



NORWOOD NEWS

Vol 33, No 10 • PUBLISHED BY MOSHOLU PRESERVATION CORPORATION • AUGUST 27-SEPTEMBER 9, 2020

POTENTIAL STRIKE AT FOODTOWN *Concerns Over Meat Freshness*



Photo by David Greene.

FOODTOWN DELI WORKERS supported by union members from the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), Local 342 participate in a one-day strike outside Foodtown on 204th Street in Norwood on June 29, 2020.

By **DAVID GREENE**

Following a previous walk-out by Foodtown deli workers in June 2020, after employment contract negotiations broke down with employer, PSK Supermarkets, in Mineola, Long Island, a further strike is now planned for Aug. 27. The strike

could affect as many as 67 workers at 11 stores across the metropolitan area, if a deal is not brokered in the coming days.

On Friday, Aug. 21, union officials from United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), Local 342, were seen handing out flyers outside the

Foodtown store at 283 East 204th Street in Norwood, as they explained to customers why a strike may go ahead, if a deal is not reached with Noah and Dan Katz, the owners of PSK. Denis Henry, union representative of Local 342, said, "We're in the process of nego-

tiating a contract. We have negotiations [planned] on the 26th so far this month [August], but we don't know what's going to come about from that."

Henry added, "But if we don't get what we want, we're going to go on strike the follow-

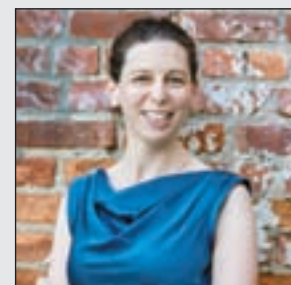
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NORWOOD NEWS

Vol. 33, No. 10

Norwood News is published
bi-weekly on Thursdays by
Mosholu Preservation Corporation (MPC)
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Public and Community Meetings

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, the **52nd PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meetings have been held via ZOOM. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, Sept 4 at 6 p.m. ZOOM details will be circulated ahead of the meeting.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 7** committee meetings have been held via ZOOM. The next full Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 23 at 6.30 p.m. ZOOM details will be circulated ahead of the meeting.



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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week, we asked readers for their thoughts on growing calls to remove statues of Christopher Columbus, and some of the founding fathers of America from public spaces.



I feel they should be taken down and they could be placed in a museum. The history should be told of all of the evil acts these people committed, because sadly, only the positive comes out. In my opinion most of these people, like Columbus and the founding fathers, did more evil than good, not like Martin Luther King, who was not perfect and made mistakes, but he did more good than bad, in my opinion.

Felix Cepeda,
Castle Hill



I think the statues belong in a museum and not as public, iconic, heroic statues. They should be offensive to everybody because they represent a shameful history of brutality. It shouldn't be inspirational or iconic but shouldn't be hidden either. I don't think they should be in public places. I think they should be in a museum. If you're talking about statues as iconic heroes, I don't think that they were necessarily heroes. Their behavior was not heroic to everyone.

Karen Gormandy,
Inwood, Manhattan



They should leave history alone. I think it would be a good idea to place a plaque, stating exactly who the person was, and what he's done in his life.

Delores Nunez,
Baychester



The admiral, the reason we call him "admiral" is because, like it or not, he still brought Christianity and the European cultural identity to this part of the world, and with the perceived bad, there's also the perceived good, including the perceived good of medicine, law, philosophy and religion that modernized and united our country. The most important thing here is that history must remain, we must learn and educate ourselves on all of the historical facts.

Egidio Sementilli,
Pelham Bay



They were thinking of not only taking down the Columbus statue, but all the other statues; I mean it's ridiculous. I say leave them there and learn from the history from them so we can move on. But this young generation, they want to take everything down and destroy everything. Instead of erasing history, it would be a good idea to add an asterisk with some of the history because as future generations start to learn about them, they can actually use that as a positive to try and not have history repeat itself.

Joseph Padilla,
Belmont



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Special Election Likely As Cohen Gets Judgeship Nod

By SILE MOLONEY

It was a case of third time lucky for City Council Member Andrew Cohen when, along with Bronx civil court judges, the Hon. Kim Wilson and the Hon. Blanka Perez, he was finally nominated for a Bronx Supreme Court judgeship at the Bronx democratic party judicial convention on Aug. 10. All three candidates go forward to compete in a general election on Nov. 3 and are expected to win in all three races in the predominantly democratic borough.

If Cohen wins a seat, it will most likely trigger a special election to find his replacement in the 11th City Council District, which covers Bedford Park, Kingsbridge, Riverdale, Norwood, Van Cortlandt Village, Wakefield and Woodlawn, and the race is already heating up fast among the six declared candidates.

In accepting his nomination, Cohen said he had been nervous the whole day and hadn't wanted to jinx anything by preparing a speech. Nonetheless, he said he was profoundly grateful for the support he had received from so many colleagues across Bronx county in the lead up to the nomination which he said meant the world to him. "I'm going to use that support on the bench to make sure that Bronxites get the justice that they are entitled to, that they deserve," he said.

Overall, there are 324 justices of the New York Supreme Court system, which itself comprises 62 courts, one for each county, including the Bronx Supreme Court. Justices are elected to 14-year terms. To appear on the ballot in the general election, candidates must first be nominated by the respective party's judicial delegates at partisan conventions. These judicial delegates themselves are, in turn, elected by each political party, and as such, hold substantial sway. The candidates need to proactively garner the support of such delegates to secure a nomination.

Under normal circumstances, Cohen's 11th District Council seat was due to become vacant in June 2021 when he reaches the end of his term. However, rumors that he would ascend to the Bronx Supreme Court bench have been swirling since 2018, as previously reported by *Norwood News*.

Indeed, reports abounded at the time that were Cohen to receive the judgeship nomination and win, it would leave the door open for Eric Dinowitz, son of Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, to run for Cohen's seat. The inference was that with Eric Dinowitz primed and ready to win the seat with the help of his father's supporters, it would ensure establishment democrats retained control of the Bronx Democratic Party.

As it turned out, Eric Dinowitz, a special education teacher and a member of Bronx Community Board 8, was not the first candidate to announce his intention to run for the seat in 2018. That



Photo by Sile Moloney

(L TO R) The Honorable Kim Adair Wilson, City Council Member Andrew Cohen, and the Honorable Judge Blanka Perez, all of whom were nominated to be justices on the Bronx Supreme Court at the Bronx democratic judicial convention, held at Monroe College on Monday, Aug. 10, 2020.

fell to Dan Padernacht, local attorney and also a member of Bronx Community Board 8. In fact, both Padernacht and Eric Dinowitz announced their intention to run for the seat within two weeks of each other but in the end, Cohen was not nominated that year, rendering the entire point moot.

In fact, when former State Sen. Jeff Klein was beaten by then candidate, and now State Sen. Alessandra Biaggi, in a State primary the same year, it was rumored that the judgeship slated for Cohen would go instead to another democrat, Klein. However, this also turned out not to be the case.

Cohen's name was floated once more for a judgeship in 2019, but again, he was not nominated. It is not clear why, but Cohen told *Norwood News* in April 2019 that, at that stage, he was considering a run for Bronx Borough President.

At the 2020 convention, which was held at Monroe College, Cohen was formally nominated by Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez, who later announced on Aug. 22 that *she* was running for Bronx Borough President. Fernandez welcomed the nomination of the two female candidates to the bench in Perez and Wilson before formally nominating Cohen, saying, "We cannot forget those who do support women, and have always put every constituent, every person in their presence, in their life to the utmost consideration, and that person is my good friend, my colleague, Andy Cohen."

Fernandez credited Cohen with being one of the first people who knew her name when she was starting out as a staffer in the early stages of her political career. She added that he always treated people in his constituency who may have been less visible with courtesy, respect and diligence.

In his acceptance speech, Cohen made special mention of Jeffrey Dinowitz,

who he previously worked alongside from 2001 to 2002 in the assemblyman's Albany office, drafting and analyzing legislation, and helping to provide constituency services. "I really want to thank my assemblyman, Jeff Dinowitz, who has been a friend and a partner in government and really, I'm going to miss working together in the way that we do," he said. "We've accomplished so much together for the people we represent, and it's been a privilege to work with you."

After the convention, State Sen. Jamaal T. Bailey said good quality judges were needed on the bench. "We also need quality judges of a diverse background," he said. "You need the right people with the right mentality to properly interpret those laws." Referring to Cohen, he said, "He's been a phenomenal colleague in government, and I think he'll do great things on the bench."

Meanwhile, in terms of his own plans for the future as he approaches the end of his term, Bailey said he had no particular plans other than continuing to serve his constituents by implementing sound policy and ensuring they had access to testing and appropriate PPE to stem the tide of COVID.

News of Cohen's nomination quickly spread throughout the borough after the convention, propelling the existing 11th District City Council candidates to step up their campaigns, and prompting one more candidate to join the race.

One of the first to release a formal statement on Cohen's nomination was Eric Dinowitz who thanked the councilman for his service to the Northwest Bronx and for being a strong progressive voice for working families and seniors. He then reminded his followers that he was running for Cohen's seat and said, "I look forward to asking the voters for their support in a March special

election."

Norwood News reached out to both the Bronx and the New York City Board of Elections offices to ascertain if a March special election date was set in stone.

Based on the June elections, the results of a March special election may not be known until May 2021 if voting is carried out by mail. To date, we have not received any feedback from the Board of Elections. Cohen's office said the special election date would be determined by the mayor once Cohen's seat is vacated.

Norwood News reached out to the mayor's office for more insight on this. We also asked who will represent the 11th District constituents between January and May if Cohen gets elected in November, and starts his new role on Jan. 1, 2021, as is required. As of the date of publication, we have not received a response.

Meanwhile, Dan Padernacht also issued a statement the day after the convention, referencing Cohen's nomination and the likelihood of a special election. "An informed electorate is an empowered electorate," he said, adding, "The date of the election is determined by the date that Council Member Cohen chooses to resign from his current role."

This suggests that, should he win the judgeship race in November, Cohen could even vacate his City Council seat *prior* to his expected start date on the bench on Jan. 1. Padernacht added, "We don't yet know the date of the election, but we urge residents to take time to learn about the candidates asking to represent them."

Norwood News asked Padernacht if the timing of the election made any difference to his campaign at this stage given he has been campaigning for as long as Eric Dinowitz has, even if the other challengers have not. "The challenge of any special election is decreased voter turnout," he said. "Beyond that, our campaign is ready to roll out our vision to address the pressing needs of those struggling each day in our district."

Jessica Haller is one of two female candidates running in the 11th District. "I'm thankful for Council Member Andrew Cohen's leadership, and congratulate him on this appointment," she told *Norwood News*. "Our district is confronting a lot of connected issues and I am ready to tackle them with the backing of the people. I look forward to continuing the many conversations we're already having with voters across the district about how we make the Bronx equitable, sustainable, and resilient. I'm ready to deliver for the Bronx, no matter when the election may be."

Meanwhile, when contacted for comment, candidate Dionel Then said,

(continued on page 10)

NEWS BRIEFS

By **SÍLE MOLONEY**

The Love Legacy Chapel Feed a Thousand

Members of The Love Legacy Chapel, located at 2500 St. Raymond's Avenue in Parkchester, began an ambitious, "Feed a Thousand" campaign in early July with half a dozen volunteers handing out 200 meals to hungry Bronxites. They held their most recent event on Sunday, Aug. 17, at Westchester Square and eventually hope to feed 1,000 people each week. The church purchases food through donations, and food is also donated directly through partnerships with local restaurants. It is currently operating without help from local officials. Anyone wishing to learn more about the Love Legacy Chapel or its Feed a Thousand campaign, can contact the church at 1 (888) 309-5552 or visit their website at: <http://lovelegacy-chapel.org>.

Vote-by-Mail Legislation Passed

On Aug. 20, a bill sponsored by Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz and State Senator Alessandra Biaggi became law and temporarily expands New York voters' ability to vote by mail in upcoming elections, including the presidential election in November, and other elections taking place in 2021. The new law temporarily alters the definition of "illness" with respect to absentee voting eligibility to include the "risk of contracting or spreading a disease that may cause illness to the voter, or to other members of the public," such as in the case of the coronavirus. The law previously restricted eligibility for absentee ballots to just those with temporary or permanent illness or disability, in addition to those absent from their residence during an election, such as military personnel. A State constitutional amendment, which requires a statewide popular vote, to permanently change the law is slated

Bronxites Rally to Save Jerome Station Post Office

By **SÍLE MOLONEY**

A small but lively protest was held on Saturday morning, Aug. 22, to save Jerome Station Post Office, located at 2540 Jerome Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights, from potential closure. Local resident, Pereta Rodriguez Ph.D., who said she relies on the post office for essential mail, initially asked three people to join her in saving her local branch, in solidarity with others around the country as part of a national day of protest to save the United States Postal Service. "I wanted to make sure that everyone knew what was at stake," Rodriguez said.

"It's not just the ballots, and there's nothing political about your mail. There's nothing political about your medicine, and there's nothing political about social security checks." However, none of the three could make it at the last minute, and so she enlisted the help of Rachel Bradshaw, the soon-to-be president of North West Democrats for Change. Bradshaw, who is also the current community engagement committee chair of Fordham Hill Owners Corporation, quickly rallied a group of about ten people who duly showed up to lend their support on the day.

Rodriguez said as they rallied outside the post office, their efforts were met with thumbs up by passersby and words of encouragement from customers who were making their way in and out of the building. Some even joined them. The protestors carried signs, some of which read, "Save our Post Office. We need our Mail, Checks, Medicine, Postal ballots."



Photo courtesy of Rachel Bradshaw
PERETA RODRIGUEZ, PHD, (center) joins Rachel Bradshaw (right) and a colleague at a protest outside Jerome Station Post Office at 2540 Jerome Avenue in the Kingsbridge Heights section of the Bronx on Saturday, August 22, 2020.

Bradshaw said that aside from the recent, nationwide controversy over lack of funding for the post office system, she had been concerned about the state of her local post office on Jerome Avenue for quite some time. "It could use a makeover," Bradshaw said. "It could use more staff as is. Northwest Bronx Democrats for Change were very concerned if the post office didn't get the funding - what would happen to those staff members that are already there, and just how much it would affect the community in general."

The Washington Post reported on Aug. 22 that more than 800 community demonstrations at post offices across the nation took place on Saturday as part of a day of action organized against controversial changes to mailing operations. In recent weeks, aside

from the inconvenience of dealing with delayed mail and medicines, citizens have become increasingly concerned that their mail-in ballots will not be received in time to vote in the presidential election in November.

Meanwhile, in Washington D.C., emergency coronavirus relief legislation had been stalled, including funding for USPS, and President Donald Trump had voiced concerns that widespread voting-by-mail would lead to voter fraud, though this assertion has since been discounted. Politico later reported on Aug. 23 that House Democrats passed a bill on Aug. 22 that would provide USPS with \$25 billion in emergency funding, and block operational changes deployed by Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, a known supporter of the president.

Back in the Bronx, Bradshaw said that one postal worker informed her group that other Bronx protests took place on Grand Concourse, and at the Kingsbridge post office. As they protested, Bradshaw said the group observed just how much the Jerome Station post office is used, adding that it needs to be made wheelchair accessible and needs an aesthetic makeover. "Because of the age demographic, we do most of our stuff, of course, electronically but I grew up going to the post office," she said. "The post office is still a way of life for all of us. It's still a way of life for my mom. We still definitely need the post office. We're just going to keep up on this to just ensure that that post office in general is getting what it needs."

for January 2022.

Torres Wins 15th Congressional Race

After a lengthy ballot count, which included an unprecedented number of absentee ballot votes, City Councilman Ritchie Torres emerged victorious among 11 candidates in New York City's 15th district congressional democratic primary race, winning 32.2 percent of the votes. The win, which was announced on Aug. 4, brings Torres one step closer to becoming the first LGBTQ Afro-Latino member of Congress if he wins the general election in November. Incumbent Congressman, José Serrano (D), who was first elected in 1990, did not seek re-election for the South Bronx seat, and is due to retire in the coming months.

Youth Rally Against School Policing

Sistas and Brothas United (SBU), the youth organizing arm of the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, organized a rally on Saturday, Aug. 22 to take action against school policing, and what the organization says are practices and policies that criminalize young people in schools. SBU said since its foundation, it has been working to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline, and organizing to eradicate suspensions, arrests, metal detectors, and school safety agents in schools, all of which the organization says pushes young people out of school and into the prison system.

Mural Underway at Jacobi Hospital

A mural, entitled "Care" is underway at

Jacobi Hospital with staff painting the first panels on Friday, Aug 21. It will ultimately be pieced together and fixed to the wall behind the Rotunda building to promote greater neighborhood wellness, and help build trust and engagement between the community and the hospital. It will depict how the beauty of a delicate and fragile flower expresses life, new beginnings and hope, while two hands help and protect it while it grows. The key theme is highlighting the ideas of togetherness and inclusion. It is believed the mural will inspire the hope, joy and happiness of being together. Work on the mural will continue in the coming weeks and an unveiling will be held on Sept. 3.

No Criminal Charges in Fatal Police Shooting

Bronx District Attor-

ney Darcel D. Clark announced on Aug. 12 that a year-long investigation into the fatal shooting of Kawaski Trawick inside his non-profit housing apartment at 1616 Grand Avenue in the Morris Heights section of the Bronx by a member of the NYPD on April 14, 2019 resulted in no criminal charges being brought. Clark said although the facts did not warrant a criminal prosecution, the event demands a thoughtful review of police procedures and training techniques, and the community must do a better job of providing appropriate support for residents and staff of supportive housing services in the City. The formal report detailing the investigation will be released to the public in the coming weeks.

CRIME FILE

BY SÍLE MOLONEY



Man Arrested for Stabbing Mother with Baby

On Aug. 25, pursuant to an ongoing investigation into a non-fatal stabbing incident in the Van Cortlandt Village section of the Bronx in mid-July, Carlos Gonzalez has been arrested and charged with attempted murder. On July 14, 2020 at approximately 7.11 p.m., in front of 3343 Sedgwick Avenue in Van Cortlandt Village, a 21-year-old female victim was walking with her ex-boyfriend, Carlos Gonzalez, 25, of Manhattan, while pushing their infant son in a baby stroller. A verbal argument ensued at which point Gonzalez allegedly placed the woman in a choke hold, dragged her and the baby, still in the stroller, to the ground and proceeded to stab her multiple times throughout the body before fleeing the location. EMS responded to the location and transported both the victim and the infant to Saint Barnabas Hospital, where they were listed as being in a stable condition. Gonzalez is presumed innocent unless and until

proven guilty.

18-Year-Old Female Shot in Bedford Park

Police are looking for two men who they say shot an unidentified 18-year-old woman as she was walking with her boyfriend in Bedford Park. The incident was reported at 3.09 a.m. on Sunday, Aug. 23, at Bainbridge Avenue and East 199th Street. The NYPD said two unknown men exited a vehicle at the location and discharged several rounds. The victim was shot in the right arm and was transported to St. Barnabas Hospital in a stable condition. The shooters fled in the vehicle and police have no suspects, but ballistic evidence was recovered from the scene. Police said it's unknown if the victim was the intended target. At the time the incident was reported, they were looking for a black Toyota sedan, occupied by four men.

Missing 75-Year-Old Man

The NYPD is searching for a 75-year-old man reported

missing on Friday, Aug. 21 in the 50th police precinct.

Raymond Morris of 6355 Broadway in the Riverdale section of the Bronx was last seen on Tuesday, Aug. 18, 2020, leaving his residence at approximately 10:30 a.m. He is described as a Black man, 5 feet, 8 inches tall, weighing 150 pounds, is bald and has brown eyes. His clothing description at the time of his disappearance is unknown. A photo description is available at the NYPD.

Robbery of Pharmacy in Fordham Manor

The NYPD is searching for four unidentified men in connection with a burglary of a pharmacy at 229 East Kingsbridge Road that took place in the 52nd precinct in the Fordham Manor section of the Bronx.

On Tuesday, June 1, at 11 p.m., a group of unidentified men broke into the pharmacy by forcing the security gate, and once inside, removed an undetermined amount of prescription medication. They

then fled the area. A video of the suspects is available at the NYPD.

Missing 14-Year-Old Girl

The NYPD is searching for a missing teenager. Yessica Nivarrez Castro, 14, was last seen on Monday, Aug. 17 inside her home at 323 East Mosholu Parkway North in the Norwood section of the Bronx at approximately 11 p.m.

She is described as a female, Hispanic, 5 feet, 2 inches tall, weighs 95 pounds, and was last seen wearing all dark clothing. A photo description is available at the NYPD.

Suspects Wanted For Three Robberies

The NYPD is searching for two individuals wanted in connection to three burglaries which took place in the 50th precinct. On Sunday, July 19, 2020, between 00.30 a.m. and 5 a.m., an unidentified man entered the Palmas Restaurant, located at 240 West 231st Street in the Kingsbridge area of the

Bronx through a locked rear door. Once inside, he removed \$200 and a Samsung tablet and fled in an unknown direction. One of the men was who was wearing a red shirt removed the property. The other wore a white shirt.

On Tuesday, July 21 at approximately 1.30 a.m., inside of a commercial laundromat located at 215 West 230 Street in the Marble Hill section of the Bronx, two unidentified men broke the glass on the front door to gain access to the location. A man in a red shirt entered the location and removed \$1,300 from the register and tip jar, and an unknown amount of cleaning supplies while the other man kept watch.

On Monday, July 27 between the hours of 3.30 a.m. and 6.45 a.m., an unidentified man entered the Dale Diner located at 189 West 231 Street in the Marble Hill section of the Bronx, using a crowbar. He also used it to break the cash register before removing \$500. A photo and video of the suspects are available at the NYPD.



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Special Election Likely As Cohen Gets Judgeship Nod

(continued from page 6)

“Council Member Cohen has been eyeing this judgeship for a while now and I am happy he has been nominated, despite putting my campaign at a disadvantage.” He added, “He has served our district well and is a role model for the Northwest Bronx. As far as the pending special election goes, because of COVID, the election will be a litmus test for the rest of the city, as the Bronx has two special elections already in the works. This is exciting to say the least, and I will be out canvassing and spreading the word and continuing to meet our neighbors on a daily basis.”

Abigail Martin, another candidate also provided a comment, saying, “The power brokers in The Bronx know full well how unsafe it is to campaign during a pandemic. They’re doing everything they can to schedule an early election to make it harder for voters to hear from all the candidates.” She added, “So, they either don’t care about people’s health or they don’t care about the democratic process. The people of the Northwest Bronx deserve better.”

The day after the convention, on Aug. 11, Marcos Sierra also announced his candidacy in the 11th District race. *Norwood News* reached out to Sierra for his views on the issue of party politics within the Bronx democratic party. “Historically, special elections have favored candidates endorsed by ‘the machine’ due to low voter turn-out,”

he said. “This is but one of the critical reasons that voters need to get actively involved in the local political process.”

His remarks were echoed by some others, like State Sen. Alessandra Biaggi who was quoted in *The NY Daily News* on Aug. 12, giving her reaction to the debate. “I don’t know that it benefits anybody to have two members of the same family in the same area at the same time,” she said. “I don’t know how that’s not a negative. This whole entire move is so predictable, it’s almost boring,” she added.

On the question of a special election taking place, Cohen’s office later said that as a judicial nominee, he would not be able to comment on political matters, and with regard to the judgeship nomination process, his office said he did not have a say in the decision-making process. His office acknowledged, however, that he had expressed his interest in the judgeship for several years, independent of any campaign.

Norwood News also reached out to Assemblyman Dinowitz to address the rumors directly that Cohen’s nomination would help his son’s bid for a City Council seat.

He said that Cohen was well-known and well-respected across the entire borough of the Bronx for his level-headedness, record of building consensus, and legal resume. “That is what the delegates based their decision on,” he said, referring to the open vote at the

judicial convention, and adding that three term-limited council members had sought higher offices this year, including Cohen.

“In addition, it should be noted that Council Member Cohen, Democratic District Leader Eric Dinowitz, and myself did not vote at last night’s meeting,” the assemblyman said. “Alternates voted in our place, as the record shows. Cynics will always find something to criticize, but I did everything I could to inspire confidence in our judicial selection process, and it is unequivocal that Andy won this nomination through his own hard work and qualifications.”

As for the special election, Dinowitz said that assuming Cohen wins the judgeship race, the voters will decide who replaces him. “Frankly, I reject the supposition that a special election favors any particular candidate for City Council over another,” he said. “There are six people who are currently running, some of whom have already been campaigning for a while now, including three who declared two years ago, and another who declared last year, and the decision will ultimately rest with the voters to decide who among them should be chosen to represent our community.” He added that he felt sorry for those who saw nefarious intent behind every action. “It must be exhausting, and I think their efforts would be better spent getting to know the people of the Bronx in person instead of inventing

gossip for the Twitter-sphere.”

The Bronx Supreme Court generally handles civil matters beyond the monetary limits of the lower courts’ jurisdiction, divorce, separation and annulment proceedings, and criminal prosecutions of felonies.

In terms of his qualifications, in addition to his legal experience as an attorney in various capacities, including at Civil Court, as a City Council member, Cohen previously served as chair of the council committee on mental health, disabilities and addictions, and as chair of the committee on state and federal legislation. He is currently committee chair of consumer affairs and worker protections and has been a member on other committees.

Norwood News asked the councilman, on the night of his nomination, how he saw his future role on the bench. “One of the nice things about being a legislator, versus coming from civil court, is I’ve really had the opportunity to be out with people, to be out in the community, representing people. I think that, right now, that experience is more important than ever - kind of really what’s going to matter so, I’m excited to bring that to the courthouse,” he said.

Regarding his eventual nomination specifically, he said you never know how it’s going to go with judicial politics. “I’m glad it all worked out,” he said.

Foodtown: Possible Strike at 11 Stores, Including Norwood

(continued from page 1)

ing day, the 27th.” He said that workers in the supermarket’s deli department have been working without a contract for the past seven years, though other Local 342 officials said it’s been more like four years.

Henry said that workers who stock food on the store shelves, as well as cashiers would also be walking off the job. However, this statement could not be confirmed with other officials from Local 342 or with officials from the Retail, Wholesale & Department Store Union (RWDSU) Local 338, who signed a five-year contract with PSK Supermarkets in May.

Strike action is not the only controversy surrounding the store. A longtime customer of the 204th Street store who did not want to be identified, complained that the store’s deli department has changed in recent months, saying, “The meat comes in black packages. It’s nasty.” The customer added that sell-by dates are no longer indicated on meat sold at the deli counter. The same customer said he told a store worker, “If I get food poisoning, I’m going to sue the [expletive].”

Asked about the recent change to the deli department’s meat products, Henry said that deli workers informed him that

the store now receives pre-packaged meat from suppliers based far away from the Bronx whereas before, the meat was coming from more local distributors.

“So, they’re getting the meat from Pennsylvania, and God knows where they’re getting it from,” said Henry. “So, in the process of that meat getting here, it takes seven days, and there’s no dates on it, so they put the meat in the freezer, and they bring it back out, and put it in the meat cage [on the deli counter].” He said it was then repackaged for customers.

The deli counter at the 204th Street store is less busy than it has been in the past.

“You don’t know what you’re getting,” Henry said, adding that the recent practice of repackaging the meat for customers began before Foodtown deli workers walked off the job in late June.

Henry added, “If it doesn’t sell in three or four days, they bring it back downstairs, they grind it with other meats, and they sell it as chop meat.”

On Monday, Aug. 24, when asked about the workers’ contract negotiations, Alan, a manager at the Norwood Foodtown store, denied there was any contract dispute with store workers. However, when asked about the allegations regarding the new deli depart-

ment practices, he said, “I can’t say anything.”

During the one-day walkout on June 29, Millagros, a Local 342 representative, said, “We’ve been without a contract for four years now,” referring to the deli counter workers. “They don’t want to give us any wage increases. They want to reduce our medical benefits.” Referring to the risk of contracting the coronavirus, she added, “They refuse to give us hazard pay, and we come out every day and we risk our lives. All we’re asking for is a fair contract.”

When earlier negotiations took place in June, Millagros said that PSK had not been negotiating in good faith and that a moderator had to be brought in.

When asked about the 5-year contract signed in May between PSK and RWDSU, Millagros called it, “lousy.” She added, “They got a 15 cent per hour increase; that’s how much they got.”

During the one-day strike by deli workers in late June, which was also supported at the time by their union, *Norwood News* asked who was serving at the deli counter inside the store given it was open and all the deli workers were outside on the picket line. Millagros replied, “We don’t know because we’re not inside the store.” A stroll through the store on that day found nobody behind

the deli counter.

PSK Supermarkets are believed to own 11 supermarkets in the tri-state area, employing sixty-seven deli workers. Six are employed at the Norwood location. The number of total PSK workers is unknown.

The modernized Foodtown on East 204th Street was rebuilt from scratch after it burned down during a five-alarm blaze that hit the block on Dec. 21, 2009. The market expanded and reopened in early 2011. Since COVID hit, workers say the company put up plexiglass to protect cashiers and customers and it also provides workers with free vitamins.

On Monday, Aug. 24, when Lisa O’Leary, deli worker and secretary / treasurer at Local 342, was asked if members of RWDSU, which represents the non-deli counter store workers, would join her union members in a possible strike, she said, “I don’t know what would happen there. You’d have to ask their union. I’m not saying it’s not true, but of course I don’t talk to the cashiers. But, it’s very possible.”

Repeated attempts were made to reach PSK Supermarkets for comment. *Norwood News* also reached out more than once to contact Noah Katz but did not receive a response.



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Elections 2021: Jessica Haller on Climate, Motherhood and Investment

By SÍLE MOLONEY

With the announcement of Councilmember Andrew Cohen's nomination to the Bronx Supreme Court on Aug. 10, the race to fill his District 11 City Council seat just got a whole lot more urgent.

Currently, there are six candidates vying to replace Cohen, with five having formally declared their intent with the City's Campaign Finance Board. Jessica Haller, a tech entrepreneur, environmentalist and mother of four, announced her candidacy in late January, expecting at that point to spend much of her time in one of her favorite places—outside—knocking on doors. When the coronavirus pandemic hit in early March, she said she quickly had to change tack.

"I probably hosted one of the first ZOOM political events in the country, because we did it really quickly," she said, adding that she was that little bit ahead of the curve because her children's school had closed about two weeks before the statewide PAUSE order went into effect. "I eventually found that they're not so much fun," she said, referring to the ZOOM meetings. "People got 'zoomed' out,"

she added. Instead, Haller switched to hosting composting events, while simultaneously organizing petitions and getting people involved with the City budget discussions, which quickly became a hot topic.

As a climate activist, Haller is running on a campaign centered around sustainability, resilience, and equity. If elected, she said she will use her environmental experience and technical know-how to build sustainable neighborhoods in the Bronx, where she has lived for the last two decades. She also plans to modernize public transit, make buildings energy efficient and resilient, bring 21st century skills to public school children, strengthen community for seniors, and promote economic opportunity for all.

On the last point, she said the way to go about this, especially right now, and even if it seems counter-intuitive, is to repeat the proven success of the New Deal, post-WWII era and invest, rather than cut spending. She advocates for what she calls a type of 'Civilian Conservation Corps'

"Almost like a green jobs kind of investment mechanism where we put people to work in the local economy,"



Photo courtesy of Jessica Haller

JESSICA HALLER IS a candidate in the 11th District City Council race covering the Bronx neighborhoods of Bedford Park, Kingsbridge, Riverdale, Norwood, Van Cortlandt Village, Wakefield, and Woodlawn.

she said. "You invest in the people to build yourself out of the hole that we're in." As an example, she said it wasn't enough to defer rent, but allow a store to go out of business anyway. "That landlord's got to drop the rent," she said. "Get the next entrepreneur in with whatever it is - the hair place, the bookstore, the fruit stand into that vacant lot so that the community can start to recover, and so the landlords have to be incentivized to help kick-start the economy in a way."

Though she considers herself to be the most progressive of the candidates running [as of July], she said she is hesitant to label herself a progressive. "I am probably the most progressive on sustainability and climate, and those issues," Haller said. She is also in favor of taxing the top one percent. "There's no other way," she said. "We cannot cut our way out of this, right? We have to come up with new revenue ideas."

On the other hand, when it comes to allocating funding and resources, she is not a fan of litigating by hashtag, "#DefundthePolice, #CanceltheRents; maybe it's not as simple as #CanceltheRent?" she said, in response to a question about what could be done to help some of the smaller landlords who are struggling to pay their mortgages right now.

"I have a friend who is a small, local, commercial landlord who owns tiny parts of the Bronx," she said. "She's suffering because she's trying to keep her people employed when there's no money coming in, or what

happens when the elevator breaks, or what happens when the taxes have to get paid? So, the #CanceltheRent is not as simple as that. I have some ideas and it would take me to figure out what to do there, but it's definitely not as simple, right?"

When it comes to fundraising, Haller is used to it. "I spent my career asking people for millions of dollars to invest in whacky start-ups - some not so whacky," she said. "Like, 'Hey, can I have \$10 million?' or whatever is very different. So, to say to someone, 'Can you invest in me? And you can't even give me more than \$1,000, and I'd really just like \$175 because that optimizes the match,' I'm able to do that," she said.

In fact, of the five formally declared candidates in the race, Haller trails Eric Dinowitz only, having raised \$55,827 to date, and having spent \$17,456 so far. When it comes to donors, she has 386 contributors with an average donation of \$145 dollars. Around one fifth of those contributions come from donors outside New York City.

By comparison, under one third of Dinowitz's contributions come from donors outside the City, and Dinowitz has fewer contributors at 311, with an average donation of \$236.

Haller is also no stranger to the world of finance, having worked previously in data analysis for MasterCard. However, it is as a climate activist that she found her true calling. Former Vice President Al Gore named her a leader of the Climate Reality Project before "An Inconvenient Truth" became a thing. In that role, she is charged with educating the public on the climate crisis.

In her previous career, she said she helped the Bloomberg administration's \$3 billion Willets Point development understand the impact of climate change on that development so that today it is built to withstand climate and sea level rise.

"When we first saw it, by 2015, it was going to be underwater, and you can't do a \$3 billion development in 2008, and have it to be underwater in four years," she said. "So, that is an indelible mark on the city that I've already made in just being able to think about how do we impact? For me, sustainability is, 'How are we impacting the world?' and the resilience is, 'How do we withstand the way the world comes back at us?'"

(continued on page 18)

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Out & About

Compiled by SÍLE MOLONEY

Events

The Bronx Night Market is the largest event series in Uptown, The Bronx, and Westchester County. It attracts thousands every Saturday, May through October, to Fordham Plaza. The series, celebrating culture and cuisine, represents the city's diverse offerings and supports up-and-coming food concepts, all the while encouraging visitors from the greater New York area and beyond to explore our borough. Join for the best Saturday you can imagine on Saturday, Sept. 5, 2020 from 12:00 PM – 8:00 PM EDT at 1 Fordham Plaza, including 50 plus food vendors, a robust musical line-up, a beer garden, all family activities, pet friendly raffles, giveaways, and tasting tables and it's all free!

Kingsbridge Riverdale Van Cortlandt Development Corporation bring Open

Street Sundays to Johnson Avenue, and welcomes people to dine in the street from 12 noon until 9 p.m. on Sunday Sept. 6. Located between 235th and 236th Streets, Johnson Avenue will be closed to traffic and restaurants will be open for outdoor and socially distanced seating. A mask is required for the safety of others. For further information, contact info@krvc.org, KRVDC.org/events.

Exhibits

NYC Cultural Affairs and Gallery 505, located at 505 W. 236th Street, Bronx, NY 10463 (505BX.org) present "Impressions and Reactions," an art exhibit running from July 27 to Sept. 4 featuring artist, Alex "Fdez" Fernandez. Viewings are by appointment only on Wednesdays from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Email lindakrvc@gmail.com for appointments.

Educational Events

The Bronx Toastmasters Club of Riverdale will be having a meeting on Wednesday, Aug. 26 at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom Video Conferencing. Please RSVP to BronxToastmastersClub@gmail.com. <https://www.bronxtoastmastersclub.org> for more information.

A Bronx Safe School Reopening Q&A session will be held virtually on Thursday, Aug. 27, at 7 p.m. Panelists include: Dr. Kaliris Salas-Ramirez, Ph.D, Neuroscientist, Assistant Medical Professor CCNY, Stuart Chen-Hayes, Professor & Program Coordinator, School Counseling, Aixa Rodriguez, Bronx Educators United for Justice Founder, ENL teacher, MORE steering committee member, Tom Sheppard, Parent Representative at NYCDOE Panel For Education Policy, Farah Depigne, CEC 8 President, Kiara Abreu, 11th grade student at Mott Hall V. Please register at: <https://tinyurl.com/yxmm49cb>

Music

Capital One City Parks Foundation SummerStage is New York's largest free outdoor performing arts festival. SummerStage annually presents approximately 100 performances in 15-18 parks throughout the five boroughs. With performances ranging from American pop, Latin, world music,

dance and theater, SummerStage fills a vital niche in New York City's summer arts festival landscape. This year, the events are virtual. All summer long, SummerStage has been highlighting different genres that were born in, or deeply represent New York culture - Mondays: Contemporary Dance, Tuesdays: Global, Wednesdays: Indie Rock, Thursdays: Latin, Fridays: Hip Hop and Saturdays: Jazz. The SummerStage team has spent months finding ways to make the most of this summer and remains committed to bringing free, accessible, and diverse arts programming to New York City. For more information, visit www.SummerStage.org. #PeopleSpeakSundays is a continuation of the SummerStage Anywhere debut of "The People Speak" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWe8vD_mXNo&feature=youtu.be, a collaboration with VOICES. Want your voice to be heard? SummerStage invites you to join us on our digital stage and to be a part of the conversation! We'll be featuring the voices of our SummerStage audience each Sunday throughout the summer on our SummerStage social channels: <https://www.instagram.com/summerstage/>, <https://www.facebook.com/SummerStageNYC/>, <https://www.twitch.tv/summerstagenyc> <https://www.youtube.com/user/NYCSummerStage>

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Summertime Exercise in the Time of Social Distancing

By SHIRLEY SYMISTER

Exercise is very important for overall health. It can help you to lose weight, stay at a healthy weight, lower the risk of some diseases and help with managing emotional health.

With gyms closed and social distancing in place, finding a time and place to exercise is more difficult than ever before. However, there are still ways to get the exercise you need this summer, regardless of where you are:

Get outdoors!

Check out the Williamsbridge Oval and Van Cortlandt Park in Norwood, where there is enough room to exercise and still stay six feet from

other people.

Workout at home with these free resources:

YMCANYC.org - free live and recorded strength and cardio exercise classes, classes for seniors, and dance classes by the YMCA

[Walk at Home](#) - videos on YouTube by Leslie Sansone, a personal trainer

[Go4Life](#) - exercise videos on YouTube created by The National Institute on Aging

[Move Your Way](#) - exercise tips on YouTube created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

While building your COVID-era exercise practice, keep in mind these

recommendations:

Get at least 150 minutes of aerobic activity per week.

Aerobic activity, or cardio, is when the body's large muscles move over a period of time. During aerobic exercise, your heart rate increases, and you may feel warm and breathe faster.

Get your cardio in by walking quickly, riding a bike slowly, jogging, running, or participating in workout classes.

Make sure to work on your muscle strength two or more days a week.

Try strengthening muscles by

lifting weights, doing push-ups, or using resistance bands.

Stay hydrated

When doing exercise, especially during warm weather, it is important to be careful and not overwork your body in the heat. Be sure to drink enough fluids to stay hydrated.

Every bit of movement counts! For more information about physical activity basics, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/index.htm>.

Shirley Symister is a project manager for Montefiore Health System's Office of Community & Population Health

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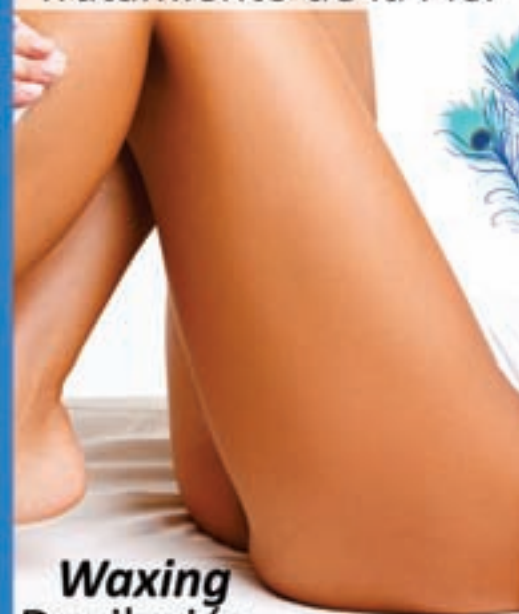


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St. Patrick's Carmelite Sisters Celebrate Foundation Day, Reflect on Emotional Half-Year

On July 16, a memorial service was held for all of the residents who died of various causes at St. Patrick's Home in Norwood since March of this year. On Sept. 3, 1929, Venerable Mother Angeline founded the religious order, The Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm, the Order who run the home. The date is a very important one for all Carmelite Sisters. As they prepare to celebrate the anniversary, known as Foundation Day, the Sisters and staff at St. Patrick's look back on the history of both the nursing home and the Carmelite Order, and reflect on how its founding principles helped everyone get through an emotional six months.



Photo courtesy of St. Patrick's Home

HANGING ON THE "Memorial Trees" in the chapel at St. Patrick's Home in Norwood are heart-shaped, ribboned cards with the first names of the residents who died of COVID and other causes since March 2020.

whatever tasks were required to shelter and support the destitute for whom the Little Sisters were founded.

While in America, and working with the people of the local area, she fell in love with their light-heartedness, devotion and independence.

Sister Angeline returned to Europe to make her final profession [of vows], including a fourth vow of hospitality, in France in 1925. Following this, after a brief assignment in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, she was named Mother Superior of Our Lady's Home in the Bronx.

Although the Little Sisters of the Poor were founded in France, Mother wanted the homes to become more American including the celebration of holidays like the 4th of July and Thanksgiving, plus other changes. More than anything, Mother wished for her homes to be full of love and compassion for all. "Most people respond to kindness," Mother would often say.

During an annual retreat in the U.S. in 1927, Mother felt the urge to reach out to do more for the aged people she cared for. She felt that the European way, and many French customs did not meet the needs or customs of the Americans.

Mother sought advice and counsel from Cardinal Hays of New York. The cardinal listened and told Mother how

he valued the work of the Little Sisters in caring for the destitute aged. However, he was aware of the need to provide for the middle class in keeping with the American way of life. In order to accomplish what she felt urged to do, and with the blessing of Cardinal Hayes, Mother and six other Sisters withdrew from the Little Sisters of the Poor and were granted permission to begin a new religious community in the care of the aged. In the words of Cardinal Hays, "If this be of God, it will prosper."

The Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, whose convent was not far from the Home of the Little Sisters, offered the seven women hospitality during this interim. On Sept. 3, 1929, a temporary residence was provided for the seven Sisters in the vacant St. Elizabeth's Rectory. As a result, Sept. 3 became the official foundation day for the new order, The Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm.

Advancing forward, the "red brick" building, which was the experimental laboratory for the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), was purchased in 1931, and served for many years to care for the Sisters' residents, as well as for the formation of the Sisters themselves. Many men and women came to the home and Mother and her small community cared for all of them. However, it was soon realized that they had outgrown the space. In 1989, a new St. Patrick's Home was built on the same property that could facilitate the care of many more elderly men and women.

St. Patrick's Home would become very well-known as the Sisters lovingly cared for the residents from admission until natural death. St. Patrick's follows the doctrine of the Catholic Church in all areas of care. Our palliative care program begins at admission and ends when the residents are discharged to their community, or when they are called home to God. Palliative care is not just about adding days to life, but about adding life to days. It provides quality of life for the residents and their families during the difficult times.

During these challenging times, it is the love and compassion shown ev-

ery day by the Carmelite Sisters and our dedicated staff to all of our residents that shines through. We are all aware that there have been some very difficult times during these past few months. There were residents who died and due to COVID-19, they were not able to have a wake or a funeral mass or service. It was so sad, but the staff continued to care for the residents each day. Everyone pitched in to make the days full of love for all. There were many tears and yes, many smiles too. Each resident is important to us and loved by all of us as well. As we became closer to the residents during these difficult times, we focused on making sure that they were not alone.

To continue our remembrance of them, the pastoral care department made a "Memorial Tree" for each nursing unit. The first names of the deceased residents were placed on a heart and were attached to the trees with colorful ribbons, so that each resident was remembered. It was a very solemn time when staff and residents remembered the deceased in such a meaningful way. There were many tears, and again many smiles as stories were shared about each resident. The Memorial Trees remained on the nursing units until the Feast Day of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel which was celebrated on July 16.

On that day, all the trees were brought to our chapel and placed in front of the statue of Our Lady. The trees were blessed by Fr. Michael Kissane, and prayers were offered for those who had died. Today, the trees remain in our chapel as a remembrance to all our beloved residents.

All of us at St. Patrick's strive to continue the Ministry that was begun by Mother Angeline Teresa and the small community of six Sisters in caring for the Aged and Infirm. Whatever our role, we can make a difference in the lives of our residents by following the words of Mother Angeline, "The best interest of the old people should always come first."

Sr. Kevin Patricia Lynch is a member of the Order of Carmelites and is the CEO of St. Patrick's Nursing Home, while Kathy Mayer is Director of Pastoral Care at the home.

Elections 2021: Jessica Haller on Climate, Motherhood and Investment

(continued from page 12)

Haller is an active member of 21 in '21, an initiative to raise the number of women serving on the New York City Council from the current 12 to 21 of the 51 members. As a mother, she said she was proud to receive the endorsement on Aug. 10 of Vote Mama, the first political action committee (PAC) to support Democratic moms running for of-

fice. "Here are the three numbers you need to know," she said. "51 members of [City] Council, 12 women today, and two mothers. How do we legislate for childcare? And how do we think about impacting families compassionately, health care, and all of this with two moms in the room?"

Though she doesn't have conventional, political experience under her

belt, Haller's campaign is gaining momentum. She said she sees Dinowitz and Dan Padernacht as career politicians, and added that there was "nepotism involved". "I'm looking at this in a more holistic way - sustainability, resilience, equity," she said. "They're all connected and using those lenses to measure everything. I don't believe the other two guys are. I am following my passion to go make

a change, and to be a changemaker. I think I'm more people-centered and definitely more planet-centered. I also have a business degree, so I also want to do this in a fiscally responsible way."

Haller has also received the endorsement of The Jewish Climate Action Network (JCAN), Bronx Climate Justice North (BCJN), and North Bronx Racial Justice (NBxRJ).

New Mobile Health Care Clinic in Morris Heights

By JASON GONZALEZ

Data analysis by both State and City health departments shows that the COVID-19 virus disproportionately impacted Bronxites for a whole host of reasons, one of which was lack of access to healthcare, especially in low-income communities. On Friday, July 31, City Councilwoman for District 16, Vanessa Gibson, took a step towards addressing that disparity in the Morris Heights section of the Bronx.

"We are here at River Park Towers unveiling a new mobile health care clinic facility in partnership with Morris Heights Health Center, following a disturbing article that we read about in June that talked about the unconfirmed COVID cases here at the towers," Gibson said.

The mobile healthcare facility will provide tenants of River Park Towers, housed at 20 Richman Plaza, with access to COVID-19 testing, as well as other primary healthcare services, but aside from the tenants of River Park Residences, residents of the Morris Heights area are also eligible to receive patient care at the facility.

Gibson explained that a major, contributing factor in the placement of the mobile unit in the area was the underlying health conditions of many of the Bronxites who lived there. There was also an urgent need not only to build a testing site for COVID, but to provide mental health services, and overall health services to that community.

She said that once the data became available, conversations were held in mid-June with both Morris Heights residents and with community leaders to find a way to bring a mobile unit to the area. Gibson said the plan was not just to bring a mobile unit, but to build a trailer in the area that would serve as an actual healthcare facility.

"Residents have been traumatized by COVID-19," Gibson said, adding that what was needed was not just COVID-19 testing, but access to healthcare whether people had insurance or not, as well as mental health therapeutic services and trauma informed care.

According to the 2010 census, there are over 7,000 tenants living in the two River Park skyscrapers that overlook the Harlem River. As a part of the Mitchell-Lama housing program, River Park Towers provides affordable rental and cooperative housing to moderate and middle-



Photo by Jason Gonzalez.

COUNCILWOMAN VANESSA GIBSON (center) attends the opening of a mobile health care clinic at River Park Towers in the Morris Heights section of the Bronx on July 31, 2020.

income families in the West Bronx.

Gibson said the new mobile healthcare facility is adequately equipped to provide professional services to the residents in the area, once known as a COVID-19 hotspot in the City when coronavirus numbers spiked five months ago.

Referring to residents of the area who have been affected by the coronavirus, Gibson said, "They've lived in isolation. Some are suicidal, and they just don't see a way out." Indeed, the economic fallout has not helped matters either. "They have lost income; they're falling behind in rent," she added.

Gibson said the pandemic had turned everyone's world upside down but at River Park Towers, with over 1,600 tight-knit units, living safely had always been a challenge. "Whether there are confirmed cases or not, [but] the health care needs have always been here," she said, before expressing her optimism for the future with the new health care unit.

"If you live on Sedgwick, if you live on Cedar, you're able to come here Monday to Friday, because we want to provide services and as of right now, we have a contract to be here through the end of October," she said.

The councilwoman also said that if there was a need, she would talk to the City about additional funding to keep the mobile facility at the location, acknowledging that it was really important not only to identify short-term needs but long-term ones too. "It's going to take a while to get out of the health disparities around heart disease and diabetes, and obesity, and high blood pressure that so many of our residents, particularly African-Americans and Latinos have," she said, adding that older residents also encountered health disparities.

In addition to Gibson, other political representatives and officials spoke at the event, including Assemblywoman Latoya Joyner, Morris Heights Health Center executives, and the River Park management office.

Overall, it was clear from what was said that establishing the trust of the local residents, developing a good rapport with them, and breaking down certain barriers took a concerted group effort. Referring to Morris Heights Health Center, Gibson said, "They know their work."

She added that there was now continuity of service and she spoke to the positive aspects of the location as well. "They don't have to travel; they will pass this facility every time they leave the development," she said. "And that's what we want to encourage - residents to use this facility to get access to health care, wraparound services for those that can't get out."

Gibson said that the provision of telehealth services in conjunction with BronxWorks was also a future goal. "We continue to be thankful to Morris Heights for their commitment, BronxWorks, Omni Reliant [Realty], the community board and everyone who really had a hand in today's event," she said.

Anti-Gun Violence Rally Held in Morrisania

By SÍLE MOLONEY

On Monday, Aug. 24, NYPD Police Commissioner Dermot Shea announced that, going forward, additional police officers would be rostered at the weekends in an effort to curb the increased rates of gun violence seen across the Bronx, and across the City in recent months. The NYPD reported that 44 percent of shootings in the last month occurred on Saturdays and Sundays.

For the week ending Aug. 23, murder in the Bronx, rose by 400 percent compared to the same period last year. In the 52 precinct alone, two murders were reported in July within six days of each other. Suspects in both cases have since been arrested.

As part of a broader plan to stem the tide of gun violence in the Bronx, on Thursday, July 23, “A March to End Gun Violence,” was held in the Morrisania section of the Bronx, organized by Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark in conjunction with law enforcement, the clergy, community groups, youth leaders, and other elected officials, including City Councilwoman Vanessa Gibson, City Councilman Andy King, Public Advocate Jumanne Williams, recently appointed Chief of Community Affairs at the NYPD, Chief Jeffrey Maddrey, City Councilwoman Latoya Jackson, and others.

The event kicked off in Mott Playground on Morris Avenue where a group of about 200 people gathered, despite the extreme, early evening temperatures. Many wore T-shirts representing different anti-gun violence groups, including Operation Save Our Sons and Sisters, Guns Down Life Up, Save Our Streets (SOS), Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence (BRAG), Release The Grip (RTG), The Arc of Justice, NYC Health and Hospitals, Bronx Connect, Stand up to Violence, and National Action Network.

Police and youth community leaders were seen playing basketball with teenagers and kids in the Mott Playground, before Clark spoke briefly to explain why the event was taking place. After some prayers were said, and amid a jovial atmosphere, the march got underway. For the duration of the route, marchers were flanked by NYPD officers and vehicles, as well as a gaggle of press teams.

Clark, Gibson, King and others defiantly led the marchers through the local blocks, sending their message loud



Photo by Sile Moloney

DANTE, A YOUNG anti-gun violence activist, addresses the crowd after a march to end gun violence was held in the Morrisania section of the Bronx on July 23, 2020.

and clear, with chants of, “SOS - Save our Streets!”, “Guns Down, Life Up!” and “Who’s Streets? Our Streets!”.

Members of the public, including many younger people, stopped what they were doing to watch and listen to the chants of those marching by. Some took out cell phones to record the march, while others raised their fists in solidarity or shouted out words of encouragement and support. Most, if not all wore masks.

At 170th Street and Sheridan Avenue, there was a brief pause for some additional prayers at the location where Anthony Robinson was shot in early July while crossing the street, as he held the hand of his six-year-old daughter, Khloe.

A number of speeches were given at the end of the march. Clark, sweat droplets pouring down her face as they had been throughout the route, thanked everyone for coming out on such a hot evening, and encouraged people to socially distance while listening to the speeches. “We did it!” she said, her voice growing hoarse. “A march to end gun violence! You’re out here because you care about your community, and that we love each other. That’s what this is all about!”

She said the marchers had come out to spread the word that residents were taking back their communities. “We cannot stand for this carnage, and this devastation,” she said. “We need your help. We cannot do this without you.” She said by showing up, the community was letting everyone know that they were there to help each other. “But

we also need the help of those people who are not here as well, so you got to spread the word, okay?” she said. “Let everybody know that it’s their responsibility to help us take back our community. These small number of people who are causing these shootings, and these murderers should not be running our communities. It’s *our* community!”

Clark said they would also be reaching out to those other people in the days that followed. “My message this evening is unity,” she said. “And we see unity right here with all of you standing here, young and old, from all walks of life. You are all here, and for us to be unified, for us to solve this violence, we need the cooperation. We need to help the police get to these people who are killing our kids, who are killing our elders, who are killing ourselves.”

While Clark acknowledged that there was a lot of protesting taking place (referring to the Black Lives Matter protests), she said action was needed to protest the violence that was occurring within communities, against those who were killing that same community. “We need the courage, we need that courage from God,” she said.

“We need our cure violence and crisis management teams. You are here. You are the credible messengers. You stand right next to those who are thinking about picking up that gun. You’re the ones that could say, ‘Brother, put the gun down. Release the grip.’”

Clark brought additional context to the event when she said that there had been over 50 homicides in the bor-

ough since the beginning of the year, and 175 non-fatal shootings. “In the 44th [precinct] alone, there’s been nine homicides,” she said, referring to the precinct in which the march took place.

Clark said that people marched for the many survivors of gun violence. She decried retaliatory killings, including the retaliatory killing for Anthony Robinson’s murder which took place just a few hours after he was shot. “Guess what happened today?” Clark said. “Anthony Robinson’s brother was arrested for the murder of those two men, so that’s retaliation. That’s shooting upon shooting. We have got to stop this.”

For her part, Gibson said, “It is important that you are here. It is important that you stand with us in solidarity with one voice, for one purpose, in unison to save our children, to give our young people a future, to make sure that they are success stories, and not statistics.”

“We are calling those out that use violence and weapons in our own community,” she said. “Enough is enough - we have got to do better. This is our community. These are our streets. These are our blocks, These are our children. These are our babies, These are our young kids - our young. These are our young queens, but most of all, this is our future. So, whether we walk, we jog, we stride, no matter what it is, we will always stand together on behalf of our children.”

Eve Hendricks, mother of 17-year-old Brandon Hendricks, who was shot in late June, also addressed the crowd. “I still refuse to believe that my boy was taken from me like that - prematurely,” she said. “Someone who’s headed somewhere, so if you’re such gangsters, come out! Face us! Face me! Let’s have a one-to-one. Tell me why you have people killed. If you want to kill someone - kill yourself.

You walk with guns? Walk with a pen, walk with a book. Give kids books, give kids pens, give kids hope.”

Hendricks added, “And we’re all accountable, we are responsible. We are all responsible for each and every death, because we are not protecting these kids properly. We’re not finding things for them to do. We’re not. So, government, you got work to do. We’re not just talking - action! And like I said, until the day I die, I’m going to hold you accountable.”

Virtual Discussion of Health Disparities and COVID-19 in the Bronx

By AURÉOLE RIBES &
SÍLE MOLONEY

Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. and the “#Not62 Campaign for a Healthy Bronx” steering committee held a virtual discussion on Wednesday, July 29 entitled, “A Discussion of Health Disparities and COVID-19.”

The dialogue focused on why and how the Bronx ended up with the highest rates of COVID-19 cases in the State from both a historical and an analytical perspective, as well as what could and should be done to shift that disparity.

Since 2009, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s county health ranking report has ranked the Bronx in 62nd place out of New York State’s 62 counties in terms of health outcomes.

In response to this, several interested groups came together in 2015 to build a collaborative campaign of partners and Bronx residents who pledged to live, work, play and pray in a manner that improved everyone’s overall health.

It represented a call to action, and was led by the Bronx borough president’s office, the Institute for Family Health - Bronx Health REACH, CUNY’s Institute for Health Equity at Lehman College, Montefiore Health System, and Bronx Neighborhood Health Action Center, an affiliate of the City’s department of health.

Collectively, they aimed to address the social and economic conditions that impact the overall quality of life for residents in the borough, change health behaviors, and improve clinical care and the physical environment to help Bronx residents attain their highest level of health.

Diaz Jr. opened the Zoom meeting, explaining that the goal had been to get the Bronx out of the bottom spot on the ranking index by 2020, but this had not yet been achieved. “We are getting a little bit healthier than the previous year, so we are headed in the right direction, but we still are in the last place,” he said.

The speakers included Jane Bedell, M.D., the former Bronx head of the Bronx Neighborhood Health Action Center, Lessie Branch, Ph.D., race scholar and associate professor at the Metropolitan College of New York, and Denise Nuñez, M.D., a pediatric critical care physician at Montefiore.

Dr. Oxiris Barbot, the former City health commissioner, framed the discussion by outlining the department of health’s response to the pandemic.

Diaz Jr. asked Barbot how far along the department was in implementing rapid COVID-19 testing and getting test results back in under half an hour.

Barbot said that testing had always been everyone’s Achilles’ heel throughout the pandemic. “Not only as a City,



Photo by Adi Talwar

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT Ruben Diaz Jr. held a virtual discussion of health disparities and COVID-19 in the Bronx on July 29, 2020.

but as a country, we’re nowhere near where we need to be in terms of having turnaround times that help people make real-time decisions that are going to help to reduce the transmission of this virus,” she said.

In terms of the types of tests available, Barbot said the most reliable test was the PCR test and the most reliable way to get the PCR test was at a commercial lab or at a lab in a hospital. The problem, she said, was that there was limited capacity for such testing across the country.

Barbot said that while previously test results were available in 24 hours using this method, as more testing was rolled out to more people, that timeframe went up to 48 hours, and later to over a week, which she said rendered the test meaningless [given that immediate isolation was needed by anyone who tested positive, to curtail the spread].

To address this problem, Barbot said pop-up testing sites were set-up “in the field” in places like Tremont, and similar technology was used to perform another type of test which was faster but less reliable.

This rapid testing method, Barbot explained, sometimes caused false negatives and positives, meaning that some people tested negative in the field but when tested later in the lab, turned out to be positive and vice versa. Nonetheless, she said, this rapid test had its benefits. “In a community where we have high levels of virus, that are still circulating, the chances of a positive in the field being a true positive are going to be much higher, so that’s why that test is good, in communities where there’s high viral load,” she said.

Diaz then asked Barbot how far away she thought the country was from getting a vaccine, and what was the likeli-

hood of a second wave occurring. Barbot said she felt it was inevitable that there would be a second phase of increased transmission. She added that until a vaccine, and definitive medication to treat the virus become available, people would have to assume that there will be more cases, especially as people begin to spend more time indoors in the fall.

Her recommendations were to wear a mask, to stay home if sick, to wash hands regularly, and to practice social distancing. “Anyone who thinks we’re going to test our way out of this pandemic are kidding themselves,” she said.

For her part, Bedell spoke about health outcomes, and the factors that contribute to lower life expectancy in the Bronx. She displayed a map of the City where lighter colored areas represented a higher rate of life expectancy and vice versa. “I want to draw people’s attention to the Bronx, which is only in the dark colors,” she said.

Bedell said growing up in the Bronx decreases the chances of living a full life, because of the way assets and resources are distributed in the borough, compared to other parts of the City.

She first described the population of the Bronx as being overwhelmingly made up of people of color, the majority of whom are young people. One third are first generation immigrants and as a result, 90 languages are spoken.

She then presented slides that showed that the Bronx has a high rate of overcrowded housing and multigenerational housing, which overlap with each other, and increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Diaz, as a Puerto Rican, explained that this multigenerational housing arrangement can be for cultural as well as economic reasons. “In my mother-in-law’s house, my wife’s grandmother is 84 years old, and she’s

in the household” he said.

Bedell explained how the practice of redlining had influenced the City and the health outcomes of people generally, explaining that banks in the U.S. had historically denied mortgages to certain people, mostly people of color in urban areas, preventing them from buying a home in certain neighborhoods or from getting a loan to renovate their homes. She said this practice, that was once backed by the U.S. government, started in the 1930s and took place across the country in many of the larger cities with large minority populations.

“These redlining maps set up policies and practices that real estate businesses profited from and that have left a tremendous legacy today in terms of housing, and therefore health,” she added.

Branch expanded upon Bedell’s presentation, explaining how advocacy, activism, urban policy, and Black optimism for social progress, are all key areas of intervention in health equity and access. She talked about how unemployment is higher in the Bronx than it is citywide, and that the national mortality rates of COVID-19, according to the Economic Policy Institute, are three times higher for Black people versus white people. Branch said that what puts Black and Latinx communities into situations of higher unemployment rates and COVID-19 infection, is policy.

She concluded that there was one positive, if it could be called a positive, that emerged from the pandemic. “So, what has COVID done?” she asked. “COVID-19 has made policy violence leveled against Black and brown communities visible.”

For her part, Nuñez spoke about the lessons learned from the pandemic in terms of treatment and survival, including how to monitor one’s health by keeping regular appointments with health care providers, eating well, getting vaccinated, and generally being more cognizant of our overall health from a preventative, rather than a reactive standpoint.

Diaz, who is serving his last term as borough president, ended the meeting by encouraging everyone to stay safe. “Thank you all. God bless you all, and God bless the Bronx,” he said.

Since the discussion took place, Barbot stepped down as health commissioner on Aug. 4 citing her disappointment that during the most critical public health crisis in this lifetime, the Health department’s incomparable disease control expertise was not used to the degree it could have been.

The borough president and the #NOT62 partners will continue to offer ongoing public outreach events covering various different health related topics.



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Tree Art Inspired by Mosholu Parkway

By **JOSÉ A. GIRALT**

On any given morning people can be seen walking, running, or biking along Mosholu Parkway. Benches on the sidewalks can even provide a contemplative resting stop for others. For Barbara Korman however, the landscaped thoroughfare provides a source of inspiration for her art.

Korman has lived in Bedford Park for 50 years, the last 42 of which she has spent in the same two-bedroom apartment, having converted one of the bedrooms into a studio. The passage of time has not caused the artist to slow down however. “I’m always working,” Korman said. When asked if the pandemic had impacted upon her art production, she responded adamantly, “I’ve been able to spend more time [creating art]!”

The artist uses salvaged tree branches that she finds along the parkway and transforms them into what she describes as “discrete objects and installations.” She strips the bark, sands the wood, glues the branches together, and then paints them usually in dark gray and black tones. Others have a blue or green hue. The pieces end up in a multitude of shapes and configurations with some serving as freestanding sculptures.

In April 2012, Korman appeared in a video profile published by *Norwood News* in which she explained her process as she prepared for an exhibition at Arts Westchester Gallery in White Plains, entitled “Looking at Woods.”

She credits living in Bedford Park, and her morning walks along the parkway, as an important reason why she decided to work with wood. “Living close to the Botanical Gardens and

Mosholu Parkway made me aware of the trees and the debris,” she said.

Since the beginning of August, Korman has been showcasing her work as part of a multi-media exhibition organized by Studio Theater in Exile and the Hudson Valley MOCA entitled “Climbing the Walls.” The organizers asked various artists to create works that imagine the future by looking at how COVID-19 and the subsequent protests for social justice have changed the way we experience life.

Rather than reflect upon some of the darker themes that have emerged from the current state of world affairs, Korman chose to include an array of colorful sculptures made of wood, papier mâché, vinyl compound, and acrylic paint, entitled “Fetishes for Fun.” These specific artworks represent something of a departure from her usual process of working with wood she saves from her walks in Mosholu parkway. “After many years of working with salvaged tree branches, it felt like time for a change,” she writes in her artist statement. For this particular exhibition, she created the sculptures with store-bought wood and painted the pieces in bright, eye-catching colors.

She hopes the pieces will give people a respite from today’s stressors. “These small sculptures while serious, seemed playful and demanded bright, playful color. I think of them as fetishes for fun,” she said.

A virtual viewing of “Climbing the Walls” is available through the new year on the Hudson Valley MOCA website.

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