



# NORWOOD NEWS

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## HATE HAS NO PLACE IN NORWOOD



Photo by Miriam Quinoñes.

**BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 7** District Manager Ischia Bravo (left), Elisa Crespo, education liaison at the Bronx borough president's office (center right) and others listen to remarks given by Kenny Agosto, district director to New York State Senator Jamaal T. Bailey at a rally in Norwood on Saturday, Sept. 19.

By Isaiah Mathewson,  
Miriam Quinoñes &  
Sile Moloney

Following reports on Sept. 18 of the defacing of a mural painted in support of Black trans lives, on 204th Street and Perry Avenue in the Norwood section of the Bronx, reaction from allies and various public officials was swift. Their message? Hate has no place in Norwood.

On Saturday, Sept. 19, a rally was organized at the mural location by Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez, who was joined by a group of about 30 members of the Black trans community, allies, and local leaders for the purpose of, "denouncing hate and the defacing of a mural supporting Black trans lives."

The mural, which displays the words, "Black Trans

Lives Matter," in yellow lettering had been painted about three months ago by Black Trans Media, an organization founded to, "shift and reframe the value and worth of Black trans people through community, media, and education," according to the group's Instagram page.

It was discovered, on Wednesday, Sept. 16, that the mural had been defaced with

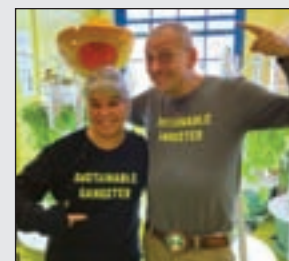
hate speech and obscenities against the LGBTQ+ community, using red paint. Similar hateful messages written on the sides of buildings on Hull Avenue and Decatur Avenue, also in Norwood, were discovered on Friday, Sept. 18.

During the rally, those present took turns to speak and publicly denounce the actions of those who defaced the

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# 2020 Election Local Lens: The Environment

By ELIOT SCHIAPARELLI

Sewage treatment plants, major trucking routes, food distribution centers, and highways like the Cross Bronx Expressway, all clustered together in the South Bronx have created an area with such poor air quality, it has been nicknamed “Asthma Alley,” by locals.

According to a 2018 City health department report, pollution levels in the South Bronx neighborhoods of Mott Haven and Melrose are some of the highest in the State and country, exacerbating asthma rates that send sick kids to Bronx hospitals, nearly three times more often than in the rest of New York City.

Ahead of Election Day 2020, Bronx environmentalists and activists are highlighting the importance of taking a holistic and proactive approach to environmental policy.

According to Anita Gita of Sunrise Movement, the presence of these pollutant-creating factors in the South Bronx, in particular, in predominantly non-white, low-income communities is no accident; it’s environmental racism.

Sunrise is a national, grassroots, youth movement whose aim is to stop climate change and create millions of good jobs in the process. It has 4,138 followers in New York City.

For Gita, Black and Brown communities in the Bronx are faced with a burden of pollution and waste. “To me, it sounds like a theoretical term,” she said, referring to the burden of pollution in the borough. “But you can see it, and you can feel it. Kids in the Bronx have the highest rates of asthma, I think, in the country. So, people who are not doing anything wrong are being tasked with the burden of dealing with asthma and respiratory diseases.”

In fact, there are a number of risk factors which have contributed to the high asthma rates seen in the Bronx according to a September 2019 report from Montefiore Health System. These include obesity, housing quality (including the presence of mold and rodent droppings), smoking (including passive smoking), and air quality.

Gita, along with Sunrise members Fiona Crisp and Michael Villanova, officially founded a Bronx chapter of the organization three months ago at the end of July. It has 276 followers. Gita and Crisp are seniors at Fordham University and Hunter College respectively, while Villanova is pursuing a masters at CUNY.

Villanova is from the Bronx, and he said the need for more climate change activism is obvious.

“If sea levels rise around six feet, the South Bronx and areas around City Island which tend to be lower-income people, and also tend to be Black and Latino people, they’re the ones who will have to move,” he said. “They’re the one[s] who are going to be impacted by this.”

The first major initiative of Sunrise Bronx was to help reinstate a Bronx Solid Waste Advisory Board (SWAB) to inform the manner in which the borough deals with waste. According to Crisp and Villanova, 30



Photo by SÍLE MOLONEY

**(L TO R)** Elizabeth Quaranta, executive director of Friends of Mosholu Parkland, and her colleague David Claudio clear fallen tree debris from the Edible Garden, located next to the Keeper’s House in Norwood after Storm Isaias on Aug. 5, 2020.

percent of the city’s waste is processed in the Bronx, but the borough has not had an advisory board in over a decade.

In fact, in July 2018, according to the National Resources Defense Council, New York City Council enacted legislation limiting the amount of trash that could be sent to overburdened neighborhoods that were home to a majority of privately-owned, environmentally troublesome, waste transfer stations.

There were, at that time, 38 such stations, 26 of which were located in three neighborhoods – north Brooklyn, the South Bronx and southeast Queens.

By contrast, just one borough over, in Manhattan, Sunrise Bronx said there exists a robust example of a SWAB which has programs aimed at achieving zero waste. Sunrise Bronx hopes they can help Bronx climate activists create a similar zero-waste strategy in conjunction with the borough president’s office. Long term, the group also wants to have an impact on policy, and on elections.

“We’re looking at using our voice as young people,” said Villanova. “I don’t know if you’ve seen the electoral victories that have happened with Sunrise-backed candidates, but we want to replicate that in the Bronx.” He added, “Jamaal Bowman got elected here with the help of the [Sunrise] city-wide hub, but we want to replicate his victory with down-ballot races, especially with City Council races next year and legislative elections in 2022.”

According to a Pew Research poll conducted between July 27 and Aug. 3, 2020, 42 percent of registered voters said climate change was a “very important” issue to them when it comes to voting.

The same poll found that while there were substantial differences between Trump and Biden supporters on the importance of most issues, the *widest* gaps were on climate change (57 percentage points), and racial and ethnic inequality (52 points).

“Climate change is far from this nation’s most pressing national security issue,” reads the GOP platform. “This is the

triumph of extremism over common sense, and Congress must stop it.”

On a recent visit to California to survey the damage caused by the most recent wildfires, President Donald Trump echoed this sentiment.

“It’ll start getting cooler; you just watch,” he said, in response to the assertion that the wildfires were caused by a rapidly warming climate.

Indeed, the GOP party has other priorities when it comes to the environment. The party favors lifting environmental regulations to allow businesses which profit from America’s natural resources to grow.

On the other side of this issue is former Vice President Joe Biden. The Democratic nominee for president appeared to agree with Villanova and the Sunrise Movement’s view that communities like those in the Bronx are often the hardest hit.

“The unrelenting impact of climate change affects every single solitary one of us,” said Biden during a recent campaign speech. “But all too often, the brunt falls disproportionately on communities of color, exacerbating the need for environmental justice.”

Meanwhile, an extract from the Sunrise Movement’s website reads, “We’re building an army of young people to make climate change an urgent priority across America, end the corrupting influence of fossil fuel executives on our politics, and elect leaders who stand up for the health and wellbeing of all people.”

Sunrise is not the only group pushing for climate justice in the Bronx. Elizabeth Quaranta is from Bedford Park, and is the executive director of Friends of Mosholu Parkland (FOMP). Her group focuses on maintaining greenspace, especially along Mosholu Parkway and more recently, on educating residents about sustainability.

Quaranta said when she initiates a conversation about climate change, she starts with the park space in the Bronx and how it is maintained, and then she moves on to tangible events like Storm Isaias, which  
*(continued on page 18)*



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# INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week, we asked readers their thoughts on the opening of Catholic, private and public schools during a global pandemic.



Technically, they are not ready to accept the kids back in school. To reopen the schools, it's not safe, and they haven't received the funding that was to be given to them in order for them to get things in place. They need new ventilation systems in the school, because the ventilation systems are out of date and haven't been touched, as well as PPE and wash stations and partitions in the classrooms. Those things need to be done before they start bringing the kids back into the classrooms.

**Veronica Jackson,**  
Belmont



Yes, I think they should. The kids need to be in school. I don't think the virus is that big a problem. If they open the school and an outbreak occurs, they can shut the school down for a few days. The virus is not such a danger.

**Anil Budwah,**  
Bedford Park



I think it is a big concern. A slow opening would be okay, because at the end of the day, we are trying to get back to some sense of normalcy. To be honest, it really depends on what's going on, because numbers don't lie. If things start to get bad again, statistically speaking, then they can make it tighter or whatnot. I think shutting it down is a bit much because you have to remember, there are different ways of learning. So, shutting it down may not be the best thing.

**Nelson Valdez,**  
Soundview



As far as the kids going back to school - Horace Mann, the private schools - they have outdoor learning in the tents. Then, when the weather gets cold, they'll do remote [learning], and in March, they'll come back outside. They always have a plan. New York City is too big. It's too crowded. If they [the teachers] weren't getting paid, would they go to school? That's a big question.

**Jimmy McCormack,**  
Throggs Neck



If people are using masks and keeping a social distance, it will be fine. Kids go to school today and have an opportunity to learn, but they don't learn anything even when they go. Being at home doesn't help. I know that, because of this pandemic, the college institutions are losing money because nobody wants to go to school.

**Mighty Calabrese,**  
Norwood



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# NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY

## North West Bronx Democrats Plan for 2022

On Aug. 23, North West Bronx Democrats issued a press release in which they referenced the recent announcement by Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez of her intention to run for Bronx borough president, and the separate, recent announcement by 80th Male District Leader Marco Serrera of his intention to run for City Council in District 11. The group said there was sufficient reason to believe that both candidates may win their respective races. In order to plan ahead therefore, they announced their intention to put together an exploratory committee to find a select team of candidates from across the district to take on various political positions in 2022, including assemblyperson, district leaders, State committee people, judicial delegates and county committee people.

## Biaggi Hosts Census Drive

On Sept. 16, State Sen. Alessandra Biaggi, the Office of NYC Public Advocate, the Office of the Bronx Borough President and a group of empowered women leaders and advocates held a mobile census drive around the borough. Throughout the day, they travelled by caravan through hard-to-count Bronx communities to encourage census participation ahead of the Sept. 30 deadline. Census information was provided to businesses and residents along the route. The caravan tour began in Hunts Point, made stops in Morris Park, Parkchester, Westchester Square, and Schuylerville, and ended in Throggs Neck.

The census response rate for the Bronx as of Sept. 20 was 60.7 percent, lower than the final census response rate in 2010 of 64 percent. The census does *not* ask about immigration, citizenship, criminal history, or income. By law, all census responses are completely confidential and cannot be shared with anyone, including any immigration authorities, tax

# Bronxites Mark the 19th Anniversary of 9/11

by DAVID GREENE

Bronxites observed the exact moment when hijackers crashed two jetliners into the World Trade Center at several events marking the 19th anniversary of 9/11, as a number of somber ceremonies took place at police stations and fire houses across the borough.

On Friday, Sept. 11, an estimated two dozen officers stood to attention outside of the 49th precinct on Eastchester Road. The officers gathered with members of the 49th Precinct Clergy Council and saluted the names of the 23 police officers who were killed in the line of duty during the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

One sergeant was heard saying to officers, "We honor the dead while protecting our way of life." He added, "As we observe this anniversary, take pride in knowing that history will remember that the New York City Police Department demonstrated the highest personal service and humanity that day."

At the same time, a second event was held a short distance away at the 9/11 Memorial Garden at Jacobi Medical Center. Closed to the public this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, the garden hosted a small gathering of hospital staff, Jacobi Hospital CEO Christopher Mastromano, members of the hospital's Community Advisory Board and local elected officials. A moment of silence was observed at 8:46 a.m., marking the exact moment Flight



Photo by David Greene

**AN UNIDENTIFIED RANKING** NYPD officer places a carnation at the 9/11 Memorial Garden at Jacobi Medical Center on Friday, Sept. 11, 2020.

11 crashed into Tower One of the World Trade Center.

At the conclusion of the service, two wreaths were placed at the two granite markers bearing the names of more than 140 Bronxites who perished that day in the attacks. Attendees followed suit, placing white carnations at the markers and solemnly paying their respects.

A third event was held later that evening at the Throgs Neck 9/11 monument, located at East Tremont Avenue and the Throgs Neck Expressway. This event also included the reading of the names of the 9/11 victims. According to an online post, their names were read out by friends and family members.

The annual tradition of the public reading of the names of the victims at Freedom Tower, in Lower Manhattan, was upheld and the ceremony was attended by both Vice President Mike Pence, and former Vice President and Democratic nominee for president, Joe Biden. The event was closed to the public however, and the reading of the names was mostly pre-recorded.

A short distance away, about 100 people joined members of the Tunnel to Towers Foundation for an event in Zuccotti Park, where the names of the victims were read in real time, in the presence of a mask-wearing crowd who adhered to social distancing guidelines.

authorities, any law enforcement authorities, or even landlords. The penalties for breaking this law are up to five years in prison, and \$250,000 in fines. This law has not been broken since it was passed in 1953.

## Bronx Vigil for Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Following the death on Sept. 18 of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a Bronx vigil was organized in her honor on Monday, Sept. 21 at Lou Gehrig Plaza by Bronx women elected officials. Justice Ginsburg was a civil rights pioneer that advocated for women's rights and gender equity during her tenure on the Supreme Court. Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark, Council Member Vanessa L. Gibson, Assemblywoman Nathalia Fer-

nandez, and other Bronx women elected officials and community leaders came together to speak on Justice Ginsburg's legacy, and on how to continue pushing for equality for marginalized communities.

## Bronx Man Arrested Over Subway Derailment

On Sunday, Sept. 20, at approximately 8.18 a.m., police responded to a train derailment at 14th Street subway station in Manhattan. An investigation revealed that a man had been seen throwing construction debris onto the northbound A train track, which caused the first car of a subway train to derail upon entering the station. No injuries were reported by the emergency services at the time of the incident. The A, C, D, E, and F subway line services

were delayed as a result of the derailment.

The man was removed to the NYPD Transit District 2 where the investigation continued. Demetrius Harvard, 30, of Mapes Avenue in the Crotona section of the Bronx, was subsequently arrested on charges of reckless endangerment, criminal mischief, assault and criminal trespassing. An arrest is not proof of a person's guilt.

## Bronx Event to Highlight Infant Mortality

The Bronx Healthy Start Program team at Albert Einstein College of Medicine held a "Strollin' for Life" walk and informational event to raise awareness about infant mortality at Parque De Los Niños in the Soundview section of the Bronx on Tuesday,

Sept. 22.

According to Bronx Healthy Start Partnership, the top five leading causes of infant mortality (over 50 percent of all infant deaths) are birth defects, preterm birth (birth before 37 weeks of pregnancy) and low birth weight (less than five pounds eight ounces), maternal complications of pregnancy, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), and injuries e.g. suffocation.

The event sought to raise awareness and provide information about infant mortality, educate attendees on ways to prevent and reduce the incidences of infant mortality, acknowledge the babies lost, and celebrate those in attendance.

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## Keeping Yourself and Others Safe from the Flu

By CARLOS TEJEDA

Flu season is approaching quickly. This year, it is especially important to get the flu vaccine to help you stay healthy and reduce the severity of COVID-19 symptoms should you get sick. This season, it is essential to take extra steps to protect yourself and others by getting the flu shot and practicing good hygiene.

To help your loved ones stay safe in the upcoming months, follow these tips:

**Monitor your health daily.** Both the flu and COVID-19 are contagious respiratory diseases that share similar symptoms. Pay close attention to your health and see a medical professional if you experience any of the following:

- fever
- difficulty breathing

- headache
- extreme tiredness
- dry cough or sneeze
- sore throat
- stuffy or runny nose
- muscle aches or chills
- stomach symptoms such as nausea and diarrhea

Apart from these symptoms, people with COVID-19 can also develop a loss of taste and smell.

**Follow health guidelines and practice social distancing.** The CDC recommends the following for protecting ourselves and others:

- Stay home if you feel sick.
- Wear a mask when in public settings, especially in spaces where it is challenging to practice social distancing.
- Practice social distancing by staying six feet away from others.
- Wash your hands often with soap

and water for at least 20 seconds.

- Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

**Protect yourself and others by getting the flu vaccine.** The flu is a contagious respiratory disease caused by the influenza virus, causing mild to severe respiratory symptoms. Getting the flu shot protects you and those around you who may be at a higher risk of flu complications. People at higher risk include, but are not limited to:

- older adults
- children younger than two years old
- those who suffer from chronic illnesses such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease.

According to the CDC, the flu shot can help reduce the risk of flu-related hospitalizations and deaths. After getting the vaccine, it takes two weeks for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against the flu. You may experience mild symptoms, such as soreness where the shot was given, but serious complications are rare. The vaccine's symptoms are usually mild compared to how sick you would feel if you developed the flu.

There are many no and low-cost options for the flu vaccine. Montefiore has teamed up with Walgreens to offer flu-shots at no or low-cost on these dates:

**Sept. 18, 11am-1pm,** Montefiore Community Center, 3450 Dekalb Av-

enue

**Sept. 19, 10:30am-1:30pm,** Tilden Towers, 801 Tilden Street

**Sept. 28, 1pm-4pm,** Breaking Ground, 1191 Boston Road

**Sept. 30, 11am-1pm,** Parkside Community Center, 2972 Bronx Park East

**Oct. 4, 9am-12pm,** St. Simon Stock Church, 2191 Valentine Avenue

**Oct. 11, 9:45am-1:30pm,** Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 627 East 187th Street

**Oct. 18, 9am-12pm,** Sacred Heart Church, 1253 Shakespeare Avenue

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**Don't put your healthcare on hold.** Montefiore and other providers are taking steps to keep you safe and healthy, including extra cleaning measures, regular temperature and symptom checks, and having masks and hand sanitizer available for patients and staff. Montefiore also provides virtual doctor visits through the Montefiore FIRST app and remote access to providers and health information through Montefiore MyChart. For more information on how to sign up for Montefiore FIRST or Montefiore MyChart, visit <https://covid-safe-care.montefiore.org/covid-safe>.

*Carlos Tejeda is Community Health Specialist for Community and Population Health at Montefiore Health System.*



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# Green Machine

By AURÉOLE RIBES

As a youngster in the Sixties and Seventies, Stephen Ritz and his friends would drill a hole in a quarter, put a fishing string through it, and play infinite pinball games at Larry's Luncheonette on the corner of Gun Hill Road and Tryon Avenue in Norwood. They got away with it for a few weeks.

Ritz recalls this little ploy with fondness and has an amalgam of other memories as well. He remembers learning basketball at Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, building little tree houses in Reservoir Oval Park, biking down Gun Hill Road, and meeting the Duncan "YoYo" man outside of school on Wednesdays.

It's moments like these that he fondly recalls when he drives through the Bronx each week dropping off food for those who need it through his organization, Green Bronx Machine. The group completes the weekly, 26-mile food delivery run to support 55 families and 30 cancer patients who are currently experiencing food insecurity.

In fact, Green Bronx Machine does even more than that. Founded in 2011, it is an impact-driven organization that teaches kids about the art of healthy eating. According to Ritz, it started as an after-school alternative program for high school students at Community School 55 in the South Bronx.

It is now fully integrated into the school's core curriculum and is also in dozens of other schools across the City, and in over 500 schools nationally and internationally.

"We were named Top Ten Health and Wellness Program in America by Harkin Institute and have made the Top 100 Educational Innovations in the World three times!" said Ritz proudly. "A replica of our classroom is in the U.S. Botanic Garden, and we were invited to the Obama White House three times and installed farms indoors and outdoors there."

Their program aims to make healthy eating more accessible to students. So far, they have grown over 100,000 vegetables in the Bronx, and their Green Bronx Machine Face-



**YOUNG GRADUATES OF CS 55** who are also participants in the Green Bronx Machine program gear up for Harvest Day festivities, and socially distant farming on July 16, 2020.

book page is awash with fun, colorful, playful photos showcasing their "green" work.

A community school is a partnership between school staff, families, youth, and the community to raise student achievement by ensuring that children are physically, emotionally, and socially prepared to learn.

It serves as a center, providing access to critical programs and services like health care, mentoring, expanded learning programs, adult education, and other services that support the whole child, engage families, and strengthen the entire community.

Under the NYC Community School approach, each school is paired with a lead Community Based Organization partner that works collaboratively with the principal and the school leadership team to carry out the work at the school.

National studies have found that strong community schools have higher graduation rates and lower dropout rates; higher student attendance; higher reading and math scores; improved school climate, including teacher morale and student behavior; greater parent engagement; and lower rates of neighborhood crime and violence.

"My goal is to redefine the nar-



Photos Courtesy of Green Bronx Machine  
**STEPHEN RITZ, FOUNDER** of Green Bronx Machine, with Lizette B. Ritz, Executive Director.

rative and lifestyles for people, students, and teachers in the Bronx," Ritz explained.

The hands-on, project-based curriculum has lesson plans and activities that help students meet their core academic requirements, while also teaching them about gardening, food production, health, and wellness. The lesson plan subjects range from science to math, and from language to the arts.

Since March, the school has shifted to online and socially distanced learning and has also implemented nightly, online tutorials with twenty-five of the most at-risk elementary school children. An afterschool cooking program has also been created where students deliver food door-to-door on Tuesdays, and then meet via Zoom on Wednesdays to cook.

Ritz explained that he and his colleagues have known since day one that children in the Bronx and com-

munities of color and poverty are in danger. "The pandemic is symptomatic, is a manifestation of a much larger virus, or several viruses; the viruses of greed, corruption and racism," he said. Indeed, according to the 2020 New York County Health Rankings, the Bronx is the last county in health outcomes and factors in New York State.

During the teacher shortage in the eighties, Ritz, a former athlete, unexpectedly became a teacher. Earlier in his career, when he was teaching science at Middle School 319 on 184th Street, he created a biodiversity center which began with one tank of fish, and soon included frogs, turtles, and snakes.

His childhood visits to Mr. Chin's pet shop on Gun Hill Road inspired this idea. Chin would tell the kids stories, talk to the birds and let them feed the fish. "The pet shop was really the moral equivalent of our Bronx Zoo," Ritz said. "We loved watching them swim," he said of the fish. "It was very calming. It was very educational, and it was something that I wanted to bring into my classroom."

Ritz said he is still influenced by his childhood in Norwood to this day, especially the way the community shared resources and information. "Norwood is a community where we love people and use things, as opposed to loving things and using people," he said.

To learn more about Green Bronx Machine, visit their website at <https://greenbronxmachine.org/who-we-are/>.

## CRIME FILE

By SÍLE MOLONEY



### Man Sought for Forcible Touching Incident

The NYPD is seeking the public's assistance in identifying a man wanted in connection with a forcible touching incident which occurred in the 52nd Precinct. On Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2020 at approximately 3.15 p.m., in the vicinity of East 197th Street and Decatur Avenue in the Bronx, a 33-year-old female victim was entering the rear of her apartment building when an unidentified male approached from behind and grabbed the victim's buttocks. The individual then fled on foot in an unknown direction. The victim sustained no injury.

### Armed Robbery Pattern across Bronx

The NYPD is asking for the public's assistance identifying three men who are sought in connection with a series of gunpoint robberies which took place in the 43rd, 44th, 47th, and 50th precincts. Video and photo evidence of the suspects taken in the vicinity of the various incident locations is available from the NYPD.

**Incident Number 1**

On Tuesday, Aug. 18, 2020 at 7 p.m., in the vicinity of Grant Highway and West 169th Street, in the Mount Eden section of the Bronx, a 66-year-old male victim was walking on the street when two unknown men approached him from behind, displayed a firearm and demanded his property. The individuals forcibly removed the victim's jewelry and fled the location on foot to parts unknown. The victim suffered pain and bruising but refused medical attention at the scene. The victim's property had an undetermined estimated value.

### Incident Number 2

On Thursday, Aug. 20, 2020 at approximately 7.20 p.m., in front of 4305 Byron Avenue in the Wakefield section of the Bronx, a 51-year-old man and a female companion were approached by two men who displayed a black firearm and removed the male victim's neck chain with an approximate value of \$7,000. The individuals fled on foot. There were no injuries.

### Incident Number 3

On Sunday, Aug. 23, 2020 at approximately 1 a.m., on the corner of Albany Crescent and West 231 Street in the Kingsbridge Heights section of the Bronx, a 45-year-old male victim was approached by two men who displayed a black firearm and removed the man's jewelry and personal property with an approximate value of \$3,000. The individuals fled on foot. There were no injuries.

### Incident Number 4

On Wednesday, Aug. 26, 2020 at approximately 4.30 p.m., in front of 3414 Bailey Place in the Kingsbridge Heights section of the Bronx, a 66-year-old male victim was approached by two men who displayed a silver firearm and removed the man's jewelry with an approximate value of \$1,000. The individuals fled in a black Honda four-door sedan. There were no injuries.

### Incident Number 5

On Monday, Aug. 31, 2020 at approximately 1.25 a.m., in front of 4825 White Plains Road in the Wakefield section of the Bronx, a 43-year-old male victim was approached by three men who displayed firearms and removed the man's jewelry with an approximate value of \$13,000 as well as his car keys. The individuals fled on foot. There were no injuries.

### Incident Number 6

On Monday, Aug. 31, 2020 at approximately 2.20 p.m., in front of 1832 Gleason Avenue in the Soundview section of the Bronx, a 32-year-old male victim was approached by three men who displayed a black firearm and removed the man's jewelry and personal property with an approximate value of \$8,000. The individuals fled on foot. There were no injuries.

Two of the men are 5 foot, 10 inches tall, and weigh between 160 and 170 pounds. The other man is 6 foot, 2 inches tall and weighs 250 pounds. They are described as Black, and in their twenties.



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Photo courtesy of Oswald Feliz

**OSWALD FELIZ** is a Northwest Bronx Democrats 4 Change Board member and is running for the City Council seat in District 15.

## Elections 2021: Oswald Feliz on Education, Climate Action & Housing

By **SILE MOLONEY**

Oswald Feliz is very clear on what his top three issues are in running for City Council in the 15<sup>th</sup> District. “Number one, I will work to racially and economically desegregate our public-school system,” he said. “We actually have the most racially and economically segregated system in the country, and that has to change.”

Feliz said that in a City which has the largest public-school system in the country, with over 1.1 million students, where 70 percent are from minority communities, it is unjust that only a fraction gain entry to the best public high schools.

He cites the example of Stuyvesant High School, rated the top public high school in the City, where in 2020, out of 760 admitted students, only ten were African American. It was a similar tale in 2019, where out of 895 admitted students, only seven were African American, and only 20 were Hispanic.

Feliz is critical of the design of the school system, not just in terms of the barriers it presents to low-income students and students of color from a funding perspective, but also because of the specialized high school admissions test.

“Specialized high schools determine admission based on one thing – the score on an exam and nothing else,” he said. “A test score may not be the best way to measure how well they do.” He acknowledges that it is one factor, but he said it shouldn’t be the only thing that’s

considered, adding that many lower income kids have very high GPAs, but do not necessarily do well in the exam.

One reason for this, he said, is that many wealthy parents can afford to send their kids to a special summer school program six months out in order to prepare them to take the test. Another reason is that many first-generation families are navigating the system for the first time, and may not even know the exam exists in order to apply to these high performing public schools.

If elected, Feliz would require top public schools, when screening applicants, to account for not just the admissions exam results, but also a student’s GPA, attendance, teacher recommendations, and social-economic and racial background.

His second top campaign issue is the environment. “The Bronx is a classic example of environmental injustice,” he said. “We have the worst air quality in our city, and we also have high asthma rates due to the poor air quality. It’s due to a lot of reasons but it’s mostly because of the air pollution.”

He attributes this to the many highways and expressways in the South Bronx, in particular, including and especially the Cross Bronx Expressway, which traverses a number of neighborhoods, and which he said was recently rated the most congested expressway in the nation.

“You know, it has six lanes – three going up, three going down - a lot of congestion, heavily used by trucks,” Feliz

said. He plans to create a green space over the 1950s expressway.

“The Cross Bronx has a lot of different areas, most of it is below level and some of it is elevated,” he said. So, the areas that are below ground level, I will work to put basically like a cap or a deck of new green space [overhead] to help absorb the pollution.”

He added that technology would also be installed to absorb more of the pollution into the tunnel underground. “It’s not going to quickly absorb every single particle, but it would, at least, help decrease the pollution in the area.”

He cites Klyde Warren Park, built over the Woodall Rodgers Freeway in Dallas, Texas as a similar successful example, as well as plans in Brooklyn for the Brooklyn Queens Expressway.

Feliz said that a company in Brooklyn analyzed the project there and came up with a proposal. He reached out to the company and they told him they had actually been trying to analyze the issue in the Bronx but had reached an impasse. “It hasn’t gained enough political traction,” Feliz explained.

The third priority for Feliz is promoting home ownership, changing the socio-economic fabric of public housing, and curbing gentrification in the Bronx by incentivizing long-time residents to stay in the borough. He plans to offer 15 to 20 percent of tenants in public housing the opportunity to purchase their homes at an affordable rate through a designated non-profit organization, similar to a Co-op arrange-

ment, provided the tenants meet certain criteria.

They would have to have lived in the public housing complex all their lives and would have to be above a certain income threshold. This means not being the lowest-income earners, but not being well off enough to buy elsewhere in the City. Sub-rentals would be prohibited and if they subsequently wanted to sell their home, they would have to do so at the same rate at which they purchased it, using the same non-profit.

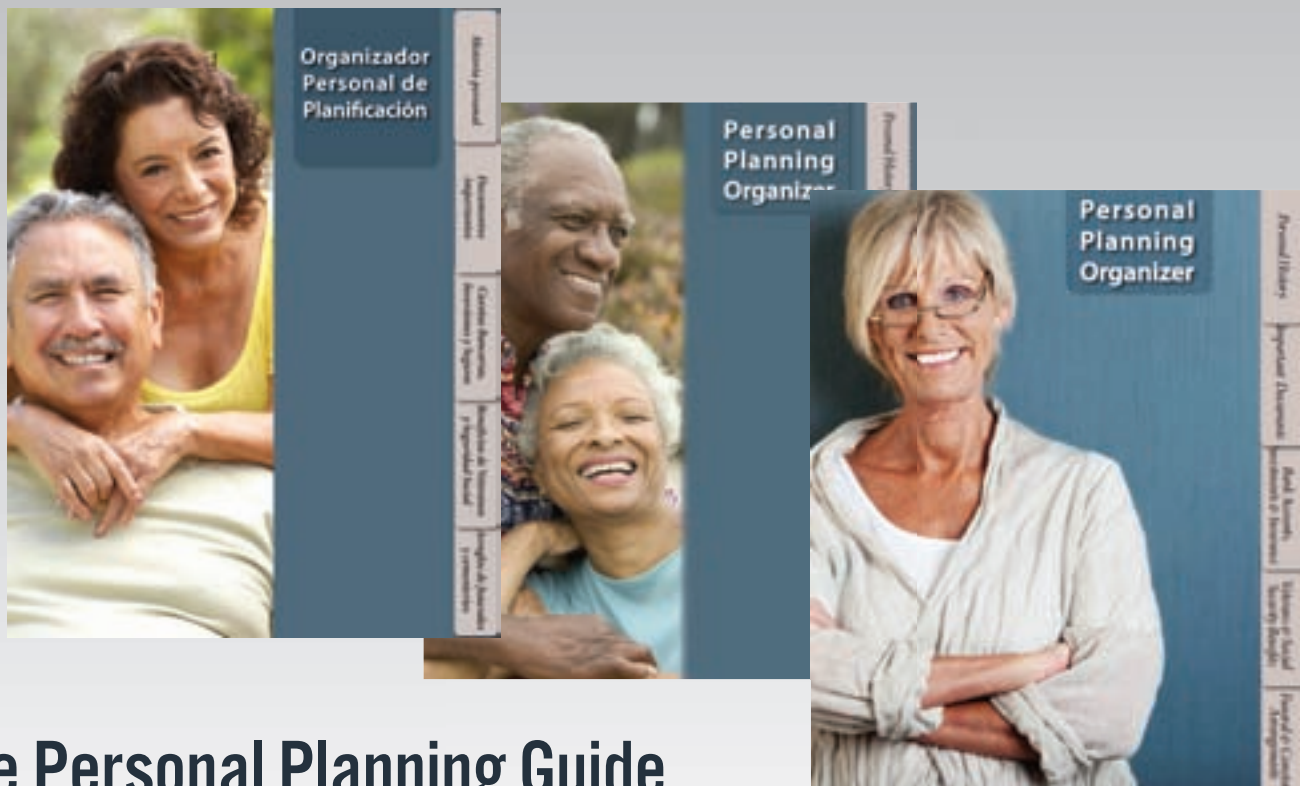
“Having housing programs that are economically integrated has a lot of benefits,” Feliz said in a recent Facebook live campaign event. It will bring income to the community and promote stability.

In terms of his political experience, Feliz has worked previously for State Sen. Gustavo Rivera, and he also worked on the political campaign for Congressman Adriano Espaillat.

Asked why he would be a better candidate than his opponents, Feliz said, “I would say that I am a strong negotiator. As a tenant lawyer, I have taken on the most aggressive landlords in our City.”

He added, “I’m an educator and taught in a classroom in the Bronx for many years.” He added that he would not be an elected official that would only vote ‘yes’ or ‘no’ on issues. “I’m going to be an elected official that is actually going to be taking the lead on the issues. That is what the Bronx needs to help solve problems.”





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# Out & About

Compiled by AURÉOLE RIBES

## Events

**The Bronx Night Market** series celebrates 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. Entrance is free and it will be every Saturday and Sunday through November starting on Sept. 25. For more information, go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), and search for "Bronx Night Market."

Every Friday, from Sept. 25 to Oct. 16, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., the **New York Botanical Garden** will hold a "Pressing Plants for Art & Science" workshop. This course teaches you how to make museum-quality, preserved plant specimens, suitable for research, education, and decoration. For more information, visit [www.nybg.org](http://www.nybg.org), and search for "Pressing Plants for Art & Science."

**The Virtual Bronx Book Fair 2020**

takes place from Oct. 2 at 6 p.m. to Oct. 5 at 7 p.m. Although this is usually an in-person fair, this year there will be four days of virtual programming for the entire family including a writing workshop, a featured music presentation, featured poetry readings, an open mic, a featured keynote speaker, a children's story hour, a book talk, a featured storyteller, and much more. To learn more, go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), and search for "Virtual Bronx Book Fair 2020."

**The James Baldwin Outdoor Learning Center** Community Farmers' Market takes place every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. until Oct. 31. It features vendors from local farms and Bronx-based foods and crafts. It is located at the intersection of Goulden and Sedgwick Avenues and West Moshulu Parkway South (north side of DeWitt Clinton Educational Camp). For more information, go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), and search for "James Baldwin Outdoor Learning Center."

Peggy Robles-Alvarado leads a free, bi-monthly, generative writing workshop which is great for writers of all levels. You will write, develop poems, write pieces, and get feedback on your work. It will take place online on Wednesday, Sept. 23, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, visit this site: [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com) and search for "**Line Breaks and Bronx Beats** with Peggy Robles – Alvarado."

## Volunteer Opportunities

Help clean up Wakefield's Bissel Gardens as part of the **#CleanUpTheBronx** community effort. Join The Bronx for Black Lives, Wakefield 4 Change, Bronx Bodega, and Council Member Andrew Cohen to clean up Bissel Gardens on Saturday, Sept. 26 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at East 241st St & Baychester Avenue, across from Camp Street. All supplies including bags, masks, and gloves will be provided. RSVP here: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdO6dCNaxUDanBXtQwA2kSemSA1Cv9QGr32calsVthJEdcpw/viewform?fbclid=IwAR0oCe1uIDGQ94HcQYb3tSAXwyPssqz-lyWXMxQnN-vPXv-Osvi5buiPIMU>

## Exhibits

**The Bronx Museum of Arts** presents, "Bring the Museum Home!" which is an afternoon filled with art-making activities, all from the comfort of your

home. To learn more and register, visit their website at: <http://www.bronxmuseum.org/events/september-virtual-family-affair-bring-the-museum-home>

## Sports and Movement

On Saturday, Oct. 3 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Free Walkers is organizing a "**Bronx Coast to Coast**" walk from the Hudson River to Pelham Bay. Free Walkers is an organization that helps aid people's health and wellbeing by educating, motivating and challenging people to go on long-distance walking events. The walk starts at the intersection of West 231st Street and Riverdale Avenue, by the benches at the entrance to Ewen Park. More information can be found by visiting [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com) and searching for "Bronx Coast to Coast."

On Oct. 3, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. EDT, **Bronx River Alliance** is hosting a two-hour estuary paddle event for \$35. This paddle starts and ends at the Concrete Plant Park boat launch. Journey through the lower segments of the Bronx via canoe or kayak, traveling south and back, passing along Concrete Plant Park, Hunts Point Riverside Park and Soundview Park. Travel to the connecting East River and learn about what this amazing natural resource has to offer! For more information, go to: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/estuary-paddle-10320-tickets->



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# Hate Has No Place in Norwood

(continued from page 1)

mural, and who apparently intended to cause hurt. "This is not the community that I know and that I proudly represent," said Fernandez, addressing the crowd. "We have always accepted every single person - color, creed, anyone - because that is what community is about."

Asked by *Norwood News* what steps the assemblywoman would take to prevent such hate crimes from happening again in the area, Fernandez said that in discussions with Bronx Community Board 7 and local trans leaders, there was mention of a task force being formed, though details have yet to be solidified.

Also, in attendance at the event was Elisa Crespo, education liaison at the Bronx borough president's office and the first openly transgender woman of color to work for a borough-wide office in the Bronx. Crespo is also running for the New York City Council seat in District 15. "As a member of a community that is being attacked by the highest levels of government, I am here to tell you that our oppression and subjugation will no longer be tolerated," she said.

Speaking with *Norwood News* before the rally, Crespo made clear that her political campaign was not solely based around her identity as a transgender woman. "When I am elected as Councilwoman, I will be bringing a voice to a community that has never been heard," she said. "But, I'm also here to represent everyone regardless of their background."

Meanwhile, members of Black Trans Media not only attended the event and painted over the hateful messages that covered the mural, but they also used the occasion to address those gathered.

Xeno Olionus, who was the lead artist on the mural when it was originally painted, said its defacing was all the more senseless considering the current situation with the coronavirus pandemic and resulting economic crisis.

"I think that the last thing that should be [the vandal's] priority is, 'How can I take it a step further and keep knocking people down that are just trying to live?'," he said. "All we're trying to do is live. That's it - simple!"

He added that because everyone was going through such hard times, tearing other people down didn't make anyone else's life any better. He called for more respect and empathy.

"Every artist knows that when you do art, there's a part of you that goes into it," he said. "For someone to just step over it and not consider the time it takes, the emotion it takes, it's a lack of consideration and a lack of empathy."

In June, during the initial painting of the mural, Black Trans Media had posted a message on their Instagram account thanking the local commu-

nity for their support. "Day 1 photos from working on our #blacktranslives-matter mural in the Bronx was so epic magical and we appreciate everyone coming out and supporting each other in staying safe," the post read.

"We got to interact with tons of folks in the community who came up to us, talked to us, and thanked us for our work. One family got out of their car to take photos with their kids in front of the words black trans lives matter," the post continued. The group added that folks had also donated money and water to them on the day in question.

Other speakers on the day included Olympia Sudan, co-director of Black Trans Media, Ischia Bravo, district manager of Community Board 7, and Kenny Agosto, district director to New York State Senator Jamaal T. Bailey and the first, openly gay man to serve as a district leader in the Bronx.

"We have a Montefiore center dedicated to HIV prevention," said Agosto, his voice appearing to crack at times due to emotion. "We must fund those things!" He also called for the funding of LGBTQ+ support services, centers, and for support for LGBTQ+ artists. "We must defend our artists because they are defending us!" he said, pointing to the mural. "We're here because this is intolerable!" he added. "We are sick and tired of being sick and tired!"

During her remarks, Sudan called for more education and understanding among non-trans people of the issues faced by the trans community and encouraged people to think about policy decisions that affected them.

All in attendance appeared to be heavily moved by the event during the delivery of the various remarks and expressed their support and solidarity with the Black transgender and wider transgender community.

Overall, the anger and sadness that such vitriol towards fellow human beings could be expressed in such a vulgar, hateful and public manner was palpable.

A hate crime is an offense that is motivated by bias. A person commits a hate crime when one of a specified set of crimes is committed, targeting a victim because of a perception or belief about their race, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, religion, religious practice, age, disability or sexual orientation, or when such an act is committed as a result of that type of perception or belief.

Hate crimes can be perpetrated against an individual, a group, or against public or private property. For example, hanging a noose or painting a swastika can be deemed hate crimes.

In January 2019, city Council passed legislation to create the Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes (OPHC) — the first of its kind for a city

in the United States.

According to OPHC, hate crime complaints, which can be the result of civilian reporting or officer activity, went up by 19 percent from 2018 to 2019, in part because of an increase in anonymous hate-crime vandalism, without an identifiable suspect to arrest.

Of all bias categories, anti-Jewish bias comprised the largest proportion of both complaints (58 percent) and arrests (35 percent). Of these complaints, 76 percent were for incidences of swastika vandalism.

Anti-LGTBQ bias comprised the second-highest proportion of hate crime complaints (16 percent) and arrests (27 percent). White individuals made up the highest proportion of arrests across all bias categories. The highest proportion of arrests was for males aged between 26 and 35 years of age.

Brooklyn led the boroughs with the highest number of hate crime complaints and arrests, followed by Manhattan.

Meanwhile, the NYPD confirm that the Norwood incidents are clas-

sified as hate crimes, and that they are being investigated by their Hate Crimes Task Force division. To date, there have been no reports on who the culprit or culprits are.

Destination Tomorrow is the only LGBTQ+ center in the Bronx with the unique experience of working hand in hand with members of the Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming community (TGNC) community. The center provides housing, social support, and employment related services. The center's goal is to act as a resource not only to TGNC community members, but also to those in the borough who are looking to work with or understand this community.

Anyone wishing to obtain more information about the agency can do so by accessing their website at [www.destinationtomorrow.org](http://www.destinationtomorrow.org).

**To report a hate crime in progress or any emergency, call 911. Non-emergencies should be reported to the local precinct.**

For general questions about the work that OPHC is doing, New Yorkers can email [OPHC@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:OPHC@cityhall.nyc.gov) or visit [nyc.gov/stophate](http://nyc.gov/stophate).



## Letters To The Editor

### Challenging MTA's Financial Woes

MTA Chairman Pat Foye claims his agency is facing a financial "Five Alarm Fire." Putting it out requires not only federal assistance, but also farebox, City Hall, and Albany revenues. First, the MTA requested \$3.9 billion in additional funding. After receipt of \$3.9 billion in CARE COVID-19 funding, the MTA announced they needed another \$3.9 billion. Today, it is \$12 billion. What will it be tomorrow? Weeks ago, it was a four-alarm fire. Now it is a five-alarm fire. What will it be tomorrow? MTA Chairman Foye reminds me of Pinocchio.

Riders and Washington are already fighting the financial fire. City Hall and Albany must do likewise. MTA Chairman Foye recently blamed Washington for a loss of \$1 billion. This was based on the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) not working fast enough with the MTA with the completion of the NEPA environmental review process. This is necessary to implement Congestion Pricing. It is supposed to raise \$15 billion for the "MTA \$51 billion 2020 - 2024 Five Year Capital Plan."

Even if FHWA made a NEPA finding tomorrow, tolling could never

be implemented on Jan. 1, 2021. For nine months, Governor Cuomo and NYC Mayor de Blasio never announced their appointments to the MTA Traffic Mobility Review Board. Details of who will pay what, can never be resolved and made public until this board is established and completes its mission. This process is politically sensitive. It could take many months to a year before congestion pricing is set. I will not hold my breath waiting for MTA Chairman Foye's future New York Times Guest Op Ed holding Mayor de Blasio and Governor Cuomo accountable for their inaction delaying implementation. This \$15 billion could have solved the financial crisis.

**Larry Penner  
Great Neck**

### Support for Abortion and Sex Education?

Warren Milenin (September 10 letter) agrees with Richard Marias (July 30 letter) in praying for an end to abortion. Are they also praying for more sex education and birth control so that there will be less unwanted pregnancies?

**Richard Warren,  
New York City**





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## 2020 Election Local Lens: The Environment

*(continued from page 2)*

ripped through the area in early August. FOMP were actively involved in the storm clean up.

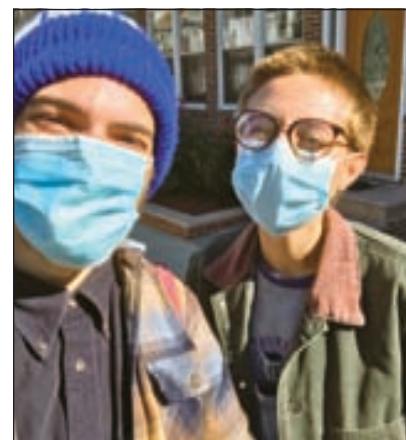
Many of these conversations start in the “Edible Garden” the group maintains, located beside the Keeper’s House in Norwood. The edible garden model is one where community residents can come in and volunteer in planning, seeding, planting, watering, weeding, and helping to make compost. They can also help harvest and prep for the next season.

School gardens are another venue for such conversations. Quaranta said they should be made mandatory throughout the borough. “I think it’s definitely a must for the children to know where our food comes from,” she said. “The other thing is - it also provides an opportunity for adults to go back to the basics. As we teach children about food, and climate change and sustainability, the adults - most likely the parents - get on board with the same initiative.”

Congressman José E. Serrano, who has represented the 15<sup>th</sup> congressional district, which includes the South Bronx, for the last 30 years, has been hailed as a progressive leader when it comes to his voting record on climate change. Indeed, he commissioned the original study which high-lighted the link between the high asthma rates in the South Bronx and the area’s high pollution levels.

As a result, he introduced legislation that provided tax credits to businesses that use clean-fuel vehicles in areas with high pollution. He also supported the South Bronx Greenway project - a belt of parks and paths that cut through industrial areas to connect several neighborhoods to their immediate waterfront.

One of his landmark achievements was the restoration of the highly contaminated Bronx River, the City’s only true freshwater river, which was known for illegal dumping, but was transformed into a healthy eco-system capable of sustaining migrating herring and the first beaver in New York City in over



**(L TO R)** Michael Villanova and Fiona Crisp, co-founders of the Bronx chapter of Sunrise Movement. Photo courtesy of Michael Villanova.

200 years.

As Serrano prepares for his retirement, organizations like Sunrise Bronx and FOMP will no doubt expect his presumptive successor, City Councilman Ritchie Torres, along with all elected officials to build on this work for the betterment of the Bronx. Given that a recent Harvard University study found that someone living in an area of high-particulate pollution is 8 percent more likely to die from COVID-19 than others living in areas with less pollution, it’s clear that a smart, holistic policy approach to environmental policy is needed.

During her regular park clean up outings, Quaranta also notices the amount of non-biodegradable waste there is scattered around - everything from plastic cups to plastic bags, and straws to Styrofoam containers.

She said there must be another way to encourage manufacturers to stop making non-environmentally friendly items. “I think, on a national level, we really need to think about the products we make,” she said.

*Sile Moloney contributed additional reporting to this story.*



# Small Business Grants Available for Minority-Owned Businesses

By DANIELA BEASELY

Mosholu Preservation Corporation (MPC) is partnering with Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) NYC to support local, small businesses in the Norwood and Wakefield neighborhoods through the LISC NYC Small Business Relief & Recovery Fund. The Fund will provide grants of \$10,000 to minority-owned, small businesses, in response to their needs to successfully retool and adapt to new business guidelines and a changing marketplace, in the wake of COVID-19.

LISC NYC embraces an inclusive, economic development agenda that prioritizes targeted investments in public infrastructure, human talent, innovation, diverse enterprises, and community organizations. This aligns with MPC's efforts to advance the health and wellbeing of Bronx communities through small business support, neighborhood development, quality housing, and local news.

Through this partnership, MPC will support businesses in



the Norwood and Wakefield area in screening grant applications to the LISC NYC Small Business Relief & Recovery Fund. In addition, MPC will deliver technical assistance and business development support to participating businesses.

Business applicants selected by LISC NYC as relief fund grantees will receive support from MPC and avail of its specialized menu of small business services provided to all Northwest Bronx Merchants,

helping them rebuild the commercial corridors hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic. They will also be connected with the NYC Department of Small Business Services' Bronx Business Solutions Center.

The pandemic, and the resulting economic downturn, has had a severe impact on the ability of New York small businesses to survive and thrive. This funding opportunity is crucial in MPC's fight for Bronx businesses, which have been repeatedly shut out of other aid opportunities made available during this pandemic. Many Bronx merchants didn't qualify for available aid because of citizenship status, bookkeeping capabilities, employee numbers or because their needs weren't addressed under the eligibility requirements pertaining to use of funds.

The relief fund grants can be used for payroll, overhead, rent, upgrades to technology and infrastructure, marketing, employee training and other business expenses. Business owners seeking to apply for these grants must re-

ceive assistance from a partnering Community Based Organization (CBO) in order to submit their applications. MPC, as a CBO partner, will help business owners apply for these grants and will also provide additional, technical assistance and training to help them sustain their businesses.

To be eligible for this grant, small businesses must be minority-owned, have an annual revenue of less than \$500,000, have fewer than 20 employees, be formally registered and in business for at least one year, and be located in New York City. MPC will be providing applicants to LISC NYC for Round 2 of this grant opportunity from Monday, Oct. 19 at 9 a.m. EST through Friday, Nov. 6, at 11.59 p.m. EST.

If you are a small business interested in applying for grant funding, please contact Daniela Beasley at [dbeasley@mpcbroxx.org](mailto:dbeasley@mpcbroxx.org).

*Daniela Beasley is Manager of Small Business Support at Mosholu Preservation Corporation. For more information, please follow @mpcbroxx on Instagram or head to our website at [www.mpcbxx.org](http://www.mpcbxx.org).*



## Big or small, the Census is for us all. Count all kids and babies!

**Children should be included on your 2020 Census form**—and not just children related to you, but any kids living at your address most of the time. When babies and children are included, the programs that support them get the funding they need.

Count your children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, foster kids, and the children of any friends or relatives staying with you, even if it's only temporary. Babies count, too! Even if they're still in the hospital, as long as they were born by April 1, 2020, make sure the person completing the Census for your address includes them on the form.

For more information about the 2020 Census, visit [2020Census.gov](http://2020Census.gov) or call 844-330-2020.  
#2020Census #CountAllKids



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