



# NORWOOD NEWS

Vol 32, No 16 • PUBLISHED BY MOSHOLU PRESERVATION CORPORATION • AUGUST 1-28, 2019

## COHEN: PARTY'S OVER AT VAN CORTLANDT PARK

*Locals fed up with ongoing parties; take it to Councilman Cohen*



Photo by David Cruz

**LARGE CROWDS GATHER** at Gun Hill Meadow inside Van Cortlandt Park by Jerome Avenue and West Gun Hill Road on July 27. Loud parties have become the norm over this past summer.

### By SÍLE MOLONEY

Picnics and yoga? Forget about it. It's more like an open-air rave each weekend at the Gun Hill Meadow inside Van Cortlandt Park, which stretches along West Gun Hill Road and Jerome Avenue.

After years of filing 311

noise complaints, residents at Knox Place, Gates Place, DeKalb Avenue, and West Mosholu Parkway say the late-night open-air sprees have gotten progressively worse each year, and are already untenable as the summer surpasses its halfway mark.

After 165 noise complaints were logged for the area this year alone, the majority between June and July, 98 residents penned and signed a formal letter of complaint dated July 16 to Mayor Bill de Blasio, the NYPD, Bronx Borough

President Ruben Diaz Jr., Councilman Andrew Cohen, Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, and other elected officials. So far, Cohen has personally met with frustrated residents, and is now pushing for even greater enforcement.

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## IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

# By The Numbers: 11th Council District Campaign Filings

By DAVID CRUZ

For candidates in the impending 11th Council District race, Eric Dinowitz still leads when it comes to fundraising, building an \$80,990 war chest compared to main rival Dan Padernacht, who raised \$28,026, according to the latest campaign finance figures.

Dinowitz, a school teacher, district leader, and the son of AssemblyMAN Jeffrey Dinowitz, also has 50 percent of his donors coming directly from the 11th Council District, which covers Norwood, parts of Bedford Park, Kingsbridge, Riverdale, Fieldston, and Woodlawn.

But Padernacht, an attorney, isn't far behind. Of the 113 donors coming from the Bronx, 84 percent of them live in the district, representing 38 percent of the total number of donors. His top ten donors also come from the Bronx, compared to four for Dinowitz.

While Dinowitz received funds from family members, including his

father who gave \$1,425 through his campaign committee, he also scored contributions from the United Federation of Teachers political arm, which donated \$2,800, the maximum contribution, to Dinowitz's campaign.

Dinowitz also benefited from a rare \$1,425 boost from the Speaker Heastie Political Action Committee (PAC), the political action committee created by the eponymous Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie. The PAC was formed in January 2018 and has used the money mostly to fund state legislators seeking re-election. The PAC's contribution to Dinowitz represents the few times it has funded city-based races, indicating where the Bronx Democratic Party will be throwing their support.

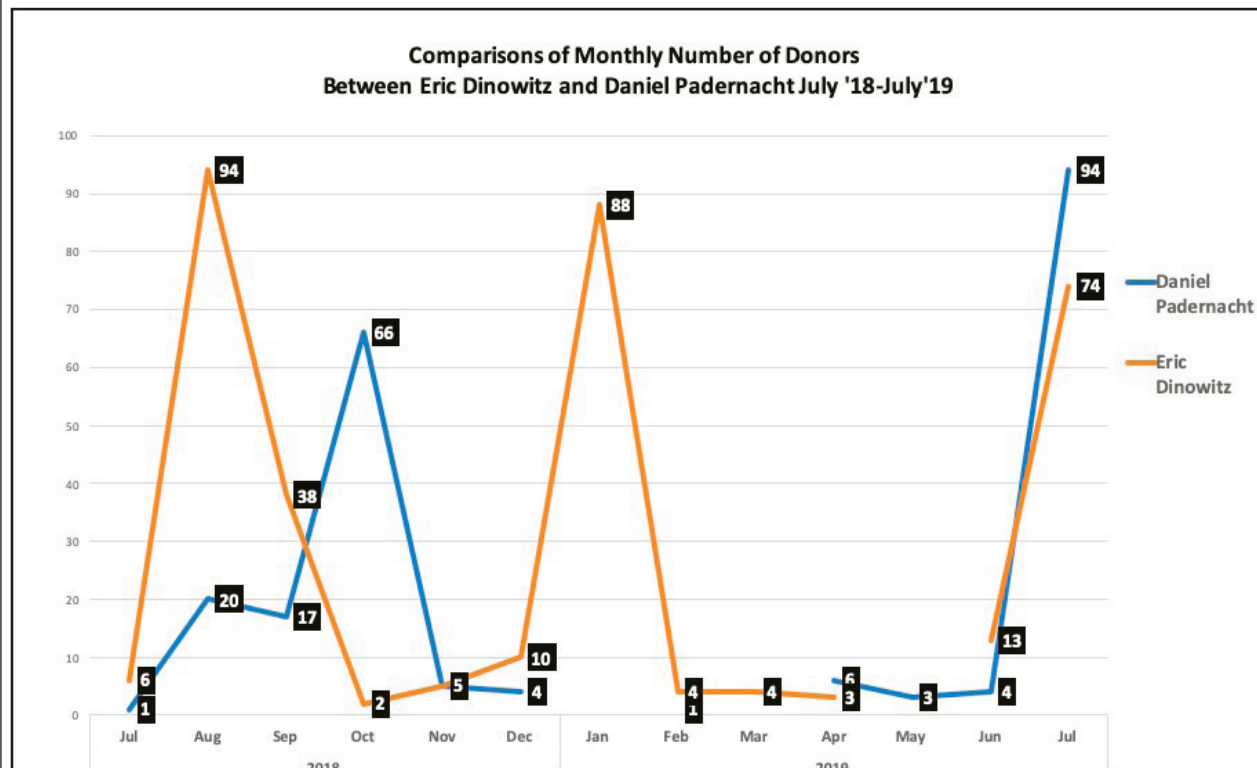
Padernacht so far has raised \$11,011 exclusively from Bronx donors, among them Hiram Colon, a realtor from the Bronx who gave \$2,000. Other top donors to Padernacht's campaign were also from the real estate industry, including

Harsimran Sabharwal, who contributed \$1,000.

The two sides have begun ramping up fundraising efforts ahead of an Aug. 8 judicial convention where suspicion has mounted that the Bronx Democratic Party intends to nominate Councilman Andrew Cohen, who currently represents the 11th Council District, for a judgeship, effectively opening the seat that can trigger a special election.

Dinowitz's greatest activity in the last few months happened this July, after he held a fundraiser that raised \$1700 from donors living within the 11th Council District, according to the analysis by the *Norwood News*. The analysis also showed Padernacht had an active month, holding a fundraiser that raised \$1300 from donors living in the district.

*Additional reporting by Sile Moloney.*



Graph By David Cruz

# Norwood News Heads Into Brief Break, New Print Version Out Aug. 29

As has been the case for years, the *Norwood News* will take an extra two-week breather from its print edition. The current issue runs

through Aug. 29.

This does not mean the paper is completely shut down. We will be posting original content on our website, [www.norwoodnews.org](http://www.norwoodnews.org). As usual, please send

tips and story ideas to editor-in-chief, David Cruz, at [dcruz@norwoodnews.org](mailto:dcruz@norwoodnews.org) or [norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org](mailto:norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org).

# Opinion

## Families Need Multi-Agency Collaboration to Address Noise Disturbances

By **DAN PADERNACHT**

At a recent meeting of the 52nd Police Precinct Council, residents described disturbing stories of sound piercing through their homes from noisy neighbors; parked cars blaring stereo systems; disrespectful individuals hanging out in front of buildings creating disturbances and blocking entrances; and parks hijacked by unpermitted groups using large speakers, illegally barbecuing and

leaving litter strewn across the area. The community pleaded for help from police.

The commanding officer assured attention to the matter. However, the feeling in the room was something we Bronx residents have sensed before: any response would be temporary and ineffective.

Noise complaints are the number one 311 complaint in New York City. In 2018 alone, there were 436,941 requests for assistance with these matters. That is double the amount made in 2011.

The City's current protocol for responding to noise complaints seems futile for most residents. Noise complaints are made through the 311 system. Most are diverted to the local precinct, which is supposed to respond within eight hours. However, often by the time the police arrive, if a unit can arrive after responding to emergency calls, the perpetrator has ended the disturbance. The damage has been done and will probably occur again.

To tackle this problem, the City should create a multi-agency task force

that is solely focused on enforcement of these quality of life issues, with a different unit assigned to each borough.

The task force could be comprised of officers from the Police, Fire, Parks, Environmental Protection and Building departments. This wide range of expertise among the agencies would increase the effectiveness of the group and limit jurisdictional challenges.

The officers assigned to the task force should be trained in neighborhood policing, conflict de-escalation, noise statutes, noise detection equipment, crowd control, and specialized tactics. They should be adequately staffed and provided with necessary equipment. The unit would need to act independently from routine patrols to focus on enforcement and long-term mitigation strategies, such as identifying recidivists through historical complaints. Its members should be in contact with local community boards and police precinct councils to obtain information about ongoing problems.

Noise is not just a menace but is also classified as a health issue. In 2011, the

World Health Organization released a report titled "Burden of Disease from Environmental Noise." The study found that exposure to prolonged or excessive noise has caused a range of health problems such as stress, poor concentration, productivity losses in the workplace, communication difficulties and fatigue. Exposure has also caused serious ailments such as tinnitus, hearing loss, cardiovascular disease and cognitive impairment.

While the Bronx is known for creating original music, we should play it at a volume that does not infringe upon our collective right to quiet enjoyment. We need to respect our neighbors and community. When individuals fail to do so, it is the City's responsibility to enforce those limits. Statistics show that the City's current methods are not working. A multi-agency task force would make a tangible impact on this pervasive problem.

*Dan Padernacht is a local attorney, former Chair of Bronx Community Board 8 and a Candidate for City Council.*

## State Public Financing Would Reduce Role of Big Money in NY Elections

By **AMY LOPREST**

This is an exciting moment to discuss public financing of elections. New York City's small dollar matching funds program was designed to reduce the role of big money in elections and make contributions from everyday New Yorkers more valuable. The matching funds program has done exactly that for three decades, and recent changes to the program give small dollar contributors an even larger role.

This program has become a model to other jurisdictions as more than a dozen states have adopted their own public financing systems. And with the creation of a state campaign finance commission, New York is the next state in line.

The city's matching funds program ensures contributions come from city

residents in every corner of the five boroughs. In the Bronx during the 2017 elections, 92 percent of Census block groups had at least one contributor, and 94 percent of contributions to Bronx candidates were from individuals. By contrast, state legislative candidates in 2016 raised 68 percent of their funds from special interest groups and corporations.

The city's public matching funds program also provides voters with more choice and a broader diversity of candidates. In 2017, open City Council races had an average of 10 candidates; seats with an incumbent running still had an average of four candidates make the ballot. Compare that to the State Assembly and Senate, where incumbents rarely face competition.

Last November, 1.2 million New

Yorkers voted for a ballot measure to increase the power of small-dollar contributions. The proposal boosted the matching rate to \$8-to-\$1, from \$6-to-\$1, and citywide candidates can now get matching funds for the first \$250 contributed by NYC residents. Earlier this year, the City Council increased the total amount of public funds available so that all candidates can compete without ever having to raise large-dollar contributions.

These changes will also decrease candidates' reliance on large contributors, by cutting contribution limits more than half. The largest contribution for mayoral candidates was lowered from \$5,100 to \$2,000, and from \$2,850 to \$1,000.

We're already seeing positive results from these updates to the program.

Data from February's special election for public advocate, the first with the \$8-to-\$1 match, shows that the most frequent contribution was just \$10, compared to \$100 in previous elections.

The matching funds program brings more New Yorkers into the political process as candidates, contributors, and voters, while reducing the role of big money in politics. Most New Yorkers would welcome a greater role for voters and a reduced role for special interests in state elections too. As they consider a similar program for New York State, the public financing commission would be well advised to consider the insights we've learned from administering New York City's program.

*Amy Loprest is executive director of the New York City Campaign Finance Board*

### Keep Parkway Pristine

*This letter is a response to the story, "Fourth of July Leaves a Mess at Local Parks," that appeared in the Vol. 32 No. 15 (July 18-31) edition of the Norwood News.*

Thank you for addressing some of the developments with parks in our area! Unfortunately, for the most part, the readers of your fine publication are probably not the ones who are part of the problem.

Sadly, the guilty ones are not readers of your excellent paper. I would be surprised to learn if they are readers, period! I have lived on Hull Avenue for 15 years. I can remember when Mosholu Parkway was beautiful, due in large part to the concern for cleanliness that more of the



## Letters To The Editor

then-residents had. By and large, those folks have moved away. In their place, we have too many who were not raised to have concern for their neighbors/neighborhood.

Residents who live in the area eat their meals where they pay their rent. They don't dump their refuse in the parks or on the sidewalks. Also, they don't carry their household trash to leave it on the Parkway for Parks Department employees to

cart off, especially since the Department of Sanitation picks up garbage at each residence. Furthermore, neither do they use the corner litter receptacles for their household refuse.

Furthermore, they shouldn't have Porta-Potties on along the Parkway. It is a "Parkway," not "Mosholu Park." Folks who use the Parkway should use the bathroom in their Mosholu-area apartment or, have their picnics in a desig-

nated 'park.' The parks, to my knowledge, have restroom facilities.

Mosholu "Parkway" was never intended to provide for barbecuing.

Also, residents, for the most part, are not dog owners. So, from where is all the unpicked-up dog waste coming from? For the most part, the remaining large population are the ones who have turned Mosholu Parkway and the surrounding blocks into a garbage and dog-waste dump.

Please try to find a way—other than the *Norwood News*—as a way to put a stop to the descent that this area is experiencing.

**Name Withheld**  
**Norwood**



# INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week we asked readers their thought on the police officers doused with water during recent arrests, including one in the Bronx, and whether these individuals should have been arrested on the spot.



I do think they should have arrested them right there on the spot. Why did they have to wait a day to arrest them? They should be charged with a misdemeanor, first of all, because I think they did it for fun as they were having a nice time.

**Mary Osario**  
Bedford Park



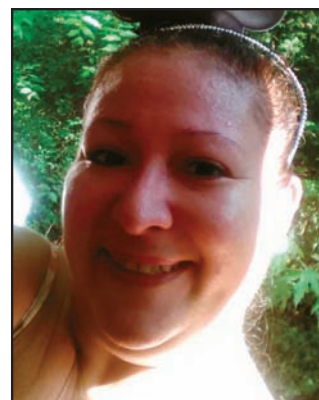
When I first saw the video, it seemed like they were all okay and in sync with it, including the police officers. Them running away made me think like they were all playing in good fun. When I saw it was a matter of disrespect, that's when I got upset. The police are here trying to do their job and have a hard time as it is, they don't need that. So I was glad they made arrests. It was good detective work; they grabbed them and it was the best thing they could do. Otherwise they will think it's okay to do that.

**Carolyn Osario**  
Bedford Park



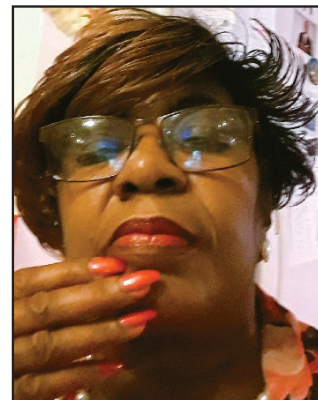
My first reaction was I could not believe it. I realize that we do have problems in the Hispanic and black communities with police, but I feel they should still be respected. You know when you cross that line of just allowing cops to have water thrown on them, then what's going to be next, that it's okay to shoot them? So I've seen the video, but still they had no right throwing the water. I understand why the cops didn't do anything, because they knew they were probably going to be videotaped, but still they should have held their ground. At the end of the day, they still have to show their authority and they should have said something.

**Eugenia Currie**  
Throggs Neck



I feel like the kids were wrong throwing the water on the police officers, because they are still a form of authority. Water can't just be thrown on anybody. You don't know if it's water or urine or water from the street. It's totally disrespectful, even if it's all fun and games. I think it was wrong of the kids. It was a hot day; I think they were underage. Call their parents and make a report or put them in jail or something, because they have to learn. I see them playing with water and I tell them, "Hold on, let me get by."

**Milagros Negron**  
West Farms



Yes, I saw it and I said, "Oh my goodness, that's wrong." Because they didn't know who or what the person was being arrested for, so they should at least find out the reason before they do something like that. I guess they were just retaliating because of the decision handed down in the Eric Garner case. The guy being arrested could have killed somebody or hurt somebody and they caught him and they were just retaliating because of the Garner case. So they see someone being arrested and they're going to pick on the cops, but that's wrong.

**Novia Jarrett**  
Co-op City

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# NEWS BRIEFS

BY CHRISTY RAE AMMONS

## PR Gov. Resigns

After hundreds of protestors gathered outside the residence of Puerto Rico's governor in response to the discovery of a crude group chat he and other officials took part in, Ricardo Rosello finally announced that he will be resigning on Aug. 2. Wanda Vazquez, the secretary of justice, will temporarily be Puerto Rico's governor.

## Street Co-naming for Stan Lee

The man behind Spider-Man, the Avengers, and the X-Men, will get a street named after him in the Bronx. Councilman Fernando Cabrera sponsored the legislation for "Stan Lee Way," named after the late Marvel Comics icon. The street co-naming will be found at the corner of University Avenue between Brandt Place and East 176th Street come spring of 2020. "Stan Lee was a Bronx native who grew up in my district," Cabrera said, adding, "Mr. Lee's amazing talent brought joy and entertainment to countless children and adults and he deserves to be permanently memorialized in his home borough, the Bronx."

## New E-Cigarette Bill

Due to the alarming increase in middle and high schoolers using e-cigarettes, Bronx Congressman Eliot Engel (NY-16) has co-introduced a bill that would ban e-cigarette usage in educational and childcare facilities. The bill, called the Smoke-Free Schools Act, will require e-cigarettes and other electronic nicotine delivery systems, such as vapes, be included in school smoking bans. "We are in the midst of an adolescent tobacco epidemic," Engel said. "Too many children are being exposed to e-cigarettes in schools, threatening the progress we have made in reducing tobacco use."

## Water Incident

A suspect has been arrested for throwing buckets of water at two police officers at East 173rd

# Empty for More Than a Decade, Developer Looks to Build on Perry Avenue Lot

By CHRISTY RAE AMMONS

The empty lot at 3067 Perry Ave. and E. 204th Street has been vacant for over a decade, taking up 2,500 square feet of the Norwood neighborhood. At a time when developers have swept into Norwood and its adjacent neighborhoods, building at a rapid clip during this construction boom, the demand for space is critical.

The owner, Joe Quintessenza, purchased the lot with a plan to construct a seven-story apartment building with 32 units and a parking garage on the ground floor. But when zoning laws downsized the area, Quintessenza's plans fell through.

"We were planning on building 32 units 11, 10 years ago, and then out of nowhere they changed the zoning laws on us from R-7 to R-6. And that took easily a million dollars out of my pocket because the value went down. The plans that we paid \$150,000 for were worthless," Quintessenza told the *Norwood News* in a phone interview. "Money just evaporated into the air because they didn't want a big building."

Despite the property being vacant for so long, Quintessenza did not consider selling.

"When they downzone a property, it loses value. We paid top dollar for the R-7 zoning. When they go down to R-6, I would owe more money on the property than I could get," Quintessenza said.

In the meantime, Quintessenza will continue working with CGM Management to construct the residence. The new plans call for a four-story building with 20 units, according to building records. The project, he said, is set to be completed within the next year.

There are several stop work orders



Photo by Christy Rae Ammons

**THE OWNER OF** this lot at 3067 Perry Ave. hasn't given up hope in constructing a residence. He told the *Norwood News* that plans are in the works.

issued on 3067 Perry Ave., with \$1,000 in fees being owed, that could slow down the process even more. The property has also received just shy of 30 complaints from residents.

The Department of Buildings (DOB) said that no permits have been issued to begin work on the four-story building. In order to obtain permits, the fees for violating the stop work order must be paid.

Residents of the area are curious why nothing has been done with the lot over the last decade.

"It's been here for quite some time now, like nine or 10 years," said Felix, a longtime resident standing at the medical center beside the lot. "I grew up around here. There was a house there. They tore it down. Now it's just on construction for years now."

Quintessenza has had similar is-

ssues constructing buildings in the past. At 1604 Williamsbridge Rd. in Morris Park, he owned a property and wrote "I'm working on a dream" on the wall around the lot. It was going to be "The Joseph Nicholas Quintessenza Medical Arts Center," named after his autistic son who died of leukemia. But because of similar issues with zoning laws, the center was never built and Quintessenza eventually sold the property.

Despite construction being stalled for a decade and stop work orders being placed on the property, Quintessenza is determined to build his apartments at 3067 Perry Ave.

"So now after 10 years, we're getting our resources together and hopefully we will take out permits soon to do a smaller development," Quintessenza said.

Street and Boston Road on July 21, one of a series of incidents where police officers had water thrown at them. Robert Perez, one of the suspected water-tossers, was charged with harassment, criminal mischief, disorderly conduct, and criminal trespass. Similar incidents happened in Harlem, where three arrests were made.

## New Protected Bike Lane Plan

In response to the growing number of cyclist fatalities, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced "Green Wave: A Plan for Cycling in New York City," which will

add protected bike lane networks city-wide and increase enforcement. The goal for the Department of Transportation (DOT) is to build 30 miles of protected bike lanes every year, resulting in over 80 miles of protected bike lanes by the end of 2021. The DOT will also pilot "Green Wave," signal-timing that discourages speeding. "No loss of life on our streets is acceptable," de Blasio said.

## Pot Decriminalization Becomes Law

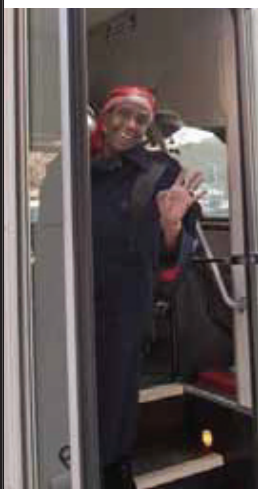
Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed a bill to further decriminalize

marijuana, a bill that was first introduced by Norwood state Sen. Jamaal Bailey. This bill will reduce the penalty for possession to a violation punishable by fine. The bill will also create a process for people who have been convicted of small possessions to expunge their record. "Communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by laws governing marijuana for far too long, and today we are ending this injustice once and for all," Cuomo said.



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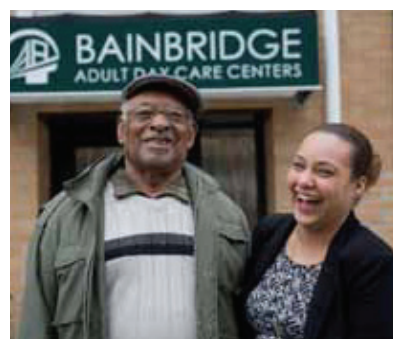
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## Twin Babies Die After Left in Car for Hours, Father Charged

By DAVID GREENE and DAVID CRUZ

A pair of twin babies' lives was cut short after they were left behind in a vehicle for hours in Kingsbridge on a day when temperatures reached the mid-80s, according to police.

The one-year-old victims, identified as Luna and Phoenix Rodriguez, were found in a Honda Accord that had stopped at the corner of Kingsbridge Road and Kingsbridge Terrace at around 4:08 p.m. after the victim's father discovered his children inside. The vehicle's rear windows were tinted, preventing anyone from seeing inside.

The father was identified as Juan Rodriguez, 39, a Rockland County resident and social worker for the James J. Peters Veterans Administration Hospital. Rodriguez called the deaths an accident after saying he left them in the car for hours to go to work at the hospital. He was taken into custody for questioning at the 52nd Precinct, later telling police he had “blanked out.” He was charged with two counts of manslaughter and two counts of criminally negligent homicide. He was on suicide watch before posting \$100,000 bond.

Before heading in for work, the father was to bring the twins to daycare, but forgot and went to work, leaving his children inside, according to one source.

News of the incident stunned residents in the neighborhood, with several suspecting it was more than an accident. Like many in the crowd, lifelong Kingsbridge resident C.J. Rivera, 36, was quick to pass judgement on what he felt was a heartless crime, stating, “He came down here and tried to make it look spontaneous. To me it

looked intentional. How can you do that to two kids?” Rivera and a couple of friends would light several candles and leave them in the street.

One furious woman showed no sympathy, fuming, “They should castrate him or put him in front of a firing squad. Don't tell me he didn't know.”

“My heart is broken,” said Councilman Fernando Cabrera, whose district covers Kingsbridge. “Two innocent babies lost their lives, dying from heat in a parked car at a major facility in an area of heavy vehicular and pedestrian traffic. This happens far too often, even with caring parents who cannot explain why it happened.”

The two babies reportedly had just celebrated their first birthday earlier this month. The National Safety Council, a non-profit that promotes health and safety for children, reported that 52 children died in hot cars last year in the United States.

The Kids Transportation Safety Act was passed in 2008, before lawmakers could include rear-seat occupancy sensors that would tell a driver that occupants are in the back seat. Advocates were recently on Capitol Hill promoting the Hot Cars Act of 2019, which is opposed by many top automakers. The legislation passed the House of Representatives, but died in the Senate.

The VA Hospital declined to comment. One security guard at the hospital did confirm that NYPD detectives had visited the hospital to speak with staff and look at surveillance video.

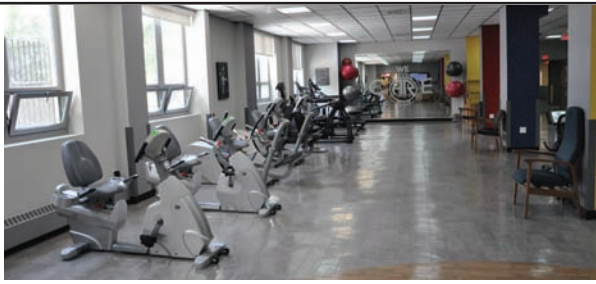
Rodriguez is currently out on bail with his wife's full support, but is due back at Bronx Criminal Court on Aug. 1.



Photo by David Greene

**POLICE SURROUND THE** vehicle, a Honda Accord, where the twins were found.





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## Life for Cartel Head Who Moved Hard Drugs to Bx.

By **SÍLE MOLONEY**

Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán Loera, the infamous, former head of the Sinaloa drug cartel, was sentenced to life in prison plus 30 years at the city’s Eastern District courthouse in Brooklyn on July 17.

Guzmán was found guilty on Feb. 12 on 10 federal charges, including murder conspiracies, engaging a continuing criminal enterprise and other drug-related charges, after an 11-week trial.

The sentencing is timely given that last month, 18 people with ties to the Sinaloa cartel were charged by the Bronx District Attorney’s Office in June with 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.

At least two of those charged in June had connections to Kingsbridge Heights and University Heights. 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.

It is expected that Guzmán will be transported to a maximum-security federal prison in Colorado in about 60 days giving his U.S. legal team some time to work on his appeal, which has already been filed.

## Torres: Home Seizure Program Has Sights on Black and Hispanic Homeowners

By **MICHAEL TURAY and DAVID CRUZ**

A city program that takes away distressed homes from owners is doing more harm than good, robbing its owners of its home valued at millions of dollars in market assets, according to an investigation by the New York City Council. And their findings have found the Bronx is among those hardest hit.

“Our investigation found that out of 420 properties, 210 of them had no financial distress. The legal standard for financial distress is a 15 percent lien-to-value ratio. Those 210 properties on average had a three percent lien-to-value ratio,” said Councilman Ritchie Torres at a news conference outlining his findings on the controversial Third Party Transfer program (TPT) on July 26. “Furthermore, our investigation found that out of 410 properties in Round 10 of TPT, 155 of them had neither financial nor physical distress.”

Torres, chair of the New York City Council’s Oversight Committee, held a hearing on the program on July 22, sharing the committee’s findings with the city Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) agency, which created the program in 1996.

For the last 23 years, HPD has taken over single- and multi-family homes, which include co-ops that fall under the Housing Development Fund Corporations (HDFC) cooperative program,



Photo by David Cruz

**COUNCILMAN RITCHIE TORRES** (at podium) unveils findings of Third Party Transfer program that’s compromised the wealth of black and Hispanic communities.

if they find them to be distressed or severely behind on their water or property taxes. Usually, the seized properties are taken by non-profit organizations, as has been the case these last six months. Nonprofits can ultimately flip the properties and sell them once the terms of their arrangement with HPD have been satisfied, effectively making them the beneficiary to someone else’s wealth. Torres noted that the total value of each of these seized homes, which will likely not be given back to homeowners, is \$152

million.

The program ensures that qualified sponsors will be able to take over distressed properties and convert them into affordable housing. However, some of the properties recently selected to be seized are not at fault and have been “targeted,” according to the investigation.

While Torres believes that the TPT program is problematic, he doesn’t want to see its complete undoing. “We are committed to a comprehensive reform of the TPT program so that the focus is not on (HDFC’s), but on genuinely abandoned properties that have been neglected by slumlords and absentee landlords,” said Torres.

Along with not falling under the category of distress, Torres and his committee are arguing “racial and geographic disparities,” within HPD’s selection. Among the 420 properties selected, 192 were found in Brooklyn, 132 in the Bronx, 86 in Manhattan, 10 in Queens, and zero in Staten Island.

“When we do the selection, we are not looking at racial data. All we are looking at is how much money is owed to the city. When you map these properties in these areas, these are properties that have high foreclosure risks, the highest numbers of notices of foreclosure, and suffered greatly in 2008 from the mortgage crisis,” said HPD Commissioner Louise Carroll in response to these claims at the July 22 hearing. “The law then says once you have identified properties that owe the city the most money, then you have to pick up everything on the block. That was our process.”

Carroll is stressing the amount of debt buildings owe toward the city as the reasoning. Not all of the 420 properties could owe an outrageous amount of money to the city and most are not in terrible shape, but they are held liable because the neighboring buildings in their respective communities are behind on taxes.

For at least one group of homeowners in the Bronx, understanding the TPT program started as a small notice slipped under their doors in 2017. Isabel Adon has lived at 1600 Nelson Ave., a cooperative in the Highbridge section of the Bronx for over 40 years. She held back tears as she spoke during the conference on July 26.

She recalled the day she received the notice from the HPD. “On Sept. 5, 2017, it was a Saturday, there was a flyer in my building that said your building has been transferred, the new owner is neighborhood restore. You are no longer a shareholder, you are now becoming a tenant as of this day,” said Adon, adding “our building is not in distress.”

“I will ask anyone from HPD, including Ms. Louise Carroll to come to our building and see the conditions in which our building is in,” said Adon.

## Norwood Residents Fight a Rat’s Nest, and Their Landlord

By **SHA-NIA ALSTON**  
And **DAVID CRUZ**

Joe Franco is incredibly cautious when heading to the back of his building to throw out the trash.

“It’s the Bronx Zoo back there,” said Franco, a 40-year resident of the building, who’s noticed a rat infestation in the building, with the critters often spotted hopping over trash cans.

It’s on a list of problems at 241 E. 207th St., an 11-unit building between Bainbridge and Perry avenues in Norwood that Franco, along with a litany of residents, want to see fixed. Adding insult to injury is suspicions their landlord is looking to kick the tenants out. The problems have grown so severe they’ve enlisted the help of West Bronx Housing executive director Sally Dunford to pressure the landlord into improving conditions.

When Franco first moved into the building he said it was beautiful. His original landlord was great. “I loved the guy,” he said. Since then,

Franco has had six landlords all the while seeing his building conditions deteriorate. For another tenant, Ivania Silva, the conditions are so bad she finds herself constantly cleaning while also having to look out for her dog’s safety. “This is the dog’s dog bowl, and the dog wouldn’t eat for a while because the rats kept jumping into the bowl, and he was too scared to eat,” Silva said. She had to retrain the dog to overcome his fear.

Dunford took a previous landlord from the building to court 20 years ago over negligence. Now, it seems history is repeating itself, with the current landlord ignoring pleas to get the building fixed. “It looks like he wants to empty this building and that’s not acceptable,” she said, referring to the current landlord, Oval Realty LLC, who Dunford claims is trying to remove the tenants by offering them a buyout in the range of \$5,000 to \$10,000.

According to Dunford, if a landlord causes tenants enough distress

they are more likely to move, saving a landlord money on court fees, and buyouts. “We would recommend to somebody if they are going to take an offer from a landlord, they shouldn’t accept anything less than \$40-\$50,000 because they are not going to find another affordable apartment,” Dunford said.

Currently, there are 72 open violations for the property on the New York City Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) website. Listed violations include defective carbon monoxide and smoke detectors, exposure to lead paint, and several needed repairs along with the presence of rats.

*Norwood News* reached out to Oval Realty LLC several times but they were unavailable for comment. Oval Realty LLC also own the parking lot adjacent to the building.

“Joe is the originally unmovable object, and the landlord is going to have to come to grips that this is not going to happen easily,” Dunford said.





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# CRIME FILE

By **CHRISTY RAE AMMONS**



## Cell Phone Snatched

On July 11 near East Kingsbridge Road and Valentine Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights, a man took a cellphone out of another man's hands and ran off with it. The robber (pictured below) is described as a Hispanic man, bald, with a beard, and was last seen wearing a black tank top, blue jeans, and black sandals.



was approached by two men on a motor scooter (pictured above), who then snatched his necklace. A similar instance occurred on July 4 when two men on a scooter took a necklace from a 45-year-old man.

## Electronics Stolen

On July 6, a man (pictured right) entered Little Inventors Aqueduct, childcare center, at 2505 Aqueduct Ave. through a bathroom window. Once inside, he stole a vacuum cleaner and some electronics. He was last seen wearing a white T-shirt, light colored pants, and a black baseball cap. Police are still searching for him.



## Woman Stabbed in Neck

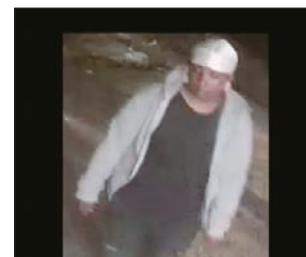
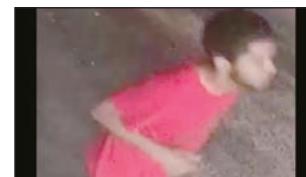
Police found the dead body of a 33-year-old woman, identified as Cindi Olivio, in her Fordham apartment on July 12. Her death was ruled a homicide, and police are now searching for Olivio's

boyfriend, 49-year-old Luis Severino, who is believed to be the murderer. The Medical Examiner's office confirmed that Olivio suffered multiple stab wounds to the neck.

## Cell Phone Thefts

Police have reported 11 linked incidents of cellphone theft from June 8 to July 7 occurring within the 52nd Precinct. One of the thefts occurred at 3222 Bainbridge Ave. and was captured on surveillance cameras. The suspects (pictured right) also roam East 207th Street, Reservoir Oval, and Perry Avenue, all within Norwood. Police are looking for the individuals, who are male and female teenagers, 15 to 18.

*Anyone with information on the above-mentioned crimes is asked to call CrimeStoppers at (800) 577-8477. All calls are kept confidential.*



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# KNIC Project Lumbers Along, New Deadline Set

By DAVID CRUZ

The owner behind the beleaguered and virtually dormant Kingsbridge National Ice Center (KNIC) project, revealed a new start time for the plan, telling the *Norwood News* he intends to see the ambitious project through despite ongoing delays and legal follies.

"I'm very confident we're gonna get there, it's just not a straight line, nothing ever is in life," said Kevin Parker, KNIC's owner, in a phone interview with the *Norwood News*. "but we're not going away and we're here we're battling and we're putting one foot in front of the other taking the steps to get this thing done and hopefully within 12 months I hope to be able to announce that everything is in place and that the whole project is ready to be built."

As has been the case from the start, the \$355 million project is slated to be built inside the Kingsbridge Armory, a colossal five-acre fortress found at the corner of East Kingsbridge Road and Jerome Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights.

It's not the first time Parker has imposed a new deadline for his venture. In March last year, he told members of KNIC's community advisory board



File photo

**THE LONG VACANT** Kingsbridge Armory (pictured, background) remains in play as the site of the world's largest ice skating center, according to Kevin Parker, the visionary behind the incredibly delayed project. It's been more than 2,000 days since the New York City Council voted to approve an ice center at the Armory.

that the public won't see any new progress until January this year. When that deadline arrived, nothing happened. Several months later, Parker told *Crain's New York* it was near a

deal to securing the construction loan. Once again, silence.

As it turns out, the project's first phase is more complex than imagined. True, in 2016 KNIC received a \$138 million loan commitment from the state's Empire State Development corporation, an authority controlled by Gov. Andrew Cuomo, to get the first phase of the project up and running. But the technical aspects to approving the construction loan and laying out its terms have presented the greatest challenge.

"[T]he mechanics of administering a construction loan are quite complicated and the state is simply just not set up to administer construction financing. So they basically insert a bank who has the capabilities of administering a construction loan in between," said Parker. "So the bank actually manages the construction lending part of it so that the state doesn't have to take something on that they are not equipped to do."

Citibank was chosen to administer the loan, though that phase of the project has been on hold for now, Parker said, as architects begin putting Parker's vision of nine ice skating rinks and a 5,000-seat arena inside the cavernous Armory to paper. "The guys that are working on the plan have been in the Armory a lot."

"What we need to do now is finish the plans and submit [the plans], get the bid and then wrap up the rest of the financing," said Parker. "You need all of those things in order to get a bid for construc-

tion. You need to get the plans in place first, then you need to hold the plans out for bid, then you need to raise the necessary amount of capital to complete the plan."

Citibank declined to comment for this article.

The New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), owners of the landmark property that committed to the offer of a 99-year lease to KNIC, maintains confidence in the project even after KNIC sued the agency in 2016 for not releasing the lease, which is contingent upon securing the financing. NYCEDC did not specify if it's given KNIC a deadline to guarantee the construction loan.

A spokesperson with the NYCEDC said the agency "remains committed to supporting the Kingsbridge National Ice Center, which is anticipated to boost economic development and recreational activities for young children and families in the north Bronx."

Parker's commitment goes back to the days when he personally met with members of the Kingsbridge Armory Redevelopment Alliance, an offshoot of the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition. There, he bolstered the benefits of introducing hockey to a community unfamiliar with the sport.

"It grew beyond the initial altruism of trying to address in a small way the lack of ice in New York City to a much bigger goal in mind in a neighborhood that in many ways was forgotten, and has not kept up with general improvements in the economy and in the city and so forth," said Parker. "It's sort of a legacy idea and a way of giving back to the city. It became a kind of a centerpiece in that whole idea. I made a lot of friends in the Bronx and met a lot of people up there. We put people on buses down to Philadelphia, we showed them what can be done, and that it's all about choice."

Progress, it seems, hinges on how fast the architects can draft their plans for submission. In any event, Parker will be waiting.

"Once all that transpired, it became much more of a mission, given all the problems I've had and the challenges I've had in getting this done. It would have been far easier to walk away, no doubt," said Parker. "At great personal expense financially and reputationally, I made a decision a while ago that I was not going to give up on this project and I was going to see it through until the end."



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# Montefiore Wakefield Campus Hails Decade in Neighborhood

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

As the thermometer hit 96 degrees, visitors to the Montefiore Wakefield Community Health Fair on July 20, were glad to see plenty of bottled water, cooling fans, and an invitation by hospital officials like Toni Hayes to rest inside the air-conditioned lobby. “Be sure to stay hydrated,” Hayes reminded visitors.

The oppressive heat, however, did not keep elected officials and hospital administration from celebrating Montefiore’s 10th anniversary managing the Wakefield campus. The hospital located at East 233rd Street near the Bronx River Parkway was formerly known as Our Lady of Mercy Medical Center. Montefiore officially took over the former hospital on July 23, 2008, with officials celebrating the 10-years on the cusp of its 11-year anniversary.

More than 15 tents were erected around the entrance of the hospital promoting information on everything from tips ranging from handwashing with a portable hygiene sink to awareness on prostate cancer screening.

The celebratory spirit not only included the hospital’s outreach to the local community but also news of a workforce expansion.

By the end of this year Montefiore expects to add 200 jobs to the Wakefield campus.

Dr. Peter P. Semczuk, senior vice president and executive director of Montefiore’s Moses and Wakefield campuses, noted the jobs will be full



Photo by José A. Giralt

**POINTING TO A** group of workers from the maternity department, Councilman Andy King (c) speaks at the Community Health Fair to celebrate 10 Years of Montefiore Wakefield Hospital in Wakefield on July 20.

time, creating “a positive impact on the local community.”

Dr. Semczuk sees the growth as not only a commitment to improving medical and health services but to also show that Montefiore is economically invested in the local community. “We [the Montefiore Hospital system] are the second largest private employer in

New York state and know the impact that good jobs can have on a community,” Dr. Semczuk added.

During the early 2000s, Our Lady of Mercy Medical Center went through a period of uncertainty because of underfunding. With more than 500 physicians, 2,500 employees, and periodic reports of imminent closing, the bankrupt hospital was taken over by Montefiore in 2008 and incorporated into their expanding state-wide system.

At the time, it was estimated that more than 150,000 neighborhood residents would have been immediately impacted had the medical center closed.

Karl Stricker, 77, a Woodlawn resident remembers those days well. “The talk in the neighborhood was always about where would we go for medical care if they closed Our Lady of Mercy,” Stricker, once a member of the former hospital’s advisory committee, said.

Stricker not only remembers the concerns as a local resident, but also has insights into those days because of his volunteer work on the advisory committee at Our Lady of Mercy. “We just couldn’t figure out how the money was, or wasn’t being spent back then,” he said.

For the past 10 years, Stricker has served in the same capacity for the Montefiore Wakefield campus and is satisfied about the way things have turned out at the medical center. “In the end, it was a good thing that Montefiore took over,” he said.

It was with the help of U.S. Sena-

tor Charles Schumer, Congressman Eliot Engel, and former Congressman Charles Rangel, that Our Lady of Mercy was kept open through Montefiore’s acquisition in 2008. Back then, the hospital was initially called Montefiore North Division. It wouldn’t change to its current name until the following year.

The hospital has since received recognition for some of its medical services. It recently received the Joint Commission Gold Seal of Approval for Advanced Certification for Total Hips & Knee Replacement. Only 10 hospitals have received this designation in the state.

The stark turnaround in the medical center’s reputation was echoed at the event by proclamations from Councilman Andy King, state Sen. Jamaal T. Bailey, and Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie.

Keeping the sweltering heat in mind, the elected officials kept their remarks short as they presented framed proclamations from the city, State Senate and Assembly to hospital administrators.

Bailey emphasized the importance of Montefiore Wakefield to the community by saying it’s the hospital he goes to for medical attention. And King remembered coming to this location during his childhood when it was known as “Misericordia” (Spanish for “mercy”) from 1958 to 1985. “This hospital has been a part of my childhood memories and I’m happy to be a part of this milestone,” King said.

## Health Fair Winner!



Photo by Miriam Quinones

**ANTONIA RAMOS PROUDLY** holds up the basket of healthcare-related products she won during the raffle portion of a health fair sponsored by state Sen. Gustavo Rivera and Assemblyman Victor Pichardo on July 26. The yearly event was hosted this time at Monroe College’s Mintz Auditorium and aimed to encourage senior citizens to stay healthy. The Bronx remains the unhealthiest county in New York state.



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## Make a Healthy Sandwich a Lunch Favorite

By MARIA MORALES

A sandwich has always been an easy go-to option for lunch that is easy to make on your own, or to buy anywhere in the city. For many of us, the most famous is the peanut butter and jelly sandwich we grew up eating, as it was packed in our lunch box, or offered as a quick afternoon snack.

As we grow older, the sandwich is still a staple lunch item for a lot of us, but we may look for a far more “sophisticated” version than our childhood PB and J. We have options of different meats, type of breads, spreads and—who can forget, cheese!

Elements of a healthy sandwich:

**Whole grain bread:** It's a good source of carbohydrates and is low in fat. It is also a good source of fiber, minerals and vitamins. The fiber in the bread will help you feel full for longer.

**Lean protein:** A healthy sandwich can include chicken, ham or turkey, tuna, hummus or low-fat-cheese. When using deli meats, make sure they are low in sodium.

**Vegetables:** Veggies such as tomatoes, onion, lettuce, roasted red pep-

pers, and spinach add nutrients and flavor.

**Condiments** – Most condiments are high in fat. Choose a condiment that is low in fat, like the ones listed below, for a healthier option that can give your sandwich extra flavor.

- Optional condiments
- Mustard
- Honey mustard
- Light dressing
- Light mayonnaise
- Avocado spread/guacamole

We are fortunate to live in a city where these types of breads, spreads, and condiments to make our own sandwiches are easily accessible. Whether you make your own or decide to buy one, look out for the healthy sandwich combo option newly available at your local grocery store or bodega. Not only will the combo not break the bank, it will also provide you with a low-calorie sugar free drink and a piece of fruit instead of a greasy bag of potato chips. Remember: Health is Wealth!

*Maria Morales is a project supervisor for Montefiore Health System's Office of Community & Population Health.*



## From Eyesore to Exhibition

Photo courtesy Maria Estevez  
**NEIGHBORHOOD ARTIST**  
**LADY K** Fever puts the finishing touches on a newly restored column that's been transformed into an art installation at the southwest corner of Jerome Avenue and East Gun Hill Road. The Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District commissioned the work, a total of four columns, within the commercial district's borders as a way of sprucing it up with help from Councilman Andrew Cohen and ArtBridge.

## Jerome Gun Hill BID Merchant Spotlight: Mosholu Optical

By JEROME GUN HILL BID

Mosholu Optical has been a neighborhood fixture in the Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District (BID) since it first opened in 1948. Originally owned by Dr. Irwin Kaskawits, Mosholu Optical has been serving patients and shoppers in the Norwood community for over 70 years. Ed Greenspan, the current owner, has been a part of the business since 1968 when he began working for Dr. Kaskawits.

Ed first got his start in the optical business at the original location of Moscot eyewear in Manhattan's Lower East Side, now one of the oldest businesses in New York City. By 1985 Ed took over Mosholu Optical from its original owner and has been running the operation since.

Originally located at 3490 Jerome Ave., Mosholu Optical moved to 1 E. Gun Hill Rd. in January of 2019. Now in a brighter and more modern space, the team at Mosholu Optical continues to serve thousands of patients from the community each year.

Ed and his staff pride themselves on the level of care and respect they show to everyone who walks in the door. Dr. Jennifer Yoon, an optometrist, has been working with Ed for over nine years and loves the diversity of patients that she sees at Mosholu Optical. From little kids getting their first pair of glasses to seniors dealing with eye conditions, the team at Mosholu Opti-

cal is well equipped to support their patient needs.

In June, the BID held a Small Business Recognition BBQ, celebrating all of our small businesses that have been continuously operating for over 25 years in the community. Ed's was among 22 businesses that received an award. In addition, Mosholu Optical received special recognition for being the oldest business in the district. We thank them for their 70+ years of dedication and we look forward to many more years of their presence in the community.

Mention this article next time you visit Mosholu Optical for a free eye exam with the purchase of eyeglass frames and lenses! Visit the store at 1 E. Gun Hill Rd. for details.

*The Jerome Gun Hill BID is one of 75 BIDs throughout New York City and one of 10 BIDs in the Bronx. A vibrant retail commercial district, the BID serves 230 merchants on Jerome Avenue between East 212th Street and East Mosholu Parkway North, and East Gun Hill Road between Jerome and Webster avenues. As part of our small business support work, we will be running a Merchant Spotlight once a month to shine a light on the small businesses in our corridor that help make our community special. For more information, find us at [jeromegunhillbid.org](http://jeromegunhillbid.org) or on Instagram, @jeromegunhillbid.*



Photo by Jerome Gun Hill BID

(L-R) MOSHOLU OPTICAL owner Ed Greenspan with the business's optometrist Dr. Jennifer Yoon, and optical employee Kareem Phillips.



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# Laal Seeks to Shape Future for Norwood's Bengali Women

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Sanjana Khan and Ayesha Akhtar, two young Bengali-Americans from Norwood, said the experience of seeing their mothers and other Bengali women struggle to integrate into U.S. society for different reasons, despite some living here for over 20 years, was a motivating factor for starting Laal, the first non-profit aimed at supporting these women in the Norwood area. But while envisioning a non-profit is one thing, raising funds to manage it can be a daunting task.

## Raising Funds

"We are a very small team and we're all pro-bono right now," said Akhtar. "We want to raise \$25,000 for our operational costs to fund our programs. It's an online campaign because that's the cheapest way to do it, so it's on GoFundMe."

Undeterred, they are encouraged nonetheless by the support they received from Councilman Andrew Cohen's office and State Sen. Jamaal Bailey. Laal was also among the recipients of the 2019 Neighborhood Grant awarded by the Citizens Committee for New York City whose mission is



Photo by Sile Moloney

(L-R) **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 7** District Manager Ischia Bravo, state Sen. Jamaal Bailey, with Sanjana Khan and Ayesha Akhtar, co-founders of Laal, a non-profit supporting Bengali women in Norwood, and Assemblywoman Natalia Fernandez strike a pose while holding aloft promotional material during the Bangla Bazaar Street Fair on June 23.

to help New Yorkers, especially those in low-income areas, come together and improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods.

With the needs assessment and fundraising among the first order of business for the group, plans are now afoot for their English as a Foreign

Language class, transportation and health and wellness classes.

"We're going to do a transportation class starting in the spring," Khan said. The classes will start with a group of volunteers and five Bengali women who will be taught how to use the city's buses and subways to get to and from Jackson Heights and other important parts of the Bronx like Fordham. Khan said they will then mix up the group and get the women to go in pairs. She said it's a small but empowering activity that the women can then do by themselves.

"My mother has been here for 30-plus years and she still has a fear," said Khan. "She has her driver's license but a fear of getting lost. It's so deeply embedded in her." Khan puts this fear down to cultural oppression and wants to break that cycle.

Difficulty getting around has certainly impeded Bengali women's ability to practice English, given the isolation, but Khan also emphasized that, unlike India, English is not commonly spoken in Bangladesh. "Then, on top of that, the women aren't allowed to go out 'cause at home they're not allowed," she said. "So, when they come here, it doesn't change."

To address this, Laal will provide English classes, covering beginner, intermediate and advanced levels, and also conversational classes. In addition, exercise and health classes will be held on Saturdays, starting in the fall.

## Partners & Influencers

Khan's and Akhtar's work has been

influenced by other non-profits covering the South Asian community. Laal has partnered with Malikah, a non-profit which provides self-defense classes for Muslim women, after its founder, Rana Abdelhamid, was attacked and her hijab pulled in her Queens neighborhood in 2010.

They also see the value in Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), a group known for its community organizing capabilities. Desi is a term used by Bengalis who are abroad to identify fellow Bengalis. "That's what we really want to get into," said Khan. Referring to the 2020 presidential election, she asks, "Can we get this community to mobilize to vote?"

The *Norwood News* asked if a Bengali woman were to run for public office, would it perhaps change traditional perceptions of women in the community. "Oh, we're definitely going to run for office," Khan said, referring to women in her community. "This has to change. I think AOC has been a huge influence," said Khan, referring to Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. "And really being part of Laal, we should be at the table, not just a few men who have money. We want to put the women in this community at the table."

## "Insiders but Outsiders"

Another challenge is language and subculture within the community. Though both Akhtar and Khan speak the Sylheti dialect, this is different from Shudo Bangla, another dialect spoken in their community, and this has sometimes hampered communication. They said there are also specific religious considerations that have to be understood.

"The women are much more conservative so, you know, little things that are not little but you have to be inside the community to know," said Khan. "So, we're like insiders but outsiders."

Are they confident they will overcome these barriers? "Although we're doing this thing that's very challenging, we are very Bengali and we take care of our families," said Akhtar. "We're very rooted in that tradition so I don't think we'll have as much of a problem as a true outsider would."

**Editor's Note:** This story ends a two-part series on Laal. Further information on Laal can be found at <https://www.laalnyc.org>.

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# New Van Cortlandt Library, Twice The Size of Its Former Depository, Opens

By SÍLE MOLONEY

The grand opening of the new Van Cortlandt library at 3882 Cannon Place, a quarter mile from its old site at 3874 Sedgwick Ave., took place on July 15, having officially closed its former smaller premises in June.

To mark the occasion, colorful helium balloons swayed in the summer breeze and attendees tucked into a celebratory buffet while a human-sized, furry lion mingled playfully among staff, children, visitors and elected officials including Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., State Sen. Alessandra Biaggi, Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, Councilman Andrew Cohen, and Congressman Adriano Espaillat.

"This was in the making for many years," said Dinowitz.

The new library, once a two-story apartment residence, is twice the size of the former one, providing 5,800 square feet of public space. Features include an adult reading room and separate community room, more computers and laptops, on-site programs in dedicated programming rooms, classes, workshops for all ages, charging stations for personal devices at tables, multiple public restrooms, a water fountain, an outdoor space and dedicated areas for teens and children.

"Not only is it a beautiful amenity but it's been done in under a year, with



Photo by Síle Moloney

(L-R) COUNCILMAN ANDREW Cohen, state Sen. Alessandra Biaggi, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, and library manager Peter Pamphile, cut the ribbon on the new Van Cortlandt Library on July 15, as they stand alongside the New York Public Library's mascot and several local kids,

community input. It was a team effort," said Diaz of the new library, confirming that \$600,000 had gone towards the Van Cortlandt Library project.

Library manager Peter Pamphile, who was accompanied by his wife Stephanie and 8-year-old son Caleb, drew cheers from the crowd when he

spoke ahead of the official ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"We have adult computer classes geared towards seniors and we're looking to start a book discussion group now that we have the space to have it," said Pamphile.

Did he have a favorite book growing

up? "As a kid, I loved 'Caps for Sale,' so that's probably my favorite book if I had to go nostalgia-wise," he said, smiling.

To meet the literary needs of the library's 58,000 annual visitors, a so-called bookmobile had been in circulation since June 20 until the new library was opened.

Nicole Wallace has lived in the neighborhood for about eight years and was a frequent visitor of the former library, along with her six-year-old daughter, Elanor, who, she said, was sad that the former library was closing, worried about coming to the new library.

"She said it's going to be too big and she's going to get lost but I think she's pretty happy cause she sees now that they have a whole collection of her favorite books that the other library didn't have," said Wallace.

Although the former library was only closed for about a month before the opening of the new building, Elanor took matters into her own hands and made her own library inside her house, lending and borrowing books with her sister.

"I like 'The Magic Treehouse' book and the 'Geronimo Stilton,'" said Elanor when asked what type of books she likes to read. "They're kind of easy."



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Washington Heights Community Office	1467 St. Nicholas Avenue	8/19, 9/9

Location, dates, and times are subject to change. Please call to confirm.

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### TRAVEL

Trip to Hershey Park, Pennsylvania, Saturday, Aug. 31 at 8 a.m. from East 163rd Street and Southern Boulevard. For more information, please contact Eddie at (718) 757-5485.



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## NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

### Open Gym Nights

Community Board 6 is sponsoring free volleyball and dodgeball games on Mondays and Wednesdays from 5 to 10 p.m. through Aug. 21 at Aquinas High School, 685 E. 182nd St. Kids ages 13 to 19 are welcome, but anyone under 18 years old must have a parent sign a waiver. For more information, call (646) 474-3630.

### CB6 Seeks

#### Community Associate

Bronx Community Board 6 seeks a part-time Community Associate, whose responsibilities include planning/helping community outreach efforts and events, updating CB6's social media, and attending a monthly evening meeting. Candidates must have a high school diploma or equivalent and three years of experience in community work. To apply, submit a resume and cover letter by Aug. 9 to [bronxcb6@bronxcb6.org](mailto:bronxcb6@bronxcb6.org) or mail to 1932 Arthur Ave. Rm. 403-A, Bronx, NY 10457. For more information, call Community Board 6 at (718) 579-6990.

### 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.

### Constituent Services

State Sen. Alessandra Biaggi provides constituent services at Community Board 7, 229-A E. 204th St., every second Thursday of the month from 11 a.m. to 4

p.m. For more information, call Community Board 7 at (718) 933-5650 or Biaggi's office at (718) 822-2049.

### Accompanying The Elderly


Volunteer to visit the elderly once a week through the city Department of Aging's Friendly Visiting Program of Neighborhood SHOPP. Volunteers donate their time to accompany the elderly once a week for an hour as a means of improving their mental health. Volunteers will need to undergo a background check and commit six months to the program. For more information, call 311.

### Norwood Youth Market

Affordably priced fruits and vegetables will be up for sale at the Norwood Youth Market, East Gun Hill Road and DeKalb Avenue, each Thursday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Nov. 21. Vendors accept cash, SNAP/EBT, debit/credit, WIC and senior FMNP coupons. For more information, go to [grownyc.org/norwoodyouthmarket](http://grownyc.org/norwoodyouthmarket).

### Right to Counsel

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



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# Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

## EDITOR'S PICK

### NYPD National Night Out

National Night Out Against Crime will be held on Aug. 6. The 52nd Precinct event will be held at Poe Park on the Grand Concourse at Kingsbridge Road from 5 to 8 p.m. Activities include bouncy house, pony rides, giveaways, dance contest, refreshments, and crime prevention information. The 47th Precinct event will be held at Grenada Place between Ely and Laconia avenues across from its precinct from 4 to 8 p.m. Activities include free games, rides, food and entertainment. Peace Prayer March begins at 3:30 p.m. at Laconia Avenue and East 222nd Street.



File photo by Miriam Quinones

**RAIN OR SHINE**, National Night Out Against Crime is slated for Aug. 6, a nationwide event aimed at forging greater bonds between police and community. Pictured, 52nd Precinct Community Affairs Officer Crystal Reveron shares a moment with this young man at last year's National Night Out event (see Editor's Pick for details).

## Onstage

Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. presents Sunday summer concerts at Orchard Beach at the main stage at section 9, subject to change, including **The Nelson Gonzalez All Star Band** and **Conjunto Clasico** on Aug. 4; **The Mambo Legends Orchestra** on Aug. 11; **Tipica 73** and **Hector Trioche** on Aug. 18; and **Andy Montañez** on Aug. 25. For more information, call (718) 590-8989.

## Events

Williamsbridge Oval offers a variety of free **summer programs** including sports, exercise, and dance. For more information and a detailed schedule, call (718) 543-8672.

Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., Empire Blue Cross & Montefiore present **Back-to-School Health and Literacy**

**Fair**, Aug. 14 from 3 to 7 p.m. at Poe Park on the Grand Concourse at Kingsbridge Road. Events include music, giveaways, entertainment, food, and raffle prizes. For more information, call (718) 590-6012.

The 52nd Precinct holds a community meeting, **Build the Block**, on Aug. 7 at 6 p.m. at the Fordham Methodist Church, 2543 Marion Ave. to discuss the public safety challenge in our neighborhood. Attendees can meet the Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCOs) and the Steady Sector Officers on how to solve local quality of life conditions and crime concerns. For more information, call (718) 220-5811.

Van Cortlandt Jewish Center, 3880 Sedgwick Ave., holds a **Blood Drive**, Aug. 4 from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the game room. Volunteers who get screened get a \$10 Dunkin' gift card and high school students 16 to 19 are

eligible for an additional \$15 gift card. Walk-ins are welcome. For more information on requirements and to sign up, call Stu at (646) 240-1279.

Bronx County Historical Society presents **Beautiful Bronx Trolley Tour**, Aug. 24, rain or shine, visiting the Hall of Fame on the Bronx Community College campus, Parkchester, Pelham and Mosholu parkways, and lunch in Little Italy (not included). Meet at the Jerome/Bainbridge avenues gate of the Woodlawn Cemetery at 11:45 a.m. Tour begins at noon. Tickets must be purchased in advance at woodlawntours.org and all sales are final; no refunds. For more information, call (718) 920-1469.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers the following summer concerts: **Bronx Salsafest – Chino Pons & Grupo Irek**, on the Great Lawn on Aug. 7; **DJ Lightbolt Spinning Globe Sounds**, at the Kate French Terrace on Aug. 8; **Dronehoir**, in the Aquatic Garden on Aug. 15; and **Gamelan Dharma Swara**, in the Aquatic Garden on Aug. 22; all at 7 p.m., rain or shine, (\$12; \$8/students/seniors; \$6/age 6+; free/WH members and under age 6; no refunds; 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.

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: **Birds of Prey**: to learn about hawks, owl, and falcons, Aug. 9 at 3 p.m. Teens/young adults can enjoy **Pizza and movie at 5 p.m.**: Aug. 1. Adults can attend: **films at 2 p.m.**: "Spider-man: Into the Spider," Aug. 1; and "Creed II," on Aug. 2; and **Computer Basics**: Aug. 20 at 4:30 p.m.; and Aug. 29 at 1 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit [www.nypl.org](http://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, Aug. 5, 8, 12, 15, 19, 22, 26 and 29; and for ages 5 to 12: **Crafty Fridays at 3 p.m.**: crafts, Aug. 2, 9, and 23; and **STEM: Kids Science at 3 p.m.**: Water, Aug. 6, 13, 20 and 27. Adults can enjoy: **Knitting Circle**: Thursdays at 3 p.m. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Pl. (near Kingsbridge Road), offers for adults **Computer Basics at noon**: Aug. 8, 15, 22 and 29. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

## Public Service Announcement

The *Norwood News* begins its yearly hiatus with this issue and will return on Aug. 29. We wish all our readers an enjoyable summer.

**NOTE:** Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to [norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org](mailto:norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org), and should be received by Aug. 19 for the next publication date of Aug. 29.

## Finding Balance in the Parkway



Photo by José A. Giralt

**AN INSTRUCTOR WITH** Sweet Water Dance and Yoga Studio leads an early evening yoga session at East Mosholu Parkway North and Hull Avenue in Norwood on July 26. Hosted by Montefiore Moses Community Advisory Board, the session sought to introduce yoga to the community.



# Cohen: Party's Over at Van Cortlandt Park

(continued from page 1)

## "Frustration and Outrage"

The letter was written to express the group's "frustration and outrage" at the recurring summer bashes which some say last until 4 a.m., well beyond the Parks Department's rule of closing parks at dusk.

On July 26, packed parties were still rocking at around 9 p.m. As a hookah was shared among one group, another group opted for alcohol poured in plastic cups, which were eventually scattered to the ground. A DJ was spotted playing loud rap music from a sound system, creating a club-like atmosphere. Meanwhile, as day transitioned to night, heaps of trash dotted various parts of the park, reaching a barricaded portion of the park primed for a parking lot. All this took place despite the presence of three Parks Enforcement Patrol officers who were talking among themselves. A local bodega owner said the outdoor activity pales in comparison to other weekends.

The rowdy behavior didn't end there. The next day, one partygoer is seen slapping a Parks Department horse in the face in the presence of a mounted officer in a video published by the *New York Post* on July 28. The defendant was not charged, but did receive separate summonses for disorderly conduct and smoking in the park.

"This is one more example of the out-of-control behavior that can occur in our parks, especially Van Cortlandt Park and Moshulu Parkway during the summer," Cohen said in a statement. "I think this awful incident is indicative of a need for greater enforcement efforts in our parks."

The incident has put the Parks Department and NYPD on alert.

It also complements accounts published in the letter sent to officials, a copy of which was provided to the *Norwood News*, which cites "a total lack of disrespect for residents" by thousands of people using the park each weekend, some arriving by tour bus, and some carrying gas-powered generators.

It also details rock-concert volume music, smoke pollution from barbecues, vast quantities of litter left behind after parties, how a public electricity grid located on the park's sidewalk is used to power music systems and how dozens of barbecue grills are set up.

## 50th and 52nd Precincts Team Up

Cohen said the marathon parties is an ongoing problem, bringing it up at precinct council meetings with both the 50th Precinct, which has jurisdiction over the physical park, and the 52nd Precinct, whose jurisdiction covers the impacted, adjacent residences, creating a jurisdictional conundrum

that has perhaps not helped the situation.

The issue stood as one of the many topics at a July 25 meeting organized between Cohen's office, various Norwood residents, and the 50th Precinct Commanding Officer, Captain Emilio Melendez, who confirmed that the 50th and 52nd precincts are already working together to ensure greater enforcement of park rules and will continue in the same vein.

Residents also offered verbal accounts, including instances where sections of the park were cordoned off with caution tape for private gatherings and that the signs denoting the prohibition of barbecues in the park have been removed.

## Striking a Balance

Those contacted for this article asked not to be quoted for fear of retribution, an indication of just how acrimonious the situation has become among neighbors in the area. Some signatories said additional residents also agreed with the letter's content but didn't sign as they felt intimidated.

The group said their actions are bearing some results, with greater Park presence evident for the last three weekends, both in patrol vehicles and on horseback. They have also witnessed Parks officials preventing the cordoning off of specific areas and precluding the setting up of speakers.

For Ana Garcia, 21, a frequent park goer, preventing families to come together isn't a solution, but striking a balance should be. "A lot of people come here just to have a good time with their friends and family," she said. "I understand if it's like after a certain time but honestly, I've been here a lot and people just do their own thing. Nobody really bothers anyone. Well, the residential is not really right next to the park so I don't see how it affects them that much." Garcia conceded that people could do more to clean up afterwards.

Given that park rules state no person shall play or operate any sound reproduction device in any park without a permit, while barbecuing next to trees, tree roots or buildings and in non-authorized areas is prohibited, as is littering and dumping of debris, Cohen was asked at what point enforcement kicks in.

"No one is being murdered. It's not an index crime and getting the NYPD to take care of these quality of life crimes sometimes takes some effort and also like where they fit on the spectrum of responding to other crimes in the district," he said. "At some point in time, in the evening, the party's gotta be done."

No arrests were reported the week-end of July 27.

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