



NORWOOD NEWS

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SIX BRONX CATHOLIC SCHOOLS ABRUPTLY CLOSE



Photo by José A. Giralt.

ST. JOHN'S CATHOLIC school in Kingsbridge is one of six Bronx Catholic schools that will not reopen in September, leaving parents scrambling for solutions to school their children.

By **SÍLE MOLONEY**

On Thursday, July 9, the Archdiocese of New York announced that 20 Catholic schools, including six in the Bronx, would be unable to reopen in September due to lack of finances in the wake of

the COVID-19 pandemic.

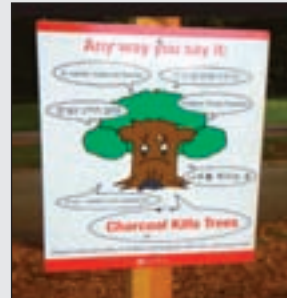
The affected Bronx schools are St. John's School in Kingsbridge, St. Luke's School in Mott Haven, St. Thomas Aquinas School in West Farms, the Nativity of Our Blessed Lady School in

Eastchester, Our Lady of the Assumption School in Pelham Bay, and Sts. Philip & James School in the East Bronx. Meanwhile, three Catholic schools in the State will merge.

The archdiocese confirmed

that overall, the 20 closures and mergers will impact approximately 2,500 students and 350 staff, and that much deliberation and analysis went into the final determination of which schools

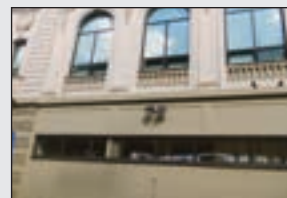
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Uptick in Illegal BBQs on Mosholu Pkwy, Bronx Park

By DAVID GREENE

Indoor dining had been slated to return under Phase III of New York City's reopening plan, but with COVID-19 cases spiking in various cities across the country amid their respective re-openings, the plans were abruptly shelved. This set-back, coupled with a generally gloomy economic outlook, left Bronxites looking for something to break up the monotony, and they seem to have found it in illegal barbecues!

As Parks Department officials braced for the Fourth of July weekend, the City's 311 complaint numbers for illegal barbecues were almost the same as for the entire 2019 summer season.

Illegal cookouts were observed in parks on June 20 and June 28 along Mosholu Parkway, where multiple gatherings of mostly ten people or less were found. A drive along Boston Road early Friday, July 3 revealed billowing smoke from multiple park locations, including one at the side of the Parks Department shed on the south side of Bronx Park East. Residents say it's worse than ever.

Norwood resident, Sheila Sanchez, who is president of Friends of the Williamsbridge Oval (FOWO), said of the barbecues along Mosholu Parkway, "There have been barbecues every single day for the last two weeks, and no cops showed up".

Sanchez couldn't confirm if anyone actually called 311 or the 52nd precinct to complain but said, "It's happening all along Mosholu Parkway, from Webster Avenue to Jerome, but most are between Decatur Avenue to East 204th Street, and on both sides of Bainbridge Avenue". Sanchez said there were multiple barbecues happening at the same time and they sometimes involved repeat offenders.

The issue with illegal cookouts has been ongoing for years, but when asked if this year was worse than previous years, Sanchez replied, "Yes". Indeed, *Norwood News* reported last summer that residents had to formally escalate the issue to elected officials in the end. It was not just the fumes from the cooking oil that caused problems during the hot summer weather, it was also the noise that continued into the early mornings, even on week days.

In addition, there were accusations of gangs coming into the Bronx from other boroughs and selling drugs in Van Cortlandt Park. Residents interviewed at the time by *Norwood News* felt intimidated by the situation and declined to disclose their names for fear of retribution.

This year, with elderly residents having to self-isolate in their homes, the problems with the fumes are made worse. There is also a general feeling of hopelessness among some residents who have spoken with *Norwood News* when it comes to the effectiveness of the 311 complaint line.

Elizabeth Quaranta is president of Friends of Mosholu Parkway (FOMP) and acknowledges that there are concerns about the illegal barbecues. "We have seen the aftermath of barbecue coals on the parkland," she said. "It's a lot, but complaints are not the same with the pandemic we are still living, and Black Lives Matter initiatives. Some things just need to be put on the back burner for now."

Quaranta described cookouts with families as "the American dream" and said, "We need to choose our battles in today's movements". She added that public education was key to ensuring there was an ecologically sound and safe way for all members of the community to enjoy public parks.

"It's up to Parks to provide its park users a safe area with red bins for coal disposal," she said, adding that FOMP have been advocating for the special bins and additional signage for several years. "Bronx, like every other borough, is a melting pot of cultures that have barbecued for generations," Quaranta said. "To keep peace in the community, agencies including police need to work with the public."

Meanwhile, Parks Department press officer, Dan Kastanis, told the *Norwood News*, "While we offer more than 60 designated barbecuing locations citywide, at times people do not observe our rules. Our Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) officers have increased patrols around Mosholu Park, and will continue to work closely with the NYPD to monitor and enforce the rules related to barbecuing."

But with the NYPD weary from months of stay-at-home and social dis-



tance monitoring, followed by a month and a half of Black Lives Matter protests, and condemnation from many in the general public over their handling of the protests, morale is near an all time low. Now that the men and women in blue are facing an unprecedented rise in violent crime and shootings, Parks officers will likely get little help, if any, from local precincts this summer.

As it stands, Parks currently has 59 PEP officers covering Bronx Parks. Additional officers were assigned to patrol Mosholu Parkway during the July 4 weekend. Forty PEP officers patrolled the same parks on July 4, 2018, a jump from 2017 when just 26 PEP officers patrolled local parks that summer.

It should be noted that PEP officers take an educated approach to issuing summonses or making arrests. They say this only occurs if an offender refuses to comply with the rules. Kastanis said, "Barbequing outside of designated areas is not permitted, and we ask New Yorkers observing instances of such to report them to 311." Those who violate the Parks Department's "failure to comply with fire restrictions" administrative code face a \$50 fine.

Some of the complaints raised by residents about illegal cookouts include discarded food and trash, loud noise, billowing carbon dioxide gas going into windows of nearby apartment buildings, fire damage to trees and grass from discarded coals, and accidental fires. In fact, one young child suffered a severe burn to the foot several years back when the child stepped on hot, discarded coals in Van Cortlandt Park.

Cookouts are currently allowed at nine Bronx Parks. For a full list of locations and rules, visit the Parks Department website at www.nycgovparks.org/facilities/barbecue.

Public and Community Meetings

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March,, the 52nd PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL meetings have been held via ZOOM. There will be no further meetings held in July or August due to the summer recess. The fall meeting schedule will be circulated toward the end of the summer.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, COMMUNITY BOARD 7 committee meetings have been held via ZOOM. There will be no meetings held in July or August due to the summer recess. The September meeting schedule will be released at the end of August.



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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



In this edition, we asked readers for their thoughts on this year's rise in complaints over illegal fireworks in the neighborhood and across the City.



I still hear some every now and then. I still hear a few going off mainly at night but sometimes you don't know if it's a gunshot. It's a crazy neighborhood out here - just got to be safe, but I like fireworks, but it's over now. I think it was because of the COVID, because if this didn't happen, the police would have been on it more. Last year it wasn't like this. People had their fireworks, but it wasn't as much as this year.

Sinclair Williams
West Farms



I don't like them, and there were too many people doing wrong, and the fireworks were in the wrong hands. It was worse than ever, because I've never seen such a gunpowder smoke cloud in the air from fireworks. It looked like something from Vietnam. They're not doing them as much at night anymore, thankfully.

Janice George
Norwood



It was loud, but exciting. It was much worse this year. There were too many people all crowded together, as close as we are. It was too congested. It seemed like people were just glad to get out, that's what it was. Yes, it's all done - a few firecrackers here and there, but that's about it. Yes, the fireworks seemed more powerful this year than any Fourth of July that I've seen, and I'm 60 years old.

Kathy Morris
Norwood



I think there were a lot more fireworks this year than in past years - incessant noise for no reason. I think perhaps it was the African American communities protest and all the violence going on. Our civil disobedience is blowing up firecrackers, and everything going on now exacerbated it. I think it was a desire to express civil disobedience. I know that we have a lot of powerful fireworks in America.

Jeffrey Williams
Kingsbridge



The illegal fireworks really was terrible this year. I'm really not sure what made it so bad, maybe less police in the area and people stuck in their homes from the virus and they just went berserk.

Curtis White
Morrisania



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Brandon Hendricks Remembered

By **JASON GONZALEZ**

Being the oldest sibling in her household, Tanya Downer did everything in her might to ensure her baby brother, Brandon Hendricks, was protected. Like many times before, Downer ensured that Hendricks was both safe and doing okay before she left town on vacation in late June 2020. In need of some rest and relaxation following the stress and aggravation of the recent lockdown, she was looking forward to a change of scenery.

As soon as it was safe to fly again, Downer and her family traveled to Puerto Rico, her favorite holiday destination. The time spent in the Caribbean should have brought her and her family the peace and tranquility they were seeking. However, after just two days, Downer's vacation was short lived. On June 29, at around 3:00 a.m., she woke to the sound of her cellphone, and news that would permanently change her life.

Tragically, Hendricks lost his life just one week before his 18th birthday. In the early hours of June 29 while attending a friend's birthday cookout on Davidson Avenue in the Morris Heights section of the Bronx, he was caught in crossfire during which a hail of bullets rained down from an assailant's firearm. Hendricks was hit in the neck by

a bullet that law enforcement officials are almost certain was meant for someone else.

Downer recalled the fateful phone call she received in her hotel room. "I was told to call my mom, and my heart immediately dropped," she said. "I knew that something had happened to my brother. His [Brandon's] uncle broke the news to me, and I was screaming 'No!' for about an hour. I cried non-stop."

Hendricks was born in the Bronxville section of Westchester County. He was a success story in his South Bronx neighborhood, triumphing over the pitfalls to which many other adolescents fall prey. The highly decorated student and athlete had just graduated from James Monroe High School days before his untimely passing. He was also the point guard and captain of the James Monroe Eagles basketball team.

Downer praised her brother's many attributes. "Brandon, as a child, was perfect," Downer said. "He was my best friend. He was always into sports and making my mother proud. He was never the type to be rude or disrespectful. He was always calm and loved to smile. We raised him to not play with toy guns. Water guns and Nerf guns were not allowed in our house."

Downer said Hendricks had dreams



Photo courtesy of Tanya Downer

BRANDON HENDRICKS AND Tanya Downer

of graduating college, majoring in Sports Management and playing basketball professionally, and had received multiple offers to attend colleges and universities throughout the United States. She said he had been close to committing to a place at St. John's University in the fall and was also slated to join the Red Storm basketball team as a walk on.

"It is extremely hard," Downer said of the grieving process. "We are a very close and loving family. We are all devastated and heartbroken." She said her mother, Eve Hendricks, has shown a lot of strength and courage throughout the ordeal, and is coping with the loss of her youngest child as best she can.

She offers her mom as much comfort and solace as possible but said while she is a strong and secure matriarch for the family, there are moments when she literally needs a shoulder to cry on. "She can't sleep and can't eat," Downer said. "My mom just picks at food."

On July 7, in honor of Hendricks' 18th birthday, a rally denouncing gun violence was held on East 157th Street and Courtlandt Avenue, not too far from the housing development in which he was raised.

"I want to get out of this what my brother always wanted," Downer said. "I want people, especially the young generation to do good and prosper. I want mothers to be kinder to their sons. I want fathers to be there for their children. The world doesn't need any more broken people."

Downer said that Hendricks was always a good listener and always spoke about being an inspiration to kids from when he was a very young child. "He never complained about having to go to church. He participated and knew who God was," she added.

The police arrested Najhim Luke, 22, on July 6 in relation to the case. Knowing that a suspect has been apprehended has provided Downer and her

mother with some measure of relief. "It's a little weight off of our shoulders, although it doesn't bring my brother back," Downer said. "At least I know that this low-life is off the streets and can't hurt another family the way he hurt my family."

Finding a silver lining following her brother's tragic murder will be difficult for Downer. However, she is confident that with faith and time, something positive may transpire to assure her that her little brother didn't die in vain.

"My brother was my world before I had my daughter," she said. "Brandon both loved and adored her. They both shared my heart."

There is no word yet as to when Hendricks' funeral will take place. Eve and Hendricks' uncle, Noel Ellison, are working together to finalize the details. The current health crisis has put his memorial service on hold. A GoFundMe page to help with costs has been set up in Eve's name.

As part of her grieving process, Downer finds it therapeutic to reminisce about the good old times she shared with her brother.

"My favorite memory of Brandon was teaching him to ride his bike without the training wheels when he was about five or six years-old," she said. "He was so scared, but he trusted me, and was so happy once he got the hang of it. We spent the entire day at the park, and he never gave up."

With gun violence spiking across the city, Hendricks has become one of the latest in a growing number of gunshot victims. What will his legacy be? How will the beloved star, on and off the court, be remembered? Downer is clear on this point.

"His legacy will be remembered by getting our youth off the streets, being active in sports and schools again, getting guns off the streets, and mentoring the next generations to come so that they can be great," she said.

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NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Call for Online Voter Registration

On July 10, 2020, the City's League of Women Voters called on voters to allow online voter registration in New York City. In 2019, the State passed a law to allow for online voter registration but because of budget constraints, the release of the program was delayed until further notice. The City's Campaign Finance Board (CFB) has already created an online voter registration portal that is ready to go live but the State legislature must pass another law to allow the NYC Board of Elections (BOE) to accept the registration forms. The group is asking voters to e-mail, phone, or write their state assembly members and senators to urge them to support the S6463/A8473 bills. Assembly Member Michael Blake of the Bronx sponsors the bill.

Mission-Based Lenders Authorized under PPP

On July 10, 2020, Congressman Adriano Espaillat (NY-13) announced the release of updated Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) information to New York's 13th congressional district by the Small Business Administration and U.S. Treasury Department. He said that in the early days of the pandemic, minority-owned small businesses were not seeing the resources and support via the PPP program with the expediency they expected. Espaillat said elected officials took action to make sure that mission-based lenders like CDFIs, credit unions, minority depository institutions, and smaller local depository institutions in the community had the ability and lending authority to help their neighbors. He said they have since delivered, and that this has helped to keep small businesses open, with over thirty-thousand jobs retained so far.

Paycheck Protection Program Reopened

The Paycheck Protection Program resumed accepting applications on July 6, 2020, at 9:00 a.m. EDT in response to the president signing the program's extension legislation. The new deadline to apply for a Paycheck Protection Program loan is Aug. 8, 2020. The Paycheck Protection

Barbara Stronczer, Green Space Advocate, Honored

By MARISA MAROTTA

Green spaces have held a special place in the heart of local resident, Barbara Stronczer, for many years. It was only fitting, therefore, that her many years of advocacy to keep Bronx communities beautiful, clean and safe were honored on Tuesday, June 30.

A lifelong Bronx resident, Stronczer is passionate about keeping the City clean, and over time has been involved in everything from organizing park clean-ups to beautification projects, and simply helping people in the neighborhood.

She currently serves as president of the Bedford Mosholu Community Association and is chairperson of Bronx Community Board 7 Parks' Committee. Stronczer is also a member of the 52nd Precinct Community Council, and is a board member of both the Bedford Park Multi-Service Center and the West Bronx Housing and Resource Center.

Gardens are also important to the Stagg Group which has been developing properties throughout the Bronx for over 20 years. Opening this summer is its property at 150 Van Cortlandt Avenue, a structure designed to include an exterior garden space for people to enjoy as they walk by, or to use as the perfect location for a photo opportunity.

During a recent ceremony organized by the Group, Stronczer was honored and presented with a plaque in her name that will be a permanent fixture in the Van Cortlandt Garden. "I appre-



Photo courtesy of Marisa Marotta

BARBARA STRONCZER AND Mark Stagg on June 30, 2020

ciate this garden being named in my honor," she said. Mark Stagg is CEO and Founder of the Group and paid tribute to Stronczer's years of service.

"One of the things she's known for as a force on the community board is green in the City, green in the neighborhood, and I think there is no better way to honor that activism and commitment to the community than a garden with a plaque in her name," he said.

Stagg noted that he and Stronczer share a similar passion for green spaces and indicated that wherever he has the opportunity, he incorporates green spaces into his building designs. Indeed, each Stagg property offers design features that make living in them a warm and enjoyable experience -

from game rooms, lounges and gyms to beautiful gardens - the buildings invite you in.

For her part, Stronczer commended Stagg Group's green approach to construction. "It is great to see the Stagg Group adding greenery to their projects. Since Mark Stagg was the first developer to build a residential project on the newly rezoned Webster Avenue, his taking the lead in softening the appearance of his buildings is a step in the right direction."

Stronczer added that most of the older buildings in the area, both the Art Decos and the pre-war buildings, were constructed with some type of shrubs or planters. "May this garden be the start of many more green spaces being added to the neighborhood," she said.

Program is a loan designed to provide a direct incentive for small businesses to keep their workers on the payroll. The Small Business Administration will forgive loans if all employee retention criteria are met, and the funds are used for eligible expenses.

Junior Knicks and Junior Rangers Offer Virtual Summer Camps

The Junior Knicks and Junior Rangers are introducing Free Virtual Summer Camps, presented by Chase starting Monday, July 13, 2020. These two options to get kids active this Summer will feature a variety of guided drills, workouts and other bonus features, such as Q&As with players, alumni and special guests. Junior Knicks virtual camp is for kids aged 6-16, and Junior Rangers virtual camp is for kids aged 7-14. Both have a rolling registration.

Virtual Tribute to Bronxites Lost To COVID-19

On Friday, June 12,

2020, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. launched a virtual tribute to remember and celebrate the lives of Bronxites lost during the coronavirus pandemic. The virtual memorial, which went live on the Bronx Borough President's website at bronxboropres.nyc.gov/covid-memorial, honors borough residents who lost loved ones to the COVID-19 pandemic. Those wishing to submit the name of a Bronxite to be included on the page can do so at bit.ly/bxcovidmemorial.

Engel Prepares to Challenge Validity of Absentee Ballots

The Intercept reported that since New York's Democratic primaries took place on June 23, 2020, new challenger Jamaal Bowman maintains a double-digit lead over Congressman Eliot Engel, and that Engel has filed a preemptive lawsuit preserving his campaign's right to challenge the validity of absentee ballots, which are still being counted. Bowman al-

ready declared victory in the race following the release of the in-person vote results.

Nursing Home Visits Start on July 20

Starting July 20, New York will allow visits to nursing homes and long-term care facilities on a limited basis. Visits will be allowed at facilities that have been free of new COVID cases for at least 28 days. Only two people are allowed to visit each resident, with at least one being at least 18 years of age and both must undergo a temperature check, wear a mask and social distance while visiting. In a 100-bed facility, no more than ten residents can have visitors per day in order to maintain proper social distancing and ensure safe compliance. Nursing homes accepting visitors must send their visitation plan to the State health department and affirmatively attest that they are follow-

ing the relevant State guidance.

Americans Can Cosponsor Justice in Policing Act

On June 25, 2020, the US House of Representatives passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act to address systemic racism and police brutality. Among other provisions, the bill will prohibit racial profiling by law enforcement, ban chokeholds and no-knock warrants, limit the transfer of military-grade equipment to local law enforcement, increase accountability and transparency on police misconduct, invest in community public safety initiatives, and create new training programs to change the culture of law enforcement. JusticeInPolicing.us was created by the office of House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer to help the public learn more about the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act and enable Americans from across the country to sign on as citizen cosponsors and add their voices to the national discussion. The deadline to sign is July 23, 2020.

CRIME FILE

BY ISIAH MATHEWSON & SÍLE MOLONEY



Robbery in Fordham Manor

On July 1, 2020 multiple individuals entered 263 East Fordham Road (Footaction) in the 52nd precinct and removed approximately \$26,000 worth of merchandise. The NYPD circulated photos online of the suspects and is seeking the public's assistance in identifying the individuals in question.

Second Robbery at Footaction in a Week

On July 8, 2020 at approximately 3:37 a.m., four males gained entry to Footaction at 263 East Fordham Road in the 52nd precinct by forcibly breaking the rear door lock. Once inside, the individuals removed sneakers and clothing before fleeing northbound on Valentine Avenue with the merchandise. The NYPD circulated photos and video online of the suspects and is asking for the public's assistance in identifying the

individuals in question.

Teens Threatened with Knife in Attempted Robbery

On July 4, 2020 at approximately 3:10 p.m., a 16-year-old male victim and an 18-year-old male victim were approached by two unidentified individuals at Kingsbridge Road subway station. After words were exchanged, one of the male aggressors brandished a knife and demanded one of the victim's cellphone, while the second male aggressor demanded the other victim's cellphone. Both victims refused to hand over their phones and the aggressors fled on foot to parts unknown. There were no injuries reported as a result of the incident. The NYPD has circulated photos online of the suspects. Individual #1 is described as a dark-skinned male in his twenties, 5 foot, 10 inches tall, weighs 140 pounds, has black hair and was last

seen wearing a white T-shirt, black shorts, black socks, black sneakers with purple laces, and a surgical, blue face mask. Individual #2 is described as a dark-skinned male in his twenties, 5 foot, 10 inches tall, weighs 140 pounds, has black hair and was last seen wearing a white T-shirt, black and red shorts, white socks, multi-colored sneakers, a dark hat and a white face mask.

NYPD Sergeant Arrested in "Family Fight"

On Friday, July 10, 2020 at 11:59 p.m., Andy Rollins, 38, an off-duty NYPD sergeant was arrested and charged with assault in the West Bronx within the confines of the 46th precinct. The New York Post reported that the arrest occurred following an argument of "unknown origin" according to authorities and that an NYPD spokesperson said it was "a family fight", with the victim suffering "bruises and scratches".

Four Injured in Three Separate Crashes along "Fordham Motor Speedway"

Four people were injured in three separate vehicle collisions in the 52nd precinct on Wednesday, July 8, 2020 along a three-block stretch in University Heights. The first collision was reported at 2:00 p.m. at the intersection of 237 West Fordham Road and Hampden Place, where Andrew Brito, 25, of West 87 Street, Manhattan allegedly slammed into a parked car. He was transported to St. Barnabas Hospital along with a female passenger who was also injured. He was later charged with a DUI offence, and for driving with a suspended license.

At 6:30 p.m., a rider of a motorized scooter was struck by another vehicle at Andrews Avenue and West Fordham Road. Conscious but injured, he was removed to St. Barnabas Hospital. The driver of the

other vehicle said that a bus had stopped to let the second vehicle pass but the driver couldn't break in time and collided with the scooter.

Later, at around midnight, EMS responded to a third collision on the corner of Loring Place North and West Fordham Road, when one vehicle which was double-parked, struck another vehicle when it was moving out of a lane. One victim suffered neck and back injuries and was transported to St. Barnabas Hospital.

For the week ending July 5, 2020, there were 334 collisions in the Bronx, down from 694 for the same time period in 2019, a decrease of 52.1 percent and likely due to fewer drivers on the road because of the pandemic. However, 21 people have died in traffic accidents in the Bronx during the first six months of 2020 so far, compared with just 13 during the same period in 2019, an increase of 52.1 percent.



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When Emotional Eating Consumes You

By JESSICA SHAPIRO

Do current events trigger a gut feeling of uneasiness causing you to have food cravings or to seek comfort by bingeing on unhealthy snacks? Do you find yourself lacking an appetite when the fate of the future is foggy, resulting in food restriction? Either way you are not alone. It is natural to desire control when times are uncertain. Many people experience emotional eating in response to fear, stress, grief, anxiety, and any number of other emotions. Food is one aspect of our lives that we can control when other aspects feel uncontrollable. We can control what we eat, how much we eat, where we eat, and how much we purchase.

Emotional eating is not inherently bad. It is the relationship of food to your feelings that needs to be explored to find the reasons why you might eat, besides true hunger. You have the power to establish a more positive association with food. Start with understanding what is triggering you to seek comfort from food. Triggers could arise from worrying how your family will manage if schools do not open in the fall, feeling extra stress from working from home, or losing a friend or loved one. These thoughts, emotions, and fears are connected to past experiences or an imagined future. Here are some suggestions to assist you in overcoming your emotional eating triggers:



Practice being mindful by focusing on what is going on now, in the present. Don't worry about poor food choices made yesterday and don't worry about events that aren't happening for another month from now.

Stick with a reliable eating routine that works for you, which may include two to three meals and snacks each day.

Healthier foods lift our mood, so incorporate a rainbow of fruits, veggies, and other nutrient dense foods in your diet.

Notice when you are deviating from your eating routine and ask yourself why. A simple acronym, **HALTS**, can assist you in identifying if you are having an emotional eating response. Ask yourself: Am I Hungry? Am I Angry? Am I Lonely? Am I Tired? Am I Stressed? Am I Sad?

Honor your feelings away from food

by identifying other sources of comfort. For example, try listening to uplifting music, going for a walk, painting a picture, or calling or having a socially distant meet-up with a close friend or family.

Most people may also benefit from simultaneously exploring their difficult feelings with a therapist.

Sometimes we want to soothe with food, and that's okay.

We may feel out of control when thinking about an unknown future, but we are free to control how we act on these uneasy feelings. We are all in this together and will get through it together. But seeking professional help can also help you manage your feelings and emotional eating in a healthy way.

If you need help in improving your diet, set up an appointment with a Montefiore registered dietitian nutritionist by calling 929-263-9519. To reach out to Montefiore psychiatry services, call 718-430-2290 or visit [covid19.montefiore.org/anxiety-and-covid19](https://www.montefiore.org/anxiety-and-covid19) for resources specific to COVID-19 and anxiety.

Jessica Shapiro MS, RD, CDN, CDCES is the Associate Wellness and Nutrition Manager at Montefiore Health System

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JAMS Men's Shelter Residents Move to Four-Star Manhattan Hotel

by DAVID GREENE &
SÍLE MOLONEY

The residents of a 200-bed men's homeless shelter in the Woodlawn section of the Bronx have been quietly moved and are currently being housed at a four-star hotel in Manhattan due to coronavirus concerns. Some residents and workers from the area couldn't be happier.

On Saturday, May 16, as New York City started to see the flattening of the COVID-19 curve, the City's Department of Homeless Services (DHS) transferred 200 homeless men, many with mental illness, out of the Jerome Avenue Men's Shelter (JAMS), located at 3600 Jerome Avenue.

According to DHS, the shelter residents are currently staying in separate rooms at the once-empty OYO Times Square hotel. According to a flyer for the 208-bedroom hotel, located at 157 West 47th Street, pre-pandemic room rates ranged from \$138 to \$228 per night. They are now going for between \$186 and \$207 a night. Special rates are available for first responders.

On May 24, in reference to the homeless men's move, a worker at the Woodlawn and Jerome Corp Deli, a 24-hour grocery store located next

door to the shelter, said, "It's nice. It's good for business, and now I have nice people again". The store owner had previously informed *Norwood News* that shop-lifting had been an issue and had attributed this to the shelter residents.

A female customer at the deli also approved of the move. "It's good for the neighborhood because I'm tired of them smoking crack in our building, sitting on the steps and pretending the kids aren't there. It's just ridiculous," she said, referring to the building she lives in which is located just around the corner from the deli.

She said that even though the majority of the homeless residents are gone, there is still a couple who sometimes come around her building to do drugs. She said she saw them spaced out in the building smoking crack one day and when she told them to get out, they put their hands up and asked, "What do you want us to do?"

She said she told them to, "Get the (expletive) out," adding that she was exasperated that they tended to hang out on the first-floor lobby with a crack pipe in their hands. "It's crazy," she said. "I'm happy they're gone."

The customer then said she heard a rumor that the JAMS building was

to be converted into a women's shelter, but the deli worker said, "No, no, they said they were bringing them back," referring to the homeless men who used to reside there. "They took them for some reason but they're coming back in three or six months," he said.

The customer then said she thought all the JAMS residents had the coronavirus, and that the City couldn't leave them there because of social distancing. "With the new laws coming in, they can't be so close together," she said. "They have to be in their own rooms because they won't be able to social distance, because they just have bunk-beds next to each other". She then added, "I think they are playing up the virus, and they're cleaning out the building".

In mid-May, *Norwood News* queried the City's count of COVID-19 cases per ZIP code. In the dataset prepared by the City's health department, the group with the highest number of cases had no ZIP code assigned to it, and instead included an "N/A" reference.

A City representative provided an email explanation on May 14, writing, "Individual [COVID-19] cases are classified by the ZIP code

of residence. Cases listed under the N/A category are cases for which we do not have an address for the individual, so we can't assign them to a ZIP code." *Norwood News* asked if that meant those cases referred to homeless people. The representative said he couldn't speak to the possible circumstances as the [case] information was collected at the point of testing by the relevant health care provider.

The COVID-19 data is tracked daily. For the dataset in question, out of the 5,589 people who were tested and did not have a ZIP code, 5,247 tested positive. In other words, 93.88 percent of people who were tested and did not have a ZIP code, tested positive for the virus. Curiously, the latest available dataset of cases by ZIP code excludes this "N/A" category. *Norwood News* has queried this with the City's health department.

Back at the deli, when asked when was the last time the female customer had stayed at a four-star hotel, she responded, "[Expletive], I've never. I don't think I got one when I went on vacation. These (expletive) are loaded," she then said, referring to the homeless men now staying at the hotel. "I don't care. I don't even get a four-star hotel when I'm on va-

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cation - maybe a three-and-a-half-star hotel," she said, as both she and the deli employee laughed.

On May 29, a statement was issued by Isaac McGinn on behalf of the City's social services and homeless services departments in the context of the pandemic. "At DSS, we're continuing to implement tiered strategies and proactive initiatives to combat COVID-19, protect the New Yorkers who we serve, and ensure anyone who needs it, is connected immediately to care, or to [self-] isolation and the use of commercial hotels is central to this work," the statement read.

In fact, under the City Charter, the City has an obligation to provide shelter to every New Yorker. The 1979 lawsuit *Callahan v. Carey* paved the way to ensuring the right to shelter for homeless men, women, children, and families in the City. The Charter also details the minimum standards which must be met in shelters, including basic health and safety standards.

The DSS statement continued, "Through these efforts, our essential staff have been able to help more than 900 New Yorkers effectively isolate, resolve their conditions, and depart isolation. At the same time, through these strategies, we have also proactively relocated, and continue to proactively relocate thousands of individuals from targeted shelters to commercial hotel settings out of an abundance of caution, including seniors and single adults from larger congregate locations who are not sick at this time".

The statement concluded, "As of this past weekend, we can report that approximately 10,000 individuals, well over half of all the single adults experiencing homelessness who we serve, are now residing in commercial hotel settings, with that number increasing up to 11,000 by next week, enabling these New Yorkers to more effectively isolate, while also increasing social distancing at the shelters from which they moved. Every day, we're redoubling our efforts and evolving with the situation to ensure we're supporting our clients in all that we do, and we continue to explore new strategies and policy responses as this situation unfolds".

BronxWorks, a community-based organization that runs JAMS, could not say if or when the men would return. It was also unknown if they were receiving the necessary treatment for mental illness and drug addiction that they needed at their new location.

In June, the De Blasio administration followed up on the use of commercial hotel space to house the homeless, as DHS estimated relocating up

to 1,000 shelter residents per week, mostly from single adult shelters to commercial hotels.

DHS was, at that point, also taking steps to manage social distancing at remaining shelters by reorganizing beds, spacing chairs in rooms, and setting stricter room capacity limits. In addition, shelters were canceling and limiting gatherings, installing Plexiglas at staff stations, adding signage, and providing face masks to all shelter staff members and clients. DHS were also providing security at any hotels being used for shelter clients to help limit gatherings and enforce social distancing.

Meanwhile, Bronx homeless activist and author, Michael Joseph Vessio, has self-published a 353-page book entitled, "Psychedelic Shacks", in which he describes his three years in the shelter system. He described the book as an exposé of the system, and said it is illustrated with photographs, "deep throat" memos, testimonies, and also includes a chapter called "JAMS-gate".

In it, Vessio alleges that BronxWorks, is "a criminal organization". "The entire \$1.8 billion budget for the DHS shelter system is corrupt, ripe with fraud, and neo-slavery," he said. "What my book illustrates; a 5-year-old can figure out."

Norwood News made several unsuccessful attempts to contact a number of BronxWorks offices for comment. On Monday, July 13, one BronxWorks employee who answered the phone said only that she had no idea if, or when the men would return to JAMS, or if there were plans to repopulate the now-empty shelter with women.

Meanwhile, all calls placed to individual rooms at the OYO Times Square hotel were directed to management, while repeated attempts on July 13 to reach management were unsuccessful.

Vijay Dandapani, CEO of the Hotel Association of New York City has said the hotel industry won't be able to recover in any meaningful way from the pandemic until at least 2023, and more likely 2024. Since New York City was declared a disaster area, it's possible that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is currently picking up the tab for housing the homeless population in City hotels. Norwood News contacted both FEMA and the State health department for comment.

In April 2020, Coalition for the Homeless estimated that there were 60,422 homeless people, including 13,861 homeless families with 20,494 homeless children, sleeping in the City's municipal shelter system each night. Families make up more than two-thirds of the homeless shelter population.

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Out & About

Compiled by AURÉOLE RIBES & SÍLE MOLONEY

Events

Bronx River Alliance is presenting the first ever virtual Bronx River Flotilla, a three-part video series that takes visitors on a guided trip down the Bronx River. You may even spot some beautiful mallards in this series, which will premiere on the group's YouTube Channel, BronxRiverAlliance.

On Saturday, July 18 at 10 a.m., join an ecological tour of the upper river.

On Saturday, July 25 at 10 a.m., join a historical tour of the middle river.

On Saturday, Aug. 1 at 10 a.m., join the group at Starlight Park to learn about recent efforts to restore and reclaim the Bronx River for the communities through which it runs.

GACED presents a fundraiser for the 2020 NYC Global African Monthly Power Up BBQs at Belmont Park, The Bronx, NY on Saturday, July 18 at 1:00 p.m. Free entry! There will be a backpack giveaway, food and music. This is an event to foster community and goodwill, that spreads the spirit of unity. Donations will be accepted for: Apprentice Enterprise Training,

GACED Social Services Emergency Housing Fund, GACED Realty Trust Distressed Property Crowdfunding. Further details are available at:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2020-nyc-global-african-monthly-power-up-bbq-tickets-110678470284>

NY Botanical Gardens (NYBG) offers virtual garden walks, a herbarium expedition, the fundamentals of gardening, and many other activities which can be found at <https://www.nybg.org/whats-on/month-view/>. If you are interested in delving into your passion for plants, NYBG also has a book club where you can access digital archives, podcasts, films, and books. The group discusses plant-related themes every two weeks. Participants can join the group via Facebook at NYBG Beyond Books Club.

The Bronx Zoo opens to members on July 20 and to all visitors on July 24. All visitors must reserve a date-specific ticket in advance. Please check the Know Before You Go section of the website for details at <https://bronxzoo.com/plan-your-visit/know-before-you-go>.

Norwood Farmstand sources its food from GrowNYC, a program that brings the freshest, highest quality, regionally grown farm products to the New York City community. GrowNYC is now offering virtual gardening workshops. On July 22 from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., the group will host an herbal care and remedies workshop. Register at <https://www.grownyc.org/calendar>.

Exhibits

The Bronx Council on the Arts (BCA) is delighted to present the Confidence in the Future Virtual Exhibit at the Longwood Art Gallery @ Hostos. Throughout the 2020 season, BCA continues to focus on paying homage to socially conscious artwork and to art that comes from artists who are actively engaged in creating a vision of the future, and expanding our understanding of the role of resistance. The eight featured artists were chosen through an Open Call to ensure wide representation from the borough's unending talent. Check out the exhibit at <https://www.bronxarts.org/programs/connector/longwood-art-project/longwood-art-gallery>

Lehman College Art Gallery is offering an online arts exhibit highlighting the work of Pre-K, Elementary, Middle, and High School Students. The exhibit can be accessed via the website at <https://www.lehmangallery.org/>.

ChaShaMa has its first virtual exhibition entitled Homecoming which shows the work of eight female Korean artists. Visit the exhibit at <https://chashama.org/event/homecoming/>.

Music

The Bronx Music Heritage Center presents Soul Music Celebration featuring the Morrisania Band Project on July 18, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. This is a virtual celebration of soul with award-winning songstress, Elissa Carmona and the Morrisania Band Project. This is an RSVP event, with a \$10 suggested donation. It will also be livestreamed on Zoom. RSVP at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/soul-music-celebration-featuring-morrisania-band-project-tickets-98543858333>.

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series SummerStage Anywhere this week with daily one-of-a-kind digital arts content specific to genres that were born in or deeply represent New York - Mondays: Contemporary Dance, Tuesdays: Global, Wednesdays: Indie Rock, Thursdays: Latin, Fridays: Hip Hop and Saturdays: Jazz. Daily genre-driven content will be featured across all SummerStage social channel (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitch) and will vary between exclusive digital performances, in-depth conversations, one-on-one interviews, DJ sets, and arts engagement programs for youth and families. For the most up-to-date scheduling, please visit SummerStageAnywhere.org.

Educational Events


Through Culture Pass, a program for cardholding patrons of New York City's public libraries, visitors can attend the virtual program, Healing and Resistance Through the Female Voice: Facets of the Dark Madonna with Bronx Music Heritage Center. The Dark Madonna, la Magdalena, La Dominadora (Santa Marta) - she has been a healing presence for some, for others a symbol of resistance and voice for the oppressed. This program will feature vocalist and percussionist Alessandra Belloni, vocalist and songwriter Raquel Rivera, vocalist and songwriter Maria Terrero, and visual artist Tanya Torres. Thursday, July 23, 2020 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. EDT. Register through the Culture Pass website at <https://www.culturepass.nyc/virtual-programs>.

Mosholu Montefiore Community Center is providing a virtual information session on Friday, July 17, from 11:00 a.m. to midday about paid training programs via remote learning. Interested in earning your high school diploma equivalency, or looking to gain culinary experience while earning your food handlers certificate? Then look no further! Sign up for the virtual information session at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/virtual-information-session-tickets-112714241330?aff=ebdssb> online search.


NYC-DSA Bronx/Upper Manhattan Political Education Working Group presents Socialism 101, a fun and easy online (Zoom) introduction to socialism on Sun, July 26, 2020 from 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. EDT. What is capitalism, and what is socialism? Why do socialists oppose capitalism, and what do they propose to put in its place? The group has lined up a series of enlightening and interactive multimedia activities designed to create a space for free and open exploration of the core questions at the heart of socialist theory and practice.

Outdoor Dining

The Belmont Business Improvement District (BID) launched "Piazza di Belmont," on July 11, their first-ever piazza-style al fresco dining plan on Arthur Avenue between East 188th Street and Crescent Avenue. Approved by the Department of Transportation, "Piazza di Belmont" creates a glorious, European-style outdoor weekend dining experience, incorporating health and safety protocols, six-foot spacing between tables and signage for pedestrians. During weekend nights, the street is closed to vehicular traffic Thursdays to Saturdays from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and Sunday from 1:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. The street is open to traffic and parking for shoppers during the day.



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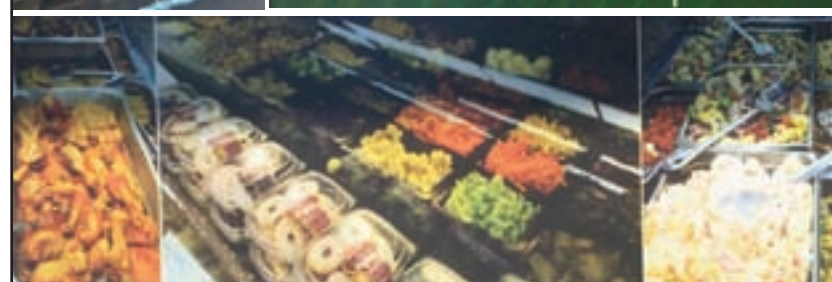


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Black, Brown, and Blue in the Bronx: Stories of Pain, Profiling, and Measured Promise

The following article is the second of a two-part feature story on the resonance of the Black Lives Matter protests in the Bronx.

Part II

Stories like the ones that follow are all too familiar in the Bronx.

It is not only in the streets of

the City where tensions are rising between law enforcement officers and the public. The incarcerated population has also been the subject of abusive practices by those sworn to protect.

Norwood resident, José Saldana, is the director of Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP) and has firsthand knowledge of

how the incarcerated population is treated. "Law enforcement is infected with racism in New York City and [the] State," Saldana said. "It's nothing new that's going on, it's been going on for generations."

After serving 38 years in prison, Saldana was released in January 2018 and started work-

ing with RAPP. The organization seeks to reframe society's reliance on mass incarceration as a way of keeping communities safe. He wants people to know that it is not only in the streets that Black and Latino people suffer brutality from the authorities, where it can now be captured on people's cell-phones.

"One thing I like to stress is that these things [brutality] happen every day to those incarcerated," he said. Saldana is pleased to see how video recordings of police brutality in the streets have prompted a new generation to protest for justice. "Of course, Black Lives Matter, but let's not forget those we don't see every day," he added.

A 2018 City health department report found that Black and Latino New Yorkers experience higher policing compared with non-Latino White New Yorkers, and that this leads to higher rates of detention of the former group.

Within the local neighborhoods of Bedford Park, Fordham, Kingsbridge Heights, Norwood, and University Heights, incarceration rates per 100,000 are consistent if not overwhelming. The last publicly available

figures show the collective incarceration rate for those neighborhoods was 583 per 100,000 adults aged 16 and older. That's lower than the Bronx rate of 670 per 100,000, but higher than the citywide rate of 425 per 100,000.

Norwood News reached out to the NYC Department of Correction (DOC) for a response to community activists who are protesting brutality within the corrections system. DOC Commissioner Cynthia Brann wrote, "We continue to build, improve and sustain the trust of those we serve by ensuring the fair and equitable treatment of all who are entrusted to our care. Dedication to duty and the desire to ensure public safety is essential and every individual must be guaranteed fairness and equal rights without discrimination."

Brann added, "We are committed to building on the progress we've made under this administration to create a correctional system that is more humane, and fair".

In fact, the department considers itself a national leader in correctional reform. Among changes it cites in departmental policies are providing housing options according to gender identity, removing adolescents


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from Rikers Island, eliminating the use of punitive segregation for anyone under the age of 22, and limiting punitive segregation sentences to a maximum of 30 days for nearly all infractions (except assaulting an officer which can result in 60 days punitive segregation).

To some who have suffered abuse at the hands of law enforcement, suing law enforcement agencies, protesting in the streets, and reforming punitive segregation practices offer them a measure of hope that change is happening. Indeed, some lawmakers are trying to use this moment in history to effect even more substantial change in local communities of color.

At a press conference across the street from the Bronx Supreme Court on June 17, State Sen. Jamaal T. Bailey announced the repeal of section 50-A of the Civil Rights Law, which prevented the disclosure of disciplinary records of law enforcement officials. The law had previously allowed abuses by police officers to remain shielded from public view.

As Chair of the Senate's Codes Committee, Bailey held hearings that included testimony from an array of law enforcement officials throughout the state. They complained to



Photo by José A. Giralt

ANGELIQUE NEGRONI-KEARSE RAISES her fist in Joyce Kilmer Park across the street from the Bronx Supreme Court building on Wednesday, Jun. 17, 2020 after State lawmakers announce multiple reforms to policing. Angelique's late husband, Andrew Kearse, died in police custody on May 11, 2017 in Schenectady, New York when officers ignored his pleas that he could not breathe.

the senator about how officers might lose their right to privacy if 50-A was repealed. "We understand that privacy concerns are legitimate," Bailey said. "However, what is not legitimate, and will never be legitimate is the desire to hide [the] disciplinary records of an officer."

Another recent reform in State law, the Andrew Kearse Act, was introduced by Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez. "What it secured is that an officer, and or the department can be held civilly liable if they are found to have denied medical attention or mental medical attention to a person in their custody," she said. "The officer has a duty to seek for extra help if they cannot address the situation at hand and must act in good faith to address the situation".

The law was set in motion by the death of Andrew Kearse, a 36-year-old Bronx man who died in police custody after a traffic stop. On May 11, 2017, police in Schenectady, New York say they saw him driving erratically and pulled him over. After he allegedly tried to run, they subdued him and put him in the back of a patrol car.

Video footage from inside the patrol car shows Kearse gasping for air and pleading for the officers to open the window while driving him to the police station. By the time they arrived at the station he had passed out. One of the officers began CPR until emergency medical services got to the scene and continued resuscitation efforts. He died at

a nearby hospital. A medical examiner determined cardiac arrhythmia was the cause of death.

When asked by a reporter why it has taken so long to pass laws to protect those in police custody, Andrew's widow, Angelique Negroni-Kearse responded, "Because now the people are tired and it's time for a change. That's why, and we're tired of our family members being hash-tagged. We're tired of us getting killed, we're tired of getting beat on. We're just tired of it. Enough is enough".

There are some who believe that now is a unique time to push for change. Hayden M. Greene is the director of Multicultural Affairs at Manhattan College. "We are experiencing something not likely to be repeated," said Greene. "We have a perfect storm of occurrences." He points out that, in the past, many protests have not been consistent because people had to get back to work and be content with one or two concessions while pushing for change.

However, because of the quarantine and many people being out of work, the push for change through protests has engaged a wider spectrum of society. "We see people around

the world protesting, all 50 states. We see the youth of the protestors, the diversity," Greene said.

He points to a key demographic in the efforts to combat racism. "Just as sexism has to be eliminated by men, racism has to be stomped out by those who present themselves as white," he said.

Assemblyman Blake remembers being harassed by the local police while he was a teenager attending DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx. Now, he gets the opportunity to pass laws that protect communities of color. "We saw a modern-lynching with George Floyd. People try to make excuses about Eric Garner, about Andrew [Kearse], about Tamir [Rice], about Trayvon [Martin]," Blake said at the press conference.

"You literally saw a white officer put his knee on the neck for eight minutes and forty-six seconds and kill a human being, clearly because he's black. And if you have a soul you couldn't watch that and be the same. It took too long for us to get here but people turn pain into promise because of that."

Norwood News reached out to the NYPD for comment on this story but did not receive a response.

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Six Bronx Catholic Schools Abruptly Close

(continued from page 1)

would not reopen. It is expected that the actions taken will ensure the overall fiscal stability and long-term viability of New York Catholic schools.

"The coronavirus public health crisis has had a devastating financial impact on Catholic school families and the greater Archdiocese," a statement from the archdiocese read. "Mass unemployment and continuing health concerns have resulted in families' inability to pay their current tuition, and a significantly low rate of re-registration for the fall, while months of cancelled public masses and fundraising for scholarships have seen a loss of parish contributions which traditionally help support the schools."

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, said in a written statement that children were always the most innocent victims of any crisis, and that the COVID-19 pandemic was no exception. "Too many have lost parents and grandparents to this insidious virus, and now thousands will not see their beloved school again," he wrote, adding he was grateful to the various pastors and principals who were all on board in finding schools nearby for the affected children to continue their Catholic education.

He acknowledged the announcement came late, considering schools have been out for a few weeks already, and he regretted the unconventional timing. "We could not have anticipated the effects of the coronavirus, and when it became apparent that some schools were in trouble, our team worked non-stop attempting to increase enrollment, and get some of these wonderful schools off the list so

they could reopen in the fall," the cardinal said, adding that he was pleased that a number of schools originally thought to be in trouble would finally be able to remain open in September.

A review of the websites of the six impacted Bronx schools found no announcements regarding the schools' closures, and when contacted by *Norwood News*, no direct responses were provided. TJ McCormack, Director of Communications and Public Relations for the Catholic schools in New York later said that press enquiries would be handled by his office.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Anisha Applewhite, whose younger son was scheduled to enter the 2nd grade in September at St. John's School in Kingsbridge, said parents of the children attending the school were completely confused, shocked and blind-sided by the announcement, which was communicated to them via two letters last week.

The first letter dated July 9 outlined that the school would be closing, offered sympathy to parents and explanations for the reasons why, and a promise to work with them to find alternative arrangements for their children in other Catholic schools.

An extract read, "Let me assure you that your child will be able to continue receiving a quality Catholic education, and we can guarantee a seat for every child at a Catholic school. Directors of Enrollment will be assigned to you to help identify an appropriate school for your child to enroll in for the 2020-2021 school year". The letter was signed by Michael J. Deegan, Superintendent of Schools Archdiocese of New York.

(continued on next page)

Six Bronx Catholic Schools Abruptly Close

(continued from previous page)

Applewhite, who has an older, 20-year-old son who previously attended St. John's School also, said the school is one of the last standing of Catholic faith in the area and that the closure leaves children in the area displaced. "The other Catholic schools away from the community are already at capacity," she said in a phone interview with *Norwood News*, adding that there had been no prior indications from the archdiocese that the school was struggling financially.

"It's our fear that the Archdiocese has misused the funds given to them by the State to pay off past debt from sexual allegations, and or they have sold St John's building to a realtor who will capitalize (gentrification)," Applewhite wrote in an earlier email to *Norwood News*.

We put these allegations to the schools' PR representative, TJ McCormack, who said that no decision has yet been taken with regard to the impacted school buildings or property, and that the top priority has been finding alternative arrangements for the impacted students and teachers. Regarding the allegation of misuse of funds, McCormack referred us to Joseph Zwilling, who is the PR person for the Archdiocese of New York. As of the time of publication, attempts to reach Mr Zwilling were unsuccessful.

In his statement, the cardinal said that Catholic schools will always be "the little guy" and that the schools "will never enjoy the fiscal muscle enjoyed by government schools which are provided billions of tax dollars". He called on elected officials in Washington to "do the right thing" in order to avoid any more closures and provide more assistance for Catholic schools under the HEROES Act currently making its way through Congress.

The New York Daily News reported on July 12 that current per-pupil spending in New York is roughly \$23,000 per year, and that these 20 New York Catholic schools save taxpayers approximately \$80 million per year.

A second letter dated July 10 stated that St. John's school would not reopen for the 2020-2021 school year, leaving parents to wonder if this meant the announced closure was finally just temporary or permanent.

The letter acknowledged parents' sorrow at the school's closure and offered financial assistance to help with the search for a new school on condition that parents would choose a Catholic school. "We hope that we might ease your family's transition to a new school, by extending Transition Aid of \$1,000 per student to you if you

enroll at a participating Regional Catholic school," the letter read.

The letter described how the non-refundable adjustment would be applied to families' Smart tuition billing accounts in four installments during the school year, with the final adjustment applied to the last bill of the 2020-2021 academic year. The letter was signed once again by Deegan.

Applewhite said that the problem with the proposed arrangement was that the nearest schools to St. John's i.e. St. Margaret's and St. Gabriel's, were too far away and that taking into account her work location and daily commute, it would require her arranging early morning daycare for her son before school, which she would then have to pay for. She was also concerned that as those schools are already filling up, they will be unable to meet social distancing requirements if they take on more students.

For his part, McCormack said that the absorbing Catholic schools would ensure that social distancing requirements would be met, but that this also depended on any changes to State issued guidance which may be received between now and the beginning of the school year.

Meanwhile, the 2018-19 State education department examination results show that Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of New York outperformed State and City schools in performance growth over each of the past five years, and Catholic school students outpaced State and City public school students in terms of the percentage of students meeting or exceeding proficiency standards in both Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA).

Additionally, results show that over 99 percent of Catholic high school seniors graduate, and 99 percent of those graduates go on to college or post-secondary education.

In reference to the closing schools, the cardinal said, "Please know that none of the schools that are closing were "failing" schools. Each provided an exceptional academic experience and we owe it to the proud 200-year heritage of Catholic education to carry on".

Applewhite said St John's has been the face of Kingsbridge Riverdale for decades and that parents have already begun the process of contesting the closure. "We have created a petition and have already notified all news agencies in hopes they bring the chaos this has caused to light. We will not be silenced or manipulated into believing everything that was stated in the letter. If it means we protest and write letters, we will. We are not leaving without a fight," she said.

Commanding Officer Quits Over Police Reform



Photo by David Greene

FORMER COMMANDING OFFICER of the 46th precinct, Richard Brea waves goodbye to fellow cops after he quit the job in protest over recent police reforms.

By DAVID GREENE

Hundreds of NYPD police officers filled Ryer Avenue as Commanding Officer Deputy Inspector Richard Brea walked out of the 46th precinct for the last time on Friday, June 26. Brea resigned from the NYPD after 28 years in protest over recent police reforms, including the disbanding of the anti-crime unit.

In his farewell speech, Brea chastised elected officials for some of the

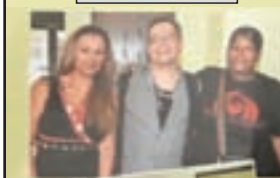
reforms and for not backing cops during the ongoing protests against the NYPD. He also said that top brass at 1 Police Plaza were unprepared for the night of looting in the Bronx on the night of June 1, and that he had been given little guidance on how to get illegal guns and fireworks off the streets without the anti-crime unit. Deputy Inspector Joseph Seminara has been named the 46th precinct's new Commanding Officer.

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