



NORWOOD NEWS

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HOME CARE WORKERS DEMAND FAIR PAY



Photo by David Greene

HOME CARE WORKERS HOLD A rally at Fordham Bus Plaza in the Bronx, and call for higher pay and healthcare coverage on Friday, March 12, 2021.

by **DAVID GREENE**

A few dozen home care workers held a rally in the Bronx on Friday, March 12, to push for the passage of the “Fair Pay for Home Care Act,” which aims to guarantee workers better conditions. Low wages and poor conditions have been causing a mass exodus from the profession, affecting both elderly and disabled people, who are usually cared for in their homes by such workers. However, due to the shortage, seniors and people with disabilities are increasingly being forced to enter already overburdened nursing homes.

The Fair Pay for Home Care Act (S-5374) was introduced on March 3, by State Sen. Rachel May of Morrisville, who represents New York’s 53rd district, upstate. Local State Senators, Gustavo Rivera, who represents the 33rd district, and Luis Sepúlveda, who represents the 32nd district, have both co-sponsored the bill, which would raise wages 150 percent

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Photo by David Greene

STUDENTS AND FACULTY members of the City University of New York hold signs outside of Herbert H. Lehman College demanding a reinstatement of educators during a protest on Saturday, Jan. 30, 2021.

Protesters Rally Over CUNY Lay-offs & Cuts

By DAVID GREENE

Employees and students at the City University of New York (CUNY) held a noisy, caravan-style protest on Jan. 30, in opposition to ongoing cuts and lay-offs which have affected both students and faculty alike. The group taped signs to their cars, hung out their windows, honked their horns and generally shattered the usual, peaceful tranquility known to some residents of the North-west Bronx.

The estimated 20-vehicle, caravan rally formed outside Herbert H. Lehman College on West Bedford Park Boulevard, between Paul Avenue and Goulden Avenue in Bedford Park, and later deliberately drove past the homes of Bronx Community College president, Thomas Isekenegbe in Spuyten Duyvil, and Hostos Community College interim president, Daisy Coco De Filippis in Fieldston.

Organizers of the protest said CUNY colleges have been hit with massive lay-offs since last year, and allege that CUNY is sitting on nearly \$700 million in federal funding that protestors say was meant to be “targeted at needs created by the pandemic.”

The protestors also allege that all three public colleges in the Bronx, Lehman, Hostos and BCC, have received over \$72 million in federal funding from the CARES Act and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), but despite this, just a few million has been used to protect CUNY jobs.

Before the mobile protest got underway, CUNY adjunct professor at Lehman, Susan DiRaimo, a CUNY law degree graduate, who has also worked at BCC, voiced her opinion on the situation. “They laid off hundreds of adjuncts,” DiRaimo fumed. “I’ve been an adjunct for forty-years at CUNY and that’s how they save money on faculty. They pay us less wages and now, during COVID, they’ve laid off a lot of people.”

DiRaimo clarified that she, herself, was not among the adjunct professors who were laid off but said many of those present at the rally were supporters of the more than 2,000 staff members CUNY has let go since June 2020.

DiRaimo is also a member of the 27-member executive committee of the Professional Staff Congress (PCS), the union that represents 30,000 faculty and staff at CUNY and at the CUNY Research Foundation. PCS is also part of the American Federation of Teachers, Local 2334.

She added, “They’ve also made classes so big that it’s hard for students to learn. They’re not realizing what a crisis it is, and also the adjuncts they laid off, needed their health insurance so a lot of them lost their health insurance.”

Before the protestors got into their cars to start the rally, BCC associate professor, Alex Wolf, said, “We’re here to demonstrate against the racist austerity that is gripping all of CUNY, not just in the Bronx. They’re raising class sizes, they’re cutting sections, and our

students are suffering.”

Wolf continued, “So, we’re going to have a caravan that’s going to go by the homes of presidents of both Hostos and BCC, and we’re going to make some noise.” He added that the CUNY Board of Trustees were “making a really racist decision” with the recent cuts, along with more cuts that could come after the end of the academic year.

As planned, once the group arrived in Spuyten Duyvil, the caravan first passed the home of Isekenegbe, a 30-year educator who was appointed to his position in August 2015. Several minutes later, the stillness was shattered as the caravan drove along a quiet street in Fieldston, passing the home of De Filippis, where an unidentified neighbor defended her, telling the *Norwood News*, “She has nothing to do with cuts... she just got appointed as an interim.”

The neighbor added, “It’s the trustees of the City University who cut up the pie. She’s just acting as interim with no real authority.”

The January rally was not the first one organized in the Bronx in opposition to the CUNY cuts. Another had also been held in the borough on July 15, 2020. Following that rally, and after repeated attempts by the *Norwood News*, over several months, to seek comment from CUNY on the cuts, on February 3, 2021, Frank Sobrino, director of media relations, emailed the following statement.

“Since the federal CARES money

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week, we asked readers their thoughts on life one year on from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.



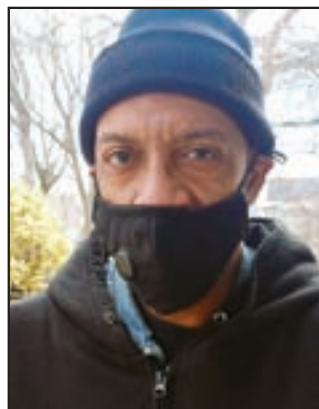
"I just want this [expletive] to be over with, I just want to go back to school. I just want everything to go back to normal. No, I didn't think it was that serious when this first started. I thought it would [have been] over by now and it hasn't - that's how serious it was, and how many people have died."

Aameenah Islam
West Farms



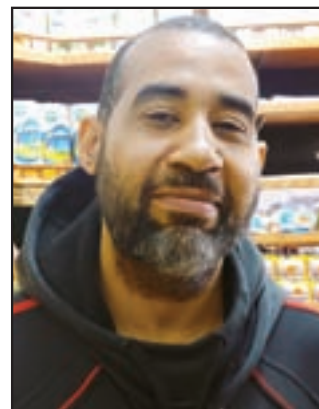
"I just came out of the nursing home, and I was with people who had all types of oxygen machines, even the big, giant ones, and they were dying in there. So, now I'm home, and have 14 different home attendants. I was around the virus, but I didn't know what it was. Now, the home attendants are keeping me locked in my room."

Alice Snake
Bedford Park



"I lost a lot of people; the virus sucks. Thanks for [President Joe] Biden to get us fixed and better now. I've been working from home, which sucks. I haven't got the vaccine yet, which sucks. I'm not eligible for the vaccine yet; that sucks. I'm just making sure that everyone I love is being safe and careful."

Kevin Jones
Jerome Park



"One year later, I feel a little better because we now have a plan going forward. We have the vaccine going forward and now, we're trying to target certain communities so that families can go back to work and we can get back to some normalcy. There's some hope now, some light at the end of the tunnel that we can get back to where we were before. But now, we have to be more open and educated and wise about our environment. How many people died - 500,000-plus people? If that doesn't make you more aware of what can continue to happen on a daily basis, then I don't know what else can be done. Life hasn't changed forever, but one of the things I've missed are fans in a stadium for sports, because it makes it a lot more exciting. When no one is there, it can get really boring. I also miss going out to eat and dining with my wife."

Jason Holloman
Norwood



"I'm a special education teacher and I was hospitalized in April 2020 with COVID, pneumonia and developed sepsis. I was hospitalized again in September, in the ICU. COVID had filled my lungs with blood clots. I required emergency surgery. They removed six clots; the largest was over two inches and was blocking my pulmonary artery. I haven't been back to work since. I spent three days in the hospital again last week. My mild-to-moderate asthma is now moderate-to-severe. I have since been diagnosed with COPD [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease] and emphysema [a lung condition that causes shortness of breath]. I finally got approved for in-home, skilled nursing and physical therapy."

Mariana Pineda
Babylon, N.Y.



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NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Montefiore Receives New Grant for Autism Therapy

The Rose F. Kennedy Children's Evaluation and Rehabilitation unit at Montefiore has been awarded \$150,000 from the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation to support their work providing advanced therapies to pre-school and school-aged children with autism.

The funding will support programs/interventions that enhance children's ability to function in social situations, improve their social communication, support an intervention targeting behavioral challenges, support a parent training and support group that helps parents cope with their child's disability, and enables the creation of a new feeding program that helps children feel more comfortable with different foods, through play.

Biaggi: Cuomo's Behavior an "Open Secret"

In a March 15th New York Times opinion piece by Michelle Goldberg, entitled "How the Left Made Cuomo Vulnerable," in the context of allegations of bullying, New York State Sen. Alessandra Biaggi, who once worked for Gov. Andrew Cuomo, said his abusive behavior, "has definitely been an open secret." She added that it was one that "people were afraid to share because they were afraid of retribution, which is exactly why it's been kept below the radar of most people in the state and country." The governor denies accusations that he is a bully.

More Grocery Options for The Bronx

On March 15, the NYC Department of City Planning (DCP) and City Council announced the expansion, beyond 19 city neighborhoods, of the Food Retail Expansion to Support Health (FRESH) program. This revises zoning laws, and allows convenient, accessible grocery stores to be built in underserved city neighborhoods, using a zoning incentive that gives property owners the right to construct slightly larger buildings in mixed residential and commercial districts, if they include a FRESH supermarket. It also allows grocery stores as-of-right in light manufacturing districts.

The FRESH program currently applies to Bronx Community Districts (CD) 1 through 7. With this update, the program will be expanded to Bronx CD 8, which includes Kings-

Protesters Rally Over CUNY Lay-offs & Cuts

(continued from page 2)

was made available in May 2020, the university has distributed \$118 million in student emergency grants to more than 161,000 students. An additional \$118 million in aid to students will be allocated shortly, using federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act Fund."

The statement continued, "This aid to students is being supplemented by \$9 million the Chancellor's Emergency Relief Fund raised through private and corporate philanthropy. The Chancellor's Emergency Relief Fund was established in April 2020 to help students who have experienced job losses, and other financial setbacks during the pandemic. The fund has, so far, awarded \$500 grants to more than 9,000 students, prioritizing undocumented students and international students who were precluded, under the Cares Act, from receiving aid."

The CUNY statement concluded, "The university has also utilized CARES funding to purchase 33,000 laptops and ipads for students' usage for distance learning, as well as for personal hotspots for those students who require WiFi capability. The balance of CARES ACT and CRRSSA funding will be allocated directly to the campuses for student support and mental health services, and to reimburse colleges for COVID-19-related costs, such as refunds, among other priorities identified by the university's community and senior colleges and professional schools and programs."

The statement did not answer our requests for comment regarding the

lay-offs of the adjuncts or the related protests. We also requested a comment regarding the allegations that racism played a role in the lay-offs. We did not receive an immediate response.

During last year's July 15th protest, outside the BCC campus, dozens of empty shoes were placed on the steps of the college to represent absent faculty members who had been let go. One such adjunct professor, Walter Ostrowski, recalled the impact of getting such difficult news. "It was a shock... it came out of the blue," he said. "I didn't get the reappointment. I was thinking - was it something I had done?" Asked if any warning or reason was given by CUNY, he said, "No explanation - I just got a letter."

DiRaimo told the *Norwood News* that CUNY originally let go about 2,700 adjunct professors in April 2020 but rehired 900 in the fall, including Ostrowski. At BCC, 36 educators were let go, and nine were eventually brought back.

Another adjunct professor, who declined to be identified, said that before the coronavirus pandemic struck, the union had fought for, and won, three-year appointments for adjuncts that provided "job security and healthcare benefits." He added that of the 36 educators who had been let go, most were seasoned professors who had been with the college over many years.

The adjunct professor continued, "So these 3-year adjuncts are the most experienced of our adjuncts." He said many had a decade or more of experience. "The cost savings that they make, laying off these adjuncts, it barely puts a dent in the budget gap

that they tell us they're closing," he said. In light of these comments, *Norwood News* reached out to seek clarification from CUNY. We did not receive a response.

DiRaimo told us that following the latest negotiations with the CUNY PSC union, the most recent three-year contract agreed with CUNY for adjuncts has been applied retrospectively but is due to expire next year.

Yudi Ventura is studying criminal justice at BCC. Referring to her tuition fees, she told the *Norwood News* at last year's July protest, "I'm a student, but at the same time I work to pay for school, because I don't get any financial aid, so I pay out of pocket. So, if there are not enough jobs for the students, then how can we work, and get experience as professionals?"

CUNY serves approximately 275,000 students, across 25 New York City campuses. Ventura added, "If there's not enough professors, then a lot of classes won't be available, and many students have to be full-time in order to keep that [visa] status as a student. I'm one of those international students, and in order to be an international student, I have to be a full-time student."

The PCS union representatives at the rally told us that they are bracing for the possibility of further lay-offs, come June.

Norwood News attempted to reach the presidents of both Hostos and BCC for comment, and did not receive an immediate response.

Editor's Note: Síle Moloney, editor of the Norwood News, is a CUNY graduate.

bridge, Riverdale, North Riverdale, Spuyten Duyvil, Fieldston and Marble Hill, and Bronx CD 9, which includes Castle Hill, Parkchester, Soundview, Harding Park, Bronx River, Clason Point and Unionport.

Lehman College Bags \$1.2 million for STEM Teachers

Lehman College's School of Education has won a \$1.2 million award from the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program to recruit and train K-12 teachers with science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) backgrounds, dispatch them to high-need schools, and support them in shaping stu-

dents to become the next generation of scientists. The program was established in 2002 to help boost the ranks of the country's science and math teachers in underserved elementary, middle, and secondary schools. It is the third such award that Lehman has received since 2008.

NCB/Jacobi Adopt New COVID Guidelines

On March 16, NYC Health + Hospitals announced that all system-wide hospitals would be adopting the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) Foundation guidelines, to further reduce the spread of COVID-19. These include:

- avoiding tracheal intubation based solely on oxygen requirement, and instead considering the trajectory of deterioration and candidacy for less invasive ventilation or proning;
- not routinely placing central lines as an alternative to intravenous therapy, and if a central line is necessary, considering the removal or replacement to reduce the potential for infection;
- reducing routine daily laboratory testing if a patient's clinical labs are stable, and avoiding non-urgent labs in separate blood draws if they can be batched together;
- not ordering routine, daily chest X-rays in patients

with COVID-19; and

- not using bronchodilators - medications that relax muscle bands that tighten around the airways, unless there is active obstructive airway disease.

NYC CFB Releases Public Matching Funds Report

The NYC Campaign Finance Board (CFB) announced on Monday, March 15, that it has approved \$9,469,159 in public matching funds payments which it paid out that day to 90 candidates. Including this latest payment, the Board has now issued a total of \$48,830,893 in public matching funds to candidates running in New York City's 2021 elections.

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Bronx BP Race: Candidates Cross-Endorse Each Other



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

STATE SEN. BRIAN Benjamin, candidate for NYC Comptroller (right), endorses Assembly Member Nathalia Fernández (left), candidate for Bronx borough president, in the presence of Assembly Member Kenny Burgos (center).

By **JOSÉ A. GIRALT**

During back-to-back campaign events in the Bronx last Friday and Saturday, two pairs of candidates running for elected office cross-endorsed each other ahead of the Democratic primaries in June. On March 12, City Council Speaker Corey Johnson endorsed fellow councilmember, Vanessa L. Gibson, for Bronx borough president. The following day, March 13, State Sen. Brian Benjamin endorsed Assembly Member Nathalia Fernández, also for the Bronx borough presidency. In return, Gibson and Fernández endorsed Johnson and Benjamin, respectively, for the position of city comptroller.

During the first event, Johnson referred to Gibson, who represents the Bronx's 16th City Council District, as "not just my colleague, but my dear, dear friend." Standing together in Fordham Plaza, Johnson, who represents Manhattan's West Side, recounted his experience of working with Gibson.

"Anyone who knows Vanessa knows that number one, she doesn't sleep.... She's always awake because she's always working," he said. "She is someone with the right values, the right vision, and the right work ethic for the borough of the Bronx to recover out of this covid pandemic."

Both Johnson and Gibson had been heavily involved in the City budget renegotiations last June, facing mounting pressure amid the George Floyd protests to defund the police, Johnson in his capacity as speaker, and Gibson as part of her budgetary committee duties.

It has been speculated that Johnson lost some political clout following his vote on that revised budget. He subsequently withdrew from the mayoral race, but later announced he was running for the position of city comptroller.

Johnson said Gibson had done crucial work leading the committee on the City's capital budget, and making sure projects in schools, parks and streets were completed faster and with more transparency. "Vanessa Gibson will never stop fighting for the Bronx, and that's why she's going to be a terrific Bronx Borough President," said Johnson.

For her part, Gibson, who turns 42 on March 19, said throughout her time in the City Council, Johnson has been an ally, enacting policies that make the city more affordable, the criminal justice system fairer, and the education system more equal.

Describing it as an honor to work alongside Johnson, an "amazing speaker," Gibson said, "Corey has helped lead our city through one of the most difficult fiscal crises we have faced, and he did so while continuing to prioritize communities in need. He has always been responsive to the needs and concerns of our neighborhoods and acted quickly to ensure we had the resources we needed when the COVID-19 pandemic began."

After the formal endorsement announcements were concluded, Gibson and Johnson walked, with some campaign supporters, along the business

(continued on page 22)

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CRIME FILE

BY SÍLE MOLONEY & DAVID GREENE

**Man Shot on Perry Avenue**

Police are looking for an individual who shot a man in the knee while he was walking home in Norwood. The alert was raised at Perry Avenue and East 206th Street at 3:09 p.m. on Saturday, March 11. Police said a 21-year-old man ran to a nearby building to call for help after being shot. EMS responded and transported the victim to St. Barnabas Hospital in a stable condition. No description of the shooter is available, and police continue to investigate.

An arrest is not proof that a person has committed a crime.

Fordham Manor: Armed Auto Theft

The NYPD is seeking the public's assistance locating four men wanted in connection with the theft of three vehicles, and the assault of an employee at G & S Sons Parking Lot, located at 2740 Webster Avenue in Fordham Manor. The investigation is part of a search for several individuals wanted in connection to a spate of similar robberies in the 43rd and 49th precincts in recent weeks.

Police were called to G & S Sons Parking Lot at 2:55 a.m. on Tuesday, March 9, following a gunpoint robbery in which a 58-year-old male parking attendant suffered bruises and abrasions. Further investigation revealed four suspects had arrived at the location in a vehicle, while the victim had been starting up three separate vehicles, which he had left running while waiting for their respective owners to arrive.

The four suspects inquired about parking at the location. When told the lot was full, three of them exited the vehicle, one brandishing a firearm. They forced the victim into a service booth, tied him up with cable wire taken from the location, and kicked him about the head and body. They took \$180 from the victim, as well as his wallet, before entering each of the three parked, idling and unattended vehicles, a dark colored Honda CRV, a black Toyota Camry and a black Porsche. They then

fled the location, along with the fourth vehicle.

At least two of the vehicles were observed driving over the Broadway Bridge into Manhattan. The four suspects were described as Hispanic men in their 20s.

There are no arrests, and the investigation remains ongoing. There was no assault complaint report on file based on the incident details, and the parking attendant refused medical attention at the scene.

Phony Plumbers Torture Two Men

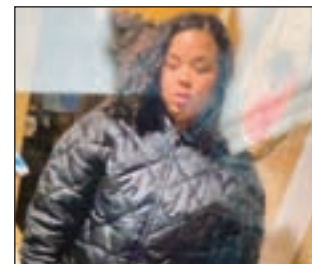
Police are looking for two men who posed as plumbers during a home invasion robbery, during which they tortured and assaulted two Wakefield residents on Monday, Feb. 22, in the vicinity of East 227th Street and Barnes Avenue. Police said the suspects knocked on the door of the home of a 28-year-old man and a 35-year-old man at around 3 p.m. saying they were there to "fix the plumbing."

They allegedly entered the apartment, displayed a firearm, tied up both victims and demanded money. The suspects remained in the home overnight and assaulted both victims. The 28-year-old man suffered a head injury as well as burns to his back after the pair tortured him with a hot clothing iron.

The suspects later fell asleep, and the 28-year-old victim was able to free himself, escape the home and call police. Officers quickly responded and found the two suspects and the second vic-

tim were no longer at the location. Police said the second victim was eventually located and the thieves escaped with a cellphone and \$2,000 in cash.

Both suspects wore matching black slacks and shoes and matching, official-looking, high-visibility, yellow vests, face masks, and black hooded jackets.

**52nd Precinct: Search for Missing Girl**

The NYPD is seeking the public's assistance in locating Delilah Justiniano (pictured above) of East 198th Street, in The Bronx, who has been reported missing. Justiniano was last seen leaving her home and heading eastbound on Grand Concourse on Tuesday, March 16, 2021 at approximately 11:30 a.m. She is described as female, 31 years old, Hispanic, approximately 5 feet, 6 inches tall, weighs approximately 250 pounds, has brown eyes, black hair and was last seen wearing a black jacket, multicolored spandex pants, and camouflage shoes.

Attempted Murder Charge for Subway Push

A woman has been charged with attempted murder and assault for allegedly pushing another woman onto the subway tracks in Crotona Park East in the Bronx. Officials said that at around 7:50 a.m. on Feb. 9, 2021, on the platform of the 2/5 subway line at the Southern Boulevard and East 174th Street station, Luz Sanchez, 29, of Lexington Avenue, Manhattan approached Rosa Elizabeth Galeas Florencio, 54, and using her body, pushed the victim, causing her to stumble backwards. Sanchez then allegedly put both her hands on the victim's shoulder area and pushed her, causing her to fall backwards onto the tracks as a train pulled into the station.

The oncoming train was alerted that the victim was on the tracks and braked before striking her. She was pulled to safety, treated for injuries at Saint Barnabas Hospital, and was later released. The defendant fled to Georgia and was later arrested on Feb. 25, 2021. Sanchez's attorney declined to say if she had undergone psychological evaluation at the time of her arrest. The case is ongoing.

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.

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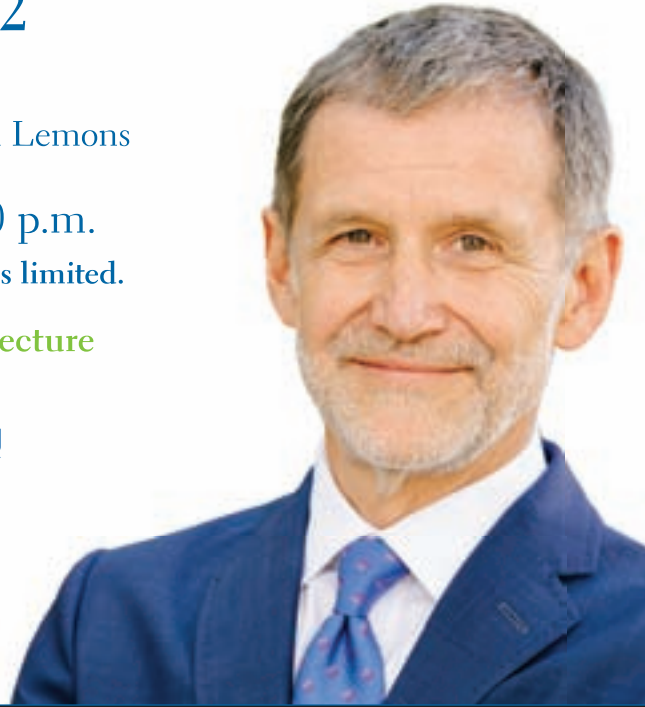
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Elections 2021: Bernadette Ferrara on Housing, Policing & Small Businesses

By SÍLE MOLONEY

A lifelong resident of Van Nest, founder of the Van Nest Neighborhood Alliance, and a Bronx Community Board 11 (CB 11) board member since 2011, Bernadette Ferrara is one of ten candidates in the District 15 City Council District race, aiming to fill the seat vacated by former councilman and now Congressman Ritchie Torres.

Though *Norwood News* requested an interview with Ferrara, time did not allow for this finally, and so, here, we present a profile of Ferrara's candidacy based on her campaign platform, and on her public comments during recent interviews and debates on three areas: housing, policing, and helping small businesses.

The self-described working-class, single mother who, is also an animal rights activist, has called for oversight and accountability from absentee landlords who, she said, don't maintain their properties. Ferrara said this destabilizes neighborhoods. During a recent interview with News 12 New York, Ferrara said, "There's a lot of [tenant] screening processes and they do not do that, for whatever reason."

During a District 15 BronxNet debate earlier this month, in terms of tackling the housing crisis, Ferrara touted her 12 years of experience participating in CB 11 land use meetings. "Zoning is a very specific thing," she said, adding that people needed to listen acutely to community leaders and housing activists, especially those living in NYCHA developments. She said some areas needed down-zoning rather than more development.

During the News 12 New York interview, Ferrara said that there were 2,150 NYCHA developments in District 15. "That's a systemic challenge that should've been addressed, especially with the falsified lead paint inspections that were brought to light," she said, adding that NYCHA housing problems had been on the City's agenda

for a long time. "That should have been dealt with before our mayor decided to do all the allocations for affordable housings," she said. "This mayor wanted to have a one size fits all with affordable housing."

Referring to an unspecified affordable housing project that came before CB 11 and other Bronx CBs, Ferrara said all 12 Bronx CBs rejected the proposal at the time because the project was not a "one-size fits all" solution. "Each fabric of each community holds its own characteristic," she said.

"Zoning is a big issue. The median income [per district] needs to be looked at," she said, adding that it is documented that the mayor allegedly ignored such considerations, and forged ahead anyway. "People should live there for a month, basically, and from their experience say, 'Uh uh - No Can Do,' and they're not," she said.

Ferrara said Torres brought the matter to light when representing City Council District 15, which includes the neighborhoods of Belmont, Fordham, Tremont, Mount Hope, Allerton, Olinville, Van Nest, West Farms, and parts of Bedford Park. "I'm so grateful to him for that," she said, adding that, if elected, she hoped to pick up on his work on the oversight and investigations committee. "I would like to really dig in and see what's going on, especially with housing," she said, adding that they've had first-hand experience of dealing with the consequences of poor housing planning in Van Nest.

When it comes to policing, Ferrara told BronxNet that the City needed to add more, not less, funds to the NYPD budget. "There's a lot of training that needs to be done, whether it's mental health, dealing with EDPs [emotionally disturbed persons] or just dealing with difficult situations," she said. Ferrara shared that her brother has severe autism, telling News 12 New York, "He's my baby brother. He's in a group home."



Photo courtesy of Bernadette Ferrara
BERNADETTE FERRARA

She said she wanted assurances that if her brother had an altercation with police, they would have the training to recognize his cognitive issues. "He will shut down," she said. "He will not be responsive to immediate questions that say, 'Hey, what's your name? Stop doing this! What's going on?' He can't, cognitively, respond."

Though she didn't mention the person's name, Ferrara said another candidate had called for the "demilitarization" of the police. "First of all, yes, they get their firearms from the Department of Defense, but on the local, precinct level, they do not have the high-end militia."

Ferrara is in favor of curbing police spending in one area. "They do not need to get extra insurance to cover them personally," she said. She is also in favor of reallocating funding within the police budget. "Where is our funding for our youth, our youth explorers? That needs to be expanded," she said. "We have youth officers. They need to be out in the community more. We're not getting that. We need to come back to that, and a lot of it is because there needs to be more police doing it. But, taking money away from the police, I do not support at all."

Ferrara, who comes from a military family, also advocates for more engagement, generally, between the community and the NYPD, saying in her local 49th precinct, the community regularly attends precinct meetings, has one-on-one meetings with the captains and NCOs, en-

courages participation in the "Build the Block" meetings, and has implemented a hotline to the police with text chats.

"I don't know who's on duty, but we came up with a solution that seemed to be working," she said. "We send out a blast to everyone. Whoever is on duty, responds, and it makes people feel that there's a response."

Ferrara said crime was a major issue affecting many seniors, like her father who lives in the Monsignor Fiorentino apartments, as well as disabled veterans. "They don't come out of their houses," she said. "I'm sorry. I've done a lot of door knocking, and I listen. You get me in there [to elected office], I will focus on this," she added.

"They're not going to go out if it's three o'clock in the afternoon, and they feel a little unsafe," she said. "They have to find someone to help them and it's a very sad day when that is at the forefront of their minds. I'm a senior myself," she added, before recounting a story of an elderly woman who was slashed in the face while walking home.

"They need to have more police on the beat," she said, adding that even with NYPD cameras in certain hotspots, people still feel safer when there are actual cops on the street. "People ask me, 'What happened to the beat cops? Where are they? We feel so unsafe.'"

Meanwhile, when it comes to helping small businesses, Ferrara said all across the country, states are opening up, and taking away the mask mandates, and focusing on getting the economy back. She said New York should be opening up "100 percent," but added that safety guards need to be maintained.

"We need to be practical and common sense about it, but these small businesses need help," she told BronxNet, adding that there needed to be mentorship programs and vocational schools to help people get jobs. She added that property owners had not gotten any breaks either and some were losing their prop-

erties and would potentially have to leave the Bronx.

Ferrara told News 12 New York small businesses also needed relief from pandemic-related violations. "Why is there no leniency? Why has that not been looked into? To me, it's like a no-brainer," she said.

Ferrara sits on the board of the Morris Park Business Improvement District (BID) and said she hears what businesses say. "I'm a non-voter because I don't own a business, but I represent my community. I want to hear what's going on. I want to know what resources come to their rescue, and are those resources enough? I'm seeing that it's not," she said.

In terms of empty storefronts and struggling businesses trying to re-open, she said more advocacy was needed at City Council level. "You have to bring it up at every City Council meeting, and say, 'What about the small businesses?'" she said.

"I know a lot of these businesses. They know Van Nest. They know Morris Park, and they just can't do it," she said. "Their life savings are drained. These [government program] loans are maybe small percentage loans, but they're not money that's given to them. They have to pay that back. What happens if they can't pay that back? They're making decisions based on that, and that is very sad."

Asked by News 12 New York what makes her stand out as a candidate among the others, Ferrara said experience was priceless. "I've sat on the housing committee, the economic development committee. Land use is a major, major issue, zoning, etc. It can change the landscape of a community in a heartbeat. We all know that," she said, before adding that one of her priorities during her 12 years on CB11 was youth and education. "That's our future. That's the product, and we're going to reap what we sow there, so that is foundational."

The District 15 special election takes place on March 23.



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Bronx BP Race: NWBx Dems Endorse Fernando Cabrera

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Local political organization, the Northwest Bronx Democrats (NWBx Dems), announced on, March 16, that they have chosen their candidate for the position of Bronx borough president, and have thrown their support behind City Councilman for the 14th District, Fernando Cabrera.

Anthony Riviuccio is the founder of the organization which has approximately 1,600 followers on social media. He said since the inception of Cabrera's political career, when the NWBx Dems were on the losing side, having supported Yudelka Tapia over Cabrera in a 2009 race, the organization has kept a "tremendous eye" on the councilman. "We supported his election in 2013, and then on, for one simple reason," said Riviuccio. "He's a district listener and exactly what we believe the borough of The Bronx needs, especially right now."

According to the press re-

lease, the organization's executive board highlighted "Dr Cabrera's" efforts on public safety, where "the good doctor" sponsored the "cure violence" initiative, with over 27 million dollars allocated to 21 districts which, according to the group, resulted in the most effective reduction of gun violence in the nation.

The executive board said the councilman also honored the empowerment of women by passing Resolution 104, which will serve to increase accountability in domestic violence intervention programs, by requiring that the effectiveness of the programs be measured.

Meanwhile, the organization said Assemblyman José Rivera, who represents the 78th A.D., and who is also a member of the NWBx Dems, was, among others, a major player in moving the pieces forward for the group's formal endorsement of Cabrera. Rivera has also personally endorsed the councilman for the position of borough president.

The NWBx Dems have been involved in the local community, and in political work in the Northwest Bronx neighborhood since 2003. Since the pandemic hit, their members have volunteered their time and services at different food drives

and other local events. Their first political endorsement was for Oliver Koppel in 2009, who recently endorsed environmentalist and tech entrepreneur, Jessica Haller, in the District 11 City Council race, aiming to fill the seat vacated by former Councilman Andrew Cohen, who was elected to be a judge on the Bronx Supreme Court in November 2020.

Since then, the group said it has been actively involved in supporting over 30 council, state assembly, senate and congressional candidates, including two who they described as rookie insurgents at one point, State Sen. Gustavo Rivera in 2010, and City Councilman representing the 13th District, Mark Gjonaj in 2012. The latter recently announced that he will not be seeking re-election at the end of his term.

As reported by the *Norwood News*, the organization threw their weight behind Republican candidate, Gene DeFrancis, in the 80th A.D. general election on Nov. 3, 2020, a race ultimately won by Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernández. DeFrancis, a veteran and founder of the Allerton Merchants Association, is a supporter of former President Donald Trump, and told the *Norwood News*, this was mainly be-

cause of Trump's economic policies, and because he was not in favor of "unnecessary wars."

DeFrancis has been an open critic of business closures amid the pandemic and did not appear to support mask-wearing either, having been seen in group settings, without a mask, in videos posted to social media.

DeFrancis confirmed he attended an event in early December 2020 in Washington D.C. This event was also attended by numerous Proud Boys, who are categorized in Canada as a terrorist group and in the U.S. as an extremist group who have been known to post white nationalist memes and hold alt-right views.

DeFrancis said he gave a friend a ride to the D.C. event, but had also been curious to see it for himself, because he was suspicious of how the media portrayed the group, which he described as very diverse. He said the event, for the most part, was "fun," though he witnessed some internal conflict, while there. "I do see the threats and the dangers of this organization getting too big and too out of control," he added.

When asked about DeFrancis' attendance at the Proud Boys event, Riviuccio said it happened after their endorsement of his candidacy, and added that

they had all been disappointed, and some were shocked. Asked if the NWBx Dems denounced the Proud Boys and white supremacy, he said they did, adding, "Do we denounce the 39 other hate groups in the Bronx? Absolutely!"

Riviuccio said DeFrancis was an ex-Democrat, and the only Republican the group has supported in its history, even though it does have a smattering of Republicans, as well as "Blue Dog Democrats" among its members. Riviuccio added that he commended DeFrancis for arranging rallies in support of small businesses.

Most recently, in terms of the 2021 upcoming special elections, the NWBx Dems have ranked equally their chosen candidates in both the District 11 and District 15 City Council races. These are Dan Padernacht in District 11, and Ischia Bravo, Elisa Crespo and Oswald Feliz in District 15. The group said they are currently studying the 14th City Council District candidates, and their viability, and will make campaign announcements shortly.

As for Cabrera, Sheila Sanchez, the president of the NWBx Dems said, "He wants to build up The Bronx, one community at a time."

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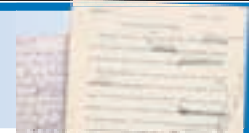


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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

Compiled by SÍLE MOLONEY

COVID-19 Vaccinations

Appointments are required to receive a vaccination. To determine your eligibility, access a list of nearby providers, and schedule your vaccination appointment, use New York State's *Am I Eligible* app. Prior to receiving your scheduled vaccination, you must complete the New York State COVID-19 Vaccine Form. Please be patient and continue to monitor these links frequently for available vaccine appointments:

New York City: <https://vaccinefinder.nyc.gov/> or 877-VAX-4NYC (877-829-4692)

New York State: <https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/> or call 1-833-NYS-4-VAX (1-833-697-4829)

VaccineTogetherNY: <https://vaccinetogetherny.org/Pages/default.aspx> or call 646-697-VACC

To schedule an appointment, go to: <https://vax4nyc.nyc.gov/patient/s/>.

To find a vaccination site, go to: <https://vaccinefinder.nyc.gov/locations>.

Your physician or local pharmacy may also have information on scheduling vaccine appointments.

If you need transportation to get your vaccine appointment, click this link for a list of options: <https://forms.ny.gov/s3/vaccine>.

To schedule an appointment at Yankee Stadium, you can also call 1-833-SomosNY. Another new mass vaccination site opened at Co-Op City on Thursday, March 4, which is open to all eligible applicants.

For trustworthy information on the vaccines and the research behind them, go to: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-vaccine-facts.page>.

The MTA announced that it has launched a new vaccination site locator on its live subway map. See the map here: map.mta.info.

Bronx CB7 Vaccine Site Update

The Walton High School Campus vaccination site, one of the local vaccination sites for Bronx Community Board 7 residents, has moved to the Bronx High School of Science, located at 75 West 205th Street, in Jerome Park. NYC

Department of Education needed to reclaim the Walton HS campus for middle schoolers who are returning to the classroom for in-person learning.

More Help with Scheduling Vaccine Appointments

Epicenter-NYC is a vetted, volunteer group, assisting New Yorkers to find and schedule vaccine appointments, particularly the elderly, and anyone not adept at using the internet. More details can be found here: <https://epicenter-nyc.com/epicenters-vaccine-resources/> or my emailing hello@epicenter-nyc.com.

Sign-up here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSczOilgEn1U-4RavkHdRSadTgd6_VSM-D1-Ueqhs4jwpxyH6NQ/viewform

Separately, and additionally, the turboVax site, <https://www.turbovax.info/>, scans the websites of all providers offering the vaccine throughout the city and lists their available appointments.

Latest Updates on Vaccine Eligibility

Who is now also eligible?

As of March 10, New York residents ages 60 and older are eligible.

As of March 17, the following groups are eligible:

- public-facing government and public employees;
- nonprofit workers providing public-facing services to New Yorkers in need;
- essential, in-person, public-facing, building service workers (does not include workers at construction sites).

COVID-19 Testing Sites

For a full list of COVID-19 testing sites, text "COVID TEST" to 855-48 or go to:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/coronavirus/get-tested/covid-19-testing.page>.

Bronx District 11 and District 15 Council City Special Elections

The District 11 and District 15 special elections will be held on March 23. Polls are open on election day from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Find your poll site and view a sample ballot here: <https://findmypollsite.vote.nyc/>.

The Early Voting Period is from March 13, 2021 to March 21, 2021. Voters must vote at their assigned early voting site.

Early Voting Hours

Saturday, March 13, 2021

10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Sunday, March 14, 2021

10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Monday, March 15, 2021

7:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Tuesday, March 16, 2021

12:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

12:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Thursday, March 18, 2021

10:00 AM to 6:00 PM

Friday, March 19, 2021

7:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Saturday, March 20, 2021

10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Sunday, March 21, 2021

10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

The Bronx Board of Elections is accepting applications for absentee ballots from voters who wish to vote by mail. Further information can be found on:

<https://vote.nyc.gov/page/absentee-voting-0> or by calling the Bronx Board of Elections at (718) 299-9017 and selecting Ext. 1875.

Whoever wins the March 23 special, nonpartisan election will serve until Dec. 31, 2021. Future representation in the District beyond that point will likely be determined via a June 2021 primary and a November 2021 general election.

Ranked Choice Voting

The District 15 and District 11 special elections are the first two elections in the Bronx which will incorporate the new voting method of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV). RCV is a voting method whereby voters can, but are not obliged to, rank up to five candidates in order of preference, instead of choosing just one. Note that there can be more than five candidates on the ballot in a race, but only five rankings are possible.

If a candidate receives more than 50 percent of first-choice votes, that candidate is the winner. If no candidate earns more than 50 percent of first-choice votes, then counting will continue in rounds. At the end of each round, the candidate with the fewest votes will be eliminated.

If a voter ranked an elimi-

nated candidate first, then the next highest-ranked candidate on the voter's ballot will be taken into account in the next round of counting. The process continues as such until there are two candidates left. The candidate with the most votes wins.

LAAL Mental Health Initiative

LAAL, the Norwood-based, nonprofit dedicated to supporting women in the Bengali community, is holding a Mental Health Fundraiser to support its Mental Health Initiative. The funds raised will be used to conduct carefully designed assessment surveys of 300 womxn, using materials accessible in both Bangla and Sylheti. The surveys will be followed up with in-depth, hour-long, qualitative interviews, with the aim of producing data that can be used in future health policy initiatives, prioritizing mental health issues among such marginalized communities.

LAAL Womxn's Support Group

LAAL is launching its newest program, Laal Mohila Shomitim, a womxn's support group. Laal's needs-based assessment in 2019 found that 62 percent of Bangladeshi womxn surveyed in Norwood spent more than eight hours a day alone. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, social isolation has had an even greater effect on the mental health of womxn. The aim of the womxn-only, support group is to allow womxn to come together and address the problems they are facing, and work through possible solutions, all in a safe space. Laal wants to reassure all women that they are never alone in their struggles, when shared with another person. The group meets monthly, the discussion topics are led by womxn and vary from overall health, education and housing, to gardening and growing food. The goal is for the group to be a place where womxn can forge stronger relationships, and have their voices heard, regularly.

LAAL Food Pantry

In February, Laal partnered with NYC's Test &

Trace Program and Dhaka Discount Grocery in Norwood to hold its first food pantry. The group distributed over 60 halal chickens, 1,360 pounds of padma rice, 68 pieces of Bangladeshi lao (squash), and more to 34 households. A second food pantry is scheduled for April 8, also at Dhaka Discount Grocery. As Ramadan begins on April 12, the food pantry will focus on providing staple food items during the holy month. It will also be a chance to test & trace for COVID-19, and to sign people up for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Indoor Dining Updates

Indoor Dining in New York City will expand capacity to 50 percent beginning March 19. Currently, New York City (and New Jersey) restaurants are operating at 35 percent capacity, and the rest of New York State is operating at 50 percent capacity. This follows Gov. Andrew Cuomo's announcement that restaurants outside of New York City will expand to 75 percent capacity beginning March 19.

All restaurants and bars licensed by the SLA must cease all indoor and outdoor dining activities by 11 pm daily.

Bars Inside Establishments: All physical patron bars must be converted to service bars only. That means no seats at bars, and patrons cannot directly order a drink at the bar or be served a drink at the bar. All service is at seated tables.

Outdoor Dining Structures: If more than two sides of an outdoor dining structure are enclosed, it is considered "indoor dining" and the 50% occupancy and related requirements apply.

Table Spacing: Tables are to be spaced 6 feet apart. However, when that is not feasible, they can be closer if approved barriers are placed between the tables.

No Face Mask, No Entry: Businesses cannot allow patrons to enter the establishment, go to or from the bathroom, or stand inside for takeout, if they are not wearing a face covering.

HVAC: Businesses must closely review air circulation and filtration requirements.



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*Note: The lottery will be held on April 15, 2021 For applications, please visit our website at www.ilchs.org

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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 3rd Thursday of each month at 6 p.m.** Call the 52nd Precinct Community Affairs office at [718-220-5824](tel: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 Wednesday, March 24, at 6.30 p.m.** 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 meetings are held **on the first Wednesday of the month at 8 p.m.** For further details, contact bedfordmosholu@verizon.net.

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Opinion

Why You Shouldn't Just Vote in the Presidential Election

By MARGARET GROARKE

Presidential elections are important. But your vote also matters, probably even MORE so, in local elections. In New York City elections, we choose the people who will be in charge of many of the things that affect our daily lives. If you care about the quality of local schools, the way NYPD polices your community, the state of the parks, how safe it is to walk, drive or bike on our streets, those are all issues that are dealt with by the mayor and the City Council.

So, why did five times as many people vote in the presidential election in 2020, as vote for mayor in 2019? Turnout was certainly up in 2020 all across the country, and I'm proud that the Bronx was part of that trend. More than 420,000 Bronxites voted in the 2020 presidential election, 27,000 more than in 2016.

Yet, only one in five of those Bronxites – a little more than 78,000 – participated in the 2019 elections for mayor and City Council. Part of the reason for this was that 2019 wasn't a particularly exciting New York City election. Mayor Bill de Blasio was running for re-election, and many City Council members were also running for re-election with little opposition.

In fact, turnout in our local elections is always low, despite the big impact of City government on our lives. Some people think that local elections are not as important as national elections, but I disagree. Local elections have an impact on many everyday issues that we care about, and if anything, your vote matters MORE in local elections, where fewer votes are cast. Elected officials know which neighborhoods vote, and as a result, they are more likely to pay more attention to those neighborhood's needs.

This year, 2021 promises to be an especially meaningful New York City election year. Because many City officials are limited to two terms, de Blasio can't run for office again, so we'll be electing a new mayor. So far, 40+ people have thrown their hats in the ring in the mayoral race. Many of our Bronx City Council members are also

term-limited and cannot run again or they have taken up other positions, so the elections will be competitive, one in which we, the voters, have a better than usual opportunity to choose a new council member, with new ideas, to represent us.

That's why I'm proud to be part of the Voter Power Committee of the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC). The NWBCCC engages in community organizing to work for racial and economic justice in the Bronx. The Voter Power Committee focuses on how we can use elections toward the same goals – making sure Bronxites can cast a vote – and knowing where the candidates stand, so that elected officials know they have to pay attention to our concerns.

This year's City elections will be our opportunity to choose the people who will lead New York City for the next four years. *So, this year, I challenge all of you who voted in the presidential election to make your voice heard in this year's NYC elections.*

Like the presidential race, there will be three ways to cast your vote: (1) by absentee ballot, (2) by voting early, two weeks before Election Day, and (3) by voting in person on Election Day itself.

First up for the Bronx are the Special Elections scheduled for March 23rd in both District 11 and District 15, to fill two Bronx City Council seats that became vacant when Congressman Ritchie Torres was elected to represent the 15th congressional district in the Bronx in November 2020, and former Councilman Andrew Cohen was elected to become a judge on the Bronx Supreme Court in November 2020.

Most readers of the *Norwood News* live in one of these two districts. If you want to know which district you live in, go to <https://www.mygovnyc.org/>. Later this year, on June 23rd, the primary elections will be held for these seats, and also for the positions of mayor and all citywide races. The general elections for these races will take place later, on Novem-



Photo by José A. Giraldo

AFTER VOTING IN the primary elections at PS 8 on Briggs Avenue in the Bedford Park section of The Bronx, Maisha Smith wears an "I voted" sticker on her forehead on Tuesday, June 23, 2020.

ber 2nd.

Remember, your vote is your chance to say who you want to represent your interests in City government. It's also your chance to say that your neighborhood can't be ignored. There are many ways to learn about the candidates. This newspaper, and many other media outlets, have been writing about them and continue to do so. There have also been a number of debates held – on TV, on the radio and on Zoom, with more to come. The Voter Power Committee, as part of a broader, Bronx-wide coalition, is sponsoring

debates. If you want to be invited, email info@northwestbronx.org.

So don't just use your voter power in the presidential election – vote in the 2021 NYC elections, starting with the March 23rd City Council elections.

Margaret Groarke is a resident of Kingsbridge Heights, a member of the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition Voter Power Committee, and a professor of political science at Manhattan College. If you want to get involved in the Voter Power Committee, email margaret@northwestbronx.org.

Out & About

Compiled by **RACHEL DALLOO**

Events

From December 2020 to June 2021, the **Norwood Farmstand** will be open to the community on Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at E. Gun Hill Road and Dekalb Avenue with fresh, affordable fruits and vegetables grown by regional farmers, year-round. Be a part of GrowNYC's Wholesale program, designed to bring the freshest, highest quality, regionally grown farm products to the New York City community. To learn more, visit <https://www.grownyc.org/farmstand/Norwood>.

Do you like Sports? Do you like to talk about Sports? Join the **Van Cortlandt Library** on March 20 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. for discussions about sports. This will be a casual session focusing on sports book recommendations, what you are currently reading and

conversations about what's currently going on in the sport's world. To register, visit <https://www.nypl.org/events>, and type in "Sports Book Discussion."

Art

Join the **Bronx Museum of the Arts** on March 25 from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. for their event, "Representing vs. Re-Presenting: Unpacking Methods of Visibility," as speakers explore the various ways, we represent communities within two-dimensional media (drawing, painting, and photography). The panelists include artists, Shaun Leonardo, Steve Locke and Jamel, who will discuss their positions as artists, having their feet in both worlds as both artists/makers and as community members. To register for this event, visit <http://m.bronxmuseum.org>.

Want to see a live entertainment show? Join the **Lehman Center for the Performing Arts** for a series of "Rhythm of Dance" live shows from March 16 to March 21. This incredible show creates a new era in Irish entertainment, showcasing a wealth of Irish talent, and featuring World and Irish champion dancers, and some of the finest traditional musicians and singers. Combining traditional dance and music with the most up-to-date stage technology, this two-hour dance and music extravaganza takes the audience on an exhilarating, energy-packed time trip through the ages. To register for tickets, visit <https://www.lehmancenter.org/events>.

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: <https://www.instagram.com/bronxnomads/>.

Join **Bronx Council for Environmental Quality** (VCPA) for "Community Volunteer Day: Tibbetts Brook Trash Removal" on March 20,

from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. to help remove trash from the river that runs through Van Cortlandt Park. Volunteers must arrive by 10 a.m. at the Van Cortlandt Golf Course Clubhouse, wear a mask and practice social distancing. VCPA will provide all work tools and supplies. To register, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com>, and search for "Community Volunteer Day: Tibbetts Brook Trash Removal."

Join NYC Parks on March 28, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Van Cortlandt Nature Center in Van Cortlandt Park, for a **Birding 101** event and learn about the amazing abundance of park wildlife. Urban Park Rangers will guide you to the best wildlife viewing spots in the urban jungle. NYC Parks asks participants to follow prevailing COVID-19 safety guidelines. For more information, call (718) 548-0912.

Want to participate in a virtual yoga class? Join the **Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center** on Mondays for a free, 4-week, gentle yoga experience, "Stop the March Madness" from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Kripalu Yoga is inspired by ancient tradition, encouraging a practice rooted in self-awareness and self-care. To register, contact sarah.bishow@parks.nyc.gov or call (718)-543-8672.

By Oni Tongo

March is National Nutrition Month. It's a great time to think about what we eat, and how we can make healthy food and physical activity part of our lives. We can celebrate by trying a new food or recipe, making healthy snacks with our kids, or adding a different physical activity into our daily routine.

This year's theme is "Personalize Your Plate," which is all about choosing food and fitness goals that work best for you. Our city and our neighborhoods are diverse, and folks have unique food preferences and tastes. That means we also have a lot of food choices around us. This month can be an opportunity to try something completely new and healthy.

Here are a few tips to help you get the most out of your food.

- **Mix it up.** Variety is key - the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends eating different types of vegetables and fruits, and choosing whole grains at least half the time. It's also important to vary the type of proteins you eat. Choose different types or cuts of meat, chicken, or fish; experiment with beans and eggs; and eat a variety of low-fat or fat-free milk, cheese and yogurt.



How to Eat Healthy During National Nutrition Month and Beyond

- **Plan ahead.** Planning your meals each week can help you avoid grabbing last-minute, unhealthy fast foods. Have healthy snacks around such as carrots, celery, or baked tortilla chips with fresh salsa, to help you avoid mindless snacking on junk food.

- **Limit restaurant meals.** If you know you're going out to eat, you can review the restaurant's menu in advance to find healthy options, for example:

- Choose foods with vegetables as part of the meal, or add a side dish

- Drink water or unsweetened coffee and tea, instead of sodas

- Ask for dressings and sauces on the side, so you can control the amount you use

- Pay attention to calorie information when available

- **Make it yourself.** Cooking meals at home allows you to have more control over what you eat and what's in your food. Making healthy snacks and cooking full meals at home also helps you cut down on the amount of food you're eating; and it allows you to add variety to your daily food routine.

Working with a registered dietitian can be useful for many people, and you can speak with your doctor for a referral. Also, check out these websites for more tips about healthy diet and physical activity:

- Eatright.org - Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

- MyPlate | U.S. Department of Agriculture

Oni Tongo is a project manager for Montefiore Health System's Office of Community and Population Health.



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Letters To The Editor

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

Holding Gov. Cuomo Accountable

We are writing to express our support for our elected representatives in Albany, including State Sen. Alessandra Biaggi and Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, for their ongoing push for accountability and more civil behavior from the governor's office regarding the handling of the COVID-19 crisis.

Gov. Cuomo's attack on Assemblyman Ron Kim, who is raising appropriate questions about how nursing homes managed COVID-19, is very troubling and unacceptable. While emergency powers may have been necessary at the beginning of the crisis, we stand with the 14 state senators, including Sen. Biaggi and our neighbor, Sen. Gustavo Rivera, who recently called for rescinding those powers given to the governor last spring.

It is time for the governor to recognize that the legislature is a co-equal branch of government, and to treat each member of the legislature with respect.

**The Steering Committee of
NYCD16 Indivisible
New York City**

Child Abuse, A Public Health Crisis [Op-Ed, Norwood News, March 4]

Instead of a writer whose credentials include having a Master's degree in childhood education, you might select a writer who was married, and stayed home to raise her children. From her, you might have learned that child abuse is not a public health crisis but a government-created crisis, caused by the de-

struction of the family and the patriarchal structure necessary to maintain it.

When there are fathers at home, the school drop-out rate is cut in half, the teenage pregnancy rate is cut in half, truancy decreases, academic performance increases, on time graduation increases, and juvenile delinquency decreases. These statistics hold true regardless of class-sizes, teacher salaries, and educational facilities.

**George J. Silos
Fieldston**

Editor's Note: If a child is in immediate danger of abuse, call 911. If you suspect child abuse or neglect, call 311 or the NY State Central Register (SCR) Child Abuse & Maltreatment Hotline (24/7) on 1(800) 342-3720.

The MTA

It is sure that Gov. Andrew Cuomo will not hold a press conference to announce that as part of his proposed state budget, he will be reallocating \$160 million dedicated for our public mass transit agencies into the state's general fund. This includes the MTA receiving \$145 million less than anticipated from Albany as part of the next April 1, 2021 - March 30, 2022 state budget. (Source: "Cuomo pushes \$145M raid on funds dedicated to cash-strapped MTA," NY Daily News by Clayton Guse, February 12).

At the same time, MTA chairman, Pat Foye, Sen. Charles Schumer, Mayor Bill de Blasio, and other elected officials have been successful in lobbying Washington for a third CARE COVID-19 bailout of \$6.5 billion. The Federal Transit Administration already provided the MTA with a total of \$8 billion under two

previous CARE COVID-19 bailouts. This is all on top of \$1.4 billion in 2020 and \$1.5 billion in other formula, and discretionary funding provided by the Federal Transit Administration to the MTA.

The receipt of federal funding was never meant to be used by Gov. Cuomo to back out previous committed state funding to the MTA, as a means to balance his own budget. Will Schumer hold one of his Sunday news conferences to hold Cuomo accountable? Don't bet on

it. He is too busy with plans to run for another term in 2022! Foye has no problems blaming Washington for his multi-billion-dollar shortfalls. He will never publicly disagree with his benefactor, Cuomo, who appointed him to his position. Reduction in previously promised financial support from Albany by Cuomo is a box of Valentine's Day candy already partially eaten by riders.

**Larry Penner
Great Neck**

Bronx BP Race: Candidates Cross-Endorse Each Other

(continued from page 8)

corridor on East Fordham Road speaking with merchants and pedestrians as they did so.

A day later, Benjamin, who represents the 30th senatorial district in Manhattan, which encompasses Harlem, East Harlem, and the Upper West Side, showed up at Soundview Park in the South Bronx to endorse Fernández for borough president.

He spoke to the *Norwood News* about the position of borough president in the context of widely reported friction between Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Mayor Bill de Blasio, and how, ultimately, the people of the Bronx get hurt when the two disagree on policy solutions. He said he felt that someone with experience in Albany politics, like Fernández, who represents the 80th Assembly District, would be an effective leader in the borough president's office.

"The issues between the governor and the mayor, and how they go back and forth - we can solve that because we understand how important Albany is, but we also know the City," Benjamin said. "We [the state legislature] provide a lot of the revenue that the City needs in order to function and we live in these neighborhoods."

Benjamin described Fernández, 32, as part of a new generation of political leaders focused on the most pressing issues for the average Bronxite, like affordable housing. "As a senator, I've been fighting for affordable housing," he said. "For me, that's the kind of partner I need, because there's no more important issue that we have to deal with in the City of New York than affordable housing. She and I can get that done together."

During the event, a local resident who went by the name, Mrs. Etta, and described herself as a community liai-

son, pressed Fernández on the issue of getting more people from the neighborhood employed on the many construction sites she sees in the South Bronx.

"I've been in the construction business 30-something years," Etta said. Referencing some of the safety training that is required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), before construction workers can enter a site, she asked what the candidates would do to help more Bronxites become qualified for jobs in construction.

Fernández thanked Etta for the question, saying it was absolutely her number one priority to ensure that the jobs being brought to the borough would go to Bronxites first. "As borough president, I will mandate that any project or development that is confirmed here [will] make sure that Bronxites get the proper education, the proper training so they can be a part of the growth of this borough," she told Etta.

She went on to propose the idea that community board offices could also serve as training centers for such jobs.

In addition to Gibson and Fernández, the race for Bronx borough president includes Councilman Fernando Cabrera who represents the 14th City Council District and who is serving his final term, former NYPD detective, Sammy Ravelo, State Sen. Luis Sepúlveda, who represents the 32nd senatorial district, and community activist, Victor Gutierrez.

A win by either Gibson or Fernández would shatter at least one glass ceiling, with the election of the first, female Bronx borough president and possibly more. If Gibson wins, she could also be the first African American to become elected to the position, while a win by Fernández would see her as the first Latina (woman of Hispanic heritage) to take on the coveted role.

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Home Care Workers Demand Fair Pay

(continued from page 1)

above the minimum, and give the average home care worker an annual salary of \$35,000.

The rally was held at the Fordham Bus Plaza, between Park Avenue and Third Avenue, with many workers holding signs and chanting, "What do we want? Fair Pay! When do we want it? Now!"

Denise Clark of Cooperative Home Care Associates, the largest worker-owned cooperative in the nation which trains over 600 low-income women every year to provide home care services to New Yorkers who are elderly, chronically ill, or living with disabilities in their communities, addressed the crowd. "We are here today to tell the leadership of the state legislature, Carl Heastie, who represents many of us in the Bronx, and Andrea Stewart-Cousins that they must support our work to raise health care pay and make sure that 'Fair Pay for Home Care' is in the house budget," she said.

As if addressing the state elected leadership directly, she added, "Every legislator in New York State has a choice right now. After 15,000 deaths of nursing home residents, one million jobs lost, and economic devastation, what will you do now to prevent this from ever happening again, to fight for older and disabled people, to create jobs and restore our economy?"

A recent study conducted by CUNY's School for Labor and Urban Studies found that passage of the legislation would generate \$5.4 billion for the state economy through new income and sales tax revenue and would bring an estimated 200,000 new home care workers into the industry over the next decade. It would also create 180,000 jobs in other sectors and related industries.

Norwood News reached out to Penny Lewis at the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies to ask what type of other jobs would make up these additional 180,000 positions. We did not receive an immediate response.

Meanwhile, Clark said the deaths of the nearly 15,000 nursing home residents in New York from COVID-19 has exposed the dangerous conditions in overburdened nursing homes that existed before the pandemic. "If we are serious about keeping seniors

and people with disabilities safe, we need to make sure that everyone has the home care they need to live in their own homes," she said.

Citing figures from the CUNY study, Clark concluded, "New York is the epicenter of a national home care workers shortage, with a projected shortage of 50,000 workers by 2023, and over 83,000 by 2025. This shortage comes as tens of thousands of New Yorkers are currently at risk of being forced into nursing homes because they cannot receive the services they need."

The importance of addressing everyday problems that affect seniors living at home was further highlighted last month, on Feb. 28, when local elected officials stood, in Co-op City, with Congressman Jamaal Bowman and a number of health care professionals, as the congressman for New York's 16th congressional district announced the introduction of his new "Care Economy Resolution."

It calls for higher pay for home care and childcare workers, medical coverage for those workers, and paid medical leave. Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernández was also present at the same Dreiser Loop press conference, which was organized, in part, in response to the recent black-out that occurred there.

"I want to thank the congressman for introducing this resolution and bringing the much-needed attention to a decades-long problem," Fernández said. "We need the investment, we need the attention, we need the funding to our community."

Meanwhile, referring to the legislation, State Sen. Alessandra Biaggi said, "I want New York care workers to know that your representatives at every single level of government are working, and they're advocating on your behalf, and I'm very grateful to be here today, and look forward to making sure that this is a reality."

For his part, State Sen. Jamaal Bailey said, "When you provide your professional life to the service of others, you should be taken care of." He added, "Whether that's economically or that's in terms of health care, or that's in terms of just simple respect, caregivers deserve to be taken care of."

Meanwhile, Bowman said the gathering was an example of government coming together, working in

collaboration to meet the needs of all people, particularly the most vulnerable.

"I'm tired of living in a country where we invest in Wall Street and allow stock buybacks, while our seniors are struggling to pay for prescription drugs," he said, before asking the crowd, "If we are a nation that doesn't take care of our seniors, what does that say about us as a country?" He added, "Where is our moral standing as a world leader if we don't take care of our seniors?"

At the same event, Bowman acknowledged the tragic passing of local, Co-op City resident, Ada Longmore, 73, who reportedly died after climbing several floors to her apartment in the De Kruif Place building during the recent black-out.

According to the New York Post, the elderly Jamaican immigrant climbed the stairs after the power outage shut down the elevators. When her oxygen tank apparently gave out, she collapsed, her husband Algon Longmore, 77, told *The Post*.

Bowman said the investigation into her death was still pending but there seemed to be a link with the black-out and her ultimate passing. He said it raised an excellent question. "Often times, when we think about care, we don't think about the overlap between something like a black-out and what happens with care," he said.

"There are so many people who require electricity for the devices that they need to keep themselves safe and alive, and when the power goes out and the electricity goes out, those people are left vulnerable and that seems to be what happened with Ada Longmore," he said.

Bowman added that he was working with colleagues in government, State Sen. Jamaal Bailey, City Councilman Kevin Riley and others, to implement safety measures to ensure that if another black-out occurs, the City will be better prepared for it. He also acknowledged the technicians who worked quickly to restore the power. "They've done a remarkable job to get the power back on, quickly," he said, adding that the long-term causes of the outage had also to be investigated.

Linda Burke, the president of Riverbay Corporation, which man-

ages Co-op City, who also spoke at the event, said that Co-op City is a Mitchell Lama co-operative community of over 45,000 people. "We do have a lot of seniors and a lot of people dependent," she said, noting that there are 35 buildings, that eight lost power, and that Building 8 has a generator that provided full power to that building. She added, "We will be providing back-up generators to all the buildings until we can figure out what the problem is. All the electricity is hard to determine, so all those things, we will be working on."

In response to a reporter's question about Co-op City generating its own power, and whether there was something bigger or structural happening that caused the black-out, Burke said, "What happened this weekend is extraordinary. This has not happened before. We've had a black out in a building, and have had it back up in an hour, an hour and a half. The city has had black outs; we've always had electricity."

Noel Ellison of Riverbay Corporation later confirmed, by phone, to the *Norwood News* that the Co-op City housing development harnesses and generates its own power from a nearby power plant.

A Con Ed representative also affirmed that this was the case and added that whatever power was not used onsite by Co-op City, was sold back to a central power grid.

He also said that Co-op City has stand-by service feeders to Con Ed, should the Co-op City on-site system and back-up generators fail. He said that in the case where Con Ed would activate such feeders, Co-op City would still have to have a functioning power distribution system to transmit the electricity to its residents.

Burke said, "This is some type of unusual fluke, and we will have to decide and determine what caused it, but it is extremely unusual to have happened as it did."

Meanwhile, Bowman said, "The 'Care for All' agenda is about centering care in a holistic way, centering care at the rebirth of our nation and at the rebirth of our economy... and centering those who are most vulnerable, from our seniors to our children, to our babies, to people with special needs."

**Sile Moloney contributed reporting to this story.*

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