“I’ve always wanted to change the world,” says Sally Dunford, sitting inside a cubicle less than seven hours before capping 28 years as executive director of West Bronx Housing.

It’s Jan. 7, and for Dunford—wearing a maroon shirt, black pants, and white shoes— it’s retirement day, a moment she never thought would come, capping a lifetime of housing advocacy that’s kept thousands of Bronx residents in their homes while also empowering them to reclaim their quality of life against unscrupulous landlords. Making her indispensable over the years was her encyclopedic know-how of the daunting housing system, which over the years, she notes, has improved for the sake of tenants.

Operating at a storefront office at 220 E. 204th St. in Bedford Park, West Bronx Housing typically sees an estimated 1200 clients a year. A subsidiary group for the Bronx Jewish Community Council, West Bronx Housing has been a force for Norwood and Bedford Park, home to large swaths of rent-stabilized apartments and the highest

(continued on page 19)
State of the State: What Your Norwood State Reps Had to Say

By DAVID CRUZ

Governor Andrew Cuomo delivered his 10th State of the State address that received praise and some criticism from the borough’s state legislators covering Norwood.

Among Cuomo’s proposals include expanding its tuition-free state college program to families who make $150,000 or less; categorizing hate crimes a type of domestic terrorism; and legalizing marijuana, a measure that received intense pushback from critics in the last session. Cuomo also reaffirmed his commitment to revitalizing Hunts Point and seeing the installation of four Metro-North stations to the Bronx.

But the Governor stood silent on the issue of bail reform for misdemeanor and nonviolent felonies, where a string of anti-Semitic attacks recently has prompted stakeholders to lobby Cuomo into tweaking portions of the bill, allowing judges to regain discretion over who should receive bail and who shouldn’t.

State Sen. Jamaal Bailey, chair of the Codes Committee, which pushed for bail reform, told the Norwood News that a tweak should not be on the table, citing the fact the law that eliminated cash bail is relatively new. “The law is nine days old and we should allow the law to be able to do the work that it can,” said Bailey, adding that restoring a judges’ discretion to mandate bail for individual cases is not a solution. “I am extremely concerned about any type of ‘dangerousness’ assessment be included in bail, simply because ‘dangerousness’ is a proxy for inherent racial bias,” said Bailey.

Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez, whose district covers Norwood, thought it premature for Cuomo to consider any revisions to the law, adding that scare tactics are driving a push for reconsiderations. “I do think that the fear mongering is a little excessive because the rich people that are doing half of the same crimes are walking out scot-free and it’s only the poor people that are getting the highlights in the news, like, ‘Oh my God, look what they did,’” said Fernandez.

Her colleague, Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz, echoed Bailey and Fernandez, though he was open to some tweaks to the law, particularly when defining violent incidents that can be considered misdemeanors. “If there’s any clarification that’s needed, it’s with that,” said Dinowitz.

Melissa DeRosa, Secretary to Cuomo, told NY1 Inside City Hall host Errol Louis that conversations around changing aspects of bail reform have “started in earnest” with the Office of Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie.

Two of Dinowitz’s bills—one to change the penal code on rape cases and another to install an electric bus fleet in upstate New York—made it to Cuomo’s speech, a point Dinowitz was pleased about. He also would back a marijuana legalization loophole, but was on the fence on cutting taxes for middle class and small business. “While that sounds good in theory, I’m having trouble figuring out how you cut taxes when we’re facing a multi-billion-dollar deficit,” said Dinowitz, referring to the $6 billion budget hole the state is facing. “When you have a huge deficit you either have to cut spending and/or raise taxes.”

Cuomo didn’t quite single out New York City to be grossly impacted by a plan to close the budget gap—a move he’s attributed to rising Medicaid costs, which the state has picked up the tab on since 2014—but state-funded social service programs in the city have been cut before.

Fernandez sees an increase in the Millionaire Tax, where millionaires are taxed at a rate as high as 8.82 percent, as a way of filling the hole. “These are the top tier who have the money to spend on luxuries and they should now give back,” said Fernandez.

Cuomo signed a bill in April that extended the Millionaire Tax through 2024.

Other revenue builders included a measure by Cuomo to allow movie theater companies to sell alcohol. The proposal was not well received by Dinowitz. “I don’t need some drunk sitting behind me making noise while I’m watching a movie,” said Dinowitz, laughing.

File photos by David Cruz

(L-R) STATE SEN. Jamaal Bailey, Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez, and Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz had varied opinions on Governor Andrew Cuomo’s State of the State address on Jan. 8.
Federal MTA $ Good for Bronx

The Jan. 15, 2020 Metropolitan Transportation Authority Public Hearing for their proposed federal Fiscal Year 2019 capital program of projects confirms there continues to be good news from Washington, D.C. concerning real financial support. Norwood and other Bronx commuters will see some of the benefits.

The MTA receives over $1.4 billion annually from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). These dollars are used to fund various capital improvement projects for NYC Transit subway and bus, Long Island Rail Road, Metro North Rail Road, and MTA Bus and Capital Construction Company. Most federal transportation grants require a 20 percent hard-cash local share. FTA accepted toll credits instead of hard cash for the local share. This saved the MTA over $1 billion in the previous $2.2 billion 2015-2019 five-year capital program. The MTA will save $1.6 billion under the $5 billion 2020-2024 five-year capital program when applying for $8 billion in future FTA funding.

Washington, D.C. has made available over $1.4 billion in 2019 FTA formula funding for the MTA. This helps pay for a significant portion of its capital program. This includes $28 million in buses and bus facilities; $793 million in Section 5307 Urbanized Area federal funding. There are other opportunities for up to several hundred million more in discretionary competitive federal grants.

The MTA can also take advantage of FTA pre-award authority prior to grant approval. Use of Pre-award Authority affords the MTA an opportunity to start projects months earlier and incur costs for reimbursement at a later date after grant approval and obligation of funding. The MTA currently manages an active portfolio of federally funded capital improvement projects and programs in open grants worth over $12 billion in direct FTA financial assistance.

Larry Penner

Larry Penner is a transportation historian, advocate and writer who previously worked 31 years for the Federal Transit Administration Region 2 NY Office.

Fordham Gentrification?

We have an issue with gentrification. Gentrification is about some kind of monopoly coming in and taking over an area. We used to think of it when white people moved into an area displacing people of color. In this case, what we have is automated growth of the Fordham University campus, which is creating a need for more housing than they can provide on campus or in dorms.

Case in point: I am a 68-year-old woman with a disability who has been living at 2391 Arthur Ave. for approximately eight years. Recently, my landlord issued a notice of intent to renew my lease, which was dated Oct. 15, 2019, and ending on Jan. 31, 2020. I am losing my apartment so this landlord can increase her profits by renting to another Fordham student, although she has not admitted to that and is instead making me the culprit. It’s not that I’m being evicted, but my lease is not being renewed and the end result is the same – I have to move.

I was the one who got my landlord her first Fordham renter who then handed it to his brother. That first rental expanded to three of the four apartments in the building being rented to Fordham students. Presently, my apartment is the only one in her building not Fordham occupied.

Please don’t get me wrong. I have nothing against Fordham students. Prior to them, the tenants in the building were much more unsavory types (e.g. prostitution, drug dealing). Unfortunately, these students can pay higher rents than the average person, so it is lucrative for landlords to rent to them.

I thought I had a good working relationship with my landlord. She took me out to breakfast and lunch sometimes. I adopted and gifted her a pedigree dog. Sure we had our disagreements just like any landlord and tenant, but I never anticipated that I would be searching for a new place to live in the dead of winter on a fixed income. Clearly, profit has trumped this relationship.

The agency that subsidizes my housing due to my disability, has permitted me to find my own apartment. The barriers are: 1) timing (who moves between October and January?); 2) finding a landlord who will accept my voucher; and 3) the mental anguish of having to leave my community that I’ve lived in for eight years.

The paradox with this particular type of gentrification is that on one hand it looks so positive – it’s education. We have students coming in from all over the world to take advantage of this amazing university. On the other hand, you have vulnerable people like me being displaced because landlords want to take advantage of the opportunity to make a big profit from these student renters.

We need to find a way to make sure Fordham University doesn’t take over communities in a way that negatively impacts people that have built their lives there.

Marie Palladino

Fordham
With state lawmakers from the Bronx returning to work for the new legislative session, we asked readers what are some of the current issues our local politicians should be addressing?

Well, believe it or not, there is still a lot of racism here still. And it’s not just white people, it’s Africans and Dominicans; so it’s not a white thing. It’s all the races. And they’re (the NYPD) are doing the stop and search again that they were ordered not to do. Yes, they’re starting it again. You can thank [President] Trump for all of this and half the people in this neighborhood that voted for him.

Jeff Rodriguez
Norwood

I actually work in a hospital; in the operating room. I think they should keep better track of how they’re prescribing the drugs. That’s the thing; how is it they start off getting it and then they stay hooked on it? Doctors actually tell you they won’t prescribe it again to you, so how is it these people keep getting it over and over again? So the government and the politicians need to look into what the doctors are doing.

Anthony Correa
Kingsbridge

I think the most important issue affecting us right now is climate change and the environment. The Long Island Sound is historically and horribly polluted and I hope our elected officials can work together at all levels of government to address that.

John Doyle
City Island

I would like to see our elected officials advocating for more individuals to register to vote. We have always had record low turnout in the Bronx. With all of the issues hitting our communities from immigration rights to housing, the people’s voices and inputs are truly needed now. Their reach in the community is truly abundant as advocates and outside organizations can only do so much. But that won’t happen because as long as the numbers stay low, it’s more advantageous to those officials.

Gonzalo Duran
Belmont

Our biggest local problems, I’d say, is housing. I think that currently the Bronx Housing Court is too frequently packed with cases and that housing in the borough needs to be dealt with in a way that everyone is able to secure decent, affordable housing, and people are given a better opportunity to find a new apartment or able to retain their older apartments without struggling against the bureaucracy.

Michael Brown
Morris Heights

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Exposing Veteran/MWBE Business Owners to Emerging Tech, Courtesy of Lehman

By DAVID CRUZ

Kimberly Kendall, workforce education director for Lehman College’s School of Continuing and Professional Studies, will be the first to express her fondness over what technology of the future can do for military veterans and small businesses, including Minority or Women Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE).

There’s artificial intelligence capable of replicating a customer service rep over the phone (techies call it a “chatbot”), updating one’s supply list in real time, or virtual technology that allows real estate agents to take their clients on a virtual tour of a home without having to step foot in it.

“What we have to do is expose small business owners to emerging technologies, not in a theoretical sense,” said Kendall, whose department includes the Bronx Tech Incubator.

Keeping costs low while achieving a greater bottom line often signifies a mark of success for small business. For Kendall, applying practical technology is key to that.

She hopes business owners—specifically those operated and owned by veterans or designated minority or women-owned business owners—will be convinced, and undaunted, of that at a multi-day workshop funded by tech giant Verizon and slated to begin in the summer. Lehman College, part of the City University of New York (CUNY), had applied for the $100,000 grant through Verizon’s Foundation Workforce Development, where monies are being earmarked for curriculum development.

It’s a program, Daniel Lemons, president of Lehman College, called “huge” at the Jan. 8 event announcing the program, and one he wished was available when his parents had a small business. “I know it’s going to yield significant results,” said Lemons of the program.

Lehman College will pick 250 business owners—50 per borough across other CUNY institutions—to make recreational marijuana use legal in New York State. The Governor made that pledge in his State of the State address, which would work to resolve the state’s budget deficit, currently around $6 billion. “For decades, communities of color were disproportionately affected by the unequal enforcement of marijuana laws,” said Cuomo in his address on Jan. 8. “Let’s legalize adult use of marijuana.”

Cuomo made a similar proposal to decriminalize recreational marijuana use last year, but was eventually voted down by the State Legislature.

Fair Fares Surpasses Milestone

More than 100,000 New Yorkers have signed up for the city’s Fair Fares initiative, a sign of the program’s demand. City officials say the figures surpass the city’s estimates during the first phase, which expected somewhere around 90,000 New Yorkers to sign up. The program covers half the price of a MetroCard fare to low-income New Yorkers. Open enrollment of the program begins on Jan. 27. “New Yorkers shouldn’t have to choose between a ride on the subway or bus and putting food on the table for their family,” said Mayor Bill de Blasio. “Over 100,000 New Yorkers have now enrolled in the Fair Fares program, bringing us one step closer to our goal of being the fairest big city in America.”
By DAVID CRUZ

When it comes to Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s announcement to further cut state-covered Medicaid beginning April 1, on top of his decision to cut Medicaid by one percent, state Sen. Gustavo Rivera told the Norwood News that Bronxites will not be directly impacted.

“The services are still going to be provided,” said Rivera, who chairs the Senate Health Committee, which hears all matters pertaining to health. “You’re not gonna get turned away. You’re not going to be told, we can’t afford to provide this for you.”

But it doesn’t mean the area’s hospitals won’t bleed money, given Medicaid’s ability to help hospitals pay for big ticket infrastructure projects within a hospital, said Rivera.

“They have to put off some of their capital needs in some of their buildings to make sure they could pay the bills,” said Rivera. “Or they have to take particular parts of their operation and make them smaller to be able to cover other financial responsibilities that they may have.”

That could also mean basic maintenance of a building could be scaled back, according to Rivera. “If you have an elevator that’s not working, or you have two elevators and only one of them is working, then what kind of impact is that going to have on somebody who has a broken leg who has to go and get their checkup on the third floor?” said Rivera.

Governor Andrew Cuomo instituted a one percent cut for Medicaid on Dec. 31, taking effect immediately. That translates to $124 million when factoring in the federal government’s matching aid.

In his State of the State address on Jan. 8, Cuomo announced a review of Medicaid payments to counties, calling the state’s present situation in covering Medicaid costs to counties as “unsustainable.”

GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO (at podium) delivers his 2020 State of the State address, warning New Yorkers that the state will be scaling back its Medicaid program.

It has, however, worried Mayor Bill de Blasio, who expressed concerns over Cuomo’s lack of details over his plan during a radio interview on WNYC on Jan. 10. “The Governor didn’t give a lot of detail and that worries me, of course. But I’ll tell you something. I believe that the problem is if the State has a Medicaid problem, then let’s all get to the table and figure out how to save money rather than cut health care services for people,” said de Blasio.
WHERE WILL YOU BE ON SUNDAY… AND OTHER WORSHIP DAYS?

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Rev. Rosemarie Brown, Assistant Pastor • Jesus Goyco, Youth Pastor
www.vannestassembly.org

OUR MISSION STATEMENT:
Van Nest Assembly of God is a body of Believers empowered by the Holy Spirit, called to worship God in Spirit and Truth, to walk in the light of the Word of God in all aspects of life, and to be witnesses of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, through word and deed, to the end of the earth.

The Holy Spirit has clearly shown us that we are called to be a church led not by a program or a personality, but by the presence of the Lord. This is really why God’s hand of blessing and increase has been upon us all these years. As we look to the future, we know that His presence will lead us in a continuous increase of souls and expansion of facilities; for our true desire is to glorify Jesus Christ.

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October, of the investigation. Flores is described by police as Hispanic, standing at around 5’8”, with a thin build and dark hair. Investigators believe Flores could be in Connecticut at this time.

Three Wanted in Subway Attack
Police are looking for three men wanted pictured left for pummeling a man on the platform of the Kingsbridge Road subway station on New Year’s Day.

The incident happened at around 6:30 p.m. as the victim was waiting for a train to arrive. The men flashed a knife and later attacked, with the men hitting him in the nose. They took $400 and an iPhone XR off him before taking off.

The second man was last seen wearing a red jacket, blue jeans, black sneakers, and a blue ski mask; the first is described as having blond hair highlights and last seen wearing a black jacket, blue jeans, red sneakers, and a red hoodie; the third suspect was last seen wearing dark-colored jeans, and a blue and white jacket. All three are described as aged between 18 to 20 years old with a medium build.

Victim Threatened With Screwdriver
A screwdriver-carrying suspect (top right) remains on the loose after threatening a victim with the tool while demanding money.

The incident happened on Dec. 28 at around 7:30 p.m. around the area of Briggs Avenue and East Kingsbridge Road in Kingsbridge Heights, according to police.

The thief followed the victim into his apartment, displayed the screwdriver, which then led to a fight with the victim suffering lacerations to his hands. The victim was taken to St. Barnabas Hospital. The alleged perpetrator did not take anything. He is described as a dark-skinned male sporting a mustache and last seen wearing a blue jacket and blue pants.

Burlington Coat Factory Robbed
Police are searching for a man who robbed the Burlington Coat Factory store on Nov. 7 at around 11 a.m.

The alleged thief, still unidentified, entered the store on Webster Avenue near East Fordham Road and began snatching clothes off a rack without paying. When a store employee confronted the thief he was scratched by the robber, who made off with clothing.

The police provided no description of the suspect, though surveillance video shows him wearing a red New York Yankees baseball cap and dark clothes.

Teen Robbed by Other Teen
Two teens were robbed by another teen on Dec. 6 at around 8:10 a.m. on the southbound side of the Mosholu Parkway train station platform, according to police. The victims, 15 and 16, were approached by another teen purported to be 16 years old who pretended to show off a weapon in his waistband. The thief demanded the 15-year-old victim follow him to the other end of the platform, where he was eventually robbed of his iPhone, Apple Watch, and Airpods. The thief then returned and punched the 16-year-old victim before taking off.

There was no description provided by police, but surveillance video provided shows the suspect wearing a white hoodie sweater, black jacket, black pants, and white shoes (pictured below).

Creston Avenue Pervert
Police still need help finding a man (pictured below) who exposed himself to a woman after following her inside an elevator at 2608 Creston Ave. on Dec. 20.

The man not only exposed himself but then lunged at the victim, who managed to escape.

The suspect is described as being in his mid-50s, standing at 5’8” tall and weighing an estimated 240 pounds. He was last seen wearing a green hooded jacket, blue jeans, and black sneakers.

 Anyone with information in regard to these incidents is asked to call the NYPD’s CrimeStoppers Hotline at (800) 577-TIPS (8477) or for Spanish, (888) 57-PISTAS (578-4728). The public can also submit their tips by logging on to the CrimeStoppers website at www.nypdcrimestoppers.com, or on Twitter at @NYPDTips. All information is kept confidential.
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The man behind a viral social media photo that asked straphangers what their preferred subway seat is turned out to have Norwood ties.

News 12 The Bronx reports that Gabriel Bautista of Norwood was responsible for posting the photo on Twitter showing a cluster of seats on the B/D line with numbers superimposed on them. Bautista, who goes by gabefromthebx on Twitter, poses a simple question, “All my New Yorkers, which is the best seat?”

The question touched off quite the response that included 2500 retweets, 19,600 likes, and an assortment of comments that touched off a debate over the preferred seat. It even garnered responses from Mayor Bill de Blasio who wrote on Twitter, “1-3-2. 4 and 5 don’t exist when you’re 6’6,” referring to his height.

Then Bautista told News 12 The Bronx, “The next day I was working and I felt my phone vibrating, and I was like ‘Who’s calling me?’ And it was just notifications all the time.”

Bautista was apparently at the 205th Street/Norwood B/D subway station on his way to work on Dec. 31 when the idea of posing the question popped into his mind.

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By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

When asked the significance of visiting the Norwood area for a second time in nine months, Herbert Quinones, an overdose prevention trainer for the city Health Department, responds with a friendly attitude. “When we’re invited to speak, we go anywhere,” Quinones said before listing the five boroughs.

Quinones has just wrapped up a 45-minute slideshow presentation interspersed with questions from the audience at the Opioid Overdose Education Narcan Training Event held at North Central Bronx Hospital (NCBH) on Jan. 10.

The event was organized by State Senators Gustavo Rivera and Jamaal T. Bailey, Community Board 7 (CB7), and the Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District in partnership with NYC Health + Hospitals/North Central Bronx.

It comes at a time when the Bronx saw an uptick in fatal overdoses even as parts of the city experienced a decline.

As an overdose prevention trainer for the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Quinones not only visits hospitals, but libraries, community group meetings, civic organizations, and any group that wants to learn how to administer the nasal spray naloxone—commonly known by its brand name, Narcan—to reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.

The term opioid covers a broad range of drugs, including pain relievers, prescription painkillers, heroin, and fentanyl—a synthesized painkiller 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine.

New Yorkers who are not medical professionals are protected under a state law allowing them to administer the medication to an opioid overdose victim.

Every presentation Quinones gives ends with a sign-up process where attendees can leave with a zippered pouch containing two Nazarcan nasal sprays, gloves, alcohol wipes, a rescue-breathing face shield, and a blue card authorizing the individual as a certified opioid overdose responder.

From 2010 to 2017, overdose deaths—officially categorized by the city as unintentional drug deaths—rose from 541 to 1482. There was a slight drop to 1444 in 2018, the last year for which data is available. The Bronx also led all boroughs with 391 drug overdose deaths in 2018.

Not all overdose deaths involve opioids but in 2018 city health officials estimated that opioids were found in 80 percent of victims.

Dr. Frederick W. Nagel sees the destruction effects of the opioid crisis on a daily basis. As chief of emergency services at NCBH he knows that Norwood, which falls within the 10467 zip code, has been especially hit hard with opioid overdoses.

“The 10467 [zip code] is fourth out of all the neighborhoods in New York City for overdose deaths, so it is a hyperlocal issue,” Dr. Nagel said.

NCBH has been registered since 2015 with an overdose prevention program but the training event is the first time they have hosted a public event in overdose education with Narcan training, according to Dr. Nagel.

He is hopeful that through additional training sessions and increased education, more lives can be saved and the lower rate of overdose deaths seen in 2018 will be reflected in updated data.

“Everyone has a story about someone they care about affected by substance abuse and there’s no shame in that,” he said. “It’s a chronic illness and we need to appreciate that it’s a manageable disease. The medical establishment and the community need to look at it without judgement.”

In the Bronx:

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

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In the Bronx:

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

When asked the significance of visiting the Norwood area for a second time in nine months, Herbert Quinones, an overdose prevention trainer for the city Health Department, responds with a friendly attitude. “When we’re invited to speak, we go anywhere,” Quinones said before listing the five boroughs.

Quinones has just wrapped up a 45-minute slideshow presentation interspersed with questions from the audience at the Opioid Overdose Education Narcan Training Event held at North Central Bronx Hospital (NCBH) on Jan. 10.

The event was organized by State Senators Gustavo Rivera and Jamaal T. Bailey, Community Board 7 (CB7), and the Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District in partnership with NYC Health + Hospitals/North Central Bronx.

It comes at a time when the Bronx saw an uptick in fatal overdoses even as parts of the city experienced a decline.

As an overdose prevention trainer for the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Quinones not only visits hospitals, but libraries, community group meetings, civic organizations, and any group that wants to learn how to administer the nasal spray naloxone—commonly known by its brand name, Narcan—to reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.

Every presentation Quinones gives ends with a sign-up process where attendees can leave with a zippered pouch containing two Nazarcan nasal sprays, gloves, alcohol wipes, a rescue-breathing face shield, and a blue card authorizing the individual as a certified opioid overdose responder.

From 2010 to 2017, overdose deaths—officially categorized by the city as unintentional drug deaths—rose from 541 to 1482. There was a slight drop to 1444 in 2018, the last year for which data is available. The Bronx also led all boroughs with 391 drug overdose deaths in 2018.

Not all overdose deaths involve opioids but in 2018 city health officials estimated that opioids were found in 80 percent of victims.

Dr. Frederick W. Nagel sees the destructive effects of the opioid crisis on a daily basis. As chief of emergency services at NCBH he knows that Norwood, which falls within the 10467 zip code, has been especially hit hard with opioid overdoses.

“The 10467 [zip code] is fourth out of all the neighborhoods in New York City... for overdose deaths, so it is a hyperlocal issue,” Dr. Nagel said.

NCBH has been registered since 2015 with an overdose prevention program but the training event is the first time they have hosted a public event in overdose education with Narcan training, according to Dr. Nagel.

He is hopeful that through additional training sessions and increased education, more lives can be saved and the lower rate of overdose deaths seen in 2018 will be reflected in updated data.

“Everyone has a story about someone they care about affected by substance abuse and there’s no shame in that,” he said. “It’s a chronic illness and we need to appreciate that it’s a manageable disease. The medical establishment and the community need to look at it without judgement.”

In the Bronx:
LGBTQ Issues in Focus at Latest 15th Congressional District Forum

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT and DAVID CRUZ

In a crowded race seeking to replace Congressman José Serrano, candidates made their pitches on why they’re the best candidate to succeed Serrano at a Tuesday night forum on Jan. 7 in the South Bronx. The forum, organized by the Bronx’s LGBT Center Destination Tomorrow, presented the candidates with three different questions of special concern to their community in addition to opening and closing remarks.

At a forum largely focusing on the LGBTQ community, Councilman Ritchie Torres, who’s garnered the most donations than any other candidate, reminded the audience of his journey in becoming the only social conservative identified as the only social conservative community activist and organizer, putting focus on political independence. Frangell Basora turns 28 in a few weeks and worked as an intern in Serrano’s office, had no ties to the Bronx county organizations, no ties to a political dynasty. But I won my first campaign on the strength of door-to-door campaigning,” Torres said. Torres had worked for Councilman Jimmy Vacca before entering public life, which helped propel him to the current seat he holds.

Other candidates joining Torres with experience as an elected official included former Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Manhattan Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez, and Assemblyman Michael Blake. Councilman Ruben Diaz, Sr., who identifies as the only social conservative Democrat in the race, was invited to the forum but did not attend.

The other six candidates in attendance have not served in an elected capacity but emphasized their experience as community activists and organizers, putting focus on political independence. Frangell Basora turns 28 in a few weeks and worked as an intern in Serrano’s office; and Samelys Lopez, a former Community Board 7 member, worked on Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s campaign in 2018. “I’m a daughter of this community. I grew up in the South Bronx,” Lopez said, who up until recently was living in Bedford Park before moving back to the South Bronx. “We need people that are able to listen; that are able to lead with love and compassion and center that empathy.”

Lopez also hopes to reframe how the 15th Congressional District is viewed. Instead of the usual description as the nation’s poorest district, she proposes a new identity. “I think that this district is the embodiment of the American dream because this is a resilient community,” she said.

Other candidates on hand included community activists Tomas Ramos and Chivona Newsome, and retired police officer David Philip Franks Jr. Jonathan Ortiz, a financial counselor with Phipps Neighborhood Financial Empowerment Center, describes himself as a coalition-builder who can build bridges between the LGBTQ community and the general population. He told the audience that the current crop of Washington, D.C. politicians has failed them when it comes to affordable housing, eliminating student loan debt, and producing good-paying jobs. “We do not need career politicians. I believe in term limits,” Ortiz said. “They had their turn, and nothing has changed.”

Like Lopez, Ortiz also wants to reframe how people see the Bronx. “I want to make it so that ‘making it’ doesn’t mean you have to leave the Bronx,” Ortiz added.

As a founding member of Black Lives Matter Greater New York, Bronx-born Chivona Newsome touts her experience in fighting for social justice and economic opportunities. She sees no solution in electing the same politicians to office. “The politicians that we have elected, they have left us out to dry,” Newsome said.

Blake is serving his third term in Albany and tried to disassociate himself from the criticism that politicians are not doing anything. “It matters who we send to Washington,” said Blake, who doubles as vice chair of the Democratic National Committee.

Unlike most general elections, where a Republican and a Democrat eventually compete against each other, a primary victory in June is considered a guaranteed win in November because the district is heavily Democratic. Serrano won his last election in 2018, securing 96 percent of the vote.

Although it was difficult to distinguish the campaign workers in the audience from the local attendees, there was an enthusiastic reaction to the forum by many. The event emphasized how the problems traditionally associated with the South Bronx—poverty, poor health outcomes, domestic violence—is experienced more intensely by the LGBTQ community.

For some, the forum was a hopeful sign that marginalized communities will be heard from, especially during the 2020 election cycle.

Sayief Leshaw, 25, lives in Morrisania and was encouraged by what he heard at the event. “Growing up in the Bronx I was in the closet,” Leshaw said. “It’s great to see candidates paying attention to LGBTQ issues in a way that I think has long gone unseen.”

The candidates’ attendance came a day after Marlene Cintron, president of the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation, withdrew from the race citing her current work as a prime motivator toward improving the Bronx. “As a resident of this congressional district, I assure you that I will provide a voice and a vote for its residents as they look to choose a new representative. It has to be someone who will insist on additional economic, social justice, and reproductive rights for the residents of the poorest congressional district in the nation,” Cintron wrote on Facebook.
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PI: Dr. Erin Hazlett  MIRB#: 01708
NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

Social Security Expanded Office Hrs.
Social Security offices in the Bronx will be remain open to the public until 4 p.m. on Wednesdays, beginning Jan. 8. The nearest Social Security offices from Norwood is located at 2501 Grand Concourse. For more information, call (800) 772-1213.

Recreational Volleyball
Join members of the NYPD, FDNY/EMS, and Community Board 6 every Saturday from Jan. 18 through April 4 from 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at Aquinas High School, 685 E. 182nd St. (corner of Cambreleng Avenue and Grote Street). For more information or to register, call Rosie at (917) 569-7034, Victor at (917) 603-5600, or email mattersofsports@gmail.com.

Blood Drive
A blood drive will take place on Jan. 21 from 11:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the 52nd Precinct station house at 3016 Webster Ave. For more information, call (718) 220-5824.

Comment on Bus Reroute Plan
The MTA is currently accepting comments for its plan to update the Bronx's bus route network, which is expected to take effect later this year. Comments on the MTA's plan can be submitted online by going to https://bit.ly/2Zz86E3.

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

Fridays With Fernandez
Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez is available for one-on-one meetings each Friday at her district office at 2018 Williamsbridge Rd. Friday dates and times vary. To check times and make an appointment, call (718) 409-0109.

LGBT Scholarship
College scholarships totaling $10,000 will be awarded to students who are members or allies of the LGBTQ+ community. Applicants must write two 500-word essays that discuss a challenge they have faced in life, and the historical significance of the Stonewall Inn within the context of the gay rights movement. The deadline is March 1, 2020. Applications can be filled online at https://bit.ly/2PugZdH. For questions, contact Eric Vaughan at LGBTQ@schools.nyc.gov.

STEM Teacher Award
Nominations are now being accepted for NBC 4 New York and Telemundo 47's Weather Kids Star Teacher award recognition program honoring science, technology, engineering or math teachers. A portion of the application includes a section that asks what makes the nominated teacher deserving of the honor by listing reasons or a story relating to the teacher and the work they do in the classroom. Schools of each winning teacher will receive a $1,000 award the benefits the learning needs of the winning teacher’s students. To nominate a teacher, go to nbcnewyork.com/weatherkids. The deadline is Jan. 31.

Community Grants
Applications for community improvement grants of up to $3,000 to community-based groups are being accepted by the Citizens Committee for New York City. Grants will be awarded for neighborhood improvement projects planned and executed by local residents. The application deadline is Jan. 20. To apply, visit www.citizensnyc.org/grants. For more information, call Arif Ullah, program director, at (212) 822-9580.

Naloxone Training
Free trainings on the administration of naloxone, the drug used to reverse opioid overdoses, is available through the Bronx Community Health Network on Mondays from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and Wednesdays from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. at 1 Fordham Plaza (excluding holidays). For more information, contact Matthew Carrion, community health worker, at naloxone@bchn-health.org.
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SOLICITATION OF BIDS
Bids will be accepted for the installation of 180-degree panoramic/hemispheric dome cameras. Mosholu-Montefiore Community Center, Inc., a community center, located at 3450 DeKalb Ave., Bronx, NY 10467, to provide materials and labor. Bid packets and specifications may be obtained at the center located at 3450 DeKalb Ave., Bronx, NY 10467 and/or by calling Ivan Diaz at (718) 882-4000. Bids will be opened at the above address.

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EDITOR’S PICK

Help for Puerto Rico

Councilman Ruben Diaz Sr. is presenting the following two humanitarian relief efforts for Puerto Rico. Info: (718) 792-1140.

Jan. 17 at 7 p.m. – Concert at Lehman College’s Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., featuring Eddie Palmieri and several other artists. Proceeds will help the effort.

Jan. 18 at noon – Held at Southern Boulevard and Aldus Street. Bring bottled water, batteries and flashlights, first aid kits, Pampers and baby formula, and canned foods.

Onstage

Lehman College’s Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W., presents “Ain’t Misbehavin’,” Jan. 18 at 8 p.m. ($25 to $45); Yamato, the Drummers of Japan, 18 at 8 p.m. ($25 to $45); and Bar Car Night, on Jan. 18. Also scheduled is All Aboard With Thomas & Friends, in Ross Hall, Jan. 18 and 19 at 9 and 11 a.m. and 1:30 and 3:30 p.m.; and Jan. 20, 25 and 26 at 11 a.m. and 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. Info/schedule/costs: (718) 817-8512.

Exhibits

The Museum of Bronx History, 3266 Bainbridge Ave. (208th Street), presents A History of the Bronx Latino, ongoing; and Mott Haven, the Bronx: A Historic District Turns Fifty, through April 22. Hours: Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sundays 1 to 5 p.m. For more information, call (718) 881-8900.

The Bronx Museum, 1040 Grand Concourse, presents The Life and Times of Alvin Baltrop, through Feb. 9. The exhibition features photographs of gay culture. Info: (718) 681-6000.

Bronx Council on the Arts presents The Update, free exhibition at the Hostos Community College Gallery room C-190, 450 Grand Concourse, Tuesdays through Fridays noon to 6 p.m., through Feb. 26. Info: (718) 518-6728.

Bronx River Art Center, 1087 E. Tremont Ave., presents free 25 Years of Project 59: A Retrospective of Ukrainian-American Artist Irina Danilova, through March 11. Mondays through Fridays noon to 6 p.m., Saturdays noon to 6 p.m. Info: (718) 589-5819.

Library Events


Moshulu Library, 285 E. 205th St., presents for kids: Crafty Fridays at 3 p.m.: (ages 5 to 12): crafts, Jan. 17 and 24; Toddler Storytime at 11 a.m.: (ages 18 to 36 months): stories, songs, fingerplays and crafts, Jan. 23, 27 and 30; and STEM: Have you seen the new tap card system at the Moshulu Parkway #4 subway station? The MTA installed the new devices dubbed One Metro New York, or OMNY for short, adding to the existing turnstiles. Other city subway stations have already seen the new reader, which allows straphangers to simply tap their smartphone that’s connected to a bank account, onto the OMNY screen to be allowed through (other methods will be available). The MTA began rolling out the upgrades in April, gradually introducing them to the system. While MetroCards may still be used, they will be discontinued at the end of 2023.

Kids Science at 3 p.m.: (ages 5 to 12): Jan. 21 and 28 (Colors/Light). Families can attend film: “Toy Story 4,” Jan. 25 at 1:30 p.m. Adults can join: Knitting: Thursdays at 3 p.m. Info: (718) 882-8239.

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by Jan. 20 for the next publication date of Jan. 30.

Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

Help for Puerto Rico

Eddie Palmieri will lend his musical talents for a benefit concert for earthquake-ravaged Puerto Rico on Jan. 17 (see Editor’s Pick for more information).

Photo courtesy Lehman Center for the Performing Arts
(continued from page 1)
eviction rates in the Bronx. It’s also in Norwood where Dunford has called home for 40 years, bearing witness to its demographic changes. “The color of the faces has changed, the language has changed, the religions have changed, but what people want hasn’t changed,” she says.

A large rent-stabilized portfolio in her primary neighborhoods has kept Dunford busy over the years. That and some city/ state policies that have inconvenienced renters, particularly during the tenures of former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and former Governor George Pataki, raising Dunford’s ire.

Dunford is the first to point out her office isn’t a firm that assumes to single-handedly fix the issues of residents, be it repairs, obtaining SCRIE, or what to expect during an eviction proceeding. Her function has been that of a coach, guiding residents toward self-sufficiency. “I’ve always been attracted to the idea that you can empower people. It’s a kind of stale word. That by giving people the tools, get them to a place where people can take over and run their lives. And once people learn how to do it on one level they can do it on a whole lot of levels,” says Dunford. “You can take somebody that’s never had any faith in themselves and give them the tools and the strength to take off. It’s like watching a bird get wings. Just fabulous.”

The eldest of eight children, Dunford was born in Yonkers, NY, briefly living in Norwood before settling in East Greenbush, a small suburb just outside Albany. After attending Fordham University, she found herself living back in Norwood.

Growing up, Dunford would constantly fight for a cause, be it a political campaign at age 14, or later finding herself on the front lines of demonstrations protesting the Vietnam War.

By the 1970s, as the Bronx began to burn, Dunford became organized on housing matters. While raising her boys, Dunford met Bertha Keller and Ann Devenney, two volunteer activist members from Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition, where she also volunteered. “They both got great results so I learned from them,” says Dunford of the pair. “They both got great results so I learned from them,” says Dunford.

In some ways, Dunford modeled her approach after the pair, noticing that the need for righteous indignation should be unleashed once a landlord ignored Dunford’s request for rectitude on behalf of tenants. “You have to know when to play hard ball,” said Dunford. “One of the mistakes that young organizers make frequently is to confuse tactics with strategy.”

Dunford had to apply such a tactic for her family. “The landlord was very slow to get moving in terms of making repairs, and I started organizing to get things moving and he proceeded to tell me I was gonna be the last person repaired because I was a troublemaker,” recalls Dunford.

In the end, Dunford sued. And she won, winning triple damages. “We learned that what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger,” said Dunford, who also “learned the value of community” through generous neighbors.

Eventually, her housing advocacy work led to a part-time position with West Bronx Housing. She also worked full time under the administration of former Mayor David Dinkins, serving as director of the office’s “Stop the Violence” Program, until Giuliani terminated it. In the years since serving as executive director—a role where she succeeded Steve Seltzer—Dunford has noticed the tide turn for renters, more so last year when then state updated its rent laws and the city implemented Right to Counsel, the city pilot program offering free attorneys to tenants facing eviction.

Finding a singular accomplishment to cap all those years is impossible for Dunford. As she ponders that, the office doorbell rings. Lifelong Norwood residents Ronnie Ruggiero and his friend Ann Canavatchel walk into the door, hearing about Dunford’s retirement.

“I was going to cry,” says Ruggiero upon hearing of her retirement. “She did so much for me.”

Retirement had been on the horizon for Dunford for quite some time. But she wasn’t going to leave West Bronx Housing in the lurch. For the last three months she’s helped prepare for a transition with her successor, Joshua Stephen- son, formerly a constituent services employee for Councilman Andrew Cohen. Dunford describes Stephenson as “a dynamo.”

Four days after officially retiring, Dunford is given an intimate sendoff at Vladeck Hall, located in Van Cortlandt Village, surrounded by family, friends, and elected officials who honored her with various proclamations and citations. Being the center of attention was an unusual moment for Dunford, who’s used to working behind the scenes. Brad Silver, executive vice president of West Bronx Housing recalls that recognition was never anything Dunford sought.

“Sally also has had a rather large impact on the community and the borough and, in some cases the city, but you haven’t heard about it. You haven’t heard about it because in order to be effective sometimes it’s better not to be standing and shouting from the rooftops or spreading your name through the media. So it’s about the work,” says Silver.

Dunford is slated to move to Maryland to be with her family, a new chapter as it’s the first in decades where she’ll be leaving Norwood.

Dunford is slated to move to Maryland to be with her family, a new chapter as it’s the first in decades where she’ll be leaving Norwood.
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