



# NORWOOD NEWS

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## DINOWITZ WINS DISTRICT 11 SPECIAL ELECTION

By SILE MOLONEY, DAVID GREENE,  
JOSÉ GIRALT &  
MICHAEL HOROWITZ

The Dinowitz family dynasty is set to continue in the Northwest Bronx following Eric Dinowitz's win in the March 23, District 11 City Council special election on Tuesday, April 13.

The New York City Board of Elections (BOE) has not yet certified the results (as of the date of printing) but after accumulating approximately 47 percent of first-choice votes, which included early votes, election day votes, military votes and absentee votes in Round 1 of the ranked choice vote process, Dinowitz crossed the required 50 percent threshold after Round 6, following the reallocation of lower ranked choice votes from his fellow candidates.

Dinowitz finished the race with 5,579 votes, 58.38 percent of the total vote count of 9,555, pipping his nearest rival, Mino Lora, founder and executive director of the People's Theatre Project, who finished with 3,188 votes. Tech entrepreneur and environmentalist, Jessica Haller, had been eliminated earlier on Tuesday morning.

Dan Padernacht, lawyer and Community Board 8 Traffic & Transportation chair, freelance filmmaker, Kevin Pazmino, and retired NYPD detective, Carlton Berkley,



Photo courtesy of the Dinowitz campaign

**ERIC DINOWITZ WON** the District 11 City Council race with a total of 5,579 votes to Mino Lora's 3,188 on Tuesday, April 13, 2021 after six rounds of ranked choice voting counts were concluded.

had been eliminated on Monday, April 12, during earlier rounds. At that point, Dinowitz had 4,919 votes, Lora has 2,403, and Haller had 1,681. Final exhausted votes amounted to 788.

Dinowitz, son of Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, who

represents the 81st assembly district, is a special education teacher and male district leader in the Northwest Bronx. In his latter role, he covers much of the same constituency as his father's.

Following his win, Dinowitz Jr. said it was a tremendous

honor to be elected to serve the 11th Council District. "As our community works to overcome the pandemic, I am ready to be a voice for everyone in the City Council," he said. He continued, "I want to thank everyone who has supported me and this campaign: my family, our campaign team, volunteers and supporters... and every single one of my brothers and sisters in labor." He then went on to list those groups and people who had endorsed him throughout his campaign.

These included the United Federation of Teachers, 32BJ SEIU, HTC, DC37, New York City Central Labor Council, TWU Local 100, RWDSU, UAW Region 9, LiUNA/Mason Tenders, BAC Local 1 and 7, New York City SEIU Local 246, Associated Musicians of Greater New York Local 802, AFM, Uniformed Firefighters Association of Greater New York-FDNY, Uniformed EMTs, Paramedics & Fire Inspectors Local 2507, New York City District Council of Carpenters.

It also included Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., Sen. Jamaal Bailey, U.S. Congressman Adriano Espaillat, U.S. Congressman Ritchie Torres, City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, New York State Assembly Members Chantel Jackson and Latoya Joyner, New York City Council

(continued on page 27)



**Yankees Return for Another Season**  
pg 2



**Feliz Wins D15 Special Election**  
pg 19



**Johnson & Johnson Vaccine Paused**  
pg 22

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By **MICHAEL HOROWITZ**

What do Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio, Mickey Mantle, Roger Maris, Whitey Ford, Yogi Berra, Reggie Jackson, Dave Winfield, Jim “Catfish” Hunter, Mariano Rivera, and Thurman Munson have in common? They are Hall of Famers who played for the New York Yankees, the most storied franchise in sport. The Yankees, who play their home games in The Bronx, just happen to play these games in what is the world’s most famous sports stadium.

Winners of 27 World Series, The Yankees have been my team since the late-1950s. Yes, I remember watching Ryne Duren and Luis Arroyo as relief pitchers for the “Bronx Bombers” in the 1950s and 1960s, long before most teams had regular relief pitchers. And yes, I remember Whitey Ford pitching in the 1964 World Series. Finally, I was at a Yankees game in 1979, when it was announced that Hall of Fame catcher, Thurman Munson, was killed in a private plane he was piloting.

For me, the start of the baseball season is a rite of spring that signals the impending end of winter and anticipates the summer weather in which my favorite sport will be played. I am an avid baseball fan, meaning my interest in the sport is beyond reason. Every year, my wife celebrates the end of the baseball season in October because, in a very real sense, she will “get her husband back.”

Last year, for the first time in my memory, fans, like me, suffered through an abbreviated baseball season because of the coronavirus pandemic. It might sound a bit trite, but baseball and the Yankees offer fans, like me, a much-needed escape from the trials and drudgery that are inevitable in our daily lives. This year, the start of a full year of baseball, the

# Opinion

## Rite of Spring, More than Six Decades as a Fan of the Greatest Sports Franchise



Photo courtesy of Sydney07012000 via Flickr  
**YANKEES**

first since 2019, signals a hope that this horrible pandemic, which has killed more than half a million Americans, may be coming to the end all of us have been praying for.

I know that my wife wishes that I watched fewer Yankee games, but after all these years, she accepts the fact that I will follow my Heroes in Pinstripes game after game through a 162-game season. Yes, I follow other baseball teams, and the Major League Baseball standings, but the Yankees are clearly a passion for me, just as they are for thousands of fans in the Bronx, the New York Metropolitan Area, and other parts of the United States.

I remember how my late brother introduced me to the Yankees in the late-1950s and how I watched the

thrilling World Series between the Yankees and the Milwaukee Braves in 1957 and 1958. 1955 is a year still fresh in my mind when the despised Brooklyn Dodgers, with Johnny Paredes as the star, finally won a World Series over my diamond heroes. I remember watching Reggie Jackson hit three “homers” in Game 6 of the 1977 World Series. Then, there was Hideki Matsui’s amazing exploits in the Yankees’ triumph over the Philadelphia Phillies, a series in which he was the most valuable player even though he only played in games in which there were designated hitters.

Of course, I also have memories of the Yankees’ few lean years in the 1960s, when Horace Clarke was the team’s second baseman. There are few more exciting experiences for Yankee fans than sitting through a game in the bleachers, the seats where the most loyal supporters of the “Bronx Bombers” sit. The “bleacher creatures” cut across racial, ethnic and religious lines. Some of these fans seem to live and die, in a symbolic sense, for their Heroes in Pinstripes.

Throughout Major League Baseball, pinstriped uniforms are emblematic of the Yankees, a team that attracts intense “haters,” as well as its superfans. Through the years, many of the Yankees’ opponents have feared their rivals. However, the team has won the respect of foes and fans alike for exploits “on the diamond” [playing field]. Almost every year, the Bronx Bombers field a superior team, and 2021 promises to be no different. Once again, the team is stacked with homerun hitters, with Aaron Judge and Giancarlo Stanton leading the attack.

For me, baseball is the most American of professional sports, although many in our country might prefer the more dramatic paces that are synonymous with football, baseball, and hockey. For some of us, the more deliberate pace of baseball makes for more strategy in a game in which statistics reveal much about the history of the game and the achievement of its stars.

In any case, for a little over three hours on many nights between now and October, I will be escaping into my own world, a world that many Yankees fans have in common, a world dominated by the exploits of our Heroes in Pinstripes.

*Michael Horowitz is a long-time journalist, Bronxite and Yankees fan.*

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# INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week, we asked readers their thoughts on the legal changes that affect voting in Georgia, and the decision by Major League Baseball to move the All-Star Game from that state.



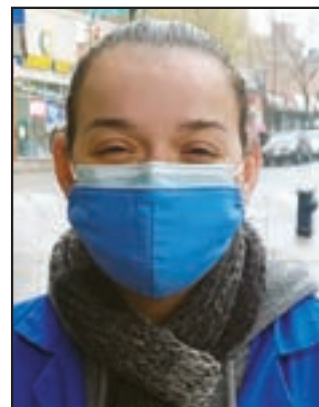
"If you're voting, which is a right given by this country, to be able to vote for whatever elected official you like, I don't think that there should be any law implemented to stop it, not to just stop people from voting. Basically, that's what they're doing, because if you're there for eight, nine or ten hours or however long it is, you're not allowed to receive water? That's illegal - you're going to go home. If you choose your health over waiting on a line and dying of thirst... making that illegal should be illegal."  
**Dennis Natal, Parkchester**



"Well, I figure they're trying to make a [former President Donald] Trump move by overpowering, and the Republicans are trying to get back in office, which they don't deserve to. They're not going to do anything for the poor people. I've never seen a Republican do anything before for poor people but taking things away - taking away voting rights is our freedom, because we have a right to vote like they tried to stop women from voting. We're not in slavery."  
**William "Slim" Livingston, Parkchester**



"I think the voting laws should be the same in every state, but it will never be like that because there's a lot of money in baseball and basketball. You can bet over the phone. I know guys that have put up their [expletive] house on the Super Bowl. I don't think Major League Baseball should have moved the game. It's only going to hurt the little people."  
**Ray Willis, Bedford Park**



"In my opinion, that's wrong because of everything going on with COVID and when it comes to the baseball game being moved, I feel like, perhaps, big corporations like Major League Baseball should try and do something. But, I feel they should have tried to make movements through activism and possibly working something out before moving the game."  
**Crystal Cruz, Norwood**



"I believe the move by the Republican Governor of Georgia is calculated to not only restrict voting of Black people and people of color, but also to seriously disenfranchise them as well. The move comes on the heels of a presidential election that saw a record turnout of those same groups across the state that led Democrats to winning those two seats in Congress. The governor and the Republican Party in that state and around the country were not pleased or amused and this was their response. Regarding MLB moving its All-Star Game out of the state, I believe it's a very good start, but it's only a start."  
**Stephen James, Jamaica, Queens**



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# NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY

## Bedford Park Affordable Housing Deadline, April 20

The April 20 deadline is approaching for applications for units in the affordable housing lottery at 2885 Marion Avenue, an eight-story mixed-use development in Bedford Park. To request an application by mail, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Bronxview Apartments c/o Fordham Bedford 2751 Grand Concourse Bronx, NY 10468. No deposits/application fees. Call 718-367-3200 for more information or log on to: <http://www.fordham-bedford.org> or <https://housingconnect.nyc.gov/PublicWeb/details/1959>.

## Montefiore Monsholu Community Center Seeks Volunteers

Montefiore Mosholu Community Center (MMCC) is seeking volunteers mainly for its food pantry program to coincide with National Volunteer Week from April 19–25. Other opportunities include being a volunteer teacher in the child development center, working with the seniors in the senior center, assisting with after-school programs, MMCC Boys and Girls Clubs, being a role model in the Work Force Development Programs or being a school volunteer. For more information about how you can help, contact Rase De Los Santos at (718) 882-4000 or email [rdeossantos@mmcc.org](mailto:rdeossantos@mmcc.org)

## Bronx Survey on Attitudes to COVID-19 Vaccine

As the Bronx ranks lowest, at 35 percent, in terms of COVID-19 vaccination rates out of all five boroughs, Bronxites are being invited to take part in a research study that aims to understand Bronx communities' attitudes toward the COVID-19 vaccine. Dr. Nancy Kheck, director of health and human services at the Bronx Borough President's Office, is working together with Dr. Damara Gutnick, senior director at the Office of Community and Population Health at Montefiore Health System on the survey. Links to the survey, in both English and Spanish are provided below. The survey takes approximately two minutes to complete: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BCVENG>, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BCVESP>.

## Españat Leads Key Federal Funding Proposals

Congressman Adriano Espaillat (NY-13) has praised President Joe

# City Comptroller Candidate, Zach Iscol, Supports Bill Aimed at Sex Trafficking Prevention

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Candidate for New York City Comptroller, Zach Iscol, voiced his support, on Tuesday, April 6, for the passage of New York State Senate Bill S6040, the Sex Trade Survivors Justice and Equality Act.

Among other things, the bill would decriminalize people in prostitution, mandate that they receive access to necessary social services, strengthen laws against sex trafficking, and advance criminal justice reform. This approach is known in some circles as *partial* decriminalization of the sex trade or the equality model.

Advocates for the model say it is a survivor-centered approach, where the focus is on harm reduction and lifting people out of the sex trade, based on a recognition that the majority of people are not there by choice. Nonprofits who work with survivors say trans women, for example, are often excluded from traditional forms of employment, because of stigma, leaving them with few other options than survival sex.

"Passing the Sex Trade Survivors Justice and Equality Act is the best way that the State can help vulnerable women,

girls and trans individuals, while preventing human trafficking," Iscol said. "It builds on what the City has done: stopping arrests of sex workers and repealing the loitering for the purpose of prostitution law."

The news comes as some resident complained during a recent Bronx Community Board 7 Public Safety meeting about sex trafficking in the district.

Iscol's views on the bill are supported by the nonprofit, Rights4Girls, a leading nonprofit on safety and justice for young women and girls. The group recently made the documentary, Nameless, which discusses the different ways in which people fall prey to sex trafficking, particularly from a young age.

Iscol also called for increased funding for comprehensive services at the New York City level, including mental health care, housing, and related social services for sex trafficked individuals.

At the same time, Iscol opposes NY State Senate Bill S6419, a bill which, if passed, would *fully* decriminalize all elements of the sex trade including pimping, sex buying, and sex work. Iscol said passing Bill S6419 would significantly increase the sex trafficking of vulnera-

ble communities and would risk making New York a global center of the sex trade.

"We know allowing sex buying, pimps, and sex tourism is the wrong approach: the places that have done it are now trying to walk it back, as it's led to a dramatic increase in [sex] trafficking among the most vulnerable communities," he said. "If we were to pass S6419, we'd have to figure out where the brothels would be, which communities would become red light districts. That's not something we want for New York City."

Meanwhile, those who advocate for bill S6419 (full decriminalization) argue that S6040 (partial decriminalization) would push the sex trade underground, a claim that has been refuted by advocates of bill S6419.

*Norwood News* previously reported on the work being done by Freedom Youth NYC in the Bronx and across the City to curb the spread of sex trafficking.

According to a 2020 article by Forbes, the International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that the global human trafficking industry (including sex trafficking) generates \$150 billion in profits annually. Meanwhile, a 2017 article by Atlanta Black Star wrote that according to the FBI, 40 percent of victims of sex trafficking are African-American.

Iscol is a former marine and one of 14 candidates running for City Comptroller. He dropped out of the New York City mayoral race in January.

Biden's fiscal year 2022 discretionary funding request to reverse decades of disinvestment by prioritizing initiatives that will help working families and the vulnerable. Since 2011, austere budget caps imposed by the Budget Control Act limited the amount of funding that Congress could provide for critical needs. As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, Espaillat will have a leading role in determining future federal funding.

Among the proposals are a \$20 billion increase for high-poverty schools, supporting higher education for DACA students, increased funding for community colleges, increasing STEM participation by underrepresented racial and ethnic groups by \$100 million, a \$1.5 billion increase in childcare, \$1.6 billion for healthier communities, \$200 million to reduce Black and minority maternal mortality, expanding Housing Choice Vouchers to 200,000 more families,

expanding Homeless Assistance Grants to more than 100,000 additional households, increased funding for communities facing persistent poverty, \$209 million for civil rights enforcement, \$1 billion for gender-based violence prevention, \$2.1 billion for gun violence prevention, \$304 million for worker protection agencies, a \$14 billion increase to combat the climate crisis, \$4 billion to combat hunger and nutrition insecurity, increased funding for roads and bridges, transit systems, and water systems.

## Bronx Received 7 Percent of NYC PPP Loans

The Manhattan Chamber of Commerce issued a report on Thursday, April 7, detailing that 230,747 federal PPP loans have injected \$25 billion into New York City's economy to date, saving 2.7 million jobs as of Feb. 27, 2021. The breakdown showed that The Bronx received just 7 percent of all loans. To put that in context, 8 percent of

the city's businesses were located in the Bronx, based on census 2018 data, which included firms of all sizes.

Meanwhile, Brooklyn received 27 percent of loans with 25 percent of the city's businesses located there as of 2018, Manhattan received 40 percent, with 42 percent of the city's businesses located there as of 2018, Queens received 22 percent, with 21 percent of the city's businesses located there as of 2018, and Staten Island received 4 percent, with 4 percent of the city's businesses located there as of 2018.

The report also found that New York City lost 635,000 jobs between February 2020 and February 2021, and that 42 percent of the city's small businesses have closed since the pandemic began. Other findings were that nearly 81 percent of all loans went to businesses with 10 or fewer employees, and 69 percent of loans were in the amount of \$50,000 or less.

## Biaggi Highlights State Budget Wins

State Sen. Alessandra Biaggi (Bronx/Westchester) hailed the advances made following the passing of the New York State budget, highlighting the most notable victories. These include a commitment to fully phase in State school aid for public schools over three years, the expansion of universal pre-k to over 210 districts, the closing of the TAP (State Tuition Assistance Program) gap in four years to provide additional aid to SUNY and CUNY, the first-in-the-nation Excluded Workers Fund to provide relief to those who faced unemployment during the pandemic but have been ineligible for any federal or state assistance, the Emergency Rental Assistance Program to provide up to twelve months of rental assistance to eligible tenants, the Small Business Recovery Grant Program to assist small businesses suffering as a result of the pandemic.



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## Overcoming Fatigue During Stressful Times

By BRENDA BOATSWAIN

Are you feeling more tired these days, despite getting enough sleep? You may be feeling this way partly because of the stress and trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of us are dealing with grief from the death of a loved one or other losses. Physical distancing and wearing masks are constantly on our minds, too. We're staying inside more, working or taking classes from

home, or perhaps dealing with the loss of a job. We're anxious to "get back to normal."

In addition to stress related to COVID-19, many folks are feeling stress from the sudden awareness of the effects of hundreds of years of racial inequality and violence. And finally, others also have concerns about climate change and its effect on the weather, our health and our food supply.

When you're under stress or experiencing trauma, your body sends out stress hormones like adrenalin. Over time, too much adrenaline depletes the body, making you tired, irritable and not feeling like yourself. Over a longer time period – like this past year – stress and trauma can affect you mentally, physically and spiritually.

Here are three ways you can manage your feelings of fatigue:

- **Stop and reflect.** Think about how stress and trauma may be affecting your life at work, school or at home. Are you feeling more sadness than usual? Are you eating too much — or too little? Maybe you're experiencing body aches or trouble sleeping or remembering things, or perhaps you're making poor decisions, or misusing alcohol or drugs. You may even question the meaning of life. All of these are nor-

mal responses to stress.

- **Create a self-care plan.** Include the following: schedule regular check-ups with your primary care provider; eat healthy meals; drink enough water; and avoid alcohol and recreational drugs. Try to exercise and get adequate sleep, too. Prayer or meditation can help, as can doing art or listening to music. And as much as possible, connect with positive, supportive people.

- **Talk to a professional.** When life gets overwhelming, speaking to a mental health counselor can help. To learn more about mental health services at Montefiore, call 718-430-2290 or visit <https://www.montefiore.org/psychiatry>.

*Brenda Boatswain, Ph.D., CGP is the wellbeing manager for Montefiore Medical Center, Office of Community & Population Health.*

## Man Stabbed After Returning Home from Party

by DAVID GREENE

Detectives from the 49th precinct are waiting to reinterview a tenant who was stabbed in the backyard of a Morris Park residence, apparently after returning from a party.

According to detective and police spokeswoman, Annette Shelton, police were called to a Paulding Avenue address at 11:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 10, after a 57-year-old man arrived at Einstein Hospital with lac-

erations under his eye and across the left side of his chest. The unidentified victim remains in "stable" condition.

The tenant's landlord, who declined to give his name, came out of his home the following morning to find police crime scene tape still wrapped around the front of his house and driveway, after police had left.

"It was a whole thing," the homeowner said, shrugging as he recalled the incident. "It happened in the back... all I can say is my tenant got stabbed last night. That's what happened. I think his wife did it. They had an argument. They came home from a party. It's the same old story." It is unknown if there were any witnesses to the incident.

A police source speaking on condi-

tion of anonymity said of the incident, "We got a call from Einstein Hospital. We had a victim there, a male saying, 'She did it.'"

The police source said the victim told police he couldn't remember how the incident occurred, or what weapon was used. "He didn't give a name of the person who was the attacker or any other really relevant information about the person who attacked him. Then he fell asleep due to the medication they gave him at the hospital."

When asked, the police source could not confirm if the unidentified wife was being questioned at Eastchester Road station house. He simply responded, "No one's arrested right now." Police continue to investigate the incident.

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# Opinion

## Arts Flourishing at PS/MS 95

By PS/MS 95 Staff

Under the direction of principal, Serge Marshall Davis, the visual arts are flourishing at MS/MS 95, the Sheila Mencher School in Van Cortlandt Village. Art teacher, Stephanie Fiorino, shepherds ongoing learning and projects, and opens students' eyes to the world of line, shape, dimension, color, texture, and form. Even during the pandemic, through blended and remote learning, Ms. Fiorino provides clear pathways to student success.

The arts program challenges the students intellectually in the classroom and puts systems in place to anticipate smooth transitions to remote learning, whenever that may occur. Its success is due, in no small part, to Ms. Fiorino's direction, and to her diligence in ensuring art supplies are sent home with the students so they have everything they need to continue with the curriculum when at home.

She also designs and models meaningful rubrics and examples, provides the students with inspiration for their artwork and always ensures high standards are met. She is diligent about both the students' understanding of the processes, and also about exhibiting student work, always looking to increments of improvement on tasks, and authentic achievement.

Sidratul Chowdhury is a 6<sup>th</sup> grader at the school and said she thinks the art program is really nice, and that they work on super cool projects like a huge mosaic. "In art class, we do oil paintings, perspective painting, and lots of water coloring." She added that they also have other art experiences like exploring shade, geometric shapes and textures. Sidratul said the arts program is very interesting because the kids get to learn about different cultures, different art materials and history, and they are also given fun assignments, both online and in person.

Meanwhile, Ms. Fiorino reaches out beyond the classroom with ongoing communication and relationship building with parents and other caretakers about the learning at hand. She elicits and addresses the concerns of the students, including the social and emo-



Photo courtesy of PS / MS 95

**STEPHANIE FIORINO**, Art teacher at PS / MS 95 gestures to one of her student's artwork, displayed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Photo courtesy of PS / MS 95

**PS / MS 95** students busy at work, making art.

tional aspects of current school life, striving to bring out each individual student's "best self." She pays particular attention to helping students overcome learning challenges.

Hakem Masoud is in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and said the arts program improves kids' skills, like drawing and painting. "We also do shading with charcoal," he said. "We learn about lots of art-

ists and their work." He said, recently, they learned about Debora Moore, who works with flowers and plants in glass. "We are starting a new project called 'light drawing of eggs' to use light and shadows to make the assignment look like real eggs."

Hakem said his teacher helps the students by making observations of their assignments and shows videos of how the artists go through the process of producing their work. He said he thinks the art program helps the school because it makes kids want to learn.

The program incorporates an array of technology, fully utilized to increase the students' range of experiences. For example, iPads are used to make stop motion animations and online graphics programs such as Piskel and Google Drawings. Ms. Fiorino is incisive in seeing just what each student needs in order to access the learning at hand, in the true sense of equity.

The students' artwork is regularly and consistently displayed within the school building, as well as at Lehman College, Dream Yard events, at the office of District 10 of the Department of Education, and at the Bronx Arts Festival.

It is noteworthy that Ms. Fiorino was a nominee for the FLAG Award for teaching excellence, and that her students' work has been professionally evaluated, accepted for, and exhibited at a program at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The visual arts program at the school is also well-balanced. Ms. Fiorino attends to the history and vision of the subject matter with broad, as well as specific, intellectual goals, articulating art with the other classroom subjects. She is intent upon encouraging students to finish their assignments.

Art is a particularly safe space for students to creatively express themselves, and art at the school connects art skills and art appreciation through a variety of mediums.

Malak Kalaz is aged 10 and is also in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. "I really enjoy art because it makes me feel very happy and calm," she said. "Having art at school and after school is really fun." Malak said she loves her teachers because they teach art in a fun and understandable way. She has learned about shading, abstract value, using shapes in art, drawing 3D, and many more. "Art can make you feel very proud of yourself," she said.

Check out the school's Instagram account at ArtSmart95x. It's a treat!



## CRIME FILE

BY SÍLE MOLONEY &amp; DAVID GREENE



### Hit and Run on Mosholu Parkway

Police are looking for the driver involved in a crash that injured a second driver, before fleeing the scene on Mosholu Parkway. According to the NYPD, the crash took place at 3:34 p.m. on Tuesday, April 6, at the intersection of Marion Avenue and East Mosholu Parkway South.

A preliminary investigation determined that a 2020 Nissan was traveling southbound on Marion Avenue when it was rear-ended by a 2017 Ford. The driver fled the scene while the unidentified victim of the stricken Nissan was transported to Montefiore Medical Center where he was treated for non life-threatening injuries. The 52nd Precinct reported no arrests in the case, but the investigation remains ongoing.

### Fordham Manor Assault in Deli

The NYPD is seeking the public's assistance identifying the individual seen in the attached photo regarding an assault that occurred in the 52nd Precinct. On Monday, April 12, 2021 at approximately 11:30 p.m., inside a deli located at 2650 Briggs Avenue, the victim and the suspect

engaged in a verbal dispute that escalated into a physical confrontation. The suspect stabbed the victim once in the back with a knife before fleeing the scene in an unknown direction.

EMS responded to the location and transported the victim to St. Barnabas Hospital in stable condition. Surveillance video taken from the scene of the incident is available on the *Norwood News* website.



### Kingsbridge Heights: Search for Missing 10-Year-Old Girl

The NYPD is searching for Michelle Martin, 10, of 2767 Morris Avenue in the Kingsbridge Heights section of the Bronx, who was reported missing on April 12 in the 52nd precinct. Michelle is described as 4 feet, 10 inches tall, weighs 80 pounds, and was last seen wearing a black coat, light blue jeans, black boots, and purple

eyeglasses. She was carrying a bright pink backpack and was wearing her hair in two braids.

The incident was initially reported on the Citizen's App on Monday, April 12, at 1:56 p.m. Police confirm that Michelle was last seen on April 12, at 11:35 a.m. at her home. A subsequent Citizen's App update on the same day detailed that police had received a report that the pink backpack contained a large butcher knife, and that police had requested additional units to the scene to aid in the search. *Norwood News* has asked the NYPD to clarify if that update was valid. We did not receive an immediate response.

### Female NYPD Officer Arrested

Off-duty, NYPD Officer, Catherine Soto, 31, was arrested in the 48th precinct in the Bronx, on Monday, April 12, 2021. She was charged with criminal sale of a controlled substance, criminal sale of marijuana, official misconduct, criminal possession of a controlled substance, and unlawful possession of marijuana.

According to the NYPD's database of public records, Soto was appointed as a police officer with the NYPD on Jan. 10, 2018.

She was assigned to the Special Victim's Unit on Nov. 16, 2020. There were no details listed for recognition or awards.

She may have been an employee with the NYPD prior to being a police officer as her training records go back to Nov. 9, 2015. Her records show a long list of police training courses on various topics. There were no disciplinary records recorded under her name. She had made four felony arrests and 12 arrests for misdemeanors during her time as a police officer.

A person arrested and accused of a crime is innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law.

### Fordham Manor: Man Found Shot in Back

On Sunday, April 4, 2021 at 2:48 a.m. in front of 2661 Briggs Avenue in Fordham Manor, a man was found lying on the sidewalk with a gunshot wound to his back. He was later removed to St. Barnabas Hospital at an unknown time.

Norwood News reached out to FDNY/EMS for more information on the timing of the transportation of the victim to hospital. We were only informed that 2:51 a.m. was the time the call was received in their sys-

tem. There are no arrests at this time and the investigation is ongoing.

### Burglars Steal ATM Machine in Indian Village

Detectives in the 49th precinct are investigating a burglary at the Liberty Diner, located at 2101 Williamsbridge Road, at Lydig Avenue in the Indian Village section of the Bronx. The NYPD said the incident was reported at 3:51 a.m. on Tuesday, April 6, by a 29-year-old man who reported to police that unidentified men entered the location by breaking the front door with an unknown object and removed an ATM from the rear of the store. Police said there have been no arrests in the case, but are looking for the burglars who fled in a gray minivan.

Anyone with information with regard to any of 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 Crime Stoppers website at [WWW.NYPD-CRIMESTOPPERS.COM](http://WWW.NYPD-CRIMESTOPPERS.COM), or on Twitter @NYPDTips. All calls are strictly confidential.



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# Beloved Head Nurse Who Died from COVID-19 in the Line of Duty Honored One Year Later

By **DAVID GREENE & MIRIAM QUIÑONES**

One year on from a previously unimaginable pandemic that, so far, has taken the lives of three million people worldwide, a dozen or so nurses and hospital staff gathered at Jacobi Medical Center in the Morris Park section of The Bronx, to honor the late RN Freda Ocran who, it is understood, was the first nurse based at a New York City public hospital to have died in the line of duty from COVID-19.

On Sunday, March 28, hospital staff joined family members and elected officials to remember Freda on the first anniversary of her passing, and to honor all front line workers who sacrificed their lives to help others amid the pandemic.

According to her family, Freda, who was just 51 when she died, immigrated to the U.S. from Ghana in the late 1980s and earned her nursing degree in 1990. The wife and mother of two sons and a daughter was working as a head nurse at Jacobi Hospital's psychiatric unit when the coronavirus engulfed the borough.

Kwame A. Ocran, Freda's oldest son, told those who had gathered, "Today, we're here to remember our heroes. We're here to salute those who have dedicated their lives to the service of others. Our memories of Freda live on in celebration and not sorrow."

Her son continued, "At the dawn of the pandemic, I remember urgently pleading with her and asking her to stay home and consider herself. She responded, 'I can't, I have to go to work. I'm a healthcare worker.' This heroism is a testament to who my mother was."

Kwame said his mother was the center of his world, and recalled memories of being at Hunter College and leaving Manhattan to travel up to the Bronx to Jacobi to see his mom for a couple hours at a time. "While she was here, she was the life of the party," he said. "She worked with everyone with such aplomb and dignity.



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

**KWAME K. OCRAN** (left), eldest son of the late RN Freda Ocran, who is believed to have been the first nurse in a New York City public hospital to have died of COVID-19 in the line of duty, reads a poem in memory of his mom during a ceremony in her honor at Jacobi Medical Center in the Morris Park section of The Bronx on Sunday, March 28, 2021.

She worked and dedicated herself to her job, despite all the politics that happened in the American workplace."

Gesturing to images of his mom, held up by her colleagues during the ceremony, he added, "My mother was supernatural. She was a diva. She often told me, 'Kwame, don't you know, I'm the queen?' And look at her; she is so regal."

Meanwhile, Joseph Ocran, Freda's heartbroken husband, also from Ghana, fought back tears as he recalled how he was restricted from visiting his wife at Lincoln Hospital, after she called him to let him know she had contracted the coronavirus, and before receiving the news of her death, which he said he received one morning at around 4.20 a.m.

"They called me. I was in my living room sleeping, but I couldn't sleep," he said. "I kept thinking about her. I got up and went to stay in the bedroom and the call came from Lincoln." As he struggled to get the words out, the grieving father's two sons reached out their hands and placed them on their father's shoulders to console him.

Wiping away tears, Ocran continued, "I firmly believe

one day we will meet again." He added, "She was a good person, a very, very good person. She was a very vocal person. She did not take this work to play. She was my everything. When the pandemic started, she would say, 'Don't go outside. Stay home.' We didn't know what was going on. That's the thing."

Ocran said he was heartbroken because he knew most of the patients that were put on ventilators didn't come off them, adding that he also knew the nurses were fearful of taking care of the COVID patients, but did so anyway.

Fellow registered nurse, Flandersia Jones, of Bronx-Care Health System, formerly Bronx-Lebanon Hospital, where both she and Freda once worked, fumed, "We should not be standing here today mourning a life, somebody that gave up herself, somebody that took care of patients, just because of a lack of PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) or lack of staffing."

Jones said her last memory of Freda was of her running towards her, and that she still has that picture of her in her mind. "A beautiful garden stands alone, missing the one who nurtured it because Freda

nurtured everybody she came across," she said. "But now Freda is gone, her flowers still bloom."

Among calls of "Amen," from the crowd, Jones continued, saying Freda loved every flower, loved her family, loved her patients, and loved her co-workers. "She was part of God's plan, so, when it was her time, he reached down his hand, looked through the garden, searching for the best, and he sure took the best away from us," she said. "That's why he found Freda. It was her time to rest."

She added, "Time flies, memories can never erase what Freda will forever be in our hearts, for the blessing your memories will be treasures. Your selfless sacrifice will never be forgotten. You will be missed beyond measure. Thank you."

Assemblywoman for the 80th assembly district, Nathalia Fernández, who is currently running for Bronx borough president, also addressed those in attendance, lamenting past decisions taken to restrict funding for hospitals, saying, "Our nurses and doctors and our healthcare workers put everything on the line, and it is a

disgrace that in that time when we were entering turmoil, we cut the budget." She continued, "I didn't, but the administration felt it was the time to do so."

Fernández added, "Now, a year later, we have a chance to fix it, to pass safe staffing so our nurses aren't overworked and our patients are taken care of with dignity and grace, to fully fund our hospitals, so they have every resource available to make sure that our patients and our health care workers are protected."

She said New York had to continue to look forward and to make sure it didn't go back to the same place it was in a year ago and to make sure people didn't continue to lose loved ones.

Members of the New York State Nurses' Association, who organized the memorial, echoed that sentiment. They are currently pushing for the passage of the "Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act," which was introduced in the New York State Assembly in early January, and calls for minimum standards in the patient-to-care ratio at both hospitals and nursing homes across the State.

During the ceremony, Councilman for the 13th City Council district, Mark Gjonaj, who is stepping down from office at the end of his current term, presented a New York City Council Citation to the Ocran family in honor of Freda's service.

During his prepared remarks, Kwame Ocran described his parents as pilgrims who had come to the U.S. and discovered a new world. He said that last year, when he lost his mother, he was in shock. "I had no idea what I was going to do so, I wrote a couple of poems that I want to share with you today," he said.

An extract from "April Showers" reads, "Take your loved ones and hold them close, because when they're gone, they're missed the most. Take heed and run like the wind. Life is an offer they can rescind."





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**Thursday, February 25, 2021 5:00 pm - 6:00pm | Thursday, March 4, 2021 5:00pm - 6:00pm**

**Friday, March 5, 2021 12:00pm - 1:00pm | Thursday, March 18, 2021 5:00pm - 6:00pm**

**Friday, March 19, 2021 12:00pm - 1:00pm | Thursday, March 25, 2021 5:00pm - 6:00pm**

**\*Nota: La Loteria se llevara a cabo Abril 15, 2021, para solicitudes favor de vistar la pagina web [www.ilchs.org](http://www.ilchs.org)**

**Puede enviar su solicitud via email a [Egonzalez@ilchs.org](mailto:Egonzalez@ilchs.org)**

**Tambien Puede enviar por correo a: International Leadership Charter High School  
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# Man Removed from Yankee Stadium, Days Before J&J COVID-19 Vaccine Paused

By DAVID GREENE

More than a dozen Bronxites waiting in line for a COVID-19 vaccination, watched in utter silence as a man was wheeled out of Yankee Stadium, placed inside an ambulance, and taken to a nearby hospital for treatment. It is unknown if the man had received the vaccination at that point or not.

A pair of paramedics pulled up to the East 161st Street entrance at Macombs Dam Bridge at 2:25 p.m. on Friday, April 9, and entered the stadium where at least two of the four available COVID-19 vaccines, including Johnson and Johnson, are being administered to Bronx residents.

A security guard at Yankee Stadium, speaking on condition of anonymity, downplayed the incident, saying, "They've been giving this shot out since February, and I've only seen this, five or six times." She added, "People are hesitant about taking their medications before getting the COVID-19 shot, or they don't eat before they come to get the shot."

After making an appointment online or by phone, Bronxites typically arrive at the stadium and follow the line of people already waiting past a metal detec-



Photo by David Green

**A PAIR OF** paramedics wheel a man in a wheelchair out of Yankee Stadium and place him in an ambulance on Friday, April 9, 2021. It is unknown if he had received a vaccination prior to being removed or not.

tor screening area. The line leads into the stadium where the playing field is visible, but doubles back and into a row of cubicles inside of the Ford Field MVP Club. Here, residents are questioned briefly before the vaccine is administered.

A separate area is designated for newly vaccinated folks to wait for 15 minutes, to be evaluated by medical professionals. Individuals with allergies

are asked to wait for 30 minutes.

On Tuesday, April 13, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention put a pause on the one-shot Johnson and Johnson vaccine due to reports of blood clotting in six American women, and while an investigation is carried out. Almost 7 million Americans have received the Johnson & Johnson shot so far. One of the six women who encountered blood clots has died, though the precise cause

of death is not yet known.

Those who have gotten the Johnson and Johnson shot are being asked to check for any potential symptoms of a potential blood clot, like a headache, body aches or difficulty breathing during the first three weeks, after getting the shot.

The FDNY did not immediately respond to a request for information regarding the Yankee Stadium incident.

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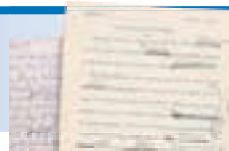
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# NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

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://vax4-nyc.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:

<https://map.mta.info/#@40.70949,-73.97853,14z>

**More Help with Sched-**

## uling Vaccine Appointments

Epicerter-NYC is a 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://epicerter-nyc.com/epicenters-vaccine-resources/> or my emailing [helloworld@epicerter-nyc.com](mailto:helloworld@epicerter-nyc.com).

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

Another volunteer group who go by the Twitter handle @VaccineSchedulerNYC and Instagram handle @VaccineSchedulerNYC are also helping vulnerable populations like seniors and non-native English speakers to book vaccine appointments. For questions, contact VaccineSchedulerNYC@gmail.com or phone/text: 646-494-7029.

Bronx Rising Initiative, a nonprofit launched in 2020, has launched a homebound vaccine initiative to help inoculate Bronx seniors where they live, in partnership with local community organizations which are already serving homebound seniors. Residents can sign-up at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/getvaccinated>.

## Free COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic

Al Masjidu Adam Community Life Center for Human Excellence in Partnership with NYC Health & Hospitals Test + Trace Corps are holding a free COVID-19 vaccination clinic at 2263 Crotona Avenue, The Bronx, NY 10457 on April 17 & 18 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. To schedule an appointment, contact Mamadou Sire Bah at (347) 755-0444 or email [msirebah@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:msirebah@cityhall.nyc.gov) or Mir Ali at (929) 237-8400 or email [mali@cau.nyc.gov](mailto:mali@cau.nyc.gov). Visit <https://vaccinefinder.nyc.gov> for the most up-to-date

eligibility list. Bring any form of ID (including national passport) as well as documentation showing vaccine eligibility (document showing age, employee ID, physician note, etc.)

## Latest Updates on Vaccine Eligibility

Who is now eligible? The COVID-19 vaccine is now available to all New York residents 16 and older. People who live outside of the state but work or study in New York are also eligible to get vaccinated. People who are eligible based on employment include both paid and unpaid workers.

Note: People who are 16 or 17 years old are only eligible for the Pfizer vaccine.

Proof of eligibility is needed at your appointment. If you have questions, call the New York State COVID-19 hotline at 833-NYS-4-VAX (833-697-4829).

## Important Vaccine Update as of April 13, 2021

New York State Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker issued a statement regarding the Johnson & Johnson vaccine on April 13, following the CDC and the FDA recommending a pause in the use of the J&J vaccine out of an abundance of caution. New York State has followed this recommendation and paused the use of the J&J vaccine statewide as of April 13, while these health and safety agencies evaluate next steps. Dr. Anthony Fauci, head of the White House coronavirus task force, said on April 14 that the CDC expects the pause to last days, not months.

## 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>.

## Help with SSI Benefits

People can apply for SSI

benefits, and other benefit programs, through a telephone appointment with the agency, even while local offices are not able to accept walk-in visitors. People can call toll-free 1-800-772-1213, or their local Social Security office, to make a phone appointment to apply for SSI. People who are deaf or hard of hearing may call Social Security's TTY number, 1-800-325-0778.

A new webpage at [www.socialsecurity.gov/third-party](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/third-party), is available for anyone who can assist another person with accessing Social Security's programs and services. Information on how to help support children with disabilities can be found at [www.socialsecurity.gov/benefits/disability/apply-child.html](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/benefits/disability/apply-child.html).

## Rent Relief

Democrat & Chronicle reported on April 7 that New Yorkers who have been unable to pay rent during the COVID-19 pandemic may soon be eligible for relief of up to 12 months of rent and utilities accrued since March 13, 2020, under a federally funded program included in the State's \$212 billion new budget. Administered by NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), the relief will be based on financial need, and the degree to which renters were financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and residents would be eligible irrespective of immigration status. In addition, a household which pays more than 30 percent of income toward rent each month can qualify for three additional months of prospective rent, or future rent. The program also provides for one year of eviction protection for tenants who qualify. For more information, contact OTDA at [nyspio@otda.ny.gov](mailto:nyspio@otda.ny.gov) or by phone on 518-473-1090.

## NW Bronx Food Justice Project

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz provided the following April/May schedules for the NW Bronx Food

Justice Project - Emergency Food Resources in Marble Hill and Kingsbridge Heights:

St. Stephens United Methodist Church: 146 W. 228th St., Bronx 10463 - Tuesdays April 6th & 20th from 2:00 - 4:00 and Tuesdays, May 4th and 18th from 2:00 - 4:00. For more information go to: [rssny.org/nwbronxfoodjustice](http://rssny.org/nwbronxfoodjustice)

Kingsbridge Heights Community Center (KHCC): 3101 Kingsbridge Terrace at Summit Place, Bronx 10463 - weekly: Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 12:00 - 2:30. For more information go to: [www.khcc-nyc.org/program/food-pantry](http://www.khcc-nyc.org/program/food-pantry) or email Will Littleton at [wlittleton@khcc-nyc.org](mailto:wlittleton@khcc-nyc.org)

Friendly Fridge: 5977 Broadway (242nd Street and Broadway), Contact: [thefriendlyfridgebx@gmail.com](mailto:thefriendlyfridgebx@gmail.com)

Bailey Fridge: 3016 Bailey Ave

For more information contact the Northwest Bronx Food Justice Project at [foodjusticebronx@gmail.com](mailto:foodjusticebronx@gmail.com).

## Bronx River Arts Center (BRAC) Spring Semester Classes

Register today for BRAC's spring semester of art and digital classes. Virtual or hybrid classes will run from Saturday, April 10 to Monday, June 21, 2021. Classes will be held on Zoom or hybrid, with some live sessions as allowed by State and CDC Guidelines for Open Culture.

BRAC's digital classes include photography, digital illustration, and digital animation. A limited number of temporary subscriptions of Adobe Photoshop for registered participants at no additional costs is available. Anyone interested in this offer should email [info@bronxriverart.org](mailto:info@bronxriverart.org). Please add "Adobe Photoshop" in the subject line. Subscriptions are limited and are assigned on a first come first served basis. For general questions about classes, please email [info@bronxriverart.org](mailto:info@bronxriverart.org).





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Thursday, February 25, 2021 5:00 pm - 6:00pm | Thursday, March 4, 2021 5:00pm - 6:00pm  
Friday, March 5, 2021 12:00pm - 1:00pm | Thursday, March 18, 2021 5:00pm - 6:00pm  
Friday, March 19, 2021 12:00pm - 1:00pm | Thursday, March 25, 2021 5:00pm - 6:00pm

\*Note: The lottery will be held on April 15, 2021 For applications, please visit our website at [www.ilchs.org](http://www.ilchs.org)

You can email the application to [Egonzalez@ilchs.org](mailto:Egonzalez@ilchs.org)  
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## Public and Community Meetings

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the 52<sup>nd</sup> PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL meetings have been held via ZOOM. The next meeting will be held on **April 22, 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, April 27, at 6.30 p.m.** Zoom details will be circulated ahead of the meeting. Contact [mirosario@cb.nyc.gov](mailto:mirosario@cb.nyc.gov) to be added to the distribution list.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, **BEDFORD MOSHOLU COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION** meetings have been held via ZOOM. The next meeting will be held on **Wednesday, May 5, at 8 p.m.** For further details, contact [bedfordmosholu@verizon.net](mailto:bedfordmosholu@verizon.net).

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# And Then There Was One...Oswald Feliz is Elected to City Council District 15

By JOSÉ GIRALT, SÍLE MOLONEY & DAVID GREENE

Oswald Feliz has been elected as the new New York City Council member for District 15 in the Bronx, following the non-partisan special election held on March 23, and the conclusion on Monday evening, April 12, of Round 10 of the ranked choice voting count, after which Feliz accumulated 1,766 votes out of a total of 3,976. He is now, at age 30, the youngest council member elected to the *current* New York City Council.

Feliz continues a legacy of young candidates being elected to the same city council district. Bronx Congressman Ritchie Torres was elected to City Council District 15 at age 25, and Joel Rivera, Torres' predecessor, was elected to the same council district at age 22, advancing eventually to become the majority leader of the Council.

Feliz won the special election, which was among the first in the City to implement the new ranked choice voting process, by 404 votes, surpassing his nearest rival Bronx Community Board 7 District Manager, Ischia Bravo, who finished with 1,362 votes. Exhausted votes amounted to 848. Feliz, a tenant lawyer and adjunct professor at Hostos Community College, whose candidacy had been profiled previously by *Norwood News*, had maintained his lead since election night when the New York City Board of Elections (BOE) tallied the first choice, early ballots and first choice, election day ballots from over 96 percent of the voting scanners.

The election night tally did not include military ballots or absentee ballots. Feliz won 28.42 percent of the votes on election night, while Bravo won 21.54 percent. She was followed by John Sanchez, Bronx Community Board 6 District Manager, who garnered 20.21 percent of the election night votes. Both Bravo and Sanchez trailed Feliz since that date.

Speaking to the *Norwood News* on Monday night at the Bronx BOE borough office at 1780 Grand Concourse, where the various counts had been taking place and were being independently observed since Sunday, April 11, Feliz said, "We thank every single voter that participated in this election. Thank you to everybody who supported me. I also thank everybody who knocked on every single door, who called every single voter, talking about why I am the best candidate in this race."

He added, "We're looking very forward to getting to work, to making sure that we bring good public schools in the Bronx, to make sure that we truly prepare students for the future... also more access to affordable housing and improving public safety in the Bronx. We are ready to hit the ground running on Day 1 as soon as the results are certified. Thank you so much."



Photo by David Greene

**OSWALD FELIZ (LEFT)** GIVES a thumbs up at the Bronx Board of Elections Office on Monday, April 12, 2021, after the completion of ten rounds of ranked choice vote counts, which secured his victory and election as the next District 15 Council member to the New York City Council.

The BOE still has to certify the results and release all official count figures. Following Round 2 of the ranked choice ballot count by the BOE on Sunday, April 11, which included election day ballots, early voting ballots, absentee ballots and military ballots, Ariel Rivera Diaz, a former finance clerk with the City's Board of Elections and former official at the Republican National Hispanic Assembly, was eliminated and his votes were redistributed to other candidates in accordance with the ranked choice voting process. José Padilla, former Independence candidate for both the New York State Assembly and the New York State Senate, was eliminated after Round 3, and his votes were then also redistributed.

The count continued with Round 4 on Monday morning, April 12. After various rounds, Elisa Crespo, education liaison for Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., who recently announced that she would *not* be running again in the District 15, in the June Democratic primary race, was eliminated, along with Latchmi Devi Gopal, a community organizer and former staffer for U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, Altagracia Soldevilla, another community organizer, Kenny Agosto, district director to New York State Senator Jamaal T. Bailey, and Bernadette Ferrara, president of the Van Nest Neighborhood Alliance. Sanchez was later eliminated also when he had a total of 1,061 votes.

Bravo also spoke to the *Norwood News* at the count center on Monday night, after Round 10 was concluded, saying, "I would like to thank everyone that supported our campaign. I would like to congratulate and express my camaraderie to all my colleagues that ran, I think, a very good race and I look forward to working with everyone, and I will be running again in the June Democratic primary."

She added, "I think my district needs me, and that was exemplified here today, and I hope that there is a better turn-out

as well in the electorate."

A total of 93,211 residents were registered to vote in District 15 as of Feb. 21, 2021, according to the BOE, with 12,366 voters deemed inactive, and 80,845 deemed active. The last date to mail a registration form to vote in the special election was Feb. 26, while the last date to register to vote in person was March 13.

Special elections are known to have low voter turnout and the District 15 City Council special election was no exception with a final total of 3,976 ballots. When Torres last won the District 15 City Council seat in 2017, in a regularly scheduled election, 10,507 residents showed up to the polls.

Torres resigned his seat last year after being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in November 2020, where he now represents New York's 15th congressional district, having replaced former congressman, José Serrano.

Torres tweeted his congratulations to Feliz on Monday night saying, "Congratulations to my successor @OswaldFeliz on his election as the new City Council member for District 15. Serving in the @CityCouncil is one of the greatest privileges of public service. Cherish every moment of it."

City Council District 15 covers the Bronx neighborhoods of Fordham, Mount Hope, Bathgate, Belmont, East Tremont, West Farms, Van Nest, Allderton, Olinville and parts of Bedford Park. It overlaps with Congressional District 15 which includes Bathgate, Belmont, Clason Point, East Tremont, Fordham, Harding Park, Highbridge, Hunts Point, Little Italy, Longwood, Melrose, Morrisania, Morris Heights, Mott Haven, Soundview, Tremont, Unionport, and West Farms.

Feliz will serve as councilman until Dec. 31, 2021. Future representation in District 15, beyond that point, will be determined via the upcoming June 2021

primary and November 2021 general election.

The son of immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Feliz was born in New York City and raised in the Kingsbridge section of the Bronx, where he attended local public schools. As a tenant attorney, he successfully defended vulnerable Bronx residents who were at risk of eviction and sued landlords who were in the practice of tenant harassment. Feliz helped form a tenant association of over 50 tenants and successfully negotiated a settlement from a powerful landlord in the Southern Boulevard section of the Bronx to provide tenants with nearly \$100,000 in damages due to the deplorable conditions in the building.

Prior to his work as an attorney, Feliz worked on behalf of Bronx families as a legislative staffer for State Senator Gustavo Rivera. He then joined the historic 2016 campaign of Rep. Adriano Espaillat in the 13th Congressional District. Feliz also co-founded the Northwest Bronx Democrats for Change, where he has worked to increase political participation by organizing community town halls and holding voter registration drives in the Bronx.

Later on Monday night, Feliz released a written statement thanking his volunteers and supporters again, including Congressman Adriano Espaillat, who represents Congressional District 13, covering parts of Manhattan and the Bronx, Assemblyman Victor Pichardo, who represents A.D. 86 in the Bronx, Assemblywoman Carmen De La Rosa, who represents A.D. 72, covering parts of Manhattan and the Bronx, and Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez, who represents City Council District 10, covering Manhattan and a small part of the Bronx.

Feliz also thanked his opponents for what he called a well-run race. "I hope we can work together moving forward to best serve all of the diverse needs of our community. The Bronx has always been my home, and I am humbled by the faith and support District 15 has placed in me," he said.

He added, "Now, we have urgent work ahead of us to make sure our community can recover from the COVID-19 pandemic as quickly as possible. Starting on Day One, I'm going to be focused on vaccinating vulnerable New Yorkers throughout the Bronx, helping small business owners get back on their feet, and ensuring working families are at the heart of our City's economic recovery. Additionally, I will work tirelessly to increase access to affordable housing, improve educational outcomes, and improve public safety. I'm ready to tackle all of the pressing issues our community faces, and vow to be a powerful voice for the Bronx in the City Council."





## Letters To The Editor

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

### The Problem with Ideology

The part of Richard Marias' letter [Norwood News, April 1 edition] I can agree with is the lack of concern for public safety by most of our city leadership. But the solution is not voting for conservative Republicans who show no concern for workers' rights and refuse to condemn Donald Trump, and the January 6th insurrection. Also, we should not have to choose between having cops crack down on dangerous criminals and cracking down on criminal cops. We need both.

But the problem with ideologues, whether

they be left, right or center, is that they blindly follow agendas. They have no interest in the philosophy of Chris Rock, who said, "I'm not a liberal or a conservative because that means I have my mind made up before I hear the issue." If a person is victimized or discriminated against because of their race, nationality, religion or sexual orientation, it is still wrong.

In prison, should we allow solitary confinement for prisoners who endanger others with violence while also firing correction officers who use solitary confinement when it's not warranted? Should

we back cops who use deadly force to protect innocent lives and their own lives and prosecute those who wrongly kill people? Should both police and social programs be well-funded? Of course!

There are people across the political spectrum who love Clint Eastwood's Dirty Harry movies, but Harry killed dangerous criminals, not people selling loose cigarettes. Before people line up on the sides of opposite extremes, they should remember the words of Stephen Stills, "Nobody's right, if everybody's wrong."

**Richard Warren,  
Van Cortlandt Village**

### National Crime Week

April 18 through 24, 2021 is National Crime Victims Week. Now, more than ever, that assistance is needed in the Bronx which has become the "O.K. Corral" with gun violence. Need I repeat what happened in one week? A 20-year-old shot in the head on Hull Ave, two blocks over, a man was seen walking on a weekday afternoon with an AK-47 rifle on Webster Avenue. Three blocks over to the right, a teen was shot in the leg in front of a Church on East 206th Street! Across the Bronx River parkway, two teens on a scooter fire an automatic weapon into an Olinville playground with children playing.

These incidents just highlight the Norwood and Olinville sections of the Bronx, and what are

our City Council elected officials doing? Going after the police to defund them! Forget about helping innocent crime victims. Maybe we need more Norwoodites to get off Facebook and get into the good book - the Holy Bible!

**Richard Marias  
Norwood**

### Earth Day, April 22

Let us celebrate Earth Day April 22nd all year long. Besides recycling newspapers, magazines, glass, plastics, old medicines, paints and cleaning materials, there are other actions you can take which will also contribute to a cleaner environment. Leave your car at home. For local trips in the neighborhood, walk or ride a bike.

As more fellow New Yorkers get fully

vaccinated against COVID-19, it is now safer to use mass transit. For longer travels, consider the many public transportation alternatives already available. MTA NYC Transit subway, bus, Metro North along with other private transportation owners offer various options, such as local and express bus, ferry, jitney, subway and commuter rail services.

Most of these systems are funded with your tax dollars. They use less fuel and move far more people than cars. In many cases, your employer can offer transit checks to help subsidize a portion of the costs. Utilize your investments and reap the benefits. You'll be supporting a cleaner environment and be less stressed upon arrival at your final destination.

Many employers now allow employees to telecommute and work from home full and part time. Others use alternative work schedules, which afford staff the ability to avoid rush hour gridlock. This saves travel time and can improve mileage per gallon. You could join a car or van pool to share the costs of commuting.

Use a hand powered lawn mower instead of a gasoline or electric one. Rake your leaves instead of using gasoline powered leaf blowers. The amount of pollution created by gasoline powered lawn mowers or leaf blowers will surprise you.

A cleaner environment starts with everyone.

**Larry Penner  
Great Neck**

### SPONSORED CONTENT

## New Clinical Study To Help People Who Are Living With Chronic Pain

**Allen Burton, M.D.,  
Medical Director,  
Abbott Neuromodulation**

Abbott's DISTINCT Clinical Study is Here to Help People in Your Neighborhood Who are Living with Chronic Low Back Pain

Low back pain is the world's leading cause of years lost to disability, according to a study in The Lancet. And for 20 percent of patients, low back pain can become "chronic," which the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke defines as pain that persists for six months or more.

Now, a clinical study, which recently got underway at Montefiore Medical Center - Waters Place, Bronx, N.Y., is investigating a distinct new way to help treat people who suffer with chronic low back pain. The DISTINCT (Dorsal spinal cord STimulation vs mediCal management for the Treatment of low back pain) study, sponsored by Abbott, will compare the use of spinal cord stimulation (SCS) to standard medical care, which can include taking medicine. The goal of the study will be to determine how much a patient's level of pain, physical function and emotional well-being improves under each type of care.

SCS treats people living with chronic pain by using mild electrical pulses delivered by a small implant to change pain signals as they travel from the spi-

nal cord to the brain. The study will use Abbott's BurstDR SCS device, which has been used over the past five years to help those affected by back pain.

Currently, doctors do not have consistent treatment guidelines for chronic low back pain. Many patients start on a regimen of over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medications and exercise or physical therapy. Some will eventually be prescribed opioids for the pain, while others might qualify for surgery. For those who are not able to have surgery, treatment options can be limited.

Findings from the study could answer questions healthcare providers have about how to treat low back pain in patients who are not able to have surgery and for whom there are limited treatment options. This could also help inform future standards of care, and provide insurance companies with the evidence necessary to demonstrate the benefit of SCS for patients who are not able to have surgery.

The DISTINCT study is now enrolling at up to 30 sites across the United States. Patients will be randomized to either SCS treatment or be treated with medication. Participants will be followed in-clinic and via telephone over a two-year period.

To see if you may be eligible for Abbott's DISTINCT study and to obtain more information on how to enroll, visit [Neurostudies.abbott](http://Neurostudies.abbott).

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# Out & About

Compiled by SÍLE MOLONEY

## Events

**Can't Stop, Won't Stop: New York and the Birth of Hip-Hop** on Thursday, April 29, 2021, 5 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. will discuss hip-hop's roots and why hip-hop continues to be one of New York City's great contributions to global culture. Targeted to high school and college-age students, the panel will feature stories from the pioneering hip-hop family of DJ Kool Herc and Cindy Campbell, whose August 1973 party is commonly cited as the beginning of the hip-hop movement. The panel will be led by Davey D and Rob Kenner, who almost half a century later, utilize hip-hop to advance social change.

Panelists include Davey D, hip-hop journalist, activist and historian, co-author of "Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of Hip-Hop, Young Adult Edition," DJ Kool Herc, "the Father of Hip-Hop," Cindy Campbell, the "Mother of Hip-Hop," Rob Kenner - hip-hop/dancehall journalist and filmmaker, author of "The Marathon Don't Stop." The event will be moderated by Jeff Chang, co-author of "Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of Hip-Hop, Young Adult

Edition." Learn more at <https://www.nymusicmonth.nyc/>.

## Art

**KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature** exhibition is now showing at The New York Botanical Garden, featuring new work by celebrated Japanese artist, Yayoi Kusama. Showing from April 10 to Oct. 31, 2021, the vibrant, fun-filled, colorful exhibition is the first ever, comprehensive exploration of the artist's lifelong fascination with the natural world and takes place across the Garden's 250-acre landscape. The New York Botanical Garden is the sole venue for this exhibition. Tickets on sale now at <https://www.nybg.org/event/kusama/>.

The New York Public Library launched its first **World Literature Festival**, highlighting multicultural collections and resources for New York's diverse communities. The festival runs from April 12, in honor of **Immigrant Heritage Week**, through April 30. The festival will feature a selection of literary events with authors from around the world, book discussion groups, and bilingual story time for children. Multilingual programs with English interpretation will feature a wide variety of guest speakers and

authors, such as National Book Award winners, Ha Jin, Nicole Dennis Benn, Alexander Stessin, Naomi Hirahara, Don Miguel Ruiz and Colombe Schneck. Each discussion will be held in the author's native language. The library's signature event series, LIVE from the NYPL, will also hold two special events. For more information, go to: <https://www.nypl.org/events/world-literature-festival>.

## The Bronx Memoir Project

**(BMP)** is a community-based writing project that encourages a cross-generational, multi-ethnic collective of Bronx residents to tell their stories first-hand. Participants engage in free workshops, led by a professional writers, culminating in the opportunity to submit their work for publication in the Bronx Memoir Project Anthology. For more information, go to: <https://www.bronxarts.org/programs/connector/bronx-memoir-project>.

## Music

**The History of Latin Music & Latin Jazz Part XIV** is a free seminar series by Hostos Community College's Continuing Education & Workforce Development. It highlights the music pioneers and their impact on the history of Latin music and jazz. Film, video, and music clips add to the learning experience. Hosted by Joe Conzo Sr., noted music historian, producer, and author of *Mambo Diablo: My Journey with Tito Puente*, the seminars take place virtually on Zoom, every Saturday through April 24, 2021 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Call (718) 518-6656 or email [cedu@hostos.cuny.edu](mailto:cedu@hostos.cuny.edu) for more information.

## Movement

Join the **Spring Planting and Garlic Mustard Pull** on Saturday, April 17, 2021 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Help kick off Earth Week 2021 with a spring planting of shrubs and trees in the forest of Van Cortlandt Park, along the Putnam Greenway. Meet at Van Cortlandt Golf House. In addition to planting, the group will also be removing the introduced garlic mustard species, harmful to native forests, outcompeting native herbaceous plants. Gloves and tools will be provided. Volunteers must wear masks and follow social distancing at all times. RSVP required for this free event. Call (718) 601-1460 or email [john@vancortlandt.org](mailto:john@vancortlandt.org).

Shape up NYC presents **"Whine" fitness** (aerobic dance fitness) for teens, adults, and seniors each Friday from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., from April 16 to June 30, at Williamsbridge Oval Park. Join this Carnival-style workout, with easy-to-follow dance moves, and let the bass-driven music move you. Memorable time guaranteed! For everyone's safety, participants and instructors should wear a face covering and maintain social distancing of 10 feet during class. Wash your hands frequently and stay home, if sick. Carmen is the instructor. Sign up here for updates on this class: <https://www.nycgovparks.org/reg/shape-up-nyc/10697>.

## NYS DOH Pauses Johnson & Johnson Vaccine Pending Investigation

By SÍLE MOLONEY

The CDC and FDA issued a statement recommending a pause in the use of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine on April 13, out of an abundance of caution, and following reports that six women who had received the vaccine developed blood clots. One woman has died, and an investigation is underway to determine what caused the blood clots. New York State followed the CDC and FDA recommendation and paused

the use of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine statewide, while the health and safety federal agencies evaluate the next steps.

All appointments for Johnson & Johnson vaccines on April 13 at New York State mass vaccination sites were honored with the Pfizer vaccine.

New York State Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker said, "As the CDC and FDA have said, any adverse events related to the Johnson & Johnson

vaccine 'appear to be extremely rare' and, 'People who have received the J&J vaccine who develop severe headache, abdominal pain, leg pain, or shortness of breath within three weeks after vaccination should contact their health care provider.'"

He added that he was in constant contact with the federal government and will update New Yorkers as more information becomes available.

On Wednesday, April 14, NBC News

reported that Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of National Institute of Allergy & Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and head of the White House coronavirus task force, said the Johnson & Johnson vaccine pause will last days, not months.

Norwood News recently reported on how The Bronx has the lowest vaccination rate across New York City, at 35 percent, and the efforts being taken to address that.



# Big Pun Family Unite at Street Renaming

By JASON GONZALEZ

"Meet me on the corner of the plaza... you mean Big Pun Plaza?" Twenty-one years after his untimely passing at just 28 years of age, the Grammy-nominated rapper, Big Pun, has a piece of his native Bronx turf named after him. The popular intersection of Fordham Road and the Grand Concourse is now known as Big Pun Plaza.

The Puerto Rican artist was celebrated on March 22 in front of a peaceful crowd that included some well-known faces. Hip Hop pioneers, Grand Master Caz and Kool DJ Red Alert, were in attendance, as were District 14 City Councilman Fernando Cabrera and Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr.

Long before the release of his platinum-selling debut studio album, *Capital Punishment*, Big Pun had pledged his allegiance to the Bronx. The proof was in his lyrics, as when he recited the bar, "The king of New York lays his crown in the Boogie Down."

Liza Rios is Big Pun's widow and knew him since they were teens. "He would probably be doing backflips now, if he could," she said, smiling. "Actually, he's here... he's feeling it. He's happy. This is what he wanted."

Rios was a moving force behind the plaza's renaming. "I dedicated my life to give this man [even after death] whatever he wanted," she told celebrating fans. "I am excited that we were able to make this happen. He is well-deserving of it. He's a legend, and we are here to stay forever."

The event featured DJ Doo Wop spinning on "the Ones and Twos" as well as friends and family of the lyricist known for his multi-syllabic rhyme scheme and incredible breath control.

Big Pun's son, Chris Rios, was only six when his father died, and recalled being impressed by the masses of fans who showed up at his father's funeral to mourn him. "Today, again, I get to see him be immortalized ever further beyond that," he said. "This is the place [the Bronx] he was born at, the place he died at, and the place that he became an immortal. To see the fact that he got a street named after him, I know that he is shining down and smiling right now."

The street co-naming ceremony was originally scheduled for February 8. However, Mother Nature had dif-



Photos by Jason Gonzalez

**A STREET RENAMING** in honor of Grammy-nominated artist and Soundview native, Big Pun, took place on March 22, 2021. Family and friends of the Grammy-nominated artist and Soundview native, Big Pun, who died 21 years ago, celebrate the renaming of the popular intersection of Fordham Road and the Grand Concourse as Big Pun Plaza, on March 22, 2021.

ferent plans on that day, and inclement weather forced a cancellation. But some would argue that there isn't an expiration date on greatness.

"Top of the world Ma! Top of the world!" shouted rapper and Big Pun's best friend, Cuban Link. "That's where he wanted to be [memorialized in the

Bronx]. He wanted to go out like a gangster and a gentleman, and we celebrate with him today. He got his own street now. Oh wait! He doesn't have a street; he has a plaza! That's even better!"

When reminiscing about the good old days, when his comrade was alive, Cuban Link said that every day with Big Pun was special. "Every day with Pun was happy days," he said. "He just had that humor. We used to make each other giggle in our own personal space with our own personal jokes. All he had to do was look at me and it was over! We had that chemistry, where we already knew. That's hard to find."

For Rios' supporters, his memorialization is a long time coming. A decade ago, the rapper's family members were rebuffed when they met with Community Board 2, requesting that the corner of Rogers Place and E. 163rd Street in Longwood be renamed for him.

Board 2 members and other local leaders had argued that Big Pun didn't give back enough to the community during his lifetime to deserve the honor of a street renaming. Other residents argued that memorializing him would serve to promote the lifestyle he talked about in his lyrics, some of which were about drugs and violence.

Big Pun [Punisher] was born Christopher Lee Rios on November 10, 1971. The native son of Soundview died from a heart attack, coupled with respiratory failure on February 7, 2000. The rapper had struggled with obesity for most of his adult life. It has been reported by various sources that he weighed 698 pounds at the time of his death.

Big Pun's second album, *Yeeeah Baby*, dropped posthumously in April of the same year, and just like his previous project, it was certified platinum. But although Big Pun's life may have been cut short, Liza Rios feels that a lot can be learned from her husband's passing.

"Soon enough, everyone will know the full story of his life," she said. "But I would say that self-love [is what people should be taking away from his death]. We got to learn how to love ourselves."

Rios continued, "Pun had a lot of obstacles, and the one thing that he didn't do was love himself," she revealed. "The whole world loved him, but he had to love himself. It's the one thing that I learned from Pun. I always advocate self-love."



# Bronx Lacrosse: A Break from the Norm

By JASON GONZALEZ

While basketball and baseball remain king in the South Bronx, a small but growing number of young athletes of color are trying their hand at “laxin,” a sport typically associated with fancy prep schools.

“Laxin” is slang for playing lacrosse, a sport relatively ignored in the “Boogie-Down” until a nonprofit group, Bronx Lacrosse, started luring young players with dedicated coaching, tutoring and opportunities to shine as athletes.

Youth from Mott Haven, Melrose, Longwood, Hunts Point and Port Morris are now congregating in the neighborhood of Highbridge at least four times a week to play a sport that was once associated with individuals of affluent backgrounds.

Bronx Lacrosse founder and coach Dan Leventhal said the idea originated when he was a Teach for America fellow, teaching math at Highbridge Green Middle School, where he observed higher rates of asthma, obesity and hunger among students.

“In lower income communities, there’s way less access to organized sports, enrichment activities, extra-curricular activities,” Leventhal said. “And then in the South Bronx especially, there’s also health disparities as well.”

As a former player on the Tufts College lacrosse team, and a former program director for Israel Lacrosse, Leventhal decided the sport offered a promising way to address these disparities, while also giving students an opportunity to achieve educational and life success. Leventhal began recruiting students from the Highbridge Green Middle School, as well as the Rafael Hernandez Dual Language Magnet School to form a team, even as he was completing his Master’s degree in education at Fordham University in the Bronx.

His strongest pitch was that colleges and universities are looking to diversify lacrosse, so it can provide an excellent pathway to higher education. “This is a sport that’s played by a majority of white people, and if you’re coming from an area of a diverse background, it can present an opportunity that basketball probably can’t, because there’s so many kids that play basketball,” he explained.

Bronx Lacrosse consists of 150 students/players. The demographics



Photos by Jason Gonzalez

**BRONX LACROSSE** IN action.



listed on the Bronx Lacrosse website show the make-up of the team’s players as 75 percent Latinx and 25 percent Black or African-American descent, with females making up 53 percent of the roster. Although the team is fully comprised of Bronxites from all over the county, the South Bronx is the most represented region of the borough.

As the young ladies of Bronx Lacrosse took to the field at 1055 Jerome Avenue, in Highbridge, on a warm spring afternoon, their competitive spirit was on full display, and they approached the scrimmage as a real game. Second year player, Lizmary Rojas, is elated to be on board. Rojas’ fascination with the sport started when she first picked up a stick and caught

several passes.

“The program is very special to me because this is a way, especially right now in the pandemic, where I can stay safe and be active,” the 13-year-old said. “I know many of us are stuck at home, and are probably bored, or like trying to think, so I know that this is definitely something that keeps my mind off of all the bad things.”

Bronx Lacrosse players have experienced their fair share of achievements on and off the field. Last season, both the boys’ and girls’ middle school teams won the middle school championship.

Both teams play their home games at Randall’s Island and Bronx Lacrosse competes against other schools in New

York City, Westchester County and Connecticut. Hunter Middle School and The Anderson School are just a few of Bronx Lacrosse’s rivals.

The group has several funding streams to cover expenses incurred for uniforms, equipment, park permits, and coach salaries. The nonprofit receives support from private donors, as well as the City Department of Education and the Department of Youth and Community Development, through partnerships with WHEDCO [Women Housing Economic Development Corporation].

Rojas’s teammate, Ashley Zamora, 14, said playing on the team has helped her focus on the future and her dreams, and tutoring offered by the nonprofit has helped her raise her grades. “When it came to the sport, it helped me improve as a person and it helped me become a better team teammate,” she said. “I plan on becoming a leader for the younger lacrosse players, and I want to get into a good college to be a surgeon.”

Leventhal is proud of the strides that Bronx Lacrosse has made since he introduced the sport to the neighborhood five years ago. But, at 29, he said he has plenty of bigger ambitions for the future. “We’re looking to give kids an opportunity to achieve life success,” he said. “That’s what we’re trying to do.”



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# FOMP Launches Clean Air Initiative

By SÍLE MOLONEY

As the warmer weather starts to kick in, as Bronxites venture outdoors, and barbecuing season approaches, Friends of Mosholu Parkland (FOMP) has launched a Clean Air Initiative to remind community members to be mindful of those with asthma, and to take pro-active measures to maintain clean, healthy air in their respective communities.

“The community of Mosholu deserves clean, fresh, and unpolluted air,” said Elizabeth Quaranta, executive director of FOMP, adding that with the high rates of asthma in The Bronx, the message was even more important.

As reported previously by Norwood News, according to the New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, each year, approximately 20,000 children in New York City end up in the emergency department or are hospitalized due to asthma. About 40 percent of these children live in the Bronx, with Black and Latino communities among the most affected.

Quaranta said that barbecues are not just about litter but air pollution. “The Bronx is already compromised with more people coming into this community from the exponential housing development,” she said. “With tall buildings, there is less air flow between residents. We are creating a heat island effect more than ever. When we smell toxic smoke coming from a building, don’t we call 311 or even 911?”

Quaranta said FOMP’s clean air campaign is about breathing in clean air, which also helps those who are asthmatic. They encourage residents to take note of the following points in this regard:

- Inhaling carcinogens is not good. The smoke produced by grilling contains carcinogens and other pollutants that damage health. BBQ smoke contains a high level of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), which are known to cause DNA mutations and lung disease. Research also confirms that smoke also enters the skin more quickly causing the same amount of damage. Barbecue pollutes the air. The particles that are small enough to make it down into the airways and

into the lungs and some of the gases, such as nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), can also trigger asthma symptoms. A typical barbecue releases as much greenhouse gas into the atmosphere as a 90-mile car journey, scientists have found.

- There are alternatives to barbecuing. It’s often easier to throw an eco-friendly picnic. Planning ahead, keeping things simple, and choosing sustainable supplies are surefire ways to make your summer picnics as eco-friendly as possible. Picnics are also healthier, and Bronx county is ranked number 62 out of New York State’s 62 counties when it comes to the population’s overall health.

- Residents can bring their take-out food to the park, but should remember to take away what they pack in. With budget cuts to the City’s Parks’ department, our trash pick-up is limited to almost nothing. Residents are asked to take their trash with them, recycle what they can, and dispose of the rest. Many parks nationwide are opting out of providing trash bins in public parks. Quaranta sees that being implemented here too, as the City has already done it on most of the MTA platforms.

Residents who still wish to barbecue in public are encouraged to do so in designated barbecue sites, located across the borough. The following website: <https://www.nycgovparks.org/facilities/barbecue> lists those areas. For those who do barbecue, Parks’ department officials have advised that Parks’ enforcement patrol officers (PEPs) will continue to regularly patrol Mosholu and other parks in the Bronx and elsewhere and will be working closely with the NYPD to monitor and enforce the rules to ensure compliance with all applicable barbecuing and fire restrictions.

Because barbecuing outside of designated areas is not permitted, a Parks’ department spokesperson told the Norwood News, “We ask New Yorkers observing instances of such [violations] to report them to 311.”

Because of the ongoing pandemic, City officials and PEP officers are fully aware that people need to make use of the parks for recreational purposes and for their mental health, es-

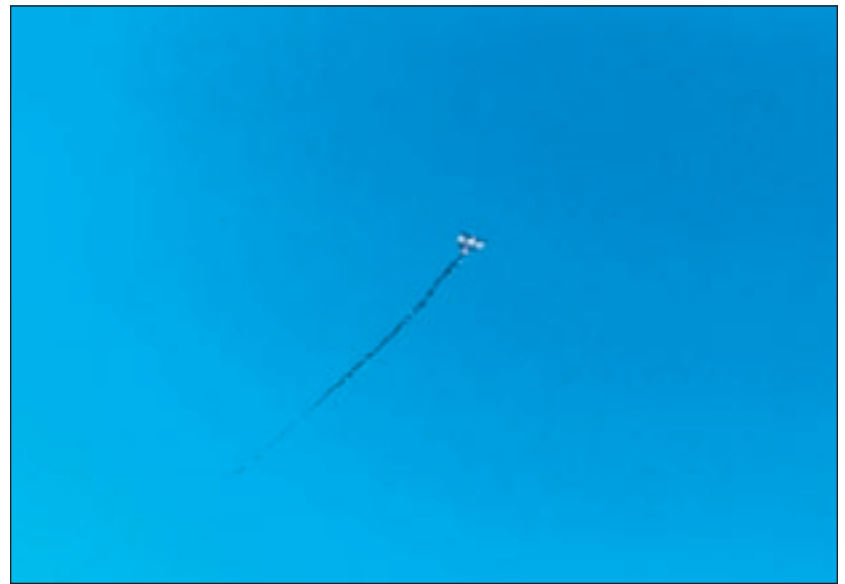


Photo by Danilo Batista on Unsplash

## CLEAR BLUE SKY



Image courtesy of the National Forestry

**A SIGN FROM** the National Forestry encourages residents to clean up after themselves when using public parks.

pecially during warmer weather and in the absence of other options, as the reopening of the City is staggered.

Officials say PEP officers take an educated approach, whenever possible, when speaking to groups who may not be aware of barbecuing restrictions, and will always try to work with residents, as opposed to making arrests or issuing summons.

They say that, typically, summonses are only issued by officers if park patrons refuse to comply with their requests to desist from barbecuing, once they have been warned. That being said, in accordance with NYC Parks’ administration code §18-146(c)(22)(a), failure to comply with fire restrictions can result in a fine of \$50.

Quaranta is critical of what she sees as too low a fine. “That is ridiculous,” she said. “Climate change is a priority for this new [Biden] administration, and barbecue smoke is an issue. That \$50 needs to be \$2,500.”

Meanwhile, prevailing barbecuing guidelines are detailed on the City’s Parks’ department website. Residents are advised to be cautious when barbecuing and to keep a safe distance from patrons, children, and trees.

They are asked to be courteous to others and to clean the area carefully before leaving. Barbecuing events involving more than 20 people require a special events permit.

Parks’ rules prohibit the following:

- littering and dumping of debris
- propane
- barbecuing in non-authorized areas
- barbecuing next to trees, tree roots, or buildings. Residents should keep ten feet or more away from any structures.
- any type of open, ground, or campfire. Please barbecue at least three feet off the ground.
- barbecuing by anyone 18 years or younger

There are also rules which stipulate how to clean up after barbecues. All coal and matches must be disposed of in designated red barrels. Residents should not place anything flammable in a regular litter barrel, and water should be used to extinguish hot coals. Improperly dumped coals or matches can do major damage to the parkland.

Quaranta acknowledged that barbecues have been around for years. “It’s been a pastime, it’s American, it’s July 4th, it’s Labor Day, but at what cost?” she asked. “Remember when everyone smoked? It was the thing to do, but research has changed that smoking habit because it’s killing us.”

Quaranta continued, “We have to take care of each other. People who smoke are not on top of people who don’t. Barbecuing should be the same. Barbecues can trigger all kinds of toxic smoke with asthmatic seniors and people with respiratory issues. Why do I want second-hand smoke? It’s my parkland too.”



# Dinowitz Wins District 11 Special Election

(continued from page 1)

Members Danny Dromm, Mark Treyger, and Kevin Riley, former City Council Member June Eislund, former Congressman Eliot Engel, former Congresswoman Liz Holtzman, the Bronx Democratic Party, the Benjamin Franklin Reform Democratic Club, the Stonewall Democratic Club of NYC, and the Liberty Democratic Association.

As previously reported by *Norwood News*, Dinowitz's endorsement of the Ben Franklin Reform Democratic Club courted some controversy, amid allegations that the proper absentee voting procedure, in accordance with the club's bylaws, had not been followed. This prompted all of the other District 11 candidates to withdraw their request for the club's endorsement. The club denies the allegations.

Dinowitz Jr. added to his statement, saying, "I especially want to thank every voter who made their voice heard in this special election. No matter if you voted for me or not, endorsed me or not, I will work with you to deliver an equitable recovery that ensures all

Bronxites can thrive." He added, "From our students to our working families, to our seniors to all of the North Bronx, I am so excited to get to work for you."

While the official breakdown of all votes by the BOE is still pending, as of the date of writing, according to the Dinowitz campaign, the election featured one of the highest voter turnouts (9,555) of any special election across the City, in at least a decade, and had a higher turnout than the 2014, 2017, and 2019 Democratic primaries, as well as the 2019 public advocate special election.

As of Feb. 21, a total of 102,617 voters were registered to vote in District 11 in the nonpartisan special election, according to the BOE. Of this number, 13,110 were deemed inactive voters, while 89,507 were deemed active.

The BOE confirmed that, as of March 22, 4,423 absentee ballot applications had been distributed and 1,791 have been returned at that stage. They were reviewed for validity, and it was expected that subsequent absentee ballots would also be received during the days following the election date.

According to his campaign, Dinowitz, whose candidacy was previously profiled by *Norwood News*, was able "to build a broad and diverse majority with a positive, future-focused campaign that won every neighborhood and gained votes with each reallocation."

Most of the other District 11 candidates, including Lora, Berkley, Padernacht and Pazmino have voiced their commitment to run again in District 11 in the June Democratic primary race, in addition to social worker and Columbia adjunct professor, Abigail Martin, and male district leader in District 80, Marcos Sierra. The latter two candidates dropped out of the March 23 special election over concerns with signature collection amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Martin and Sierra were among two of a number of candidates who had called for the 450-minimum signature requirement to get on the ballot, to be waived for the special election, citing the health risks associated with COVID-19 for candidates, staff and voters through mass person-to-person contact. New

York State Gov. Andrew Cuomo did drop the minimum signature threshold in the end, but did not eliminate it.

Martin issued a statement in response to the special election results, saying, "We must rebuild our City into one that works for everyone." She added, "I congratulate Eric Dinowitz for winning the special election, but with me running in the June primary, Democrats in the northwest Bronx will now have the chance to elect someone with both the independence and the experience to fight for everyone in our district."

Meanwhile, Sierra provided the following comment on the election results to *Norwood News*, saying, "I wish him [Eric Dinowitz] much success in his new nine-month temporary job!"

For his part, Pazmino said he wished Dinowitz well as he finishes out the current term, left vacant by former Councilman Andrew Cohen, who resigned on December 31, following his election to the Bronx Supreme Court last November. "I look forward to running against him in November, if he doesn't lose in [the] primaries,

this summer," Pazmino said.

Berkley, reflecting on Dinowitz's victory, said his current plans are to be on the ballot in June. "It is time for the candidates fighting against the machine candidate, Eric Dinowitz, to unite against him in the June primary. If we can unite behind a single candidate, I would be willing to step aside, and support that candidate," Berkley told the *Norwood News*. "The overriding goal should be to defeat the machine that has dominated the district for far too long."

Lora also released a statement on Tuesday, saying, "During a pandemic, Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz handed our former councilman a judgeship a year before his term was up, leaving District 11 without representation for months, and forcing this extra election to install his own son as the replacement."

She continued, "Only 11 percent of registered voters turned out for the March 23rd special election, and that's exactly what they wanted. In a district that's majority working-class and people of color, this is effectively voter suppression. The race for City Council is far from over, as this was always a race to the June 22 primary. This seat doesn't belong to one family, it belongs to the people of the Bronx. ¡Punto!"

The assertion that Dinowitz Sr. orchestrated the District 11 special election, the type of election that typically results in lower voter turnout and favors candidates with a strong name recognition, is not new.

As reported previously by *Norwood News*, the inference among some critics was that Dinowitz Sr., as a senior member of the Bronx Democratic Party, campaigned, formally or otherwise, and garnered enough presumptive votes from fellow party members at the party's August 2020 judicial convention to ensure

a successful nomination of Cohen to the Bronx Supreme Court bench. This would have required him, if he won the judgeship, to vacate his council seat before the end of his last term, thereby triggering a special election, leaving the seat open for the assemblyman's son to challenge.

Cohen had indicated his interest in pursuing a judgeship two years prior to the August 2020 convention, so it was not a complete surprise when he was nominated. Jeffrey Dinowitz told the *Norwood News* at the time that Cohen was well-known, and well-respected across the entire borough of the Bronx for his level-headedness, record of building consensus, and legal resume. "That is what the delegates based their decision on," he said, referring to the open vote held at the judicial convention for the judgeship, and adding that three, term-limited council members had sought higher offices that year, including Cohen.

"In addition, it should be noted that Council Member Cohen, Democratic District Leader Eric Dinowitz, and myself did not vote at last night's meeting," the assemblyman said the day after the convention. "Alternates voted in our place, as the record shows. Cynics will always find something to criticize, but I did everything I could to inspire confidence in our judicial selection process, and it is unequivocal that Andy won this nomination through his own hard work and qualifications."

Referring to the special election itself, Dinowitz also said at the time that, assuming Cohen would win the judgeship race in November, which he did, the voters would decide who would replace Cohen in his City Council seat. "Frankly, I reject the supposition that a special election favors any particular candidate for City Council over another," he said.



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