



NORWOOD NEWS

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VP HARRIS VISITS THE BRONX



U.S. VICE PRESIDENT Kamala Harris addresses about 120 elected officials and invited guests during a visit to the Edenwald YMCA center in the Northeast Bronx with U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, Xavier Becerra, on Friday, October 22, 2021, at the invitation of Congressman Jamaal Bowman (NY-14).

By **DAVID GREENE & SÍLE MOLONEY**

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, Xavier Becerra, visited the Bronx on Friday, Oct. 22, at the invitation of Congressman Jamaal Bowman (NY-14). The event took place at the re-

cently opened, state-of-the-art Edenwald YMCA center in the Northeast Bronx, which falls within Bowman's district.

The purpose of the visit was to advocate for the Biden administration's "Build Back Better" agenda. In his own prepared remarks, Bowman said, "It's an absolute honor to welcome our

vice president, Kamala Harris, to the Bronx, a community of incredible resilience, culture, and diversity that for far too long has been overlooked."

Bowman said he was incredibly proud to show Harris and Becerra what Bronxites were all about, and to join them in the fight to uplift working fami-

lies and bring about the change that people deserved, adding that it was the job of elected officials at every level to ensure communities like Edenwald were given targeted and reparative investments.

"That starts with the Biden administration's Build Back
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Kids Enjoy a "BOO-rific" Party at Poe Park | pg 22

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3400 Reservoir Oval East
Bronx, New York 10467
Phone: 718 324 4998
Fax: 718 324 2917

E-mail: norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org
Web.: www.norwoodnews.org

Publisher

Mosholu Preservation Corporation

Executive Director of MPC

Jennifer Tausig

Editor-In-Chief, Norwood News

Sile Moloney
smoloney@norwoodnews.org

Regular Contributors

David Greene, José A. Giralt,
Miriam Quiñones, Dawn Clancy,
Sarah Huffman,

Contributors

Adi Talwar, Michael Benjamin

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Over 300 Participate in 5K Event to End Domestic Violence

By DAVID GREENE

Over 300 people pre-registered and participated in the '5-K Run/Walk/Roll to End Domestic Violence' sponsored by the Bronx District Attorney, Darcel Clark, on Saturday, Oct. 16. The event took place along the Grand Concourse, from East 170th Street in Mt Eden to East 161st Street in the Concourse to coincide with Domestic Violence (DV) Awareness Month.

The fourth, annual, in-person event to take place in the borough in the last five years shut down the Grand Concourse to vehicular traffic, and was held in partnership with the New York Yankees and the State University of New York (SUNY).

Clark said the pandemic forced her office to hold the annual run as a virtual event, last year. This year, ahead of the event, she said, "We will honor the resilience of domestic violence survivors and hopefully raise awareness to prevent these incidents."

Clark continued, "Domestic violence affects so many people through physical, emotional, sexual and psychological abuse; and knows no race, gender or social status. My domestic violence bureau prosecutes those who commit these crimes." The district attorney added that her office is currently prosecuting over 1,500 misdemeanor and 175 felony cases of domestic violence.

Between 2017 and 2018, intimate partner homicides in the Bronx increased by 85.7 percent, from seven in 2017, to 13 in 2018, according to a 2019 report by the New York City DV Fatality Review Committee.

The district attorney explained that the crime victim assistance unit at her office offers therapy sessions to survivors, and referrals to the Bronx Family Justice Center for additional services.



Photo by David Greene

(L TO R) Domestic violence advocates and sisters, Regina Cameron and Heather Guerino of Norwood, place their gloves together, symbolizing their intent to knock-out domestic violence during the "5K Run/Walk/Roll to End Domestic Violence" event on the Grand Concourse on Saturday, October 16, 2021.

It also offers referrals to the early victim engagement (EVE) program, where advocates work with survivors from the time of an abuser's arraignment and helps keep survivors informed of developments in their legal cases.

Along the Grand Concourse, three women observed hugging, crying, and praying, Carmen, Sharon, and Joy, (whose full names are not being disclosed) seemed like they were life-long friends, but had just met on the day of the 5K run.

Concourse resident, Sharon, explained, "I was going to have a coffee over there and I see the 5K run... I was like, 'Okay! What's the 5K about?' And then, it says 'domestic violence' and I had to get involved, and I put a shirt on."

She continued, "We are all victims

of domestic violence. It's real funny because I thought my story was bad, which is why you saw us here praying, by the blood of Jesus, when I saw my sisters I met today... we all had the same story."

Explaining how she was unaware she was being emotionally and sexually abused over the course of her 25-year marriage, Sharon added, "I never knew I was in an abusive relationship until I went onto YouTube, and I found out about the word 'narcissist' and everything just started coming out."

Meanwhile, Carmen said, "I lost my sister to domestic violence. She was killed by her husband, and my nephew, he killed both of them. My nephew was 19 and she was 35. He was trying to kill her, and he killed them both." Carmen said her sister's killer died in jail, adding, "and one year after that, my husband tried to kill me one night too. He tried to choke me. I was a fighter, and God helped me escape."

As walkers and runners made their way back to East 161st Street, Clark was seen standing under a stream of dozens of large purple and white balloons, congratulating individual participants with a congratulatory "high-five" as they crossed the finish line.

On Thursday, Oct. 21, the Mayor's Office to End Domestic & Gender Based Violence announced that all major New York City landmarks across the five boroughs would be lit in purple for

(continued on page 4)

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE

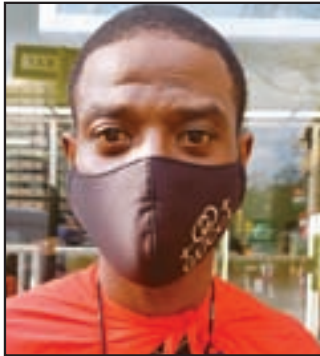


With roughly 9,000 people across the State waiting on an organ transplant, some will die before they receive it. In recognition of Organ Donor Enrollment Day in New York State on Oct. 7, we asked readers if they were organ donors, and if not, if they would consider becoming one.



"I am an organ donor. I've been an organ donor for over 14 years now. I think if we can give the last gift of life, that's the greatest gift to give. I think we should follow Spain's direction where they actually have opt-out donors. You're automatically registered as a donor and if you wish to opt out, you have that choice. I think they should do that because many people don't want to face the fact that they will be dead, and that's why they don't think about donating their organs. I think that using animals for transplants... I'm not for that. I think it's unfair, because we have so many humans who are dying without donating their organs and raising animals to be transplants, I think that's animal cruelty."

Roxanne Delgado,
Pelham Parkway



"I don't have a driver's license, but I am an organ donor. I'm not going to say that I have big thoughts on it, because I don't know too much about it. But, I will look into it. If I had to say anything, it would be that if it's going to help the community and society and help people as a whole, then I'm all for it. If it's going to save countless lives, if it can save 9,000 lives in New York State today, then come on, let's do it! We're wasting a lot of time doing exactly nothing, so we might as well try something that we've never done before."

Cedrick Dennis,
Fordham



"My thoughts on organ transplants is if a person can live, then why not? If a religion tells you not to donate an organ, then that's the devil involved. People need to live. Yes, I would give an organ, but I'm 60 years old and I don't know how good they are, but I'm willing to give to save a person's life, of course. I had heard about a pig's kidney being transplanted into a human. Technology is always advancing and we should go with it."

Glenn Daniels,
Morrisania



"I am a proud organ donor. Many years ago, I listed myself as an organ donor, so that when my time comes to leave this plain, the many blessings this body has brought me may extend to a fellow human being. In making that decision, I struggled with a natural inclination to keep my mortal remains intact. I'd also just begun exploring my Jewish heritage and knew of the debate around organ donation in Judaism. Although I am not Orthodox, it gave me pause. In the end, I sided with saving or extending a life as the highest mandate and the purest expression of solidarity. We come to this world, after all, to make it a better place."

Walter Krochmal
Morris Park



"Last year, nearly 40,000 lives were saved in the United States by organ donations. These donations are a precious gift from the dead to the living. Nobody wants to think about organ donation, of course, any more than most people look forward to preparing a will, but the benefits are enormous. I would encourage anyone considering organ donation to learn more and sign up."

Patrick Rhéaume,
Ft. Greene, Brooklyn



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Over 300 Participate in 5K Event to End Domestic Violence

(continued from page 2)

the 8th annual, "NYC Go Purple Day." Among the targeted city landmarks were the Bronx County Courthouse and Yankee Stadium.

Norwood News went to Yankee Stadium to take some photos of the occasion on the night in question but did not witness any purple lighting at the venue. Last year, we were advised that the Bronx County Courthouse would similarly be lit up (on that occasion, in orange) to highlight "16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence," but similarly, there was no visible lighting on the building on that occasion either. We reached out to the mayor's office for comment, and a representative said she would look into the matter.

On Friday, Oct. 29, the mayor's office also held an event for technicians working in the hair, nail and beauty industry to train them to recognize victims of domestic abuse, and how they can look out for signs of abuse and potentially help victims. Other virtual

events were also held over the course of the month, including de-escalation and self-defense classes, the impact of DV on children, and the intersection between domestic violence and animal cruelty.

The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed H.R. 1620, the Violence Against Women Act of 2021 and H.R. 2119, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Improvement Act of 2021. Both bills head to the U.S. Senate for more debate before a vote is taken, and before they become law with President Joe Biden's signature.

The Bronx District Attorney's office urges anyone suffering at the hands of an abuser to immediately contact the Bronx D.A.'s crime victim assistance unit at (718) 590-2115. The Bronx Family Justice Center can be reached on (718) 508 1220. For more help & resources, visit <https://on.nyc.gov/2BqhBe8>. or call 1-800-621-4673 (HOPE).

**Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*



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NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Curbside Composting is Back

The City's curbside composting service is back. Councilman Eric Dinowitz is encouraging Bronxites to sign up for the service since food scraps, food-soiled paper and yard waste account for 1/3 of the City's trash. This can, instead, be used for composting and will help eliminate landfills. Dinowitz warned residents that those who were previously signed up for the service do not automatically get reinstated, however, and must register for the service anew. He said for those who live in a building with more than 10 residential units, the manager or property owner is required to sign up for compost collection, but he encouraged all residents to sign up in any case. More information can be found at ericdinowitz.nyc/composting.

Bronx-wide Climate Justice Rally

Coinciding with the U.N.'s COP26 climate conference in Glasgow, Scotland, which began on Oct. 31, and which was attended by U.S. President Joe Biden, a Bronx-wide climate justice rally was held on Thursday, Oct. 28, at Fordham Plaza, "to support bold climate legislation that relies on Bronx-based community organizations to shape solutions that are right for the Bronx."

The event was hosted by several environmental and local Bronx organizations, including NY Renew, Jewish Climate Action Network NYC, TreeAge, and The Point CDC. They were joined by a climate activists and a number of elected officials, including Assembly Members Karines Reyes, Nathalia Fernández and Kenny Burgos, State Sen. Luis Sepúlveda, and District 16 City Council Member Vanessa Gibson. Statements of support were shared from State Sen. Alessandra Biaggi and Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz.

2nd Annual Bronx Harvest Festival

Bronx Night Market presents

Kathleen A. Benjamin, Mother of Ex-Assemblyman Michael Benjamin, Laid to Rest

By MICHAEL BENJAMIN

Former Bronx assemblyman, Michael Benjamin, announced that his mother, Kathleen A. Benjamin, née Conton, passed away at Calvary Hospital (Morris Park) on Thursday, Oct. 28, 2021, at the age of 86. A native of Christiansted, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, Kathleen came to the Bronx in 1956 and later married husband, Ray Benjamin, in October 1957. She resided at Tracey Towers in the Jerome Park section of the borough, on the border with Norwood.

After three children and ten years as a "stay-at-home," mother, Kathleen became a para-professional at the school her boys attended, P.S. 130X, on Prospect Avenue in the South Bronx. She went on to earn her B.A. in education from Lehman College (Jerome Park) in 1979 and earned her Master's in elementary education from City University. She taught first



Photos courtesy of Michael Benjamin

TRACEY TOWERS RESIDENT, Mrs Kathleen Benjamin (née Conton), of USVI died Thursday, October 28, 2021, at Calvary Hospital.

grade in Community School District 8 in the New York City public school system, primarily at P.S. 130, for 30 years, until her retirement in 1997.

Kathleen is survived by her sons, Michael, Lawrence and Vernon; her cherished great-nephew, who is a fourth son, Kenon Tutein; niece, Denese Clay, and friend, Karen Mitchell, both of whom became the daughters she never had; daughter-in-law, Susie Wong-Benjamin; son-in-law, Stanley H. Willauer, Jr; grandsons, Maxwell and Xavier; sisters, Joyce Tutein, Lucida Robles, Inez Thomas; brothers, Alfred Conton, Jr. and Vernon Conton; and a host of loving

nieces, nephews, friends and former students.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Ray O. Benjamin. Of his mother's legacy, Michael Benjamin said, "Mom was a natural-born educator who enjoyed being around children and helping them to learn."

Mrs Benjamin's homegoing service will be held at McCall's Bronxwood, 4035 Bronxwood Avenue/E. 227th Street (Wakefield) on Thursday, Nov. 4 at 11:30 a.m.

Donations, in Kathleen's memory, may be made to [Dementia Society of America](http://DementiaSocietyofAmerica.org), P.O. Box 600, Doylestown, PA 18901.

the 2nd Annual Bronx Harvest Festival on Saturday, Nov. 13, at noon on Fordham Plaza in conjunction with the Fordham Road Business Improvement District, the local Bronx Community Board and BronxNet. Residents are encouraged to come out and enjoy amazing food, live performances, fun contests, giveaways, and more.

Jerome Park Missing Boy

The NYPD is seeking the public's assistance locating two 11-year-old boys, one of whom is a Bronx resident, who were last seen and reported missing in Brooklyn. Ruben Rodriguez, 11, of 3001 Briggs Avenue in Jerome Park, and Jerome Jemmot, 11, of 56 North Oxford Walk in Brooklyn, were last seen together on Monday, Nov. 1, playing inside Fort Greene Park in Brooklyn, in the 88th precinct.

Ruben is described as 5



feet tall, weighing 120 pounds, is Hispanic, has a medium build, a light complexion, black hair, and brown eyes. He was last seen wearing a blue sweatshirt, blue sweatpants, and blue sneakers.



Jerome is described as 5 feet tall, weighs 100 pounds, is Black, has a thin build, a dark complexion, and black hair and brown eyes. He was last seen wearing a white hooded sweatshirt with red

"GOAT" lettering on it and black lettering on the sleeve, black sweatpants, and black Puma sneakers.

It's the second time in a matter of weeks that Ruben has been reported missing. He was previously reported missing on Saturday, Sept. 25. On that occasion, he was last seen inside the Broadway/Lafayette subway station on the F line platform, at approximately 5 p.m. Photos of each boy are attached.

Anyone with information regarding these missing persons 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 <https://crimestoppers.nypdonline.org/> or on Twitter @NYPD-Tips. All calls are strictly confidential.



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Photo by José A. Giralt

COUNCILMAN OSWALD FELIZ who represents City Council District 15 (at podium) is joined by some of his fellow council members at a press conference at City Hall Park on Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021, as he announces that a letter has been sent to State officials asking for legislative reforms to curb gun violence in New York City. The letter, signed by 20 members of the City Council, asks for legislative reforms to be made, allowing judges the flexibility to remand individuals caught with firearms.

Elected Officials Try Multiple Approaches to Curb Gun Violence

By **JOSÉ A. GIRALT**

Reports of gun violence continue to make headlines in the Bronx and across the City, and elected officials are making it a focus of their political endeavors in the lead-up to Election Day. Although New York City has seen historic drops in most crime categories, 2021 is proving to be especially dangerous for teenagers.

According to NYPD data, through Sept. 26, 2021, there were 16 fatal shootings involving teen violence. This is more than double the number, at seven, reported throughout 2020 for such fatalities. In addition, as of Sept. 26, 2021, there were a reported 89 non-fatal incidents involving teen violence.

To address the situation, City Councilman Oswald Feliz (C.D. 15) has called on State legislators to reform prevailing laws which allow people to be quickly released from jail even when they have used firearms during a crime. Known broadly as “bail reform” legislation, it took effect at the beginning of 2020 with the intent of lessening the disproportion-

ate impact cash bail was having on communities of color.

According to the ACLU, after an arrest, wrongful or not, a person’s ability to leave jail and return home to fight the charges depends on money because, in most states, people are required to pay cash bail. Originally, bail was supposed to make sure people returned to court to face charges against them. However, ACLU officials say, instead, the money bail system has morphed into widespread, wealth-based incarceration. Often, due to lack of means, the cash bail system disproportionately impacts people of color.

Meanwhile, critics of bail reform have long argued that it has made the streets less safe and provides little incentive for repeat offenders to change their ways.

Though there has been a lot of finger-pointing among politicians, law enforcement, and the judicial branch of government as to the reasons for the growth in gun violence, elected officials like Feliz

are now imploring State lawmakers to implement reforms as a matter of urgency.

At a press conference on Oct. 7, just steps from City Hall, Feliz was joined by six of his counterparts in announcing the delivery of a letter to both Gov. Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature, calling for reforms of the January 2020 bail reform laws. Signed by 20 council members, the letter asks judges to use more discretion before releasing certain individuals back into the public, namely those who have been charged with violent offenses, or who have a criminal history. This includes young people arrested for gun violence, who have had their cases transferred to a family court by a judge.

“No one can deny that our gun laws are broken,” Feliz, a former tenant lawyer, said. “When someone is caught and arrested with a firearm, they’re immediately released, and if they’re caught again, immediately released, and caught again and immediately released again,

no one can deny that we’re sending our young kids a bad message, [a] dangerous message,” he said.

On Sept. 29, Nisayah Sanchez, 16, was shot on East 187th Street in the Belmont section of the Bronx. He died the next day. Police reports identified Sanchez as a gang member but possibly the unintended target of the shooting. He, reportedly, had a long rap sheet. Police Commissioner Dermot Shea reacted to the shooting along with news of other teen victims of recent gun violence, during an interview with WPIX, with a rhetorical question, “How many kids have to die before we fix these laws?”

He continued, “We are not helping these kids by putting them back on the streets,” he said. “In fact, what we’re actually doing is encouraging others to carry guns, because you have to, because no one is being removed from the streets. It doesn’t take mass incarceration. It takes common sense, and it takes leadership and courage to say we need to

(continued on page 20)

Fall Festival on Jerome Avenue Returns for 20th Anniversary

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

The live music was loud, the food was delicious, and the children couldn't get enough cotton candy. The 20th Annual Fall Festival, organized by the Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District (BID) was back in full force on Saturday, Oct. 23.

Jerome Avenue was closed for six hours from Gun Hill Road to East 208th Street in the Norwood section of the Bronx to accommodate the vendors, volunteers, and community groups.

On the stage, set up just south of Gun Hill Road, Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernández (A.D. 80) received a public service award from the BID, and had praise for the work they do. "I'm so honored to receive the public service award," Fernández told *Norwood News*. Of the BID itself, she added, "I look forward to their continued work and I thank them for everything they do for the community."

Most of the tents set up at the festival were selling some type of goods or food, but not all. Brandon Montes, 30, is the founder of the Norwood Community Library, and his display was filled with books that visitors could walk away with for free. Montes depends on the goodwill of people to return the books when they're finished and exchange them for others. "I showed up with two carts filled with books, and I'm now down to just four [books]," he said. "I think we must have given out 150 books today, easy."

Comments from some of the attendees showed an eagerness to



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

(L TO R) Jerome Gun Hill BID director of community and economic development, Jennifer Tausig, is joined by Sallie Caldwell, BID board member, as well as BID festival organizers, Natalia Guendel Bueno and Ariana Cipriani at the 20th Annual Fall Festival in Norwood on Saturday, Oct. 23, 2021.

return to the sense of normalcy seen before the pandemic hit. Tania Blanco, 40, was glad to see the fair return for its 20th anniversary. "I think the fair is amazing because it brings the community together," she said. "In these times, we need to see that." Blanco had a special reason for picking the music as her favorite part of the fair. "It's always the music," she said. "I just lost my dad, so listening to the Spanish music, you know, helps me remember," she added.

Brenda Caldwell-Paris, president of the 52nd Precinct Community Council, walked up and down the street on the day of the festival, along with other council members, giving away face coverings. "We're promoting mask wearing by giving them away," Caldwell-Paris said.

"We're also making people aware of the next 52nd Precinct Community Council meeting," she added. (At the Oct. 28 meeting, free hand sanitizer was handed out to attendees.) While the council has resumed in-person meetings, which are usually held on the

third Thursday of each month, Caldwell said at the October meeting that the November meeting may, actually, be held virtually. Residents should call the council at (718) 220-5824 ahead of time to check.

Brina Lauriano, 30, walked to the festival from nearby Villa Avenue and said she hopes to see more public events like it which she views as an escape from what she described as the negativity of all the pandemic-related news.

"[It] is [a] way to see positivity," Lauriano said. "It's hopefully a way to do good."

Meanwhile, registered dietitian nutritionist, Dr. Gloria Bent, spoke to festival goers from her stand about the advantages of eating good, nutritious food. Bent makes cucumber water which she says is better for one's system than soda or juices.

The positive festival vibe, complemented by music and dance performances, was conta-

gious, and made some of the local vendors and community partners think about returning next year. This was the second year for the Norwood Community Library to have a stand at the festival and Montes expects to be back. "I love events like this because all of us come out and support each other and [it] adds something positive here in the Bronx," he said. "I'm happy to help and be here for the community."

Summing up the day, Jennifer Tausig, BID director of community and economic development, said, "We are thrilled to celebrate the 20th Annual Fall Festival together, particularly after the last 18 months." She added, "We're grateful for our sponsors, community partners and our neighbors for their continued support of the BID, and our local small businesses."

**Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

REGISTERED DIETITIAN NUTRITIONIST, Dr. Gloria Bent, talks to festival goers about good, nutritious food during the 20th Annual Fall Festival in Norwood, organized by the Jerome Gun Hill BID, on Saturday, October 23, 2021.



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CRIME FILE

BY SÍLE MOLONEY

**University Heights Robbery**

The NYPD is seeking the public's help identifying the individual seen in the attached photo above, sought in connection with a University Heights robbery. On Monday Oct. 25, at approximately 6 p.m., at Five Star Tire Shop, located at 2409 Jerome Avenue, two unknown individuals approached two 29-year-old men and displayed a firearm.

The two individuals removed one necklace from each victim, before fleeing on foot southbound on Jerome Avenue towards East 184th Street. The total value of the stolen property is \$2,050. No injuries were reported. One of the individuals is described as a light-skinned male who was last seen wearing a black sweatshirt with a Nike logo on the front, black shorts, and green/white sneakers. The photo shows him walking northbound on Jerome Avenue from North Street shortly after the robbery.

Fordham Heights: 21-Year-Old Shot

A murder investigation has been launched following the shooting of a 21-year-old man in the head in Fordham Heights. Police responded to a 911 call regarding a man who had been shot at 2253 Ryer Avenue on Sunday, Oct. 24, at approximately 8.49 p.m. Upon arrival, they observed the man, lying on the ground with a gunshot wound to the head. EMS also responded and transported the victim to Saint Barnabas Hospital, where he was pronounced deceased on Tuesday, Oct. 26. The incident has since been classified as a homicide. There are no arrests, and the investigation remains ongoing. The deceased has been identified as Saiko Koma, 21, of East 180th Street in the Crotona section of the Bronx.

Fordham Heights: Assault & Robbery

The NYPD is seeking the public's help locating the unidentified man seen in the attached photo below who is sought in connection with a robbery and assault that occurred in Fordham Heights. On Wednesday, Sept. 15, at 2.40 a.m., in front of 109 East 184th Street, a 43-year-old male victim was ap-

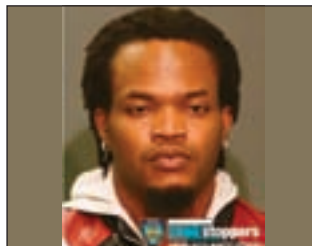
proached by the unidentified assailant who demanded his cash. When the victim refused, the assailant punched him and knocked him to the ground, and stole the victim's wallet which contained \$2,500, as well as bank cards and his ID. The suspect fled on foot while the victim, who suffered pain and bruising, refused medical attention.

**Fordham Manor Murder Investigation**

The NYPD is seeking the public's help locating the man seen in the attached photo below who is sought for questioning in connection to a murder that occurred in August 2021 in Fordham Manor. On Aug. 13, at approximately 4.09 p.m. police responded to a call regarding an assault that occurred inside 2550 Bainbridge Avenue. Upon arrival, officers observed

a 21-year-old man with multiple gunshot wounds to his body, lying unconscious and unresponsive inside the location.

EMS responded and transported the victim to an area hospital where he was pronounced deceased. There were no arrests, and the investigation is ongoing. The deceased was later identified as Jayquan Lewis, 21, of Fordham Manor. Police are now searching for Kemel Smith, described as a 31-year-old male who is Black.

**Kingsbridge Heights: Forcible Touching in Subway of 16-Year-Old**

The NYPD is seeking the public's help identifying the individual who is sought for questioning in connection with a forcible touching incident that occurred in Kingsbridge Heights.

On Tuesday, Sept. 28, at

approximately 7.20 p.m., the individual approached a 16-year-old teenager from behind as she was exiting the Kingsbridge Road B & D subway station and grabbed her buttocks. The man then fled the location on foot in an unknown direction. The victim was not physically injured as a result of the incident.

According to New York Penal Code §130.52, the legal definition of forcible touching is touching the intimate or sexual parts of another person to receive sexual satisfaction or for no legitimate reason at all. Forcible touching is a misdemeanor, Class A, and not a felony like most other sexual offenses.

Anyone with information regarding these incidents is asked to call the NYPD's Crime Stoppers Hotline at 1-800-577-TIPS (8477) or for Spanish, 1-888-57-PISTA (74782). The public can also submit their tips by logging onto the CrimeStoppers website at <https://crimestoppers.nypdonline.org/> or on Twitter @NYPDTips. All calls are strictly confidential.



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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY

COVID-19 Updates

As of Aug. 17, people 12 and older are required to show proof they have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine to obtain access to indoor dining, indoor fitness, and indoor entertainment. Learn more at: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-vaccines-keytonyc.page>.

On Sept. 9, President Joe Biden mandated that all private employers with 100 or more workers require their workers to be vaccinated or tested weekly. He also mandated that all healthcare workers in hospitals, clinics and other facilities that accept Medicare and Medicaid payments, and all federal contractors must get vaccinated, with no opt out option.

On Sept. 9, Mayor Bill de Blasio mandated that all NYC pre-kindergarten, childcare, and after-school program workers who have contracts with the City had to show proof of having received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by Sept. 27.

On Sept. 22, the US Federal Drug Administration (FDA) authorized people over 65 who have received Pfizer-BioNTech's coronavirus vaccine to get a booster shot at least six months after their second injection. The FDA also authorized booster for adult Pfizer-BioNTech recipients who are at high risk of becoming severely ill with COVID-19 or who are at risk of serious complications from the disease due to frequent exposure

to the coronavirus at their jobs. Certain New Yorkers are now eligible to receive their COVID-19 booster shot. Check who is eligible here: <https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/booster-doses>.

Gov. Hochul has signed into law a moratorium on COVID-19 related residential and commercial evictions, which is in effect until Jan. 15, 2022. To apply, go to: <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/emergency-rental-assistance/>.

The open enrollment period for uninsured New Yorkers has been extended through Dec. 31. New Yorkers can apply for coverage through NY State of Health, at <https://nystateofhealth.ny.gov/> or directly through insurers.

NYC offers free, at-home PCR COVID-19 testing for all New Yorkers who are 65+ or immunocompromised. The service is available 7 days a week from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., and appointments can be scheduled by calling 929-298-9400.

The City has expanded its in-home vaccination program to all New Yorkers aged 12+. You can select which of the vaccines you prefer at no cost. To request your in-home vaccination, visit <https://forms.cityofnewyork.us/f/home>.

NYC Mobile Vaccine Buses continue to provide J&J vaccines in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan and Queens. The full schedule of mobile vaccine locations can be found at: [https://www1.nyc.gov/site/coronavirus/vaccines/covid-19-vaccines.](https://www1.nyc.gov/site/coronavirus/vaccines/covid-19-vaccines.page#walk-up-sites)

[page#walk-up-sites](https://www1.nyc.gov/site/coronavirus/vaccines/covid-19-vaccines.page#walk-up-sites). Walk-ups are welcome and if you need assistance, you can also call (855)-491-2667.

The FDA expanded emergency use authorizations for the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna mRNA vaccines. Immunocompromised people are eligible to receive a third booster vaccine shot to boost their antibodies. NYC offers free, at-home PCR COVID-19 daily testing, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. for New Yorkers, 65+ or immunocompromised. Call 929-298-9400 to book.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved booster shots of the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines on Oct. 20 for select groups.

The City of New York operates a COVID-19 hotline. Call 212-COVID19 or (212) 268-4319 with your questions.

Following the vaccine mandate deadline of 5 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 29, for most City employees, the vaccination rate as of Saturday afternoon, Oct. 30, for such employees was at 91 percent, according to Mayor Bill de Blasio.

As of Nov. 2, both the FDA and Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) have approved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for kids aged 5 through 11. Voluntary vaccination is expected to start on Nov. 4.

Get the facts about the COVID-19 vaccines at these sites:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-vaccine-facts.page>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/facts.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/about-covid-19/caring-for-children/families.html>

NYC Utility Moratorium

New York's statewide, utility shut-off moratorium, which had expired on March 31, has been extended. The law extends the statewide moratorium on utility shut-offs, including water, heat, electric, telephone, cable, and broadband services until the conclusion of the COVID-19 state of emergency, or until December 31, 2021, whichever comes first. For New Yorkers suffering financially due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the law enshrines a further moratorium extension of 180 days.

Excluded Workers Fund

The application for the Excluded Workers Fund is live. Visit <https://ewf.labor.ny.gov/new> to apply. For more details and to learn about documentation required to apply, visit on.ny.gov/ewf. This \$2.1 billion State fund will provide financial relief for New Yorkers state-wide who have suffered income loss during the pandemic and were left out of the various federal relief programs, including unemployment and pandemic benefits.

Four Fires Overshadow Halloween Weekend

By DAVID GREENE

Eleven people, including nine firefighters, were injured in a Fordham Manor fire, reported on the third floor of a six-story building at 2664 Grand Concourse at East Kingsbridge Road at 2:48 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 30. An FDNY official said 106 firefighters from 25 units were needed to bring the blaze under control, which it was, at 4:14 p.m. The source added that two civilians refused medical attention at the scene.

Asked if she knew where the fire started, third-floor resident, Maria Moore, told the **Norwood News** she believed it was in Apartment 3M. We asked if she knew how the residents were doing, "The dog died, but everybody is okay," Moore replied. "Yesterday, they had to go to a hotel." Referring later to the cause of the fire, she added, "I heard there was a [power] surge with the electricity."

District 15 City Councilman, Oswald Feliz, who was leading in his bid to retain his District 15 seat when polls closed on Election Day, Nov. 2, said he

was aware of the impacted family's circumstances and has offered to help.

For most City employees, a COVID-19 vaccination mandate deadline had gone into effect the previous day, on Friday, Oct. 29, at 5 p.m. amid some protests. Reports of widespread FDNY retirement announcements and sick leave requests ensued. One Facebook user, Charles Frizzida, alleged in a post that four fire companies in the Bronx were subsequently closed due to a manpower shortage.

They were identified as Engine 73 at 655 Prospect Avenue, Engine 42 at 1781 Monroe Avenue, Engine 92 at 1259 Morris Avenue and Squad 41 on East 150th Street. **Norwood News** reached out to the FDNY and its union to request confirmation regarding the alleged staff shortages but was unable to validate the claims. We also reached out to Frizzida to ask if he is an FDNY employee. We did not receive an immediate response.

Meanwhile, a 4-alarm fire was reported by the FDNY on Twitter at around 11.50 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 1,



Photo by Cristian Martin

FIREFIGHTERS ABOVE SET up three tower ladders as a 2-alarm fire at the Grand Concourse and East Kingsbridge Road in Fordham Manor is slowly brought under control on Saturday, October 30, 2021.

at 3650 Bailey Avenue, at W 238th Street in Van Cortlandt Village. The fire apparently broke out on the first floor of a commercial building and was confirmed by FDNY, at around 1.24 a.m. on Nov. 2, as being under control. **Nor-**

wood News reached out to the FDNY for details of any injuries. We did not receive an immediate response.

A separate fire was reported by the FDNY in Williamsbridge at 1166 E 215th Street on Nov. 1, at around 9.58 p.m. It was, reportedly, in the bedroom of a multiple dwelling (Apt 2C). Strangely, a separate tweet from the FDNY at 9.43 p.m. (15 minutes before the tweet calling for all hands to respond) confirmed that a fire at the same address was under control. **Norwood News** reached out to the FDNY for clarification regarding the sequence of the tweets as well as confirmation on any injuries. We did not receive an immediate response.

On Oct. 31, at around 10.55 p.m., the FDNY reported on another fire in a Wakefield garage at 686 E 224th Street. The agency confirmed in a tweet at around 11.17 p.m. that the fire was under control. Again, **Norwood News** reached out to the FDNY for details of any injuries. We did not receive an immediate response.



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Election Day 2021: Initial Results & Voter Reaction

By **DAWN CLANCY, SARAH HUFFMAN, MIRIAM QUIÑONES, JOSÉ A. GIRALT & SÍLE MOLONEY**

After the polls closed at 9 p.m. on Election Day, Nov. 2, and before *Norwood News* went to press with its Nov. 4 edition, the New York City Board of Elections released unofficial Election Night results for the various races.

In the citywide races, Brooklyn Borough President and Democratic nominee for mayor, Eric Adams, led in the mayoral race with 75 percent of the vote, followed by Republican candidate, Curtis Sliwa with 18 percent. Incumbent public advocate and Democrat, Jumaane Williams was leading in the public advocate race with 76 percent of the vote, followed by Republican candidate, Dr. Devi Elizabeth Nampiaparampil, with 15 percent.

In the City Comptroller's race, Democratic City Councilman Brad Lander led with 78 percent of the vote, followed by Republican candidate, Daby Benjamine Carreras with 15 percent. In the Bronx borough president's race, District 16 City Council Member and Democratic nominee, Vanessa Gibson, led with 84 percent of the vote, followed by Republican candidate, Janelle King, with 9 percent and Conservative Party candidate, Sammy Ravelo, with 6 percent.

In the District 11 City Council race, incumbent Democratic councilman, Eric Dinowitz, led with 85 per-

cent of the vote, followed by Republican / Conservative Party candidate, Kevin Pazmino, with 10 percent.

District 15 incumbent Democratic councilman, Oswald Feliz, led with 84 percent of the vote in the District 15 race, followed by Republican / Conservative Party candidate, Ariel Rivera Diaz, with 12 percent, and in the District 14 City Council race, candidate, Pierina Sanchez, the Democratic nominee, led with 91 percent of the vote, followed by Shemeen Chappell with 8 percent.

In the special election race for Bronx Assembly District 86, Yudelka Tapia, the sole candidate in the race, won 99.7 percent of the vote, based on the unofficial election night results.

In other North Bronx races, incumbent Democratic District 12 councilman, Kevin Riley, won 99 percent of the vote as the sole candidate in the District 12 race. In District 13, Democratic nominee, Marjorie Velázquez led with 57 percent of the vote to Republican, Aleksander Mici's 41 percent.

In other parts of the Bronx, Democratic incumbent city councilwoman, Diana Ayala, won 98 percent of the votes as the sole candidate in District 8. In District 16, Democrat, Althea Stevens, was leading with 92 percent of the vote, in District 17, Democrat incumbent, Rafael Salamanca was leading with 80 percent of the vote, in District 18, Democrat Amanda Farias



Photo by Dawn Clancy.

RICHARD CHAPLE, 46, votes at P.S. 056 Norwood Heights polling site in Norwood, located in City Council District 11, on Election Day, Tuesday, November 2, 2021.

was leading with 88 percent of the vote. In District 22, Democrat Tiffany Caban was leading with 69 percent of the vote.

As of the morning of Nov. 3, the BOE confirmed that 1,022,802 people

had voted in the mayoral election based on 97.76 percent of voting scanner results.

Throughout Election Day, *Norwood News* visited P.S. 46 polling site

(continued on next page)

MTA Congestion Pricing

Proposed congestion price tolling for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) is politically sensitive. Congestion pricing may not kick in until January 2023 or later, and final details on who will pay still need to be established. Since November 2019, former Gov. Andrew Cuomo and NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio delayed announcing their appointments to the MTA Traffic Mobility Review Board.

De Blasio finally got around to filling this one seat in July 2021. When will Gov. Kathy Hochul make it one of her transit-related priorities to fill her five seats? Completion of this requirement is now twenty-three months overdue.

Elected officials will lobby for discounts or exemptions for police, fire, teachers, low income, NYC outer borough residents, seniors, physically disabled, small commercial delivery businesses, users of electric vehicles or other special



Letters To The Editor

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

niche populations.

These discounts or exemptions will be adopted to placate the constituents of elected officials running for reelection in 2021 or 2022. You can't capture five years of toll revenues, estimated to be \$1 billion per year (leveraged to raise \$15 billion in support MTA's \$51 billion 2020-2024 five-year capital plan) when you implement the program three years or more after 2020.

A late start with implementation, a downturn in the economy, more people telecommuting full and part time, along

with a series of discounts and exemptions to tolls, will result in billions of lost anticipated revenue.

Just how will the MTA bridge a future, funding shortfall in the billions within the previously approved \$51 billion 2020-2024 five-year capital program? Like it or not, sooner or later, some difficult decisions will have to be made by MTA chairman, Janno Lieber, and MTA board members.

Larry Penner
Great Neck

Idea for Organ Transplants

The recent issue of the *Norwood News* included the article, "Montefiore Highlights Importance of Organ & Tissue Donation as 8,486 New Yorkers Await Organs."

May I suggest Montefiore consider a restorative justice approach to this problem by meeting with the governor of NYS and seeking permission to reach out to prisoners serving life terms for crimes for which they have been convicted. The hospital could ask these prisoners to consider making amends to innocent people by donating one of their organs for transplant. Both parties could find peace and comfort in such a process.

Richard Marias,
Norwood

(continued from previous page)

at 2760 Briggs Avenue and P.S. 8 at 3010 Briggs Avenue in Bedford Park, Monroe College polling site, located at 2501 Jerome Avenue in Fordham Manor, P.S. 85 polling site, located at 2400 Marion Avenue in Fordham Heights and none reported any voting machine issues.

We spoke with T'Shawn Shannon who voted at Monroe College, located in City Council District 14. She spoke to us about her views on the candidates in the race. "I appreciated that some of them came to my door, actually, and talked to me about the various issues in the neighborhood," she said.

"It seemed that they were very responsive and willing to listen to me and, hopefully, they go about with the information that I gave to them dealing with the issues that I addressed." On the merits or otherwise of ranked choice voting, Shannon said, "I think whatever gets people out to vote is beneficial to everyone."

Kiana Correro, who voted at P.S. 8 in District 11, said the main reason she came out to vote was to vote Mayor Bill de Blasio out of office because she said the mask mandates and vaccine mandates have created a mess.

"You have police officers getting fired, teachers getting fired," she said. "You claim you want to save lives, but you're actually destroying lives by firing people for not having medical freedom, basically. So, that's something I really don't like. I think we should just get back to normal living to be very honest. Like, it just seems very over tyrannical and that's the main reason I came out here to vote today," she added.

We also visited P.S. 056 Norwood Heights polling center, located at 341 E 207th Street in Norwood, located in District 11. Again, there were no problems reported in terms of voting machines at the center. Richard Chaple, 46, a customer service representative, who voted for Adams for mayor, was asked which issue was to the forefront of his mind on entering the polling station.

He told *Norwood News* he wants to feel safe in the city. "I'm from New York, and I moved to Miami for 15 years, and came back, and since De Blasio came to the city, it's kind of scary," he said. Chaple added, "I want the city to be running better; it's kind of chaotic now."

Voters also cast their ballot on five State constitutional amendment proposals. Proposal 1 related to amending



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

BRONXITE, EDGAR, VOTES AT P.S. 86 at 2756 Reservoir Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights on Election Day, November 2, 2021, and tells the *Norwood News* that Democratic mayoral nominee, Brooklyn Borough President, Eric Adams, is an honorable man.

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Out & About

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY

Events

Norwood Community Library will be handing out free books for all on Sunday, Nov. 7, from noon to 3:30 p.m. on Gun Hill Road between Wayne Avenue and Bainbridge Avenue.

Experience the beauty of Woodlawn Cemetery, located at 4199 Webster Ave, Bronx, NY 10470, when lit by night during its popular **Illuminated Mausoleums Tour**, on Friday, Nov. 5. Guests will be taken by trolley through the cemetery and will walk back enjoying the art and architecture of the beautifully lit mausoleums. This tour is outdoors, so please wear comfortable walking shoes and warm clothes, and don't forget to bring along a flashlight!

This is a trolley and walking tour. All guests, regardless of vaccination status, will be asked to wear a mask while on the trolley. Meet at the Jerome Avenue and Bainbridge Avenue entrance. For more information, email

contact@woodlawnconservancy.org or call 718-408-5624. These tours quickly sell out so advance registration is recommended.

Music

Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, located on the campus of Lehman College/CUNY at 250 Bedford Park Boulevard West, in the Bronx, is proud to present the return of HÉCTOR "El Torito" ACOSTA for a Special VIP Concert, "La Noche de El Torito," on Saturday, Nov. 20, at 8 p.m.

Known affectionately as "El Torito" (The Little Bull), Héctor Acosta, one of the Dominican Republic's most well-known *bachata* and *merengue* artists, will perform his hits such as "Me Voy," "Sin Perdón," and "Tu Veneno". Tickets can be purchased by calling (718) 960-8833, Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and beginning at 4 p.m. on the day of the concert, or online at www.LehmanCenter.org.

Gotham Early Music Scene (GEMS) inaugurates its Open Gates Project with **The Divine Feminine: Centering Women of Color in Early Music**, a program of 17th-century works celebrating the animating feminine spirit featuring an ensemble composed of women of color. The performances take place in different boroughs, with the Bronx performance being held on Sunday, Nov. 14, at 4 p.m. at Pregones Theater, [575 Walton Ave., Bronx, NY](http://575WaltonAve.com).

This classical music program includes Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Madre, de los primores, Chiara Margarita Cozzolani: O dulcis Jesu, Barbara Strozzi: I baci, Francesca Caccini: O vive rose, Alessandro Stradella: Sinfonia No. 22 in D minor and Giovanni Battista Pergolesi: Stabat Mater. Tickets are available online at gemsny.org; by calling 212-866-0468; and at the door, subject to availability. For more information, visit the website or email media@gemsny.org.

Spoken Word

The Poor Mouth Writers' Night takes place at An Béal Bocht, at 445 W 238th Street in Fieldston, on Wednesday Nov. 10, at 8 p.m. Join for an open mic session with featured reading by poet, Sarah Sarai. Please note that proof of full vaccination is required. If you'd like to participate in the open mic, please sign up with Melinda Wilson upon arrival.

Sarah Sarai is author of *The Future Is Happy* (BlazeVOX[books]), *Geographies of Soul* and *Taffeta* (Indolent Books), and *That Strapless Bra in Heaven* (Kelsay Books). Her poems are in *The Southampton Review*, *Barrow Street*, *Okay Donkey*, *Barrow Street*, *Zocalo Public Square*, *ZYZZYVA*, and many other journals, as well as anthologies on Sylvia Plath; Lyrical Poetry; Quaker Poetry; James Brown; Dada; David Bowie (forthcoming), and others.

Movement

Williamsbridge Oval Park Recreation Center, located at 3225 Reservoir Oval E, Bronx, NY 10467, is open for the fall season, and registration is free. Go to <https://www.nycgovparks.org/facilities/recreationcenters/X104> for more information on the various classes and activities on offer.

Food

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Woman Injured in 4-Car Collision in Norwood

By DAVID GREENE

At least one woman was injured, and four cars were damaged when the axle on one car detached, causing it to smash into three other vehicles in the Norwood section of the Bronx.

An axle on a vehicle is a rod or shaft that rotates the wheels and supports the car's weight.

According to NYPD spokeswoman,

Sergeant Jessica McRorie, the crash was reported outside Woodlawn Cemetery, at East 211th Street and Tryon Avenue in Norwood at 10:32 a.m. on Friday, Oct. 22.

Officers from the 52nd precinct were observed surveying the damage, and at least one female victim was transported to a local hospital by ambulance. The FDNY has not yet re-

sponded to a request for information on the exact number of injured persons.

McRorie told *Norwood News* on Saturday, Oct. 30, "A 33-year-old male was operating a 2010 Ford SUV, traveling westbound on East 211th Street, when the driver attempted to drive around a double-parked vehicle...when the axle of the vehicle broke." The breakage re-

portedly caused the car to collide with the other vehicles.

Norwood News was unable to speak with the driver of the vehicle that lost the axle as the driver was not at the scene when we arrived and may have been injured and removed to an area hospital. It is unknown if the 2010 car was new or second-hand, nor if it was recently serviced.



Photos by David Greene

POLICE SURVEY THE damage after a car lost its axle and crashed into three parked cars on East 211th Street in Norwood on Friday, October 22, 2021.

POLICE AND PARAMEDICS survey the scene after a 4-car crash on East 211th Street in Norwood on Friday, October 22, 2021.



RESIDENTS SURROUND A damaged SUV that was hit by a vehicle that lost its axle and crashed into three other cars outside Woodlawn Cemetery in Norwood on Friday, October 22, 2021.

ONE PARKED VEHICLE ended up on the sidewalk and lost part of its front end during a 4-car collision in Norwood on Friday, October 22, 2021.



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Public and Community Meetings

The next 52nd PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL meeting will be held on the third Thursday in November from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., mostly likely via ZOOM. Call the 52nd Precinct Community Affairs office at 718-220-5824 to be added to the email list.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 7 meetings have been held via ZOOM. The next full Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 30 at 6.30 p.m. Contact ibravo@cb.nyc.gov to be added to the distribution list. Join the meeting online at <https://zoom.us/j/83066035540> or by phone on (646) 558-8656. Meeting ID: 830 6603 5540.

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 was held on Nov. 3. For further details, contact bedfordmosholu@verizon.net.

CORRECTION

In Edition No. 20 of the *Norwood News*, October 21-November 3, 2021, the main photo on the front page was taken by Citizen user, abuhaneef2002, and not by Toby Norwood. We apologize for this error.

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Elected Officials Try Multiple Approaches to Curb Gun Violence

(continued from page 8)

fix these laws.”

Meanwhile, Mayor Bill de Blasio is also working to reduce gun violence through a special task force dedicated to the issue. The Office to Prevent Gun Violence (OPGV), looks at more than just crime statistics to determine the root causes of gun violence. Officials say analysis of crime data has identified “social and economic disparities” as significant contributors to the violence certain communities experience. In the Bronx, seven neighborhoods, including Belmont and Fordham Manor, have been identified as areas in need of extra attention.

Within OPGV, the NYC Crisis Management System (CMS) works with community groups to provide violence intervention and support systems. Created in 2014 by De Blasio and City Council, what makes the program different is that it looks to incorporate community partners, and not just law enforcement, to provide solutions. According to City officials, “OPGV ensures community-developed and led solutions, and amplifies the voice, strength, and power that lies within.”

One such Bronx-based program is the “Stand Up to Violence” (SUV) program. Operating out of Jacobi Hospital, one of the City’s public hospitals, located at 1400 Pelham Pkwy S, in Morris Park, the program treats violence as a disease.

It addresses youth violence by deploying outreach workers to respond to shootings, to prevent retaliation, and to assist family members of those who have been injured or killed. Additionally, program coordinators mentor at-risk youth on educational and job opportunities.

Its success has been acknowledged by U.S. senate majority leader, Sen. Chuck Schumer, Rep. Jamaal Bowman (NY-16), and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY-14). The congresswoman confirmed on July 30, that Congress approved her request for more funding (\$393,839) to add mental health services to the program. The hospital proposed the addition of an emergency room social worker, a case worker, a part time psychiatrist, and a creative arts or music therapist, who would each be experienced in treating trauma/violence.

This was to allow the hospital to offer wraparound, therapeutic treatment to patients to help address the root causes of youth violence. Ocasio-Cortez said at the time, “When you actually open the door to a jail, and look at who’s inside, an enormous amount of people are dealing with untreated mental health issues,



Photo by José A. Giralt

(L-R) COUNCILMAN ERIC DINOWITZ (C.D. 11) looks on as fellow Council Member **Oswald Feliz** (C.D. 15) announces, during a press conference at City Hall Park on Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021, that a letter has been sent to State officials asking for legislative reforms in order to curb gun violence in New York City. The letter, signed by 20 City Council members, asks for legislative reforms to be made, allowing judges the flexibility to remand individuals caught with firearms.

and it is not acceptable for us to use jails as garbage bins for human beings.”

She continued, “If we want to reduce violent crime, if we want to reduce the number of people in our jails, the answer is to stop building more of them. The answer is to make sure that we actually build more hospitals, we pay organizers, we get people mental health care, and overall health care, employment, etc. It’s to support communities, not throw them away.”

Many of the SUV program’s outreach workers are former gang members or have been incarcerated and know firsthand the devastating effects of gun violence. Other groups like Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence (B.R.A.G.) operate other cure violence programs, like boxing classes, as previously reported

Meanwhile, the 52nd precinct has partnered with local groups like Guerinos Against Graffiti* and other City agencies on alternative approaches to curbing gun violence like addressing local sanitation, employment, and quality-of-life issues.

In June, the SUV program also received \$45,000 via local Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernández (A.D. 80). “We must be vigilant, and we must fund the programs that are working,” she said at the time. “Anything that we can do to help stop those from picking up the guns, to shooting the guns, to even stop them

from coming into our neighborhoods [is crucial],” she said, adding that the members of SUV were heroes.

Asked at that time, before the late summer spike in gun violence, about those who say bail reform fuels gun violence, Fernández referred to the goals of bail reform law. “The concern is understandable, but it’s not fair to completely blame it on the bail reform,” she said. “We need our judges to make sure that bail is enforced for lethal actions, harmful actions.... and for when there is someone that is released [with] no bail, we need to make sure that trial comes as soon as possible.”

The public discussion on how best to reduce gun violence, and curb crime in general, will take another turn on Election Day, Nov. 2, when New Yorkers vote on a new mayor.

According to a recent story by Politico, Republican mayoral nominee, Curtis Sliwa, has called for 16-year-olds accused of serious crimes to be charged as adults, and according to a recent story by The New York Times, he has called for homeless people to be placed in psychiatric hospitals. He plans to refund the police, and he argues that as a former street vigilante, he is better equipped to crack down on crime than the Democratic mayoral nominee.

In 1979, Sliwa formed the Guardian Angels, a community-based patrol

group dedicated to guarding the city’s subway stations and preventing violence in all forms. He said the Guardian Angels helped stem the tide of crime on the subways, and as a result have expanded to over 130 cities in 13 countries around the world.

“I’ve seen our subway system at its worst, and now we’re slipping back into the abyss,” he writes on his website. “I entered the mayoral race to improve New York, to fight and take back the lifeline of our city and to ensure that people can safely ride the subways. My administration will stem the rising tide of violence, drug use and crime within our transit systems.”

Sliwa’s plans include deploying emotional support/social worker task forces to subway stations, combating fare evasion in all subway stations, establishing assistance booths and emergency calling devices in all subway stations. “To ensure the safety of train and bus commuters across our city, I will instruct our Department of Transportation to upgrade all existing surveillance cameras to state-of-the-art standards with real-time capabilities,” he said.

For his part, Adams, Brooklyn BP and NYPD veteran, pledges to walk the line between reducing crime, while continuing to reform the NYPD from within. Speaking at an event at Tracey Towers in Jerome Park on June 6, Adams who has been an open critic of racism within the NYPD said, “If we’re going to change the [inaudible] ecosystem of public safety, we need to allow police to do their roles, and [inaudible] the other roles like mental health professionals, conflict resolutions, nonprofit groups, the clergy, like the God Squad group in Brooklyn that we sponsor.”

He added that real crime is not only what happens on the streets, but what is happening within the New York City Department of Education, every day the City fails to educate its children. “Think about this number, 65 percent of Black and brown children never reach proficiency in this city, every year,” he said.

Adams continued, “Only 20 percent graduate high school.” He went on to discuss homelessness and mental health problems, including depression. “Yet, if we just invested in them, and allowed them to age out at 26, instead of 21, one report shows that 90 percent would graduate from high school. You know, if we don’t educate, people incarcerate.”

**Sile Moloney and David Greene contributed to this story.*

Some Bronx Parents Hesitant to Vaccinate Their Children

By DAWN CLANCY

After much anticipation, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) officially authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 5 through 11 years of age on Friday, Oct. 29. The decision led the way for the vaccine to be made available to 28 million unvaccinated children across the United States, subject to its subsequent approval by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), which came a few days later, on Tuesday, Nov. 2.

But much like COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among some adults, some parents in the Bronx are similarly hesitant to vaccinate their young ones. "I'm a very worried mom," said 36-year-old, Norwood resident, Amy Tsai, on vaccinating her two kids, aged 6 and 9 respectively.

Tsai said she's not alone when it comes to concerns over vaccinating kids against COVID-19. "I'm in a large parent group, and I hear a lot of vaccine hesitancy," she said. Tsai, who said she, herself, is not vaccinated,

is vice president of New York City Coalition for Educating Families Together (NYCEFT).

The group describes itself as "advocating for, and educating the most marginalized among us, fighting to create a system that responds to every child's and family's needs." They recently relaunched as a citywide organization, having been known previously as Bronx Parent Leaders Advocacy Group (BPLAG).

The group led at least one protest in July 2021 outside New York City Department of Education (DOE)'s office and called for the continuation of a remote learning option in public schools for children.

According to CEFT president, Farah Despeignes, the new group is made up of Bronx Community Education Council (CEC) and Parent and Parent Teacher Association (PA/PTA) members, as well as other community partners who represent "thousands of parents." Despeignes added, "The core membership (folks who participate in regular meetings, etc.) is over two hundred parents, educators and community partners."

Officials at CEFT, which is active on most social media channels and on YouTube, wrote, "Several of us who helped build Bx PLAG first learned to organize with Obama for America, Organizing for America, and Organizing for Action, and it's time to apply those successful strategies to meeting the educational needs of our children and families so we can foster lasting change."



Photo by Dawn Clancy

SOME BRONX PARENTS said they would be hesitant to vaccinate their 5 to 11-year-old children once the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is approved. Pictured is J.H.S. 80, The Mosholu Parkway, 149 E Mosholu Pkwy N, in the Norwood section of the Bronx on Monday, November 1, 2021.

We asked Despeignes if CEFT has a policy on the COVID-19 vaccine. She replied, "NYC CEFT doesn't have an official stance on vaccinations for children and adults, except to say that adults who are comfortable with the vaccines should get them and adults who are comfortable with getting their children vaccinated should get their children vaccinated." We asked if she herself was vaccinated for COVID-19. We did not receive an immediate response.

Knowing that former U.S. President Barack Obama has been openly campaigning to promote COVID-19 vaccinations, we reached out to the office of the former president to ask if he had any comment on being referenced, albeit loosely, in the group's campaign materials. We did not receive an immediate response.

Ultimately, CEFT officials said they want the DOE and all decisions, whether about a COVID vaccine or overcrowded classrooms in the Bronx, to be centered around families so they can respond to the needs of students. Parents from this group said repeatedly that they know what's best for their kids, not the DOE, unions, or the mayor.

The FDA granted the emergency use authorization for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for kids aged 5 through 11, after an FDA advisory panel reviewed a Pfizer study showing that the vaccine was 90.7 percent effective in preventing COVID-19 in children.

The three-phase study included approximately 3,000 participants who were randomly broken up into two groups. One group received the Pfizer COVID-19 shot in two 10 microgram doses (adults and children over 12 years old currently

receive a 30-microgram dose) and the other group was given a placebo, a substance or treatment designed to have no therapeutic value.

While some study participants reported experiencing side effects such as pain at the injection site, headache, fever, and chills, there were no cases of myocarditis, a condition that results in the inflammation of the heart muscle.

Over the past 11 months, as vaccines became more widely available, cases of myocarditis were being reported primarily in adolescent males after receiving the second dose of the COVID-19 Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines. However, according to research by Harvard Medical School, these cases have been mild, and as of July 2021, out of 1,000 reported cases of myocarditis detected in teens and young adults, 79 percent have recovered.

The number of cases reported in Harvard's research also included instances of pericarditis, a condition where the tissue that forms a sac around the heart becomes inflamed.

Despite the Pfizer study results, Anna Louelle Pelayo, a vaccinated, Norwood mother of two boys aged 7 and 10, who both attend P.S./M.S. 280, also thinks it's too soon to introduce the vaccines to younger populations.

"I just don't feel that it has been tested properly to introduce to the little ones because they're so little, they're so vulnerable," said Pelayo. "We don't know what the side effects will be in the long run for those little children."

After the FDA's approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for kids aged 5 through 11, a CDC advisory panel reviewed the

FDA's decision and voted on whether the vaccine should be recommended for all children or only a targeted subset of the age group. The vote took place on Tuesday, Nov. 2, and CDC director, Rochelle Walensky, did not reference any exceptions or subgroups to the planned rollout in a Nov. 2 press release.

Distribution of pediatric vaccinations across the country started Nov. 2, with plans to scale up to full capacity starting the week of Nov. 8. Vaccines will be available at thousands of pediatric healthcare provider offices, pharmacies, Federally Qualified Health Centers, and more.

In a phone interview with Norwood News, Dr. Mark Siedner, a clinical epidemiologist at Massachusetts General Hospital and an associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, said concerned parents, like Pelayo, do need to understand the risks of vaccinating their children.

However, he said when deciding whether to vaccinate their youngest children, parents should consider that the risks, even cases of myocarditis, aren't significant enough to outweigh the widespread benefits of vaccinations. Siedner said recognizing this will require parents to ask a more nuanced set of questions about how vaccinating their children can help facilitate their community's return to some form of normalcy.

He added, "We have to ask: will this vaccine keep my kid in school more school days? Will it stop classrooms from having to be broken up into quarantine? Will it stop people in our community who may be immunosuppressed from getting sick? Will it allow children to go back to a way of life where they can travel without a risk or a constant anxiety and fear of infection or of spreading the infection to others?"

These are the secondary benefits that, Siedner said, impact lives in ways that are hard to measure. "That's why this is a much more difficult conversation to have," said Siedner. "Some of these benefits are not to the children themselves, but to other people in society."

According to the American Medical Association, immunocompromised people account for at least 2.7 percent of U.S. adults, about 7 million people. This includes those who have had organ transplants, stem cell transplants and cancer, as well as those with primary immunodeficiency and those treated with immunosuppressive medications.

Meanwhile, every year since 2009, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

(continued ON page 23)

BOO-rrific Halloween Party Held in Poe Park

By DAVID GREENE

Dozens of youngsters aged 12 years and younger along with their parents turned out for a “Boo-rrific” Halloween party, held in Poe Park in the Fordham Manor section of the Bronx, on Saturday, Oct. 23. Children were assisted by Parks’ department employees and their parents as they created Halloween-inspired arts and crafts and decorated miniature pumpkins. Children were also treated to free face-painting, and some even got to play in the “haunted” pumpkin patch, created especially for the event by Parks Department employees.

Photo by David Greene

LOCAL CHILDREN ARE helped by their parents as they create Halloween-themed decorations at Poe Park’s “Boo-rrific” Halloween party in Fordham Manor on Saturday, October 23, 2021.

A PAIR OF children play in the haunted pumpkin patch in Poe Park in Fordham Manor during a Halloween party held on Saturday, October 23, 2021.

YOUNGSTERS CREATE HOLIDAY decorations during a Halloween party held in Poe Park in Fordham Manor on Saturday, October 23, 2021.

YOUNGSTERS GET BUSY decorating mini pumpkins during a Halloween party hosted by NYC Parks & Recreation Department held in Poe Park on Saturday, October 23, 2021.



VP Kamala Harris Visits The Bronx

(continued from page 1)

Better agenda," he said. "With bold, public investments in care for people, communities, and the environment, we can anchor the rebirth of our country and secure our future."

Referring to the plush new YMCA center, Harris later said she, herself, grew up attending her local community center. "I was a member of the Y," she said. "I swam at the Y!" She said it was great to be back in New York and, with a wide smile, added, "And it's good to be in the Bronx! It really is!"

Amid more applause, she acknowledged the invited guests and elected officials, who numbered about 120 and included the mayor and governor and said the elected leaders of New York were also national leaders, added the passage of the American Rescue Plan was, in no small part, due to New York's congressional delegation.

"Looking out at this crowd, I see America," Harris said. "I see, particularly with our

young leaders, the children of America. I see the families of America, and I see the people who have continued to hold it all together through the rollercoaster of this pandemic. It has been a lot, and people are tired."

She said she and President Joe Biden knew working families were struggling and that families that had the least were being harmed the most amid the pandemic, and that their plight had prompted action in D.C.

Citing the lessons learned from the pandemic in terms of addressing housing assistance, childcare assistance, and a larger child tax credit, she said the relief contained in the American Rescue Plan put the country on a path to a better future.

"Today, we have, within our grasp, an opportunity to finish what we started with the American Rescue Plan," she said. "This, right now, is a moment that will not last. It is a particu-

lar moment of incredible opportunity and a moment to transform our nation," she said.

"Let's recognize this moment for what it is. The pandemic hurt so many people but, by the way, things weren't so great before the pandemic," she said, adding that it highlighted a lot of what was wrong for all to see. "A greater number of people had an opportunity, born out of the crisis, to see that there is work to be done, and this is the moment to do it," she said.

Harris said it was a moment of transformation, where schools and small businesses were opening back up and the economy was growing, adding it was time to build an economy that works for working families.

"So, let's *make* it work for working families," she said. "We are working to that end to pass our Build Back Better agenda." She said some asked what that meant. "It's about being better on climate, better

health, better jobs and, intentionally, it is about our families," she said.

Harris was, at that point, interrupted by one male protestor, seated in the audience. It was difficult to hear him, but he appears to have asked Harris, "Why are we not working with the Chinese on the Belt and Road initiative (BRI)?" This is a network of enhanced overland and maritime trade routes that aim to better link China with Asia, Europe, and Africa.

"You are right, brother," Harris said. "How about if you and I talk after I give my comments?" Saying, in a democracy, everyone should be heard, her handling of the situation was greeted with applause, as the protestor was ushered out of the room.

Despite the idealism of the vice-president's Build Back Better message, she was met with a group of about 40 other, some French-speaking, protesters outside the venue,

some holding banners with the words, "African Communities Together, African Immigrants for Justice."

One protestor said, "We need VP Harris to be on the side of the immigrant communities that have been fighting for green cards, citizenship, and a chance to stay and work and live here in the U.S., and not on the side of the unelected Senate parliamentarian, who has said that green cards are not something that the Senate can do." He said he wanted to see a bill, currently under discussion, passed that would grant amnesty to 8 million undocumented immigrants.

For her part, Harris stuck to her message inside the center, telling those present that she saw the determination and resolve of the American people. "I see you," she said. "President Biden and I both see you and we stand with you, and we are fighting with the leaders here for you each and every day."

Some Bronx Parents Hesitant to Vaccinate Their Children

(continued from page 21)

County Health Ranking Report has ranked the Bronx as number 62 out of New York State's 62 counties in terms of health outcomes.

As an example of immunocompromised Bronxites, according to a September 2021 report by NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, there are several, high-poverty, Bronx neighborhoods which, persistently, have the highest rates of asthma-related morbidity when compared with the rest of New York City. Two-thirds or more of these neighborhood residents comprise people of color.

Officials at the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University estimate that as of Nov. 1, over 5 million people across the globe have died from the COVID-19 virus. Around 700,000 or 15 percent of those deaths have occurred in

the United States (U.S.).

In New York City, 4,688 Bronxites died from the virus, the most in any borough relative to its population at 0.32 percent, followed by Queens at 0.31 percent, Brooklyn at 0.29 percent, Staten Island at 0.25 percent and Manhattan at 0.19 percent.

According to the same John Hopkins report, only 58 percent of the U.S. population has been fully vaccinated, suggesting that among those eligible for the jab, 42 percent are still vaccine hesitant.

Meanwhile, a study from the Kaiser Family Foundation's COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor, an initiative that tracks the public's attitudes and experiences with COVID-19 vaccinations, detected a similar hesitancy among parents.

When asked if they would get their children vaccinated when a COVID-19 vaccine was autho-

rized, 27 percent of parents said they would, 30 percent said definitely not, while 33 percent said they would wait and see. A mere 5 percent of parents said they would only vaccinate if given a mandate.

The results also revealed that over 50 percent of parents worry that a COVID-19 vaccine mandate in schools will force their children to be vaccinated even if they don't want them to be.

When the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine was given emergency use authorization for 12 through 15-year-olds in May 2021, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio strongly encouraged the vaccine but hasn't mandated the jab for this age group to attend school.

However, according to the NYC DOE's website, vaccines have been mandated for all

students, 12 years and older who participate in what are considered high-risk, after-school, extracurricular activities like chorus, musical theater, dance, band, marching band, orchestra, cheerleading, step teams, and flag teams.

When asked at the final NYC mayoral debate, on Oct. 26, whether he would support a vaccine mandate for 5 to 11-year-olds, Eric Adams, New York City's projected winner of the mayoral race, said he's open to discussing options for parents, including remote learning, but didn't definitively say whether he would impose a mandate.

"COVID devastated our City, our economy; the communities and families are still living with the trauma of COVID. I'm not going to go backwards; we must protect the people in this city," he

said.

In the meantime, Fatema Mustafa, 36, a vaccinated mother in Parkchester, continues to weigh her options. With a 6-year-old son diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism, the vaccine decision is a grueling one to make, but what keeps Mustafa awake at night is the fear associated with making the wrong one.

"I'm the one who's going to take my son to get vaccinated, which means potentially I'm the one who's going to destroy his future," said Mustafa. "And once I go that route, there won't be any coming back, and there will be nobody to hold liable for that because I did that to my child. I don't think I can live with that kind of guilt."

**Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*

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Kramer & Pollack, LLP Practice Areas:

- Accidents
- Animal & Dog Bites
- Automobile Accidents
- Aviation Accidents
- Bicycle Accidents
- Birth Injuries
- Boating Accidents
- Brain Injuries
- Burn Injuries
- Bus Accidents
- Construction Accidents
- Injuries to Minors & Children
- Medical Malpractice
- Motorcycle Accidents
- Nursing Home & Assisted Living Abuse
- Pedestrian Accidents
- Premises Liability
- Product Liability
- Slip, Trip & Fall Accidents
- Spinal Cord Injuries
- Truck Accidents
- Wrongful Death

