



# NORWOOD NEWS

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## CELEBRATING THE WORK OF A HOUSING ADVOCATE

*West Bronx Housing Executive Director Sally Dunford, a champion for tenants, retires*



**SALLY DUNFORD DANCES** with her husband Michael at her retirement party on Jan. 12 at Amalgamated Houses' Vladeck Hall in Van Cortlandt Village. Sally officially retired as director of West Bronx Housing on Jan. 8.

By **DAVID CRUZ**

"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 land-

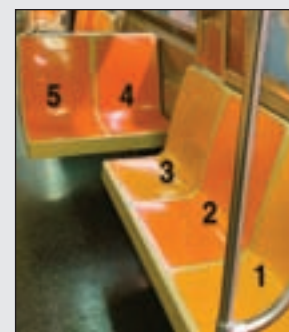
lords. Making her indispensable over the years was her encyclopedic know-how of the daunting housing system, which over the years, she notes, has improved for the sake of tenants.

Operating at a storefront office at 220 E. 204th St. in Bedford Park, West Bronx Housing typi-

cally 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  
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## IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

## 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 often 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



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.

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.

## Public and Community Meetings

The **52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meets on Jan. 23 at 7 p.m. at 100 W. Kingsbridge Rd. For more information, call (718) 260-5820.

**COMMUNITY BOARD 7** committee meetings are held on the following days at the Board office, 229A E. 204th St. at 6:30 p.m. at the following dates and times: Executive Committee meets on Jan. 16; Health & Human Services Committee and the Veterans Committee meets on Jan. 21. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.



# Opinion

## Happy Retirement, Sally!

By DAVID CRUZ

Farewells are never easy. At least not for me. There's this propensity to think that the people in your life, be personally or professionally, will somehow be in your life forever when in truth they're like a rotating cast of a television series. I was struck by that when I heard a few months ago that Sally Dunford, the executive director of West Bronx Housing, was retiring after 28 years of service leading the agency.

Running a nonprofit with the kind of demand needed for such a service—the group helps with landlord-tenant disputes, Section 8, SCRIE/DRIE applications, and navigating the bureaucratic maze that's Bronx Housing Court—is not easy work. That burden is compounded when a service works

with a handful of full-time employees and volunteers generous enough to lend their time. At an event on Jan. 12 over at Vladeck Hall, Brad Silver, executive vice president of Bronx Jewish Community Council, where West Bronx Housing serves as its subsidiary group, said it best when describing Sally's commitment to the work. She wasn't looking for credit toward herself but the organization.

It's truly hard to quantify the amount of commitment, especially as it translates to the countless people that Sally has helped over the years.

What made Sally understand the plight of fellow tenants was her own ability to step into the shoes of clients struggling to maintain a quality of life in their home, a place intended to put you at your most comfortable. In 1989, Sally and her family were temporarily displaced after her landlord decided to make an example out of her for speaking up on behalf of her family, urging for repairs. The heartache of seeing her family thrown for a loop appeared etched in her memory. She wouldn't want to see that happen to

anyone else. It seems to be a motivating factor for why she helped a cluster of tenants at a four-family home at 243 E. 204th St. in 2016. The family had faced a takeover of the building from Peter Fine, a Brooklyn-based developer who, through various limited liability corporations, begun swallowing up several homes in the Bedford Park area. Hearing their tales of inconvenience, Sally took on the fight, staving off eviction proceedings for everyone in that building. Sadly, the building went up in flames during the proceedings, but it demonstrated Sally's all-in approach.

There were also her inklings into the state Department of Homes & Community Renewal over whether the agency is properly tracking rent rolls for thousands of tenants. Sally warned residents to be mindful of how much they're paying since a landlord could simply be making up a rent amount it reports to the state. That incident had put her in touch with her successor, Joshua Stephenson, the now current executive director of West Bronx Housing, whom Dun-

ford describes as a dynamo. Joshua had at one point served as constituent services director for Councilman Andrew Cohen.

With an endorsement coming from Sally, my guess is the agency picked the right person to lead this critically vital organization for Bedford Park.

Lastly, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention how important Sally was to the creation of the Norwood News. She was among those who understood the power of a newspaper in forming community, telling founder Dart Westphal the benefits of centralizing information by various agencies to help keep the community informed. It's a major reason why we honored Sally at our 30th anniversary celebration in November 2018.

So, with a heavy heart, I bid Sally a happy retirement. She's leaving us for Maryland to live closer to her family, and we hope she can rest and finally look back at the life she lived here in the Bronx. Happy retirement, Sally.

*David Cruz is editor of the Norwood News.*



## Letters To The Editor

### 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 \$32 billion 2015-2019 five-year capital program. The MTA will save \$1.6 billion under the \$51 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 capi-

tal program. This includes \$28 million in buses and bus facilities; \$793 million in Section 5337 State of Good Repair and \$672 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 69-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 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 the 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

# INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



**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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# NEWS BRIEFS

By DAVID CRUZ

## Hurricane in Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico experienced a 6.4-magnitude earthquake on Jan. 7, ravaging the commonwealth that was still reeling from the effects of 2017's Hurricane Maria. Federal aid has yet to release disaster relief funds to the island, said to be in the billions, to fix its infrastructure following the earthquake that killed at least one person. Several elected officials running for higher office have visited the island since. Councilman Fernando Cabrera, who's running against Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of the 14th Congressional District, visited the island, as did Assemblyman Michael Blake and former New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, who are both candidates in the 15th Congressional District race.

## Homes Report

Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. issued a new report outlining the dire situation facing one- to four-family residences across the Bronx, while offering a set of recommendations aimed at increasing homeownership opportunities and preserving and expanding existing homeownership rates. "[A]ny plan to tackle the housing affordability crisis must include solutions to preserve homeownership and give first-time homebuyers the tools they need to invest in the future," said Diaz. Greater small homeownership preservation programs are the key to reversing the trend, according to the report.

## Broadband Expansion

The city announced a plan for affordable, high-speed, reliable broadband service across the five boroughs that offers seamless connectivity at home and on the go. Framed as a master plan, the de Blasio Administration has outlined ways the

# 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 "chat-bot"), 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.

city and private sector Internet providers can offer uninterrupted service. They'll look for how to utilize the city's rooftops and light poles, and building fiber optic lines to connect to other city-owned resources. A 2017 report by New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer found 34 percent of households in the Bronx lack broadband at home, compared to 30 percent in Brooklyn, 26 percent in Queens, 22 percent in Staten Island, and 21 percent in Manhattan.

## Marijuana Legalization

Governor Andrew Cuomo vowed to make recreational marijuana use legal in New York State. The Governor



Photo courtesy Lehman College

**A NOVELTY CHECK** held by Lehman College officials shows Verizon gave the higher learning institution \$100,000 for a business development workshop geared for military veterans and Minority or Women Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) businesses.

Lehman College will pick 250 business owners—50 per borough across other CUNY institutions—to make the first cohort. Applicants, if picked, will be asked to commit to a two-year mentoring program, where volunteer members from a variety of Verizon's tech departments will be matched up with business owners to help adapt any technologies to their business.

Kendall and her team are fleshing out details on the program. The goal is for them to be pragmatic enough for business owners to consider investing in emerging technologies. "If they're not aware of the opportunity or aware of what that could mean for their business, then they might wake up a year from now and they're out of business," said Kendall.

The program piqued Wil Rempersaud's interest. The owner of the Bronx-based digital marketing startup, Ramp Up Media, Rempersaud quickly saw the

program's benefits. "What Verizon is doing with the curriculum ... is exactly what I want," she said.

Kyana Beckles, owner of Leverage Assessments, which develops credentialing exams, was skeptical over whether the program would work for her business. "I would need to see how you gonna break this down for me to see that I can take this and apply it," she said, adding she hopes business owners from various sectors will help develop the programming.

For her part, Kendall stood aware that businesses may be skittish on assessing the practicality of a web-based app. But she said the reward will matter in the way of dollars and cents. "If this means you're going to get million-dollar clients versus hundred-thousand-dollar clients it might be worth the investment. But until you do the research, you can't discount it," said Kendall.

Applications will be accepted beginning in February.

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 pro-

gram'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."



# How Cuomo's Medicaid Cuts Impact Recipients

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



Photo courtesy Darren McGee - Office of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo

**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.

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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."

It's unclear how much more Cuomo looks to cut, a decision promulgated by the state's \$4 billion budget hole Cuomo's office said is caused by Medicaid, where six million New Yorkers depend on it. Thirty percent of Bronx residents depend on Medicaid to cover their hospital bills. For Rivera, he'll have a greater sense of Medicaid's fate

when Cuomo presents his preliminary budget proposal toward the end of January.

"This is my 10th year in office. What I've learned is that when the Governor says something in a press release or certainly when he says something in a press conference or when he says in the State of the State [address] I don't trust it until I see it," said Rivera.

Though April 1 is right around the corner, and Cuomo's decision to cut Medicaid took effect instantaneously, it hasn't quite worried the NYC Health + Hospitals, the public hospital system that has oversight on North Central Bronx Hospital.

"It's really too early to determine any budget impacts on any of our facilities," said Christopher Miller, a spokesperson for NYC Health + Hospitals. "We continue to be focused on delivering the best care we can to our patients."

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.



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## CRIME FILE

By DAVID CRUZ

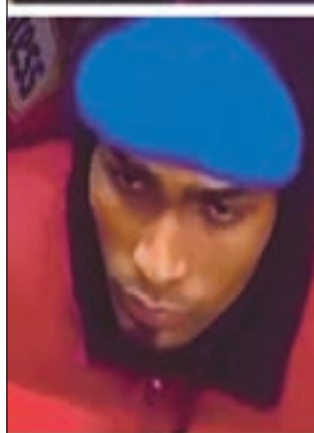


### Lead in Edgar Perez Killing

The killing of Edgar Perez Sr. in August has finally produced a person of interest.

Police at the 52nd Precinct are now tracking the whereabouts of 20-year-old Alexis Flores (above), wanted in the shooting death of Perez during the overnight hours of Aug. 25. Perez had been shot while outside a baptism party for his granddaughter being held at the Church of the Holy Nativity on Bainbridge Avenue between Rochambeau Avenue and East 204th Street.

The new lead comes three months after Perez's son, Edgar Jr., said the police have given him little in the way of an update. Edgar Perez, Jr., 22, said his family moved out of their home in the days after the killing, but still reside in Norwood. "They haven't called me or anything. We call them and ask if they caught him or if they knew anything new about the guy and they just say that they're on his trail," said Perez Jr. back in



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 de-



manding 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

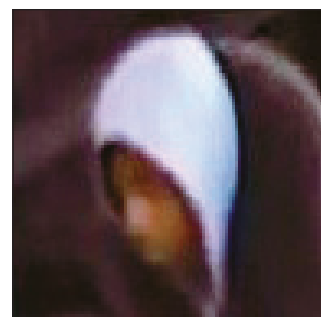
Police are searching for a man who robbed the Burlington Coat Factory store on Nov. 7 at around 11 a.m.

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.

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 hooded 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.



### Teens 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 Mo-sholu 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

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-PISTA (74782). The public can also submit their tips by logging on to the CrimeStoppers website at [www.nypdcrimestoppers.com](http://www.nypdcrimestoppers.com), or on Twitter at @NYPDTips. All information is kept confidential.

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# Post Behind Great Subway Seat Debate Has Norwood Ties

By DAVID CRUZ

The man behind a viral social media photo that asked straphangers what their preferred subway seat is turns 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 as-

sortment 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.



Photo courtesy Gabriel Bautista

"ALL MY NEW Yorkers, which is the best seat?" was the question posed by Gabriel Bautista of Norwood on Twitter on Dec. 31, 2019, along with this photo (pictured) of a group of seats inside a subway D train (seat numbers were added). What's your answer?

## A Clean Start to 2020

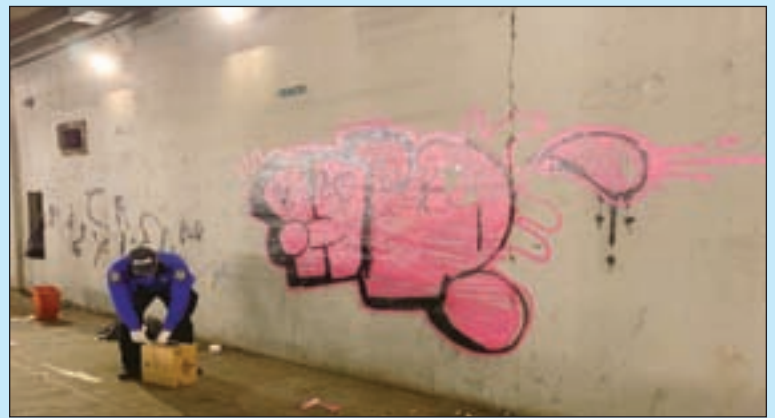


Photo courtesy 52nd Precinct

**COMMUNITY AFFAIRS POLICE** Officer Stephen Echevarria of the 52nd Precinct (shown opening a box containing buckets of paint) came to paint over the graffiti on this wall (pictured) found at the notorious underpass on Kingsbridge Road between Creston and Valentine avenues on Dec. 31, under orders from commanding officer Deputy Inspector Thomas Alps. The area, commonly known as The Tunnel and also known for drug use, underwent repeated attempts by the Five-Two to clean it out.

## The Bronx Mobilizes to Ensure Everyone Counts in 2020 Census

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

Representatives for the impending U.S. Census count have converged onto the Bronx, stopping by various organizations to lay out what residents should expect for the nationwide tally aimed at determining federal funding and electoral lines.

Among the biggest takeaways from census reps is reassuring people with an undocumented status that their participation is not only crucial but also protected.

Maria Matos, a partnership specialist assigned to the Bronx by the U.S. Census Bureau, spends part of her time informing Bronxites that census information is confidential and protected by federal law. She was most recently at the monthly Bedford Mosholu Community Association, where she noted that Title 13 of the U.S. Code punishes anyone violating that confidentiality by a federal prison sentence of up to five years, a fine of up to \$250,000, or both.

Census officials are also reminding everyone that the work done at the bureau is carried out under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Commerce and not Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). In fact, the 2020 Census questionnaire will not have a citizenship question included nor be shared with ICE. Such questions are kept confidential for 72 years.

Preparation for the census goes back a year and has continued since.

At a forum held at Lehman College last October about the 2020 Census,

the school's president, Daniel Lemons, pointed to the issue of "undercounting" as "a pervasive problem in New York City." Lemons added, "It is the families and communities who have been historically hard to count who stand to benefit the most from an accurate and complete count in census 2020."

Underscoring the financial impact of an accurate 2020 count, Assemblyman Marcos Crespo has stated that \$675 billion per year is at stake for New York state annually. Among programs and services affected are Medicaid, SNAP, transportation, hospitals, parks, and education.

Locally, Mosholu Montefiore Community Center (MMCC) was chosen to receive a \$150,000 grant to help get residents counted. The Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition received \$125,000 for census-related education and organizing.

For many people who have a social media presence, whether undocumented or not, Matos points out, they have revealed more about their private lives to the public than required by the census questionnaire.

"If immigration wants any information, they have a thousand ways of finding your information," Matos said. "For all undocumented individuals that we all know, they put everything on Facebook. If ICE wants information, they have other ways [because] they can't get it from the census."

The count begins on April 1, with the census starting this month in remote parts of Alaska.



# The On-the-Ground Fight to Reverse Overdoses Takes Center Stage at NCBH

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.

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



Photo by José A. Giralt

(L-R) JOSEPH MITCHELL, peer advocate; Jennifer Tausig, executive director of Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District; Rachel Ferrari, director of Strategic Planning & Special Projects for state Sen. Gustavo Rivera; Kevin Trujillo, Lehman College student; Herbert Quinones, overdose prevention trainer at the city Health Department; Cristina Contreras, executive director of NYC Health + Hospitals/North Central Bronx; Dr. Chinyere Anyaogu, deputy chief medical officer; Dr. Keith S. Margulis, assistant director of dental services; and Dr. Frederick W. Nagel, chief of emergency services at NYC Health + Hospitals/North Central Bronx; at the Opioid Overdose Education Narcan Training Event held at North Central Bronx Hospital in Norwood on Jan. 10.

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 con-

taining two Narcan 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 crises 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."

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# 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 first openly gay elected official from the Bronx. In a political climate that is seeking change from the status quo, Torres described his path to city government as firmly rooted in a grassroots philoso-

phy.

"When I first ran for the City Council, I was 24 years old, openly LGBT, which was a frightening experience; 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 ca-

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.



Photo by José A. Giralt

**[L-R] CONGRESSIONAL DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES** Frangell Basora, Assemblyman Michael Blake, David Franks Jr., Samelys Lopez, Melissa Mark-Viverito (holding mic), Chivona Newsome, Jonathan Ortiz, Tomas Ramos, Councilman Ritchie Torres, and Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez at the Bronx LGBTQ Candidates Forum held in the South Bronx on Jan. 7. All are running for the Democratic nomination in New York's 15th Congressional District with the primary election to be held June 23, 2020.



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## NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

### Social Security Expanded Office Hrs.

Social Security offices in the Bronx will 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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](http://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 (929) 220 8176 or [naloxone@bchn-health.org](mailto: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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# Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

## 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

fees: (718) 960-8833.

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*, Jan. 19 at 4 p.m.;

Bronx River Art Center (BRAC), 1087 E. Tremont Ave., presents *Edsel Gomez's Triumvirate*, performing Latin jazz, Jan. 30 at 7 p.m. Suggested donation: \$10/ adults; \$5/seniors/students. Info: (718) 589-5819.



Photo courtesy Lehman Center for the Performing Arts

**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).

North Central Bronx Hospital, 3424 Kossuth Ave, 17th floor, presents **Day of Empowerment**, honoring Martin Luther King Jr., Jan. 20 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., featuring a musical performance. Info: (718) 510-5000.

New York Botanical Garden presents **The Holiday Train Show**, model trains passing by miniature landmarks made from natural materials, through Jan. 26; 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.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: Freedom Quilters of Gee Bend, to create your own quilt from donated fabric, Jan. 18 and 19; and Bronx Photo & Poetry Archive Story, to create choreo-poems to capture stories of people of the Bronx, Jan. 25 and 26; both in the WH House 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Grounds admission is free until noon Tuesdays and Saturdays all year. Info and a schedule of events including tours and walks: (718) 549-3200.

## 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

Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents for ages 5 to 12: **STEM Fridays at 4 p.m.**: Jan. 17 – Frozen Hour of Code; and Jan. 24 – Lunar New Year Calligraphy. Adults can attend: **film**: "*Venom*," Jan. 25 at 2:30 p.m. Info: (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org).

Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers 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**:

**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](mailto:norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org), and should be received by Jan. 20 for the next publication date of Jan. 30.

## Upgrade at Mosholu #4 Subway Turnstiles

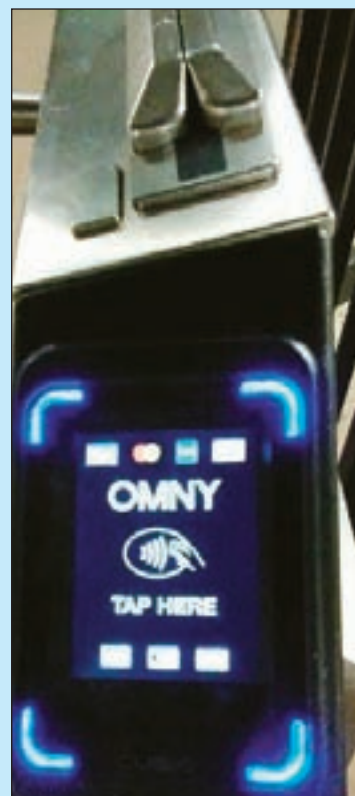


Photo by Judy Noy

**HAVE YOU SEEN** the new tap card system at the Mosholu 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 app, 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.

# Celebrating the Work Of a Housing Advocate

(continued from page 1)

eviction rates in the Bronx. It's also in Norwood that 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 oldest 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.

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 a personal matter around 1989, when a fire tore through her home on East 208th Street and Bainbridge Avenue, making her unit temporarily unlivable for her and her family.

The landlord, however, made life hell

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 does make 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 Stephenson, 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.

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