



# NORWOOD NEWS

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## SALSA MUSEUM SEEKS HOME IN THE BRONX



Image courtesy of Aracelis Batista

**AN ARTIST'S RENDERING** of what the International Salsa Museum could look like if housed at the Kingsbridge Armory, in Kingsbridge Heights.

by **ARACELIS BATISTA,**  
**DAVID GREENE**  
& **SILE MOLONEY**

Music industry professionals have joined forces to form

the concept for the International Salsa Museum (ISM) in The Bronx and organizers recently held a press conference in Kingsbridge Heights, outside

the massive Kingsbridge Armory which they hope will, someday, be the home of "El Condado de la Salsa."

The ISM is a non-profit

which was created to educate and increase the public's awareness of salsa and to "preserve salsa music's rich culture" (continued on page 27)



**Axelbank Family Honor Mom with Library Funding | p2**



**LAAL Celebrate End of Ramadan pg 20**



**Sirio Guerino Honored for Community Service | pg 24**

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# Axelbank Family Helps Fund School Library in Memory of Mom & Former Director

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

Family members of the late Muriel “Mickey” Axelbank are making sure students at Marble Hill Nursery School, where the late community leader spent decades as an educator, an assistant director, and finally, as director continue to enrich themselves with a well-stocked library. Sons, Jeffrey and Gary Axelbank, the latter a longtime BronxNet TV host, presented a check for \$1,800 on behalf of the family to the school’s director on June 9.

School director, David Bleeker-Adams, expressed his gratitude for the donation from Mickey’s three sons. (Arthur Axelbank was unable to attend the presentation). “It’s a very pleasurable duty to thank you on behalf of the families and the children and the staff at Marble Hill Nursery School, all of whom use this library and benefit from it,” said Bleeker-Adams.

The non-profit, parent cooperative nursery school, founded in 1953, is located within the Marble Hill Houses complex and serves an average of 55 children each year, according to information posted on the school’s website. After their mom’s passing last year, the three Axelbank brothers reached out to the school, knowing that they wanted to do something to honor her legacy and help the students in a tangible way. They said helping with the



Photo by José A. Giralt

**THE LATE MURIEL** “Mickey” Axelbank, at Marble Hill Nursery School, where she served as the school’s director from 1977 to 1985. She died in April 2020 at the age of 91.

school’s library seemed like a natural fit.

In addition to the check, the three brothers also donated some books that held special meaning for them as children. Gary Axelbank donated “Caps for Sale,” by Esphyr Slobodkina. Holding up the book inside the library where the presentation took place, Gary shared some fond memories. “This was my choice; she used to read it to me,” he said. “It’s kind of a cute little tale, but the bottom line is the seller of the caps did the right thing... and something really good happened to him at the end of it, and there’s a little bit of a lesson in that.”

Mickey Axelbank died in April 2020. In her obituary, published in the *Norwood News*, she was described as “an exceptional woman with a big heart that touched everyone around her.” She served as the school’s director from 1977 to 1985.

Karen Worchel first got to know Mickey while bringing her eldest

daughter to the school at a time when Mickey was serving as the assistant director. According to Worchel, those were some of the darkest days in New York City’s history, when it was often described as being “broke,” such was the extent of the apparent lack of funding. “[I didn’t realize] what a burden it was for her to take over that job,” Worchel said. “She did it with such grace and such resilience, that when I think about it, it’s just astonishing to me.” Worchel went on to work with Mickey as the administrative director at the school for eight years.

“She was a role model for me, actually. ... I don’t ever remember her being unpleasant or rude to anybody. She got what she needed by being kind and knowing what she wanted. I really loved her,” Worchel said. “It was my honor to work with her.”

The legacy of how Mickey led the school during the early days continues to resonate with the school’s current director also. “Mickey is mainly an inspiration in that she weathered really difficult times, as well,” Bleeker-Adams said.

Meanwhile, Mickey’s son, Jeffrey, a psychologist based in New Jersey, told the *Norwood News*, “The gift to this school is meant to replenish their library with both newer copies of the classics, and to buy new books that reflect the diversity of the children here.”

In 1973, Mickey earned her master’s degree in early childhood education. Jeffrey remembers her dedication to students and fellow educators at Marble Hill. “I remember picking her up at the end of the day, and there was always a problem getting her out of here,” he said. “She was just immersed in working with children, or working with parents, or working with teachers. ... She just loved this place.”

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# INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week, we asked readers their thoughts on the new Citi Bike stations that have recently popped up across the borough.



"I actually came out of the building, and it just appeared there last week. That's when I noticed it. I'm actually looking forward to using them, and I was just saying to my friend that I think it's a great use of the space. I do think if you're going to use these bikes, you definitely should have all the safety gear that you should wear when you're biking."

**Monique Robinson,**  
Bedford Park



"No, I won't ride it. I think it's too dangerous and they need to enforce the laws and the rules of the road more, so everybody can be safe: helmets, speed and insurance – absolutely! It seems like anybody can just drive and ride, but there needs to be more enforcement because if not, there are going to be more accidents."

**Sharon Smith,**  
Bedford Park



"I didn't know about this, and I do watch the news, but it wasn't really reported on. In the Bronx, we do need parking spaces and these stations are everywhere and they are taking a lot of parking spaces. I don't think it's right because we do have a lot of cars in the Bronx. I'm going to use it today because I want to have the fun of being a kid again. I'm actually late for work, and I could get an Uber or a train, but it won't really play a part in my day-to-day life. I think the way they have some in the street could be a danger to users, from the passing traffic."

**James Heyeman,**  
Norwood



"Yes, I will ride it. I think it's a good opportunity to go anywhere I want to go, and I don't have to drive, so you save time and save money. It's very convenient and good for the neighborhood. People are suffering to go 10, 15 or 20 blocks and they can take a ride, and you can drop the bike off anywhere you like. It could make it a little harder for the drivers, but I think it's okay for more people to have the convenience."

**Gurmit Singh,**  
Kingsbridge



"I feel like the Citi Bikes are not as necessary in the City, because we are losing a lot of parking spaces and this is what we need, especially when you live in an apartment building. When you live in a house, you have plenty of parking, but around here there's not a lot of parking spaces. When you put the Citi Bikes in, it limits the amount of parking spaces, especially in commercial areas like here. If you want to go shopping and you want to park right away, now you can't park right away. Citi Bikes are in the way and I don't know why they would put it in the Bronx. Nobody is going to rent it. They're going to steal the bikes, and I also don't know if these bikes have insurance, and Citi Bank, the one that owns them, I don't think they're going to pay for any damage."

**Luis Villar,**  
Woodlawn



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# NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY

## Open Air Dining Brings Color to Street

The southeast corner of Jerome Avenue and Gun Hill Road in Norwood is seeing brighter days with the recent arrival of colorful street paving, all in preparation for the expansion of open-air dining in the neighborhood, and now that the weather is getting warmer. Bright asymmetrical shapes in sunflower yellow, different shades of blue, and bright orange light up an eye-catching pathway along the street, ready to attract open air diners as the City celebrates an easing of COVID-19 restrictions.



Photo by Judy Noy

**THE SOUTHEAST CORNER** of Jerome Avenue and Gun Hill Road in Norwood is prepared for open-air dining.

## CD15 Campaign Financing Reaches Close to \$500M

Close to half a million dollars have been paid out in taxpayer dollars to candidates in the District 15 City Council race, according to a summary by the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB), as of Thursday, June 17. Under the CFB's public matching funds program, participating candidates received a total of \$464,181 in public matching funds. The summary also showed that, as of June 17, collectively, participating candidates had raised a total of \$144,186 in private funds, and had spent just over a quarter of a million dollars, \$251,843, collectively, on their campaigns, ahead of the June 22 primary election.

## New Bill Allowing Seniors in Co-Ops Access to Home Equity Loans Passes

The State Assembly and State Senate have passed legislation to allow seniors living in cooperative apartment buildings apply for "reverse mortgages," a type of loan currently available to homeowners that transfers built-up home equity into cash. Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (A.D. 81), who was one of the legislators to introduce the bill, announced the news on Friday, June

# Fire in University Heights, Potentially Suspicious

By SÍLE MOLONEY

A fire broke out in University Heights on Saturday afternoon, June 19, and the cause of the fire is potentially being treated as suspicious.

Citizen's App users posted that a fire was reported shortly after mid-day on the second floor of a building located at 130 West 183rd Street in University Heights. A video posted to the app showed several fire trucks at the location, with a ladder deployed.

Citizen users later posted that at around 12.30, firefighters at the scene said the the fire had been brought under control, but that the cause was deemed as being potentially suspicious. The users added that FDNY officials said fire marshals had been requested to investigate the cause of the incident.

The FDNY had tweeted at 12.11 p.m. the same day that "all hands" had been requested to respond to the said location, regarding a fire in a multiple dwelling. FDNY officials tweeted again at 12.30 p.m. confirming that fire had been brought under control.

*Norwood News* reached out to the FDNY for more information as to the cause of the fire, and whether there were any injuries.

On Sunday, June 20, the FDNY formally confirmed that a fire had been reported in a 6-story multiple dwelling at 12.02 in the afternoon on June 19, at 130 West 183rd Street, and that 12 FDNY units responded comprising about 60 members. The official said the fire had been placed under control at 12.29 in the afternoon and that there had been no injuries.

*Norwood News* asked if the cause of the fire had, in fact, been deemed suspicious finally. We did not receive an immediate response.



Image courtesy of the Citizen's App.

**A SCREENSHOT TAKEN** from a video posted to the Citizen's App shows fire trucks at 130 West 183rd Street in University Heights, responding to a fire at a multiple dwelling.

11, as the Legislature broke for the summer recess.

Dinowitz wrote that many of those living in co-operative apartment units are elderly and are of low to middle-income. Many also have fixed incomes derived solely from social security and pension checks. Although cooperative apartments are not considered to be "real property," and thus are not traditionally eligible for such reverse mortgages, coop owners have invested a substantial amount of their lifetime earnings into home equity.

According to bankrate.com, a home equity loan is

a lump-sum loan that's secured by home equity. Quickloans.com defines equity as the difference between what a person owes their mortgage and what their home is currently worth. If a person owes \$150,000 on their mortgage, and their home is worth \$200,000, they have \$50,000 of home equity.

## Rare 'Annular' Eclipse of the Sun Briefly Visible in Co-Op City

Bronx residents who were awake and facing east at dawn on Thursday, June 10, captured a rare, yet brief treat as an 'annular' eclipse of the sun was visible in the

eastern sky across North America. In New York City, the eclipse was cut short when thick clouds and rain rolled into the area. Partial solar eclipses happen when the moon comes between the sun and earth, but the moon only partially covers the sun's disk. A total solar eclipse happens when the moon comes between the sun and earth and casts the darkest part of its shadow, the umbra, on earth.

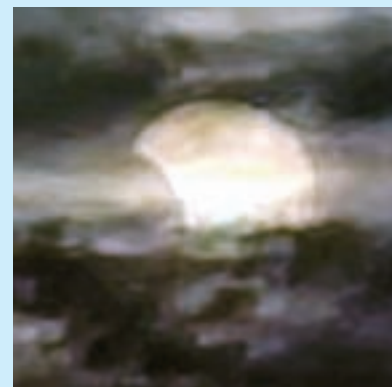


Photo by Michelle Diaz.

**THE MOON PARTIALLY** blocks out the sun in this photo, facing east from Co-Op City, during an annular eclipse observed on Thursday, June 10, 2021.



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# Van Cortlandt Village: Woman Dies Apparently after Fall from Bike

By SÍLE MOLONEY

A woman has died after an apparent fall from her bicycle in Van Cortlandt Village, police have confirmed.

On Friday, June 11, at approximately 12.29 in the afternoon, police were informed of an unconscious cyclist, lying on the roadway along the paved bike path in Van Cortlandt Park, near Dickinson Avenue, located in the 50th precinct. Upon arrival, officers observed a 56-year-old woman lying on the roadway/bike path, unconscious and unresponsive with head trauma. Police said no helmet was found.

EMS responded to the location and transported the aided woman to Montefiore Hospital, where she was pronounced deceased. Further investigation by the NYPD Highway District's Collision Investigation Squad determined the cyclist had been traveling north on the bike path in Van Cortlandt Park, in the vicinity of Dickinson Avenue, when she fell from the bicycle and was discovered lying on the ground.

The deceased has been identified as Jian Hua Li, 56, of Jerome Park, The Bronx.

There have been widespread re-



Photo by birdlives9 via Flickr

## VAN CORTLANDT PARK

ports of attacks against Asian-Americans in recent months. However, according to police, no other vehicle or person was involved in the incident or affected. They added that the investigation remains ongoing.

Norwood News asked the NYPD if this meant there was a possibility the woman may have been attacked before she fell from the bike. Sergeant Anwar Ishmael, an NYPD spokesperson, said,

"Yes, the information provided is preliminary and the investigation is ongoing."

We asked if this meant the incident was being investigated as a possible hate crime. A spokesperson responded, saying, "No, the investigation is preliminary, and ongoing." Sergeant Edward Riley, NYPD spokesperson, later added, "This investigation is being conducted by the Highway Collision

investigation squad."

Anyone with information with regard to this incident is asked to call the NYPD's Crime Stoppers Hotline at 1-800-577-TIPS (8477) or for Spanish, 1-888-57-PISTA (74782). The public can also submit their tips by logging onto the CrimeStoppers website at [WWW.NYPDCRIMESTOPPERS.COM](http://WWW.NYPDCRIMESTOPPERS.COM), on Twitter @NYPDTips. All calls are strictly confidential.

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COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY



## DOT Worker Arrested for Child Sex Abuse

An off-duty New York City employee was arrested on child sex abuse charges on Friday, June 18, at 10.30 p.m. in the 46th precinct, which covers Fordham, University Heights, Morris Heights and Mount Hope. José Lozano, 50, an NYC Department of Transportation bricklayer was arrested and charged with rape, two counts of a criminal sex act involving a victim less than 13 years old, two counts of sex abuse involving a victim under 13 years old, and two counts of acting in a manner injurious to a child less than 17 years of age. A person arrested is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

## Fatal Shooting in Fordham Manor

A 29-year-old woman has died following a shooting in Fordham Manor. On Wednesday, June 16, at around 11.24 p.m., police responded to a 911 call regarding a man who had been shot at East 194th Street and Marion Avenue, in the 52nd precinct. Upon arrival, officers observed two people with gunshot wounds: a 31-year-old man with multi-

ple gunshot wounds about his body, and a 29-year-old woman with a gunshot wound to her torso.

EMS also responded to the location and transported both victims to Saint Barnabas Hospital, where the woman was pronounced deceased. She has been identified as Katherine Diop, 29, of Fordham Manor. The man is currently listed in stable condition. There are no arrests at this time, and the investigation remains ongoing.



## Bedford Park: 17-Year-Old Stabbed and Robbed in Store

The NYPD is seeking the public's assistance identifying the men seen in the above-surveillance photos who are wanted for questioning regarding a robbery and stabbing that occurred in Bedford Park. On Sunday, June 13, at around 3 p.m., inside a store lo-

cated at 2701 Decatur Avenue, in the 52nd precinct, a 17-year-old male store customer was approached by two unidentified men who punched and kicked him about the body, threw baking flour and butter on him, and forcibly removed the sneakers he was wearing.

One of the men then removed a knife from behind the bodega counter and stabbed the victim once in his abdomen. EMS responded to the location and transported the victim to Saint Barnabas Hospital in stable condition. The suspects fled in an unknown direction.

## Fordham Heights: Two Arrested for Murder

A 20-year-old woman and a 23-year-old man have been arrested on murder charges following an incident in Fordham Heights. On June 14, police confirmed that Fatimah Adegoke, 20, of Yonkers was arrested on charges of murder, manslaughter, robbery and criminal possession of a weapon. Marlon Gardner, 23, of New Rochelle, had been arrested on June 9, on charges of murder, manslaughter, robbery, burglary and criminal possession of a loaded firearm.

On Sunday, June 6, at around 2.14 a.m., police responded to a 911 call regarding a man who had been shot inside a building on Tiebout Avenue, located in the 46th precinct. Upon arrival, officers observed a 40-year-old man, unconscious and unresponsive with a gunshot wound to the torso. EMS responded and transported the victim to Saint Barnabas Hospital where he was pronounced deceased. The deceased was identified as Edward Campbell, 40, of Tiebout Avenue in the Bronx. A person arrested and accused of a crime is presumed innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law.

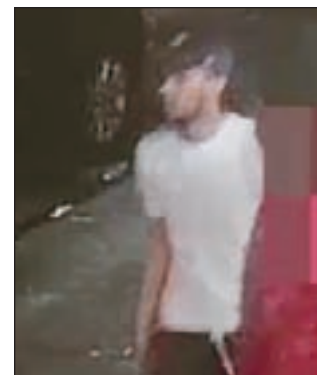
## Bedford Park: Search for Man Wanted in Connection with Reckless Shooting

The NYPD is seeking the public's assistance identifying the person seen in the video screenshot below who is wanted for questioning in connection to a reckless endangerment incident that occurred in the 52nd precinct.

On Saturday, June 12, at around 2.35 a.m., the person approached an 18-year-old male victim and a 17-year-old male victim, as they sat in a parked vehicle in front of 2835

Grand Concourse, in Bedford Park. After the vehicle left the location, the suspect displayed a firearm and discharged it multiple times in the vehicle's direction. The victims were not injured.

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



Anyone with information with regard to these incidents is asked. All calls are strictly confidential.

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- Check for expiring items & handle returns.
- Maintain a safe and clean work environment by keeping store areas clean (dusting, wipe counters/shelves).
- Contribute to team effort.
- Promptly complete tasks requested by management.
- Flexible to work any shift within store hours

## Pharmacy Tech

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- Assist pharmacist in dispensing prescriptions & over-the-counter products
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- Properly document patient requests
- Communicate well with patients regarding orders & provide excellent customer service.
- Check for expiring items & handle returns
- Maintain safe and clean work environment by keeping store area clean
- Contribute to team effort
- Order items based on patient need
- Promptly complete tasks requested by management.

# District 11 City Council Race: Mino Lora Addresses Inwood Rezoning Controversy

By SÍLE MOLONEY

District 11 City Council candidate, Mino Lora, has been facing pressure in recent weeks to explain her alleged support of a controversial, \$200 million re-zoning plan, the Inwood Rezoning Plan, announced in 2018 for the Northern Manhattan district where the candidate's nonprofit, the People's Theater Project (PTP) is located.

Lora encountered criticism over the plan from different perspectives and has addressed each of them. We will attempt to break them down one by one.

Firstly, local Inwood housing activists had objected to the plan, concerned they would be "rezoned" or displaced from their neighborhoods because of it. Some Northwest Bronx voters had asked if the same thing might happen to them if they elected Lora to District 11.

The Inwood housing activists went as far as challenging the rezoning plan at the New York Court of Appeals last year. Though a lower court initially supported the group's arguments, Real Estate Weekly reported that on Nov. 23, 2020, the higher appeals court ruled that, finally, it would *not* hear a case from Inwood Legal Action, the housing group which opposed the plan on grounds that it entrenches racism and "privileges the priorities of developers."

Despite the ruling, some Inwood housing activists remained dissatisfied with the final plan, which was negotiated by Manhattan District 10 Councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez. The councilman had sought input from community residents and stakeholders representing different sectors from small businesses to housing, and from culture to health and education, etc. over three years. Lora was among those who had liaised with the community and provided feedback to Rodriguez, from a cultural perspective, on the community's needs.

According to the City's Economic Development Corporation (EDC), in terms of housing, the plan included the creation of an estimated 1,600 affordable homes on different public

sites and, through the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) program, the expansion of Inwood's affordable housing stock, preserving and protecting 2,500 affordable homes in Inwood and Washington Heights through new resources that would prevent displacement and keep apartment buildings affordable.

It also included a plan to replace Inwood library with a new residential building which would incorporate further affordable housing, along with a new library.

In a NY Daily News May 3 op-ed by Esteban Girón of Tenants Political Action Committee, and Tiffany Ann Khan, an affiliate of Met Council on Housing, the two wrote that the MIH program has been proven disastrous, writing that the program involves subsidizing private, profit-making developers to create 75 percent luxury housing, and [only] 25 percent "affordable" housing in designated zoning areas.

"Even if we accepted the mayor's dishonest definition of affordability, the City already has a glut of luxury housing, and a desperate shortage of housing regular New Yorkers can afford," they wrote.

On Aug. 2, 2018, Rodriguez held a press conference at City Hall, during which he said he felt the final plan would be accepted by the community after some carve outs had been agreed – specifically the removal from the plan of the so-called "U zone" commercial area from Dyckman Street to 207<sup>th</sup> Street.

Lora was one of about ten other people standing alongside Rodriguez as he presented the final plan to the media while simultaneously, housing activists protested outside the building, holding banners which read, "Vote No in Inwood" and "Don't Zone Us Out."

Lora's campaign told the *Norwood News* that she and others involved in the project had been invited to attend the press conference but were unaware of the final details of the plan beforehand, and neither were they aware of which parts of the plan had been removed before it was agreed

and announced.

Meanwhile, Rodriguez told those present, "We have negotiated significant investments in affordable housing creation, preservation, tenants' protection, esteemed education in our schools, and supporting of small businesses." He said the city council, which was required to vote on the plan, had listened to the community, and had understood their priorities.

He then highlighted the plan's main elements, including the affordable housing component. Other wins included "millions" for parks and a new pier at Inwood Park marina, and \$50 million in various educational initiatives as well as a commitment to build a first-in-the-nation, immigrant, research-centered performance arts center (IRPAC) to celebrate the artistic contributions made by all immigrants to the area.

Rodriguez emphasized that both he and his colleagues had made sure to invest in people, education, art and culture, that they had not politicized the situation, and that their aim had been to protect, preserve, and create housing.

He said they had acted responsibly in terms of the negotiation, in aiming to protect small businesses by reducing the extent of the rezoning plan, and that their intent had been to elevate the lower and middle classes to allow them to live with dignity. "For the first time in our city, we will decide some type of rent control for small businesses, so in any site, developed with City subsidy, we will establish, at least, a ten-year lease in rent control for small businesses," Rodriguez said at the time.

The councilman then answered various questions, saying he didn't have the final figure for the financial commitment by developers for the project but would provide it later.

According to the City's Economic Development Corporation (EDC) website, some components of the development are currently on hold due to the pandemic but on June 10, 2021, the City announced that financing had "been secured and is moving forward for 'The Eliza,' the landmark project that combines the new Inwood branch of The New York Public Library with 100 percent affordable housing in one building."

It is therefore not yet possible to confirm definitively if what was promised in terms of affordable housing in 2018 has yet been delivered.

Rodriguez was asked at what point

he decided to support the final plan, given the lengthy negotiations. He said reducing the extent of the rezoning had been a big factor in making his decision i.e. the carve out of the commercial U-zone.

He was also asked if the proposed 10-year lease program for small businesses was a pilot program that would be expanded to other City neighborhoods. He said it was a first-time plan, starting in Inwood, and agreed as part of the rezoning.

He was then asked if the referenced 1,500 affordable housing units were in addition to what had already been planned for the area, and he said, "No, this is the plan." Finally, he was asked what he would say to those residents who were concerned that they would be displaced, and if the final plan addressed the concerns of those residents.

Rodriguez said, "I believe it does. I believe that the concerns of the residents have been listened to...we feel that this is a good plan that we're putting on the table, and we hope that when the residents will listen in more detail, they will be fine."

As he responded to the various questions, Lora appeared to nod in agreement with the councilman's answers. *Norwood News* reached out to the Lora campaign for a comment regarding criticism over the plan's housing component. Her campaign said that over three years, Lora worked with dozens of arts groups and hundreds of community members to gather community input and identify community needs, just like other leaders did in the areas of small business, housing, education, health and so on.

They said the plan she and her colleagues presented to Rodriguez was not the same plan he announced at the August 2018 press conference, and that they only learned at the same time as the community did that a lot of their proposals and work had been ignored.

As such, Lora said she did not support the final rezoning plan, that she had been shocked to discover its final details, and that the whole experience at the press conference had made it clear to her how important it was to have values-driven, people-first representation at City Hall.

"I learned a great deal from what happened in Inwood," she told the *Norwood News*. "Community involvement is crucial, but it's not enough.

(continued on page 23)



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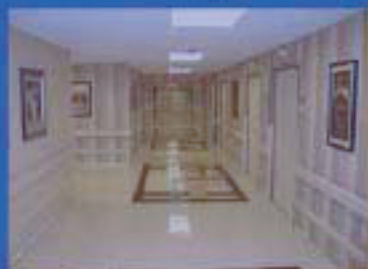
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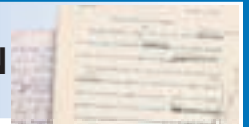
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## NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

COMPILED BY SARAH HUFFMAN



### Mass Vaccination Sites

All New York State mass vaccination sites are now open to eligible New Yorkers for walk-in vaccination on a first come first served basis. In addition, all vaccine providers are encouraged to allow walk-in appointments for eligible New Yorkers. People who would prefer to schedule an appointment at a state-run mass vaccination site can do so on the Am I Eligible App or call (877) 829-4692.

### 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>.

### Gun Buyback Event

A Bronx Gun Buyback is taking place on Saturday,

June 26, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Christ Church at 860 Forest Avenue (between E. 160th and E. 161st Streets), in the South Bronx. This is a no-questions-asked opportunity to turn in operable handguns or assault rifles, and receive a \$200 pre-paid card, plus a free iPad from the Bronx DA's office for the first 76 participants (limited to one per person). Participants can also turn in operable rifles, shotguns, and air guns to receive a \$25 pre-paid card. Masks are required for all participants.

### COVID-19 Restrictions Lifted

Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced on June 15 that all COVID-19 restrictions would be lifted in New York State since 70 percent of adults in the State have received at least their

first dose of the vaccine. However, just 45 percent of Bronx residents have received one dose of the vaccine, and only 39 percent of Bronxites are fully vaccinated, the lowest rate in the City.

With this policy change, retail, food services, offices, gyms and fitness centers, amusement and family entertainment, hair salons, barber shops and personal care services, among other commercial settings, may all return to normal operations. Unvaccinated individuals are expected to continue to wear a mask and comply with CDC guidelines. New York State health guidelines continue to be in effect for large-scale indoor event venues, pre-K to grade 12 schools, public transit, homeless shelters, correctional facilities, nursing homes, and health care set-

tings per CDC guidelines.

### Jerome Gun Hill BID Summer Friday Series

As part of its Summer Friday event series, Jerome Gun Hill BID will be hosting "Make Art" with the Uni Project as well as "Grab a Free Book" with the Norwood Community Library on June 25 from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., on the corner of Jerome Avenue and East Mosholu Parkway North, under the Mosholu Parkway 4 subway station.

### Van Cortlandt Park Alliance Lawn Party

Van Cortlandt Park Alliance (VCPA) is hosting a lawn party on Thursday, June 24, from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. on the Van Cortlandt House Museum lawn. The event will include live music, lawn games, and an opportunity to visit the goats. Individually-boxed

dinners, designed by Thomas Preti Events to Savor will be provided. To learn more, and to RSVP, visit [vancortlandt.org/lawnparty](http://vancortlandt.org/lawnparty).

### New York Salutes America Firework Display

The New York Salutes America Fireworks Extravaganza will be held on Thursday, June 24, from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Orchard Beach, as an early celebration of Independence Day. The event is being organized by the Business Initiative Corporation of New York, Bronx Tourism Council, the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation, the Bronx Chamber of Commerce, Montefiore and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, together with Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. Attendees should bring chairs or blankets to enjoy music and fireworks.

# Bronx River Parkway Hit & Run Leaves E-Bike Cyclist Dead

By SÍLE MOLONEY & DAVID GREENE

A man is dead following a hit and run incident which occurred in the vicinity of the Bronx River Parkway underpass and Southern Boulevard.

On Friday, June 18, at around 11:22 p.m., police responded to a 911 call regarding a motor vehicle collision involving an e-bike and a 2019 Mercedes Benz sedan, in which a cyclist had been struck in the vicinity of the Bronx River Parkway underpass and Southern Boulevard.

Upon arrival, responding officers observed an as-yet unidentified man on the roadway with severe trauma to his head and body. EMS also responded to the location and pronounced the victim deceased at the scene.

Further investigation by the NYPD highway district's collision investigation squad determined that the cyclist had

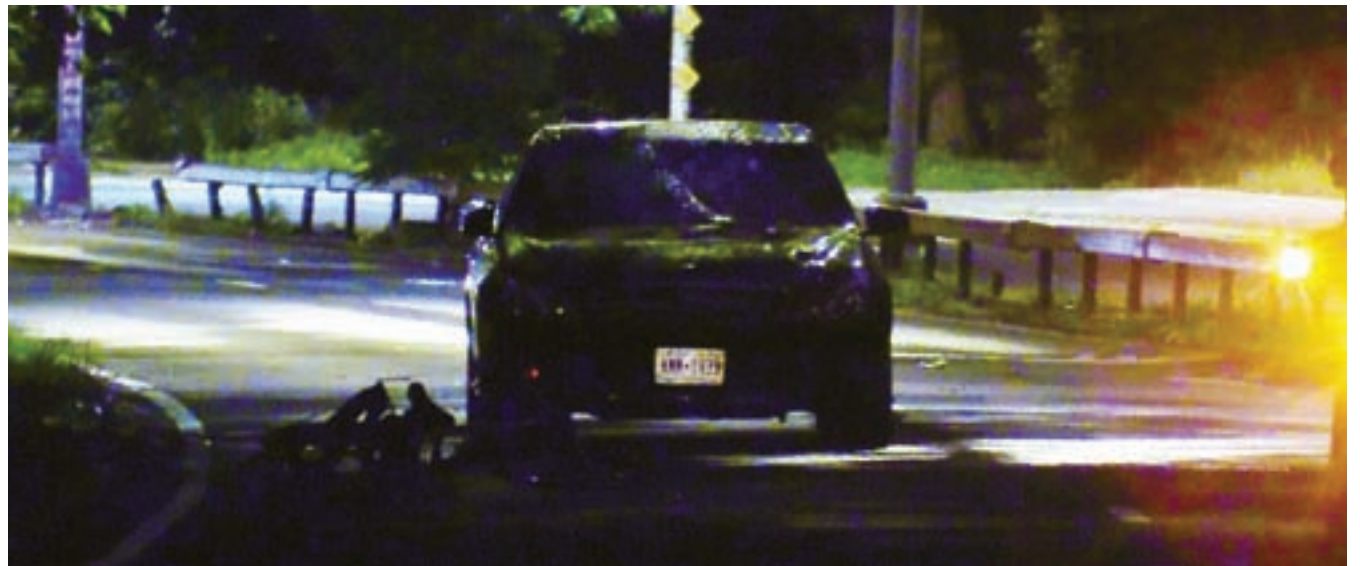


Photo by David Greene

**THE SOUTHERN BOULEVARD** was shut down at the Bronx River Parkway after an e-bike rider was killed. The photo shows the scene of the hit and run incident, photographed on Saturday, June 19, 2021.

been traveling ahead of the Mercedes Benz sedan, eastbound on Southern Boulevard in the right travel lane, approaching the Bronx River underpass.

The Mercedes Benz, which

was being driven by an unidentified man, was apparently speeding and did not have sufficient space or time to go around the cyclist. As a result, the vehicle struck the

rear tire of the e-bike, knocking the cyclist forward. During the course of the impact, the cyclist, who was not wearing a helmet, struck his head on the windshield of the se-

dan.

The operator of the Mercedes Benz fled the location on foot after the collision. There are no arrests, and the investigation remains ongoing.

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## June is Men's Health Month

By CHAD FEAY

June is National Men's Health Month; it's important that men don't overlook their health. This awareness month was created by Congress in 1994 to bring attention to men's medical needs, as well as ways to improve their health.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that, on average, men die five years sooner than women and are at a higher risk for some illnesses, including lung cancer and heart disease.

Also, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that, compared with women, men wait longer to see a doctor or other healthcare professionals. It is important for men to seek regular care, complete regular health screenings and practice healthy habits.

Men can do this by making meaningful changes in their daily lives, with a little knowledge, motivation, and consistency. Here are some suggestions:

- **Reduce, or better yet, stop smoking.** This includes hookahs, e-cigarettes, and vaping, which, according to the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, can also contain harmful chemicals.
- **Limit use of alcohol and drugs.**
- **Manage stress.** Try to understand why you are stressed, and learn healthy ways to combat stress, such as exercise, meditation, or counseling.
- **Eat healthier foods and smaller portions.** Choose more fruits and vegetables and eat less starchy foods, salt, and sugar like soda, juices, and energy drinks.
- **Get physically active.** Do something you enjoy that gets your heart pumping for at least 30

minutes several times per week. This can be something simple like taking a brisk walk or something more involved, like a game of basketball or working out at a gym.

• **Maintain a healthy weight.**

This can be a slow journey, so allow yourself time to succeed.

• **Get a medical check-up.**

Make an appointment with your doctor, even if you're feeling fine. Doctors recommend a yearly physical.


National Men's Health Month comes along once a year, but is an opportunity to make changes that last throughout the year. To help you on your health journey, Montefiore offers free appointments with Certified Health Education Specialists for our patients. These healthcare professionals can share more guidance and support, so ask your Montefiore provider to order a referral, and start working together on a healthier you!

To learn more, visit the links included in the article or visit these webpages:


- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/men>
- Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - [https://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/HealthStatistics/NCHS/NHIS/SHS/2017\\_SHS\\_Table\\_A-18.pdf](https://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/HealthStatistics/NCHS/NHIS/SHS/2017_SHS_Table_A-18.pdf)
- Information on E-Cigarettes and Vaping from NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/smoking-e-cigarettes.page>

*Chad Feay, MA, CHES, is health educator at the Office of Community & Population Health at Montefiore*

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# Report Finds Children's Hospital at Montefiore One of Best in Nation

By SÍLE MOLONEY

For the 14<sup>th</sup> year in a row, the Children's Hospital at Montefiore (CHAM) has been recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* as one of the nation's best pediatric hospitals, hospital representatives announced on Tuesday, June 15. In the 2021-2022 Best Children's Hospitals list, the hospital's neonatology, pediatric cancer and gastroenterology & GI surgery units ranked among the top 20 programs in the country, and the nephrology, and neurology & neurosurgery units were in the top 50. CHAM is also highlighted as the number three children's hospital in New York State.

In compiling the list, *U.S. News* gathered data from 118 children's hospitals in early 2020, and from pediatric physicians and other healthcare organizations in 2021. Data collection from children's hospitals was not repeated in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Best Children's

Hospitals list methodology includes objective measures, such as patient outcomes, including mortality and infection rates, as well as compliance with best practices.

Reacting to the news, Michael D. Cabana, M.D., MPH, physician-in-chief at CHAM, who is also "The Michael I. Cohen, M.D. university chair at the Department of Pediatrics at Albert Einstein College of Medicine," said, "As we mark CHAM's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we couldn't be more proud of our colleagues who heroically provide the most advanced and specialized care to children with a wide range of health challenges."

According to hospital officials, this year, the specialty of neonatology at CHAM ranks as number 19 in the country for "the outstanding and compassionate care delivered to the most fragile newborns, enabling them to grow and thrive."

Neonatology is a subspe-



Photo by Sile Moloney

**THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL** at Montefiore in Norwood has been recognized on the nation's list of best pediatric hospitals by *U.S. News & World Report*.

cialty of pediatrics that consists of the medical care of newborn infants, especially the ill or premature newborn. It is a hospital-based specialty and is usually practiced in

neonatal intensive care units (NICUs). Officials cited patients like 20-year-old Skye Saunders, who was born at 24 weeks and battled multiple medical issues, including brain bleeds and vision impairment, as being one of the beneficiaries of the hospital's neonatal care.

"Today, she is a junior at Purchase College where she recently received an award for community service, academic accomplishments, and her ability to overcome obstacles," hospital officials said. "Skye, a mentor to children with disabilities, who is graduating from college early with a double major in journalism and history, is a testament to the CHAM neonatology team, and her family."

Deborah Campbell, M.D., F.A.A.P. is chief of neonatology at CHAM and professor of pediatrics at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. She said the earlier babies are born, the more health, behavioral

and developmental problems they tend to experience. "Our goal is to partner with and empower our families to be active participants in the multidisciplinary team of experts, providing the best possible care for infants and giving them a solid foundation for achieving lifelong health," she said.

According to the nonprofit, March of Dimes, in the Bronx, 1 in 10 babies is born preterm – meaning before 37 weeks of pregnancy. Officials say the rate of preterm births is highest for Black infants (11.5 percent), followed by Hispanic babies (9.7 percent). These babies can be very small, having a low birthweight and immature organs and requiring sophisticated therapies to help them breathe and feed.

CHAM officials say every year, the neonatology team at CHAM successfully cares for hundreds of seriously ill newborns from the Bronx, and throughout the Hudson Valley.



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## Public and Community Meetings

The next **52<sup>nd</sup> PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meeting will be held on **Thursday, June 24, at 6 p.m.** at 3100 Webster Avenue in the Doe Building at the corner of 204<sup>th</sup> Street and Webster Avenue. Masks and social distancing are required at the meeting. Call the 52<sup>nd</sup> 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 **Wednesday, June 23, 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 meetings are usually held on the **first Wednesday of each month at 8 p.m.** The last meeting for the season was held on June 2. The group breaks for July and August. For further details, contact [bedfordmosholu@verizon.net](mailto:bedfordmosholu@verizon.net).

## CORRECTIONS

In the *Norwood News* June 10-June 23 edition, on page 6, “CD11, CD14 Races: Abreu & Lora Get AOC’s Backing,” it was stated that Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY-14) endorsed District 11 candidate, Mina Lora, in the District 11 race. In fact, while Adolfo Abreu had been personally endorsed by Ocasio-Cortez in the District 14 race, Lora had not been endorsed in the District 11 race.

The congresswoman’s campaign clarified that Lora had taken the “Courage to Change Pledge” by way of a questionnaire issued by the congresswoman’s PAC of the same name and had achieved a perfect score. The campaign explained that this did not constitute an endorsement but served as a voters’ guide, showing voters who was behind grassroots policies that prioritized working families. This distinction was made clear in our online story.

In the same edition, in the story entitled, “Bronxites Mark Gun Violence Awareness Month,” on page 27, we incorrectly referred to Dr. Marni Confino as “he,” and omitted her title. Dr Confino is, in fact, a woman. This was made clear in our online story. We apologize for these errors.

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# Woodlawn helps you plan ahead for peace of mind in person or virtually

Brookside Cremation Garden

**W**hen a death occurs, most New Yorkers aren't sure who to turn to or what to do. We recently spoke with The Woodlawn Cemetery about how they help individuals put their end-of-life preferences in writing ahead of time to prevent their loved ones from having to make decisions on their behalf.

**Norwood News:** How does Woodlawn help families with making difficult end-of-life decisions?

**Woodlawn:** Our Family Service Associates work with individuals and families to address their preferences about end-of-life arrangements. This includes offering our complimentary Personal Planning Organizer, to gather all the information needed for final arrangements in one place. Then, when the time comes for loved ones to make decisions, the process is easier. Not to mention you can secure today's payment rate with the decisions you make.

**NN:** What type of information is typically needed when making arrangements?

**Woodlawn:** Essentially, the location of all of your important documents. This includes social security numbers, marriage licenses, and military discharge papers. Where to find bank, retirement, and investment accounts. How to locate insurance policies, veterans, and social security benefits, and of course, preferences for funeral and cemetery arrangements.

We provide families with a Personal Planning Organizer so they can collect all the information that the funeral home or cemetery will need and ask for at the time of death. When properly filled out, this organizer can simply be handed over to the funeral home and cemetery so bereaved family members don't have to dig through documents for these de-tails in their time of grief. We offer book-lets for singles, married couples, and a Spanish version.

**Woodlawn:** During these unusual times, our Family Service Associates are able to meet with families either in person (with safety precautions) or virtually. If you choose to meet virtually, our staff can walk you through property selection via our website. If needed, multiple family members can participate in a contactless appointment at the same time. We are here to make sure that all your questions are answered and that you receive the highest level of service whether you choose to meet with us in person or virtually.

**NN:** What are some of the options that Woodlawn offers for memorializing a loved one?

**Woodlawn:** There are many options for traditional burial and cremation including private mausoleums, community mausoleums, traditional burial with a headstone, cremation benches, niches, and more. It's important for an individual to express their preferences between traditional burial and cremation, and which type of burial is preferred: in ground, above ground, or cremation. This is a great example of a question

that can be addressed in the Personal Planning Organizer. Most people have a strong opinion on their own final disposition, and it's important to make sure those preferences are in writing.

**NN:** With the rise in cremation, what kinds of questions are you hearing from families?

**Woodlawn:** Most families want to know what their options are. After all, according to a 2019 report by the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA), the cremation rate in the U.S. is projected to be 78.7% by 2040. That is a huge increase compared to previous years. Families need to know there are meaningful options for cremated remains. We hear from so many who have the cremated remains of a loved one at home and aren't sure what to do with them. We'll make sure you understand all of your options and talk through what is best for you and your family.

**NN:** What do you say to these families?

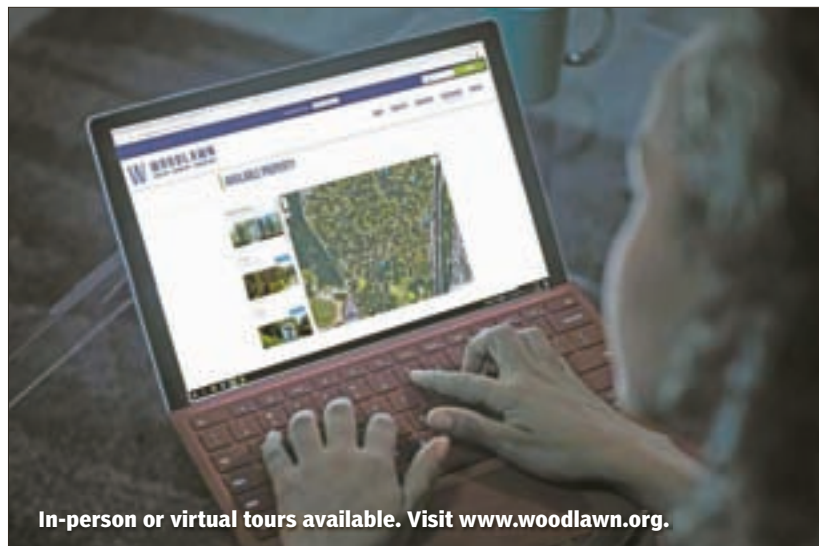
**Woodlawn:** First, we explain how important it is to have a place they can come back to over the years to visit their loved one who has died. This is an essential part of the grieving process and one that is

often overlooked. Then we advise them to come to Woodlawn to see their options for themselves. We have something for everyone and every budget. We also make sure to tell families that Woodlawn is proud to be an exclusive provider in the Bronx of the Cremation With Confidence™ Guarantee. This means that we own and operate our own crematory and follow a 10-step process that ensures your loved one is treated with dignity and respect throughout the cremation process. We take our responsibilities very seriously and want families to know that.

**NN:** What is the next step families should take?

**Woodlawn:** Call us to make an appointment to meet with one of our Family Service Associates in person or virtually. They will help you know exactly what to do, and explain your options so you can ultimately reduce stress on your family. Call **718-920-0500** or visit **www.woodlawn.org** for more information.

The Woodlawn Cemetery is located at **4199 Webster Ave., Bronx, NY.**



In-person or virtual tours available. Visit [www.woodlawn.org](http://www.woodlawn.org).



# Bengali Community Celebrate the End of Ramadan

By **DAWN CLANCY & MIRIAM QUIÑONES**

Women from Norwood's Bengali community threw a festive BBQ and ice cream-themed feast at Mosholu Park on Saturday, May 22, to celebrate the end of Islamic holy month of Ramadan.

The event, hosted by LAAL, a non-profit organization that provides resources and support to Bengali women in Norwood, also marked the first time the community had gathered in person since the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, and as such, was also an opportunity to celebrate life beyond the various State-mandated lockdowns.

"When everything shut down in March of 2020, we had to cancel all of our in-person programming," said Alexandra Indira Sanjal, LAAL's marketing and media coordinator. "We've all been at home for over a year so this is also a kind of post-COVID celebration. So, it's really special."

With some dressed in cheerfully colored hijabs, traditional head coverings worn by some Muslim women, the attendees commemorated the end of Ramadan, Islam's season of fasting and reflection, also called Eid-al-Fitr, or Eid, which in Arabic means "Festival of Breaking Fast."

In the past, as reported previously by *Norwood News*, immigrant Bengali women in Norwood didn't have access to any common, safe and dedicated space where they could connect with one another, which left many feeling marginalized. Sanjana Kahn sought to close that gap by co-founding and creating LAAL in 2018.

Since then, each year, LAAL organize women's support groups, food pantries, conversational English classes and transportation classes, and this summer, they also plan to launch a community garden. In addition, the group is



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

**MEMBERS OF LAAL**, a local Bengali women's empowerment group mark the end of Ramadan with a celebration in Mosholu Park on Saturday, May 22, 2021.

also becoming more politically active, and have endorsed the Bronx People's Platform of NYC 2021, a people-powered, grassroots movement with a broadly progressive agenda.

"I was born and raised in Norwood, and I never felt like there was a space for us," said Kahn, who also recently hosted one of the many virtual District 11 City Council candidate forums which took place in the lead-up to the June 22 primary

election. "Even growing up, when we would go to the Mosque, the girls weren't allowed. When we go to the grocery store, the men just stare at us. So, I co-founded LAAL two years ago for the women. They are the ones who wanted this."

As reported, the Bengali population in Norwood is growing. In 2019, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated there were 2,445 foreign-born Bangladeshis living in Bronx Community Dis-



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

**(L TO R)** Sanjana Khan, LAAL's executive director, with community advocate, Naznin Sultana, celebrate the end of Ramadan in Mosholu Park on Saturday, May 22, 2021.

As we also reported, throughout the pandemic, The Bronx was one of the hardest-hit boroughs. Its COVID-19 positivity rate reached the highest in the City at 7.06 percent over a seven-day average in late January 2021. However, with the availability of COVID vaccines, and the onset of warmer weather, outdoor gathering with or without masks is finally possible, and LAAL's Bengali community plans to seize every opportunity to celebrate.

As reported, in response to the pandemic, LAAL initiated the COVID-19 Relief Fund, a fundraising campaign in partnership with The Zakat Fund of NYC, which was established in 2016 to collect and distribute "Zakat," or almsgiving in New York City. Through the fund, LAAL distributed groceries and cash aid to over 54 local families. "This is our first public gathering and it's really exciting. I'm so happy right now," said Kahn. "During the pandemic, we showed up when no one else did for our community and that's why we have the trust of the community now."

district 7 (CB7), representing 4.2 percent of the district's total population which includes Bedford Park, Norwood, Fordham, Kingsbridge Heights, and University Heights.

Meanwhile, according to the Asian American Federation, New York's Bangladeshi population (those who identify specifically as Bangladeshi alone) grew by 60 percent from 38,639 in 2010 to 61,927 in 2015. The majority (66 percent) of Bengalis live in Queens, followed by 16 percent in The Bronx, 15 percent in Brooklyn, and three percent in Manhattan.



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# Out & About

By SARAH HUFFMAN

## EVENTS

Young people and parents are invited to join the **Woodlawn Book Club** for a discussion of “Riding on Duke’s Train” by Mick Carlon. The book tells the story of nine-year-old Danny who stows away on Duke Ellington’s train where he meets many famous musicians. The book discussion will take place on Sunday, June 27, at 11:30 a.m. Participants will meet outdoors at the Jerome Avenue entrance of the Woodlawn Conservancy at 4199 Webster Avenue. To register, visit [woodlawn.org](http://woodlawn.org), click on the conservancy tab and select Tour and Events.

The New York Women’s Chamber of Commerce is hosting a **2021 LGBTQIA Roundtable** on Friday, June 25, at midday. The purpose of the event is to inform the public about a partnership between the NYC Department of Small Business Services and the National LBGT Chamber of Commerce. TJ Chernick and Wendy Garcia from the NYC Comptroller’s office will be the guest speakers along with the others from the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce. The event is virtual, and participants can

register at [eventbrite.com](https://eventbrite.com). Change the location to online events, and search “2021 LGBTQ Roundtable.”

The Woodlawn Conservancy is hosting a **Trolley Tour** to visit the final resting places of vaudeville and jazz musicians at Woodlawn Cemetery. The tour will stop to honor George M. Cohan, Nora Bays, Duke Ellington, and others. A victrola will play the music of these famous musicians, and the tour will be hosted by Michael Cumella, aka DJ MAC. The tour will take place on Sunday, June 27, at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Tickets are \$25 per person or \$20 for members and seniors. Children aged four and older must have a ticket. To purchase tickets, visit [woodlawn.org](http://woodlawn.org), click on the conservancy tab, and select Tour and Events. Scroll down to purchase tickets for the tour. All participants must wear a mask on the trolley.

New York City Pride is bringing back **Youth Pride** in New York City this year. NYC Pride partnered with youth-focused LGBT centers, organizations, and programs nationwide to present this year’s virtual event. The event will take place on Saturday, June 26, at

3 p.m., and will feature musical performances, LGBTQIA+ center spotlights, DJs and a special ballroom segment. The event is free and interested parties can visit [nycpride.org/event/youth-pride-to-rsvp](https://nycpride.org/event/youth-pride-to-rsvp).

Starting July 5, Bronx Zoo will be hosting **World of Wildlife**, a program that aims to bring to life the worlds built within the books of legendary children’s author, Eric Carle. The program will involve live performances, music, games and more. Visit [bronxzoo.com/eric-carle](https://bronxzoo.com/eric-carle) to learn more and to reserve tickets.

## ART

The exhibit **Born in Flames: Feminist Futures** is on display at the Bronx Museum, now through September 12. The exhibit showcases the visions of contemporary artists. To learn more, visit [bronxmuseum.org](https://bronxmuseum.org), select the exhibitions tab and scroll down to locate the event. Tickets to visit the museum can also be purchased at [bronxmuseum.org/visit](https://bronxmuseum.org/visit).

The exhibit, **Wardell Milan: Amerika, God Bless You If It’s Good To You**, opens on Wednesday, June 23, at the Bronx Museum and will remain open until October 24. The exhibit showcases 12 new drawings and mixed media created by the artist Wardell Milan. Milan and choreographer, Zachary Tye Richardson, will present new performance works as part of the exhibit. Visit [bronxmuseum.org](https://bronxmuseum.org).

org, select the exhibitions tab and scroll down to learn more about the exhibit. Tickets to visit the museum can also be purchased at [bronxmuseum.org/visit](https://bronxmuseum.org/visit).

En Foco is a Bronx photography nonprofit and Wallworks will be showcasing En Foco’s exhibition of its 2021 photography fellowship awardees until June 30. The exhibit, **In Between Yesterday Today and Tomorrow**, was curated by Elia Alba and features the work of Richard Acevedo, Argenis Apolinario, Roy Baizan, Daveed Baptiste, Kevin Quiles Bonilla, Amarise Carreras, Vinay Hira, Sydney King, Spandita Malik and Bashira Webb. The exhibit is located at 15 Canal Place. Tickets can be purchased at [wallworksny.com/book-online](https://wallworksny.com/book-online).

## MOVEMENT

New York City **outdoor public pools** will open on June 26. All indoor pools will remain closed for the time being due to COVID-19. Visit [nycgovparks.org/facilities/outdoor-pools](https://nycgovparks.org/facilities/outdoor-pools) to search for pools in your area.

Bronx Healthy Start is hosting **Fitness Friday** on June 25, from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. The program is the last event on Bronx Healthy Start’s June workshop calendar. The event will take place virtually on ZOOM, and interested parties can register by searching for bxhealthy start on [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com). Once on the group’s profile, click on the link in their account bio and then click the box tagged “Fitness Friday.”

# Primary Election Day 2021 Preliminary Results

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Primary Election Day got underway on Tuesday, June 22, and Bronxites joined the rest of the City in heading to the polls to collectively cast their ballots in the first of their widespread elections to use the new voting methodology of ranked choice voting. District 11 and District 15 constituents had already experienced this during the March 23 special election but Primary Day was the first time the State of New York would try out the new system, as a

whole.

Unofficial results on Election Night saw Oswald Feliz in the lead in the District 15 Democratic primary, with 39 percent of the vote share, Eric Dinowitz in the lead in the District 11 Democratic primary, with 41 percent of the vote share, and Pierina Sanchez in the lead in District 14 Democratic primary, with 39 percent of the vote share. In the Republican District 15 primary, Ariel Rivera Diaz led with 49 percent of the vote.

Meanwhile, Eric Adams led in the mayoral Democratic primary with 30 percent of the vote share, while Curtis Silwa led in the Republican primary with 69 percent. Jumaane Williams led in the public advocate race with 69 percent of the vote and Brad Lander led with 39 percent of the vote in the city comptroller’s race.

In the Bronx Civil Court election, Jessica Flores was in the lead with 35 percent of the vote, followed by Verena Powell with 20 percent. Meanwhile in

the Bronx borough president’s race, Vanessa Gibson led with 39 percent of the votes.

The Board of elections advised the following in terms of the expected timeline of results:

Unofficial election night results will be posted at the close of polls on election day. These results will include first-choice votes from early voting and election day but will not include absentee and affidavit ballots.

One week later, preliminary RCV elimination rounds

will be tabulated and an unofficial report will be released. The tally will not include any absentee ballots.

The ranking of candidates may continue to change until all absentee ballot processing is completed and all cure deadlines have expired.

Preliminary RCV elimination rounds will be conducted and reports released every week until the election is certified. Final results in rank-choice elections will not be known until all absentee and military ballots are counted.

# District 11 City Council Race: Mino Lora Addresses Inwood Rezoning Controversy

(continued from page 12)

You have to have a council member who fights for and stands with the community - not one that ignores them. My commitment, as councilwoman for District 11, is to my neighbors. The billionaire real estate interests know that which is why they put their money behind Eric Dinowitz."

*Norwood News* previously reported on contributions made to the Dinowitz (the incumbent District 11 councilman) campaign and to other candidates in the March 23 District 11 special election by people with links to the real estate industry. Such fundraising is not illegal but noteworthy.

In reference to the final plan, Lora's campaign said, "To be clear, there were some folks who were opposed to even trying to make the rezoning benefit the community. There were others who were willing to try to work to make the rezoning the best possible deal for the community. Mino was not the only one in the second group."

Lora's campaign said Lora remembers there being about 150 people, including people from the Metropolitan Council on Housing, involved over the course of the negotiations, including people from the Metropolitan Council on Housing.

Aside from criticism of the housing component, some Bronxites also began to insinuate on social media that Lora stood to benefit from the cultural commitments made under the plan, through the creation of the proposed new theater and arts space (IRPAC).

Lora addressed this point, telling the *Norwood News*, "The theater does not exist. If a theater ends up being built, it will be part of a cultural center that will belong to NYC's Department of Cultural Affairs, and not any one person or organization."

The Inwood Rezoning Plan was also raised during recent District 11 debates during which some of the candidates also voiced their concerns about Lora's alleged support for the plan. *Norwood News* reached out to each of the other candidates to ask for their latest comments on the

topic. (Due to timing constraints, not all candidates were aware of Lora's explanation of her involvement in the rezoning plan at the time they provided their comments to us.)

Abigail Martin said, "The first job of a council member is to represent the community and to serve the needs of those living there. The local community board, neighborhood activists, and small businesses were all against the rezoning of Inwood in Northern Manhattan."

She added that she had been disappointed to recently come across pictures of Lora at City Hall "in support of the Inwood rezoning, and to learn about her efforts to help push this plan through."

Meanwhile, a spokesperson for Dinowitz said Eric was focused on running a positive campaign, and had "no comment on Mino's pro-development stances in Washington Heights."

Padernacht said it didn't seem credible to him that somebody who says they were opposed to the rezoning was on stage for the press conference announcing the rezoning, and the 150 people who gave input to the rezoning were clearly not on the stage. "If she were opposed to the rezoning, she probably would have been with the protesters outside City Hall, opposing the rezoning land," he said.

Padernacht added that the greater issue for him was whether Lora was being truthful with voters. "As far as rezoning is concerned, I personally voted against the mandatory inclusionary housing plan, and the zoning for quality and affordability plan in 2015, because I knew what effect these zoning changes would have on any rezoning plan," he said, referring to a 2015 citywide text amendment to the rules around zoning that affected the bulk and density of future construction in New York City.

"When you upzone an area, these new bulk and density rules would certainly take a toll on a community. When you upzone a community, residential and commercial rents increase, so any change in an area zon-

ing...[that is] not carefully planned.. can have significant effects upon a community," he said.

Padernacht said that Community Board 8 had put forward a downzoning plan several years ago to the City Department of Planning which was rejected. "We actually sought to downzone the area around Dash Place and City Planning wouldn't even look at our plan," he said.

Meanwhile, Marcos Sierra said it was "completely disingenuous" for someone who runs a campaign on a platform of progressive values, including housing, to support rezoning that would displace thousands of Hispanic families that had been there for generations. "Ms. Lora sold out the residents of Inwood for an Arts and Theater space, and \$500k in funding from the prime sponsor of this rezoning, Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez," he said.

In response, Lora's campaign said that PTP, like many nonprofits serving City residents, receives City funding for services it provides to children and other residents, and that the funds allocated by Rodriguez are for free, after-school programs and programs that serve new immigrants.

They said the funding started in 2012 and that there is "absolutely no basis" for claiming any connection between the Council funding and Lora's participation in the rezoning effort. They said, since the rezoning, Rodriguez has, in fact, cut the funding for PTP by almost two-thirds.

"Instead of discussing his policy differences with Mino Lora, Marcos Sierra is fabricating attacks that have no basis and for which he has no proof. He claims to be opposed to nepotism and the established machine, but by attacking Mino, all he is doing is helping Eric Dinowitz," Lora's campaign said.

They went on to say that the accusations demonstrate a lack of understanding of what a City Council member does and that allocating discretionary funds, administered by the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) is a big part of the job.

The campaign also provided a financial breakdown of PTP funding received from the City's fiscal year budget 2012 through 2021. They said, in a typical year, City discretionary and initiative funding represents just 15 percent of PTP's total funding, and that most of PTP's funding comes from private sources. They

said during the referenced 10 year period, funding from Rodriguez amounted to just 9 percent of total PTP funding.

They added that since the Inwood rezoning was announced, Rodriguez had cut his discretionary City funding to PTP by 60 percent, and added that more than 70 percent of PTP funding came from City government sources other than from Councilman Rodriguez, highlighted that their close work with the Mayor's Office for Immigrant Affairs helped them to offer their programs for free.

Regarding other innuendo put forth that Inwood residents had perhaps lost out on additional affordable housing in exchange for commitments to the referenced Arts & Culture space (IRPAC), *Norwood News* reached out to the New York City Department of Housing, Preservation & Development (HPD) to ask if there were not set rezoning rules that dictated the percentage of rezoned land that had to be allocated to housing, hospitals, schools, the arts etc. in any rezoning plan, and whether such an argument was even a valid one.

We were referred to the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC). While the agency did not immediately respond to our question regarding agreed percentages for rezoned land, an agency official did inform us that under the Inwood Plan, there *was* a commitment to building the IRPAC as a flexible performing arts space which would include a theater, rehearsal space, and classrooms, etc.

The official further confirmed said the IRPAC had *not* been agreed at the expense of more affordable housing in the area. EDC also confirmed that the IRPAC/theatre doesn't currently exist because the agency is still in the process of selecting a nonprofit to design and run it through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

The deadline for nonprofits to apply to the RFP was Dec. 19, 2019. *Norwood News* asked for a list of RFP applicants. We were informed that this could not be disclosed at this time as the agency was in the process of putting together its short-list.

Having responded to all the allegations, in conclusion, Lora said, "It's telling that all the candidates who claim to be against nepotism and the machine candidate are attacking me, the strongest opponent in the March special election, who has the best chance to beat Eric Dinowitz on June 22," she said. "That's just helping Eric."

# Sirio Guerino Honored for Exceptional Community Service

By DAWN CLANCY

For his ongoing efforts in erasing graffiti from buildings in the Bedford Park and Norwood sections of the Bronx, the Bedford Mosholu Community Association (BMCA) has presented Sirio Guerino, co-founder of Guerinos Against Graffiti (GAG), with the Mary Vallati Memorial Award, an annual prize which honors those individuals who provide exceptional service to their community.

Vallati was a longtime community activist who was active with the association until her death at 101. News of Guerino's win was announced during BMCA's final (virtual) meeting before

Stronczer is also Parks' committee chair of Bronx Community Board 7 (CB7). As such, she was also aware of the extent of Guerino's repeated clean-up efforts in the wider CB7 community this year, all of which have helped to promote a cleaner and safer environment.

In conjunction with the NYPD's 52nd precinct, the NYPD Explorers, and other community groups, several organized clean-up events were held in recent months across CB7 to clean up specific blocks which were identified as being more prone to gun violence than others. Other city agencies were also engaged to help address other



Photo by David Greene

(L TO R) Guerinos Against Graffiti (GAG) co-founders, Sirio Guerino and his wife, Heather Guerino present the 1st Annual GAG Awards during the 52nd Precinct Community Council meeting at the precinct, on May 27, 2021.

the summer recess, held on June 2, and Guerino was physically presented with the award by the association's executive committee a week later at a small gathering at Mosholu Parkway and Webster Avenue.

Barbara Stronczer, a lifelong Bronxite and president of the BMCA, said the committee felt this year's accolade belonged to Guerino, who has been carrying out his clean-up work for several years but who went to extra lengths this past year, in particular.

"Sirio is what I would call a real community volunteer," Stronczer told the *Norwood News*. "We always see him with his shopping cart walking through the community with different color paints and brushes, painting over graffiti he would find on mailboxes and walls. He's been doing this for years, and we appreciate his work. We're so glad to have him."

quality of life issues in those target neighborhoods, all in efforts to uplift the local community. Guerino was one of the central figures involved in the clean-up efforts.

As *Norwood News* reported in 2017, Guerino and his wife Heather started GAG in 2015 after the couple grew frustrated with the graffiti they noticed was slowly taking over the walls of neighborhood businesses. But long before GAG was established, Guerino, a Bronx native, often left his home at 4 a.m. with paint cans and brushes in tow to track down any graffiti that had popped up overnight.

"I didn't understand why my husband would go out with his shopping cart and paint," Guerino's wife told the 52nd precinct's community council meeting on May 27. "I told him, 'They're going to put up graffiti no matter what you do.'"



Photo by David Greene

(L TO R) 52nd precinct's Deputy Inspector Thomas Alps, Sirio Guerino, 52nd precinct Community Council President Brenda Caldwell-Paris, Stephen Echevarria, 52nd precinct Community Affairs Officer, Heather Guerino, and NYC Department of Sanitation community affairs officer, Stephen J. Caruso Jr, pose for a photo during the presentation of the Guerinos Against Graffiti (GAG) Awards celebration held at the 52nd precinct, on May 27, 2021.

However, in the end, she realized Guerino's biggest pet peeve was also his passion. "I decided I wasn't going to fight him anymore," she said. "I wanted to support him, as his partner, so when he asked me to help him beautify The Bronx, I said, yes." Today, Mrs. Guerino serves as GAG's president while Mr. Guerino hunts down graffiti with his trademark shopping cart.

In addition to cleaning up the Bronx, the Guerinos hosted the first-ever GAG Golden Brush Awards at the 52nd precinct's community council meeting in May. Golden trophies, topped with paintbrushes, and covered in twinkling blue, green, and purple sequins, were awarded to community members who had supported and encouraged GAG's mission over the last year.

Awards were presented to the 52nd precinct's commanding officer, Deputy Inspector Thomas Alps, as well as to community affairs officer with the City's sanitation department, Stephen J. Caruso Jr. Honorable mentions went to council president of the 52nd precinct community council, Brenda Caldwell-Paris and to Stephen Echevarria, 52nd precinct community affairs officer.

According to City data, neighborhoods across the five boroughs have experienced an uptick in graffiti this year, some of which has included offensive hate slogans and symbols, as reported by *Norwood News*. In response, the NYPD has created a dedicated email address, [graffiti@nypd.org](mailto:graffiti@nypd.org), which New Yorkers can use to send pictures and location information of graffiti in their respective neighborhoods to request its removal. Once the request has been reviewed and approved,

a team of volunteers will be dispatched to follow-up.

Meanwhile, reacting to news of the award, Guerino said that receiving it took on a special meaning given that he knew and admired Mary Vallati when she was alive. During a phone interview with the *Norwood News*, he said, "Mary was always very active in the neighborhood, so it's an honor to get an award named for her."

Anyone who is looking for a dedicated Bronxite to assist with graffiti removal in their area can contact GAG's Sirio Guerino at (718) 231-4762 or [ssg.nag@gmail.com](mailto:ssg.nag@gmail.com).

*\*David Greene contributed to this story.*



Photo courtesy of the Bedford Mosholu Community Association

**THE BEDFORD MOSHOLU** Community Association (BMCA) executive committee present the annual Mary Vallati Memorial Award to Sirio Guerino of Guerinos Against Graffiti at a small gathering at Mosholu Parkway and Webster Avenue one week after BMCA's June 2, 2021 meeting, during which the award announcement was made.



## Letters To The Editor

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

### DA's Contradictions

The description of the police actions that led to severe injuries to a 16-year-old [Norwood News, May 27-June 9, "Bronx DA: No Criminality by NYPD in Jahmel Leach Case,"] are confusing and inconclusive. The report describes the incident as Leach being tasered by a cop as he's about to set fire to street debris.

Later in the article, it states, "In the video, officers can be heard using a profanity and addressing Jahmel aggressively, despite the fact that he appears to immediately comply with their instructions and answer them in a respectful manner." There appears to be a contradiction here.

If these officers used unnecessary force, (he was tasered by the cop and struck twice by two different officers) then why would Clark say there is no criminality? This is compounded by the fact that the same DA prosecuted a cop for murder in 2017 in a case that was clearly self-defense. Sgt. Hugh Barry shot and killed a woman who was swinging a baseball bat at his head.

Luckily, Barry waved his right to a jury trial and the judge hearing the case acquitted him. Clark was willing to prosecute Barry when he was clearly defending himself, but she's unwilling to prosecute cops for severely injuring Leach when it appears he was no threat to them.

**Richard Warren,  
Van Cortlandt Village**

### Include FTA Data in MTA Open Data Act

When Gov. Andrew Cuomo assumed office on Jan. 1, 2011, he promised to run the most open and transparent administration in history. This was to include all State agencies, along with dozens of independent authorities like the MTA. In 2013, Cuomo issued an executive order for all state agencies and

authorities to publish their data online. The State Legislature recently passed the "MTA Open Data Act." Cuomo should sign this bill into law. The legislation directs the MTA to publish all the statistical and factual information it maintains on the State's online portal.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides \$1.5 billion in annual capital grants to the MTA. This is done under the FTA Transit Award Management System (known as "TrAMS") that is used to award and manage federal grants. The MTA currently manages an active portfolio of federally funded, capital improvement projects and programs in open grants worth over \$12 billion in direct federal financial assistance. This does not include \$14 billion in COVID-19 funding, allocated under the CARES Act.

In accordance with all master grant agreements under TrAMS, the MTA is required to provide updated Quarterly Financial and Milestone Progress Reports to the FTA on active capital improvement projects and programs.

Gov. Cuomo claims his administration is the most above-board in history. In addition to the NYS governmental portal, why not promote transparency by having all of this information that is already submitted to the FTA by the MTA made public and posted on the MTA web site as well?

City, State and federal financial assistance, along with farebox revenues, fund MTA capital projects and programs. Transit riders and taxpayers are looking for accountability, efficiency and timely completion of capital projects, programs and maintenance to assure more reliable and safe commutes. Riders, transit advocacy groups, taxpayers, elected officials and transportation reporters deserve easy access to this information.

**Larry Penner,  
Great Neck**

# A Selection of Photos of Primary Day 2021 in The Bronx



Photo by David Greene

**MORRIS PARK AND** Van Nest residents line up to vote in the Primary Election at P.S. / M.S. 49 on Bronxdale Avenue on Tuesday, June 22, 2021.

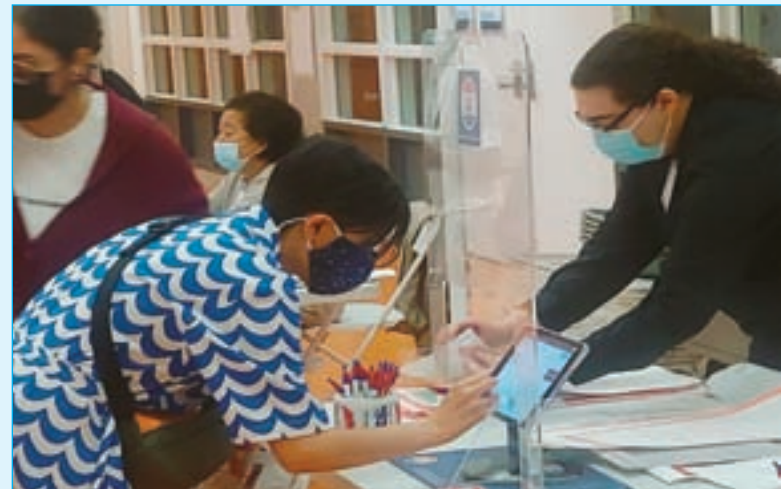


Photo by David Greene

**BRONXITES VOTES FOR** mayor, public advocate, City Council candidates and Civil Court judges for Bronx County on Tuesday, June 22, 2021.



Photo by David Greene

**A PAIR OF** seniors cast their Ranked Choice Voting ballots at P.S. / M.S. 49 in Morris Park for this year's Primary Election on Tuesday, June 22, 2021.



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# Sha-Rock Cultural Day Rocks the Park

By DAWN CLANCY & MIRIAM QUIÑONES

Hip-hop enthusiasts across the five boroughs gathered on Sunday, June 5, at Gun Hill Playground in The Bronx to celebrate African American Music Appreciation Month and honor the legacy of hip-hop's first female emcee, MC Sha-Rock.

Against the backdrop of ample sunshine and live music, some of hip hop's earliest titans, including Melle Mel of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, Lil Rodney C of Funky 4 +1, DJ Breakout, and battle rapper Sparky D, paid tribute to MC Sha-Rock, whose musical talents and contribution to hip-hop culture helped shape the scene for women in hip-hop today, and have often been overlooked.

"Without MC Sha-Rock, my mother, there would be no me," said Sparky D. "So, I'm standing in for all the female emcees that are not here today, and we just want to say, 'We love you, Sha Rock,' and we thank God for you because without you, there would be no us."

Born in Wilmington, North Carolina, MC Sha-Rock (born Sharon Green) moved to the Bronx, the birthplace of hip-hop, in the early 1970s. As a teenager, she toprocked and two-stepped her way across the five boroughs as a "b-girl" or breakdancer and rapper. In 1979, she became a founding member of the group The Funky Four +1, and that same year, the group signed a record deal, making MC Sha-Rock the first female emcee to record a song.

Success for the group continued to grow, and in 1981, through a connection with Debbie Harry of "Blondie," the group performed on Saturday Night Live, making The Funky Four +1 the first hip-hop group to showcase the art of rap and hip-hop culture to a national audience. At the time, MC Sha-Rock admits that she and The Funky Four didn't realize the event's significance as it was happening.



Photos by Miriam Quiñones

**FORMER DISTRICT 12** City Councilman Andy King (center) was one of the hosts of an event to mark MC Sha-Rock Day on Sunday, June 5, at Gun Hill Playground in The Bronx. He is seen here with DJ Chuck Chillout (right), and another colleague.



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

**MC SHA-ROCK, THE** first female MC of hip hop attends an event to celebrate MC Sha-Rock Day on Sunday, June 5, at Gun Hill Playground in The Bronx.

"At the time, we didn't think about it being a historic moment. We never thought about that because, for us, performing came naturally," Sha-Rock told the *Norwood News*. "We didn't think people would go on and say that The Funky 4+1 made history. We just thought - okay, now we're going to be on Saturday Night Live. Let's do it."

But for MC Sha-Rock, looking back, performing on Saturday Night Live's stage was significant for another reason; she was seven months pregnant



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

**ONE OF THE** pioneering DJs of the hip-hop movement, DJ Breakout, attends Sha-Rock Cultural Day on Sunday, June 5, at Gun Hill Playground in The Bronx.

with her first child.

"My stomach was hurting so bad, and so for me, I wanted to stand in a certain place without moving too much. So, then when we started rhyming and

stuff, you could hear my voice."

In 1985, MC Sha-Rock left New York. As the years passed and rap music began catching the ears of international audiences, her groundbreak-



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

**THE LEGENDARY MELLE** Mel of Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five pay tribute to MC Sha-Rock during Sha-Rock Cultural Day on Sunday, June 5, at Gun Hill Playground in The Bronx.

ing contributions to the birth of the music and culture we know today as hip-hop, were largely forgotten. But in 2019, when New York City Council formally declared June 1, "MC Sha-Rock Day," the "Mother of the Mic," as she's sometimes called, started to reap the appreciation and accolades she's earned over the years.

"It's only fitting to give a day to honor an icon, a luminary icon," said this year's Sha-Rock event co-host and former District 12 City Councilman Andy King. "MC Sha-Rock did it first in the Boogie Down Bronx, rolling around in a man's world, and she got it right."

When asked what she thought about MC Sha-Rock Day, the rapper told *Norwood News* that it made her nostalgic but, more importantly, she finally felt appreciated and recognized for the critical role she played in the birth of hip-hop and its unique culture.

"To see all of the people who were there to support me, that's when I realized maybe I don't have to cry anymore," she said, adding, "To see all of the hip-hop community out there, and knowing and feeling that we were all there for one cause, to reminisce and to have fun, that was the best feeling I could've ever asked for."

# Salsa Museum Seeks Home in The Bronx

(continued from page 1)

tural history.” It was founded by musician, music director, and producer, Willy Rodriguez, music industry professional, Lily Reyes, and entrepreneur, Manny Tavaréz.

On Tuesday, June 15, outside of the recently refurbished, but rarely utilized Kingsbridge Armory, located at West 195th Street and Reservoir Avenue, the corner also known as “Celia Cruz Way,” founders of the ISM were joined by fellow board members, Damaris Mercado, Eddie Torres Jr. and Bervin Harris for the press conference to talk about the future of the museum.

According to a press release sent in advance of the event, the museum is being developed to preserve and display the history of salsa music, from its inception in the Caribbean to its development in New York City, and to highlight salsa’s impact on society and culture that “will shape the next generation of Latino music and artists.”

The founders and board members were joined on the day by supporters of the museum, members of the Puerto Rican Institute at CUNY, Emanuel Martinez, chair of Bronx Community Board 7 (CB7), District 14 City Councilman Fernando Cabrera who is a candidate for Bronx borough president, and Jean Hill, president of the residents’ organization at Jerome Park’s Tracy Towers complex, who is also a member of CB7.

According to Erika Sanchez of ISM, members had thought about other target sites for the museum but the Kingsbridge Armory is their desired location, with hopes of breaking ground in 2024, and an opening in 2025.

One of the largest armories in the world, Kingsbridge

Armory was built around 1910. Now decommissioned, it has been mostly vacant since 1996, when it was turned over to City management.

The building still houses one unit of the Army National Guard but has been underdeveloped and underutilized by the community for several years. A damaged roof was refurbished at one point and, mostly recently, the armory was used as a food distribution hub amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, plans negotiated with City and State in recent years to lease the building to private developers, Kingsbridge National Ice Center Management, to develop a new, national ice center, the Kingsbridge National Ice Center (KNIC), at the location are still on the table.

Though negotiations on the legal and financial arrangements between KNIC Management and the City and State were hampered by the pandemic, Kevin Parker of KNIC Management, told the Norwood News on Tuesday, June 22, that the company was oversubscribed, at over \$400 million, in terms of capital commitments for the project, describing it as something of a miracle amid the economic downturn caused by the pandemic.

Parker said if the group could finalize their negotiations with the City and State, and obtain the necessary lease and permits, they could have “shovels in ground by Q4 2021, and a \$350 million investment into The Bronx.” Asked in whose court the ball now was in terms of next steps, Parker said, “It’s the City and State that need to take the next steps to say, ‘We want this project to happen and so, here’s what



Photo by Aracelis Batista

**FOUNDING MEMBERS AND** supporters of the International Salsa Museum hold a press conference outside the Kingsbridge Armory, located at West 195th Street and Reservoir Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights, on Tuesday, June 15, 2021

we’re doing about it.”

Asked if those next steps involved rezoning commitments, Parker said they did not, and referred to a State loan commitment of \$138 million which has been written into the State budget, but which needs to be re-confirmed every two years if it’s not drawn down.

The armory building is located in City Council District 14, and during discussions held over the years on its proposed use, input had been sought from local Community Boards 7, 8 and 12. Some residents had objected to the use of the armory as an ice center, even though the final development plan included an allocation of 50,000 square feet of space for community use.

That space is being managed by a community group called CAC, and KNIC Management, though a member of the 11-member CAC board, has no input into how CAC chooses to use the space. Parker confirmed that he had not been approached to discuss the salsa museum but again, stressed that the lease has not yet been signed. In any case, he reiterated that the community was free to develop the space however it chooses.

Back at the official launch of the ISM, members announced that fundraising efforts were already underway for the acquisition and development of a

state-of-the-art museum which would have core exhibits, as well as space for music programming, developed for New York City schoolchildren and other institutions, with a focus on salsa music and dance, as well as film and arts programs.

Co-founder, Tavaréz, told those who had gathered, “This is a historic moment for salsa, and an exciting time for New York City as we work on reopening after the 2020 pandemic and continue to tell important stories that have shaped New York culture and given life to various neighborhoods.” He added, “The ISM is committed to establish our presence in The Bronx, as this borough played such an integral part in developing salsa and Latin jazz into what it is today.”

ISM is supported by its advisory committee that includes Tito Puente Jr., son of legendary “King of Latin Jazz,” Tito Puente; the late musician’s estate; Demaris Mercado, the daughter of late Latin empresario, Malph Mercado; Joe Madera, legendary musical director and producer; Eddie Torres Jr., son of Eddie Torres, a founding member of New York-style dance; Steven Oquendo, a Latin jazz “big band” leader, composer and trumpeter; Crystal Fields-Sam, a leader at Bridge Philanthropic Consulting; and Carlos

Henriquez, lead bass player for Wynton Marsalis / Jazz at Lincoln Center.

During the event, Mercado, who is founder and executive producer of the Mercado Project, told attendees, “It’s an absolute wonderful privilege to serve as a board member for ISM, helping to navigate the groundwork being laid to preserve legacies, explore history and create new educational opportunities for the surrounding and global communities.”

Tavaréz added, “With New York City’s budget for arts cut by 11 percent in fiscal year 2021, and the City’s education department cut by nearly 30 percent of art education programs, it’s our job, as an arts and community center, to supplement education and develop creative spaces for our children.”

Meanwhile, Torres, Jr., the choreographer of “In the Heights: The Movie,” said, “We need this museum to represent generations of authentic culture. We need a home, an institution where we can empower and prepare our Latino people. We need to unite and raise awareness of our rich Afro-Latino history, which can be accomplished through music and dance.”

For more information on the ISM, visit their website at: [www.internationalsalsamuseum.org](http://www.internationalsalsamuseum.org).

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*Brain-Damage Baby*

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*Construction Accident*

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