



NORWOOD NEWS

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NYBG BRANCHES OUT INTO HOUSING MARKET

Bronx institution slated to build pair of buildings on Webster Avenue



Photo by Adi Talwar

DEVELOPERS PARTNERED WITH the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) plan to have a new incarnation of the Cherry Valley Supermarket (pictured) once it opens a pair of buildings on the property.

By **DAVID CRUZ**

The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) is slated to construct two residential buildings totaling more than 400 units along Webster Avenue in Bedford Park, advancing an interest in development that harkens back to nearly a decade when community advocates

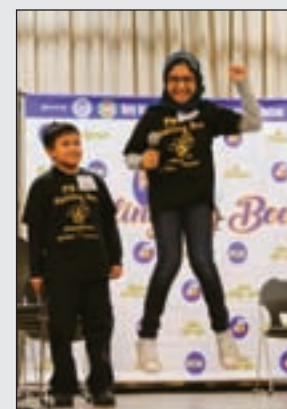
joined city leaders in rezoning Webster Avenue to welcome such development projects.

NYBG met with Community Board 7's Housing/Land Use and Economic Development Committee for a briefing on the two projects—a senior home and an affordable housing development. NYBG has tapped

Douglaston Development to spearhead the projects after entering into a 99-year lease. Financial details between the two sides were not disclosed. Douglaston Development expects to apply for tax credits with the New York City Housing Preservation and Development agency (HPD).

Representatives for both groups appeared before CB7's committee on Feb. 11, where members approved a motion for a letter of support it needs to present city officials over the design of the project. Over the course of its 129-year history, NYBG has never been in the

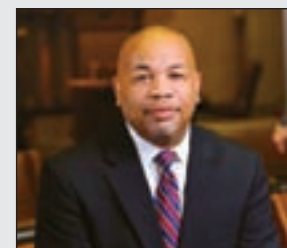
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**IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST****Former District Leader Representing Norwood Looks to Reclaim Seat**

By **DAVID CRUZ**

When Marcos Sierra stepped down as Male District Leader for Norwood's 80th Assembly District, which stretches from Norwood to Morris Park, he was on the verge of being a dad again. His mother, meantime, was facing critical surgery.

It was too much for Sierra, once a member of Community Board 7 who now serves as assistant program director for R.A.I.N., who decided to step down.

John Zaccaro Jr., also a former CB7 member and current chief of staff to Councilman Rafael Salamanca Jr., soon stepped up, appointed by the Bronx Democratic Party to fill the post. Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez currently represents the 80th Assembly District.

But now Sierra looks to reclaim the seat he relinquished in 2017, mounting a run for the district leader post, and framing Zaccaro as an absentee party emissary.

"One of the common things that I hear is that people still think that I'm the district leader and when I mention that I'm not, and let them know who is, they have no idea who this guy is," said Sierra of Zaccaro.

District leader posts are party positions that call attention to issues that are relayed to the party. They're also key decision-makers when it comes to voting who gets on the party's executive committee, which shapes the party's direction.

It's a post that Zaccaro said is "what you make of it." "For a district leader to be effective on a political level, you need to have your ears to the ground. You need a buy-in from the community," said Zaccaro.

For Sierra, the position should mean holding people accountable, including elected officials. He's found that isn't always the case. In one ex-



Left photo courtesy John Zaccaro Jr./Right photo by David Cruz

THE RACE FOR Male District Leader for the 80th Assembly District pits incumbent District Leader John Zaccaro Jr. (l) against former District Leader Marcos Sierra (r).

change he remembered having with Daniel Johnson, political director for the Bronx Democratic Party, Johnson told Sierra that "first rule of Bronx politics is you don't betray the chairman of county." Johnson said this exchange never happened.

Without mentioning many woes specific to the Norwood side of the district, Sierra did point to issues that have gone unaddressed in parts of the district, notably gentrification, under-employment, the lack of business incubators, and the proliferation of drug treatment facilities popping up as of late.

"[W]hen you speak to elected officials, they act as if they don't know what's going on," said Sierra.

Zaccaro, however, said that quality of life issues, including crime, housing, and senior services are hampering the Norwood side of the district. Greater education on the state's rent laws and the Green Light Law that allows undocumented immigrants to obtain a driver's license have also been priorities for him. "The issues stem far and wide, and so I've actually been happy to work

with various community groups and issues," said Zaccaro, who serves as a member of the Liberty Democratic Association and a member of the Pelham Parkway Neighborhood Association.

Zaccaro did not directly respond to Sierra's assertions of being an absentee district leader, but focused squarely on his ability to be a coalition builder. "Granted, there can be a lot said about our local elected officials, and how they legislate, and some of issues that they're dealing with, but at the end of the day this is really all about addressing and working with folks to address local issues, and I think I've done just that," he said.

Among those events to spur civic discourse is an upcoming town hall Zaccaro and Fernandez are co-hosting, addressing a number of topics relating to the upcoming elections, including early voting.

Petitioning to get on the ballot starts on Feb. 25.

Editor's Note: *Sierra had once interned for the Norwood News prior to the current editor's arrival.*

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 general board meets on Feb. 25 at 6:30 p.m. at Our Lady of Refuge Church, 290 E. 196th St. CB7 committee meetings are held at 6:30 p.m. at the board office, 229A E. 204th St., on the following dates: Public Safety & Quality of Life Committee meets on Feb. 13 at 7 p.m.; Health & Human Services Committee meets on Feb. 18 at Lehman Center, Faculty Dining Room, 250 Bedford Park Blvd. W., for its Disability Awareness event; By-Laws Committee meets on Feb. 19; Executive Committee meets on Feb. 20; and Veterans Affairs Committee meets on Feb. 26. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

The **52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meets Feb. 27 from 7 to 9 p.m. at United Methodist Church, 2543 Marion Ave. For more information, call (718) 260-5824.

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



With Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr. set to deliver his State of the Borough address on Feb. 20, we asked readers to offer their take on the state of the Bronx.



Right now, the main thing I'm concerned about is police actions. Other than that, the Bronx is a good place to live. Yeah, they're still doing stop and frisk. They stop people for anything: weed, guns. I don't mind them getting the guns off the street, but stopping everyone is harassment ... I do worry about gentrification and that's scary because it pushes the poor people right out of the neighborhood and we've been here all our lives.

Craig Childress
Morrisania



Well, economically, in this capitalist society, everything is kind of stagnant. No, I don't believe the unemployment numbers. They have rules that kick people off of unemployment and then they stop counting those people. They're not really doing anything about homelessness. There's plenty of space, but there's not much progress being made to decrease the homeless population. They could make affordable housing more affordable. To be eligible you have to make at least \$45,000. That's not low income housing.

Landon Graves
Kingsbridge



I see a lot of construction, but they're doing it and not hiring many Bronxites. There's also a lot of problems with drugs in the Bronx. The Bronx is getting clean. I believe Ruben Diaz, Jr. is doing good things—building infrastructure and community centers—but I do believe the drugs is a problem in the Bronx. It's the opioids. Crime really hasn't changed. The schools seem okay, but I think the lunches for the kids could be a lot better. And these teachers don't understand how these minority kids are growing up; and they're mostly Caucasian teachers, and right away they call [the Administration for Children's Services]. They don't understand how these kids live.

Adrian Cruz
Bedford Park



The problem is the economy. People work like dogs here just to keep a roof over their head. Crime too is a problem. The cost of living outpaces the wages. I don't believe the unemployment figures; it's not as good as they say. It's all speculation and numbers that they come up with to appease the community, but still there are not enough jobs. There's plenty of housing, but the landlords raise the rent so high that you can't afford it. And they're still building and there's no more room. As New Yorkers, we're basically good people, but the economy forces people to do bad things.

Joseph Cuff
Bedford Park



In my opinion, right now crime is not down. In terms of justice reform, I feel like it's really going to get worse because you have people who just cannot and will not be productive members of society, so they're letting them out without any type of training, mental screening, or medication. I am against the no bail. Some people should get bail, but if you have a chronic domestic violence abuser, he shouldn't get bail. The only thing going good is the NYPD's 52nd Precinct. It's the best precinct in the entire Bronx.

Heather Guerino
Norwood



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NEWS BRIEFS

By DAVID CRUZ

Suspected Gang Network Arrested

Authorities have arrested and charged 11 suspected Bronx gang members for running an alleged drug ring at James Monroe Houses in Soundview. One of the members of the purported gang, who authorities identified as Nyshiem Spencer, was charged with the murder of Luis Vargas near Soundview Park. The US Attorney's Office says the crew had used intimidation and violence to operate its drug market at the NYCHA property. If convicted, the defendants can face sentences that range from two years to life in prison.

Borough-Based Jail Plan

With the idea for new borough-based jails, the NYC Department of Design and Construction has issued a request for qualifications for design-build teams that will construct the new jails. The jails will be placed at the NYPD tow pound in Mott Haven, along with three other boroughs. Residents worry that the Mott Haven facility is too close to a homeless shelter, two schools, a park, and playground. Residents are also concerned with how money is being spent on building the new facility. Some feel that there are more pressing problems that \$2 billion can solve such as resolving lead paint issues, for example. A final request for proposal is due in the fall.

Lehman College Awarded \$200K

Lehman College received a \$200,000 grant to establish a design concentration for its art students as well as increased financial and career support. New lecture positions will open up in the department as a result. Lehman also plans to reapply for the annual gift of \$50,000 from the Sarah Little Turnbull Foundation for three additional years,

PS 94 Spelling Bee Competition Piled High With a Mountain of Honey

By DAVID CRUZ

The word was "amnesia."

It served as the deciding factor in who took home the first place prize for PS 94's annual Spelling Bee. And this year's victory went to Fatima Ali, a 10-year-old, who leaped into the air after beating out classmate Dion Florencio in the tense competition. Aafreen Mamsa was not too far behind. She won third place.

"This will go in my trophy collection," said Fatima, holding her trophy showing her first place ranking. Last year, Fatima placed third in the same spelling bee.

On top of spelling "amnesia," Fatima also had to spell the word Dion misspelled. It was "precipitate."

Fatima and Dion both went 11 rounds in the spelling bee that began with plenty of pomp for contestants and guests, thanks to a catchy song by American Dream DT and Jon Cash, who make up rap duo The Skerdy Boyz, dubbed "The Time is Now."

In the years since Nadine Clarke, formerly the PTA president and now the parent leader, established the competition, the spelling bee has become a highly-anticipated event for the Norwood school located on Kings College Place.

Clarke, along with Miriam Seminario, a school parent coordinator, have witnessed the power of spelling bees.

"It's the essence of education. Once you start learning how to spell you're able to communicate better with your peers, anyone you encounter," said Clarke, who started this 13 years ago with school principal Diane DaProci-da's blessing.

which will allow for more undergraduate and graduate scholarships to be created.

Election 2020 Town Hall

Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez and District Leader John Zaccaro Jr. of the 80th Assembly District will host a town hall to talk about the upcoming elections. The town hall will have information on early voting, voter registration, poll worker job opportunities, and the upcoming presidential election. It will be held on Feb. 20 starting at 7p.m. at Tracey Towers.

Bronx Elected to Mayor: Help PR

In a letter to Mayor Bill de Blasio,



Photo by David Cruz

W-I-N-N-E-R-S! (L-R) **FATIMA** Ali, Dion Florencio, and Aafreena Mamsa are this year's first, second, and third place victors respectively in the PS 94 Spelling Bee competition.

For Fatima, prepping for the spelling bee involved bouncing off words to her mother, who had attended the spelling bee. Any words that she initially got wrong were recited again and again until she got them right.

Dion, 10, soon joined her, explaining that his secret involved "just skimming through the book multiple times." Dion's mother was also on hand at the spelling bee. She was spotted sitting alongside Fatima's mother, mouthing the words their children verbally recited.

Aafreen, 9, prepared with the help of her brother who memorized "a lot of words." "I wrote them on flashcards," said Aafreen, later adding, "Maybe next year I'll get first place."

The three winners were part of 26 contestants—some of whom were bilingual and in special education—who

made it to the stage for the spelling bee after previously advancing in smaller spelling bee competitions held in each of the school's fourth and fifth grade classes in December. Two students per class were chosen to participate in the spelling bee. Those who didn't make it all the way to the end were given a round of applause and medal for their efforts, with assistant principal Keicha Bolden noting it's not easy for a young person to stand on the stage before an auditorium full of contemporaries.

"They all feel empowered to get up on that stage and try and so that means more to me than anything," said Bolden. "Spelling is a necessity in life. So this is a life skill for them. So it's not about winning or losing, it's about being able to participate and understand that you know how to spell."

Cop Shooting

On Feb. 8 at 8:30 p.m. Police Officer Paul Strofollino was shot by a gunman while sitting inside a police van at the corner of Fox Street and East 163rd. Police say the alleged gunman, Robert Williams, had a grudge against police officers. The officer suffered minor injuries, with wounds to the chin and neck. Strofollino was taken to Lincoln Hospital where he received treatment for his injuries and was released. Williams is also believed to be the same suspect linked to a shooting inside the 41st Precinct station house less than 12 hours later. A police lieutenant was wounded before Williams was taken into custody without incident.

Bronx elected officials are trying to convince city agencies to increase the resources they are providing for Puerto Ricans who have or will relocate to the five boroughs as a result of the recent earthquakes that occurred last month. "The situation is still dire in Puerto Rico and this issue is not occurring in a vacuum," said Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. "There are more than 176 thousand people born in Puerto Rico who currently reside in our city and we are expecting that number to rise with these latest catastrophic incidents. We need to be ready to accommodate Puerto Ricans taking refuge in New York City and make it easy for them to thrive."

For February, Montefiore Demonstrates the Literal Steps to a Healthy Heart

By DAVID CRUZ

Dr. Azeem Latib stands between the living and the dead. He's the last person patients at Montefiore Health System suffering from heart or coronary disease see should their conditions worsen.

"Ideally, I would prefer to have less patients," said Dr. Latib. "It means that they're getting prevention."

And at Montefiore Einstein Center for Heart and Vascular Care, where he serves as director of interventional cardiology, Dr. Latib is also part of a contingent looking to stymie such a visit. As patients and visitors passed the Moses Campus' vestibule on East 210th Street during mid-morning on Feb. 3, he and

clinicians, nurses, and other staffers from the center demonstrated that a healthy heart simply means taking a step. And another step. And another.

As has been the case for the last 15 years, Montefiore Health System hailed February Heart Month in recognition of events highlighting the many preventative measures one can take to avoid such a deadly disease. Heart disease can be congenital, though smoking, consuming fatty foods, not exercising, diabetes, or a combination of all four can lead to conditions where arteries are blocked over time, making the heart work at greater speed. If left untreated, a stroke or heart attack can follow.



Photo by David Cruz

DR. MARIO GARCIA (L), co-director of Montefiore Einstein Center for Heart and Vascular Care, walks with Dr. Peter Semczuk, MPH, executive director of Montefiore's Moses Campus and its sister campus, Wakefield (r), walk around Montefiore Mile in honor of February Heart Month on Feb. 3.

The month-long series of events geared around maintaining a healthy heart began with a walk around the Moses Campus' so-called "Montefiore Mile" track, where the center's staffers—some of whom decked out in red shirts specially made for the event—walked four intervals around the first floor's hallway quadrant, which equals to a mile. Leading the charge was Dr. Mario Garcia, the center's co-director and chief of the division of cardiology, who became the source of inspiration for the 2018 short film *Corazon*, where actor Demián Bichir portrayed Dr. Garcia. Walking alongside him casually sporting a red tie, was Dr. Peter Semczuk, MPH, senior vice president and executive director of the Moses Campus and its sister hospital, the Wakefield Campus.

For Dr. Garcia, walking is easy, and the rewards are fruitful. "The advantage of walking is it's easy to do. For people, sometimes when they want to get you to do physical activity, and they start with something that's very hard, they get de-motivated and they stop very quickly. The idea is to do something that you enjoy, that you like; that it's easy. And gradually, you increase your pace," Dr. Garcia told the *Norwood News*, who backs the recommended 10,000 steps needed to maintain one's health, provided they follow a regular 2,000-calorie a day diet. Building muscle mass also helps maintain weight, according to Dr. Garcia.

The walk stands as the traditional gesture ushering in the awareness campaign aimed at decreasing poor heart health outcomes. The Bronx, unfortunately, still ranks heart disease as the leading cause of death. Nationally, cancer has now outranked heart disease as the main cause of death in Americans in 2019.

The most available state health records show that while Hispanics and African Americans in the Bronx have the most heart failure incidents, whites are more vulnerable to developing some type of heart disease. Twenty-five Montefiore clinics dedicated to preventing and treating heart disease are scattered around the borough and Yonkers, with a total of 800 staffers making up the Montefiore-Einstein Center.

But convincing residents to come out and ensure they have a healthy heart stands as a major challenge, according to Dr. Garcia, who pointed to the lack of easy access to public transportation and even buildings with no elevator as impediments.

Campaigns have worked before, including one that stressed the negative outcomes in not maintaining diabetes, which can also lead to limb amputation.

"When we came here, there was a high incidence of amputations that I saw in the Bronx—limb loss due to uncontrolled diabetes and cigarette smoking," said Dr. Garcia. "We've done a number of campaigns and the number of amputations has decreased considerably."

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Bronx Democratic Club Stays the Course, Re-Electing Current President

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

Members of the Benjamin Franklin Reform Democratic Club—which has heavy influence in local races—kept club matters status quo this week after its incumbent president Michael Heller overcame a challenge by newcomer Morgan Evers by a count of 243 to 153 for club president.

The election drew hundreds to the American Legion Hall in Kingsbridge, where candidates were given five minutes to lay out their platforms. Heller pointed to his decades of public service and politics dating back to his teenage years when Mayor John Lindsay spoke at his junior high school. “Through my entire life I’ve chosen to work in areas where I think I can do a lot for the public and giving back,” Heller said.

One of the foremost issues on Heller’s mind, and a recurring theme throughout the night by candidates seeking other positions, was to ensure Bronx Democrats organize to defeat President Donald Trump, who is seeking to be re-elected this November. “[We need to] elect our local Democrats ... to defeat Donald Trump. That’s something we can all agree upon,” said Heller.

Much of the club’s strength lies in its well-organized members in Riverdale, whose elected leaders represent districts that cross into Norwood. Councilman Andrew Cohen and Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, who have districts that overlap with Norwood, have long been endorsed by the club. To get an endorsement from the club often means getting member volunteers



Photo by José A. Giralt

MICHAEL HELLER (C), PRESIDENT of the Benjamin Franklin Reform Democratic Club, and Bruce Feld (at podium), vice-president, listen to presidential candidate, Morgan Evers, during her speech.



Photo by José A. Giralt

MICHAEL HELLER, PRESIDENT of the Benjamin Franklin Reform Democratic Club, speaks during election event in Kingsbridge on Jan. 29. Heller won over challenger Morgan Evers by a margin of 243 to 153.

to gather petitions and a phone bank for a candidate.

While Heller spoke about doing more within the club to bring in a younger generation of Democratic activists, Evers expressed the need

to create a sense of community within the club.

After the final votes were announced, Evers spoke to the *Norwood News*. “I’m really proud of the work my team did. I had so many supporters, so many people who came here and showed up,” Evers said.

Evers team was largely comprised of candidates that formed her slate, with 11th Council District can-

didate Daniel Padernacht among them. But it was her endorsements from state Sens. Gustavo Rivera and Alessandra Biaggi that made her a viable candidate, even in the face of blowback for Rivera. Rivera’s backing had nearly cost him the club’s recent endorsement when he came before it for support of his own run for re-election, as first reported by the *River-*

dale Press. Dinowitz, who represents the 81st Assembly District, is considered an important influencer to the club’s direction. He endorsed Heller for president over Evers.

It was reported that Rivera’s support of new leadership within the club was considered as “disloyal” by a former club president.

Asked what the voting results meant for Bronx Democrats, Evers put it in perspective. “I guess a lot of people are happy with the status quo, but you wouldn’t have known that by the election of Alessandra Biaggi two years ago,” said Evers. Biaggi had unseated state Sen. Jeff Klein, who, at one point, headed the powerful Independent Democratic Conference, which routinely caucused with Republicans.

Evers is still hopeful for change given she secured nearly 39 percent of the vote. “There’s a lot of room in this neighborhood for growth and there’s a lot of positive work that we need to do,” she said.

Additional reporting by David Cruz



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Law Enforcement in the Bronx Sees Cracks in 2020 Criminal Justice Reform

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

Local law enforcement and judicial officials in the Bronx point to the recent uptick in crime borough wide as a sign that aspects of the newly implemented criminal justice reform is making it harder to keep communities safe, following a position repeated from high-ranking NYPD officials.

So far this year, the 52nd Precinct has experienced a 113 percent increase in robberies so far this year, 55 percent more grand larcenies, and a 250 percent rise in car break-ins so far this year. Rapes has also risen by 200 percent. Notably, the murder rate remains the same as last year with zero.

The upward trend in crime within the 52nd started during the second half of last year according to Deputy Inspector Thomas Alps. And he criticizes two changes as hampering their efforts to fight back effectively in 2020.

The two measures are bail reform for low-level offenders and new discovery rules which demands prosecutors

share their evidence with the defendant's legal team within 15 days of arraignment. Before, prosecutors did not have to, choosing to share state's evidence one day before going to trial.

At the last 52nd Precinct Community Council meeting on Jan. 23, Alps told guests that the 15-day turnaround was challenging his command in preparing all the paperwork that the district attorney's office needs to prepare a case. "It's a burden on us, the Police Department. It's straining the Police Department's resources, and it's taking a lot of time and energy," Alps said.

Law enforcement officials are concerned that officers will be so tied up with paperwork and electronic communications during the discovery process that their work fighting crime on the street will be scaled back.

James Brennan, deputy chief of trial division in the Bronx, admits that under the new guidelines prosecutors have to collect a lot of information in

a shorter time period before sharing it with the defense team. "The challenge is to get the information from the Police Department, to then analyze it to determine whether we have to disclose it and to make that disclosure," said Brennan.

Among the information to be shared are photographs, medical records, videos, contact information from witnesses, and grand jury testimony. "We have a much bigger universe of information that we have to get, and we have to get it over to the defense in a much sooner time," Brennan said.

The blowback on bail reform has led to a wave of criticism lodged by law enforcement institutions across the city. Those arguments have been heard by state Democrats, who passed bail reform during the last legislative session, arguing that bail often penalizes the poor and is used as a proxy to keep the accused in jail as their case lingers through the system.

Overall, officials like Alps and

Brennan agree that criminal justice reform was needing and continues to need attention. But they also worry about the long-term impact of some changes to bail procedures where low-level criminals can be out on the street quickly.

"We [NYPD] are for it [criminal justice reform], but we have concerns," Alps said. "The other day we had an individual come in through the command that had 176 arrests ... We have concerns that we're going to be releasing these individuals back out quickly [because of no bail requirement]," Alps said.

As Alps reflects on the rise of crime in the 52nd he dismisses any ideas of leaving his command though. "I'm disappointed that we lost the year," said Alps, referencing to an increased crime rate in 2019.

"I never thought that I'd lose a year. ... I have no plans of leaving in 2020, I want finish 2020 because I want to do better," Alps said.



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Botanical Square Revives Long-Dormant Tenants Association, Amplify Need for Fixes

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

For 10 years, Rosalina Garcia has been living on the first floor of 2995 Botanical Square in an apartment with “crooked floors.”

With help from the executive director at West Bronx Housing and Neighborhood Resource Center, Joshua Stephenson, she is hopeful to see the floors fixed soon. “Now, through the petitions that we put in court with [the help of] Steph, they will eventually have to fix it,” Garcia said.

“Steph” is Garcia’s shorthand for Stephenson. He has also helped the residents at 2985-2995 Botanical Square, known collectively as Botanical Square, organize a tenants association to address the concerns at the six-story, block-long building on Webster Avenue. He became aware of their plight through Barbra Stronczer, president of the Bedford Mosholu Community Association, which meets half a block away.

This is not the first time residents at Botanical Square have organized to get repairs done. Leoney Jarvis, a tenant, describes how this latest attempt to organize started more than six months ago with help from the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy



Photo by José A. Giralt

AT THE FIRST MEETING of the Botanical Square Tenants Association, Mikell Green-Grand (2nd from left wearing glasses) is joined by officers from the 52nd Precinct, Jose Fernandez (back center) and Jose Cepeda (back right) in addressing concerns about repairs and safety at 2985-2995 Botanical Square in Bedford Park on Feb. 4.

Coalition (NWBCCC). “At first we had a good turnout, we had about 60 signatures at our first meeting. And then they didn’t show up,” said Jarvis.

At their first meeting on Tuesday night, Feb. 4, Mikell Green-Grand welcomed a group of about 20 adults

concerned about needed repairs inside their apartments, lack of heat and hot water, broken security cameras, non-working elevators, and personal safety. The lively discussion also included observations on everything from teaching the young ones how to

be respectful to issues pertaining to personal responsibility for keeping the hallways clean.

On hand from the 52nd Precinct were the two Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCOs) Jose Cepeda and Jose Fernandez. The officers reassured the tenants of the precinct’s commitment to keep the streets safe. However, when it came to complaints about people smoking weed inside the lobby and hallways, the officers admitted to their authority being limited by the decriminalization of marijuana.

“The biggest problem we get at most tenants meetings... is hanging out, adolescents in front, inside smoking marijuana,” said Cepeda. “A lot of our power has been taken away. The most we can do is tell them ‘get out’... Hopefully, they respect it.”

With a team of six leading the new iteration of a tenants association, Jarvis is hopeful that the group will find the solidarity necessary to get the needed repairs done and increase the sense of personal safety.

“We don’t want this to die, we want to continue this,” Jarvis said. “We need to take charge of our own destiny ... so we can resolve the issues in our own building.”

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"Save Our City"

De Blasio Outlines Two-Year Agenda in State of the City Address

By HENRY MCEACHERN

Mayor Bill de Blasio delivered his State of the City address on Feb. 6 at The American Natural History Museum, framing his points that centered around the theme dubbed "save our city" in a town hall style format. That included promises to expand education, spur small business reform, and create greater affordability.

Under the enormous blue whale model inside the American Natural History Museum, de Blasio also focused on creating stronger bonds between the NYPD and young people. Last year, there was an increase in the number of youth-on-youth robberies, with 29 percent of those arrested falling under the age of 18, compared to 23 percent the year before.

"Our young people do not need to be policed. They need to be reached," de Blasio said in his speech. This attempt at connection includes 300 more youth coordination officers, who use a gentler hand and inspiring intellect as a way of "stopping crime before it even happens."

Another element in his strategy is to open seven new community centers across the city, including one in Tremont and another in Soundview. This is an effort to revitalize the areas that need it most, giving young people a community space of their own.

When it came to education, the mayor was all about expansion. He boasted of the success of 3K, an expansion to one of his signature achievements. Toddlers in the Bronx's School District 12 can expect their own slice of 3K starting this September. More broadly, de Blasio spoke of increasing student literacy, touting the rising number of reading coaches, and emphasized the importance of role models, stating, "[students] don't just need textbooks, they need role models. We have already hired a thousand more men of color teachers. We're going to do a thousand more on top of that."

He also segued into safety around schools with the installation of 1,000 new stop signs, stop lights, and speed bumps for schools and neighborhoods that need them most.

Another element of de Blasio's effort to save the city was small business reform. Using the crowd as a sample population, he asked how many people have a particular store they were sad to see priced out of their neighborhoods. The hands went up, with de Blasio emphasizing the city's vacant storefronts—now at 12,000, according to a study he cited—as a sign of a small business crisis.

Among efforts to bolster the small-business community, which included vacancy fines for landlords

with empty storefronts, the mayor also teased commercial rent control, saying that if a legal way exists, "we should go to Albany and get it done in 2021."

As his address flowed into housing policy, de Blasio's to-do list got longer. He stressed affordability. His hopes included rehabbing 62,000 existing NYCHA apartments, ensuring 25 percent of new apartments would be affordable to families making under \$30,000, and alluding to universal renter's protection and the elimination of security deposits, with those costs passed onto the landlords who hire brokers.

The mayor also mentioned community land trusts (CLT)—an increasingly popular way a community-based nonprofit leases land as a way of keeping rents or mortgages stable while fostering community wealth—as "one of the most promising ideas" of housing reform. This gives the community

agency over their housing and freedom from outside speculation. CLTs ensure a long-term solution to affordable housing, creating enclaves of community owned neighborhoods.

Finally, de Blasio stressed the importance of New York City's role in the fight against climate change by signing three executive orders on stage. "We are leaders on this earth. Are you proud as New Yorkers to be leaders on this earth?" de Blasio asked an applauding audience after outlining how the city plans to achieve sustainability.

These executive orders include eliminating fossil fuels from New York City use by 2040, banning plastic bottles from city buildings, and adding electric buses to New York public transportation arsenal. He also promised to implement solar power at no upfront cost, wind power in Brooklyn, and hydro-power city-wide. All in two years' time.



Photo courtesy Michael Appleton/Mayoral Photography Office

MAYOR BILL DE Blasio (holding mic) greets well-wishers before delivering seventh State of the City address at the American Museum of Natural History on Feb. 6.



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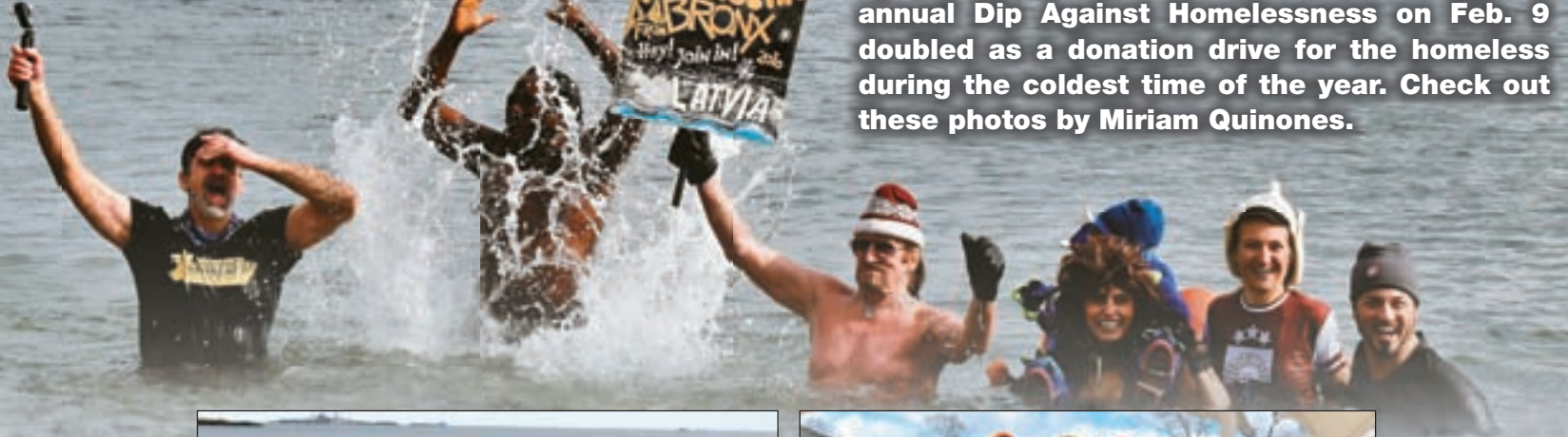
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Polar Bear Swim

Orchard Beach may be off season now, but it didn't stop some brave Bronxites to take a dip into the freezing waters for the annual Bronx Polar Bear Swim at Orchard Beach. Co-hosted by BronxNet Television and BronxWorks, the annual Dip Against Homelessness on Feb. 9 doubled as a donation drive for the homeless during the coldest time of the year. Check out these photos by Miriam Quinones.



THIS PARTICIPANT (R) summons a holy spirit to keep him warm, flapping his arms to make angel wings in the water.



THE GROUP KNOWN as Uptown Vinyl Supreme laid the soundtrack to the day's event. (Pictured l-r) Members include Rainy, Sunny, Buddy, and Josh.



THIS MAN (C) gets his fill of Orchard Beach's cold waters as participants have enough endurance to continue some more.



GRACE LOVAG (FRONT) is all laughs as she's drenched from the neck down after taking a dip into the chilly waters of Orchard Beach.



SOME OF THESE participants in this year's Polar Bear Swim (top photo) have never missed the traditional dip into the waters of Orchard Beach.

THERE'S ONLY SO much time swimmers can spend in chilly waters, and this participant (photo left) seems to have had enough, running off to warmer surroundings.

SWIMMING ISN'T ON this little girl's mind (photo right), who gets drenched by this dog's licks.



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Opinion

Partners in Education: Parent Talk at PS/MS 95

By PS/MS 95

Parent Talk at PS/MS 95, The Sheila Mencher School in Van Cortlandt Village, has a two-way communication in a program called Parent Talk. Run by parent coordinator Katherine Luis and community coordinator of students in temporary housing Delis De Leon, the platform seeks to impart useful information to participants and to provide an opportunity for parents to raise concerns, thoughts, and issues regarding their child's or children's education and experiences, both in and out of the school in a free and open exchange.

Parent Talk started more than a decade ago as a brainchild of Principal Serge Marshall Davis, who wanted to increase parent engagement and conversation within the school, to shed light on their needs, and to provide a forum for parents to have support on any given topic and to be able to speak amongst each other. Parents are welcome in the school.]

Monthly topics are formulated by Katherine, known affectionately as "Kat," on such diverse things as goal setting for yourself and your child, making healthy food choices and dealing with the challenges of social media. Kat addresses larger issues throughout the year, such as how do we learn, how do we face challenges, how can we effectively communicate with the school and how do we strike life's balances in raising kids?

Delis De Leon has indicated that topics arise from discussions of what parents need to know about. Middle school parent Donaji Sarabia said that she "can express opinions and hear other parents express theirs. I can let the school know what I think and influence the school culture." She also wholeheartedly endorses the cooking lessons where she has learned to make

healthy dishes for her family, which help to put her family on the road to good nutrition

Each meeting provides an opportunity for parents to raise concerns and give feedback on previous topics and begins with a check-in of feelings on a chart called the "mood meter." Sessions proceed with on-going translation into Spanish. There is an atmosphere of trust.

Some workshops are unusually delightful. A recent one was given by the enchanting DreamYard facilitator Corazon Tierra on de-stressing, incorporating individual relaxation with directed movement and partner mirroring. Each parent left the space feeling wonderful, having had a productive experience, also gaining insight into the many programs the school has to offer their children and themselves.

The school year ends with a meeting on giving voice to parents' reflections. The school wants to hear what the parents want to say.

Parents Association recording secretary Theresa Brown, who has two children in the school, said that she "feels that it is interesting to go to Parent Talk and hear about the dynamics of families" and finds the meetings helpful. She noted that she "learned about and directly benefitted from attending workshops discussing, both with school staff and with other parents, topics such as homework, discipline, developmental levels of children, social media and health. The sessions provide me with various ways of approaching problems and dealing with children and I put these approaches into practice." About the school community she feels that "there are others here caring about your children — there's someone looking out for you and your interests!"



Photo courtesy PS/MS 95 Staff

(L-R) PARENT DONAJI Sarabia, Parent Coordinator Katherine Luis, DreamYard workshop facilitator Corazon Tierra and Parents Association recording secretary Theresa Brown, all part of Parent Talk at PS/MS 95.

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Jules Ira Rubenstein, the Original Inquiring Photographer, Dies at 74

By DAVID GREENE

Life-long Van Cortlandt Park resident Jules Ira Rubenstein, the original “Inquiring Photographer” who produced that popular feature for the *Norwood News* for 14 years until his retirement more than a decade ago, died from complications of pneumonia. He was 74.

A source at Montefiore Hospital, where Rubenstein had been hospitalized since October, stated he had died on Feb. 4, confirming that at around 4:30 a.m., he was found unresponsive. “They tried to resuscitate him [but] he expired,” the source added.

Rubenstein was the *Norwood News*’ first “roving reporter” who covered local breaking news events such as police and fire department activity. He was first hired by then *Norwood News* editor-in-chief Betty Chen in June 1990 as a photographer, snapping photos of events in the neighborhood. The Inquiring Photographer was first published in the *Norwood News* in August 1990, becoming a fixture ever since. Rubenstein’s first question delved into whether the film *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, which focused some of its scenes in the Bronx, should be boycotted by Bronxites over its depiction of the borough.

Some of the questions he pegged to readers included a wide range of topical questions including thoughts on local businesses, national politics, or pop culture. His last, published in the May 1-14, 2008 edition of the *Norwood News* asked readers what they were most looking forward to doing in the spring of that year.

A graduate of DeWitt Clinton High School, Rubenstein spent one semester at NYU before dropping out and joining the Army National Guard, where he served for six years. Rubenstein caught the news bug while working at WCBS radio, where he wrote copy for the on-air personalities and answered phones during the overnight shift. In 2015 Rubenstein recalled, “People would call up and say they saw a flying saucer.”

Rubenstein was also a contributor to author Tom Philbin’s 2003 book entitled *The 100 Greatest Inventions of All Time*, for which he wrote a chapter on air conditioning and re-



Photo provided by Steve Bobkner
AN UNDATED PHOTOGRAPH of Jules Ira Rubenstein, who passed away on Feb. 4, 2020 at the age of 74.

frigeration. He also assisted Philbin on several other books for Philbin’s true crime series.

Rubenstein had been hospitalized in the fall of 2019. His friends brought him a radio, so he enjoyed some of the World Series games.

Longtime *Norwood News* editor Jordan Moss said of Rubenstein, “He was old fashioned in that he typed it all out on a typewriter and he’d hand it in. He was thorough in what he did. The Inquiring Photographer was a key part of the paper because it reflected the views of our readers, local folks and what they thought on local issues and he did a good job at that.”

The author of this report is the current Inquiring Photographer reporter.

Bankruptcy Issues Push Back Bedford Green House Completion

By HENRY MCEACHERN

An impending residential building spearheaded by Project Renewal in Bedford Park has would-be tenants lining up at the door. But despite a sign reading the project would be completed by fall 2019, the project deadline is now being pushed back, delaying any plans for prospective residents to move in.

The Bedford Green House's path to completion may be rocky for Project Renewal, and applicants are still waiting, but their contingency plans could have the building completed soon enough to have tenants feeling a warm breeze from their rooftop garden, surrounded by fruits and fish ponds.

It was thought that the first phase of the nonprofit's Bedford Green House would be completed by now. But last September, Hollister Construction, the company contracted to build the residence, declared bankruptcy, putting the project at 90 percent completed. According to LinkedIn, the senior project manager on site at the project left Hollister that same month. Hollister Construction is a large company. According to their bankruptcy petition, Hollister has between \$100 million and



Photo by Henry McEachern

THE BEDFORD GREEN House (l) is nearly completed, but bankruptcy issues with the construction group Project Renewal hired has delayed final completion of the project.

\$500 million in assets, and the same amount in liabilities.

Representatives for Project Renewal relayed these tie-ups to Community Board 7. In a statement to the *Norwood News*, they said, "Since Hollister's unfortunate bankruptcy, we have been working with Arch Insur-

ance Group, who insured the project against this contingency and is responsible for managing a transition that will deliver the project as quickly as possible."

Representatives for Hollister did not return a call seeking comment.

The project has legs to stand on be-

cause of this insurance. When asked when the Bedford Green House would be move-in ready, a spokesman said the group expects first occupancy in "late spring or early summer."

Project Renewal is a non-profit that seeks to "end the cycle of homelessness by empowering individuals and families to renew their lives with health, home, and jobs." The project, LEED Gold certified for sustainability, is a housing option for low-income Bronxites who seek to surround themselves with natural healing. Equipped with a rooftop fish ecosystem, greenhouse, playground, laundry, and more, all for around \$1000 a month, this innovative addition to the neighborhood seeks to surround tenants with a natural support system, especially families leaving shelters, people with substance use disorders, and HIV/AIDS patients.

Ground was broken in 2017 and the first five floors of the building were set in place, no thanks to the 375 million-year-old bedrock that towered three stories in their way. Instead of blasting it, they added it to the design in true preservationist fashion.

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New Monte CEO Talks Medicaid and Coronavirus Fears

By HENRY MCEACHERN and
DAVID CRUZ

Montefiore Health System's newest CEO, Dr. Philip O. Ozuah is taking the state's threats to cut Medicaid with a pragmatic perspective. And he's not worried.

"If there was some apocalyptic financial crisis, then we will respond like any place else. It means we would have to figure out how to continue to stay functional as an institution. And that will involve making some very difficult and painful choices we hope not to make," said Dr. Ozuah during an hourlong roundtable discussion with various media outlets, including the *Norwood News*.

Dr. Ozuah is now among the hospital CEOs bracing for cuts to Medicaid after Gov. Andrew Cuomo said there's a \$6 billion budget gap that needs to be filled, with \$4 billion of that budget hole attributed to the high costs of state-covered Medicaid. Cuomo is now proposing that municipalities, including New York City, pick up the cost of Medicaid. This could spell trouble for the city's entire health sector.

Dr. Ozuah explained that the biggest challenge to Montefiore's ability to

provide adequate healthcare is the 85 percent rate of government repayment. "As the management of Montefiore, we focus on the things we can control," he said.

When asked what his message to city and state officials would be on these proposed cuts, Dr. Ozuah stated, "We share the same goals, which is the healthcare of communities. And that's the message, and anything and any way we can partner to advance the health of communities we will do."

The Feb. 4 gathering was Dr. Ozuah's first official interview with reporters since ascending to the position in November. He's no stranger to Montefiore, having worked there since August 1989 when he began as an intern, immigrating from his home country of West Africa.

Dr. Ozuah has a history he calls "an American story." He's the first black CEO of a New York medical facility. He came to America at the height of the crack epidemic, and since then has been dedicated to the health of the Bronx community.

"So many things have happened along the way, and some of those things that happened along the way was this

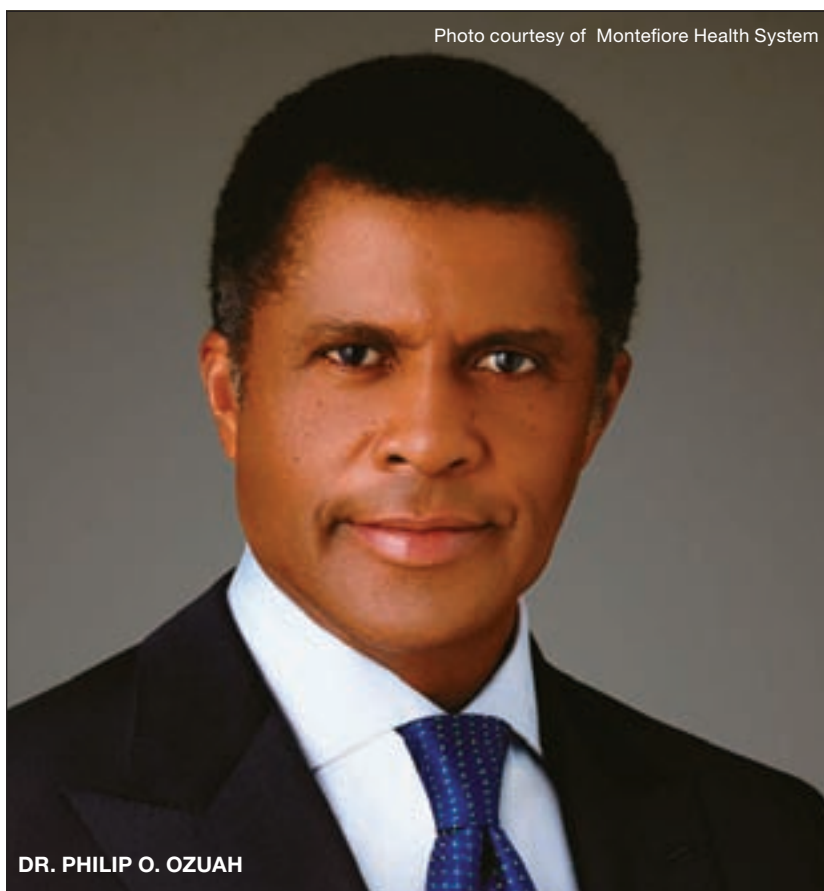


Photo courtesy of Montefiore Health System

DR. PHILIP O. OZUAH

community," said Dr. Ozuah, referring to Norwood, where Montefiore's flagship hospital is located. "And frankly, only in this country. Only in America."

Other topics Dr. Ozuah touched on included Montefiore's summer program for Bronx teens interested in healthcare, the importance of community health and listening to the community's needs, and Montefiore's high-tech response to a possible threat from coronavirus. So far, there have been no reported coronavirus cases in the Bronx.

"If you call for an appointment, we're screening for travel to China's Wuhan Province. If you show up at any one of our facilities, there's a screen. If you screen positive, you're put in a what is called a decon room--a decontamination room in the ER. If there's a suspicion that you may

have, let's say, the novel coronavirus, we have transport systems... that you get put in, that are airtight, like space-age airtight, cause we don't want you infecting everyone in the hallways as you're being transported down to the isolation units," said Dr. Ozuah, stressing that the hospital has a contingency plan.

When asked about the future of Montefiore in the shadow of a growing debt-versus-capital imbalance, Dr. Ozuah compared evolving plans to a race car. "We have to not only be racing the car around the track, we have to change the tires at the same time. So I've just told you that healthcare is going in the future more artificial intelligence, device enabled, etc. so we, as Montefiore, have to be getting ready to meet healthcare needs of the future even as we are dealing with all the challenges of today."

Superheroes Sweep Into Monte



Photo courtesy Montefiore Health System

SUPERHEROES BATMAN, SUPERMAN and Wonder Woman meet with Kelvin, a patient hospitalized at Montefiore. The visit was coordinated by mission-driven apparel brand Love Your Melon, which began in 2012 with the simple idea of putting a hat on every child battling cancer in America. Today, the superheroes hand-delivered a new line of Love Your Melon beanies to the patients at Montefiore, in celebration of their DC Comics product partnership.

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Clark Sworn in for Second Term



Photo by Miriam Quinones

BRONX DISTRICT ATTORNEY Darcel Clark (c) was sworn in for a second term as the borough's top prosecutor by New York State Chief Judge Janet DiFiore (l) at a swearing in ceremony on Feb. 8 at Lehman College. Clark won the term unopposed. She takes the oath of office while her husband (r) holds a bible.

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SOLICITATION OF BIDS

Mosholu-Montefiore Community Center, Inc. is seeking sealed bids for sales and installation of security-related enhancement. Project includes, installation of electronic security system (CCTV) and blast-resistant film or exterior glazing. The community center is located at 3450 De Kalb Ave., Bronx, NY, 10467, to provide materials and labor. Selection criteria will be based on knowledge and experience, references, adherence to work schedule, and cost. All interested firms are required to sign for proposal documents and provides primary contact, telephone, fax, and email address. Specifications and bid requirements can be obtained by contacting Lenorasealey@gmail.com. Bids will be accepted until February 7, 2020 and work will commence by February 14, 2020; to be completed by March 1, 2020.

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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

Flea Market

Donations are needed for the Bedford Mosholu Community Association's (BMCA) upcoming flea market scheduled for March 7. Drop new and used items (except for clothing and books) at BMCA's office at 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy. S., Apt. B1, on the following dates: Feb. 19 and Feb. 26 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.; Feb. 29 from 1:30 to 4 p.m.; and March 4 between 7:30 and 9 p.m. For more information, email BMCA at bedfordmosholu@verizon.net.

Internships

The Van Cortlandt Park Alliance is now accepting applications for its paid summer internship programs through April 26. The first program is for anyone interested in the food system while learning about growing and selling produce. The second program involves high school students working with horticulturists and natural areas restoration staff from Van Cortlandt Park. They also complete labs, go on nature-focused field trips, and explore green career opportunities with natural resource professionals. For more information, go to <https://vancortlandt.org/programs-overview/internships/>.

Plastic Bag Ban

Starting March 1, business operating in New York City will no longer be required to provide plastic bags for purchases. Businesses will have the option of providing paper bags at five cents for each bag. The fee will not apply to any customers using SNAP or WIC benefits. For more information, visit the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation at on.ny.gov/byobagny.

Social Security Expanded Office Hrs.

Social Security offices in the Bronx will remain open to the public until 4 p.m. on Wednesdays. 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 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 mattersports@gmail.com.

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.

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@bchnhealth.org.

Financial Literacy Workshops

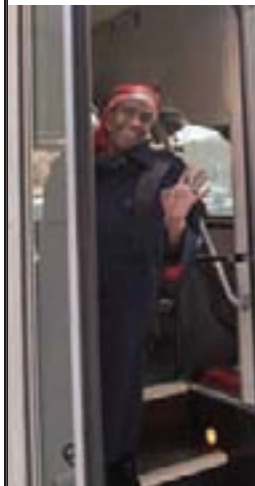
The Pinero Foundation will offer free financial literacy workshops to low income residents via two virtual workshops on Feb. 17 at the following times: money and consequences workshop at 11 a.m.; a workshop that lets you decide whether college, trade school, or work is a right fit for you. For more information and to register, call (917) 831-4100 or email pinerofoundation@mail.com.

Housing Discrimination

Renters who've been denied a home because of income discrimination can file a complaint online through the Office of the New York Attorney General by visiting <https://ag.ny.gov/source-income-discrimination>. Examples of income discrimination include paying rent through Section 8 vouchers, alimony, child support, foster care subsidies, Supplement Security Income (SSI), or any other type of government assistance. For more information, call the attorney general's New York City office at (800) 771-7755.

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Black History Month Celebration

The public is invited to North Central Bronx Hospital, 3424 Kossuth Ave. to celebrate Black History Month, Feb. 21 from 12:30 to 2 p.m. on the 17th floor. The keynote speaker is Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, the first African American Assembly Speaker in NYC history. Info: NCBPublicAffairs@nychhc.org.

Events

Tracey Towers, 20 W. Mosholu Pkwy. So., Community Room A, holds **Election 2020 Town Hall**, Feb. 20 at 7 p.m. Event includes discussion on early voting, voter registration, poll worker job opportunities, and the upcoming presidential election. Info: John Zaccaro, Jr. at John.ZaccaroJr@gmail.com.

Church of the Holy Nativity, 3061 Bainbridge Ave. at 204th Street, presents its 16th anniversary of **Poetry and Dining**, Feb. 21 at 7:30 p.m. in the Banquet Hall. \$25/ donation per ticket includes dinner, drinks, poetry and surprises. Guests are invited to bring their own pieces of poetry and participate. Info: (914) 494-3412 or (917) 208-3207.

Williamsbridge Oval offers numerous **activities** for all ages. Info/schedule: (718) 543-8672/8.

NYC Parks hosts **Family Fun Day**, Feb. 15 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at

Event includes winter sports, dance performances, games, prizes, and more. Info: www.nycgovparks.org.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: Biomimicry Boutique, to dress up and walk the catwalk, Feb. 15 and 16; and Swamp Spectacles and Marsh Marvels, to make large-scale puppets and float-like structures, then be part of a public service announcement video, Feb. 22 and 23; both in the WH House 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Grounds admission is free until noon Tuesdays and Saturdays all year. Info/schedule of events including tours and walks: (718) 549-3200.

Exhibits

Lehman College, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W. celebrates Black History Month with **Young, Gifted and Black: The Lumpkin-Boccuzzi Family Collection of Contemporary Art**, beginning Feb. 8. Opening reception is Feb. 26 from 5 to 8 p.m. in the Art Gallery. Info: (718) 960-8833.



Photo courtesy Office of the Assembly

ASSEMBLY SPEAKER CARL Heastie is expected to headline North Central Bronx Hospital's Black History Month celebration. Check out Editor's Pick for details.

presents **A History of the Bronx Latino**, ongoing; and **Mott Haven, the Bronx: A Historic District Turns Fifty**, through May. Hours: Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sundays 1 to 5 p.m. Info: (718) 881-8900.

Bronx Council on the Arts presents **The Update**, free exhibition at the Hostos Community College Art Gallery room C-190, 450 Grand Concourse, Tuesdays through Fridays noon to 6 p.m., through Feb. 26's free closing reception from 6 to 9 p.m. Info: (718) 518-6728.

Bronx River Art Center (BRAC), 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.

New York Botanical Garden presents **18th Annual Orchid Show** through April 19, featuring dazzling creations. Info: (718) 817-8700.

Library Events

Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents: **STEM Fridays at 4 p.m.:** Feb. 14; and **R.E.A.D. With Tyler:** Sign up to read to a therapy dog, Feb. 15 at 2 p.m. (both for ages 5 to 12); and **Read to Me, Little Bee:** Includes play, music,

storytime and free book giveaway (ages to 5 years), Feb. 20 at 11 a.m. Adults can attend: **Microsoft Word for Beginners:** Feb. 13 at 1 p.m.; and **film: "The Wiz,"** Feb. 15 at 2:30 p.m. Info: (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for kids: **Crafty Fridays at 3 p.m.:** (ages 5 to 12): crafts, Feb. 14 and 21; **Toddler Storytime at 11 a.m.:** (ages 18 to 36 months): stories, songs, fingerplays and crafts, Feb. 20 and 24; and **STEM: Kids Science at 3 p.m.:** (ages 5 to 12): Feb. 18 (Astronomy). Families can attend **film: "A Dog's Journey,"** Feb. 22 at 1:30 p.m. Adults can join: **Knitting:** Thursdays at 3 p.m. Info: (718) 882-8239.

Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Pl. (near Kingsbridge Road), offers **film: "Charlotte's Web,"** Feb. 22 at 2 p.m. (ages 5 to 12). Teens/young adults can enjoy: **Juggling 101:** Watch jugglers followed by participant juggling and a juggling ball making workshop, Feb. 13 at 4 p.m. Adults can attend: **Computer Basics:** Feb. 22 at noon. Info: (718) 549-5200.

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by Feb. 17 for the next publication date of Feb. 27.



Photo courtesy Joshua Bright/Wave Hill

IF YOU COME to Wave Hill, you can expect little ones participating in Yoga for Little Hibernators, one of many events happening at this Bronx oasis.

NYBG Branches Out Into Housing Market

(continued from page 1)

residential housing market until now.

The project appears to be a long time coming for NYBG, which, along with Montefiore Health System, Fordham University, and the Bronx Zoo, was at the table during discussions for the large-scale rezoning along 88 blocks of Webster Avenue that went into effect in 2011, encouraging a mix of residential and commercial spaces, with a litany of incentives to encourage the development of affordable housing and storefront space.

Prior to that, the strip had been a bastion for automotive companies. NYBG had initially proposed a hotel project in March 2016, but those proposals fell through. Aaron Bouska, NYBG's vice president for community and government relations, said the new projects "fits a community need."

"There wasn't anybody that had a reasonable model for doing a hotel business there," Bouska said. "We kept hearing from elected officials—Council Member [Ritchie] Torres and others—about the need for senior affordable housing. And it's just a great match. There's such a need in New York City for affordable senior housing."

The news comes amid a building boom along Webster Avenue as a result of the rezoning, where at least five buildings have opened or are in the midst of construction over the last five years, coinciding with other large-scale projects built in Bedford Park and Norwood.

The two new NYBG-led projects will be built in stages, with the affordable senior home expected to be built at 2856 Webster Ave. sometime this year. NYBG and Douglaston Development estimates that 187 units of senior housing—151 studios and 36 one-bedroom apartments—will be built for residents with a maximum yearly income of \$37,750, translating to an area median income level of 50 percent. On-site services will be provided to seniors, with Douglaston Development not having to go far in finding a provider in Fordham Bedford Community Services, which oversees the massive Serviam Gardens senior complex.

The senior residence will adjoin the affordable housing project at 410 Bedford Park Blvd., which is expected to be built soon after the senior residence opens. Some 250 units—31 studios, 90 one-bedroom, 118 two-bedroom, and 21 three-bedroom units—are expected to be built, with two-dozen of those units marked for formerly homeless families, according to the term sheet distributed by CB7. Douglaston Development seeks to apply for tax credits through HPD's Mix & Match Program that calls for nearly half the affordable units to be built for those earning a maximum yearly income of \$84,540 for a family of eight. The latter project is currently the

site of the Cherry Valley supermarket, a 20,000-square-foot market, and one of the few shops in the area.

NYBG's 2016 proposal for a hotel would have resulted in the supermarket's temporary closure during construction. This time, that won't be the case.

"The first phase...they will continue to be in operations in their old store...while we're in construction for the new construction, and when that store is ready they're going to build it out and move in and they're going to be operating at about 12,000 square feet," Russell Lang, senior vice president for Douglaston Development said. "But when we build the second phase, then they're going to expand to 8,000 square feet more so then they'll have the full 20,000 square feet. In the interim, there will be a little bit of time when they'll be operating with a little less, but they've kind of made accommodations to do that."

The nearest supermarket is the Met Food supermarket on East 198th Street and Bainbridge Avenue and a Fine Fare supermarket at 2645 Webster Ave., both at half a mile.

Lang noted that Douglaston plans to extend long-term leases to Cherry Valley.

The size of each building is estimated at 12 stories to accommodate the supermarket, which would be attached to both buildings. The zoning laws approved for Webster Avenue in 2011 allow for buildings as high as 11 stories, but Lang pointed to the city Department of City Planning's (DCP) Food Retail Expansion to Support Health Program (FRESH), which allows for an extra floor in mixed-income housing developments so long as the ground floor is reserved for a supermarket.

The project is certainly a long time coming for NYBG; so long enough that many of the members and community stakeholders who once helped usher in the existing zoning laws are no longer part of the conversation, negating some context over the kind of support CB7 and community stakeholders had given the zoning at the time.

Since the rezoning, much of the vision that was drafted by community stakeholders hasn't quite come to fruition as the prospect of bookstores and cafes—requests made by CB7 and residents at the time—have remained on the back burner.

These days, the belief that Webster Avenue will be overburdened has taken shape, spurring questions over whether city officials are even contemplating more city services in the way of extra police officers or another school to handle an influx of new residents.

Asked whether it's taking in these considerations in the case of NYBG, Bouska and Lang referred those questions to DCP.

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