# **BULLYING SURVIVOR INSPIRES KIDS AT P.S. 294**





**Couple Spread Love On Valentine's Day** pg 2



**Elections 2021: Kevin Pazmino Profile** pg 12



New Computer Center For Fordham Library pg 13



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Photo by Síle Moloney SHIRA BLUMENTHAL, FOUNDER of the anti-bullying movement, #HatNotHate (far right) joins students and staff at P.S. 294, Walton Avenue School, in the Mt Eden section of the Bronx, on Thursday, Feb. 11, to donate 500 blue knit hats to students and raise awareness about bullying.

### By SÍLE MOLONEY

When she was nine years old. Shira Blumenthal, founder of the nationwide anti-bullying movement, #HatNotHate, was a self-described, chubby

girl with short frizzy hair, buck teeth, and very little confidence. At the start of fourth grade, she had two friends. "They were a little cooler than I was, but that didn't faze me," she writes on her

website, hatnothate.org.

Then, there was another "cool" girl in her class, who, she wrote, was friends with everyone, boys and girls, and who always wore a bra strap headband,

which she told other kids her mother had invented. Blumenthal said she can't remember the first time she was bullied by the girl, but she continually made (continued on page 19)

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NORWOOD NEWS

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# Couple Hand out Gift Cards on Valentine's Day

### by DAVID GREENE

A couple celebrating St. Valentine's Day, who wanted to give back to elderly residents of Fordham Manor, spent some of the day attempting to hand out eight \$25 gift cards at their local supermarket to surprised and grateful shoppers.

Early on Sunday morning, Feb. 14, Joseph Riley and his wife of ten years, Monique Ferguson-Riley, showed up at the Food Universe on East 194th Street, between Marion Avenue and Bainbridge Avenue, and handed out the \$25 Visa gift cards to customers walking down the aisles, or at the checkout line.

Ferguson-Riley was born in Miami and raised in New York, while Riley was born in Houston. The couple met back in 2008 in Saint Paul, Minnesota where they both worked at a Borders bookstore. The chain closed in 2011, and the couple now live in The Bronx. According to Ferguson-Riley, today, the couple are "proud business owners, parents and (are) thriving" in their marriage.

The two run the Freedom Youth Family Justice Center, Inc., a nonprofit based on Broadway in Manhattan, whose ongoing work with combating human trafficking and domestic violence has previously been reported on by the *Norwood News*.

As he scouted for potential shoppers to whom he could hand out some of the gift cards, Riley was overheard by the *Norwood News*, which filmed the occasion, telling Food Universe manager, Jose Mimya, "I come here all the time, so I figured we'd do a little something in the area."

Mimya was asked if anyone had ever handed out gift cards at Food Universe in the ten-plus years it's been in business. Referring to a woman at the checkout counter to whom Ferguson-Riley had just handed a gift card, he replied, "Here? No, but that woman was really happy."

Explaining the reason behind the giveaway, the nonprofit founder said, "Basically, I have an older neighbor downstairs, and she's often times in need of help or just wanting a conversation with people, so I was thinking of her and other people like her that are often left out, and don't have anybody during Valentine's day or on special days."

Ferguson-Riley continued, "So, I just wanted to come out here and help



Photo by David Greene

**JOSEPH RILEY AND** his wife, Monique Ferguson-Riley, spend their St. Valentine's Day morning giving out \$25 gift cards to random customers at the Food Universe on East 194th Street on Sunday, Feb. 14, 2021.

some older people that are in need and helping towards their food. Some people reacted real funny, but I'm assuming they didn't want to be on camera. Other people really appreciated getting the gift card."

Meanwhile, when asked if this was their first time giving to strangers, Riley replied, "No, it's not our first time... one of the things we do is combat human trafficking and domestic violence, but we love to give back. Our motto is always, if we get something, we try our best to give what we have back, so that's what it's about."

As hard as it is to make a dollar, it's apparently just as hard to give away cash. At one point, Riley was seen approaching one female shopper near the fruit counter. He politely waited for another person to pass between them, and then began to get a bit closer to the woman than the recommended, 6-foot, social distancing threshold. Despite the fact that he was wearing the required face covering, the woman seemed to be a bit suspicious of Riley's motives.

As he attempted his pitch, telling the woman, "I work with a nonprofit..." the woman shook her head, and said, "No." He tried to continue, "No, listen. You don't want this? It's \$25 off your purchase." The woman again shook her head and repeated, "No."

Riley did not push the matter, and walked away with a regretful smile, saying, "It's weird, it's a \$25 gift card... trying to spread a little cheer, a little spirit of love in the season of love, but we'll continue to find somebody," and he walked back down the aisle.

Meanwhile, Ferguson-Riley said that she shops at the store because Food Universe didn't raise their prices dramatically when the pandemic hit, unlike other stores in the area. "It's a good store and I like to shop here," she added.

After a few more refusals of his goodwill donation, Riley said he believed some shoppers may have been undocumented, and as such, may have been wary of being recorded on video. In total, the couple gave out gift cards to seven shoppers, mostly seniors, and one retired member of the Army National Guard.

Asked how long the couple have been doing this, Joseph replied, "From day one.. whatever we get.. if we get food, we figure we give it right back, and we do this all the time," during holidays like Thanksgiving, Christmas and Valentine's Day.

Moments after receiving her gift card, Iris Fevus, a Briggs Avenue resident, said "I was on line, and all of a sudden they presented me with this card, and I didn't expect it, no Sir. That was a good Valentine's. Of course, every little bit helps the way things are now with this COVID, and economic problems we're going through."

"We really appreciate it," Fevus continued, "It's a shame. I've been living here for 39 years and I've seen it go from good to what we're going through now. Life has changed and every little bit helps."

# **Bedford Park Mosque Organizes Coat Drive**

### By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

On a cold but bright and sunny afternoon, members of "Masjidus Sabur" set up a table on Bainbridge Avenue in Bedford Park for their annual winter coat and essentials drive. Masjidus is the Islamic term for mosque. Iman Alprentice Talibudeen McCutchen helped manage the event on Feb. 5 in front of the mosque, located at 2975 Bainbridge Avenue. "In today's event, we're giving away [free] coats for children as well as teenagers and adults... and book bags," he said.

A group of four to five volunteers joined McCutchen in manning a folding table surrounded by multiple boxes of coats in a variety of colors, still neatly folded and wrapped in protective plastic. They took turns approaching people who were walking along both sidewalks, directing them towards the table. Many of the adults who stopped by were accompanying school-aged children.

Although none of the visitors agreed to be interviewed on the record, several expressed gratitude for the free coats and book bags. One adult said in Spanish, "Esto es bueno," [This is good]. Coat drives like these are not new for the members of the mosque. Originally formed in 1995 in Harlem, Masjidus Sabur moved into their current location in Bedford Park five years ago. "We've been doing coat drives since our inception [in Harlem] for the past 20 years," McCutchen said.

On the day of the event, they were stocked with 75 coats and "about 30 book bags," according to McCutchen. The coat drive was completely funded by contributions from the mosque's members, which number around 75. Iman Umar Abdul-Jalil is the senior iman at Masjidus Sabur, and is retired from his secular job as a commissioner with the City's Department of Corrections.

He is especially proud of the ties that members maintain with the mosque even after they move away. "We have members that stretch out throughout the five boroughs. We have members that live in Maryland, members that live in Georgia," Abdul-Jalil told the *Norwood News*.

"We have people that relocate, people in North Carolina, but they still send their monthly donations as part of their membership here." He clarifies, however, that those members who attend the mosque on Bainbridge Avenue in person, span from Mt. Vernon to Staten Island.

As reported previously by the *Norwood News*, a 2018 report by the group, Muslims for American Progress, a proj-



**MEMBERS OF MASJIDUS** Sabur, a mosque on Bainbridge Avenue, volunteer during their Annual Winter Coat & Essentials Drive in Bedford Park on Friday, Feb. 5, 2021. They were stocked with 75 coats and 30 book bags for distribution.



ity, 33 percent more than the average American household. Charitable donations also often stay close to home. For example, after Hurricane Sandy devastated parts of Staten Island in 2012, 900 individuals from Muslim organizations volunteered to deliver food, conducted needs assessment, and helped with clean-up efforts.

Abdul-Jalil said that the mosque's members are committed to being good neighbors in Bedford Park and beyond. Although they are a faith-based group, he said that they believe that reaching out beyond the Islamic community is an important aspect of their religion.

Acknowledging that Muslims are not immune to the negative effects of the pandemic, economic and otherwise, he said he feels that members want to do more for others. "We are not promoting religiosity," Abdul-Jamil said. "We are promoting neighborly needs. We are part of the neighborhood."

When asked what would happen to any coats and book bags left over from the event, McCutchen said he sees an opportunity for another giveaway event. "We'll take stock, so we can do it another day," he said. "We try to support the community as much as possible."

\*Sile Moloney contributed to this story.

Photo by José A. Giralt

ALPRENTICE TALIBUDEEN MCCUTCHEN (no hat), a member of Masjidus Sabur, a mosque on Bainbridge Avenue, points out a coat to a child on Friday, Feb. 5, 2021. Mc-Cutchen is surrounded by other adult members of the mosque who volunteered during their Annual Winter Coat & Essentials Drive.

ect of the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, found that Muslims make up 8.96 percent of the City's population. Some, though not all, of Norwood's Bengali community, for example, are Muslim.

The report found that this extremely diverse populace includes descendants of Muslims who have lived in the United States' geographical area since before its founding, arriving in America as early explorers and enslaved Africans, as well as recent immigrants from 75+ nations.

The report also found that a large

number of the City's Muslims work in front line services. For example, Muslims make up 57.5 percent of people who work at food stands, and 39.2 percent of those who work in the taxi industry, two sectors still badly hit by the flailing economy.

On the other hand, Muslims make up 9.7 percent of those who work in the medical profession, while 8.1 percent of those who work in respiratory therapy, specifically, are Muslim.

In terms of charitable work, in 2016, the report found that Muslim New Yorkers donated over \$608 million to char-

# **INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER**

**By DAVID GREENE** 



# This week, we asked readers how they planned to celebrate St. Valentine's Day amid the COVID-19 pandemic.



"I do have plans with a special guy this year for Valentine's Day. We talked about the possibility of going out to a restaurant for this day, and we both decided it's best to just stay at his place, and he's going to cook for me. It is because we are choosing not to be around too many people, and who knows if restaurants are going to get crowded on Valentine's Day, due to reopening of indoor dining on this holiday. I do miss indoor dining, but we can wait for another time in the future." Michelle Love

Norwood



"I got divorced two years ago and once I was ready to get back into the dating scene, the coronavirus hit. With the difficulties of social distancing and being safe, I had to think outside the box for meeting potential dates. A few friends of mine suggested I join a dating group on Facebook and here I am. I, unfortunately, didn't find anyone to join me this Valentine's Day, but I am hopeful for next year. With the vaccine, and more meeting venues opening, I believe it will be easier to meet someone." Gonzalo Duran Belmont

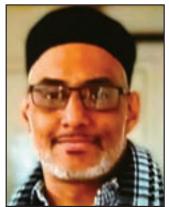
Ręgeis



"My husband and I were planning on dressing up and dining out, but due to COVID, dining out will be extremely packed no matter where we make reservations. So. I went out and purchased a backdrop, bought some aged wine and prepped our three-course meal which consists of toasted garlic bread and homemade sauce for dipping. I will be making a tossed salad to go along with chicken and shrimp, with jasmine rice and broccoli and carrots, or his choice of mashed potatoes and finishing the course with homemade strawberry cheesecake. We want to still feel like we are heading out somewhere we both love, so we will dress up. We also wanted to perform an act of kindness to the ones that are oftentimes overlooked, and may have lost their significant other, so we will be randomly selecting elders in a nearby grocery store and present them with gift cards. Monique Ferguson-Riley Fordham Manor



"My husband and I are spending the day at home, making a romantic meal with both of us sharing the cooking, while sharing a glass of wine. There is nothing better than to be in the comfort of your own home, cooking exactly what we prefer. And since it's Sunday, it's a perfect day to relax and enjoy a great dinner with great company. Even though indoor dining has opened, we are playing it safe for a while." Mirtha Paez Kingsbridge



"It's good that they've, at least, opened the small businesses and restaurants at 25 percent now, but small businesses need more support in the city of New York. My concerns basically are the new housing developments going up in our community, COVID vaccinations and getting more people tested. I don't celebrate Valentine's Day. I'm Muslim and we don't celebrate Valentine's. Every day is a day of love and happiness for our wives." Aldo Rafael Perez Bedford Park

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### **By SÍLE MOLONEY**

### **DeWitt Clinton H.S.** Launch Podcast

Last September, Christian Avilés, a Spanish Teacher at DeWitt Clinton H.S. helped launch a podcast to provide the students with an outlet to document their experiences of remote learning and share a space to self-reflect on their current experiences amid the pandemic. "Governor's Radio," named for the school's mascot, was born and can be accessed via the school's website, on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts via https://governorsradio. buzzsprout.com/.

Every week, students come up with discussion topics, and with many extra-curricular activities cancelled this year, which has affected many students' college applications, the podcast has allowed some of them to showcase their work to acceptance committees.

### Sepúlveda's Senate Seat Challenged

On Monday, Feb. 15, Rev. Ian Harris, faith-based leader and software engineer, announced he was looking to become the next state senator of the 32nd senatorial district, a seat currently held by State Sen. Luis Sepúlveda, who, last month, was arrested on charges of allegedly attempting to choke his estranged wife. Sepúlveda was subsequently stripped of his chairmanship duties at the State senate, with many elected officials calling on him to resign. Sepúlveda alleges it was his wife who assaulted him and is due back in court on Feb. 24

Harris is a community activist. His team said he has worked to improve the quality of life for local families by using technology to make resources more accessible to the community. His campaign said he has hosted numerous food giveaways, voter registration drives, and is currently working to get mobile COVID-19 testing sites placed in the Bronx.

### **New Empire BlueCross** BlueShield and Montefiore Agreement

Empire BlueCross BlueShield and Montefiore Health System announced a new agreement on Feb. 9 on improving access to quality healthcare for people throughout New York City, Westchester and the Hudson Valley. According to sources, this latest multi-year agreement will continue the longstanding relationship between the two organizations. and features several new community outreach initiatives including health events, a partnership to support nutrition services for at-risk populations, and a mobile health unit to

# **District 15 City Council Race: Several Labor Unions Endorse Ischia Bravo**

### **Bv SÍLE MOLONEY**

District manager for Bronx Community District 7 (CB7) and Democratic candidate in the 15<sup>th</sup> District City Council race, Ischia Bravo, has secured the support of several major labor unions just weeks before the special election is due to be held on March 23. Bravo is running to fill the seat of former Councilman and now Congressman, Ritchie Torres, who was elected to Congress in November 2020.

Bravo has secured the support of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU), the New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA), the Laundry, Distribution and Food Service Joint Board, Workers United, SEIU; District Council 37, AFSCME; and **District Council 9 New York IUPAT.** Painters and Allied Trades.

The Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) represents 100,000 members throughout the United States, and is affiliated with the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW). The union played a pivotal role in the

deliver essential testing and screening focused on improving the health of the community.

### Wells Fargo Provides \$5 million to Help Small Businesses

Wells Fargo announced on Friday, Feb. 12, that selected New York-based community development financial institutions (CDFIs) have received a combined \$5 million from the bank's "Open for Business Fund" (OFB) to help local small businesses impacted by the economic struggles caused by COVID-19. One of the CFDIs, Harlem Entrepreneurial Fund, will use the grant to help minority-owned, small businesses in Harlem, Washington Heights, Inwood, and The Bronx.

Applicants can access

development and passing of the "Fair Wages for New Yorkers" Act, the nation's first significant "living wage" bill, in 2012.

RWDSU president, Stuart Appelbaum said Bravo has a long record of service and leadership in her local community. "She'll be a fighter for the Bronx and the many RWDSU members who live in her district." he said.

Meanwhile, District Council 37. AFSCME, is New York City's largest public employee union, with 125,000 members and 50,000 retirees. DC 37 members include over 1,000 job titles - everything from accountants to zookeepers. Henry Garrido is the executive director of the union and said that workers answered the call when New Yorkers needed them most and now elected officials must answer theirs. "Ischia understands that, and is committed to putting working people first," he said.

The New York State Nurses Association (NY-SNA) is a union of 42,000 frontline nurses who advocate for their practice, safe



Photo by Adi Talwar I SCHIA BRAVO, DISTRICT manager for Bronx Community Board 7, has received the endorsement of several major city unions in her run for the District 15 City Council seat.

staffing, and healthcare for all. They are New York's largest union and professional association for registered nurses.

The Laundry, Distribution and Food Service Joint Board, Workers United, SEIU represents members in the private and public sector in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. The union represents more than 8,500 members across the region.

District Council 9 of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) is an organization of painters, decorators, wall coverers, drywall finishers,

sign painters, metal polishers, bridge and structural steel painters, civil service painters, lead abatement workers, glaziers and architectural metal glassworkers, paint makers, and allied tradesmen. The union represents more than 11,000 members across the region.

Joe Azzopardi is the union's business manager and secretary treasurer. He described Bravo as a lifelong Bronx native and community advocate who is determined to improve the quality of life for every resident in District 15.

Bravo was previously endorsed by Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., in addition to prior endorsements from State Senators Jessica Ramos and Alessandra Biaggi, the latter representing parts of the Bronx and Westchester.

Bravo has also been endorsed by the Northwest Bronx Democrats, United Federation of Teachers, the New York City Central Labor Council, Assembly Member Nathalia Fernández, who represents the 80th Assembly District and who is currently running for Bronx borough president, as well as by Assembly Member Catalina Cruz, City Council Member Diana Ayala, civil rights leaders Tamika Mal-

(continued on page 19)

the fund's website at https:// www.hefnyc.org/ or they can call (212) 749-0900 for further information. Applicants can also apply to the other CDFIs who are accepting applications from small businesses across the city by accessing their websites. These are: https://accompanycapital. org/, https://pursuitlending. com/. https://ndconline.org/. https://renaissance-ny.org/. Some are targeting womenowned, Asian-owned, and minority-owned businesses, in particular.

### **MTA Service Update**

Beginning on Monday, Feb. 22, the overnight subway closure will be shortened from 2 a.m. to 4 a.m., nightly. MTA officials said this will allow the agency to enhance travel services for

customers as the city gradually reopens, while also maintaining a concerted effort to deep clean and disinfect the subway system.

### **Frisch Field Public Meeting**

A public, virtual meeting will be held on Wednesday, Feb. 17, at 6 p.m. to gain input from the community about the proposed use of funding previously secured by former Councilman Andrew Cohen for the renovation of Frisch Field, located on Webster Avenue and Mosholu Parkway. All are welcome to join. Register at: https://www.nycgovparks. org/reg/community-inputmeetings/10483/. The meeting information will be provided to the registered applicants one hour before

### the event starts.

### **Correction Officers on Triple Shifts**

Councilman Fernando Cabrera issued a statement on Monday, Feb. 15, demanding an end to what he called the abusive policy of requiring the City's Correction Officers to work double and triple shifts, saying the practice not only endangered officers but inmates as well. Cabrera said Correction Officers are often forced to sleep in their cars, rather than risk driving home after completing required marathon double or triple shifts. He said this fact alone should be of great concern to all New Yorkers, and the city should immediately hire a sufficient number of officers to end the policy.

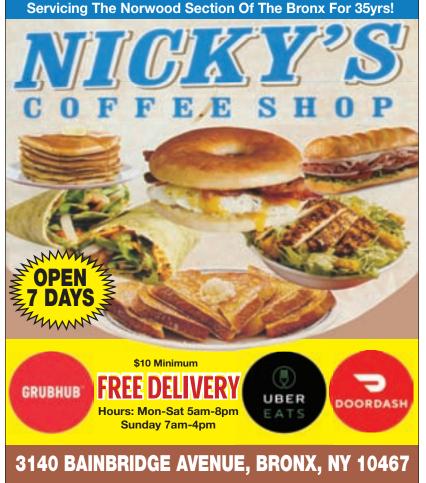
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Photo by Toby Norwood

**THE FDNY USES** two tower ladders to battle a three-alarm blaze in Woodlawn on Monday, Feb. 15, 2021.

# One Firefighter Injured, Residents Displaced in Woodlawn Blaze

### by DAVID GREENE

A three-alarm fire in the Woodlawn section of the Bronx has injured one firefighter and destroyed two businesses according to the FDNY. Meanwhile, one of the business owners told the *Norwood News* that four families living in four separate apartments, above the damaged businesses have been displaced.

According to the FDNY, the fire was reported at 8.34 a.m. on Monday, February 15, inside the basement of the Katonah Family Deli and Grocery, located at 4293 Katonah Avenue.

A fire department official said the fire extended to the first floor of the apartment building, and that 138 firefighters from 33 units responded to the incident. Members of the Yonkers Fire Department were seen in photos assisting with the blaze.

The fire was brought under control at 11.03 a.m. on the same day, with EMS reporting that one firefighter was injured and transported to Montefiore Medical Center. Paramedics reported treating one civilian at the scene, but the victim was not transported to hospital.

The *Norwood News* attempted to reach the Katonah Family Deli and Grocery for comment, but their telephone number was no longer working.

A second business, Precise Construction, located at 287 East 236th Street was also heavily damaged. An unidentified female employee who answered the phone at the business on Tuesday, Feb. 16, told the *Norwood News*, "Oh yeah. Well, our office was damaged, but I can't really tell you too much because we don't know much. There was a fire in our office, and everything was ruined."

Asked if her company would rebuild, the woman responded, "I'm sure we will eventually, when they find out what's going on with this building. Everything is wet and walls are pulled down and everything."

The *Norwood News* asked about the status of the four families living in the three-story building who lived over the businesses. The woman said, "They were all evacuated. Thank God nobody was hurt. That was the main thing." In response to a question about whether the families were still there or if they had been permanently evacuated, the woman said they were not there, as nobody was allowed back into the building.

The *Norwood News* reached out to The Red Cross of Greater New York to see if they had any information on the status of the families. A statement received from Mike de Vulpillières read, "Up until now, no one needed / requested our services. We remain available to help if anyone needs it."

The *Norwood News* also made inquiries with the Emerald Pharmacy, located next door to the Katonah Family Deli, and we were informed that it suffered no damage as a result of the fire, and was open for business the following day.

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# **CRIME FILE**

### Man Sought for Robbery **Pattern Inquiry**

The NYPD is seeking the public's assistance identifying the man seen in the attached photo (right), who is sought in connection with robberies that occurred in the 52nd and in the 50th precincts. The photo is taken from inside one of the incident locations, during the robbery.

On Thursday, Jan. 14, at 1 p.m., inside 2501 Grand Concourse (Marshalls) in Fordham Manor, the man entered the location, placed store merchandise in a bag and attempted to leave without paying. When approached by a 48-year-old male security guard, the man displayed a knife, threatened the employee, and fled on foot to parts unknown. No injuries were reported. The property removed had an estimated value of \$280.

On Tuesday, Jan. 26, 2021 at 5 p.m., inside 50 West 225th Street, (Marshalls) in Marble Hill, the suspect entered the location, once again placed store merchandise in a bag, and attempted to leave without paying. When the security guard approached him, he, once again, displayed a knife, threatened the employee, and fled

on foot to parts unknown. No injuries were reported. The property removed had an estimated value of \$150. The suspect is described as male, 25-35 years of age.



### NYPD Officer from 52 Pct Assaults Child

On Thursday, Feb. 11, at 5 p.m., an off-duty New York City employee was arrested and charged in the 52nd precinct. Freddy Difo, 29, an NYPD police officer was charged with assault and acting in a manner injurious to a child.

### Van Nest Robbery Pattern

The NYPD is seeking the public's assistance locating and identifying the individual seen in the attached photograph (right), who is wanted in connection to two robberies that occurred in the

49th and 43rd precincts.

On Saturday, Feb. 6, at around 11.19 p.m., in front of 1717 Fillmore Street in the Van Nest section of the Bronx, the suspect approached a 19-year-old woman from behind, displayed a knife and demanded her property. The victim complied and handed over her Apple ear pods. The suspect fled the scene on foot southbound on Fillmore Street.

On the same night at around 11.30 p.m., in front of 1541 Rosedale Avenue, the suspect approached a 19-year-old man from behind, displayed a knife and took his cell phone. The victim's debit card was inside the cell phone case. Pursuant to an ongoing investigation, on Feb. 7, at around 00.30 a.m., it was deduced that the suspect had used the victim's debit card to make unauthorized purchases at 4702 White Plains Road (Zoom Zoom Deli).

The suspect is described as male, around 18 years of age, Black, has a slim build and was last seen wearing a light blue backpack with a picture of Spongebob Squarepants on it, a black hooded coat, blue sweatpants and multi-colored sneakers.



### One Dead in MTA **Bus Collision**

On Saturday, Feb. 13, at 11.13 p.m., police responded to a 911 call following a vehicle collision in the Baychester section of the Bronx, in the 45th precinct. A preliminary investigation determined that a Nissan Maxima with two occupants was traveling on Bartow Avenue when it hit the rear of an MTA bus parked at a bus stop in front of 2085 Bartow Avenue. EMS also responded to the incident and transported both the driver, a 20-year-old male, and another adult male passenger of the car to Jacobi Medical Center, where the driver was listed in critical condition and the passenger was pronounced deceased.

Three individuals on board the bus sustained minor injuries, the driver and two passengers. All refused medical attention at the scene. The investigation is ongoing by the NYPD Collision Investigation Squad.

### Man Shot Dead in Pelham Bay

On Feb. 6, at around 7.08 p.m., police responded to a call regarding a man who was shot at Westchester Avenue and Bruckner Boulevard, in the 45th precinct. Upon arrival, officers discovered a man with multiple gunshot wounds to the upper body. EMS responded to the location and transported the victim to Jacobi Hospital, where he was later pronounced dead. There are no arrests, and the investigation is ongoing. The victim was later identified as Dane Salmon, 22, of nearby Hutchinson River Parkway.

Anyone with information with regard to these incidents is asked to call the NYPD's Crime Stoppers Hotline at 1-800-577-TIPS (8477) or for Spanish, 1-888-57-PISTA (74782). The public can also submit their tips by logging onto the CrimeStoppers website at WWW. NYPDCRIMESTOPPERS.COM, or on Twitter @ NYPDTips.

All calls are strictly confidential.

# On March 16, 2020, the Nor-

Photo by David Greene

A GROUP OF young women enjoy a Valentine's morning breakfast at the National Restaurant and Coffee Shop on East Bedford Park Boulevard on Sunday, February 14, 2021.

any customers since the pandemic first hit, and did not reopen even when indoor dining returned for a brief duration last year. Referring to her regulars, she said, "Even now that we've opened indoors, they haven't come back in." She added, "They don't feel comfortable to come out of their apartments. We serve a lot of elderly people, so they are more careful, and I understand that. So, most get it delivered."

Nonetheless, perhaps be-

cause it was St. Valentine's Day, every other table at the restaurant was occupied when the Norwood News visited the restaurant on Sunday, Feb. 14.

Meanwhile, on Sunday morning, at the National Restaurant and Coffee Shop on East Bedford Park Boulevard, a group of happy, young women were seen enjoying a Valentine's morning breakfast. Even though it was morning time, the restaurant had a decent scattering of customers also.

wood News spoke with the manager of another local business in the area, Madden's Bedford Pub. At the time, the manager had planned and was looking forward to a big St. Patrick's Day bash the following evening. However, following the issuance of the governor's PAUSE order, the bar closed that same night, and didn't open again until the latter part of 2020, at which point the manager had decided to build an outdoor seating section.

He did so. However, it quickly got too cold for anyone to eat, drink or even just sit outside. By that stage, the man said he was fearful his business would have to close its doors outright.

The Norwood News called the bar, once again, on Tuesday, Feb. 16, to find out how business was now doing since the return of indoor dining. A man who answered the phone said, "It's doing. I'm a little occupied right now." He added, "I'm always optimistic for the future. You can't be negative."

**Indoor Dining Slowly Returns in Bedford Park** 

### **Bv DAVID GREENE**

Following the return of indoor dining at 25 percent of normal restaurant capacity, on Friday, Feb. 12, at least one Bedford Park restaurant owner is hopeful that it's a sign of things slowly, and hopefully, returning to normal.

Maria Torres is the manager of Bedford Café and Restaurant, located at 1 Bedford Park Boulevard which, until last Friday, had been closed since Gov. Andrew Cuomo issued the executive "PAUSE" order on March 16, 2020. The order restricted all, on-premises consumption of food and beverages at eating and drinking establishments, statewide.

Eleven months later, on Tuesday, Feb. 16, Torres was asked how business was now going at Bedford Café since the latest phase of indoor dining recommenced. She told the Nor-

wood News, "Yes, we are excited about it." She said that business was not like they expected it to be, however. "It's a whole process," she said.

According to the manager, people don't yet feel 100 percent comfortable returning to dine in public. "Even if we do the cleaning, and everything, and follow all the procedures, the seniors have no plans for coming back," she said.

"We are hopeful," Torres continued. "Now, with the vaccine and all that, things are going to start getting, little by little, back to normal, and people are going to, again, get used to being back and feeling comfortable, and see that we are doing all the cleaning, and all the measures to keep everyone healthy. So, one day things are going to go back to more interaction, like it used to be."

Torres said she hasn't seen







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# **Elections 2021: Kevin Pazmino on Community, the Economy & Policing**

### **By SÍLE MOLONEY**

Freelance filmmaker, business owner, and father, Kevin Pazmino, describes himself as someone who has worked hard, evolved, and taken some chances to get to where he's at right now, in life. He acknowledges having availed of government programs which have facilitated his career progression, yet he is opposed to big government. A supporter of former President Donald Trump, he is the latest candidate to join the District 11 City Council race to fill the seat vacated on Dec. 31 by former City Councilman, Andrew Cohen, and his platform is based around community-based solutions, and community integration.

"The thing is, my campaign is a very, very small campaign," he said. "It's pretty much just me running it, and I'm not taking any cash donations because I'm just really against money in politics. I'm a little different from the other candidates, [who] I believe, are all registered Democrats. I actually am a registered conservative. Ideologically speaking, I lean more right, so I believe in fiscal responsibility."

In this sense, Pazmino advocates for empowering people through lower taxes and said he doesn't believe "putting more people dependent on the system is the answer." Nonetheless, referring to his own career path into the film business, he said, "I'm the sole provider for our family of six. I have four children. I came up in an industry that isn't very easy to break into, so in the beginnings of my career, we definitely lived paycheck to paycheck."

He added, "We definitely knew how to utilize social services and food stamps to get to the place where I am now so, I completely understand the need for that. I grew up in low-income housing so, I understand the need for a lot of these social programs that we have, but I also have gone through it, coming on the other side of it, and learning a trade."

Pazmino said he understands what it means to be empowered, knowing your worth, and having a skill set that can be transferable. "Being a gig worker, after you get through it and establish yourself, it's very empowering. I think a lot of people out there do have those skill sets, who already are community leaders, but just don't realize it yet."

Indeed, he reveres those with an entrepreneurial spirit, citing one example of a local woman he knows who, seemingly, recently saw an opportunity to start a childcare business out of her home. Pazmino did not elaborate on whether the woman was registered, qualified or had been vetted to take care of children.

On the other hand, he is skeptical of large corporate entities and large non-

profits, saying he believes there is a lot of mismanagement that takes place within them. When asked if he could share the name of a nonprofit that is being mismanaged, he said, "I can't point to one non for profit directly. I wouldn't know. I don't have access to their budgets, and access to see the scale of what they're doing with the funds that they're receiving, how much the funds are actually just donations."

He said some nonprofits do great work. "I would want to keep those businesses. I want to basically work with those people as well, in order to see where they need more help in terms of logistics, and help streamline those issues that they're facing," he said.

The *Norwood News* mentioned that 501 nonprofits have to file regular reports to the authorities to demonstrate how they use and spend their funding and asked if this provides some level of comfort regarding the mismanagement concerns. Pazmino concurred but suggested there were also alternative ways and means to report on finances.

"I want people to be able to utilize a lot of the same things that the 1 percent utilizes," he said, explaining that while many large corporates donate to philanthropic causes, they do so as a way to write it off against their taxes.

Pazmino favors a similar model for smaller businesses, saying communities know their districts' needs best.

Taking the example of food insecurity, he said he believes only a small percentage of "tax subsidies" [received by nonprofits] go towards feeding the hungry, and suggests the larger percentage goes towards management salaries.

Referring to such tax subsidies, he favored instead allocating, for example, \$100,000 among ten community restaurants and delis so they could lower their prices for the people in the community. Pazmino added that such businesses could then also provide food for the homeless in the area. "They know who our homeless community are. I'd rather give them those subsidies and then just work out free meals for the homeless and for lower income families."

The *Norwood News* mentioned that the primary aim of every business is, nonetheless, to make a profit, and to rely on businesses to ensure the homeless are fed may not be a very pro-active approach to the issue and may be more reliant on luck, chance and goodwill.

"That's just kind of a broad perspective," Pazmino said of his proposals. "Obviously, once elected, I would have to really scrutinize what monies are in the budget, and then figure out the proper way of distribution, figure out how we're currently dealing with these issues, and the ones that are working."

He also advocates for pooling existing resources like educational facilities and other spaces to address wealth imbalance across District 11, cutting out what he sees as traditional, bottomdown, government intervention and bureaucracy.

"I don't really believe in this one system for the general population living on a welfare system, and then one system for the 1 percent to live a completely different lifestyle," he said.

"I'm basically trying to empower people to go towards incorporating themselves, becoming their own business, becoming entrepreneurs, so that opens them up to the subsidies as well."

Having started his own business two years ago, Pazmino wants to help others realize their potential. "We can understand getting too caught up in the grind of life to be able to have time to put towards community activism because I haven't had that time either," he said.

"So, I would love to try to encourage people to do it, and whether it's incentivizing, and doing tax mitigation, or a straight-up payment for time volunteered, the key is getting people involved, and me knowing what each constituent in every area needs."

If elected, Pazmino sees his role as a community liaison, expanding on the role of the community boards, and connecting people with resources in a type of self-sufficient neighborhood. He uses the example of business owners making their premises available during closed hours to community groups to give classes, for example, so that the community as a whole benefits. He said he also wants to make sure that all the seats are filled at community board level, and that every block is represented.

On the subject of law enforcement and crime, Pazmino is opposed to defunding the police. "I believe that we need to make sure that our police, fire and EMFs are all funded properly, and support those agencies because in cases of emergency, those are your first responders," he said.

When asked about the topic of police brutality and the mass demonstrations seen throughout the world last year, he said, "Obviously, I'm against some of those bad apples, but I don't believe that we should punish the whole institution as a whole because of a few bad apples."

In the context of the most recent Civilian Complaints Review Board (CCRB) public hearing on the NYPD's new disciplinary matrix, and the topic of accountability at the top levels of the NYPD, we asked Pazmino if he could see why there is justifiable criticism of the agency's leadership for not taking the disciplining of such "bad apples" seriously enough in the past.

"I'm a manager myself in terms of what my vocation is, and anytime something happens on my watch, I take full responsibility, even if it's not something that I directly did," he said. "I feel the current mayor, it starts with him and the people that he elected, who he decides to be the commissioner. I'm against jumping to conclusions, and every situation is a particular situation, so if an investigation finds wrongdoing, then there needs to be firm and strict punishment."

He added, "But, in terms of just automatically demonizing the police department before investigating, that's where I just feel like you need to support the police department." Pazmino brought up talks of legislation which may curtail the power of the commissioner and put the City Council in charge of disciplining officers.

"I get a little nervous about that," he said, adding that there needs to be control within the police department as a whole, or no one will listen. "If the officers as a whole feel that their boss really isn't their boss, it's just a figurehead, you lose control and the ability to actually plan a proper department," he said.

Pazmino said having talked to retired police officers in confidence, he feels a lot of times cops may just stay in their cars, going forward, especially at a certain time of the night, and ignore situations they would previously have addressed because now, they don't want to put themselves in a scenario where their lives are at risk, if something goes wrong or something unexpected happens.

"It's a very difficult job," he said. "They're more worried about what could happen to them if the situation goes awry." He added, "You have to react to the best of your ability but if someone pulls a gun, at that point, you have to defend yourself." Acknowledging that police work is dangerous, we ask if that is not what police officers signed up for.

He said the officers he talked to would be the first to agree. "But it's when you don't feel supported by the mayor, or forget the mayor, if you don't feel supported by your own superiors, or if you feel like your superiors aren't the ones who are going to be doing the disciplinary action, then that even allows them to kind of detach from whatever [the] superior tells [them] to do," he said.

He said he fears if all disciplinary action falls to the City Council, it will lead to a situation where the superiors won't be able to run a proper department, and drive a rift between police management, and the officers in the field. "I feel like it's going to cause more disorganization," he said.

If elected, Pazmino said he's looking to take a hands-on approach to the role. "I'm looking to be in people's neighborhoods. I'm not going to be the type of councilman who is only out there during election season." he said. "It seems to me as if we're going in a certain direction. There are people, like myself, who don't believe in full blown socialism, and I know that the left will disagree with me in terms of saying, 'We're not really trying to do that,' but it's slow and steady."

# **City Proposes New Computer Center at Old Fordham Library**

### **By DAWN CLANCY**

The City's department of administrative services (DCAS) has proposed to Bronx Community Board 7 (CB7) to convert the second floor of the currently vacant Old Fordham Library, located at 2556 Bainbridge Avenue in Fordham Manor, into a new computer-based testing and application center (CTAC), to facilitate more opportunities for a wider number of local candidates to apply for City jobs.

At the latest Bronx CB7 housing and land use committee meeting, on Feb. 9, the agency proposed relocating the Bronx's current CTAC, located at 1932 Arthur Avenue in Crotona, to the Fordham Library location, and judging from the discussion that ensued, the committee appeared to broadly support the project outline, at this stage.

In all five boroughs, CTACs are community-based centers used for the purpose of taking civil service exams. "Our centers are the start of the pathway to employment with the City," said Barbara Dannenberg, DCAS's deputy commissioner for human capital, during the committee meeting. "It's a place where folks come in and chat with our knowledgeable staff and learn what jobs the City has to offer." She added, "I think we have every job in the City of New York except for astronaut."

Moving the Arthur Avenue CTAC to the Fordham Library location is expected to double the annual number of applicants served by the center in the Bronx. The Arthur Avenue location, which comprises 5,100 sq. ft of surface area, currently accommodates 40 workstations, facilitating 1,900 test-takers per month.

The 10,000 sq. ft, second-floor Fordham Library space would double the capacity of workstations to 80, increasing the number of monthly available test slots to 3,800. "The new center is a wonderful location for folks to come and visit for the purpose of taking civil service examinations," said Dannenberg. "It's near the B, D and 4 trains, the Metro North and many bus routes."

If approved, construction on the building, which has sat mostly vacant since it was shut down in 2005, could begin at the new center in 2024 and would be completed by 2026. It was noted that the two-story, 24,000 sq. ft. Fordham Library would require building-wide electrical, heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) upgrades.

Because the building, which was built in 1923, was designated eligible under the National Register of Historic Places, any changes to it would have to be approved by the State's historical preservation office. *Norwood*  *News* asked DCAS if the approval had been obtained, and we were informed that such approvals would be received prior to construction.

When asked by committee member, Sandra Erickson, why the project wouldn't start until 2024, Carmine Rivetti, chief of staff for DCAS, explained, "We have to go through the whole ULURP, Uniform Land Use Procedure process, and that will take 12 to 18 months. From there, you have to go through the design process, and the construction documents. We're talking about the full scope of work from start to finish." The ULURP process is due to commence in either early spring of 2021 or late winter.

According to DCAS, the first floor and mezzanine level of the library is slated to provide services that will benefit the Bronx community, although, currently, there are no plans or proposals as to what these services will entail.

In this context, committee member, Barbara Stronczer, asked, "Who will decide what goes in there, and will you listen to community input as to what goes there?" She added, "We've been talking about the site for many years. We always spoke about some type of a youth center. I'm wondering who's going to make the final decision?"

The *Norwood News* previously reported that in July 2013, the City released a request for redevelopment proposals for the library. Its closure at the time coincided with the opening of the Bronx Library Center, two blocks away, and local advocates had called for the building to be turned into some kind of community center to cater to youth and seniors, something the immediate area lacked.

The prevailing request for proposal (RFP) called for developers to reactivate the site through potential, "neighborhood-serving purposes." The RFP also called for the project to be "financially feasible" and to have a "reliable revenue stream."

In 2008, the City turned the old library over to the City's health department, which was mandated to turn it into a full-service animal shelter. That mandate was dropped in 2011 by the City Council, and the agency had been using the facility for administrative and storage purposes, according to the RFP.

The *Norwood News* asked NCAS to clarify when the management of the building had been moved from the health department to NCAS, and we were informed this happened in December 2013.

Before the health department took over the running of the building, two different groups - Sistas and Brothas United, the youth arm



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

**THE SECOND FLOOR** of the Old Fordham Library building, located at 2556 Bainbridge Avenue in Fordham Manor, is slated to be converted into a Computer-Based Testing and Application Center (CTAC) for city jobs.

of the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, and New Life International Church, led by pastor and current 14th District Councilman Fernando Cabrera - staged multiple rallies urging the City to turn the building, which is in District 15, over for community use.

Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr. told the *NY Daily News*, in 2009, he wanted to see some kind of science and technology center or a recreational hub at the former library.

Meanwhile, then-Bronx Councilman Joel Rivera, representing the 15<sup>th</sup> District, and son of Assemblyman José Rivera, said at the time, a private-public partnership might have been an option, but added that the City would best be served in the long-term by using the old library for developing young people and providing programming to keep them off the streets.

"In a private development, you might get 50 jobs out of it in the short term," he said at the time. "But in the long term, with a community center, you can develop a whole generation of young people."

At the CB7 meeting, Rivetti said DCAS was open to suggestions from the community regarding the building's usage. "We've engaged with the borough president's office, and there's a council race coming up [District 15 special election on March 23]. So, we look forward to having that discussion with the new council member as well," he said.

"If there's a community center that people want to explore, we're open to all possibilities. We'll have this discussion with all the stakeholders as we go through the ULURP process." Other suggestions from the community for the first-floor space include a job training center. Committee member, Edgar Ramos, said, "Since you can take civil service tests on the second floor, that might be a good co-use for the building."

Regarding the project's next steps, Nick Benson, DCAS director of communications, emailed the *Norwood News*, writing, "The ULURP process will include several public hearings, including one with the CB7. Once we have ULURP approval, we would start the design work."

No formal request for approval or non-objection to the project was asked of the committee by DCAS, and the presentation was really more of a heads up of what is being planned. As the agency advances with the ULURP process, it plans to engage with all affected stakeholders which includes, we understand, coming back to CB7 for a nod of approval, at a later stage, regarding the project's progression.

Other items discussed at the meeting included an update on the New York Botanical Garden's (NYBG) plan for two new housing developments at East Bedford Park Boulevard and Webster Avenue, part of a 2011 re-zoning plan to revitalize 88 blocks of Webster Avenue. As reported by Norwood News, residents are concerned about the project's overall impact on local amenities like schools and parking. NYBG is slated to present its plans to the CB7 community at next month's housing meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, Mar. 9, at 6:30 pm.

\*Sile Moloney contributed to this story.



### **Compiled by RACHEL DALLOO & SÍLE MOLONEY**

### **Events**

Do you think you'd be a great impostor or crewmate? Will you succeed in accomplishing your tasks, or will your plan be thwarted by the impostor? Join the Van Cortlandt Library on Feb. 19, at 3 p.m. for their online game of Among Us! To register for **Game On! Among Us**, visit: <u>https://www.nypl.org/</u> <u>locations/van-cortlandt.</u>

Do you want to help the many communities across the Bronx? Then join the upcoming **Foodway Team** meeting on Feb. 18, at 3:30 p.m. as leaders at the Youth Ministries of Peace and Justice lead a discussion around how the Foodway can serve as a model to create community policies that reconnect communities to the land across the Bronx. To register and learn more, visit: <u>http://www.bronxriver.org/</u> calendar.

Do you want to learn more about your rights? Then join the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) on Feb. 23 at 12 p.m., as they partner with the Mayor's Office for Immigrant Affairs to host two **Know Your Rights** workshops. NYIC will discuss immigration policy, city resources, and COVID19 resources. To learn more, visit <u>https://www.facebook.com/</u> events/1166626470420773.

Mark your calendar for the 27th **Bronx Parks Speak Up** event on Feb. 27, at 10 a.m. Join the Bronx Parks Speak Up is their annual community networking conference for park and environmental stakeholders. This event provides an opportunity to learn about government and nongovernment resources, and to participate in face-to-face discussions with city and local elected and appointed officials. Share the love for Bronx River parks! For more information, visit www.BronxSpeakUp.org.

### Art

Throughout the month of February, New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) will honoring **Black Contributions to Art,** Culture, and Science by showcasing cultural traditions of the African diaspora and exploring the influential contributions of Black people to botany, horticulture, ecology, and our collective understanding of the natural world. Discover captivating dance, creative and inspirational children's programs, important historical narratives, and fascinating plant stories. Learn more at: https://www.nybg.org/

event/black-history-month-athome/.

### **Movement**

Every Monday night, the **Bronx Nomads** host an hour long run / walk for anyone interested in joining the group. The event starts at Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center at 6 p.m. More information can be found on the group's Instagram here: <u>https://www.instagram.com/</u> bronxnomads/?hl=en.

Join NYC Parks on Feb. 20, from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Van Cortlandt Park for the Van **Cortlandt Park and Woodlawn Cemetery Winter Tree ID event** and explore the interesting tree species in the winter season in two of the Bronx's premiere green spaces: Van Cortlandt Park and Woodlawn Cemetery. NYC Parks asks participants to stay home if sick, maintain six feet of physical distance between households, wear a face covering, keep hands washed and carry hand sanitizer. For more information, please call (718) 548-7070.

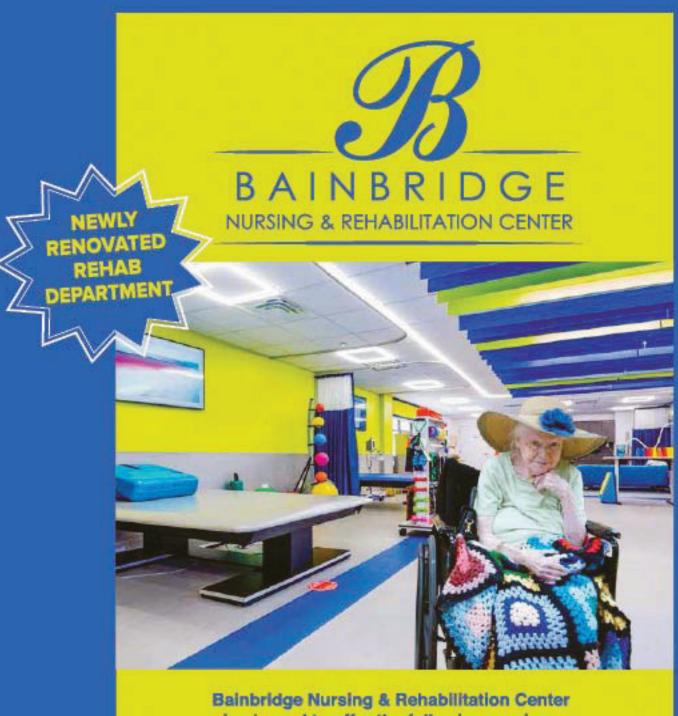
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# Letters To The Editor

### **Erosion of Women's Rights**

I invite my fellow Norwoodites to borrow the book, "Prey: Immigration, Islam and the Erosion of Women's Rights" by Ayaan Hirsi Ali from the library. The eye-opening story of the flood of refugees from Syria and Iraq shows that 80 percent are males under the age of 35. These refugees are coming into countries such as Germany in Europe, and are bringing with them, customs of polygamy, patriarchy and the view of women as commodities.

The author notes that they see no need to change their views even when living in Western Europe. As such, there are areas in Europe where women are told not to frequent to avoid the risk of sexual assault. Sadly, the courts and police maintain a culture of political correctness, and probable guilt over their role in WWII, and treat these refugees with kid gloves when they are caught assaulting women. No one gets extradited back to where they came from, since they can claim asylum.

I relate this book and its story because I am observing a mistaken political climate right now where there are calls to defund the police and release criminals from prison. Only a fool would say our subways are safe as well as our streets. Citizens in NYC became complacent with the lowering of crime rates. Well, get off your couch; crime is rising and is doing so rapidly. Just this past weekend, our police stopped a parked bus in Brooklyn loaded with teens -primarily males and eight guns were seized, and 14 people were arrested. Every morning the local TV news shows reports of a shooting in the Bronx - sadly mostly fatal. Yet no one is getting excited. Well, I am angry, and want to encourage all of my neighbors

to talk about respect, especially when it comes to women.

I always go out of my way to say hello to my Muslim neighbors, and to encourage discussion about their treatment of women. They are willing to listen, I found, but I am told I am the first to bring this subject up. Can we have our Church and Rabbi leaders initiate such discussions as well, in partnership with our elected and police officials? By reading this book, it will help to create awareness of this topic, since Norwood is experiencing a high rate of new residents. As a very masculine man, I am proud to call myself a feminist who believes no woman is a commodity, but rather an equal to any male, and no woman living in Norwood should be treated as a 2nd class citizen based on the customs of where she came from. Let's talk more about this!

Richard Marias

Norwood

### Subway Fare Evasion & Crime

How should we deal with fare evasion, vandalism and crime on NYC Transit subway and buses? Perhaps it is time to return to the good old days when a transit police officer was assigned to ride and patrol most stations and trains. This, along with installation of security cameras on trains, and at stations, might serve as a deterrent against crime, fare evasion and vandalism. There, also, may be the need to increase fines and penalties as a deterrent for those who don't pay their fare, commit crime or vandalism.

Larry Penner Great Neck

Editor's Note: We reserve the right to edit letters for space, clarity, civility, and accuracy.





# **Health Check: Your Healthy Heart**

### By SAKINAH LONG

When we think about February, most of us think about Valentine's Day hearts. But February is also American Heart Month - a good time to give your own heart a check-up. Heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The good news, though, is that you can do many things to help prevent heart disease. First, it's important to understand your chances of having or getting it. Second, you can learn what changes may help reduce your odds of getting heart disease.

According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), your chance of heart disease is higher with one or more of the following:

- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol
- obesitysmoking
- stress
- unhealthy eating habits
- diabetes or prediabetes
- · family history of heart disease

While you can't change your family history, many of these risk factors can be reduced by some simple adjustments.

### Heart-Healthy Foods

Your diet can make a big difference. A heart-healthy diet includes plenty of fruits and vegetables and whole grains like oatmeal and brown rice. Try to add foods high in healthy fats like omega-3 fats e.g. salmon and sardines. Reduce added sugars, especially in processed foods, and saturated fats like bacon and cold cuts. Stick with lean ground beef and skinless chicken or turkey to cut down on saturated fats. And choose fatfree and low-fat milk, cheese, and yogurt.

### **Get Moving**

Regular physical activity can help you lose weight, lower your stress, and improve your mental health. It can also help lower "bad" cholesterol levels and may lower high blood pressure. Speak with your doctor about how much, and what types of physical activities are safe for you. Every little bit of physical activity counts, including things like housework or gardening.

### **Lowering Stress**

Research from the NHLBI has suggested that upsetting events can trigger a heart attack in some people. Too much stress may increase blood pressure, raising the risk of heart disease. Everyone experiences stress, so it is important to be aware of when and how it affects you. Talking to a professional counselor, meditating, exercising, and talking to friends and family can help lower your stress levels.

### Smoking

Smoking greatly increases your chance of heart disease and heart attacks. If you or anyone you live with smokes, you and they should quit. If you have trouble quitting smoking on your own, speak to your doctor about joining a support group. Many hospitals, workplaces, and community groups offer classes too.

Keeping your heart beating strong and healthy is important all year. So, take a little time during American Heart Month to learn how to take care of your heart; a few simple changes can make a big difference. Join one of our free virtual presentations from the list below by going to <u>https://zoom.us</u> and using the Meeting ID Number: 96997638075 and Password: 442845.

### **2021 Heart Month Presentations**

- Understanding the COVID-19 Vaccine: Monday Feb. 22 at 2 p.m.
- Hypertension Healthy Weight: Tuesday, Feb. 23 at 2 p.m.
- Hypertension Stroke: Be a Hero: Wednesday, Feb. 24 at 11 a.m.
- What is Hypertension: Thursday, Feb. 25 at 11 a.m.
- Hypertension Mission to Nutrition: Friday, Feb. 26 at 11 a.m.

Sakinah Long is a Social Work Student at Montefiore Health System's Office of Community & Population Health.

### **NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES**

### Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants

New York City's online Tenant Resource Portal has been created to help residential renters access free public and private resources to help prevent evictions and stay stably housed. Residential renters can receive legal advice, counseling, and access to other relevant resources based on their specific needs by calling 311 and asking for the "Tenant Helpline" or by texting 311-692. TTY service for people with disabilities is also available by dialing 212-504-4115.

Learn more at https://www1. nyc.gov/content/tenantresourceportal/pages/.

Eviction cases filed before March 16, 2020 (pre-COVID) may proceed, but if you received an eviction notice before March 16, 2020, your landlord must file a motion and get permission from the court to evict you. If you receive a motion like this, or if you receive a warrant of eviction, HRA's Office of Civil Justice can provide free legal assistance to help you with your case. For more information, call 311 and ask for the "Tenant Helpline" for connection with free legal help. You should call as soon as possible.

### Food Resources

The City has created the Get-FoodNYC Emergency Home Food delivery program to provide food for coronavirus-vulnerable and food-insecure New Yorkers not currently served through existing food delivery programs. Learn more by calling 311 or going to the following website:

https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/ dsny/contact/services/COVID-19-FoodAssistance.shtml.

### Food Bank Events in Feb.

Food Bank for New York City has organized a series of food distribution events throughout the month of February at 3101 Kingsbridge Terrace in The Bronx. Residents are required to bring ID and only one food distribution per household is allowed. Recipients must be present to receive distribution and distribution is on a first-come, first-served basis. The food distribution time slot is between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. and the next dates are on Monday, Feb. 22, Friday, Feb. 26.

### NYS Emergency Paid Sick Leave

On March 18, 2020, Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed emergency legislation guaranteeing job protection and pay for New Yorkers who have been quarantined as a result of the coronavirus or COVID-19. Some employers in New York State are now required to provide at least five days of job protected, paid sick leave to employees who need to take leave because they are under a mandatory or precautionary order of quarantine or isolation due to COVID-19.

The amount of paid sick leave an employer is required to provide depends on the number of employees they have and the employer's net annual income. If your employer does not provide the required paid sick leave, you may file a complaint with the NYS Department of Labor. Call (518) 457-9000 or go to: https://labor.ny.gov/ workerprotection/laborstandards/coronavirus-complaints. shtm.

### **COVID-19 Vaccine**

New York City officials are aiming to make COVID-19 vaccines available to most New Yorkers by mid-2021. Currently, some people like health care workers, those over 65, people at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, teachers, school staff, childcare workers, Department of Corrections staff, first responders, public transit workers, grocery store workers and those working and living in group homes and homeless shelters can get vaccinated.

Residents are encouraged to get vaccinated, as doing so helps protect the community at large. People with disabilities should take precautions and consult with their health care provider first. To find out more information, talk to your health care provider, call 311, or text 311-692. TTY service for people with disabilities is also available by dialing (212) 504-4115.

Residents can also visit: https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/ downloads/pdf/covid/covid-19vaccinesfaq.pdf.

### **COVID-19 Testing**

The City is continuing to expand capacity for COVID-19 testing. For more

information, call 311 or text 311-692. TTY service for people with disabilities is also available by dialing (212) 504-4115. Learn more at: https://www1.nyc.gov/ site/doh/covid/covid-19-testing. page.

Free testing is available at the following North Bronx locations:

**NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi** 1400 Pelham Parkway South

Bronx, New York 10461 718-918-5000 COVID-19 Testing and Antibody Testing Offered Here Flu vaccines available here Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Saturday – Sunday, 9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

NYC Health + Hospitals/ North Central Bronx 3424 Kossuth Avenue Bronx, New York 10467 Appointments: 844-692-4692 General Information: 718-918-5700 COVID-19 Testing and Antibody Testing Offered Here Flu vaccines available here Monday – Sunday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Co-op City Retail Space 105 Dreiser Loop Bronx, NY 10475 Monday – Sunday, 9 a.m. – 7 p.m. Rapid Antigen Testing Available Here Flu vaccines available here

St James Rec Center 2530 Jerome Avenue Bronx, NY 10468 Monday – Sunday, 9 a.m. – 7 p.m. d Molocular Tostiu

Rapid Molecular Testing Available Here. Rapid testing availability may be limited at this time.

### Health Insurance

NYC Care is a health care access program for people who are not

eligible for or cannot afford health insurance. It is now available in every

borough. To learn more, visit https://www.nyccare.nyc/ or call (646) 692-2273.

NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) Alerts

Residents can get the latest DCWP alerts and information on all COVID-19 resources, including in additional languages, at https:// www1.nyc.gov/site/dca/media/ DCWP-Alerts-During-COVID19. page

Alternatively, call 311 and asked for "DCWP Alerts." Residents can also text 311-692. TTY service for people with disabilities is also available by dialing (212) 504-4115.

### **Price Gouging**

Effective June 26, 2020, the NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) issued a permanent rule that makes price gouging illegal for any products or services essential to health, safety, and welfare during a declared state of emergency. Learn more by calling 311 and saying "Overcharge."

### NYC Human Resources Administration:

You may be eligible for an emergency cash grant if it will meet

certain special needs. For more information, call HRA's infoline at 718-557-1399

or visit: https://a069-access. nyc.gov/accesshra/

### NYC Department of Education

The NYC DOE will be offering childcare to eligible families through their Learning Bridges program. Learn more by calling 311 or go to:

https://www.schools.nyc.gov/ enrollment/enrollment-help/ learning-bridges.

### NYC Campaign Finance Board

Ranked Choice Voting will be used in all Special Elections taking place after January 1, 2021. The first special election with Ranked Choice Voting in District 11 and District 15 will be held on March 23.

Ranked Choice Voting means a voter can rank up to five candidates in order of preference, instead of choosing just one. If a candidate receives more than 50 percent of first-choice votes, they are the winner. If no candidate earns more than 50 percent of first-choice votes, then the counting will continue in rounds. At the end of each round, the candidate with the fewest votes will be eliminated.

If a voter ranked the eliminated candidate as their first choice, then the voter's next highest ranked candidate on their ballot will be taken into account. This process will continue until there are two candidates left. The candidate with the most votes wins. More information on ranked choice voting can be found here:

http://www.nyccfb.info/nycvotes/ranked-choice-voting-faqs/, by emailing nycvotes@nyccfb. info or by calling 212-409-1800.

### Returning to Work During COVID-19

Learn more about important guidelines and resources available to workers under Phase 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the reopening at www. nyc.gov/workers or by calling 311 or (855) 491-2667. Important information for domestic workers and their employers can be found here: https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/ dca/downloads/pdf/workers/ReturntoWork-Information-for-Domestic-Workers-and-Employers. pdf.

### Funeral Planning During COVID-19

Important Information for New Yorkers who have lost loved ones can be found here:

https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/ dca/downloads/pdf/consumers/Funeral-Planning-During-COVID-19-English.pdf

### Funeral and Burial Guidance and Assistance

The New York City Human Resources Administration will provide financial assistance to individuals who need assistance to meet qualifying funeral expenses. For more information, call 311 or visit: https://wwwl.nyc.gov/site/ hra/help/burial-assistance.page.

### Taxi and Limousine Commission

TLC licensees can take advantage of the Driver Resource Center, which provides

financial counseling and legal services and other useful free City resources such as health care insurance, mental health resources and more.

https://portal.driverresourcecenter.tlc.nyc.gov/. Are you at risk of losing your home? NYLAG's Foreclosure Prevention Project Attorneys can help you avoid Foreclosure at no cost. Call 212-946-0349 or email contactfpp@nylag.org.

### **Free Tax Prep Services** New Yorkers can now use

New Yorkers can how use NYC's Free Tax Prep Services to file their tax returns for free and keep their whole refund. Anyone who has earned \$65,000 or less in 2020 can file for free, from home, with the help of an IRS-certified VITA / TCE volunteer preparer. Preparers can already help residents prepare to file their taxes safely now, and then transmit the returns to the IRS when the agency opens the tax season on Friday, Feb. 12.

Residents are reminded that any preparer promising a tax refund before Feb. 12, may be selling a Refund Anticipation Loan (RAL), which may come with fees and high interest rates. Tax Prep Services are available in English, Spanish, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Korean and Russian. Additional languages are available through phone interpretation. Learn more by calling 311 and asking for tax preparation assistance or by going to nyc.gov/taxprep.

The deadline to file a 2020 tax return is April 15, 2021. NYC Free Tax Prep services include in-person tax preparation, dropoff services, virtual tax prep, and assisted self-prep to file taxes for FREE. Filers will need access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone and a stable internet connection for virtual free tax prep services.

### NYC Financial Empowerment Centers

Professional financial counselors can help New Yorkers manage their bills and credit amidst the coronavirus crisis, understand student loan repayment options, and more in a confidential setting. For the health and safety of providers and clients, most Financial Counseling sessions will be conducted over the phone. Book an appointment by calling 311 or go to:

https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/ dca/downloads/pdf/consumers/ DCA-Template-Cease-Debt-Collection-Communication-Letter-for-Consumers.pdf

### Student Loans

Has your income or family size changed? Get important information about payments and resources by calling 311 or go to: https:// www1.nyc.gov/site/dca/consumers/ Student-Loans.page where you can learn about Income-Driven Repayment (IDR) plans that can lower your monthly payments. Book an appointment for free financial counseling at 311 or go to: https://www1.nyc.gov/ site/dca/consumers/get-free-financial-counseling.page.

### Debt Collection

DCWP has created a letter template that you can fill out and mail (required by federal law) so debt collectors can't contact you until the State of Emergency in New York City has ended. Learn more by calling 311 or go to:

https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/ dca/downloads/pdf/consumers/ DCA-Template-Cease-Debt-Collection-Communication-Letter-for-Consumers.pdf

### COVID-19 Scams and Safety Tips

Important information that describes common COVID-19-related scams and tips can be found by calling 311 or going to:

https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/ dca/downloads/pdf/consumers/ COVID-19-Scams-and-Safety-Tips-English.pdf

### NYC Commission on Human Rights

Harassment and discrimination based on race, national origin, age, and disability, including having COVID-19 or another serious illness, is illegal. If you have faced harassment or discrimination in housing, at work, or in any public place, contact the Commission by filling out our online form or by calling 311 and asking for "human rights." Learn more at:

https://www1.nyc.gov/site/ cchr/index.page





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# Gibson Honored by Crain's New York Business

### **By SÍLE MOLONEY**

Councilwoman Vanessa Gibson, representing the 16<sup>th</sup> District, has been honored by Crain's New York Business 2021 as a Notable Black Leader and Executive. The list spotlights Black men and women who have affected the city with professional, communal and philanthropic achievements, particularly in matters of diversity and inclusion. Gibson congratulated her fellow honorees, said she was blessed to be recognized, and that she stood on the shoulders of the pioneers and trailblazers who started the work before her.

# **Public and Community Meetings**

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the **52<sup>nd</sup> PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meetings have been held via ZOOM. Meetings are usually held **on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each 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** meetings have been held via ZOOM. The next full Board meeting will be held **on Tuesday, Feb 23, at 6.30 p.m.** Zoom details will be circulated ahead of the meeting. Contact <u>mirosario@cb.nyc.gov</u> to be added to the distribution list.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, **BEDFORD MOSHOLU COM-MUNITY ASSOCIATION** meetings have been held via ZOOM. The meetings are held **on the first Wednesday of the month at 8 p.m.** For further details, contact <u>bedfordmosholu@verizon.net</u>.

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# **Bullying Survivor Inspires Kids at P.S. 294**

### $(continued \, from \, page \ l)$

fun of her hair, her weight, her looks, her style, and zeroed in on her for just about anything, until it all became too much.

"All I can recall is the amount of crying I did after repeated episodes," she wrote. "She turned classmates against me, and I felt worthless. When she picked on me, none of the other kids ever stood up for me, and I remember feeling so lonely." A visit with her mother to the school principal caused the situation to escalate and eventually, Blumenthal ended up leaving the school. While she subsequently made new friends and the painful memories faded, the scars remained.

Twenty years later, in 2018, Blumenthal decided to create the Hat Not Hate campaign, after seeing a then, 9-year-old girl who was being bullied but who decided to speak out about it.

On Thursday, Feb. 11, the bubbly, smiling founder and activist was at P.S. 294, Walton Avenue School, in the Mt Eden section of the Bronx to make a donation of 500 of the organization's signature, blue, knit hats to students. The aim was to bring awareness to an issue, which according to the National Bullying Prevention Center, affects one if five kids across the country.

The school's principal, Nicole Perkins, and second grade teacher, Elisa D'Aguanno, who was the driver behind the initiative, were outside the building, located on 1425 Walton Avenue, to accept the donation, along with a handful of kids whose parents had provided authorization to be interviewed.

Though they were a bit camera-shy in the end, and didn't say much, the kids seemed excited by the occasion, happy to receive the hats, and also seemed to take in the message imparted by Blumenthal, who looked each one in the eye, and told them they were seen, they were heard and they were loved.

One little girl, who seemed, perhaps, to be wearing a religious headscarf underneath her knit hat, seemed a little more shy than the others and, later, kept close to Blumenthal's side as she spoke with reporters.

The #HatNotHate campaign had forged a close relationship with the school's staff, through D'Aguanno and when they expressed an urgent need for warm hats for their students during the cold winter months, it was a win-win situation. A number of the students live in shelters and were also in need of warm clothing. #HatNotHate saw the opportunity to help the students, while also spreading a message of solidarity and anti-bullying awareness.

October marks National Bullying Prevention Awareness Month, and the blue hats are usually donated to schools to coincide with that month. However, school closures amid the pandemic upended the normal routine.

Lion Brand Yarn Company, where

Blumenthal serves as a brand ambassador for the last five years, helped launch the Hat Not Hate initiative, while the concept itself was conceived by Blumenthal. The idea was to get knitters and crotcheters to knit and crochet blue hats and donate them to the cause. Blue represents awareness and solidarity and is the color to wear in support of bullying prevention. To date, more than 32,000 wool hats have been collected for this year's #Hat-NotHate campaign with an extended goal of 100,000 for 2021.

The *Norwood News* asked Perkins how the school got involved with the campaign. She said D'Aguanno has a business where she crochets and knits. "Ms Deguano asked me if she can sponsor P.S. 294 to launch this program with our kids," Perkins said. "It's such an important initiative and I was like, 'Yes!""

She said the second and fifth graders are going to pilot the program. "We figure, our second graders, they have a couple more years before they graduate, so this will be a great initiative for them to push through the school in the upcoming year, and I hope to continue a connection with them, and they can really wear their hats with pride, showing that they are a part of this anti-bullying program."

Perkins continued, "The fifth graders, they can wear their hats moving forward into middle school, and they can always remember that as they're going into this new phase of schooling, that's not what we want to do. We want to make sure we treat people with respect and talk to them with respect."

Asked about specific state and city policies and guidelines for schools in terms of how to handle bullying, Perkins said, "There is a DoE [Department of Education] program which we call, "Respect for All" for which Ms D'Aguanno is the liaison."

She said they also have additional initiatives, where they educate kids about not bullying people based on race or other reasons. "That's part of our building safe design," she said.

We asked Perkins if bullying is a serious problem at the school and if kids, generally, come forward if they've been bullied. "You know, being, at first, I was assistant principal here, and now being a principal, we had had instances, but the thing is, sometimes students feel like a one-time occurrence is bullying," she said.

"In those instances, it wasn't really bullying. It may have been just a verbal type thing, like, a name they didn't like, or they said something about what they were eating or something like that. Once you explain the term, what bullying is, my students usually realize that that's not the case."

She said they explain to students that a person can perhaps say something mean one day, but that bullying is an ongoing issue that is something different.

"So, it hasn't been an ongoing thing, thankfully, not too much here at P.S. 294,"

she said. "The ongoing incident is something that, as soon as a child says that, or uses the word 'bullying,' it has been my mindset to always investigate, have a mediation with the children, talk about it, have a mediation with the parents, so that's something that lives within P.S. 294."

For her part, D'Aguanno said that because she is a teacher, she has to help children feel safe, feel empowered, feel loved, and know that if they are bullied, they have options, and don't have to use their hands. "Our school is very open, and we do a lot of communicating. We have wonderful staff and psychologists and we really work with the kids and meet them one on one, and have play groups and talk groups." she said. "So, if there is an instance, we handle it right away, but I would say our school is definitely safe."

The National Bullying Prevention Center (NBPC) found that bullying can result in depression, alcohol abuse and even suicide in some people. Cyberbullying has also doubled from 2007 to 2019.

Speaking at the event, Blumenthal said she never wants another child to

feel the way that she did as a child. She added that because the hats are soft and warm, they may also bring an extra level of comfort and warmth to a bullied child when they put one on.

"While every kid may not be bullied, there is bullying happening all the time, whether we want to see it or not," she said. "I always say that there's always someone in a room that has been bullied, witnessed bullying, or been a bully, and I just hope that with these hats, we can bring light to the issue."

Blumenthal added that there's no better feeling than receiving something that is handmade. "I hope that these kids are going to feel that and hopefully they'll tell their friends, and their friends will tell their friends, 'How do I get one of those blue hats?' So, that's my dream. That's my wish, and Elisa heard me, and the Walton School accepted this concept with open arms."

More information about New York City's Stomp Out Bullying program can be found here: https://www. stompoutbullying.org/.

# District 15 City Council Race: Several Labor Unions Endorse Ischia Bravo

(continued from page 10)

lory and Kirsten John Foy.

In addition, she has received the backing of 21 in '21, a group that advocates for at least 21 women to hold elected office at New York City Council by 2021, as well as Vote Mama, which supports Democratic moms with young children running for office up and down the ballot and across the country.

In addition to Bravo, according to the New York City Board of Elections and Ballotopedia, nine other candidates are running in District 15.

These are Kenny Agosto, district director to New York State Senator Jamaal T. Bailey, Elisa Crespo, education liaison at the Bronx borough president's office, Ariel A. Rivera-Diaz, a former finance clerk with the City's Board of Elections and former official at the Republican National Hispanic Assembly, Oswald Feliz, tenant lawyer and adjunct professor at Hostos Community College, Bernadette M. Ferrara, president of the Van Nest Neighborhood Alliance, Latchmi Gopal, a community organizer and former staffer for U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, José A. Padilla, a former acting supreme court justice at the Bronx Supreme Court, Community Board 6 District Manager, John Sanchez, and Altagracia E. Soldevilla, another community organizer.

In terms of campaign contributions raised, according to the latest CFB figures filed last month, Sanchez leads with \$56,649, followed by Crespo with \$37,743, Bravo with \$36,216, Feliz with \$32,272, Gopal with \$17,805, Altagracia with \$7,182 and Agosto with \$1,175. No information was available for Ferrera, Padilla or Rivera-Diaz.

District 15 includes the neighborhoods of Belmont, Crotona Park, Fordham, Van Nest, and part of Bedford Park. The nonpartisan special election in District 15 is the first of two elections in the Bronx which will incorporate the new method of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV). For official information on ranked choice voting, go to the NYC Campaign Finance Board FAQ page or the New York City Board of Elections website.

The Bronx Board of Elections (BoE) is now accepting applications for absentee ballots from voters in District 15 (and in District 11) who wish to vote by mail. Further information can be found on the BoE's website or by calling the Bronx Board of Elections at (718) 299-9017 and selecting Ext. 1875. Polls are open on election day from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. The Early Voting Period is from March 13, 2021 to March 21, 2021. Voters must vote at their assigned early voting site.

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# Verdicts/Settlements

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