.5 million residents of the Bronx.

On May 23, Dixon's dedication to the community was acknowledged with the Fund for the City 2019 Sloan Public Service Award held at the Bronx Library Center. She also received a check for \$10,000 in furtherance of the work she has done with New York Public Libraries in the Bronx.

What makes Dixon so special as a borough-wide director is that she has always taken a grass-roots approach in promoting library services. "I love attending local events so I can learn from the community what they need from their local branch," said Dixon.

This type of listening has been crucial in helping public libraries stay relevant in the digital age.

"Yes, the library's main mission is to promote literacy, but it's no longer just about books," Dixon

Norwood News asked Hailey what she learned. "We learned all about the different drums and it was fun when we played them," she said, smiling. "My favorite part was when he showed us all the instruments and also the one that goes...[makes whistling noise]."

Hailey also said she might take up the drums and that she's going to come back to the library again. Meanwhile, Juliette said her favorite thing about the event was the drums. "I have one in my house," she said excitedly.

Summing up the value of the summer learning program, their mom said, "I like to bring them to keep them reading and engaged. They had fun. They like it."



Photo by José A. Giralt

GESILLE DIXON (L) receives a check for \$10,000 as the 2019 Sloan Public Service Award winner from the Fund for the City of New York. The ceremony was held at the Bronx Library Center on May 23.

points out. "We offer many lovely resources to promote small business literacy, technology literacy, health literacy. We're in the information business."

During the award ceremony, Dixon's personal touch in reaching out was highlighted by Chemika Fuller, a student at Bronx High School for Law and Community Service. "I consider her to be a mentor, Someone who has been so helpful with my education and more," Fuller said.

Dixon hasn't specified how the award money will be used but knows it will help promote the library's goal of engaging with the issues affecting the local community.



Photo by Sile Moloney

NORBERT GOLDBERG, PERCUSSIONIST instructor for the New York Public Library, gives a lesson on Latin American drumming at the Mosholu Library as part of the Summer Reading Challenge kickoff event.

New Gym Brings Art of Fighting and Mindfulness to Bedford Park

By **CHRISTY RAE AMMONS**

When William Rivera was six years old, he started learning martial arts. Over the years, the art form inspired and encouraged him to teach others.

"I always loved martial arts. It was always my dream to teach, you know? Open up a martial arts school and teach and get students, see them progress and represent me," Rivera said.

His dream came true. Now, Rivera is an instructor, or "Kru" in Thai, and owns his own martial arts gym, BX Thaiboxing Academy, at 2832 Valentine Ave. NEAR East 197th Street in Bedford Park. The room is full of sunlight inside BX Thaiboxing Academy. The floor is covered with red padding and boxing equipment, such as punching bags, lingers in the back of the room. On the right of the entrance, there is a small desk and t-shirts with the gym's logo hanging on a rack. The room is bursting with energy and feels inviting and comfortable.

Rivera operates the gym under a company called Lion's Roar Promotions. He runs the business with Andrew Ravitch, one of his former students. "I was his student in one of his older gyms in Tremont about 10 or 20

blocks south of here," Ravitch said. "I trained with him for a few years, and then I started getting into photography and started taking pictures at his fights for the promotion. That's when I started doing the photography and the advertising for this gym."

The building was home to a synagogue, but was abandoned for about 20 years before Rivera and Ravitch opened their gym. "A lot of people in the neighborhood came by when they noticed that something was built here," said Ravitch.

Since Rivera was influenced positively by his instructors when he was growing up in the Bronx, he wants to impact kids today in the same way, seeing as how he finds that some kids simply "just play video games, or get into gangs, or smoke." "I'm 52 years old. I grew up in a rough neighborhood in the Bronx," Rivera said. "I never did any type of drugs. I never even tried it because of martial arts."

BX Thaiboxing Academy opened in early February, and offers a variety of classes including Muay Thai, boxing, Tae Kwon Do, and Salsa dancing. Soon, they hope to add Jiu Jitsu, Zumba, and Afro-Cuban dance as part of the martial arts repertoire. "This gym is about bringing lots of different martial arts and styles together,"



Photo by Adi Talwar

JOE KIMBLE FROM Red Planet Muay Thai lands a punch on Miguel Perez of Jai Su Muay Thai during an exhibition match at the BX Thaiboxing Academy located at 2832 Valentine Ave. in Bedford Park.

said Ravitch.

BX Thaiboxing Academy wants to provide a holistic experience that not only benefits clients physically, but also mentally. Through practicing mindfulness, developing body awareness, and studying fight psychology, students can learn how to connect their mind and body.

The gym also hosts fights or matchups. "We get different gyms from all over. We get people as far as Virginia,"

Rivera said. "They come down and we match them up with other people from other gyms, local gyms or other states. We do like 15 matchups. We have them fight in the ring. Sometimes we do tournament style too."

Together, Rivera and Ravitch hope to expand BX Thaiboxing Academy and help other people through martial arts. "I believe martial arts has definitely made me the person I am," said Rivera.



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How Will Rent Reform Laws Impact You?

(continued from page 2)

Greater Oversight of DHCR: Mandates that the state Department of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) submit a report each year outlining how it's ensuring the rent regulation system is being protected. The report is supposed to point out how many rent stabilized units are in each county, applications and approval for MCIs, units with preferential rents, rents charged, and overcharge complaints. Dunford praised the reform, saying that overcharge complaints were barely resolved in a timely manner, a move she said is caused by lack of manpower at DHCR.

"So, for example, if you got a rent overcharge and you file it with the state, it can take the state a year to make a decision on it or even longer. And that's been really problematic because in the meantime somebody could get evicted and then turn out they were right [on being charged rent and not wanting to pay for it] all along. This will hopefully mitigate that to some extent," said Dunford.

Security Deposits: Caps security deposits to one month's rent instead both first and last month's rent and clearly outlines procedures to make sure a tenant gets their security deposits back in a reasonable amount of time.

Eviction Protections: Ensures tenants

are not harassed or retaliated against if facing an eviction. It also creates a crime of unlawful protection, where a landlord illegally locks out or uses force to evict a tenant. That's now punishable by a civil penalty that carries a fine of upwards of \$10,000. New provisions ensure renters have greater time to get a lawyer, while even granting judges a right to put a stay on an eviction for upwards of a year.

Notices: Mandates landlords give notice to tenants if they intend to increase the rent more than five percent or do not intend to renew the tenants' lease.

But advocates didn't get everything they had hoped for. Off the table was the complete removal of Major Capital Improvements (MCIs), a tactic where landlords pass on the renovation-related costs to tenants for however long the tenant is in their apartment, a move that creates a financial burden for low-income tenants forced to pay more money towards their housing. MCIs remain but landlords will only be able to tack on a two percent rent increase instead of the current six percent.

"I would've liked to see them removed altogether," Dunford said, adding that she'll host workshops in the fall educating tenants on the new rent laws.

Baby Steps Lie Ahead For Massive Fordham Landing Project

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

The Bronx shoreline along the Harlem River is poised to undergo a massive change within Community Board 7's (CB7) borders if developers win approval for their projects. But the city has already said this will be a complicated process.

The area just south of the University Heights Bridge was bought for \$31.5 million by Dynamic Star, a Connecticut-based developer headed by CEO Gary Segal.

Their goal is to invest \$3.5 billion in 5 million square feet that will include 2,800 residential units, with 30 percent set aside as affordable. A 700,000 square-foot Life Science Center, esplanades, and a stadium for professional video gamers is also in the works.

The area north of the bridge is still being negotiated but presents more obstacles to development. This section runs north to West 193rd Street where the Metro-North train tracks

curve west to the Spuyten Duyvil station.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) also utilizes some of that space to get its equipment onto the Harlem River for bridgework.

"While the site seems underutilized, we have found that it's pretty important for DOT to have a site where they can access the water," said Shawn Brede, deputy director of the city Department of City Planning's Bronx Borough Office. "Aside from anything to do with land use or planning, this is just an incredibly complicated site."

Although the project is in the early stages of being approved, John Snider, chairman of the CB7 Housing, Land Use & Zoning Committee, is in no hurry to see it pushed through city agencies. "This project is years away; years away. I probably will not be on the board and maybe many of us won't be on the board [when it's completed]," Snider said.



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Lawn Party: Sunday, June 30, 1 p.m. at the Bedford Park Congregational Church, 201st Street and Bainbridge Avenue. Come relax on our shady lawn and enjoy hamburgers, hotdogs, assorted salads and desserts, and good fellowship. \$10 adults and teens, \$5 children (12 and under).

TRIP

Trip to Dorney Park and Wildwater Kingdom in Pennsylvania on July 6. Depart from East 163rd Street and Southern Boulevard at 8 a.m. Price \$92 per person. For more information, please call Eddie at (718) 757-5485.

NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

Safe Disposal Event

Recycle automotive products, electronics, household products, and medical items at the Safe Disposal Event on June 23 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Allen Shandler Recreation Area/Adam Chandler Parking Lot in Van Cortlandt Park. Items that are not accepted are appliances, air conditioners, dehumidifiers, refrigerators, and tires. Residents must provide proof of their residency. RSVP is required by calling (718) 549-7300.

Gang Awareness Summit

For parents concerned about their children's well-being, the NYPD Gang Squad is holding an informational summit on July 3 at 6:30 p.m. at the Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. For more information or special requests, call (718) 220-5811.

The Green Neighborhoods Program

The New York City Parks Department's Stewardship Program is looking for volunteers to revitalize street trees and local natural areas every second Saturday of the month through February 2020. To join, call (718) 392-5232.

Farmers Market And Wellness

The New York Botanical Garden's Farmers Market happens every Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. inside the Moshulu entrance and across the street from the Botanical Garden Metro-North station. A variety of fresh, locally grown produce and foods are available.

New York Health Act

The Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition is holding an informational session on the New York Health Act on June 23 from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. at St. James Episcopal Church,

2500 Jerome Ave., in the Parish Hall. For more information, call (718) 584-0515.

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.

Become a Home Health Aide

Home Health Aide certification can be earned in one month (no high school diploma or equivalent is required) at the SUNY Bronx Educational Opportunity Center, 1666 Bathgate Ave.

Applicants must be able to pass a background check and a drug screening. Register Monday or Wednesday from 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. at <http://bronxeoc.org/register> for tuition free training. For more information, call (718) 530-7000.

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7636. If you are interested in volunteering, visit catholic-charitiesny.org.

Free Bird Walks

Free bird walks are offered every Saturday beginning at 9 a.m. through July 20 at the Van Cortlandt Nature Center. Bird watchers can look for various species of residents and migrants and discuss a wide range of avian topics. For more information, email Joseph McManus at mcmnaus638@aol.com. No registration necessary. No limit. Free, thanks to grant by Councilman Andrew Cohen.

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.

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HEALTH INSPECTIONS

This rating is based on how well the facility meets Medicare's minimum quality requirements. Each facility is reviewed annually. The results of the last three years' worth of inspections comprise the score. The most recent inspection carries the greatest weight.

STAFFING

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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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

It's My Park

Partnerships for Parks presents It's My Park at Mosholu Parkland's Welcome Garden, Mosholu Parkway North and Bainbridge Avenue, June 22 from noon to 3 p.m. Activities include face painting, storytelling, acoustic guitar music, and planting on the sidewalk gardens. For more information, visit www.partnershipsforparks.org/calendar.

Onstage

Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents bachata artist **Frank Reyes**, June 29 at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$45 to \$85; \$125/VIP (includes preconcert wine and hors d'oeuvres reception at 6:30 p.m. in the Havana Café). For more information, call (718) 960-8833/4/5.

The NY Botanical Garden hosts a free **musical event**, June 21 from 1 to 3 p.m. featuring host Samba Timba and various artists performing Brazilian and Caribbean sounds. For more information, call (212) 843-9342.

JASA Van Cortlandt Senior Center, 3880 Sedgwick Ave. hosts **Bronx Arts Ensemble concert**, June 26 at 6:30 p.m. preceded by dinner at 5:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 549-4700.

Events

The Williamsbridge Oval Park hosts a **Family Fitness Festival** on June 22 from noon to 2:30 p.m. Events include games, yoga, Zumba, fun activities, health workshops, arts & crafts, gifts and prizes (while supplies last), and healthy foods and snacks. For more information, call (718) 881-8999.

Bronx Community Board 7 presents **Community Resource Fair**, June 29 from noon to 3 p.m. at Poe Park, Grand Concourse at Kingsbridge Road. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse, offers **Kids Arts & Table Top Activities**: to make beaded bracelets to take home, 9 to 11 a.m. (all ages); **Shape Up NYC**; **Latin Dance Fitness**, 9 to 10 a.m. (adults); and **Shape Up NYC; Zumba**, from 10 to 11 a.m. (adults); all on Saturdays in



Photo courtesy Lehman Center for the Performing Arts
GRAMMY-NOMINATED SINGER Frank Reyes will perform his greatest hits at Lehman Center for the Performing Arts (see Onstage for more information).

June (info: (718) 365-5516). Also scheduled in June (all ages) is **Poe Cottage Tour**: Thursdays and Fridays 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Sundays 1 to 5 p.m. For more information, call (718) 881-8900.

Mini Parade and Fun Day takes place on June 22 from 1 to 5 p.m. starting at 174th Street and Rosedale Avenue between 174th and 172nd streets, marching up Rosedale Avenue to Gleason Avenue ending at Watson and Gleason Park/Playground. Activities start at 2 p.m. and include games, contest prizes, and live entertainment. For more information, call (347) 340-7307.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Project**: Waves and Ripples With Ink and Paper, to learn about watersheds and waterways, June 22 and 23; and Nature Reshaping and Wild Adaptation, to create art and papercraft sculptures of plants and animals, June 29 and 30; both in the WH House, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Also scheduled is **Bombay Rickey**, featuring 5-piece band, June 26; and **Zephaniah O'Hara**, country song singer, both on the Great Lawn at 7 p.m. (\$12; \$8/ students/seniors; \$6/under age 6; bring picnic and folding chair). 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

NY Botanical Garden presents its largest exhibition ever, **Brazilian Modern: The Living Art of Roberto Burle Marx**, through Sept. 29, featuring lush gardens with a curated gallery of his vibrant paintings, drawings and textiles. In addition, the sights and sounds of Brazil and its lively contributions to music and dance are included. For more information, call (718) 817-8700.

The Museum of Bronx History, 3266 Bainbridge Ave., presents exhibition, **The Bronx Goes to the Movies**, through Oct. 6. For more information, call (718) 881-8900.

Bronx River Art Center (BRAC), 1087 E. Tremont

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

The Museum of Bronx History, 3266 Bainbridge Ave. (208th Street), presents **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 children ages 5 to 12: **Art Thursdays at 4 p.m.**: arts & crafts, June 20 and 27; **STEM Explorers**: Hands on activity, June 7 at 4 p.m.; and **film**: (ages to 12 years), June 18 at 4 p.m. Teens/young adults can enjoy: **Turtles, Frogs, Snakes and Toads**: Hands-on program including live animals, June 27 at 4 p.m.; and **film**: "Love, Simon," June 28 at 4 p.m. Adults can attend: **film screenings**: "Major!", June 20 at 6 p.m.; "Interstellar," June 22 at 2:30 p.m.; and "Aquaman," June 29 at 2:30 p.m.; **Microsoft Word for Beginners**: June 24 at 1 p.m.; and **Computer Basics**: June 26 at 1 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: **Toddler Storytime at 11 a.m.**: (ages 18 months to 3 years), interactive stories, action songs, fingerplays, and crafts, June 24 and 27; **Crafty Fridays at 3 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), crafts, June 28; and **STEM: Kids Science at 3 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), Gardening, June 25. Adults can enjoy: **film**: "Glass," June 29 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 all ages: **film**: June 29 at 2 p.m. Adults can attend: **Computer Basics at noon**: June 27. 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 June 24 for the next publication date of July 4

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More Add-Ons for Norwood Shelter

(continued from page 1)

within the one-year-old facility. News of the expansion drew concerns, even surprising the committee, given how no one remembers an “outward facing” clinic as part of the original plan for the shelter.

Although the shelter has been operating with a temporary on-site clinic, John Betts, the residence director at JAMS, announced that the facility is “in the process of building out a full outward facing, Article 28 clinic that will be open to the community for people who are homeless...or formerly homeless.”

The Article 28 designation is part of the New York State Public Health Act, which recognizes and regulates the accreditation of public health care facilities. The public often benefits from this state designation given the state's stricter standards of operation. The health care provider, in turn, benefits from full participation in Medicare, Medicaid, and private health insurance plans with an increased rate of reimbursement than non-Article 28 facilities.

Currently, the shelter provides 200 beds to “men with mental health issues who are currently homeless,” according to Betts. They do not have individual rooms but live in a dormitory arrangement with a 10 p.m. curfew. The facility is open 24 hours with a social services staff that is available on-site during weekdays from 8 a.m. to midnight and 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekends.

Betts estimates that half of the 29,275-square-foot property will be dedicated to the new clinic, which will be coordinated by Care for the Homeless.

While the service expansion will be a benefit to the existing residents at JAMS, which Betts describes as “large and robust,” the move will also benefit those who don't live in shelters. JAMS' administration, under a mandate by the city Department of Health, is now opening the clinic up to people from outside the shelter, including women, who will be sent to the location for health care services. Those attending CB7's committee meeting worry this could pose a danger to the neighborhood. An increase in foot traffic, residents said, could result in panhandling and loitering across the street at Van Cortlandt Park.

With residents expecting an influx in the population, the question of whether the Department of Homeless Services police officers were needed at the site came up. Currently, JAMS does not have any DHS police officers, but contracts with a private security

team of eight, each shift rotating every eight hours. They are trained in mental health first aid, non-violent crisis intervention, and safe restraint.

“We were promised when we opened that we would have DHS police. We have now been told that that is on hold indefinitely. So, right now it's only BronxWorks security and contract security,” Betts said.

Noel Concepcion is the director of BronxWorks' Adult Homeless Services Department and often works with DHS. “We actually invited the folks at DHS to this [CB7 Housing] meeting so that you could ask them what the status was,” said Concepcion. According to Betts, “at the last minute they said they weren't able to come.”

A request for comment to DHS was not returned to the *Norwood News* before deadline.

When pressed by committee chairman John Snider on when the decision to make JAMS' clinic available to residents from other shelters happened, Concepcion said they'd “have to find out from Care for the Homeless.”

“So, this is the notification you're giving this community right now?” Snider asked.

“Honestly, in my professional opinion ... we don't anticipate there being large numbers of people coming in from the outside,” said Concepcion.

To calm any hysterics, Jean Hill, CB7's chair, said it's best the board do some data gathering of the shelter. “What we need to do is to see [if] there's been reports [of incidents] to the 52nd Precinct ... because we need to have them come in and chime in on it also,” Hill said.

The only police report relating to the shelter came from a missing persons case early this year. Police at the 52nd Precinct reported that Clemente Garcia, 53, was last seen in front of the shelter on Jan. 6 at 10 p.m., the shelter's curfew. It's unclear whether Garcia had turned up.

With the next CB7 Housing, Land Use & Zoning Committee scheduled for Sept. 10, Hill recommends that both the landlord, Liberty One Group, and Care for the Homeless, be invited to explain their action in building the new clinic under Article 28 guidelines.

Snider hopes that future meeting with JAMS will be more transparent. “As a board, we have never been opposed to helping people. You need to come to us as a board, as equal partners and let us know what's going on so we can make an informed decision” said Snider.



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