



NORWOOD NEWS

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ELECTION DAY CHILLS & THRILLS IN NORWOOD



Photo by DAWN CLANCY

NORWOOD VOTERS CAST their ballots at PS 94 Kings College School polling station on Election Day, Nov. 3, 2020.

By **DAWN CLANCY**

Norwood's residents braved the first chill of fall on Tuesday, Nov. 3, to cast their votes on Election Day 2020. Despite the convenience afforded by

early voting this year, there was clear driving force behind a solid local Election Day turnout that saw long lines meandering through parking lots, and pouring out onto nearby

streets. That driver was the pandemic

"COVID has leaped over all my other voting issues," said Jan Vanlier, 55, an executive assistant. "My mental and

physical health can't take another four years of this."

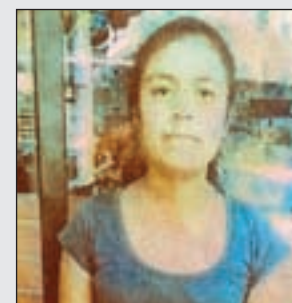
It's a sentiment that has spread aggressively throughout the Bronx, as the borough
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2020 Election Local Lens: Immigration

By **NORA THOMAS**

In the final presidential debate on Oct. 22, President Donald Trump touted his administration's efforts to increase border security, and said undocumented children in federal custody had been brought over by "coyotes and cartels."

Since he announced his run for president five years ago, Trump has always taken a hard stance on immigration, making it a pillar of his domestic agenda. In February 2019, the president declared a National Emergency Concerning the Southern Border, enabling him to allocate billions of dollars to build a border wall, after Congress repeatedly blocked funding for it.

Framing undocumented immigration as a national security issue, the president's re-election campaign page highlights his administration's efforts to unwind the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, instituted by President Barack Obama in 2012, as well as the arrest of around 270,000 undocumented immigrants since Trump took office.

The DACA program shields, from deportation, some young, undocumented immigrants, who often arrived in the United States at a very young age and in circumstances beyond their control.

More than one third of the 1.4 million residents of the Bronx were born outside of the United States, according to a 2018 report from the New York City Comptroller's Office. Immigrants also make up half of the borough's work force and 60 percent of self-employed entrepreneurs.

While federal policies related to immigration and naturalization are always a hot-button issue in New York City, the economic devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic has shone a bright light on how quickly immigrants fall through the safety nets designed to prevent financial ruin in times of crisis.

Immigration advocates say immigrants have been left particularly vulnerable amid the ongoing pandemic, as they have been left without access to unemployment benefits or federal stimulus money, which is severely impacting their ability to pay their rent.

BronxNet's Daren Jaime recently interviewed Jennifer Hernandez, the lead organizer at Make the Road New York, a grassroots community organization that fights to build power for immigrants and working-class communities.

During the interview, Hernandez explained that in addition to being first to fall through the cracks economically, undocumented residents are also more vulnerable to intimidation because of the fear of being deported.

"I think especially for undocumented folks, there's a lot of fear of retaliation, when it comes to immigration status," she said, adding that immigrants also lack access to various other programs



Photo by **SÍLE MOLONEY**

A LOCAL FAMILY attends the Bangla Bazaar Street Fair in Norwood on Sunday, June 23, 2019.

that could help them financially. "So, it is extremely hard."

In response to the pandemic, Make the Road New York has focused its efforts on securing government assistance for undocumented residents, helping them negotiate the cancellation of accumulated rental payments, and pushing for a reduction in the number of incarcerated people in order to curb the spread of COVID-19 in prisons.

Most of their advocacy has been at the local and state levels, but they say federal policy could play a substantial role in helping immigrant households. The president's challenger, former Vice President Joe Biden, has said welcoming immigrants to American communities is a priority of his campaign.

In the final presidential debate, Biden reasserted his plan to reinstate DACA during the first 100 days of his presidency, and to send a plan to Congress to create a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States. However, his campaign page does not mention any specific plans to provide aid to immigrants who are currently ineligible for existing unemployment and stimulus benefits.

Arturo Lopez, the Legal Director of Bronx Works, a community organization working to improve the economic and social well-being of Bronx residents, said some of the largest hurdles for Bronx immigrants could be considered mundane.

"There's a whole host of smaller issues that are much, more technical that the community is facing, that immigrants are facing," he said. These include dramatically increased delays in the processing of applications for seemingly, simple matters like the renewal of a legal, permanent residency card, usually called a Green Card or work permit."

Lopez said the steps along the pathway to naturalization that used to take less time, have become more exhaustive

in recent years. As an example, he cited changes to the fee waiver procedures, to maintain a functional I.D., for immigrants with legal status. This, now, requires residents to pay \$500 annually, a sum, Lopez points out, that can't easily be paid by most Bronx residents.

But beyond the tangible policy changes that have impacted upon immigrants, Lopez said the president's rhetoric has also made Bronx immigrants uneasy.

"From the people I encounter daily, since the current administration took over, the tone has created a sense of fear, a sense of being targeted that we did not see coming from the community during the prior administration," he said.

During the final debate, Trump reiterated his usual mantra that undocumented immigrants who enter the United States illegally pose a danger to society.

Of course, some immigrants do commit violent crime, as do some residents. In researching a May 2019 story, writers at The Marshall Project, in conjunction with The New York Times, obtained estimates of undocumented populations from the Pew Research Center, sorted by metro area. They compared these with local crime rates published by the FBI.

This created an opportunity, for the first time, for a broader analysis of how unauthorized immigration may have affected crime rates since 2007. Overall, the analysis suggests that growth in illegal immigration does not lead to higher, local crime rates.

The Bronx is the poorest of New York City's five boroughs, in no small part due to its large immigrant community who work in the City's lowest-paying jobs. The cruel irony, of course, is that those who bear the brunt of the country's immigration system can do little, themselves, to influence it. Their fate lies, instead, in the hands of the electorate.

**Sile Moloney provided additional reporting to this story.*



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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week, we asked readers their thoughts on early voting and the 2020 presidential election.



"I think that the process was very effective, I'm hoping. I watched the press conference of Governor [Andrew] Cuomo, that he's going forward with this in the future, so I think this was a very effective and efficient way of having this opportunity of early voting. The line was about sixty feet and I was able to get in and out in twenty minutes. It only took me ten minutes to vote. I think the most critical issue is bringing people together. The divisiveness we're dealing with now is certainly at the forefront, and I think we need leadership that can work at bringing people together."

**Kenneth Hall,
Parkchester**



"This location was very different from what I saw on the news; it was very smooth. I'm surprised it was such an easy process here. I've never voted early before, so this was my first experience with early voting. There was no line at all. Yes, I would do this every four years or every election, if possible. The local campaigns were a little too aggressive for me and we'd rather hear more on the issues not just for New York, but the country as well. Homelessness is one issue. The pandemic, of course; this could be handled in a much more efficient way, and we need to work on the racism in this country because I feel until that issue is really reigned in and handled, we can't accomplish things as Americans."

**Bedford Cintron,
Allerton**



"It was perfect! It's convenient. They should do this all the time. There was no line. We walked right in. Women's rights are an important issue to a lot of women, and I want to live a better life for my daughter."

**Jannette Valdez,
Morris Park**



"It was good; they're well organized. They know where everybody is supposed to go. The line goes very fast. It was simple, no problem at all. They should keep it the way it is now. I don't really like the way things are going right now with the current president that we have. I think he's causing more problems for this country rather than resolving anything. I don't really think he handled the COVID-19 pandemic very well. The most important issue for me is for them to come up with a resolution for COVID-19. It's affecting a lot of businesses and a lot of people are leaving New York. In Manhattan right now, there are supposedly thousands of empty apartments."

**Edward Rivera,
Burnside**



"Early voting is necessary right now for this time, but it went well, very smoothly - no wait, no hassle. Everybody was respectful. I normally would have to wait. Definitely, it was kind of annoying after work, and a lot of people would come in and the long lines. Sometimes, I would wait without voting. That happened to me a couple of times. There were no lines and the process was great. To me, family values and religion are important, and I would like to keep my Social Security, and help for the working man, and our vets."

**José Dominguez,
Fordham Manor**



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NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Mosholu Parkway Clean-Up

Christodora, a group whose mission is to connect New York City youth with the outdoors, joined forces with Bedford Mosholu Community Association for “It’s My Park Day” on Saturday, Oct. 17, for a park clean-up. Joshua Soto said given the current climate, it was important for local Bronx youth to get outdoors and see the value of helping their community, keeping their parks clean, and building relationships that last a lifetime. About 15 people in total took part in the clean-up event.

Norwood: 19th Annual Fall Festival

The 19th Annual Fall Festival took place by Mosholu 4 subway station in Norwood on Saturday, Oct. 17. Hosted by the Jerome Gun Hill BID, Mosholu Preservation Corporation, Montefiore Medical Center, the Bronx Board of Elections and Walgreens, residents were treated to a selection of goodies, including free masks and hand sanitizers, tote bags, candy, pumpkins, patties and empanadas from local restaurants, Golden Krust and Craft Empanadas. Early voting information and flu shots were also a feature of the day.

Deadline Extended to Nov. 6 for CBO Grants

The New York Urban League and its partners invite community-based organizations (CBOs) to apply for a NYC Council Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund (CCNSF) grant by the new extended deadline of Nov. 6, 2020 at 5 p.m. The council established the fund in recent years, and has allocated \$2.5 million to award grants to support Black, Latino, and Asian-led community-based organizations throughout New York City’s five boroughs.

Hate Crime Investigation Continues in Norwood

A month after a hate crime

Father & Son’s Kitchen Rides Pandemic Wave

By AURÉOLE RIBES

There’s a citrus-y, sweetness to this tangy, tomato-based sauce, followed by a kick! It’s a refreshing take on your regular, grocery store barbecue sauce. Aptly named, “Sweet and Tangy,” it’s the first barbecue sauce created by Father and Son’s Kitchen, a company founded in 2019 by Norwood resident, Luis Rivera Jr.

Like all entrepreneurs, Rivera knew the first year of his start-up would be a gamble but hoped that by working hard and staying focused, things would get easier in his second year of business. Little did he know things were about to get a whole lot crazier in 2020.

Father and Son’s Kitchen is an artisan, gourmet food company that also provides personalized culinary services. Rivera has a passion for American barbecue sauce and produces a range of different flavors at Bronx Cook Space, located at 50E. 168th Street, a few blocks from the Grand Concourse.

He offers a consultation-based, personal chef service for up to fifteen people (in compliance with COVID-19 guidelines) where he cooks and creates a restaurant-style atmosphere in his clients’ homes.

Rivera said he draws inspiration for his sauces from Piedmont-style, Carolina barbecue sauce. A piedmont dip is a tomato, vinegar and pepper sauce, traditionally eaten as a dip with shredded whole hog in North Carolina.

When Rivera’s son Mason was just three, the little boy was eager to help his father in the kitchen, which is how Father and Son’s Kitchen got its name. “I would teach him how to use the measuring cups and spoons, and how to set everything up in order,” he said.

Though Mason is now 13, and no longer stands on a stool to test his father’s



Photo courtesy of Luis Rivera Jr.

NORWOOD RESIDENT, LUIS Rivera Jr., owns Father & Son’s Kitchen, an artisan, gourmet food company and personal chef service, based at Bronx Cook Space, 50E. 168th Street in the Bronx. Photo courtesy of Luis Rivera Jr.

dishes, he’s become quite the steak person, according to his dad. Mason’s favorite dish, made by his father, is a rib-eye steak with a pinot noir sauce, made with shallots, garlic, thyme, rosemary and beef stock. Rivera serves this dish with red potatoes roasted in bacon fat

and sautéed green beans.

Rivera’s culinary journey began at Citi Field. He can’t remember who played the Mets that day in 2009, but he does recall where he stood while he ate the pulled pork sandwich with a Mem-

(continued on page 8)

against the LGBTQ community was reported on 204th Street and Perry Avenue on Sept. 18, police are likely looking for a burly, shadowy figure caught on surveillance video as the suspect. In addition to this incident, the NYPD said there were four other incidents involving graffiti that occurred along 204th Street, reported on Sept. 18, that are also currently being investigated as hate crimes.

The four locations are the area opposite 296 East 204th Street, the area in front of 320 East 204th Street, the area in front of 314 East 204th Street and the area in front of 300 East 204th Street. There are no arrests and the investigation is ongoing.

80th Assembly District Race

As of Nov. 4, incumbent, Democratic Assembly-

woman Nathalia Fernandez, was leading her nearest challenger, Republican Gene DeFrancis, in the 80th Assembly District race on Nov. 3, based on early results.

Former Norwood Priest Now Nuncio of Philippines

On Sept. 28, Pope Francis announced the appointment of a new apostolic nuncio to the Philippines. U.S. born,

Archbishop Charles John Brown, currently the Apostolic Nuncio to Albania, will head the Holy See’s diplomatic mission to the Philippines in Manila. Brown was born on October 13, 1959 and was ordained a priest of New York Archdiocese on May 13, 1989. Before going to Rome, he worked as assistant parish priest at St. Brendan’s Church in Norwood.

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Father & Son's Kitchen Rides Pandemic Wave

(continued from page 6)

Memphis-style sauce that piqued his interest in American barbecue. Memphis-style sauce is akin to the Piedmont dip he tells the *Norwood News*, but slightly sweeter and smokier.

In the nineties, after high school, Rivera went straight into the workforce, but in 2010, he left his position as an inventory control coordinator at Tiffany & Co. to study culinary arts at Monroe College. "I got accepted, and thus started the journey of working a full-time job, and going to school at night," he said.

During his studies, he entered a barbecue sauce competition. To his surprise, he won! The school funded the production of his winning sauce for two semesters, and he sold it at the New Rochelle farmer's market.

After graduating, he hopped between a variety of seasonal gigs, had a dry spell, worked at the Roxy Hotel in Manhattan, and later as a food service manager at the City's education department. He said though his colleagues were talented and hard-

working, the bureaucracy there discouraged him. He said he believed it caused the food quality and service delivery to suffer.

"I sold my culinary soul to work at, arguably, one of the most questionable food service operations in the country," he chuckled. Later, while working as an executive chef at Sunrise Senior Living in 2019, he hurt his back.

With nothing but time on his hands, Rivera fumbled through some old USB drives and found his cost spreadsheet for his winning barbecue sauce at Monroe College. He decided to take the plunge, got his processing license, wrote out recipes, got them tested, built up his inventory, and then...the pandemic hit.

Rivera said it's been a challenging time. "Most of the support, in the beginning, came from either family, friends, people in my life and immediate network," he said. Because his business had not been in operation that long, and he doesn't have a pay-

roll, he was not eligible for paycheck or debt relief.

After the initial shock in March, he said they got a little bit of a rush going through April and June. "In June, I ran a Father's Day package that came with a barbecue grilling kit," he said, but then the rush died down. "I said, 'Okay, we got to give these people something new'."

Rivera came up with a sauce sub-brand called, "*Mi Gente, Mi Tierra*," (My People, My Land). Inspired by the flavors of the Caribbean, the sauce range includes two new varieties: Passionfruit and Spicy Guayaba.

The product packaging is based on the Taino people—the indigenous people of Puerto Rico, Cuba, Hispaniola, Jamaica, The Bahamas, and the northern Lesser Antilles. "It's generally accepted within the barbecue community, that the word 'barbecue' is actually derived from the Taino word '*barbacoa*,'" Rivera explained.

He said his Passion Fruit sauce is inspired by trips to Puerto Rico, where his grandmother would make fresh passion fruit juice from the trees in the backyard. He recommends it on grilled shrimp skewers

with peppers and pineapple chunks, saying it's sweeter than his Sweet and Tangy sauce but has more fruit-y and citrus-y notes.

Meanwhile, Spicy Guayaba is a salivating mesh of guava with a subtle spiciness, which he recommends as a glaze on fried or smoked wings. His favorite, Sweet and Tangy, he likes drizzled over a classic pulled pork sandwich with coleslaw.

Rivera said he definitely took a hit with the pandemic. The plan had been to roll out his website once he presented his first sauce at pop-ups and farmers' markets, but with the shutdown, this was no longer an option. He didn't feel alone in this.

While the City allowed restaurants to expand with outdoor seating, there were not many extra provisions made for small food vendors. "I would have liked to see more done for the smaller entrepreneur you know?" he said. "Like, the hot dog guy on the corner or the small batch baker."

Despite the set-back, Rivera remains optimistic. Though he sometimes wishes he had discovered his calling sooner, he has no regrets. "Over time, I have come to realize and accept that my journey played out just as it should have."



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CRIME FILE

By SÍLE MOLONEY

**Bedford Park: 40-Year-Old Man Stabbed**

A 40-year-old man was beaten and stabbed in Bedford Park at 2 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 15, in front of 2790 Grand Concourse, between Miriam Street and East 197th Street. The man was talking on the phone when the suspect got into a verbal dispute with him. As the victim walked away, the suspect punched him and he fell, injuring his knee. The suspect then stabbed the victim in the stomach and caused a small laceration to the victim's neck. The victim, who has not been identified, was transported to St. Barnabas Hospital for treatment. No suspect description was available. The investigation is ongoing.

Fordham Manor: 35-Year-Old Man Shot, Dies

On Thursday, Oct. 29 at around 4:39 p.m., police responded to a 911 call regard-

ing a man who had been shot in front of East 196th Street and Grand Concourse in Fordham Manor. Upon arrival, officers discovered a 35-year-old man with a gunshot wound to the torso. He was brought to St. Barnabas Hospital where he was pronounced deceased. There are no arrests and the investigation is ongoing. The name of the deceased is pending family notification.

Bedford Park: Man Stabbed, Dies

Kevin Smith, 62, of Bedford Park, was stabbed twice in the chest, apparently after a brief exchange of words with his assailant on Thursday, Oct. 22. Smith was attacked at 6:59 p.m. outside of 380 East Bedford Park Boulevard on the evening in question. He died a short time later at St. Barnabas Hospital. On Sunday, Oct. 25, police confirmed the arrest of Jason Young, 35, from The Bronx, in relation to the inci-

dent. Young was charged with murder, manslaughter and a weapons possession charge, all relating to Smith's death.

Pelham Parkway: Man Shot Dead

A man was shot and killed as he exited a Halloween party in Pelham Parkway. The as-yet-unidentified, 36-year-old man was shot in the neck and chest outside of 2143 Barnes Avenue at 1:43 a.m., on Sunday, Nov. 1. He was found unconscious and unresponsive when police arrived at the scene. EMS rushed the victim to Jacobi Medical Center where he was pronounced deceased. There have been no arrests so far and no description of a suspect is available. The identity of the victim is pending family notification and the investigation is ongoing.

Fordham Heights: 32-Year-Old Man Assaulted & Robbed

The NYPD is seeking the

public's help identifying a man wanted in connection to a robbery which took place on Sunday, Sept. 20 at around 8:30 p.m. A 32-year-old man was walking in the vicinity of Aqueduct Avenue Extension and West Fordham Road when he was approached by the suspect who pushed him to the ground and demanded his property. The man forcibly removed articles of clothing and jewelry, with an estimated value of \$22,000, from the victim, before fleeing the scene. The victim suffered pain and bruising. EMS responded and transported the victim to Saint Barnabas hospital, with a shoulder injury. The suspect is described as a male, aged 20-30 years of age.

Norwood: Woman Sought in Connection with Robbery

The NYPD is seeking the public's help in identifying a woman wanted in connec-

tion with a robbery in Norwood, on Friday, Oct. 23, at around 3:35 p.m. A 28-year-old woman was buying a MetroCard at the 205th St. subway station, when an unidentified woman approached her, offering to open the gate for \$2. When the victim refused, the suspect punched her in the neck and attempted to take her purse. After a brief struggle, the suspect removed the victim's eyeglasses and jacket before fleeing on foot. The victim refused medical attention at the scene. The suspect is described as a dark-skinned, adult woman, around 6 feet, 1 inch tall, of thin build, with dark, short hair, and was last seen wearing a black jacket, light blue jeans and a white face mask under the chin.

Photo and video, in some cases, is available at the NYPD.

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Family of Crash Victim Seek Funds for Burial in Guatemala

by DAVID GREENE

The family of a young woman killed by a speeding police car is asking the public's help in raising \$15,000 to send her body back to her native Guatemala for burial.

Sofia Gomez Aguilon, 20, of Wallace Avenue, in the Pelham Parkway section of the Bronx, was crossing Pelham Parkway South at Wallace Avenue when an NYPD Highway One patrol unit struck her at 3:26 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 5.

Police reported that, at the time of the accident, the police unit was responding, with lights and sirens, to a call for assistance, transmitted by a separate Highway 3 patrol unit on Throgs Neck Bridge.

After Gomez Aguilon was struck by the police vehicle, the two patrol officers reportedly rendered aid to her until paramedics arrived. She was later rushed to Jacobi Hospital where she died three days later on Thursday, Oct. 8.

On Friday, Oct. 23, some family members of Gomez Aguilon joined local clergy leaders who conducted a prayer vigil at the accident site.

Gomez Aguilon's cousin, Roberto Perez, told several reporters, "The family is hurt [and] very, very sad." He said he spoke with Gomez Aguilon's father in Guatemala, adding, "He could not believe that this happened to his daughter."

According to Perez, Gomez Aguilon worked at a bread factory and was coming from work the day of the accident. She got off the train at the Pelham Parkway subway station and as she attempted to cross Pelham Parkway South to go home, she was struck by the police vehicle.

Perez added that Gomez Aguilon had been in the United States for just three months at the time of her death and had wanted to study to become a nurse because she liked "helping people."

Gomez Aguilon's sister, Maria Gomez, added, "She was very happy, very joyful. She loved to go out."

Pastor Jay Gooding, the President of the 49th Precinct Clergy Council, shared details of his own personal tragedy with the gathered attendees, recounting how his daughter had passed away six weeks earlier.

Gooding said, "We're all in this together. This could be any one of us. It's a tragedy." He added, "We're praying for even the officers that had the accident."

Gooding would later present a check to the family on behalf of the clergy council for \$1,000 to go towards the cost of Gomez Aguilon's funeral.



A family photo of Sofia Gomez Aguilon, 20, who was struck and killed by a police vehicle in the Pelham Parkway section of the Bronx on Monday, Oct. 5, 2020, as police responded to a call for assistance.

On Oct. 15, The New York Post reported that the call for assistance by the second patrol unit was because police believed (erroneously) that shots had been fired on the bridge. *Norwood News* has reached out to the NYPD for details of the call placed by the second patrol unit. We were informed that this would require a Freedom of Information request.

At a later date, police provided details of the Throgs Neck incident. There was no firearm involved finally, though one man was placed under arrest, and brought to the 111th precinct.

Joshua Silvers, 23, of Lanett Avenue, Queens, was charged with three counts of reckless endangerment, fleeing an officer in a motor vehicle, and 11 violations of vehicle and traffic law.

Following the accident, initial news reports said the patrol car involved in the accident had responded to the call for assistance with their lights and sirens on. In a 24-second video obtained by The New York Post, and posted to numerous websites, the police cruiser is only in view of the camera for a second or two. The video stops just before the impact. No lights or sirens atop the police car can be seen in that video.

Meanwhile, family attorney, John Giacobbe, has filed a \$20 million notice of claim with the City

on behalf of the family; \$10 million for wrongful death, and \$10 million for the family's pain and suffering. Speaking on the day of the memorial organized by the victim's family and clergy, Giacobbe said, "Today's a day for the family to come to some sort of closure. I mean, they live right here. They have to walk across the same street their sister died on."

In apparent reference to the dashcam video of the crash obtained by the New York Post, Giacobbe said, "You see it once. It just stays with you. You know, I have nightmares about it; to see someone's life about to be taken..." Giacobbe attributed the cause of the crash to the NYPD's "failure to train" officers properly. *Norwood News* has reached out to the NYPD for comment. We did not receive an immediate response.

On Sunday, Oct. 11, New York State Attorney General, Letitia James, announced her office would be conducting an independent investigation into the circumstances of the crash.

Meanwhile, *Norwood News* spoke with "Dwayne," a young Pelham Parkway resident, who said he was sitting along the parkway when the accident happened. "I was there when she got hit, yes," he said. "The police didn't have any sirens on; no lights or nothing. The only thing - he ran the light."

Norwood News cannot independently verify Dwayne's comments though we have attempted to locate and speak to other potential witnesses.

Dwayne also said, in his estimation, the police vehicle was traveling close to 90 mph before the accident occurred. During an NY1 appearance on Wednesday, Oct. 14, NYPD Commissioner Dermot Shea said the officers were traveling at 60 mph. The stretch of road where the accident took place in is a 30 mph zone.

Dwayne also said that, after the accident happened, "The police didn't come to talk to anybody." He did not specify how long he remained at the location, after the accident. Police normally seek out witnesses following such incidents. *Norwood News* reached out to the NYPD to ask for clarification on what the procedure is, in terms of interviewing witnesses, when officers are involved in an incident. We did not receive an immediate response.

A Go Fund Me page was set-up by Gomez Aguilon's family on Oct. 15, to raise funds for the burial. By Tuesday, Nov. 3, the page had raised \$3,515.

Anyone wishing to donate, can go to gofundme.com and search for "Sofia Gomez Aguilon" to find the page.



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Out & About

Compiled by AURÉOLE RIBES

Food

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. Find out more here: <https://www.facebook.com/BronxNightMarket/>.

Movement

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m., free **Vinyasa Yoga** classes are held at Bronx Works, located at 1130 Grand Concourse. Yoga mats are provided. Go to: <https://www.eventbrite.com>

and search for "Free Vinyasa Yoga." Do not hit return. It will appear as the second event in the dropdown menu.

Events

The Bronx Toastmasters Club of Riverdale will hold their next meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 11 at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom video conferencing. Please RSVP to BronxToastmastersClub@gmail.com. To learn more, go to: <https://www.bronxtoastmastersclub.org>.

The Bronx Music Walk (BMW), presented by IAH Studio, is a guided walk to music along the Bronx River from Hunts Point to 174th street. This is a guided walk from Starlight to Concrete Plant park (or vice versa depending on where you

decide to start) while listening to IAH Studio's curated string playlist. The hour playlist highlights music from professional string musicians of color, and the musical selections are chosen to let the mind detach from its thoughts and expectations and be gently guided by the sounds. This event takes place on Saturday Nov. 7 from 11:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Go to: <https://www.eventbrite.com> and search for "Bronx Music Walk." Do not hit return. It will appear as the first event in the dropdown menu.

The **Soul2Sea Holiday Market** is hosted by the Walker Group. This two-floor pop-up market features a variety of vendors from cosmetics to candles. It will take place on Nov. 21 from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. on the first floor of the Grand Slam Banquet Hall, located at 478 E. Tremont Avenue. Go to: <https://www.eventbrite.com> and search for "Holiday Pop Up Market." Do not hit return. It will appear as the first event in the dropdown menu.

Check out the **Bronx Museum** at home, through art studio visits, guided tours, and meet the artists through

their website. Art Studio videos feature educators, presenting specific art-making activities from cross-hatching to object sculptures. Find out more here: <http://www.bronxmuseum.org/>.

The New York Botanical Garden presents an online exhibit entitled, "Black Botany: The Nature of Black Experience." This exhibit delves into the relationship between enslaved Black people, nature, and the colonial environment. Find out more here: <https://www.nybg.org/event/black-botany-the-nature-of-black-experience/>.

Mobile Library on Gun Hill Road Free copies of the book, "An African American and Latinx History of the United States," by Paul Ortiz will be available at a mobile library located on Gun Hill Road between Wayne Avenue and Bainbridge Avenue on Nov. 7.

Join the **New York Public Library** for a virtual craft circle. Find out more here: <https://www.nypl.org/events/programs/2020/11/05/virtual-craft-circle>.



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Local Caregiver Recognized for Outstanding Work in Connecticut



Photo courtesy of Assisted Living Services

FORDHAM HEIGHTS RESIDENT and caregiver, Emelia Dokyi Negron, was recently honored with a \$1,000 Homecare Hero Award by her employer, Assisted Living Services.

By **JOSÉ A. GIRALT**

A typical work schedule for Emelia Dokyi Negron consists of leaving her home in Fordham Heights for three weeks and working as a caregiver in Hamden, CT. She returns to her home in the Bronx for a week before starting the cycle again. That was before the pandemic and travel restrictions were implemented.

Now, Negron, 52, has spent months working in Hamden with only a single four-day break in August to visit her family in the Bronx. For her work as a live-in caregiver during the pandemic, that has been described as “above and beyond” the call of duty, Negron was recently honored with a \$1,000 Homecare Hero Award by her employer, Assisted Living Services (ALS).

The award came as a surprise to Negron as she was working at a client’s home on the day of notification. “They [ALS] told me they were delivering a box of masks and gloves,” Negron recalls. “I was so happy when they came and told me about [the award].”

The job of live-in caregivers has always been considered as that of an essential worker, especially during the pandemic. Among their responsibilities, in caring for their clients, are toileting needs, dressing and undressing, feeding, safety monitoring, travel and transfer help, and medication reminders.

The work is labor intensive and can make extraordinary demands on care providers. Mario D’Aquila, chief operating officer at ALS, describes the job of caregiver as critical. “Our care givers

can routinely work 10 and 12-hour shifts because we specialize on those [clients] that need us most of the days,” D’Aquila told the *Norwood News*.

D’Aquila saw how workers like Negron “really went above and beyond” what the job usually requires. In addition to Negron, ALS also honored 19 other caregivers with \$1,000 bonuses. Before the pandemic, the company used to present a monthly \$5,000 Platinum Caregiver Award to one member of staff.

“We wanted to give more caregivers the opportunity for a financial reward as they displayed incredible dedication to our clients from the very start of the COVID-19 pandemic,” D’Aquila wrote

in a press release, announcing the new more expansive award program.

For her part, Negron is glad to have a job as she sees how being unemployed has stressed out so many people. “I’m very happy I can work,” she said. “They [ALS] are very professional,” she added.

ALS employs over 400 caregivers in Connecticut, and D’Aquila has received words of appreciation about the group’s caregivers from many of their clients. “We know what [you’re] doing because our clients rave about you,” he said, addressing the caregivers. Indeed, D’Aquila said ALS would not be there without them. “They are 100 percent the most important aspect of our company.”



Letters To The Editor

MTA Budget Shortfall

I am writing with regard to State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli’s audit, “Financial Outlook for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority” and my suggestion to use the existing, Federal Transit Administration’s grant funding to deal with the MTA’s \$12 billion shortfall.

There are \$12 billion of unspent, allocated FTA grant funding available. Has the MTA conducted a forensic audit to determine available balances? The FTA allows transit agencies permission to use existing grant funds toward COVID-19 expenses.

The FTA allocated a further \$1.4 billion in 2020, and an additional \$1.5 billion will be provided in 2021. MTA previously received \$3.9 billion in COVID-19 funding. Why didn’t DiNapoli perform his own audit to determine available funds?

Washington can’t bail out everyone. Our \$27 trillion federal long-term debt will grow by \$1 trillion annually, until 2030. Uncle Sam provided \$3.7 trillion, in primarily borrowed money. A second COVID-19 bailout could range from \$600 billion to \$2.2 trillion. How will we pay for this? Only Uncle Sam runs up its credit cards with no consequences.

The private sector and American people make difficult financial decisions. Both prioritize how existing resources are spent. Why doesn’t the MTA do likewise?

The president and Congress

should offset some costs by reallocating funding within the 2021 \$5 trillion budget. Riders and Washington do their part. City Hall and Albany must do likewise.

Larry Penner
Great Neck

Progress in Norwood

I want to publicly thank everyone who has come up to me in the grocery store, subway, bus, in St. Brendan’s, and on the street about my letter in the *Norwood News* dated 8/30/2020.

I have been overwhelmed by the kindness and care of our neighbors. There have been extra donations made to the food pantry at St. Brendan’s to help our fellow neighbors. As someone who attended the 1969 Woodstock festival, where peace and love prevailed among a half million attendees, I sense that fellowship spirit permeating among our community since my letter appeared.

Even though I am 68 years of age, I don’t look a day over 67! Let’s all make a concerted effort to do one nice thing every day for someone else, preferably a stranger where the act will go further. In closing, thank you Mr. Warren Milenin whose letter appeared in a previous edition of the *Norwood News*, for your support also. Your comments made my day Mr. Milenin.

Richard Marias,
The Bronx

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Public and Community Meetings

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the **52nd PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meetings have been held via **ZOOM**. Meetings are usually held on the third Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. Call the 52nd Precinct Community Affairs office at 718-220-5824 for further details.

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 in November (date tbc). Zoom details will be circulated ahead of the meeting. Contact mirosario@cb.nyc.gov to be added to the distribution list.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, **Bedford Mosholu Community Association** meetings have been held via **ZOOM**. The next meeting will be held virtually on **Wednesday, Dec. 2**. For further details, contact bedfordmosholu@verizon.net



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Election Day Chills & Thrills In Norwood

(continued from page 1)

consistently maintained the city's lead in COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths. Since March, almost one percent of Bronxites have been hospitalized due to the coronavirus.

That's double Manhattan's COVID-19 hospitalization rate, which at 0.5 percent, was the lowest of all five boroughs. The Bronx also has the highest rate of deaths at 0.3 percent, compared to Manhattan at 0.15 percent, according to data from New York City's health department.

"We were really hit hard by this pandemic," said Tracy Moore, 29, a contract administrator who provided personal protective equipment to Montefiore Hospital during the city's lockdown. "We're really underserved in the Bronx, and I don't think either party addressed those systemic issues," she added.

Despite this, Moore said she felt a sense of obligation to those who have been left jobless by the pandemic. "I had to exercise my right to vote because we can't leave the underserved to fend for themselves," she said.

The Bronx unemployment rate jumped from 5.5 percent in March 2020 to 24.9 percent in July, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. In September, that rate, while still high, fell to 18.8 percent.

Yet, despite the downward trajectory of the unemployment rate, Ruben Perez, 38, a self-employed tax consultant and an undecided voter, fears another COVID lockdown, ushered in by a new administration, will harm business. "There's been a lot of talk about reclosing and reopening the economy, and you can tell I'm not okay with reclosing it," said Perez. "There has to be another way to do this."

Mariah Soto, 29, a nurse at Montefiore Children's Hospital, has worked non-stop throughout the pandemic, and hopes her vote will help move the country out of the crisis. "I feel a little emotional today," said Soto. "This vote is extremely important for this community. I think we need better leadership addressing COVID-19."

After casting her vote at PS 94 Kings College polling station, Soto felt a bit more optimistic, "I feel good," she said. "I'm hoping for the best."

Before polls officially opened on Election Day, 153,079 Bronx residents had taken advantage of early voting, according to the New York City Board of Elections.



Photo by DAWN CLANCY

XAVIER VARGAS, 17, volunteers at Moshulu Montefiore Community Center polling station on Election Day 2020 in Norwood, The Bronx.

However, despite the record early voting turnout and the chilly temperatures, David Agront, 31, Democratic coordinator for PS 94 Kings College polling station, said people were still lining up at 5 a.m. on Election Day to be first to vote when the doors officially opened an hour later.

"We had a line all the way through the schoolyard going down to Gun Hill Road," he said. "Because of social distancing, we can only bring in *some* voters at a time, but it's been going good so far."

Aside from the pandemic, voters also expressed their thoughts on the outcome of the election, and what the future may hold. "I feel excited now," said Antonio Ware, 35, a fashion consultant and first-time voter. "I feel like my vote really matters, but I'm wondering, am I voting for the right person? Am I making the right decision? Am I messing up?"

Sky Jimenez, 21, another first-time voter and college student at Fordham University, admitted feeling concerned over potential, post-election rioting and unrest. Yet, she said she felt the need to show up.

"I work in Soho, and I've been seeing all of the boarding-up and everything that's been going on to prepare for the election," she said. "It's nerve-racking." But, despite her anxieties, Jimenez felt this election was too important to sit out. "I'm thinking about my friends who aren't citizens," she said. "I'm thinking about my gay friends, my LGBTQ friends, friends that are immigrants and part of DACA. I don't want their rights taken away."

Meanwhile, after casting *her* ballot, Cora Knight, 60, walked out of the

Glad Tidings Assembly of God polling station on Van Cortland Avenue, feeling wonderful but cautiously optimistic. "What we have seen these last four years has been tumultuous, and I'd like to see something different," she said. "Civil unrest, health care, the pandemic, I've got my fingers crossed, even though I can't cross them any more."

"We don't have to make America great again," she added. "America is already great. What we need to do is build on our greatness."

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