



NORWOOD NEWS

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MTA DENIES FRIENDS OF MOSHOLU PARKWAY PERMIT TO PAINT MURAL

Cites lack of resources for maintenance



Photo by Síle Moloney

FRIENDS OF MOSHOLU Parkland have applied to MTA Arts & Design to paint a community mural entitled, "The Aquarium" on the park-facing wall behind Azalea Garden, adjacent to Mosholu Parkway subway station located at Jerome Avenue and Mosholu Parkway.

By **SÍLE MOLONEY**

When Elizabeth Quaranta began fundraising two years ago with Friends of Mosholu Parkland (FOMP) for a community mural in Azalea Garden, she had no idea that fundraising would turn out to be the easier part of the project.

The volunteer community association's plan was to paint a mural on the park-facing side

of the wall behind Azalea garden, adjacent to Mosholu Parkway subway station, located at Mosholu Parkway and Jerome Avenue.

Their objective was to beautify a leafy corner of Mosholu Parkland, loved and frequented by the elderly, the homeless, veterans, and local residents, some of whom live in subsidized housing in nearby Tracey

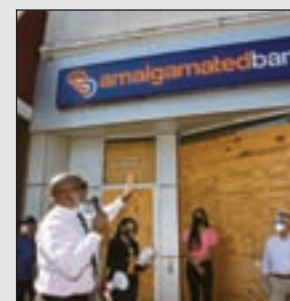
Towers.

"The culture and demographics of this area, mostly Black, Hispanic and people of color would greatly appreciate a mural where the main character is of color," and that they could relate to," wrote Quaranta, FOMP's acting voluntary executive director, in an email to the City last month.

Being very active in the com-

munity, FOMP were conscious that the corner sometimes became unsightly due to excess litter, beer cans, and spray paint on the park wall. They knew that left unmaintained, the area could also appear unsafe, and potentially deter people from using the adjacent subway station which serves the No. 4 line to Woodlawn.

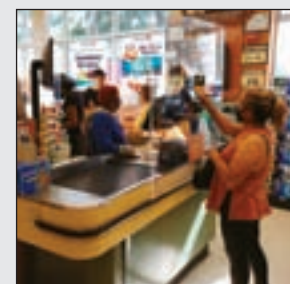
(continued on page 19)



**Rally To Reopen
Amalgamated Bank
On Burnside Avenue
pg 2**



**Wakefield Poet Pro-
motes Literacy and
Pride | pg 12**



**How Foodtown's
Re-Opening Plan
Became a Model
pg 19**

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Rally to Re-Open Amalgamated Bank on Burnside

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

Wooden boards on the storefront glass of the Amalgamated Bank at 94 E. Burnside Ave. give it the appearance of a long-time shuttered business. Officially though, it is scheduled to close by Sept. 25.

On Monday, Aug. 24 a group of protestors gathered to let bank administrators know the decision will hurt a community already facing daunting financial prospects in the midst of an economic downturn complicated by a public health crisis. Speakers at the rally included several small business owners as well as community board leaders.

The protest, organized by the Jerome Avenue Revitalization Collaborative (JARC), was led by Pierina Sanchez, a local resident and client of Amalgamated Bank. She is also a declared city council candidate for District 14. During her remarks, Sanchez also criticized Chase Bank, which has a branch just a few blocks west on Burnside Avenue that has been closed since October 2019.

"To us, these closures are personal. Today we stand together, organized and concerned by the love of our community and a commitment to our future," she told the crowd.

Emmanuel Martinez, Bronx Community Board 7 chairperson, attended the rally and sees a similar problem arising in Norwood when financial institutions abruptly leave. "We had a situation where Chase just closed their doors and we still feel it," Martinez said. He was referring to the closure of the Chase branch at 311 E. 204th St. last October which came as a surprise to many customers, as reported by **Norwood News** at that time.

Unlike the big banks which are



Photo by José A. Giralt

DR. BOLA OMOTOSHO, chairman of Community Board 5, speaks to a crowd protesting the closing of the Burnside Avenue branch of Amalgamated Bank on Monday, Aug. 24, 2020.

closely tied to big corporations and Wall Street profits, Amalgamated Bank was founded on the belief that working-class people need a financial institution to work for them.

According to the company's website, the bank was formed in 1923 by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, the same labor union that sponsored the Amalgamated Housing Cooperative in Van Cortlandt Village in the late 1920s.

During the 20th century, the bank was the first to offer services targeted at working New Yorkers and immigrants, like free checking accounts and foreign-exchange transfer services securing safe remittances to relatives abroad.

Responding to a request for comment from *Norwood News*, a spokesperson from Amalgamated Bank wrote, "Throughout the pandemic, our team has proactively reached out to more than 1,000 Burnside customers – most of our Burnside customer base – to help them gain access to online banking, provide ATM and debit cards, and provide products, services and information on how Amalgamated can serve them during these trying times."

The statement continued, "Amal-

gamated remains committed to providing continued resources for financial literacy in the Burnside community and in our other Bronx branch location; offering remote transition services, including live online trainings, as well as a dedicated phone number and email for Burnside clients to get support. In addition to the 40,000+ Allpoint ATMs across the country, 25 of which are *within one mile* of the Burnside branch, we are working to get customers access to Allpoint+, [and] deposit accepting ATMs in the area."

Amalgamated Bank's stated commitment to the community still worries Sanchez though.

"When Amalgamated says, 'Don't worry, we're going to have everybody go into online banking,' that doesn't work for us," she said. "That doesn't work for us because our community is not all online and is not all knowledgeable about how to use the internet."

Indeed, a report by the City Comptroller in September 2019 supported this assertion. The Comptroller's analysis found that internet disparities are pervasive throughout New York City. Across the five boroughs, 29 percent of households – 917,239 in total – lack broadband internet access.

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 24 at 6 p.m. To connect via ZOOM, enter the Meeting ID: 709 917 6132, followed by the password: 5n796x. To connect via phone, dial +1 929 205 6099, ID: 709 917 6132, followed by the password 418670.

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 the 9/11 attacks, 19 years later, and where they were when they heard about them.



The thoughts of 9/11 still bring tears to my eyes. I remember I was in my room watching the news; I was in disbelief. It had a big impact on all of us here in New York City and all over the world. It saddens me because I knew a church member who worked there who passed away. So many lives were taken away at the same moment. I do appreciate the way they are being honored every single year at the beautiful memorial. May God bless their souls. This will always be a sad day for all of us.

Gess Nunez,
Norwood



I was sitting in the house with my mother and sister, and we were watching TV when we thought we saw it, and then we thought we saw it again, and then when we knew it was happening, it hurt us. We had family members and nieces who had friends they lost on 9/11. But we've been through rougher things than that and we're still surviving, like this pandemic. I feel we're more cautious now, when we were so relaxed as a country. For that to happen here, it took a toll on a lot of people. This is America, and everyone here felt safe, so happy and free, and now everyone is walking around cautious and afraid, and this is not how America is supposed to be. I really don't know why we were attacked. It was just evil people.

Lois "Big Mama" Stevenson,
Mount Hope



I went into some type of fallout shelter down south when someone brought a newspaper. This sort of thing could happen anywhere when you're dealing with the people we're dealing with. Nineteen years later, I feel that the book, 'The Prophecies of Nostradamus,' people wanted to stop that book from coming out and it's in his prophecies of a major building exploding. It was a major hurt on New York, the best city in the world and it looks like we have to have radar and pandemic protection these days. It really was a shock to the system.

Fredrick Smith,
Parkchester



As a financial person, I was in my office handling market trades when it happened. So, I heard about it when Wall Street did. My thoughts about the attack are simple. While we now know it was the Saudis that attacked us, what is sadder is that they used our resources, financial and otherwise, totally unchecked. In essence we attacked ourselves. Justice served? You've got to be kidding. We're friendlier now with them than ever before, via both a Democratic or Republican administration.

Anthony Riviaccio,
Bedford Park



At around 8:30 in the morning, right around when the plane struck, I got a phone call from my brother. I was home at the time. My brother calls and says, "Turn on the TV," and I'm thinking, "What happened?" So, at that time I had a citywide scanner and turned on the scanner, and was listening to all the transmissions about what was going down at the World Trade Center as it was happening. And I heard the dispatchers when the building was coming down. I lost not only a friend who worked with me in the department, who later transferred to the fire department, but I also lost a friend of my mom's. We also learned, as it was our transgression into national security, where everything became a little more sensitive and tight for security throughout the United States.

Joseph Padilla,
Belmont



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NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Gillibrand Promotes New Nutrition Bill in the Bronx

On Monday Aug. 31, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. joined U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, at Abraham House to announce her new bill, the "Ensuring Nutrition for America's Students' Act." With food pantries across New York facing unprecedented demand, and with schools now reopened, the bill will ensure that nutritional resources are provided to families who lost access to free or reduced lunches due to school closures in the earlier stages of the pandemic. It will also extend the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) food program, set to expire on September 30, through the upcoming school year to ensure students have access to meals even if in-person learning is disrupted. The proposed legislation will make the P-EBT program more responsive to these disruptions so that eligible students who miss any meals at school will receive benefits.

Census 2020 Ends Sept. 30

With just 20 days remaining until the census draws to a close, the Office of the Bronx Borough President has received a census outreach grant to help with the borough's census count. The award money (\$328,000) will be disbursed by the Office to local non-profits to conduct targeted outreach via pop-up enrollment sites, phone/text banking operations, and social media campaigns throughout the Bronx between now and the Sept. 30 federal deadline. Bronx County qualified for the grant due to the borough's low census response rates compared to State and national response averages. Bronx County has a 59.2 percent response rate as of Sept. 5, compared to the State's 61.4 percent average response rate. New York State grant awardees include CB 7, in partnership with Bronx Works and Dominicanos USA, CB 8, in partnership with Dominicanos USA and Kingsbridge Heights Community Center, and

CB 12, in partnership with Black Institute Inc., North Bronx Youth Sports Association and The Urban League.

Tax Lien Sale Stopped

After postponing the annual tax lien auction a number of times already this year, the mayor was forced to further postpone the scheduled sale on Sept. 25, after the governor extended the executive order declaring a statewide state of emergency until Oct. 6. It was hoped that the tax lien sale would raise much needed revenue for the City's coffers as officials wrestle to prevent laying off an anticipated 22,000 public sector employees in October. On Aug. 31, Attorney General Laetitia James and 57 elected officials penned a letter to Mayor Bill de Blasio requesting the removal of small homes from the sale, and to abstain from

selling such liens until the conclusion of the COVID-19 emergency. Every year, homeowners who fall behind on their tax or water bills can find themselves subject to the City's annual lien sale, where the City sells their outstanding tax and water debts, and the ability to collect them, to private investors. After the sale, the investors, through a trust, add steep interest and fees to the debts, which quickly balloon in size, vastly increasing the amounts owed by the homeowners.

Gibson, Fernandez Both Announce Bronx BP Run

City Council Member Vanessa Gibson confirmed she was running for Bronx Borough President on Aug. 20, on Bronxnet TV, while Assembly Member Nathalia Fernandez announced on Aug. 23 that she was also running for the position. Gibson said Bronxites ex-

pect candidates running for office to step up and have real tangible, comprehensive solutions. "They don't want talkers. They want doers. You have to be doers of the word. You have to talk about it, but you have to be about it as well. You have to have a track record of accomplishments, of things that you have done. You can't just talk about what you want to do but what have you been doing," she said. Meanwhile, Fernandez said, "The COVID-19 crisis laid bare the institutional biases that exist in our communities and heightened the importance of electing people in decision-making positions such as the borough presidency. The Bronx has greatly suffered these past months in an economic sense but has also taken a heavy toll on the mental health of Bronxites. I will work hard to restore businesses to our communities and will use

my position to bring greater and more accessible mental health services to Bronx neighborhoods."

Deal Reached with Foodtown Workers

Sixty-seven deli workers at 13 Foodtown Supermarkets across the New York metropolitan area, including those at the Norwood Foodtown branch at 283 East 204th Street, are breathing a sigh of relief after the supermarket owner, PSK Supermarkets, hammered out a deal with union officials beyond the 11th hour deadline set by the union. Workers from two unions had been expected to walk off the job on Wednesday, Aug. 27, if a deal wasn't struck by Aug. 26. An official from the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) Local 342 confirmed that a deal was reached but declined to provide any details.

Modell's: All Sales Final After 131 Years

by DAVID GREENE

It's the end of the road for the physical brick and mortar locations of the family-owned, sporting goods giant, Modell's, as its 153 stores across the east coast were recently liquidated, and most of its 3,600-plus employees went home for the last time.

Founded in 1889 by Morris A. Modell, the sports chain had been successfully operating in nine states, and in the District of Columbia for over a century. The company, which sells sports equipment, sportswear and sneakers, reported \$765 million in revenue in 2015.

However, during bankruptcy proceedings held at the beginning of the year, the company blamed competition in the sneaker business, and skyrocketing rents as the reason for the its demise.

On Aug. 29, an unidentified worker at the Modell's store located at East Fordham Road and Morris Avenue said, "Yes, today is our last day." Asked how many employees would be let go, she replied, "We're all unemployed basically after this, I'm guessing. I mean the stores are closing individually. The Fordham one is closing today."

The employee said she hadn't been working for the sports company that long and was actually hired during



Photo by David Greene

THE FAMILY-OWNED, SPORTING goods giant, Modell's, founded in 1889, shut all its 153 stores at the end of August. Going forward, it will operate as an online company headed by Retail Ecommerce Ventures.

the pandemic. She had just started in July. Asked what she planned to do in the future, she said, "I guess I'm going to look for another job."

A tour of the store on the same day saw more than half of its merchandise already sold. Around the shop floor, bargain hunters were urged to grab the last of the deals, as display signs

with the words, "Going Out of Business," and "All Stores Close Sunday," hung from the ceiling.

Customers were seen taking full advantage of the "going out of Business" discounts. Some remaining jackets and sports equipment were on sale for as much as 90 percent off the original

(continued on page 18)

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Graffiti Finally Removed from Unopened AutoZone Kingsbridge Store

By SÍLE MOLONEY

It wasn't quick, but AutoZone finally removed some unsightly graffiti that had covered the southern wall of an unopened AutoZone store in Kingsbridge. Constituents had reported the graffiti via Twitter, and Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz had also noticed the graffiti as far back as July 10. After weeks of trying to find a responsible party for the unopened store, AutoZone painted over the graffiti over the course of two days on Aug. 31 and Sept. 1.

The AutoZone store has long been a sore spot for the neighborhood, as local residents have waited for several years for the doors to be opened for business. A multitude of construction permits from the City's department of buildings were filed starting in 2015 but there has been little activity at the site in recent years, making the building's large, empty walls an attractive target for graffiti artists. Representatives for AutoZone recently informed Dinowitz's office that they were very close to opening and were just waiting on final approvals on a few punch-list

items.

Referring to the removal of the graffiti, Dinowitz said on Sept. 2, "Graffiti is one of those crimes that may not inherently be dangerous for the community, but it is unsightly, and it evokes memories of a dangerous past here in the Bronx." He added, "Many residents of a certain age, including myself, worked very hard to get our community through the bad days of the 1970s and 80s, and seeing graffiti go unaddressed for so long is a slap in the face to the work that we put in years ago."

The assemblyman said that it shouldn't be that difficult to get in touch with business owners in the community. "I am hopeful that AutoZone has recognized that they need to be more proactive community partners by maintaining their property on a consistent basis going forward. Our communities are only as strong as the relationships we build, and the strongest communities have vibrant businesses that engage in productive partnerships with local residents to maintain and improve their neighborhood."

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Woman Causes \$7,000+ in Damage to Store After Being Told to Wear Mask

By DAVID GREENE

Members of the United Bodegas of America (UBA) have come together demanding officials do something after a woman went berserk, and attempted to destroy a store with a butcher's knife in the Soundview section of the Bronx on July 31, after she was asked to wear a face covering.

Members of the UBA gathered on Sunday, Aug. 30 for a press conference outside LizBeth Supermarket, where the incident occurred, and which is located at 1702 Watson Avenue, to publicly voice their concerns about the dangers and harassment bodega owners and employees face from some customers.

Supermarket owner, Wascar Soto, said in a statement to the media during the press conference, "I thought it was simple. I ask everyone coming into my bodega to wear a mask. Some argue, some curse, some want to fight, some simply slam the door and leave, but this person was different. She pulled out a butcher knife, and stabbed soda cans, plastic soft drinks, sacks of rice. You name it, she stabbed it."

Fernando Mateo, a spokesman for the UBA, said, "We had a woman wielding a butcher knife, came in. When she was told she needed to wear a mask, she pulled out the knife, got irate and started throwing groceries all over the floor." Mateo said the woman began stabbing liquid containers, and caused more than

\$7,000 worth of damage.

Mateo added, "As small business people, it's very hard for us to enforce or to force anyone to do what the mayor and the governor wants them to do." He continued, "Every day we put our lives at risk because people walk in the bodegas, and they're told you must wear a mask, and bodega owners or clerks get spit at, get cursed at, and get all kinds of abuse."

He said that after the police were called to the store, over two dozen officers showed up and went down each aisle while the knife-wielding customer was still in one corner of the store. "It took them over an hour to bring this woman to her senses, to surrender the weapon and turn herself in," he said.

"I think that the cops are doing a great job," Mateo continued. "But you know what? They are not allowed to do their jobs anymore." Mateo then publicly challenged Gov. Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio to spend one day behind the counter of a bodega during a pandemic.

Taking a swipe at the recent bail reform legislation, Mateo then added, "The worst thing of all is she was arrested, then released a few hours later. She was back sitting on the stoop of her building."

Mateo added, "Bodega owners right now have to take whatever means necessary to defend themselves." He then made reference to bodega workers throwing



canned food items to protect themselves, which is what one bodega worker did after a colleague was smacked in the face during a similar incident in Morrisania.

Meanwhile, Soto said he knows the woman who attacked the store from the neighborhood, and noted that she had never caused a problem before. Asked what he would do if the woman returned to the store, he replied, "If she comes back, we can't stop it."

According to NYPD spokeswoman, Detective Denise Moroney, police arrested Ariel Gager, 29, of Bruckner Boulevard after the incident. She was charged with criminal mischief for the July 31 incident.

Earlier this year, on Friday, April 17, an executive order signed by Governor Cuomo required all citizens and visitors of the State to wear a face covering when it's not possible to maintain a safe social distance of six feet.

Photo by David Greene

FERNANDO MATEO (CENTER) (top photo) spokesman for the United Bodegas of America (UBA) speaks to the media, surrounded by UBA members, during a press conference on Sunday, Aug. 30 to call attention to an incident dated July 31 when an irate shopper caused more than \$7,000 worth of damage to LizBeth Supermarket in the Soundview section of the Bronx after being told to wear a face mask in the store.

EARLIER THIS YEAR, (insert photo) on Friday, April 17, an executive order signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo required all citizens and visitors of the state to wear a face covering when it's not possible to maintain a safe social distance of six feet.

CRIME FILE

BY SÍLE MOLONEY

**Man Sought for Robbery of Woman**

The NYPD are searching for a man wanted in connection with a robbery which took place in the 52nd precinct. On Thursday, Aug. 20, 2020 at approximately 5.33 p.m., a 42-year-old female victim was walking in front of 2848 Bainbridge Avenue in the Bedford Park section of the Bronx, when an unidentified man approached her from behind. He forcibly removed her purse from her hand and property from her pockets after pushing and punching her. The individual then fled on foot to parts unknown. The victim refused medical attention. The individual is described as an adult male of medium build and with a medium skin complexion. He was last seen wearing a white t-shirt, gray shorts, white socks, black sneakers, blue hat and was carrying a black book bag.

Two Men Shot in Fordham Manor

Two men were shot in two separate incidents in Fordham Manor within hours of each other. A 34-year-old man was shot twice "about the body," at the corner of Briggs Avenue and East 194th Street outside Loli Beauty Salon on Sunday, Sept. 6. Police reported no arrests or description of a suspect(s)

at the time of the incident. The second shooting occurred a quarter of a mile away and was reported at 4:10 a.m. on Monday, Sept. 7, outside 2693 Morris Avenue, between East Kingsbridge Road and East 196th Street. Police said a 31-year-old man was shot in the left thigh. Both victims were transported to St. Barnabas Hospital in "stable" condition. The investigations are ongoing.

Motorcyclist Dies in Collision

On Sept. 6, at approximately 00:27 a.m., police were alerted to a vehicle accident involving a motorcyclist at Exit 21 on the southbound Henry Hudson Parkway at West 249th Street. Upon arrival, officers observed a 55-year-old, unconscious man on the roadway with severe head trauma. EMS responded and pronounced the man deceased at 00:33 a.m. The NYPD Highway Unit's Collision Investigation Squad also responded and began their investigation. Preliminary results indicate that the motorcyclist sideswiped a vehicle traveling in the same direction and lost control of the bike, causing him to strike his head on the roadway. The other driver remained at the scene and there is no criminality suspected at

this point.

Man Wanted for Slashing Taxi Driver

The NYPD is searching for a suspect in connection with an assault of a taxi driver in the 52nd precinct. On Wednesday, Aug. 5, 2020 at approximately 10.33 p.m., the victim, a 25-year-old male taxi driver, picked up an unidentified man in the vicinity of Jerome Avenue and West 184th Street in the University Heights section of the Bronx. A verbal dispute ensued inside the car and became physical when the passenger, who was in the back seat, punched the victim as he was driving. When the victim stopped his taxi in front of 40 West Mosholu Parkway South, both he and the passenger exited the vehicle, and the passenger slashed the driver on the left side of his face with a box cutter. The passenger then fled on foot. EMS transported the victim to St. Barnabas Hospital, where he underwent surgery, in stable condition. A photo and video of the suspect is available from the NYPD.

Gunman Sought for Firing at Female Resident in Kingsbridge Heights

Police are looking for an individual who opened fire on a complete stranger in broad daylight for no apparent reason.

The victim was a young woman who was simply headed to a supermarket in the Kingsbridge Heights section of the Bronx. The assault occurred outside 2645 Morris Avenue, between East Kingsbridge Road and East 193rd Street, at 9:01 a.m. on Friday, Aug. 28. Two shell casings fell to the ground at the exact spot where the assailant took aim at the young woman, before he fled the scene. The victim was not seriously injured and refused medical attention. Investigators said that as of Thursday, Sept. 3, no arrests had been made, and no description of the gunman was available.

Man Wanted for Robbery of Tools Worth \$4,500

The NYPD is searching for a man wanted in connection with a commercial burglary which occurred in the 52nd precinct. On Aug. 29, 2020, at approximately 00.35 a.m., an unidentified man entered 2467 Jerome Avenue, which is under construction, and removed tools totalling \$4,500 approximately. The man is seen pushing a generator on the sidewalk in a video captured at the location. Anyone with information in regards to this incident is asked to call the NYPD's Crime Stoppers Hotline at 1-800-577-TIPS (8477) or for Spanish, 1-888-57-PISTA (74782). All calls are strictly confidential.



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Wakefield Poet Promotes Literacy and Pride in the Bronx and Beyond

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

Bronx poet and spoken word artist, Lorraine Currelley, has nurtured a life-long love of the written word, and actively shares that passion with as many people as possible. As executive director of both the Bronx Book Fair and the Poets Network & Exchange, she is leading a group of fellow word lovers on a mission to expand literacy in the borough, provide workshops for writers, and promote storytelling by underrepresented groups in the literary world.

"I'm about change," Currelley said. "I'm about growth." In May, she was appointed State of New York Bronx Beat Poet Laureate for 2020-2022 by the National Beat Poetry Foundation. The organization's website includes an explanation of what makes beat poetry stand out. "The difference between conventional poetry and Beat Poetry is, Beat Poetry gives a voice to everyone. It is the epitome of free verse using your own form, your own rules, to express your own ideas on love, life, and the world, with an emphasis on issues concerning the environment and humanity."

In her role as poet laureate, Currelley hopes to bring more attention to not just her own literary works, but to a diverse group of Bronxites that are looking for ways to get their voices heard. With the Bronx Book Fair, which launched in 2013, she strives to promote a wide range of literary work, while also offering a forum where local residents can share their concerns.

"We need to address the issues affecting our community, like obesity, hyper-tension, and other health issues," she said. "We need to utilize resources to bring attention to mental health issues. We don't want to be just a literary group."

At its core however, the Bronx Book Fair is dedicated to engaging and growing the community of poets and writers in the Bronx, and to connecting those literary artists to readers and book lovers of all ages. Through readings, workshops, and presentations the goal of the fair is to engage the community with a variety of literature and programs that will broaden access to Bronx literary artists, increase library



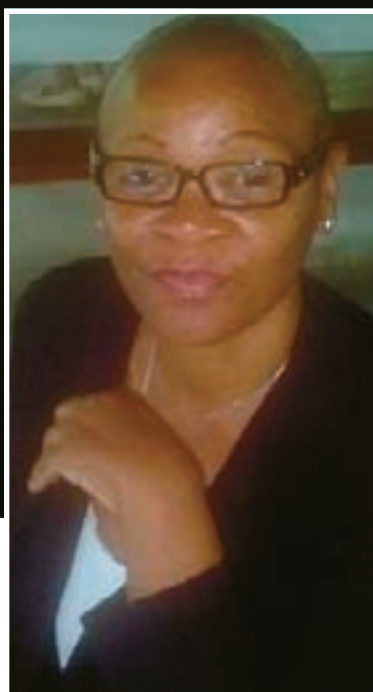
National Beat Poetry Foundation, Inc.
Honors
Lorraine Currelley



**Bronx Beat Poet Laureate
(2020-2022)
State of New York**

Photo courtesy of Lorraine Currelley

LORRAINE CURRELLEY



usage, and encourage a love of books and reading.

Currelley's ability to adapt is a helpful quality since she is adamant the annual fair will go ahead this year, once more, despite the pandemic. For the past several years, the event has taken place at the Bronx Library Center on Kingsbridge Road. Interest in past fairs has come from many places outside of the Bronx. "People have been interested in our fair from as far away as Atlanta, Indiana, even from Spain," she said.

Undaunted by social distancing restrictions, Currelley is currently finalizing the arrangements

for Virtual Bronx Book Fair 2020. The event will be streamed on Facebook Live and via Zoom from Oct. 2 through 5.

The drive and motivation needed to push forward a multifaceted agenda was already on display during her teenage years. Her brother, Edward D. Currelley, saw it when she was a teen. Growing up in Harlem, Currelley traveled to the Bronx to attend Evander Childs High School on East Gun Hill Road.

"Lorraine was always very stubborn, headstrong, even in high school," Edward said good-naturedly. As an adult, he said she remains focused when she sets an objective. "Lorraine is a very strong, vocal leader. She voices her opinion," he said.

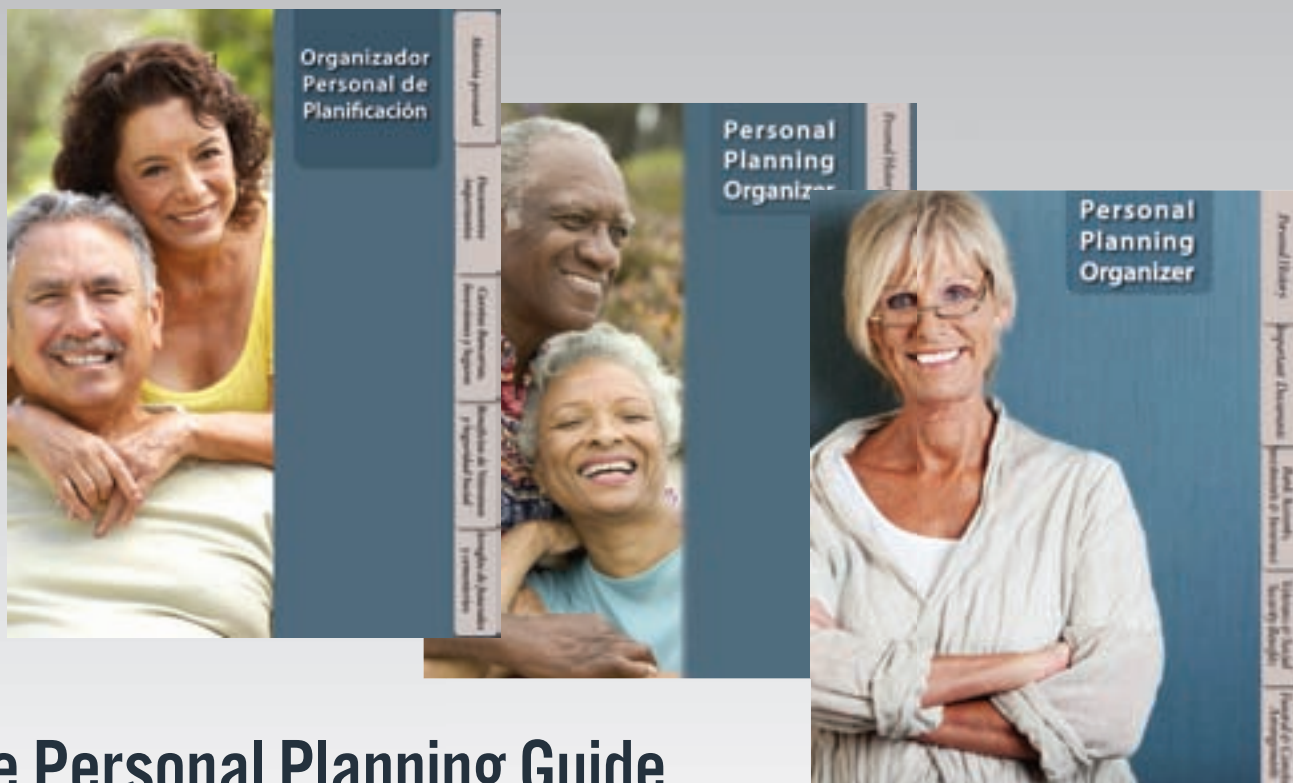
He praises his sister's dedica-

tion to building up an organization, and an event that promotes greater inclusivity. "[Lorraine] is bringing in different generations to better understand each other," he said. "Beyond just readings and selling books, it [the fair] has to be something to benefit the community," Edward said.

Now, as a community leader, Currelley works to ensure everyone feels safe, whether they want to share their latest poem, express their current concerns, or simply show support to the growing number of artists in the Bronx.

"I say to the Bronx community that this is the people's book fair," Currelley said.

More information on the fair is available at www.bronxbookfair.com. [An email account is required to log in.]



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Female Skydivers Mark Centenary of Women's Suffrage

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

At first glance, the relationship between skydiving, a woman's right to vote, and Woodlawn Cemetery might not seem obvious. On Aug. 26 though, four members of the Highlight Pro Skydiving Team parachuted from helicopters 4,500 feet in the air onto the grounds of the cemetery and placed a yellow rose at the gravesite of suffragist, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and other pioneering women.

Other celebrations took place across the country on the same day to commemorate the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution which secured the right to vote for women.

In Manhattan, a monument to women's rights pioneers, Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, was unveiled inside Central Park. However, because City regulations prohibit skydivers from landing in the park, and because of COVID-19 safety measures, the unveiling ceremony was limited to a crowd of 50 people.

Nonetheless, historian, Susan Olsen, wanted to ensure that Woodlawn Cemetery would play a part in the day's celebratory activities. She worked with administrators at the Woodlawn Conservancy and Coline Jenkins-Sahlin, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's great-great-granddaughter,

to make the skydiving event a reality. "What we wanted to do is to celebrate the fact that Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Carrie Chapman Catt, and Alva Belmont, three of the primary figures who fought for women's rights and the right to vote, are here at Woodlawn," Olsen said.

On the day itself, the first two skydivers glided on to the grounds of Woodlawn, while wearing canisters strapped to their ankles that created a smoke stream of purple and yellow, colors associated with the women's suffrage movement. They were followed by the second two skydivers who glided through the air flying banners inscribed with the words, "Shall Not Be Denied" and, "Equality Can't Wait."

Sara Curtis holds 18 world records and has jumped more than 14,000 times. She sees her skydiving activities as a way of bringing attention to the history of women, including the struggle endured by women to obtain the right to vote. "Purple, white, and yellow were the colors of the suffragist movement from 1900 to the 1920s, and they did all sorts of amazing media campaigns," said Curtis. "That's what really helped the suffragist movement."

The event, which took many months of planning, was livestreamed on Facebook without advanced notice of the



MELANIE CURTIS, AMYCHMELECK, Kaz Sheeky and Sara Curtis of the Highlight Pro Skydiving Team celebrate the centenary of women's suffrage with a 4,500-foot skydive, landing on Woodlawn Cemetery on Aug. 26, 2020.

specific location in order to keep crowds from gathering.

Team member, Kaz Sheeky, has over 10,000 jumps on her resume, but saw something unique about the centenary event. "We got to fly over Alva Belmont's mausoleum which, to me, is like super special," Sheeky said. "It was super thrilling."

In addition to the suffragists, Woodlawn Cemetery is the final resting place of many other prominent figures in American history, from Herman Melville, author of Moby Dick, to jazz innovator, Miles Davis, to Fiorello LaGuardia, mayor of New York during The Great Depression.

With the current attention given to

the 100th anniversary of the passing of the 19th Amendment, Woodlawn is making sure that visitors know the contribution made to the world by some of the women interred there. They now publish a special map directing visitors to 27 gravesites on the 400-acre cemetery for what administrators there describe as "an historic and inspiring visit to the final resting places of these extraordinary women."

For her part, Olsen, being an historian, said it was important to bring attention to the continuing struggle of all people in protecting and extending rights. "Any attention we can get at this time in our lives for the rights of others, we should do it," she said.



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MTA Denies Friends of Mosholu Parkland Permit to Paint Mural

(continued from page 1)

It was hoped that the creation of a community mural would help curb the deterioration of the area, minimize spray painting and instead, foster a sense of pride and joy among the local community.

Now, two years later, FOMP are devastated to learn that their project has been brought to an abrupt halt because the City has denied approval for the mural.

It transpires that although the target wall borders Mosholu Parkland, both sides of it fall under the scope of the MTA, and not the City's Parks' department, as was anticipated by everyone involved in the project.

Indeed, FOMP work so regularly with the Parks' department on various, outdoor community events, including regular park clean-ups, that the Parks' commissioner for the borough, along with her advisors, had already surveyed and approved the mural site during a previous, onsite visit.

It wasn't until recently that the group found out that approval for the mural was actually required from the MTA rather than from Parks. "We did receive funding for the mural, and we were in the process of getting ready [when] Parks' Arts and Antiquities confirmed

that the wall facing the Azalea Garden is an MTA wall and not Parks," Quaranta wrote in her email request to the MTA on Aug. 25.

However, on Sept. 1, the MTA Arts and Design department denied the neighborhood association the required approval to proceed. *Norwood News* received a copy of the email exchanges between FOMP and the MTA on the matter.

In its response, the agency cited its "fair, equitable, and open selection process" for art installations located within MTA properties, and explained that opportunities to participate in the selection process are advertised publicly to ensure equal opportunity for all applicants.

"Following this process has led to consistent and equitable determinations about how art is included throughout our system," an MTA representative wrote, adding that murals and other artwork *not* located within MTA stations are not included in the selection process.

The representative explained that the reason for this was financial. "They [any artworks outside a station] would require additional resources and maintenance," she wrote. "As you are likely aware, the MTA and its subsidiaries are facing an unprecedented financial crisis

as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact on ridership and other dedicated revenues the MTA relies on to operate and to conduct successful community outreach, like the outreach involved in MTA Arts and Design projects, has been profound. We are currently facing a four-year deficit of over \$16 billion."

Quaranta replied on Sept. 2, expressing her disappointment and heartbreak at the agency's response. She said that having read MTA Arts and Design's application process, she didn't think their specific project fell under its scope. Nonetheless, she explained again that FOMP already had funding for the mural, but that receipt of the grant was contingent upon the mural being completed by December 2020.

"We are now scrambling because we need to have MTA approval on this community project," she wrote. The mural is, in fact, a community development project funded by AARP, a nonprofit dedicated to empowering seniors to choose how they live as they age.

"It's a seniors project," Quaranta explained in her reply, adding that it was not just FOMP who knew about the project. "Everyone in that community knows about the mural and are excited to have it [be] part of them," she wrote.

She added that the mural was to be painted by FOMP under the guidance of a local, professional artist who was also a member of their group, and that similar murals in other parts of Mosholu had already been completed. All were at eye level and did not require any specific equipment to be painted.

FOMP had even decided on a name for the new mural. It was to be called "The Aquarium," since the veterans who sit in the nearby park area had shared with FOMP the enjoyment they derived from their own aquariums in their respective homes. FOMP came up with the idea of a larger-than-life aquarium for the mural to channel an atmosphere of familiarity and belonging.

Quaranta explained that there were more plans for the area too. "The mural would also help improve this location off the Mosholu Parkway station as we will be proposing to Parks' to have the sitting park area dedicated to a community leader who passed away from colon cancer a few years ago," she wrote.

She also pointed out that FOMP had already been maintaining the park side of the wall for over five years, removing any spray paint, and generally keeping the area clean, never realizing that it was MTA's responsibility to do so.

"Commuters throw trash from the steps as they either go up or down," she wrote. "The process of having all that area cleaned up daily would be to make many and on-going complaints to the MTA, and follow that process. However, we don't do that. We clean it up without going through the MTA complaint process."

A photo of what the wall currently looks like, as well as an illustration of the proposed mural was provided to the MTA, and Quaranta also offered to meet with the Mosholu Parkway MTA station manager to discuss the project.

She asked for clarification on what additional resources and maintenance the mural would require. "Maybe we can discuss to alleviate that concern," she wrote. "A contract would explain that the MTA would not be held responsible for maintenance or to provide other resources. We can sign to that."

In closing, Quaranta said she felt that FOMP were being more than fair, that COVID had changed many uniform processes for everyone, and she appealed to the MTA to rethink their request and see that the mural would serve as a positive, uplifting initiative for a community, hard-hit by the pandemic and going through a difficult time.

By Sept. 4, FOMP confirmed that no response had been forthcoming further to Quaranta's last email dated Sept. 2. *Norwood News* reached out to the MTA for comment on the matter on Sept. 8.

An MTA spokesperson provided the following response. "The core principle of the MTA's arts program is that works are commissioned through an openly advertised selection process accessible to all members of a community, with selections made by a diverse panel including arts professionals, MTA staff and local community members. While we regret that the pandemic has prevented us from establishing a formal mural program, our longstanding process has consistently led to equitable determinations about how art is included in the MTA system."

Norwood News referenced the initial response from the MTA dated Sept. 1 about the lack of resources for the maintenance of the mural, and how FOMP had addressed that point in their reply on Sept. 2, and had offered to put in writing their commitment to maintaining the upkeep of the mural. We asked the MTA to clarify if FOMP's offer addressed this point therefore, and if the sole reason for the denial of their application was now the requirement for "an openly advertised selection process." As of the time of publication, we have not received a response.

In the meantime, FOMP have launched a petition requesting written support for the mural and have collected 89 signatures to date.

"They need to rethink their usual process when we aren't in usual times," Quaranta said. "We are almost appalled that the MTA would rather do nothing during this time and are using their budget cuts as an excuse for stopping any program that doesn't require their involvement besides a release of liability form."



Letters To The Editor

Dear Editor,

Congratulations to New York City Department of Transportation for winning a \$10,000,000 million Bus Discretionary Grant from the Federal Transit Administration. This was one of approximately \$464 million in transit infrastructure grants nationwide to improve the safety and reliability of America's bus systems and enhance mobility for transit riders. A total of 96 projects in 49 states and territories will receive funding from FTA's Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program. The demand far exceeded available funds, as FTA received 282 applications totaling approximately \$1.8 billion in funding requests from 51 states and territories.

NYC DOT was one of only two winners from New York State beating out many other competitors. These funds will be used to enhance service, reliability and pedestrian safety along the NYC

Transit South Bronx Bx6 Select Bus Service route. The Bx6 SBS carries passengers between Washington Heights in Manhattan to the South Bronx.

Let us give thanks to the hard-working men and women of the New York City Department of Transportation Federal Grants Unit who made all of this possible, including winning extra federal dollars!

Sincerely,

Larry Penner

Great Neck, New York 11020

Dear Editor,

Life is precious. I agree with Mr Morris's letter (letter to the editor in the July 30 edition of *Norwood News*) asking prayers to end abortion. The silver lining in the COVID pandemic is it shows how precious all lives are, including the unborn.

Thank you,

Warren Milenin

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Modell's: All Sales Final After 131 Years

(continued from page 6)

price. Shelving units, office furniture, as well as other office equipment were also available to purchase.

On Aug. 29, a store employee who answered a call from *Norwood News* at the White Plains Road branch confirmed that that store was also closing the following day. "Yup, tomorrow is the last day," she said. Asked how many employees would be out of work following the closure, she responded, "A lot."

In early August, the New York Business Journal reported that in 2019, Modell's sold a 366,000 square-foot warehouse at 1500 Basset Avenue in the Morris Park section of the Bronx for \$115 million to Realterm Logistics.

Although the company is shuttering its physical stores, its name and famous jingle, "Gotta Go To Mo's" is expected to survive. Forbes Magazine reported that Retail Ecommerce Ventures purchased the brand's remaining assets, after several companies like Tiger Capital Group handled its liquidation.

Retail Ecommerce Ventures reportedly purchased the Modell brand name and jingle for \$3.64 million and is expected to take over Modell's web-

site, and develop a mail order business under the same name.

Today, a message on Modell's website tells customers, "Attention: All store locations have closed. At this time, we are still unable to accept orders online." Retail Ecommerce Ventures is expected to have the new website up and running by the end of September.

The e-commerce company has also purchased other troubled retail businesses like Dressbarn and Pier 1 Imports, with similar plans to turn them into online retail giants.

Long time Jerome Park resident, Glenn Leahey, said of the closing, "I'm sorry to hear that. I lived in Modell's on Fordham Road about one Saturday a month, from the 6th to the 12th grade. I bought all of my clothes and most of my sporting goods there."

Leahey added, "They made millions from sneakers for the past 25 or so years, but exclusive contracts between boutique chains have kept them out of the higher end business."

It's believed that the Modell's store at East Fordham Road and Morris Avenue had been operating at that location for about 40 years.

CORRECTION

In the Aug. 27 edition of *Norwood News*, in the article entitled, "Elections 2021: Jessica Haller on Climate, Motherhood and Investment," the referenced Willets Point project would have been underwater in 40 years by 2050 had it not been built to withstand climate and sea-level rise, and not in four years by 2015, as stated in the original article.

How Foodtown's Re-Opening Plan Became a Model for All Businesses

by DAVID GREENE

Everyone's got to eat. When the pandemic hit the United States in March, it came as no surprise to the owners of Foodtown supermarkets that their business would be deemed essential, but they also knew that they would have to adapt to "a new normal" in order to maintain a safe operating environment for both their staff, and their customers.

They did their research, acted on their plan and little did they know, it would subsequently become nationally recognized, and is now an on-line model for similar businesses.

Noah Katz is the co-president of PSK Supermarkets which owns 13 Foodtown stores across New York City. The Katz family opened its first Foodtown in 1956. "We were lucky enough to be on a call with a supermarket company that operates in China," Katz said, referring to the early days of the pandemic in March. "So, they told us everything they did, so we just did it."

Katz said he purchased \$30,000 worth of vitamins for his employees. "It worked," he said. "They built up their immune systems, and we had

very, very low instances of COVID in our company."

But they didn't stop there. "We put in all these precautions," he said. "We were the first company in New York City to give out masks to our employees, we were the first company to give out masks to our customers, and we were the first company to put up plexiglass."

Realizing they were perhaps ahead of the curve, they decided to share what seemed to be working with others. "We actually took all our procedures, and our practices, and we put them on a free website," Katz said.

The PSK Action Plan was born, and was subsequently featured nationally on Fox and Friends, as well as on a special on C-NBC.

The free download includes a checklist for implementing social distancing, a checklist to keep workers safe and healthy, and protocols on what to do if an employee shows COVID-19 symptoms.

"It was crazy, but it was very effective," said Katz. "It worked. So, we kind of had a good lead on everyone." He added, "We gave it to any



Photo by David Greene

A GIANT SLAB of plexiglass towers over workers and customers at the Foodtown store on East 204th Street in the Norwood section of the Bronx.

business that wanted it nationwide, for free, because what we did was so effective in limiting COVID issues in our company."

Any businesses interested in the free download can visit the PSK Action Plan website at: www.pskactionplan.com.

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