



NORWOOD NEWS

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TRIBUTE FOR BRONX'S 'UNSUNG HEROES'

Fordham resident among 37 honored at State of the Borough



Photo by Adi Talwar

CYRILLE NJIKENG, a Fordham resident (l), speaks with Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. at the borough president's latest State of the Borough address on Feb. 20. Njikeng was recognized for his efforts in beautifying the Bronx.

By DAVID CRUZ

Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. threw away the oft-formulaic State of the Borough speech he's delivered over the last decade for a retrospective of sorts while honoring a who's who of civic activ-

ists, educators, and captains of industry. His penultimate speech at Borough Hall comes a few weeks after announcing he won't be running for New York City mayor after all.

Diaz, 47, told reporters he's "at peace" with his decision,

mentioning that the Bronx certainly has a crop of elected officials ready to pick up the baton. He mentioned by name Assembly Members Marcos Crespo, Michael Blake, Victor Pichardo, and Latoya Joyner; state Sen. Gustavo Rivera, and

Council Members Vanessa Gibson and Rafael Salamanca Jr. "The list goes on and on," he said.

For now, Diaz reminded reporters he still has two years to go before retiring from
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Serviam Gardens**
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Home Robbed**
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Phone: 718 324 4998

Fax: 718 324 2917

E-mail: norwoodnews@norwoodnews.orgWeb.: www.norwoodnews.org**Publisher**

Mosholu Preservation Corporation

Senior Director of MPC

Melissa Cebollero

Executive Director of MPC

Jennifer Tausig

Editor-in-Chief, Norwood NewsDavid Cruz, dcruz@norwoodnews.org**Proofreader**

Judy Noy

InternsKhalil Reddick, Henry McEachern,
Eleanor Decker-Gavin**Regular Contributors**

David Greene, Adi Talwar

Contributors

José A. Giralte

For Display Advertising

Call Janet Geller at

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IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

We Hope He Hasn't Checked Out

Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. delivered his annual State of the Borough speech in a rather interesting way, sidestepping its usual ceremonial proclivities that involve absorbing all the attention while unveiling his to-do list for the upcoming year by honoring the borough's unsung heroes (more on this can be found in our front page story).

But missing in that retrospective speech complete with pomp and swagger, bespoke of Diaz's own personality, were ideas for the borough. Where were they? Checking back on previous state of the borough speeches (unlike this year, his office would send reporters a transcript of his speech), the paper found a multitude of ideas Diaz would introduce in a speech that found ample time to scorch "the city," code for Mayor Bill de Blasio, for not doing enough for the Bronx. Even that, too, was absent from his speech. Diaz's role in his latest state of the borough speech seemed more akin to a master of ceremonies.

It's important to add some context here. Diaz's state of the borough address happened just under a month after he threw a wrench into his own plans by announcing he will not be running for Mayor of New York City, a decision he said he's "at peace" with despite all indications showing he had used his last 10 years as borough president to take the next step. It's certainly his prerogative, though it once again delays the watershed moment of seeing a Latino rise to a citywide elected position (it has not happened yet in the city's history). Yet, Diaz has two years left in his current administrative role, and with his decision to limit himself coupled with a lack of ideas for the last two years of his borough presidency, the question becomes how much of a lame duck does Diaz want to



Photo by Adi Talwar

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT Ruben Diaz Jr. speaks to reporters shortly after delivering his latest State of the Borough address on Feb. 20.

be? Or has Diaz checked out? Not even de Blasio, who leaves office the same year as Diaz, sat back after an unsuccessful bid to run for President of the United States. In his last State of the City speech, de Blasio had provocative ideas that seek to expand affordable housing, lower crime, and reduce the city's carbon footprint.

The *Norwood News*, of course, did hit Diaz with those questions following his speech, and he was quick to point out a laundry list of items, including the rebuilding of the Orchard Beach pavilion where he allocated capital funding, the Bronx Children's Museum, the hip hop museum, and the opening of the Kingsbridge National Ice Center that's dogged his entire borough presidency. To omit that in his speech leaves us wondering where Diaz would have found another venue to make such announcements.

There are voices out there quietly wishing him to weigh in on the Southern Boulevard rezoning, whether the Webster Avenue rezoning achieved its intended purpose, criticisms on

bail reform and discovery, the recent assassination attempts on officers from the 41st Precinct, privatization of NYCHA complexes, and the proposed cuts to Medicaid. Those voices include this paper. What about pursuing other ideas announced in past state of the borough speeches, like the plating of two railyards in the Bronx to make way for affordable housing projects? To his credit, Diaz Jr. did offer his thoughts on expanding Right to Counsel, which would benefit hundreds of thousands of Bronxites. But there's just too much that was left off the table.

City & State magazine recently placed Diaz as the 46th most powerful person in New York City. It's a fantastic placement, recognizing Diaz's achievement in continuing to turn the borough around even with such limited powers. Yet, that placement, if he continues to essentially coast, could be stripped away next year, finishing a borough presidency that began with a grand vision into a blip. We hope he finishes strong.

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 committee meetings are held at 6:30 p.m. at the board office, 229A E. 204th St., on the following dates: Environment & Sanitation Committee meets on March 3; Public Relations Committee meets on March 3; Education, Youth & Libraries Committee meets on March 4 at Public School 246, cafeteria, 2641 Grand Concourse; Traffic & Transportation Committee meets on March 5; Health & Human Services meets on March 10; and Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs Committee meets on March 11. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

The **52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meets on Feb. 27 at Our Lady of Refuge, 290 E. 196th St., at 7 p.m. For more information, call (718) 220-5824.

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



With the state's new bail reform measure in effect for nearly two months—and a faction of state senators looking to tweak the law—we asked readers their thoughts on the existing law as it is and whether it's fair to link the increase in crime to the new law.



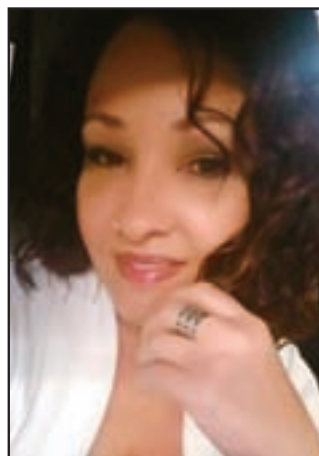
[Bail reform is] a bad idea. What they're doing now is not a good idea. I do think bail reform will bring more crime [and] even the police are angry about this. If someone gets arrested today...tomorrow they're out. Oh yeah, bail was a good idea because some criminals need to stay behind bars.

Jerry Leon
Morris Park



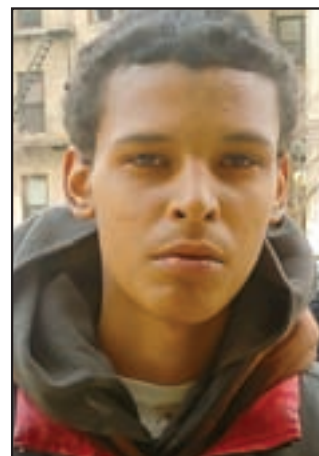
Absolutely, but I think it should depend on the nature of the crime. I was wondering if it included felonies, because you have people robbing and doing serious crimes. They probably don't want to face the music so when they get out, they skip town. But a lesser crime they may just think they'll get a slap on the wrist. I do believe it does contribute to the uptick in crime. It's almost like a freebie, almost like a get out of jail free card. Instead of learning a lesson, they think they can do it again.

Matthew Bourne
Kingsbridge



It can be related to the increased crime. I think they should have someone to look into the story and to see what happened to find out the circumstances and then decide on bail. I think it's justified to say at this time that it may be, because you didn't have this before and now we see an increase. It can potentially be attributed to that.

Jade Santana
Castle Hill



Yes, I do think it has brought more crime because now they think that they can get away with anything. Release some people; but some people need to be in jail. It's up to the judge to open his eyes and to see who the criminal is and who is not.

Maximo Carbajal
Belmont



Well, I am a man who has spent a long time in prison, and I do feel that bail reform is good sometimes in certain instances, for low-level crime. But when you start letting people out that do crimes every day, it's wrong. I'm a man that loves his people and my neighborhood and I go out and I teach these young people how not to go to jail and not to take on the attitude of others, which gets them into trouble. They need to stop the reform or look at the individual case and see the things that they've done in the past. Like me, I've kept out of trouble for the last 20 years.

Charles Robinson
Bedford Park



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With Two New Buildings Coming to Bedford Park, Concerns Over Safety Surface

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

Representatives of CAMBA Housing Ventures reassured residents of Bedford Park that their impending construction project comprised of two buildings will take into account their concerns about traffic safety, increased amount of formerly homeless people, and over-burdened city services.

The representatives updated Community Board 7 at the latest meeting of the Housing, Land Use & Economic committee meeting on Feb. 11, showing renderings of the pair of buildings.

The two buildings—one at 257-271 E. 202nd St., and the other at 258-278 E. 203rd St.—will go up on a shared plot of land in a section of the neighborhood that's extremely narrow, generating concerns over congestion in a neighborhood built to be suburban-like in New York City. The buildings, meantime, will have independent courtyards in the back of the space. With 323 units planned among the two properties, residents warned the Brooklyn-based nonprofit that creating such a congested residential project on two narrow streets will create problems. The properties will be built as-of-right, staying within the existing zoning laws that at one point CB7 had sought to amend but was unsuccessful.



Rendering provided by CAMBA

A RENDERING OF the two buildings to be built on East 202nd and East 203rd streets, respectively, near East Mosholu Parkway South.

The latest revision in the project expands affordability options to prospective tenants. From May 2019 to Jan. 2020, CAMBA doubled the number of units set aside at the two buildings for homeless individuals and families from 97 to 194. Military veterans will be preferred in 50 percent of these units. This new configuration, though, has also resulted in a loss of 49 units formerly available in the general public lottery.

Using an affordability formula based on the U.S. Depart-

ment of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) known as Area Median Income (AMI), an individual with an annual income of \$22,410 will pay \$362 in monthly rent. Another single tenant making \$59,760 annually will pay \$1,163 in rent.

One, two, and three bedroom apartments will be available ranging from \$456 to \$2,037 per month depending on AMI.

A specific concern for Andrew Laiosa, a member of CB7 and employee with West Bronx Housing, is how difficult it is currently for FDNY trucks to

punted to the city ultimately being responsible for the streets. "I think that's a conversation between FDNY and the city," said Rowe.

Another concern for CB7 is to gather assurances from developers that local residents benefit from these projects by preferred consideration in housing and employment.

As a social services agency, CAMBA promises to conduct research into the homeless shelters within the community board boundaries to prioritize their needs for housing. "We can target people who are living in the shelters now... to live here at our [building] project. We have done this in other neighborhoods," said Rowe.

As to increasing job opportunities, according to Rowe,



Photo by José A. Giralt

(L-R) DAVID ROWE, executive vice president of CAMBA Housing Ventures and Francesca Brown, project manager, speak at the Community Board 7 Housing, Land Use & Economic Development committee meeting after a slide show presentation of their planned residential project on East 202nd and East 203rd streets in Bedford Park on Feb. 11.

navigate the narrow streets along East 202nd Street, East 203rd Street, and Briggs Avenue. When the construction is finished, Laiosa sees a situation where fire trucks with ladders may not be able to position themselves to fight fires on upper floors.

"I have personally spoken to [FDNY]...off the record of course, and they've told me someone is going to die," Laiosa said. "Because there's no room for a fire truck to negotiate the streets."

David Rowe, executive vice president of CAMBA Housing Ventures, is aware of how narrow the streets are, but

CAMBA has been reaching out to community boards with job postings for local residents in an effort to fill various positions in the company. He describes the effort as a way for the company to maintain a positive presence in the neighborhood long after the construction phase is finished.

"One of the things we do really well... is collaborating and we want to collaborate with CB7 to host job fairs for construction, permanent and also permanent CAMBA jobs," said Rowe.

CAMBA plans to start construction at the site this spring.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Operation: Iron Empire

New York Attorney General Letitia James broke the seal of an extensive 107-count indictment on Thursday. The investigation, dubbed “Operation: Iron Empire,” led to the indictment of five individuals for their roles in a gun-and-drug-trafficking scheme operating throughout the Bronx and upper Manhattan, combining the use of physical and electronic surveillance with undercover operations.

The defendants—Luis Alsina, 30; Michael Alsina, 27; Miguel Rodriguez, 32; Josue Pagan-Adorno, 29; and Rafael Cruz, 22—all face hefty charges. Luis Alsina and Michael Alsina are accused of violent felonies, including first degree Criminal Sale of a Firearm and Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance, crimes that could land the two in prison for 35 years each.

“Operation: Iron Empire” is the latest in James’ commitment to curbing gun violence. The big Bronx bust follows another just last week in Long Island, one that seized 32 guns and over a thousand rounds of ammunition.

—Henry McEachern

Right to Counsel Expansion

There is a push to strengthen and expand Right to Counsel Law, which has already kept low-income tenants from facing eviction. Besides Housing Court, the expansion includes plans to make the service available to cases handled by higher courts or administrative hearings, as well as increasing the income threshold to 400 percent of the federal poverty line. The news comes as Mayor Bill de Blasio announced a 41 percent drop in evictions across the city.

—Khalil Reddick

Community Advisory

With the sewer replacement project coming ever close to its finish in Norwood, the city will continue imposing a no parking

The One Bronx Bus Stop That Could Spell Bad News for Hundreds of Riders

By ELEANOR DECKER-GAVIN

The Bx34 stop on the corner of Bainbridge Avenue and East 198th Street in Bedford Park is a crucial stop for residents of Serviam Gardens, a local senior affordable housing community. The bus stop touches the gate of the residence, making it extremely easy for elderly riders to get to and from where they need to go.

But the MTA’s Bronx Bus Network Redesign—a plan that would cut 400 stops along routes to make bus lines more efficient for drivers and commuters by the fall of 2020—looks to upend that route as a way of streamlining the route by moving the stop to Webster Avenue and East 197th Street, a good six-minute walk at a consistent pace in an isolated area that’s poorly lit at night.

Such a change could pose challenges for the hundreds of seniors who call Serviam Gardens home. Advocates for those residents say that this change could have a bad impact on their quality of life, as the move would put a large hill between Serviam and the stop on Webster Avenue, making the walk to the stop much longer and harder to reach. The route change would also negatively impact riders who take the Bx34 bus which currently stops at Montefiore Hospital in either direction.

John Garcia, executive director of the Fordham Bedford Housing Services, which manages Serviam Gardens, says that the response to the changes has been overwhelmingly



Photo by Eleanor Decker-Gavin

THE BX34 STOPS in front of Serviam Gardens, a senior residence in Bedford Park. The MTA looks to scrap the bus stop under the Bronx Bus Redesign plan.

negative. “Collectively, over 500 seniors live right by this bus stop that can take them to places like the hospital and local shops,” Garcia says.

A petition against the bus reroute garnered over 300 signatures before it was presented to MTA officials involved with the reroute plan, but it is unclear whether this petition will shift the changes. For some, it’s the first such significant change for their bus.

“Even if they are about to walk downhill to the bus stop, they would have to walk up the hill from Webster to get home,” says Garcia, also mentioning that it’s surely not just seniors who are concerned about the reroute, as many other neighborhood residents rely on Bx34.

One commuter, Margret Grimes was on her way home from work at Montefiore Health System recently when she expressed her feelings

about the change in walking distance. “This is my only form of transport at the end of the day,” she says.

Garcia, and it seems the community at large, hope the MTA will be responsive to the outcry that has resulted from their proposed plan, but it seems that the reroute plans are final despite hearings scheduled following the release of the MTA’s plan.

Advocates, however, have long thought the final plan doesn’t go far enough. “The changes in the Bronx bus redesign are important to over 600,000 daily riders who have suffered too long with slow and unreliable service,” Stephanie Burgos-Veras, a campaign manager for Riders Alliance, speaking on behalf of the Bus Turnaround Coalition, says. “The MTA’s redesign of the bus network presented an unprecedented opportunity to improve service for the riders who depend on it most.”

ordinance on the affected area on Bainbridge Avenue between East 211th Street and Jerome Avenue through April 1. The City is replacing century-old sewer pipes that are connected to the Croton Water Filtration Plant, which re-entered service in 2015.

—Khalil Reddick

Trusted Traveler Prgm. Backlash

Governor Cuomo’s response to the Trump administration’s efforts to obtain DMV data was a

strong one. The governor told reporters he simply refuses to allow the use of the DMV database for immigration purposes saying, “Every situation they have raised I have answered. We can provide Trusted Travel information. We can provide the automobile export industry information. What they really want and what we can’t provide is use of the DMV database for immigration purposes. Period. Their extortion and bullying will not work in New York.”

Cuomo’s response comes as the Trump Administration has suspended the Trusted Traveler program, which allows those who fly to get past airport security with ease, after the Cuomo administration enacted the Green Light Bill. The law allows undocumented immigrants to obtain driver’s licenses.

—Khalil Reddick

Home Protection Bills Housing advocates are rallying behind two state bills that look to stymie evic-

tions and keep real estate speculators at bay. The two pieces of legislation—the Good Cause Eviction bill and the Small Homes Anti-Speculation Act—are being championed by Housing Justice for All campaign. The news comes amid the trend of home buying by corporate landlords, effectively squeezing out working class, first-time homebuyers. The bills are currently going through the State Legislature.

—David Cruz

UFT Gives Early Endorsement to Eric Dinowitz's 2021 Run for Council

By DAVID CRUZ

Eric Dinowitz, the scion of Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz and a special education teacher in the New York City public school system, received his first endorsement from the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), representing rare public support in an election cycle that's less than two years away.

Such an endorsement was also embroiled in an awkward rollout last year when the younger Dinowitz put the cart before the horse, telling supporters in May he was endorsed by the 200,000-plus strong union well before the union publicly supported him. Educators, school staff, classroom paraprofessionals, psychologists, and retirees make up the union. Dinowitz is among those members.

This time, in a press release sent out on Feb. 18, UFT President Michael Mulgrew said Dinowitz, a Democrat running in the 11th Council District, "understands the needs of educators."

Mulgrew added that the union stands "with Eric so that our schools, our children, and our members have a voice in the room."



Photo courtesy Eric Dinowitz Campaign
ERIC DINOWITZ (L), pictured speaking with seniors at Sister Annunciata Senior Center in Bedford Park, received the official endorsement from the United Federation of Teachers City Council.

"This is an incredibly meaningful endorsement and I am honored to have the support of UFT as I run for City Council. Throughout my career as a special education teacher, UFT has stood up for students, educators, and our progressive values, advocating for better mental health services, improved resources for students with

disabilities, and support so that our students and teachers thrive. Education will always be a priority for me as a City Council Member, public school teacher, and parent," said Dinowitz.

Other candidates in the race include Community Board 8 leader and attorney Daniel Padernacht, resident Dionel Then, and climate activist and

tech entrepreneur Rebecca Haller, who recently announced her candidacy.

So far, Dinowitz has raised the most money for the race, garnering \$70,824 in campaign contributions, according to the latest filings. The UFT donated \$2,800 to his campaign last year. Padernacht, another leading contender, raised less than half those funds so far, with \$33,726.

Word of an endorsement goes back to May when it was revealed Dinowitz had posted on his campaign website that he had received backing from the UFT. That post was soon taken down after the *Riverdale Press* inquired about the announcement.

The race has gone from hot to cold in recent months after speculation surfaced that Councilman Andrew Cohen, the current legislator for the 11th Council District, was vying for a judgeship post in August last year. Those rumors soon fell flat after the Bronx Democratic Party's Judicial Convention did not appoint him for a judgeship position, quashing his plans and the subsequent plans of his potential successors.

The primary is scheduled for June 2021.



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Bag It! State's Plastic Bag Ban Takes Effect March 1

By HENRY MCEACHERN

Prepare yourselves, Bronxites, the state-wide Bag Waste Reduction Law starts March 1, barring grocery and retail stores from providing plastic bags to customers in an effort to reduce waste.

"City residents use billions of single-use carryout bags every year, and they are frequently used for only a few minutes at a time," said Sanitation Commissioner Kathryn Garcia in a press release. "Plastic bags are particularly troublesome as contaminants in our recycling, as they often clog machinery, and we've all seen plastic bags stuck in city trees around the city. This is not sustainable."

To prepare, the city Sanitation Department is giving away reusable bags for free from various government agencies.

The new law, spearheaded by the state Department of Environmental Conservation, focuses on reducing the negative impact plastic bags have on communities and the environment. While they increase street litter and fill up landfills, plastic bags also pose a danger to wildlife in the form of choking hazards and microplastics that contaminate drinking water.

Come March 1, shoppers must either come prepared with their own reusable bags, pay five cents for paper ones, or risk being stranded with an armful of groceries. Monies gathered from the five cent fee go back into a fund for providing low-income areas with reusable bags.

A clerk at Solalma Deli and Grocery off Webster Avenue at East Gun Hill Road supported the law, telling the *Norwood News*, "We do see a lot of



Image courtesy New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
FREE REUSABLE BAGS like this are being handed out by various government agencies.

plastics, so I do agree with it. It's better to just sell the reusables." When asked if she thought her store would sell the paper alternatives, she shook her head and explained that without any incentive it would be hard to convince the business owners.

Though it's being called a ban, businesses don't have to do away with all types of plastic bags. For instance, carry-out bags from restaurants, bulk-item bags for candy and fruit, meat packaged in plastic, and trash bags can be expected to remain in use throughout the state.

When asked how he thought shoppers would react to the policy, a grocery store manager at the Fine Fare supermarket on East Gun Hill Road near Perry Avenue expressed doubts, saying, "I don't know what they're gonna decide. If they're gonna bring their own bags or if they're gonna buy the bags...Now that they gotta pay five cents I don't know how they're gonna do it." He's prepared the store by posting signs at each register to alert shoppers to come prepared. "They should bring their own. It's better that way."

One Norwood shopper didn't think the ban would do any good, stating, "I think it's wrong, this ban. I think they should just keep it the way it is."

The conversation on what happens next extended to Facebook, where the

page for the Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District—which promotes the 200 businesses on Jerome Avenue between East Moshulu Parkway and East Gun Hill Road and East Gun Hill Road between Jerome and Webster avenues—was filled with mixed messages.

"It's about time! Y'all are light years behind lots of states and metros in this regard," said user Bry Conic.

Another user, John Dunkin, didn't take the law seriously, saying, "Because [New York] doesn't have any bigger problems to deal with. What a joke. If plastic is so bad then they shouldn't be available at all. Now [New York] is just charging for what used to be free."

Others expressed support, with Francine Ruh commenting, "It certainly helps the environment," and Cila Arraiano saying, "Alleluia."

The first consequence of violating the new law is just a warning. The second violation comes with a \$250 fine, with following violations racking up \$500 every transaction a plastic bag is used.

With March approaching, and with it the end of plastic bags, Bronxites should be preparing for the big change.

Editor's Note: For free bag information, call 311.

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Heastie Joins NCBH in Celebrating Black History Month

By HENRY MCEACHERN

State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie spoke to a crowd of residents on the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement and the future of criminal justice reform at North Central Bronx Hospital's (NCBH) Black History Month Celebration, a first for the state's first African American speaker.

Heastie, whose public visit to NCBH was rare, reflected on his accomplishments as a head of state, including the raising of minimum wage to \$15 an hour. He also spoke on education, saying, "We've added over \$6 billion in education funding since I became speaker. We increased the opportunity programs for people wanting to go to college by 40 percent."

Heastie took the moment to address concerns on the state's new controversial bail reform measures, defending his position that it was necessary legislation. He referred to a figure that although blacks and Latinos comprise around 30 percent of the state population, they occupy almost 80 percent of its prison population. There's an effort now under way to tweak some of the measures to bail reform, with Gov. Andrew Cuomo announcing it will be a line item in the state budget that's due in April.

Heastie has a long history in the Bronx. He's represented the 83rd District, spanning from Williamsbridge to Baychester, since taking state office in 2000. In 2015, He was unanimously elected Speaker by Assembly Democrats. He also teaches personal finance as an adjunct professor at Monroe Col-



Photo by Henry McEachern

ASSEMBLY SPEAKER CARL Heastie (at podium) speaks at a celebration honoring African Americans at North Central Bronx Hospital's Black History Month celebration on Feb. 21.

lege.

Before the talk, lunch was served to a large crowd of medical staff and community leaders. The room, overlooking the Norwood neighborhood and the distant Manhattan skyline, was lined with photos of historical black figures. Several people shared their thoughts with *Norwood News* when asked what Black History Month means to them.

David A. Leon, a local resident, said, "It means a lifetime. It's a way of life that our ancestors paved the way for. And also that history gave us

where we are now so that we can continue to progress. It's a legacy."

When asked what he saw in the future of the Civil Rights Movement, he responded, "It's about education. The cutting edge is for everyone to come

together."

Community Board 12 member Es-mie Fraser said, "It's a historic time. It shows what we've gone through, where we are, and where we expect to go."

And when asked what historical black figures inspire her, she said, "Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., [U.S. Supreme Court Justice] Thurgood Marshall, and [Congressman] Elijah Cummings, who just left us."

Black History Month was officially celebrated for the first time in 1970, but the tradition goes back to the early 20th century. The month of February was chosen because it holds both the birth-days of President Abraham Lincoln and slavery abolitionist Frederick Douglass.

The Feb. 21 event was organized by Christina Contreras, NCBH's executive director. Contreras introduced Heastie to a room filled with applause, after which lunch was served and prayers were said. The celebration included a violin performance of "We Are the World" by Hayden Hemmings, a 7-year-old musician from the Bronx Charter School for Better Learning, and a song by *American Idol* contestant and Bronx local Challenge Franchoise.



Photo by Henry McEachern

CHALLENGE FRANCHOISE (L), a 2020 *American Idol* contestant, sings "The Greatest Love of All" at North Central Bronx Hospital's Black History Month celebration event.

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Photo by Eleanor Decker-Gavin

THIS VAST TRACT of land on the west side of the Bronx just north of the University Heights Bridge is known as a floodplain. Dynamic Star LLC is spearheading the project that could see the entire waterfront revamped.

Fordham Landing Project Will Likely Have to Build Up for the Future

By **ELEANOR DECKER-GAVIN**

An expanse along the Harlem River in University Heights is well on its way to getting a revamp, with developers having to think on eco-friendly terms should they want their project to stay above water.

Dubbed the Fordham Landing Project, the \$3.5 billion project is set to transform 40 acres of just off the Major Deegan Expressway into over 2,000 apartments (30 percent of them affordable housing), a new public school, a 12-acre esplanade, and much more. The project will be built piecemeal and if successful, this will be the city's biggest waterfront project ever to be taken on by a private developer. In this case, the developer is Dynamic Star LLC headed by Gary Segal. There are companies that are currently housed on the property that have agreed to sell and it seems they aren't being pushed to move out any time soon.

A portion of the massive project lies on a designated floodplain, making the area much more susceptible to flooding. And, after the immense destruction of waterfront properties that resulted from Hurricane Sandy in 2012, the city is trying to ensure such large scale damage never happens again.

The Department of City Planning (DCP) is working on introducing a new Zoning for Coastal Flood Resiliency plan, requiring developments on waterfronts to build flood-resistant properties in response to Sandy. The

proposed regulations are intended to make the temporary regulations put in place after Sandy permanent.

Projects have been built following the disastrous storm, with many of them purposely erected with reliance measures such as thick floodgates in the renovated Whitney Museum in Manhattan's Meatpacking District, and elevating the buildings multiple feet off the ground at Dock 72 in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. These precautions aim to leave the least amount of damage to the property in cases of extreme flooding.

The plan is still waiting to enter public review, but a spokesperson for DCP has said the plan will be entered within the year. The review process involves the support of Community Board 7, which will look at the plan in terms of its impact on the communities affected.

Dynamic Star has yet to unveil any plans for the area susceptible to flooding to ensure maximum safety for potential residents and their properties in the floodplain. They did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

The group does however seem to be unfazed by the flood concerns, having recently purchased 12 more acres to add to the project, parts of this property also prone to flooding. CB7 members have commented that the project is facing a long process ahead, so it will be years before the public sees its true impact.

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

The New York State PLASTIC BAG BAN AND PAPER CARRYOUT BAG REDUCTION FEE Go into effect on March 1, 2020.



This flier contains important information regarding the impact of the plastic bag ban on your business. If you have further questions please contact the NYS DEC at 518-402-8706, the MPC office at (718) 324-4461 or email: jeromegunhillbid@gmail.com

The New York State Bag Waste Reduction Act prohibits the distribution of plastic carryout bags by retailers in New York state.

Businesses that are not exempt from the law are required to provide paper bags to consumers. Businesses must charge a 5-cent paper bag fee per bag. SNAP and WIC recipients are exempt from this fee. Businesses must show the transaction of the paper bags clearly on receipts and shall state the number of bags provided to the customer. The paper carryout bag reduction fee must be reported and paid to the state commissioner of taxation and finance on a quarterly basis.

Q: Which retailers are no longer allowed to provide plastic bags?

A: Any person required to collect tax will no longer be able to provide plastic carryout bags. Stores that are covered by the bag waste reduction law include, but are not limited to: **clothing stores, convenience stores, drug stores, green carts, grocery stores, hardware stores, liquor stores, office supply stores, pharmacies, and food service establishments located within the above stores.** The paper carryout bag fee does not apply to food pantries or soup kitchens.

Q: What does the term "plastic carryout bag" mean? Does this include all plastic bags?

A: As provided in proposed Part 351 draft regulations 'Plastic carryout bag' means any film plastic bag, other than an exempt bag, that is provided to a customer by a person required to collect tax to be used by the customer to carry tangible personal property, regardless of whether such person required to collect tax sells any tangible personal property or service to the customer, and regardless of whether any tangible personal property or service sold is exempt from tax under Article 28 of the New York State Tax Law.

Q: What is an "exempt bag"?

A: Please see the next page for detailed information on exempt bags. If an item or circumstance falls under the exempt bag list then it is not affected by the ban.

Q: What is an "exempt bag"?

A: 'Exempt bag' means a bag that is:

- Used solely to contain or wrap uncooked meat, fish, seafood, poultry, or other unwrapped food, flower, or plant items
- Used by a customer solely to package items from bulk containers, including fruits, vegetables, grains, candy, small hardware items (such as nuts, bolts, and screws), live fish, or live insects
- Used solely to contain food sliced or prepared to order
- Used solely to contain a newspaper for delivery to a subscriber
- Sold in bulk quantities to a consumer at the point of sale that were specifically prepackaged in a manner to allow for bulk sale (for example, quantities of bags prepackaged in individual pre-sealed boxes) or prepackaged in individual boxes or containers for sale to a customer
- Sold as a trash bag
- Sold as a food storage bag, such as those in snack, sandwich, quart, and gallon sizes
- Used as a garment bag, such as those used by a dry cleaner or laundry service
- Provided by a restaurant, tavern, or similar food service establishment, as defined in the state sanitary code, to carry out or deliver food
- Provided by a pharmacy to carry prescription drugs
- A reusable bag, as that term is defined in proposed Part 351 draft regulations or a film plastic bag for which there is no reasonable or practical alternative for storing, containing or transporting items, as determined by the department

Businesses affected by the plastic bag ban and paper carryout bag reduction fee should make preparations as soon as possible. Order paper bags, prepare to have reusable bags available for sale, and make sure your receipts reflect the paper bag fee correctly. Information about fee reporting is available from the NYS Department and Tax and Finance.

The law goes into effect March 1, 2020. There is no grace period. The first offense for non-compliance will be a warning, but a second offense will be a monetary fine. Please direct questions to NYS DEC at (518) 402-8706.

CRIME FILE

By ELEANOR DECKER-GAVIN

**Group Attacks and
Robs Man**

The NYPD is looking for help ID'ing four men (top photos) allegedly connected to a robbery that occurred on Jan. 31.

A group of men approached the victim, a 35-year-old man, in front of a residential building near East Kingsbridge Road and Davidson Avenue at 12:45 a.m., according to the NYPD. The group proceeded to attack the man, throwing him on the ground and taking \$120 in cash from him before taking off. The victim refused initial medical attention.

The police have given no official descriptions of the suspects, but released blurry photos in hopes that they'll help with the search.



ham, authorities say. The attack happened on Feb. 21 and the suspect was arrested less than an hour after the 11 p.m. stabbing occurred, according to the *New York Post*.

The suspect is identified as 27-year-old Hector Delacruz of New Jersey. He attacked the victim resulting in stab wounds to her neck and back and she was sent to the hospital in critical condition, according to police. Delacruz was charged with attempted murder and weapons possession.

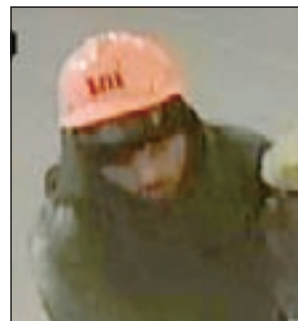
**Norwood Late-Night
Robbery**

Police are seeking the public's help in identifying a man (2nd row, left photo) connected to a robbery near Hull Avenue and East 204th Street.



On Jan. 28 at about 1 a.m., a 28-year-old man was walking into his apartment building when he was approached by the suspect who proceeded to punch the victim and take approximately \$180 before leaving. The victim refused medical attention.

Authorities haven't released a description of the suspect, but have a slightly grainy photo to help with the search.

**Norwood Home Robbed**

Authorities are looking for a man in connection to a burglary that occurred on Feb. 17. At around 11 p.m., police said a 35-year-old man returned to his home near Webster Avenue and East 205th Street to find he had been burglarized, and contacted police. The property stolen has an estimated value of \$2,400, according to police.

Police later determined that at around 5 p.m. the same day,

a person of interest was seen entering the residence with a cart containing what seem to be construction tools. He is later seen leaving the property on foot.

There is no official description of the suspect released, but police have provided this photo of security footage (2nd row, right photo) in hopes that it will help with the search.

Anyone with information in regard to the above crimes is asked to call the NYPD's Crime Stoppers 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.NYPD-CRIMESTOPPERS.COM, on Twitter @NYPDTips. All calls are strictly confidential.

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AOC-Controlled PAC Backs Samelys Lopez for 15th Congressional District Seat

By DAVID CRUZ

Samelys López, a grassroots community organizer, indirectly picked up the official endorsement of Bronx Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, through a political action committee she began in January.

López was endorsed by Courage for Change, a political action committee controlled by Ocasio-Cortez, the Democratic socialist legislator (who's also facing multiple challengers to her seat), boosting López's chances at securing the seat long held by Congressman Jose Serrano. Her endorsement was first reported by the *New York Times*.

"Growing up homeless in the shelter system, while facing housing insecurity like many of our neighbors in the Bronx, I have made it my mission to center those in my community who have been directly impacted by homelessness, food scarcity, and poverty," said López. "It is personal experiences like these that have given me the courage to fight for transformative justice. I am honored to be the first candidate in the northeast to earn this endorsement. It truly takes political courage and a movement to change our politics."

The Political Action Committee's (PAC) backing can be a financial boon for López who, despite bringing in way more campaign donations this past quarter compared to the one before that quarter, still hasn't raised the same funds as her challengers. Councilman Ritchie Torres, another challenger in the race, has raised more than \$1 million in donations.

The endorsement comes two months after Ocasio-Cortez opened the

I am honored to be the first candidate in the northeast to earn this endorsement. It truly takes political courage and a movement to change our politics."

—Samelys Lopez, candidate for 15th Congressional District seat

PAC, which is seeking the larger goal of turning Congress decidedly progressive through its backing of candidates whose ideals match Ocasio-Cortez. López and Ocasio-Cortez's relationship goes back to the days when both had volunteered for Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders' 2016 campaign.

The news also comes two months after the New York chapter for the Democratic Socialists of America endorsed López.

The primary will be held on June 23. In addition to Torres and López, other challengers in the race include Councilman Ruben Diaz Sr., Assemblyman Michael Blake, and former New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito.

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Former Council Speaker Picks Up UAW Support, First Labor Union to Back Her 15th CD Run

By DAVID CRUZ

United Auto Workers Region 9A union (UAW) is throwing its support behind former New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, the first labor union to support Mark-Viverito in her run for the 15th Congressional District race. The endorsement came a day before candidates in the crowded race start collecting signatures to get on the June Democratic primary ballot.

"Although we have relationships with several of the candidates in this race, our bond with Melissa is strong," Beverley Brakeman, UAW Region 9A director, said in a statement. "From her days as a City Councilwoman and then Speaker, Melissa always stood by us, fighting hard not only for the needs of our members, but for every New Yorker."

As a constant champion for workers' rights, Melissa lead the charge against economic inequality and other systemic injustices throughout New York City, never once backing down from fighting for what is right."

Mark-Viverito, a progressive Democrat who entered the race in August, called the support "an honor," especially for one who comes from a union



Photo courtesy Melissa Mark-Viverito Campaign

FORMER NEW YORK City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito grabbed the endorsement of the United Auto Workers Region 9A union.

family. "When I served as Speaker, I was proud to stand alongside members of UAW Region 9A as we fought for safe and affordable housing, and expansion to workers' rights, and for legal representation for families that were facing wrongful evictions," wrote Mark-Viverito in a statement.

Brakeman added that Mark-Viverito's consistent support for the island of Puerto Rico--home to a large UAW

presence and which has been ravaged by Hurricane Maria and a recent earthquake-- also sealed the deal. Mark-Viverito has made trips to the island throughout its recovery period. "The choice for us was clear. We know that Melissa will bring her passion to Congress and be the champion we all need," said Brakeman.

The union represents 37,000 active and retired UAW members, many of

whom work for General Motors. Nearly 1200 UAW members live within the 15th Congressional District, which covers the entire South Bronx. The union looks to dispatch some of its members to help canvass for her.

Others candidates vying for the seat set to be vacated by longtime seat-holder Jose Serrano include Councilmembers Ritchie Torres and Ruben Diaz Sr., Assemblyman Michael Blake, and community organizer and Democratic socialist Samelys Lopez.

Labor has had a strong presence in the race, with the influential 1199 SEIU/32BJ backing Blake and the Communication Workers of America giving its seal of approval to Torres. Torres, who represents the 15th Council District, has drawn the most labor union endorsements, with nine so far.

For Mark-Viverito, backing labor in the nation's capital will be part of her plan should she win the congressional seat. "In Congress, I will continue to serve as an advocate for not only UAW members, but for working families everywhere so we can continue to guarantee respectable wages, generous benefits, and the right to organize and bargain," she said.

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Heart Disease is a “Now” Problem. “Later” May Be Too Late!

By DR. LEANDRO SLIPCZUK

In the United States, almost 630,000 people die from some form of heart disease each year.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), risk factors for heart disease include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, obesity, unhealthy eating patterns, physical inactivity, and diabetes.

Heart disease can happen at any age. After 40 years old, however, your risk of having heart disease increases. The good news is, with early intervention and lifestyle

changes, you can reduce your risk of heart disease.

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) recommends keeping a healthy weight, reducing stress, quitting smoking and working with your care team to know your numbers and to manage your medical care. Below are six things you can do to help improve your heart health.

Eat Healthier

Eating healthier is something you can control. Start by filling half of your plate with vegetables and fruits. Choosing

whole grain foods over white bread, white rice or white pasta helps to increase the fiber in your diet, which is good for heart health. Pay attention to the type of fats you eat, too. Choose foods with healthier unsaturated fats, like nuts, seeds, fish, olive oil, canola oil and avocados. Also, look for foods that are low in unhealthy saturated fat (like poultry and low-fat dairy). Don't forget to read the labels on your food to make healthier choices. To learn how to read a food label, check out Eat-Right.org for their article entitled “The Basics of the

Nutrition Facts Label.”

Move More

Get at least two and a half hours of physical activity each week (30 minutes per day, five days a week). Find activities you enjoy, like walking or dancing, and do them for 10 minutes at a time, taking breaks until you reach 30 minutes per day. Over time, you'll find that you're able to build up to one, 30-minute exercise session. Remember to check with your doctor before beginning any exercise program.

Reduce Stress and Improve Sleep

Practicing meditation/relaxation therapy daily can help reduce stress. Try the guided relaxation audio tracks at montefiore.org/HealingArts-RelaxationTracks to start your practice. Other ways to deal with stress include talking with someone you trust and engaging in positive self-talk.

Improving sleep can also have a positive im-

pact on stress. Limiting distractions an hour before bedtime and aiming for seven-to-eight hours of sleep per night can improve sleep. Exercise is also a great way to help reduce stress and can even improve sleep.

Quit Smoking

Smoking is the most preventable risk factor for heart disease. Talk with your doctor for ways to stop smoking and set a quit date. Ask family and friends to support your efforts.

Know Your Numbers to Stay Heart Healthy

Having your blood pressure tested is the only way to know if you have high blood pressure. A normal blood pressure range should be less than 120/80, as recommended by the American Heart Association. Other important numbers to know are your cholesterol, blood sugar, and body mass index (BMI). Your total cholesterol should be less than 200, and if you are fasting, your blood sugar

should be less than 100. Maintaining a healthy weight is also important. Aim for a BMI of less than 25.

Medical Management

Working with your doctor and healthcare team is important for prevention and management of any chronic condition. Make appointments to visit your healthcare provider regularly, and follow your doctor's instructions. Use all medications as prescribed. It's also important to keep a list of all medications, along with their dose and frequency, in your wallet always. Make sure to always refill all your medications on time, too.

Dr. Leandro Slipczuk is the Director of Advanced Cardiac Imaging and Director of the CV Atherosclerosis and Lipid Disorder Center for the Cardiology Division for Montefiore Health System. The Montefiore Einstein Center for Heart & Vascular Care is always here to support you in caring for your heart.

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Wednesday, February 12, 2020	6:00 pm- 7:00 pm
Wednesday, February 19, 2020	6:00 pm- 7:00 pm
Saturday, February 29, 2020	12:30 pm-2:30 pm
Saturday, March 7, 2020	12:30 pm-2:30 pm
Wednesday, March 11, 2020	6:00 pm- 7:00 pm
Wednesday, March 18, 2020	6:00 pm- 7:00 pm
Saturday, March 21, 2020	12:30 pm- 2:30 pm
Saturday, April 4, 2020	12:30 pm- 2:30 pm

***Note: The lottery will be held on Wednesday April 8, 2020 from 5:00 pm- 6:00pm.**

For further information please contact Director of Parent & Community Engagment egonzalez@ilchs.org Extension 404
3030 Riverdale Avenue Bronx NY, 10463

Merchant Spotlight: A Family Business Grows at JGHBD

By **JEROME GUN HILL BID**

Shary and Ricky Rodriguez, the team behind Craft Empanadas and Shary's Daycare on East Gun Hill Road, have opened their latest venture within the Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District (JGHBD).

Craft Dance Studio, located below Craft Empanadas at 261 E. Gun Hill Rd., opened on Feb. 24 and serves as a space for dance classes, event rentals, and more. Children aged 3 and up can sign up for ballet, salsa, hip hop, and bachata classes on Mondays, Wednesday, and Thursdays. Adults can expect salsa and bachata classes to become available in the coming weeks.

The studio space is also available to rent at flexible and affordable rates for events. With brand new flooring, freshly painted walls, a new sound system, and flat screen TVs, the space is perfect for your next celebration whether it's a birthday, baby shower, sporting event, or community meeting. Also, community residents will receive a neighborhood discount on all event bookings.

The opening of Craft Dance Studio comes shortly after Shary and Ricky completely renovated Craft Empanadas, which first opened in 2018. The restaurant space now features bar seating, high top tables, stylish light fixtures, and a fresh new mural depicting East



Photo by the Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District

SHARY AND RICKY Rodriguez outside Craft Empanadas, one of the many businesses the married couple owns under the "Craft" brand.

Gun Hill Road and the surrounding neighborhood.

The new space invites customers to "Enjoy an empanada and enjoy the feeling of being at home," says Ricky. They strive for the "Craft" brand to exude creativity and unity, "helping the community in creative ways," added Shary.

Shary and Ricky have been in business in the BID since 2008 when they first opened Shary's Daycare at 250 E. Gun Hill Rd. Both born and raised in the Bronx, Shary is from Allerton and Ricky grew up on Gun Hill Road. They first met in elementary school, began dating in high school, and are now raising their family together in the Bronx.

The pair have been in the empanada business since Ricky first started making and selling empanadas out of his dorm room at Clarkson University in 2004. In 2015, they opened S & R Le Juice Bar at 254 E. Gun Hill Rd. in the same building as their daycare.

"We wanted to work for ourselves, we wanted to bring something new to the community that wasn't available," said Ricky. "There weren't local places to purchase fresh juices or traditional Spanish food like empanadas." After three years in business, S & R closed and moved across the street into a new space where Craft Empanadas was born. They first started with three flavors, chicken, beef, and cheese, and have now expanded to cover over 180 empanada varieties from ropa vieja to lasagna, chopped cheese, and even lobster mac and cheese!

As their menu at Craft Empanadas expands, and their offerings at Craft Dance Studio grow, Shary and Ricky have their eyes on large scale expansion. They are looking to grow the Craft brand nationwide. "Our goal is to service the community and the nation in an intimate setting," said Ricky. "We want to see a small business thrive and expand, especially in a tough market".

Editor's Note: To sign up for dance classes or to learn more about booking an event, call (347) 964-5685 or follow @craft_empanadas on Instagram.



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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) to BMCA's office at 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy. S., Apt. B1, on the following dates: 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.

Free English Classes

Register for free English classes for adults at the Kingsbridge Heights Community Center. Day and evening classes are available at two sites—3101 Kingsbridge Terr. from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and 295 W. 231st St. from 6 to 9 p.m. For more information, call (718) 884-0700, ext. 100.

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/>.

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 Carion, community health worker, at (929) 220-8176 or naloxone@bchnhealth.org.

Free Reusable Bag Giveaway

Free reusable bags are available at the district office of Councilman Andrew Cohen at 277 W. 231st St. during normal business hours. The service comes following the plastic bag ban that takes effect March 1. For more information, call (718) 549-7400.

Housing Discrimination

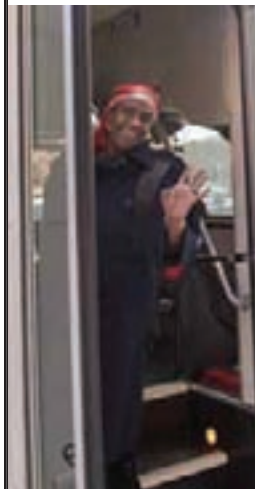
Renters who've been denied a home because of income discrimination can file a complaint online through the Office of the New York Attorney General by visiting <https://ag.ny.gov/source-income-discrimination>. Examples of income discrimination include paying rent through Section 8 vouchers, alimony, child 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.

Civic Workshop

Community Board 6 is hosting an informational session discussing the role of elected officials, and understanding the New York City budget on March 14 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at 990 E. 181st St. RSVP at bronxcb6@bronxcb6.org or call (718) 579-6990.

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Church Flea Market

Bedford Mosholu Community Association sponsors a giant flea market on March 7 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Saint Mary's Orthodox Church of India, 360 Bedford Pk. Blvd. at Decatur Avenue. Included are new and used items including lamps, jewelry, books, toys, housewares, electronics, and more. A raffle and refreshments will be available. Info: (718) 584-1900.

Onstage

Lehman College for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W., presents **Mummenschanz**, a visual theatre troupe featuring stunning visual effects, March 1 at 4 p.m. (call for ticket information); and **Grupo Niche**, performing salsa, March 7 at 8 p.m. (tickets \$45 to \$65; \$100/VIP includes preconcert wine and hors d'oeuvres reception at 6:30 p.m.). Info: www.lehmancenter.org or (718) 960-8833.

Events

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

Bronx Fashion Week will take place at the Bay Plaza Mall in Coop City, 200 Baychester Ave., top floor, on Feb. 29. Seating begins at 2:30 p.m. Tickets are available at eventbrite. Info: www.bronxfashionweek.com.

The Society Meeting House, 4450

A Forum on Elections



Photo by José A. Giralt

JEAN HILL, PRESIDENT of Tracey Towers' Tenants Association in Bedford Park (at podium), moderates the Election 2020 Town Hall meeting in a community room on Feb. 21. The forum ran down a list of election-related topics including early voting and was organized by Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez and John Zacarro Jr., male district leader for the 80th Assembly District. Zacarro is facing a challenger in Marcos Sierra, the district's former male district leader.



Photo courtesy NY Therapy Animals, Inc.

LICENSED THERAPY DOG Tyler will listen to young readers as they practice reading to him during a R.E.A.D. with Tyler session at the Bronx Library Center. See under Library Events for details.

Fieldston Rd., presents **2020: Vision Wisdom From 100 Years of Woman Suffrage**, at 11 a.m.; and **Ethics for Children**, to teach kids to be kind and fair, through stories, games, art, discussions, and free play, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; both on March 1. Also scheduled is **Diana Jones: Song to a Refugee**, American folk musician playing songs from her new record, March 8 from 3 to 5:30 p.m. (\$20/advance; \$25/at the door, includes free coffee). Refreshments will be offered for sale. Info: (718) 548-4445.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: We Build Our Homes, to create a journal of recipes for memories of what home means to you, Feb. 29 and March 1; and Homage to Spring Light, to create sculptures with varied materials, March 7 and 8; 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

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 23. Hours: Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sundays 1 to 5 p.m. Info: (718) 881-8900.

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. 28 and March 6; **R.E.A.D. With**

Tyler: Sign up to practice reading to a licensed therapy dog (advance registration required), March 7 at 2 p.m.; and **How Does Your Garden Grow?**: to construct a mini greenhouse to take home and grow plants, March 9 at 4 p.m. (all for ages 5 to 12); and **Read to Me, Little Bee at 11 a.m.**: Includes play, music, storytime and free book giveaway (ages to 5 years), March 5 and 12. Adults can attend: **Computer Basics**: Feb. 28 at 2 p.m. and March 2 at 4:30 p.m.; and **films**: "Dear White People," Feb. 29 at 2:30 p.m. and "Great Performances: Grammy Salute to Music Legends: featuring performances by famous artists, March 2 at 5 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. 28 and March 6; **Toddler Storytime at 11 a.m.**: (ages 18 to 36 months); stories, songs, fingerplays and crafts, March 2 and 9; **STEM: Kids Science at 3 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12); March 3 and 10 (Coding); and **Dr. Seuss's Birthday Party**: (ages 3 to 12) to read books and do crafts, March 2 at 4 p.m. Families can attend **film**: "Fast and Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw," March 6 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 for teens/young adults: **Birds of Prey**: to see hawks, owls, falcons and to touch raptor artifacts such as talons, skulls and feathers, March 12 at 4 p.m. Adults can attend: **Computer Basics at noon**: March 5 and 12. Info: (718) 549-5200.

Public Service Announcement

Daylight Saving Time falls on Sunday, March 8 at 2 a.m. Turn clocks ahead one hour.

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by March 2 for the next publication date of March 12.

Praising the Bronx's 'Unsung Heroes'

(continued from page 1)

public life and is focused on realizing projects that have fallen by the wayside, notably the Kingsbridge National Ice Center project that's years behind schedule. Other projects include restoring the Orchard Beach pavilion, seeing the Bronx Children's Museum and hip hop museum built, and seeing the early stages of the Harlem River waterfront development.

"Less than two years sounds like a long time, but what we're talking about is 21 or 22 more months. So that's a lot to close out," Diaz told reporters shortly after his address. But it wasn't what lay ahead or taking pot shots at Mayor Bill de Blasio that stood front and center as in years past, but what Diaz has already checked off. In what seemed like an informal 40-minute speech touting 10 years of progress for the Bronx, Diaz noted that crime and the jobless rate—two pressing issues that the Bronx grossly led in—have plunged dramatically. Meantime, interest in the Bronx grew under his tenure.

Diaz credited the men and women of the Bronx for that interest. "We wanted to do it in a way where the media and the world sees who's actually behind this. Not the borough president. They are," said Diaz, citing Diego Beekman Houses CEO Arline Parks and Community Board 2 chair Bobby Crespo as champions to the Bronx. "So these aren't just community folks who make the Bronx better, but in many cases these are all people who have a story with me."

Among those honored was Cyrille

Njikeng, a resident of Bedford Park and member of Community Board 7 honored for taking it upon himself to clean up the unkempt underpass at the Kingsbridge Road B/D station with his three children, Zayne, and twin sisters Grace and Melodie.

Njikeng captured the gesture on video, later posting it to Twitter, which later went viral. It grabbed the attention of Diaz, who later honored his children for cleaning up the space. Njikeng, who works as executive director for the CUNY student senate, was soon appointed to the board in August.

"At the end of the day it wasn't about me going viral. It was about me teaching my children about community and in teaching community that we can live in a better community," said Njikeng. "I did that every weekend. I'm still doing it."

Njikeng was among the 12 community board members (one for each Bronx community board) honored by Diaz in the address all ranging from different sectors. They were among the five categories that Diaz sought to focus on, which included those who work in education, senior services, and LGTBQ services. Those helping military veterans also received honors, including Joe Mondello and Roxana Gonzalez.

"We've always done it with individual events. But I'm always grateful and thankful for those people who really do the work," said Diaz. "And we're celebrating 10 years. So you can't celebrate 10 years and say, 'I did all of this.' We're celebrating 10 years like we did all of this. We should be proud."



Photo by David Cruz

POSTER BOARDS HIGHLIGHTING some of Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.'s milestones were posted inside Borough Hall where Diaz delivered his 11th State of the Borough speech. In this poster (pictured), Diaz leads a protest calling for the state to pass a \$15 living wage bill.

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