



NORWOOD NEWS

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LGBTQ+ COALITION MAKES BRONX HISTORY

Activists welcomed to march in St. Patrick's Day parade



Photo by Razid Season

MEMBERS OF THE Lavender & Green Alliance/*Muintir Aerach na hÉireann*, which celebrates Irish LGBTQ+ culture & identity, along with members of the Stonewall Democrats, the Third Avenue BID, and other LGBTQIA+ groups, make history by marching under their own banner, for the first time in history, in the Throggs Neck St. Patrick's Day parade in The Bronx on Sunday, March 13, 2022.

By **SÍLE MOLONEY**

Were it just "the luck of the Irish" that was needed, it might not have taken over two decades for an Irish LGBTQ+ group to finally make history, marching

for the first time ever, under their own identifying banner, in the annual, Bronx St. Patrick's Day parade in Throggs Neck on Sunday, March 13. But as parade participant, Brendan

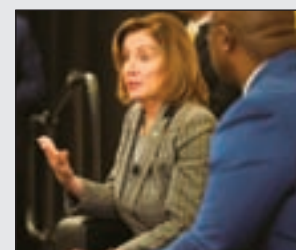
Fay, knows, changing the world sometimes means shifting hearts and minds, which itself requires imagination, patience, persistence, grace in the face of opposition, a sense of humor,

and a big dose of faith and love! Fay epitomizes all of the above, and then some.

Having been involved in various efforts over decades to
(continued on page 23)



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First Generation and Low-Income Students Find a Path to College

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

Most of the attention on COVID-19 revolves around the physical consequences of its spread, especially in communities of color, but a secondary effect has to do with a decrease in academic attainment, especially in the Latino community.

The educational fallout from the pandemic is seen in figures collected by the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). During 2020, the first year of the pandemic, Hispanic enrollment in higher education fell overall by 5.4 percent. More alarming is the decline in first-time enrollment among Hispanic students, at almost 20 percent. These statistics present a difficult future for one of the fastest-growing segments of the U.S. population. The warning from NSC is stark. "If we don't take concerted steps to counter these declines, opportunity gaps in this country will only grow, and Hispanics will be left behind," the organization's representatives said.

Some parents hope to secure a better future for their children by encouraging them to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, better known by its acronym, STEM. Careers in the humanities on the other hand, including the study of languages and literature, the arts, philosophy, religion, and history, are considered more unstable by some, with gloomy prospects for employment.

However, although STEM degrees outpace those in the humanities by a rate of almost 2 to 1 ratio, many academics, sociologists, and educators continue to promote the humanities. As one college senior observed in a December 2019 article published on studybreaks.com by Madison Feser, "With only mathematicians and engineers, who will record our history? Inspire our creativity? Challenge our politics? Foster our language?"

One institution helping to pave the way to college for those wanting to dive into the humanities, and still get a job after graduation is Columbia University. The Freedom and Citizenship educational program for New York City high school students was founded in 2009 by the Center for American Studies and Double Discovery Center at Columbia University. In that time, they have helped nearly 400 first-generation and low-income students attend college. Jessica Harriet Lee received a Ph.D. in history from Columbia University in 2016 and is the program's current executive director. "We've grown to 45 stu-



Photo courtesy of Debora Camacho
BRONXITE, DEBORA CAMACHO, is one of the past participants in the Freedom and Citizenship program offered by Columbia University.

dents per year," Lee said, adding that they started with high school students who were transitioning from junior to senior year. "The goal is to expose these high schoolers to college-level courses in a supportive environment."

Once accepted, students attend a free, four-week program in July comprising an intensive seminar on political philosophy. They then commit to a year-long, civic leadership project where they research contemporary political issues under the supervision of undergraduate teaching assistants. They are helped with the college application process by Columbia College undergraduates and successful students receive letters of recommendation from their summer professors.

Growing up across from the Bronx Zoo on Southern Boulevard, Debora Camacho, a 19-year-old Puerto Rican, was attending the Bronx High School for Law and Community Service at the Theodore Roosevelt Educational Campus on Fordham Road when she was encouraged to apply in 2020 to the Freedom and Citizenship program. The idea of studying philosophy wasn't very appealing to her, at first. "The thought of [studying] philosophy, thinking about it really hurt my brain.....but I went for it," Camacho said. "Why not take philosophy?"

The critical thinking that goes along with questioning how knowledge is produced was not easy for Camacho, who described herself as "more [of] a STEM person" and was part of the group, "Girls Who Code." But something about philosophy piqued her interest. "Since I went into more humanities [and] philosophy [studies], oh my gosh, it was such a big difference and I'm glad I took

it!" she said. "It opened my eyes to a lot of things.....thinking big, bigger questions... instead of just being settled on one answer, because there can be multiple answers to anything... and how that actually sounds pretty cool."

A future in the humanities can be concerning to parents who may be unfamiliar with such a broad field of study. "I think there is an idea that the humanities are dead or [if] they're [even] relevant," Lee said. "Most of our students are like Debora; they kind of come into the program planning to major in STEM, thinking 'Philosophy might be interesting,' and then it switches after the program. The majority of our students major in the humanities and social sciences. These are relevant texts, these are relevant questions, these are relevant conversations, and the students are interested in them."

Indeed, rather than having to make a choice between studying a STEM subject or one in the humanities, Camacho sees the possibility of a more holistic approach. "Humanities is important, STEM is important; you can combine the two," she said, adding that it is definitely possible for students to find ways to study what they love and also be financially stable. Camacho is currently enrolled at Smith College, a private, liberal arts, women's college in Massachusetts. It is described by The Princeton Review as "an incredibly prestigious, diverse, academically rigorous, socially liberal, and well-respected institution."

According to Micaela Cacho-Negrete, public relations and digital presence liaison at Freedom and Citizenship, to date, the Columbia University program has been met with so much interest that it recently helped create "Knowledge for Freedom," a national consortium of schools that will create similar programs in over 25 universities by 2024, reaching thousands of students.

For those parents and high school students looking at Camacho's impressive academic resume and concluding the program is not for them, Cacho-Negrete has some encouraging words. "We're always trying to reach more students," she said. "This isn't just one girl who did this.... She did it; you can do it too! We're accepting applications and want to hear from you!"

The link to apply can be found here: <https://freedomandcitizenship.columbia.edu/apply>.

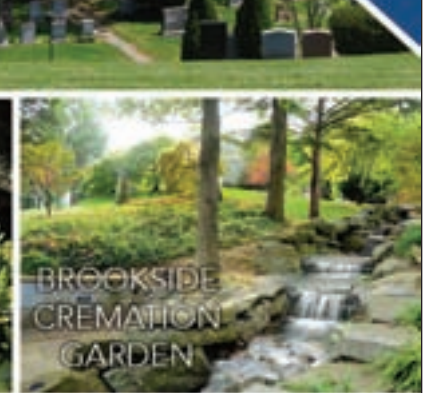
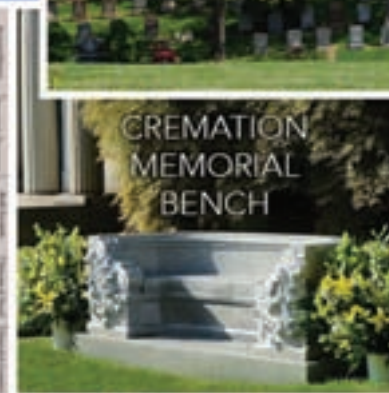
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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week, we asked readers for their thoughts on the United States taking in refugees displaced by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.



"Anything we can do to help them out would be great. They have no place to go, and Russia is bombing them like crazy; it's sad. It's sad what's going on. I hope there is a good ending, I hope there is peace for everyone there, and I hope Russia doesn't team up with China because that's scaring everybody."

David Glickenstein,
Jerome Park



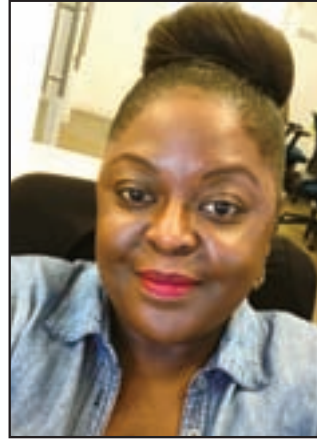
"I think it's a good thing because the innocent people get to escape the war. I also think it's kind of unfair that many people are dying, while others get the opportunity to leave, so it's both fair and unfair. But I still think it's a very good thing."

Elisabeth Degbor, 16 (with parents' consent)
Jerome Park



"My mother was a Polish immigrant, and she came to America and had me, and I'm an American now and I support it 100 percent! I don't think he [President Vladimir Putin] is going to have a choice. He's going to be corralled there and stopped. He doesn't want to stop, but he's going to get stopped by force."

Paul Kittas,
Bedford Park



"I'm not opposed to America taking in refugees from Ukraine or any country. I just hope that in the future, we afford refugees coming in from other countries....and they're given the same latitude that we afford Ukrainians and other Europeans, because we haven't done that in the past. So, my take is, yes, when people need care, when they need support, when they need a place to live and start over again, we should absolutely open our borders. That's what America is about... I am hopeful. I'm an optimistic person, and I am hoping that this ends sooner rather than later and less carnage happens."

Kai Butcher,
Parkchester



"The Ukrainian people are being attacked in their homes and shelters by an unprovoked aggressor. The United States has been a refuge and launchpad for people from all over the world, and we should continue this for Ukrainians, who want to come here, whether or not they ultimately choose to return home. Let us live up to the promise of the Statue of Liberty in our harbor. We should also remember that individual Russians who are here are not the people killing innocents. My father fought Nazis in World War II, and he could tell the difference between the German enemy combatants and the nice immigrants here who sold him schnitzel."

Mary O'Shaughnessy,
Wakefield

Editor's Note: First-hand accounts of people of color e.g. medical students and others not having been afforded the same priority to exit Ukraine as native Ukrainians when the war broke out have been reported in the media.

President Vladimir Putin has attempted to justify the invasion of Ukraine, saying Russia's actions are to protect the Russian-speaking residents in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of the country from alleged "nazification." David Roger Marples, distinguished university professor of Russian and East European history at the University of Alberta, disputes this claim, as have human rights organizations, writing, "Ukraine is more democratic than Russia. It holds regular elections, and there is relative freedom of speech and assembly. This supposed 'neo-Nazi' regime is led by a Russophone Jew from eastern Ukraine [President Vladimir Zelensky]."

Hundreds of international historians and academics signed an open letter at the end of February 2022 in which they acknowledge that while Ukraine does have a minority of right-wing extremists, this minority does not justify Russia's aggression nor Putin's allegations of genocide.



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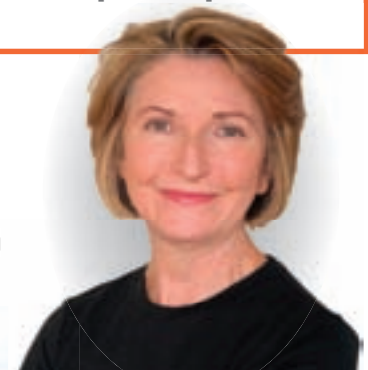
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Women's History Month Celebrated in The Bronx

by DAVID GREENE

Women's History Month kicked off with a pair of celebratory events held at Monroe College in Fordham Manor and at Jacobi Hospital in Morris Park, following International Women's Day on March 8.

On March 9, Mayor Eric Adams was expected to speak at the "My Sister's Keeper Female Empowerment Conference," held in the Mintz auditorium of Monroe College, located at 2501 Jerome Avenue. However, the mayor reportedly cancelled at the last minute.

Judging by the reaction of the crowd of young, female, high-school students in attendance, they did not appear to be too disappointed, however. Stepping in for Adams was New York City deputy mayor for special initiatives, Sheena Wright. Following an introduction by Monroe College president, Marc Jerome, Wright told the energetic crowd, "The mayor, um, could not join us this morning, but he sent me in his stead, and I have to tell you I could not be more happy to be here. I'm from the 'boogie-down' Bronx, okay? This is where I am from, and that's who I am."

Referring to District 14 City Councilwoman, Pierina Sanchez, who also was in attendance, Wright continued, "I started my career and my life much like our councilwoman here, growing up in the South Bronx, the daughter of a teenage mom." Wright, who before becoming deputy mayor was the first female CEO of the United Way, recalled how she had earned a scholarship at a prestigious school. She went on to recount a story of an encounter she had had with a fellow male student, who reportedly said, "You're Black. You're a woman, and you're from the South Bronx. Isn't that, like, having three strikes?"

The remark drew gasps from across the room. Wright continued, "I said, 'I don't know much about baseball, but three strikes sounds like you're out.' And I said, why am I captain of the cross-country team? Why am I at the top of the class?... It sounds like being Black and being a woman and being from the South Bronx makes that being an advantage."

Wright added, "But what he also needed to know was being White, male and from a financially privileged background, he was born on third-base. He didn't run those bases. He was born there, so that is also what you need to know. Whatever room that you walk into, and you might think that you might not belong, you absolutely belong!"

Attendees at the event comprised



Photo by David Greene

JOY TOLLIVER, THE vice president of governmental relations at Monroe College speaks to young women from the podium during a "My Sister's Keeper" event held on Wednesday, March 9, 2022.



Photo by David Greene

YOUNG, FEMALE, HIGH-SCHOOL students from across the Bronx attend a "My Sister's Keeper" event at Monroe College on Wednesday, March 9, 2022.

more than 150 students from a half dozen or so local, Bronx high schools, including Harry S. Truman, Celia Cruz, Fordham Heights School for the Arts and Bronx Initiative. As reported, a similar event, entitled "My Brother's Keeper" was also held at the college a few weeks earlier.

For her part, recently elected councilmember, Sanchez, spoke to the young students about the importance of maintaining short and long-term goals in life. "What do I want to do, and what's the mark I want to leave on the world?" she asked them. Referring to the steps she took, and the milestones accomplished throughout her own career to date, Sanchez concluded, "I kid you not. We're at the 10-year mark right now."

"Every single one of those steps... I got my masters, I made a lot more money, then I started off in a consulting job, I worked for the mayor, I worked for the White House with President [Barack] Obama, but, the biggest honor of my life is to represent my community that raised me here in The Bronx, in the very hood I call home!"

Joy Tolliver, vice president of governmental relations and general counsel at Monroe, later told the

formance for visitors to Building 8. Local jazz band, "Ronald McDonald House: Musical Magic," featured Longwood resident, Hanka Gregusova, and the band's drummer and pianist are also Bronx residents.

Gregusova later told *Norwood News*, "The concert theme was 'Women Who Rock.' I sang songs by famous singers, and talked about their careers and life," Gregusova said. She added that she has a record coming out later this year entitled, "Universal Ancestry." On it, she collaborated with 14 Grammy winners or nominees in the Jazz, Rhythm & Blues, and Gospel categories, and she said all the collaborators are residents of the New York City metro area.

The day ended with a collabora-



Photo by David Greene

SHEENA WRIGHT, NEW York City deputy mayor of special initiatives, addresses a crowd of young women at Monroe College during a "My Sister's Keeper" event on Wednesday, March 9, 2022.

crowd, "We are not just celebrating 'My Sister's Keeper,' but also Women's History Month. We are here today because we are going to be inspired! We are going to be empowered! We're going to talk about the importance of our health, mentally, physically...financially." Other speakers at the conference included psychotherapist, Nygera Pierson Mutis, and Mark Smith, senior vice president at Wells Fargo.

On the same day, Jacobi Hospital kicked off a Women's History Month photo exhibit with accompanying biographies of 38 women, including secretary of the U.S. treasury, Janet Yellen, astronaut, Christina Koch, and FDNY deputy chief, Tonya Boyd. The displays are open to the public in Building 4 and Building 8 at Jacobi hospital until the end of March.

Meanwhile, coinciding with the opening of the Women's History Month photo display was a live per-

tion between Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson and the New York Botanical Garden. Together, they hosted a "Women's HerStory" event that included a self-guided tour of The Orchid Show."

According to its website, "International Women's Day [March 8] is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality. The first gathering for International Women's Day was held in 1911 and the day is currently celebrated by over one million people, worldwide. For more information about the day, log onto the website: <https://www.international-womensday.com>. For additional resources from the Library of Congress and a list of online events for the remainder of the month, visit <https://womenshistorymonth.gov>.

NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY

\$400K Secured for Jacobi's Cure Violence Program

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY-14) and Jamaal Bowman (NY-16) announced on March 21 that they had secured \$400,000 in federal funding in bipartisan support for Jacobi Hospital's youth violence reduction program, 'Stand Up to Violence' (SUV).

Community-based, violence intervention (CVI) programs are designed to stop the violence from ever occurring in the first place by supporting those at greatest risk of gun violence, according to the elected officials. They said youth who have participated in SUV are 52 percent less likely to be injured in another violent trauma.

SUV deploys outreach workers to respond to shootings to prevent retaliation, and to assist family members of those who have been injured or killed. Additionally, they mentor youth of underserved communities by helping to create educational and job opportunities. The additional \$400,000 will allow SUV to add an emergency room social worker, case worker, part-time psychiatrist, and a creative arts or music therapist.

Bronx Entrepreneurship Scholarship Foundation Deadline Approaching

The Bronx Entrepreneurship Scholarship Foundation awards scholarships to college-bound high school seniors based on demonstrated academic achievement, financial need, and an express interest in entrepreneurship and/or business. Students eligible for assistance must be Bronx residents and must be graduating high school seniors who have been accepted into an accredited four-year college or university program with a 3.0 or higher grade-point average.

Consideration will be given to academic achievement, financial need, the student's community service record, and recommenda-

tions from teachers, guidance counselors, and/or principles. Students should submit a transcript and a one-page essay, entitled, "Why Entrepreneurship is Important to You."

Scholarships are awarded on an annual basis and are disbursed to the student's college/university's bursar office in August. Students must continue to attend classes and maintain no lower than a 3.0 grade-point average (or equivalent).

Scholarships awarded will be \$3,000 annually (not to exceed \$12,000 over four consecutive years). Recipients will be selected by an independent committee based on application materials provided. Applications should be submitted by April 15, 2022, to Apply@BronxESFC.com. The 2021 scholarships were awarded to Aran Glynn and Kaylah Frazier.

MTA Invites Public to Complete Safety Survey

The MTA is inviting the public to participate in a sur-

vey to assess riders' safety concerns, when riding the subway. "Our top priority at the MTA is giving our customers a safe ride," an MTA statement reads. "We want to help New Yorkers get moving again, and to do that, you need to feel safe, riding with us. As of right now, we know that many of you don't, which is why we are working every day with our partners in the City & State to change that." Officials said answers will be kept confidential and will be reviewed by the agency's leadership. The link to the 5-minute survey is as follows: <https://new.mta.info/customer-feedback>.

Torres Pushes for Disclosure of Ties with Russia

Rep. Ritchie Torres (NY-15) announced on March 21 that he is introducing the "Reveal Risky Business in Russia Act." If passed, it would require U.S. companies to publicly disclose if they have business ties to Russia or any other country that has in-

vaded a sovereign nation. The legislation aims to hold companies accountable for refusing to denounce Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and to disincentivize countries from engaging in what were described as amoral business practices with oppressive governments.

While 400 companies have withdrawn from Russia, according to Yale School for Management, many others are refusing to do so. The bill also requires such companies to report on other companies that do business with the Russian government or the government of another country that has invaded or annexed the territory of another country. We asked the Torres' office about the scope of the bill since there are currently several areas of ongoing conflict around the world which stem from the invasion of independent territories. A representative responded, saying, "It would just be from the point of law enactment, and forward."

On Tuesday, March 22,

Torres also called for an investigation into the Russian diplomatic compound, located in the Riverdale section of the Bronx. According to Torres, the compound is believed to be home to Russian foreign agents and spies who Torres' office said may be gathering sensitive information on the United States.

Montefiore Hospital Wins Nursing Award

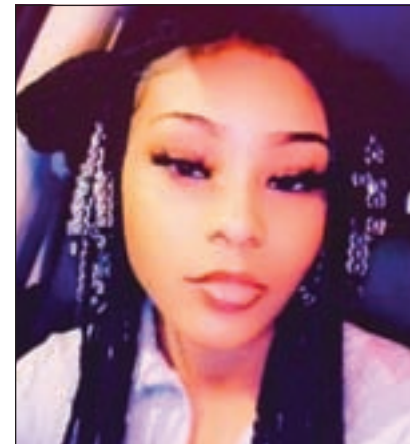
Montefiore Wakefield Hospital has earned a Magnet® designation from the American Nursing Credentialing Center (ANCC), a prestigious recognition widely accepted as the gold standard for nursing excellence and high-quality patient care. The announcement was made on March 22. The first and only hospital in The Bronx to receive this honor, Montefiore officials said Wakefield is among only 9 percent of hospitals nationwide to meet and exceed the rigorous standards required to gain Magnet® designation.

Search for Two Missing Women

By SÍLE MOLONEY

The NYPD is asking for the public's help locating a 52-year-old woman reported missing from the Van Cortlandt Village neighborhood. It was reported to police that Vanessa Morris, 52, of 80 Van Cortlandt Park South, Apt. D63, was last seen on Sunday, March 20, at approximately 11.30 p.m. at her home. She is described as female, Black, is around 5 feet, 4 inches tall, weighs approximately 160 pounds, and has red, braided hair in a bun. Her clothing description at the time of her disappearance was unknown.

Meanwhile, police are also seeking the public's help locating a 17-year-old girl, reported missing in the Pelham Gardens section of The Bronx. It was reported to police that Tyler Wilks, 17, of 2756 Mickle Avenue in Pelham Gardens, was last seen on Friday, March 18, at approximately 6 p.m., at her home. She is described as female, around 5 feet, 1 inch tall, is Black and weighs around 125 pounds, has brown



PhotoS courtesy of the NYPD

(LEFT) MISSING PERSON, Vanessa Morris, 52, of 80 Van Cortlandt Park South, Apt. D63, was last seen on Sunday, March 20, at approximately 11.30 p.m. at her home.

(RIGHT) MISSING PERSON, Tyler Wilks, 17, of 2756 Mickle Avenue in Pelham Gardens, was last seen on Friday, March 18, at approximately 6 p.m., at her home.

eyes, and black hair. Her clothing description was also unknown at the time of her disappearance.

Photos of both missing women are attached. Anyone with information regarding these missing people 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.

Lehman Launches Business School & New Program to Assist Ex-Felons

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Lehman College is launching its own school of business, expanding what college officials say is one of its largest departments, Economics and Business, into a School of Business on July 1, making it the only business school at any public college in The Bronx or Westchester Counties. CUNY's Board of Trustees approved the measure at a Dec. 13 public meeting.

In the context of the announcement, Lehman College provost and senior vice president for academic affairs and student success, Peter O. Nwosu, said, "The new school, whose niche will include entrepreneurship, small business development, and experiential learning, builds on Lehman's already strong reputation within the business community and will serve as a major pipeline for preparing diverse talent from underrepresented populations for local, regional, national, and international workforce needs."

Nwosu added, "Establishing a school of business signals to students, prospective students, and employers that we are committed to producing skilled graduates who have real-world experience, a global perspective, and a capacity for creative problem-solving in an industry that continues to evolve."

Among a student body of more than 14,000 students, the department of economics and business has a total of 1,802 declared majors, at both graduate and undergraduate level. The new school will launch with three new departments: accounting; management and business innovation; and economics, finance, and information systems, and will offer five different degrees: a business bachelor of arts, a bachelor of arts, a bachelor of science, a master of science in business, and a master of

science in accounting.

Students will choose from seven concentrations, including accounting, finance, marketing, human resource management, business law, international business, and business economics. They will receive instruction from 23 full-time faculty, transferred from the school of natural and social science, which is where the current economics and business department currently exists.

Additionally, the college is offering a new path to a degree for formerly incarcerated students. In conjunction with the nonprofit, Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison, the college will help formerly incarcerated students complete degrees they had started while in the corrections system. The initiative was formalized at a memorandum of understanding signing ceremony in December.

Of the new initiative, Nwosu said, "Lehman's partnership with Hudson Link is an expression of the college's vision and humanitarian values." He added, "Many of our Bronx neighbors are impacted by the criminal justice system in some way, and our work with Hudson Link will further Lehman's mission to serve The Bronx community, create educational and economic opportunity, and transform lives."

With the MOU in place, Lehman becomes the tenth college to collaborate with Hudson Link, which sponsors college degree-granting programs in five prisons across New York State and re-entry support to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people. However, unlike the organization's existing partners, which offer degree programs within prisons, Lehman will focus on helping students finish their degrees after their release through the College's Adult Degree Program.



Photo by Adi Talwar

LEHMAN COLLEGE CAMPUS, located in the Jerome Park section of The Bronx, is photographed on February 11, 2022.

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No Injuries at Van Cortlandt Village Fire as Mayor Signs New Fire Safety Law

By SILE MOLONEY

A residential fire in a multiple dwelling located just outside Van Cortlandt Village was brought under control with no reported injuries on the same day the mayor signed an executive order strengthening fire safety legislation.

The FDNY said all hands were called to respond to a first-story fire at 7.35 p.m. on Monday, March 21, at 68 W. 238th Street, a 5-story building located just outside the border of Van Cortlandt Village. Videos posted by users of the Citizens' App showed smoke billowing out of the building and at least two fire trucks at the scene.

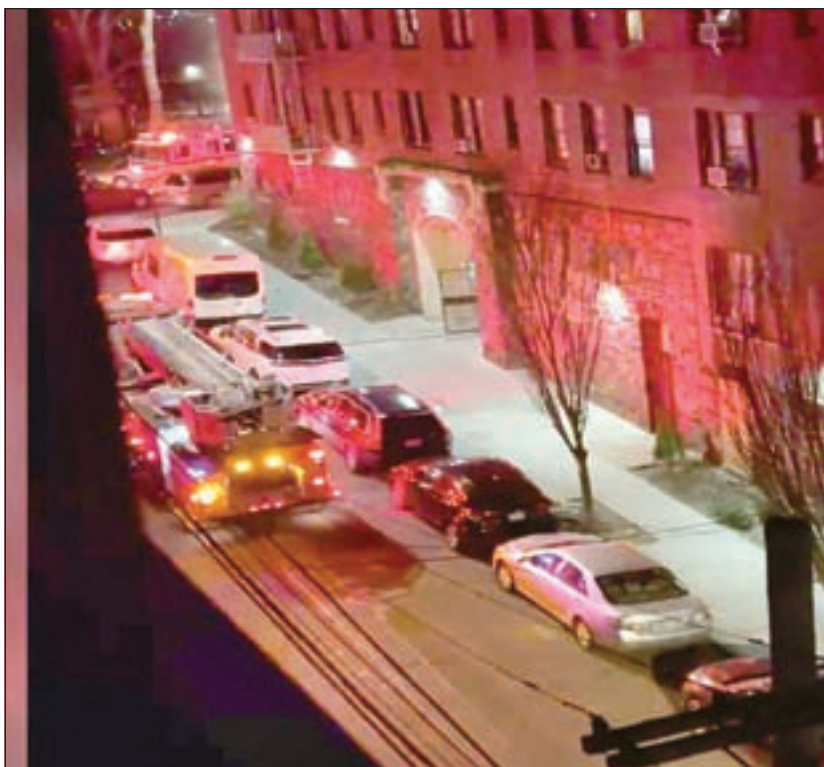
Fire department officials said the fire was brought under control at 8.05 p.m. Asked about the cause of the blaze and reports of any injuries, the fire department said there were no injuries, and the cause was still under investigation.

A second, two-alarm fire was also reported by the FDNY on Monday at 12.22 a.m. at a 3-story building, housing an Auto Body Shop located at 1689 Jerome Avenue in Morris Heights. That fire was brought under control at 1.46 a.m. Around 138 fire and EMS members responded to the scene. The incident was deemed under control at 1.46 a.m. with two civilian injuries treated at the scene. FDNY officials said the cause is under investigation by fire marshals.

As previously reported, a number of new laws relating to fire safety and prevention have been introduced at various levels of government following the Twin Parks fire tragedy in January 2022. On Monday, March 21, Mayor Eric Adams signed Executive Order 12 to strengthen fire safety enforcement and outreach.

The order will increase coordination between FDNY and New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) inspectors to identify safety violations earlier and increase fire safety compliance. FDNY and HPD will also launch a broad campaign to educate New Yorkers on fire safety. Indeed, since the Twin Parks fire tragedy, a number of ad hoc fire safety training sessions have already taken place during local community board meetings, as reported.

Adams said his administration must work towards equipping every New Yorker and every building in the City with the tools to avoid what he called the unspeakable tragedy of Twin Parks. "As we continue providing critical support for the families affected by



FIRE TRUCKS ARE seen in the vicinity of 68 W. 238th Street, just outside the border of the Van Cortlandt Village neighborhood on Monday, March 21, 2022, in response to a first-floor fire, which was later brought under control.

the fire, we are working closely with Borough President [Vanessa] Gibson, Council Member [Oswald] Feliz and our partners across and beyond government to fix this problem, upstream," the mayor said. "Today's actions are an essential step towards the goal of preventing this kind of tragedy from ever occurring again."

Meanwhile, FDNY acting commissioner, Laura Kavanaugh, said educating New Yorkers on fire safety was among the most important goals of the fire department and one it took very seriously. "These new partnerships will strengthen the work we already do and help us reach the neediest residents in all corners of the city on fire education and prevention," she said.

For his part, HPD commissioner, Adolfo Carrión Jr. said HPD were committed to working with FDNY to prevent further tragedies. "In addition to checking for self-closing doors, smoke detectors, and other critical safety items at every routine inspection, our inspectors will now also check that the Fire Safety Notice is posted on every apartment door, which provides life-saving information about what to do in the event of a fire. All New Yorkers should have a fire safety plan and contact their property owners if there are fire safety issues in their homes or file a complaint with 311 if issues are

not corrected."

Gibson said the executive order would save lives. "We are turning our pain into purpose and making sure we protect future New Yorkers," she said. "I want to thank Mayor Adams, FDNY, and HPD, as well as our partners on the federal level and the Fire Safety Task Force, for their collaboration on this important issue. Interagency communication is key in preventing the next tragic fire from occurring in our City."

Feliz, in whose district the Twin Parks tragedy occurred, in District 15's Fordham Heights, said the fire highlighted the need for stronger laws and enforcement of laws related to fire safety. "We must do everything within our power to ensure another tragedy, like the one we saw at Twin Parks, never happens again — anywhere in New York City," he said, before also thanking Adams. "I look forward to working with members of the City Council to take additional action and build a system that will protect our families from future tragedies."

The mayor's office said the administration will also work with City Council to enact additional fire safety legislation, including sensible retrofit sprinkler legislation and legislation that increases fines for landlords who falsely report curing a self-closing

door violation.

The executive order itself will increase coordination and information-sharing between the agencies to better enforce existing fire safety laws. The agencies will also enhance outreach efforts to educate New Yorkers on preventing fires and responding to fire emergencies. Measures include the following:

In addition to looking for housing code violations, HPD inspectors will now look for compliance with FDNY's requirement that the Fire Safety Notice is posted on the apartment's entrance door. HPD will communicate information about lack of this signage to FDNY and to the owner of the building.

HPD will provide FDNY with access to all violations issued that pertain to fire safety since January 1, 2021. FDNY will use this information to conduct more frequent inspections of buildings with a large number of violations.

FDNY inspectors will conduct enhanced inspections for fire signage and posting violations.

FDNY and HPD will conduct a broad, educational fire safety outreach campaign, including education related to smoke detectors, self-closing doors, and stove knob covers. Resident outreach will include information on what to do in the event of a fire and building owners will be reminded of their legal obligations related to fire safety.

FDNY will work with the Department of Education to conduct outreach in schools, including educating teachers, staff, and students about appropriate fire safety measures and proper evacuation procedures.

State Sen. Gustavo Rivera (S.D. 33), also referenced the Twin Parks fire and thanked Adams and his administration for taking what he called a comprehensive approach to addressing the issue, strengthening fire safety enforcement in the City, and promoting fire safety education to as many New Yorkers as possible. "It is critical that we work together across all levels of government to enhance fire safety protocols and ensure our communities feel protected, by providing them the resources and support they need."

As reported, District 11 City Councilman Eric Dinowitz recently hosted a virtual, fire safety session in conjunction with FDNY firefighter, Zachary Bitzer, on Feb. 28. Further tips can be found at [FDNYsmart.org](https://fdnysmart.org).

Pelosi Addresses Ukraine during Bronx Visit

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) joined Congressman Jamaal Bowman (NY-16) for a Community Town Hall in the Riverdale section of The Bronx on Monday, March 14, on the first anniversary of the American Rescue Plan. During the town hall, held at the College of Mount Saint Vincent Athletic Center, located at 6301 Riverdale Avenue, they discussed U.S. support for Ukraine amid the ongoing war with Russia, as well as key legislative priorities.

In introducing Pelosi, Bowman highlighted, amid Women's History Month, that she was the first female speaker of the House of Representatives in U.S. history.

"And she was so good the first time around, she became speaker again," he said, amid applause from the audience which included a strong female contingent that included Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson, Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark, and State Sen. Alessandra Biaggi (S.D. 34).

"She has always created the space and the platform for me to be myself and allowed me with so many other freshmen and other members of Congress to be who they are," Bowman said, adding that he felt incredibly honored and humbled to be in Congress during what he said was one of the most challenging times in U.S. history. "I continue to feel secure and stable and empowered under the leadership of our Speaker Nancy Pelosi," he said, joking that she had never called him into the principal's office to say, "Don't do this



Photo courtesy of Bowman for Congress

SPEAKER NANCY PELOSI (D-Calif.) joined Congressman Jamaal Bowman (NY-16) for a Community Town Hall, held at College of Mount Saint Vincent Athletic Center, located at 6301 Riverdale Avenue, in the Riverdale section of The Bronx on Monday, March 14, on the first anniversary of the American Rescue Plan, to discuss U.S. support for Ukraine amid the ongoing war with Russia, and other legislative priorities in NY-16.

or that."

The congressman said Pelosi often referred to the Democratic Party as a big tent. "It captures the diversity of our country, and it represents the true diversity of our country, not just in terms of class or race or religion, but in terms of ideas," he said. "The diverse ideas of our nation are what make our nation the great country that it is, and that it can be, and Speaker Pelosi's leadership guides us on that path, each and every day in Congress. She often says our diversity is our strength, and our unity is our power."

Bowman added that indeed, despite the rhetoric and the framing of the Democratic Party as one at odds with itself, that was not true at all. "It's a space with a diversity of people, where ideas are welcome, so there's going to be some disagreement - that's how a democracy works. There's going to be some

conflict. That's how a democracy works," he said.

For her part, Pelosi, who mentioned that her college roommate was from Riverdale, praised Bowman's experience and what she described as his powerful voice

in Congress as an educator when it came to discussing educational and other policy issues. "Congressman Bowman has been so effective from the start as he brought so much experience on the governance of education as well as

job creation," she said, adding that funding in education from childhood to college was not a cost, but an investment.

"There is no greater investment in the United States than investing in education," she said. "This is an investment

in the future. When I'm asked in Congress what are the three most important things we should focus on, I always say the same thing - our children, our children, our children."

On Ukraine, Pelosi highlighted the U.S. government's financial backing of the besieged nation from a humanitarian and military funding perspective, saying legislation approving over \$13.6 million for humanitarian assistance, border assistance and economic assistance had strong bipartisan support. "They really have to get that, right away," she said. "Sen. Chuck Schumer and I invited our members to a joint session this morning to hear from the President of Ukraine, President Zelensky. I spoke to him at this joint session so that he could really make a personal appeal," she said.

"We needed to hear his report, his own words as to the needs of

(continued on page 10)



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Pelosi Addresses Ukraine during Bronx Visit

(continued from page 9)

what his priorities were.” She added that there were some things Congress could do and others they could not, alluding to Zelensky’s ongoing pleas to close the skies over Ukraine to prevent further air strikes by Russia, especially on civilian targets like maternity hospitals and homes. “Open skies means we don’t shoot down any Russian planes over there,” she said. “If we were to shoot down a Russian plane, it would be the beginning of World War III.”

Pelosi characterized the Russian invasion as being “outside the circle of civilized human behavior.” She added, “Here we are at a time when one country has invaded another country, an attack against democracy, undermining its sovereignty and its borders, the bombing of a maternity hospital and the people of Ukraine have been so brave, so brave,” she said, amid extended applause.

“They are not only defending their own democracy, they’re defending the democracy of the whole world as Putin is inching closer.”

“So here we are, it’s an interesting

time and makes me think of what our founders said,” she continued. “Congressman Payne said, ‘The times, they have found us,’ and we’ve found them too.”

Pelosi went on to say that the base of any democracy was a strong middle class, adding again that Bowman had been a champion on policy affecting the most vulnerable in the country and adding that she believed they were close to reaching bipartisan agreement on curbing gun violence, saying 80 percent of the country supported background checks, for example. She also highlighted the plague of maternal mortality, especially among Black women and committed to doing all she could to address it as part of overall health policy.

Asked about her leadership, she said, addressing the women in particular, that politics was not for the faint hearted. “You have to be able to take a punch, right? But you have to be able to give a punch too,” she said, gesturing with her fist, before adding with a smile and her now famous raised index finger “for the children.”



Photo courtesy of Bowman for Congress

SPEAKER NANCY PELOSI (D-Calif.) joined Congressman Jamaal Bowman (NY-16) for a Community Town Hall, held at College of Mount Saint Vincent Athletic Center, located at 6301 Riverdale Avenue, in the Riverdale section of The Bronx on Monday, March 14, on the first anniversary of the American Rescue Plan, to discuss U.S. support for Ukraine amid the ongoing war with Russia, and other legislative priorities in NY-16.



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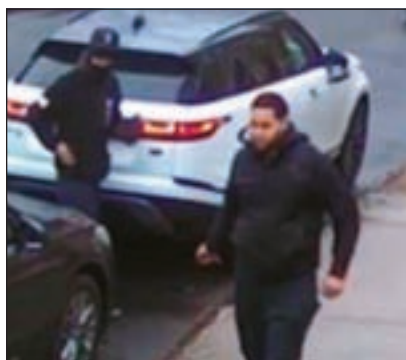
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CRIME FILE

BY SÍLE MOLONEY



Woman & Toddler Robbed at Gunpoint

The NYPD is seeking the public's help identifying the people seen in the accompanying photo who are sought in connection to a robbery that occurred in the 50th precinct. On Wednesday, March 9, at around 8.20 a.m., the two men approached a 35-year-old female victim and her 3-year-old son inside the lobby of her apartment building in the vicinity of Sedgwick Avenue and West Kingsbridge Road, on the border of the Kingsbridge Heights and Fordham Manor neighborhoods. They produced a gun and pointed it at the woman's torso and demanded her property. They then pointed the weapon at her son's head, before stealing the woman's car keys and wallet, which contained \$1,500 in cash and an iPhone. The assailants then took the victim's range rover and fled the scene.



Man Shot in Bedford Park

The NYPD said a 22-year-old man was shot in the Bedford Park section of The Bronx and the department has released photos of a person of interest sought in connection with the case. The shooting took place on Thursday, March 10, at around 4 p.m., opposite 2995 Botanical Square. Police said the gunman approached the male victim, produced a gun, and shot him once in the abdomen. The victim was brought to an area hospital. He will likely survive.

The NYPD later said the department

was seeking the public's assistance identifying the person seen in this story's accompanying photo in connection to the shooting.

Norwood News previously reported on safety and other concerns by tenants located at 2985-2995 Botanical Square, known collectively as Botanical Square, in February 2020. Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCOs) José Cepeda and José Fernandez attended a tenants association meeting at the time during which they sought to reassure tenants of the precinct's commitment to keeping the streets safe. As also reported, "Jerry," a man experiencing homelessness, who *Norwood News* interviewed last year after he had been evicted from his home, told us he had moved to the nearby Botanical Garden train station to sleep at one point when he had no fixed address, as he said he felt safer there.

17-Year-Old Shot in Norwood

The NYPD confirmed a 17-year-old male was shot in Norwood on Tuesday, March 15. The incident was reported at around 8 p.m. at 3366 Decatur Avenue. The youth was shot in the leg and was brought to Jacobi Medical Center in stable condition. The investigation is ongoing.

A female resident of the building who declined to be identified said of the incident on Tuesday night, "Someone was shot in front of my building about a half hour ago, after several shots were fired. My building has cameras all over the building, even outside and in the courtyard." She later added that it was two kids shooting at each other.

A second resident, who also declined to be identified, told the *Norwood News* on Wednesday, "Last night I was inside my house, and I heard five gunshots fired, yes, and my brother showed me a video of all the cops who were surrounding the whole block, and they had the block shut down." The resident added, "They said a 15-year-old kid got shot in the leg [outside the building]. Everything has been getting bad around here lately... a lot of people don't understand this. We need more cops out here. If we don't have more cops out here, this summer, things are going to get worse."

Two Sought following Police Impersonation Robbery



The NYPD is asking for the public's as-

sistance locating the two unidentified, male assailants seen in the accompanying photo who are sought in connection with a police impersonation robbery which occurred in Fordham Manor. On Tuesday, Feb. 8, at 3.20 a.m., in front of 80 West Kingsbridge Road, the two assailants approached the victim, a 41-year-old man, pushed him against a vehicle and identified themselves as police officers.

They then went through the victim's pockets and removed his wallet, ID, keys, and cell phone. The two then fled the location in a black Honda CRV with Florida plates. Police said the victim was not injured during the incident. Last year, *Norwood News* reported on three separate police impersonation incidents in the borough, one in Morris Heights, another southwest of Claremont Park and a third in the Country Club section of The Bronx. We asked the NYPD if there was any indication that this latest incident was related to any of the prior incidents and were informed that the case was still under investigation.



53-Year-Old Man Robbed & Assaulted

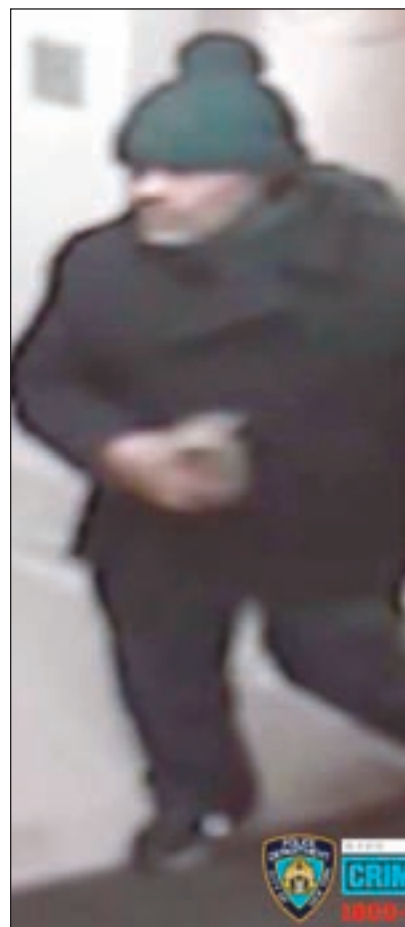
The NYPD is seeking the public's help identifying the person seen in the accompanying photo who is sought in connection to a robbery and assault that occurred in Fordham Heights. On Tuesday, March 1, at around 8.10 p.m., inside 2405 Marion Avenue, the person of interest got into a verbal dispute with a 53-year-old male victim. The dispute escalated and the assailant threw nail polish remover in the victim's face and began to choke him. He then stole the victim's jacket which contained \$350 and an iPhone, before fleeing the location in an unknown direction.

Two Women Assaulted & Robbed

The NYPD is asking for the public's help identifying the person seen in the accompanying photo who is sought for questioning in connection to an assault and robbery that occurred in Fordham Manor. On Saturday, Feb. 19, at approximately 10 p.m., police said two 67-year-old women invited an unidentified man to their apartment, located in the vicinity of Grand Concourse and East Kingsbridge Road. Once inside, the victims and the man got into a verbal dispute which later became physical.

According to police, the man struck one of the female victims with a closed fist, causing lacerations to both arms and bruising and pain to the top of her head. He then ordered the second woman to get her purse and later pushed her to the ground, injuring her back in the process. The assailant later fled on foot with the stolen purse which contained approximately \$600. The victims were treated for their injuries at the scene by EMS. The assailant is described as male, has a medium skin complexion, a medium build, and was last seen wearing a gray jacket, black jeans, and a green hat. The accompanying photo was obtained from the incident location.

Woman Hospitalized



following Hit & Run

The NYPD said a woman was brought to an area hospital after being hit by a vehicle in a hit and run incident which occurred on the border of the Fordham Manor and Fordham Heights neighborhoods. Police responded to a 911 call at around 1.45 p.m. on Friday, March 18, following a report that a woman had been knocked down by a vehicle at East 188th Street and East Fordham Road. Police said the driver fled the scene, that there are no arrests, and that the investigation is ongoing. The victim was brought to St. Barnabas hospital in stable condition.

Robbery & Assault inside Residential Building

The NYPD is asking for the public's help
(continued on page 14)



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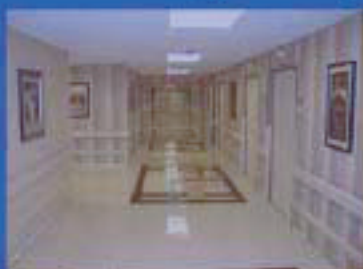
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Letters To The Editor

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

President Biden's Fuzz Math

The ghost writer who prepared President [Joe] Biden's State of the Union address must have flunked math at school. Biden's claim that "he was the only president to ever reduce the deficit by a trillion or more in a single year" had no merit. In March 2021, there was the \$2 trillion COVID relief bill, December 2021, another \$900 billion, and \$2 trillion more in March 2021. Most of these funds were borrowed and added to our long-term debt. Biden's proposed "Build Back Better" bill would cost another \$2 trillion.

On a bipartisan basis, both Democrats and Republicans are to blame for our national debt growing from \$4 trillion in 1992, to over \$30 trillion in 2022. It is time to install a national debt clock with daily updates in both Congress and the White House. In doing so, they could see, daily, how much they are adding to long-term debt every time they pass spending bills, dependent upon borrowing, to pay the tab.

Our national debt has reached \$30.316 trillion and is on a path to grow by \$1 trillion or more for years to come. Today's tab averages \$91.100 per citizen or \$241.611 per taxpayer according to the March 14, 2022, National Debt Clock.

Who is going to bail out Uncle Sam to pay for this? Government, the private sector, and citizens must make difficult financial decisions on how to use existing resources. Americans prioritize their own family budgets. They make the difficult choices in how existing household financial resources will be spent.

The world's favored currency is our dollar. This could end if Washington does not control annual increases in spending and debt. If things continue the way they are, don't be surprised if China surpasses us, and the renminbi becomes the world's favored currency. Our reign as the number 1 superpower will come to an end, like all empires.

Larry Penner
Great Neck

NYC Schools & Florida's "Don't Say Gay" Bill

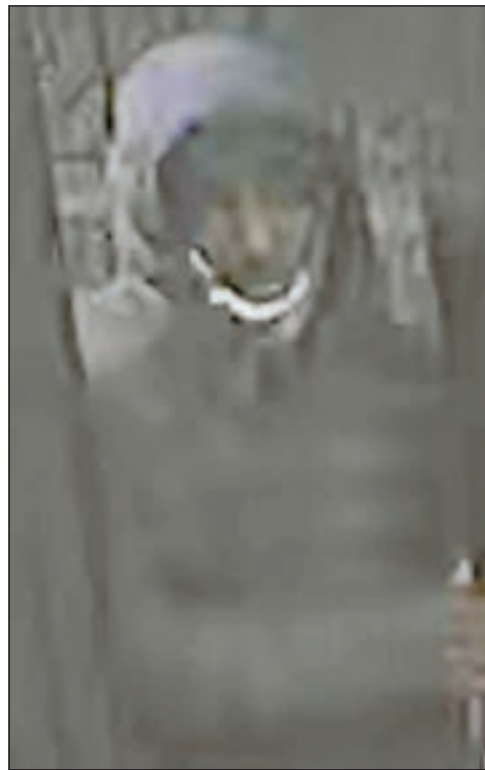
Florida's "Don't Say Gay" bill, which bans discussions about gender identity and sexual orientation in primary school classrooms belongs here in our local public school system. Third graders impacted by this bill need to learn how to perfect their penmanship, math skills, and the beginning of their science courses. Leave the sex talk in the home, where it belongs.

Richard Marias,
Norwood

Editor's Note: Linda Hawkins, Phd, MEd, LPC, co-director of the Gender and Sexuality Development Clinic at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), says a child begins to have an innate sense of their gender identity between ages 3 and 5.

CRIME FILE CONTINUED

BY SÍLE MOLONEY



identifying the man seen in the accompanying photo who is sought for a robbery that occurred in Fordham Manor.

Police said it was reported that on Thursday, March 10, at around 11 p.m., inside a residential building in the vicinity of West 192nd Street and Jerome Avenue, an unidentified person approached a 42-year-old male victim and punched him several times in the face. Police said the assailant stole the victim's wallet which contained \$60 dollars, \$1,500 (pesos), a credit card, and a MetroCard before fleeing the location. The victim sustained serious physical injuries to the leg and eye and was removed to St. Barnabas Hospital in stable condition.

Williamsbridge Fatal Shooting

Police have released a photo of a person of in-



terest, sought for questioning following the fatal shooting of a 26-year-old man in Williamsbridge. On Friday, March 18, at around 1.31 p.m., police responded to a 911 call regarding an aided person at 3559 Holland Avenue. Upon arrival, officers observed a 26-year-old man, unconscious and unresponsive with a gunshot wound to the torso.

EMS responded and transported the man to Jacobi Medical Center, where he succumbed to his injuries.

The victim has since been identified as Steph-aun Stewart, 26, of Williamsbridge. On March 20, pursuant to an active investigation, the NYPD said the shooting followed a dispute. They asked for the public's assistance in identifying the person of interest seen in the accompanying photo. The person is described as female, is 17 to 20 years of age, is Black, and was last seen wearing a black, hooded sweater, black pants, and white sneakers.

Parents Arrested following Death of 8-Year-Old Boy

The parents of an 8-year-old boy from Williamsbridge who died last June have been arrested on murder charges. Police responded to a call from Montefiore North Hospital emergency room regarding the child, who had been brought to the facility by his mother from his Williamsbridge home, on Tuesday, June 1, at around 2.10 p.m. The child was unconscious and unresponsive, with no obvious signs of trauma observed. Joseph Barney, 8, of East 214th Street was pronounced deceased at the hospital. The medical examiner was due to determine the cause of death.

On Monday, March 21, 2022, police confirmed that two individuals were arrested in connection to the incident. Michael Ransom, 33, of East 166th Street in Morrisania was charged with murder, manslaughter and aggravated manslaughter, and Sharay Barney, a 29-year-old woman, also of East 166th Street in Morrisania, was also charged with murder, manslaughter, and aggravated manslaughter. Norwood News asked the NYPD if the two people arrested were the victim's parents and they confirmed that they were.

Last June, we reported on the passage in the Assembly of landmark bill (A2375B), led by Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (A.D. 81), which requires that court-ordered forensic evaluations involving child custody and visitation be carried out by a licensed psychologist, social worker or psychiatrist who has completed a training program developed by the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence. The legislation also tasks the Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence to work with the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence to develop the new training program. At the time of the bill's passage in the Assembly, standards for child custody forensic evaluators varied by county in New York State.

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 Crime Stoppers website at <https://crimestoppers.nypdonline.org/> or on Twitter @NYPD-Tips. All calls are strictly confidential.

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Rally Held for Cab Driver following Brutal Assault

by **SÍLE MOLONEY & DAVID GREENE**

A rally was held outside Bronx Lebanon Hospital on March 20 to protest a brutal assault in Norwood on a cab driver, and to offer a reward to catch the assailants.

On Thursday, March 17, at 3560 Webster Avenue in Norwood, the NYPD told the *Norwood News* that the 61-year-old cab driver was punched in the face, having tried to intervene during a dispute. No further information was provided in respect of the incident by police.

Meanwhile, The New York Post reported that livery driver, Carlos Infante, 61, went to pick up a couple at the location just before 6 a.m. on Thursday, and that the couple were arguing when he arrived. Photos of the victim, recuperating in hospital after the assault, show him with a badly bruised, black eye and other apparent injuries.

Fernando Mateo, of the New York State Federation of Taxi Drivers later told *Norwood News* that according to Infante's family, the driver was also robbed of \$600 during the assault, though police could not officially confirm the robbery.

According to 1010Wins, a rally was later held outside Bronx Lebanon Hospital on March 20, organized by the New York State Federation of Taxi Drivers,

during which a \$3,000 reward was reportedly offered for the arrest of the couple.

The next day, March 21, Mayor Eric Adams and Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell were in The Bronx to discuss the launch of the police department's new Neighborhood Safety Teams across the City. "In six days, since we launched this program and at the police commissioner's leadership, we have made 31 arrests and ten guns removed from our streets...six days," said Adams. "More than a gun a day was removed from our streets, and this is what precision policing is about."

Also on March 21, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, and Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY-14) and Jamaal Bowman (NY-16) announced that they had secured \$400,000 in federal funding in a bipartisan Omnibus Appropriations Agreement for Jacobi Hospital's youth violence reduction program, 'Stand Up to Violence.' In June 2021, the politicians held a press conference urging Congress to provide \$400,000 to the program.

Norwood News had previously reported on a slashing assault on another taxi driver in the Jerome Park neighborhood outside Tracey Towers in August 2020. A GoFundMe page was set-up at

the time to raise funds for the driver's required surgery, such were the extent of his injuries. A video of the suspect was later released.

In January 2022, we also reported that a cab driver in Westchester Square was caught in crossfire during a shooting and was hit in the leg, while at the same time, a car collided with a second vehicle.

As also reported, a cab driver was stabbed, stiffed, and robbed in the Fordham Heights neighborhood. The incident took place on Jan. 20, at 9.28 p.m., in the vicinity of 3222 Bronx Boulevard in Olinville, when the 34-year-old male livery driver picked up three passengers. A short time later, when the cab arrived at the vicinity of 184th Street and Creston Avenue in Fordham Heights, the three passengers, two men and one woman exited the cab without paying the fare and fled on foot.

The cab driver exited his vehicle and was able to apprehend the woman, but one of the two men turned back and stabbed the victim in the chest several times with a knife. The three suspects then fled on foot in an unknown direction. An undetermined amount of money was removed from the victim, after the assault. EMS responded and



Photo courtesy of the New York State Federation of Taxi Drivers

TAXI DRIVER, CARLOS Infante, 61, recovers in hospital following a brutal assault in the Norwood section of The Bronx on March 17, 2022.

transported the victim to Saint Barnabas Hospital in stable condition.

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

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Out & About

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY

EVENTS

The New York Botanical Garden's "**Grow More Vegetables Certificate Series**" is an edible gardening course designed to equip community gardeners, teachers, and city residents with the best organic techniques for growing vegetables safely and effectively, particularly in an urban setting. The program consists of six virtual classes and hands-on gardening instruction in the field. Each student will have the opportunity to design their own urban vegetable gardening project as a final component of the course.

Priority will be given to Bronx community gardeners, but others are welcome if space allows. Applications are due by Friday, February 18, 2022. The course is held on Wednesdays,

March 30, April 6 & 13 from 6 to 8 p.m. and is online. To qualify for certification, eight hours hands-on practice is required; dates TBD. Learn more and apply here.

Bronx-based nonprofit, Freedom Youth NYC Family Justice Center, is holding a **Black & Gold fundraiser** to support the organization's anti-trafficking work on April 30, at 5 p.m. at 22 East 125th Street in Manhattan with honoree, Mayor Eric Adams. For more information, phone (929) 367-4754 or email info@freedomyouthnyc.com.

MUSIC

HIP HOP FEVER! takes place at Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, located at 250 Bedford Park Blvd West, The Bronx, New York 10468, on Saturday, April 30, 2022, at 8 p.m., as part of the center's Spring 2022

season. This event is dedicated to the former Bronx Borough President, Ruben Díaz Jr. For more information, go to <https://www.lehmancenter.org/>.

DANCE

Each Monday, from Jan. 3 to March 31, from 6 p.m. to 6.45 p.m., **Ballet for Kids** classes take place at Norwood's Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, located at 3225 Reservoir Oval East, Bronx, NY 10467. More information is available at: <https://www.nycgovparks.org/events/2022/01/31/ballet>.

ART

The Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse, Bronx NY 10456 holds the **12th Annual Taino Awards Ceremony** on Sunday, April 17, 2022, at 5 p.m. The Taino are indigenous people of the Caribbean, and the Taino Awards are given in order to recognize Taino people for all of their efforts in keeping the culture alive. Doors open at 4 p.m.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Bronx Library Center, located at 310 E Kingsbridge Road, Bronx, honors Women's Heritage Month March 2022 by celebrating **Daughters of Borikén: Reflections of our Heritage**, a mixed media photo exhibition, by Linda

Caycedo, which runs from March 3-31, 2022. Phone (718) 579 4257 for more information.

MOVEMENT

Bronx Buccaneers football club meet on Saturdays in the Williamsbridge Oval in Norwood from 11 a.m. to 1p.m. The session consists of a "Bootcamp" comprising strength, cardio and endurance training and the group also uses weights, bands and other equipment. The sessions are in preparation for the team's upcoming Tackle football program which began March 19 and continues every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., where kids are taught the fundamentals of football in a safe, fun atmosphere. Understanding there is more to football, the Buccaneers strive to develop the students/athletes, and the hope is that the players will use the program not only as a stepping stone to advance to upper level sports in High School and college, but also as a means to engage in a positive behavior and as a healthy distraction from idleness which the group says can lead to poor decisions. The Buccaneers accept kids from any community, boys or girls, ages 6 to 14. Contact Tasha Andrews at (917) 662-3632 for further information.



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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY



COVID-19 Updates

Effective February 10, the statewide indoor business mask or vaccine requirement was lifted, and is optional for businesses, local governments, and counties to enforce. Masks are still required on public transport.

Effective March 7, indoor venues, including restaurants, fitness facilities, and entertainment spaces will no longer be required to check for proof of vaccination before customers enter. Businesses previously covered by Key to NYC rules will still have the flexibility to require proof of vaccination or masking indoors if they choose.

Effective March 7, masks will no longer be required on public school grounds for kindergarten to 12th grade students. While these public-school children will be able to remove their masks, if they so choose, schools will continue to maintain strict COVID-19 protocols, including increased ventilation, a daily screener to ensure those with symptoms do not come to school, and test kit distribution.

On March 22, Mayor Eric Adams released the following statement regarding mask mandates in schools and daycare centers for 2- to 4-year-old children:

"I have always said that the science will guide us out of the pandemic, and because we have followed the data, we are winning the fight against COVID-19. New York City is currently in a low-risk environment. It's now been two weeks since we removed the mask mandate for K-12 public school children, and our percent positivity in schools has, thankfully, remained low.

Each day, we review the data, and if we continue to see low levels of risk, then, on Monday, April 4, we will make masks optional for 2 to 4-year-old children in schools and daycare settings. This will allow us sufficient time to evaluate the numbers and make sound decisions for our youngest New Yorkers. We must get this right for the health of our kids, and I refuse to jeopardize their safety by rushing a decision.

Our schools have been among the safest places for our children since the beginning of the pandemic, and we will only remove this requirement if the science says that it is safe to do so. I've said it before: I'm with New York City parents and New Yorkers can trust this administration to continue to make the proper public health decisions to keep our kids

safe. We will additionally continue to make masks available for any child or school staff member who wishes to continue wearing them."

All other COVID-19 mandates will remain in effect. Under the rules, employees will still be required to be vaccinated unless they have received a reasonable accommodation from their employer.

State Health officials said a COVID-19 booster dose helps maximize protection, prolongs the vaccine's durability, and continues to safeguard communities against the virus. Booster and additional doses of the COVID-19 vaccine are free and widely available, statewide, irrespective of immigration status.

A new COVID-19 alert system has been implemented across New York City, as per the attached chart.

NYS health department advises all New Yorkers, 5 and older, to get fully vaccinated, all eligible New Yorkers to get their booster dose, all travelers to continue to follow all CDC travel requirements, all New Yorkers who don't feel well to stay home, and to wash hands regularly. Masks are still required on public transport.

Gas-related Work Ongoing in Norwood

Gas pipe replacement work is underway by a contracted entity of ConEd at the junction of Reservoir Place and Reservoir Oval West in Norwood. The foreman confirmed low pressure [piping] is being replaced with high pressure [piping] and the street area will be opened up again each day at 4 p.m., and the works may continue to the Gun Hill Road area. *Norwood News* reached out to ConEd for more information about the extent of the works, including whether new meter installations would also be required in the affected nearby housing.

Jamie McShane, a spokesperson for ConEd, responded, saying, "This work is a part of our gas main replacement work in Norwood. Through our MRP [Construction LLC], we replace leak-prone pipe with more resilient materials, further improving system safety. The estimated time of completion for this project is May 15, 2022." He did not provide the geographical scope. We have asked for more information and will share this upon receipt.

ConED Assistance Programs:

visit www.conEd.com/PaymentPlans to view their payment program and other types of assistance.

Apply for help paying your bill: the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) helps eligible families. Contact the HEAP Information Line at (800) 692.0557 with questions about the program, or (212) 331.3126 for help from an operator.

Yankee Scholarship Deadline Extended

The New York Yankees and Bronx Community Board 7 (CB7) are looking for youth leaders who live within the CB7 boundaries to be considered for the annual New York Yankees Community Council Youth Leadership Award. The application period is currently open and the deadline has been *further* extended from March 16 to Monday, **April 4 at noon.**

Bronx CB7 representatives said participants must live within Bronx Community District 7 to apply. To check if a candidate is eligible, input their address under "Who Represents Me" via the following link: <http://www.mygovnyc.org/>. To be considered as a candidate for the Youth Leadership Award, applicants must submit the documents/information listed below to jadguzman@cb.nyc.gov.

Required Documents & Information:

- Resume, which includes education, voluntary and/or extracurricular activities, and if applicable, work experience, award(s) received and report card, etc.
- A reference letter from school, a volunteer group, and/or volunteer organization stating that the applicant has performed 50 hours of leadership/volunteer work as a tutor, mentor, community unity developer, community organizer against violence, bullying, and/or any other advocacy effort, etc.

The application form is available to download on the second page of the following webpage: https://www.norwoodnews.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/NYY-Community-Council-Youth-Leadership-Award-Application-2022-1_.pdf

The documents/information listed above need to be submitted as soon as possible, and at the latest by Monday, April 4, at noon. The ideal age group

for applicants is 14 to 18 years of age. However, if one of the candidates is a bit younger e.g. 13 years of age, and is active in the community, the application may be considered as well.

The five leaders/applications selected will receive a stipend of \$750 and will be recognized on the field during a pre-game ceremony at Yankee Stadium. For more information, contact the Bronx Community Board 7 office at (718) 933-5650 or email the district manager, Ischia Bravo, at ibravo@cb.nyc.gov.

New Yeshiva University-Albert Einstein Medicine Program Launches

Yeshiva University and Montefiore Medicine recently signed a new agreement launching a joint Yeshiva University-Albert Einstein College of Medicine B.A./B.S.-M.D. program for highly qualified, high school graduates, ensuring what is described as their path to an excellent medical education and an impactful career in healthcare.

High school senior applicants should have a demonstrable interest in medicine and be certain that medicine is the lifetime career they want to pursue. Successful candidates will be encouraged to explore a wide range of Yeshiva liberal arts and sciences majors to acquire a broad-based education that can be applied to the study of modern medical science. To be eligible for the program, applicants must:

- be a U.S. Citizen or lawful permanent resident, or have asylee status;
- graduate high school in 2022 (May-July) or later;
- earn an SAT score of 1460 or better, or a 32 or better on the ACT;
- secure a 94 or better grade point average in high school;
- apply for admission to Yeshiva College's or Stern College for Women's Honors Programs.

In order to support students in this highly competitive program, all students will receive a \$25,000 annual scholarship towards their undergraduate study while at Yeshiva University. Additionally, financial aid is also available for those students who demonstrate further financial need. For more information, email Lolita Wood-Hill, executive director, pre-professional advisement at Yeshiva University at woodhill@yu.edu.



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Public and Community Meetings

The next 52nd PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL meeting will be held on **Thursday, March 31, at 7 p.m. via Zoom**. The meeting ID is 869 1442 0302, and the passcode is 620370. 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 March 22 at 6.30 p.m. via Zoom. The meeting ID is 859 4776 2187. Contact KCabreraCarrera@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 was held on March. 2. For further details, contact bedford-mosholu@verizon.net.



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CM Dinowitz Discusses Antisemitism at Roundtable

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

On Jan. 15, an 11-hour standoff at the Colleyville Congregation in Texas ended when the gunman was distracted by Rabbi Charlie Cytron Walker, allowing the Rabbi and three others to escape. Once alone in the synagogue, Malik Akram was killed by an FBI hostage team. The incident ushered in a new year of national attention on the rise in antisemitic crimes.

Figures released by the FBI reveal that more than half of all religious bias crimes target Jews according to the American Jewish Committee, a global Jewish advocacy organization. Locally, District 11 Councilman Eric Dinowitz, chair of the Jewish Caucus at City Council, moderated a recent roundtable to address the growing number of antisemitic crimes.

"Antisemitism harms all of us and we must come together to combat it," Dinowitz said. "Anti-Jewish crime and any crime that targets a specific group, it's not just about that individual experiencing the hate, but those types of crimes terrorize our entire community." Joining Dinowitz at the forum on Jan. 26 was Bronx Congressman Ritchie Torres (NY-15), Avi Posnick, northeast director of Stand



Photo via Twitter

REPUBLICAN GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE, Rob Astorino, addresses the crowd at a rally he organized outside Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz's Kingsbridge office on Sunday, Nov. 14, 2021, during which swastikas were displayed.

With Us an organization fighting antisemitism, and Josh Kramer, director of the American Jewish Committee New York. The forum was held, significantly, on the day before International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Before his election to Congress, Torres represented City Council District 15, which includes the neighborhoods of Bedford Park, Fordham, Mount Hope, Bathgate, Belmont, East

Tremont, West Farms, Van Nest, Al-lerton, and Olinville

Although, his current congressional district 15 spans much of The Bronx, (including Norwood), in his role he serves as vice chair of the Homeland Security Committee. Although he now represents mostly the South Bronx, in his role on the committee, Torres hears, on a regular basis, the threats facing the nation as a whole.

"Even though the Jewish community is about 2.5 percent of the American population, according to the FBI, half of all hate crimes related to religion are directed against the Jewish community," Torres said. "I sense [a] growing anxiety about the spread of antisemitism and it's a function of both perception and reality."

He added an alarming observation on what the real rates might actually be. "Keep in mind the FBI's statistics are an underestimation of the epidemic of antisemitism because not every police department reports hate crimes to the FBI and the majority that do report claim they have no hate crimes within their jurisdiction, which is implausible."

The gap between reality and perception was addressed by Kramer who shared some findings published by his group, entitled, *The State of Antisemitism in America Report*. "90 percent of American Jews say that antisemitism is a problem. Only 60 percent of the general American population says so," Kramer said. "A quarter of American Jews have experienced or witnessed antisemitism in the last year, with many changing

(continued on page 21)

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Kingsbridge Armory Back to Square One?

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

Big news about what's going to happen to the Kingsbridge Armory is nothing new at Community Board 7 (CB7) meetings. Discussions on the seemingly ill-fated development have been dragging on for years. At the last CB7 general board meeting on Feb. 22, Emmanuel Martinez, chairman of CB7, announced plans to gather input, once again, from the community on what will happen to the landmark building located on Jerome and Kingsbridge Avenues.

"I want to make the board aware of the ad hoc committee that I will be creating; the ad hoc Kingsbridge Armory Committee," Martinez said. "It's important for us to start building an idea as to what are the community asks, how will the community be impacted, and most importantly, as community members and stakeholders, how do we work along with our small businesses and residents that would potentially be affected by this project."

A new source of enthusiasm for the Armory's repurposing comes from recently appointed Council Member Pierina Sanchez who represents District 14, in which the massive building is located. "There are two major entities who are the players and the deciders on what happens here," she said. "The City of New York owns the land and the armory, and The State of New York has committed \$108 million...it was \$130 million, but the previous developer used a bunch of the money," she added.

That developer is Kingsbridge National Ice Center (KNIC) Management which had proposed converting the 794,900 square-foot space into an ice hockey center with nine ice skating rinks and a 5,000-seat arena. A real estate advising firm projected revenues from the project of over \$1 billion in 30 years.

The Economic Development Corporation (EDC), a City agency, alleges that KNIC Management failed to raise enough funding to advance the project, whereas the developer disputes that assertion, and the matter is currently being thrashed out in the courts. According to our sources, the money which Sanchez refers to was used, in agreement with the City, to contract certain entities specialized in assessing the site, and scoping the resulting cost of projected work on the development. Also, according to our sources, New York State was to provide \$138M, KNIC Management had invested \$20M and \$158M was the amount that was due to be raised in order to release the lease on the building from escrow.

In December 2021, EDC released a statement, saying, "We are disappointed the redevelopment of the historic Kingsbridge Armory, a centerpiece of the



File photo

THE KINGSBRIDGE ARMORY (pictured) still remains vacant, nine years from the time the New York City Council voted to approve an ice center project.

Kingsbridge community, has been set back. Notwithstanding that, NYCEDC looks forward to working with the community, the new mayoral administration, and local elected officials to rethink the uses of this historic building in the coming new year and work collaboratively toward realizing that vision."

The statement was co-signed by Sanchez, Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson, State Sen. Gustavo Rivera (S.D. 33) Congressman Adriano Espaillat (NY-13), Bronx CB7 District Manager Ischia Bravo and Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition executive director, Sandra Lobo.

When asked in December what the current plans were for the armory, and if a new developer had been chosen for the project, an EDC spokesperson told *Norwood News*, that the agency was eager to engage the community, and that no new Request for Proposal (RFP) had yet been issued to prospective development bidders.

In the meantime, CB7 informed residents that any plans for the property would be determined by EDC, while seeking input from community leaders and civic organizations to make sure residents of the area feel their voices are heard. This is where Martinez's ad hoc Armory committee comes into play. "That's exactly to the point," he said. "That's what this committee would definitely work on...is building that consensus and working with all the players in the district."

Stories of the different chapters of the development at the Armory have graced the pages of *Norwood News* for decades. In the June 3, 2004, edition, the *News* reported on the first hearing at the City Council about the Armory since the National Guard left the building more than a decade earlier. Meanwhile, some of the ideas for the structure, discussed

by community members and elected officials over the years, have included converting the landmark building into a school complex, a recreational facility, or a commercial hub.

New York City Department of Education (DOE) opposed the plan for a school, but then-Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrión kept an optimistic outlook, saying at the time, "The Armory represents an opportunity to create sorely needed jobs and community amenities. So, it is imperative that planning proceeds without delay."

In 2007 *Norwood News* published nine stories about the Armory with several making the front page. The headline for Dec. 17, 2009, announced, "City Council Defeats Armory Mall Proposal, 45-1." The first five issues of 2013 were dedicated to the proposal that, at the time, seemed to take priority, namely, converting the structure into an ice sports center for the world. The last issue of that year ended with a positive headline on the front cover, "Council Approves Armory Ice Plan 48-1."

In the intervening years, it's mostly been a waiting game, with status updates on the financing of the project remaining largely the same: in progress. In June 2021, when there were talks of converting the armory into a salsa museum, KNIC Management told *Norwood News* it was not involved in those discussions but that under the Community Benefits Agreement, the community had some leeway to decide on the use of some aspects of the site, and that potentially, a salsa museum formed part of those discussions.

Negotiations on the legal and financial arrangements between KNIC Management and the City and State were reportedly hampered by the pandemic, according to the developer. The location was even used as a food hub at one point.

However, KNIC Management later told *Norwood News* on June 22, 2021, that the company was oversubscribed, at over \$400 million, in terms of capital commitments by investors for the project, describing it as something of a miracle, amid the economic downturn caused by the pandemic.

Meanwhile, one concern raised at the February CB7 general meeting was whether the armory project would be rebooted from scratch, with previous development suggestions erased from consideration. Jean Hill, a CB7 committee member, sought more clarity about the current state of affairs from Sanchez. "We've been doing this [discussing the armory] forever and a day," she said. "All of that is null and void now, and we're starting completely from scratch? Because there was a whole idea from before so now, we're at the start point and we're starting all over from the beginning?" she queried. "I just want to clarify that part." Sanchez replied with a simple "Yep, yep."

The councilmember continued, "The Kingsbridge National Ice Center, they never got their financing together. They never had the money to do what they promised to do.....which we all worked so hard on, and you all worked so hard on." She added, "They never had the money [for the additional financing]. So now, the process that approved them [KNIC Management] to do what they [were] going to do, that's all out the window. We are, unfortunately, starting over."

In her concluding statement to CB7, Sanchez tried to convey a more optimistic view of the armory's future. "We have a pretty good team," she said. "[State] Sen. [Gustavo] Rivera has been in conversation with us. They've been talking to the governor's office. They are a big part of the reason why we still have \$108 million in the state budget for a loan... In Congress, Congressman Adriano Espaillat is talking [about] negotiations on Build Back Better.... In Washington D.C., they're keeping it on the table that The Bronx needs infrastructure money."

A new timeline for the armory's development has yet to be established, but it's clear that the clock has been reset on the armory's future. Sanchez hopes to avoid another generation of Bronxites witnessing an abandoned, block-long property sitting sadly empty when it could be used to improve the lives of so many. "This has been 30 years in the making," Sanchez said about the previous attempts to re-purpose the massive building. "I was a little, little girl looking at the armory vacant, and it's still vacant."

**Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*

CM Dinowitz Discusses Antisemitism at Roundtable

(continued from page 19)

their behavior, hiding their Jewish identity in various settings, as a result of that perceived increase in antisemitism.”

Dinowitz, District 13 City Council Member Marjorie Velázquez, and Assemblywoman Nily Rozic, representing parts of Queens, announced on Thursday, Jan. 27, Holocaust Remembrance Day, that a New York City Council resolution in support of Rozic’s bill A472A would be introduced in the City Council. The bill directs the commissioner of State education to audit Holocaust education in New York.

A fine point was addressed by Avi Posnick on how antisemitism can be defined. Questions sometimes arise on whether criticizing political actions by the State of Israel should automatically be construed as antisemitic. “There actually is something out there that should be adopted which is the IHRA (The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) working definition of antisemitism,” he said. “Because antisemitism sometimes can be difficult to identify, consistency and clarity are crucial.”

IHRA gives the following non-legally binding working definition of



Photo via Twitter

PROTESTORS HOLD A sign that reads, “No Jab – No Entry? I did Nazi that coming,” during a rally held outside the home of Jewish Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (A.D. 81) in Riverdale on Sunday, Dec. 12, 2021.

antisemitism: “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

Although the hatred fueling antisemitism should concern everyone, it is especially concerning in a community where a quarter of the population is Jewish. The Bronx’s Riverdale neigh-

borhood, which is generally described as west of Riverdale Avenue, below West 238th Street, and west of Van Cortlandt Park to the Hudson River for the northern section, has been known as a Jewish enclave for decades. It’s also inclusive of zip codes 10463 for the southern section and 10471 to the north.

The last two census figures from 2000 and 2010 reveal the percentage of households identifying as Jewish to be 26 percent and 25 percent, respectively. This breakdown includes parts of Kingsbridge. For

2010, that meant there were 12,000 Jewish households containing 22,200 people, of whom 20,100 were Jewish. This is according to published data in the Jewish Community Study of New York: 2011 Geographic Profile, organized by the UJA-Federation of New York. Final numbers from the 2020 Census are set to be published in 2022.

Meanwhile, Dinowitz and the other panel members agreed that “Israel is not a perfect state” and can and should be held up to criticism at times. Torres expressed his position bluntly, “No one would ever claim that criticism of Israel is in and of itself antisemitic.... The antisemitism arises when you question Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state.”

A more nuanced point was made by Posnick. “You can have critiques of Israeli policies, you can have critiques of Israeli leaders; we, as Americans, have critiques of our own leaders and policies,” he said. “But, like was said before, when it’s being used to attack Israel and single Israel out and attack Jews, that is antisemitic.”

Dinowitz provided a link to where the roundtable can be viewed on Facebook: <https://fb.watch/byzuE7xvu2/>.



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FDNY Responds to Brush Fire in Whalen Playground

By SÍLE MOLONEY

A brush fire broke out in Whalen playground at East 205th Street and Perry Avenue in the Norwood section of The Bronx on Friday, March 10. A brush fire is a fire involving low-growing plants. One fire truck and a handful of fire-fighters responded to the incident.

FDNY officials said they were alerted to the incident at 3.38 p.m., that there were no reported injuries, and that the situation was brought under control at 4.12 p.m.

The fire itself was about 1 foot in height by the time fire-fighters arrived at the scene and it had burned a grassy surface area of about 15-20 square feet, close to a tree, located behind a railing which separated the area from the actual playground.

Eyewitnesses said some people had tried to put out the fire as it had started to spread, before the FDNY arrived at around 3.44 p.m. An elderly man was seen attempting to stomp out the fire with his walking cane, while another man was heard saying to him, “No, let the fire department do that. They get paid to do that.”

When it was suggested that he be careful, the elderly man insisted he knew how to put out a fire. *Norwood News* attempted to speak with the man who had encouraged the elderly man to let the FDNY handle the situation, but he preferred not to comment.

We later spoke to Anthony



Photo by Síle Moloney

FIREFIGHTERS PUT OUT a brush fire that broke out in Whalen Playground on Friday, March 11, 2022, at around 3.20 p.m.

Kotcebue, who had been in the playground when the fire broke out and asked him what happened. “We were sitting, listening to music and somebody behind us told us there was a fire, and we happened to see it. Probably one of the kids that let the grass on fire... we don’t know,” he said, adding that as he recalled, there were about three kids in the area by the tree before the fire broke out. Asked what time that was, Kotcebue replied, “That was about 3.20 p.m.”

Norwood News later asked

the firefighters if they could tell how the fire started. They said that as the grass was very dry, it had probably ignited quickly [once in contact with a flame] and suggested it had probably been started by kids.

Before the FDNY arrived, we asked Kotcebue if someone had phoned the department. He said, “Yeah, somebody phoned the fire department, and let [them] know there was a fire, and that it was spreading through.”

He added that it had been bigger than seen in the at-

tached photos. “Somebody put it out a little bit,” he said. When asked how big, Kotcebue said, “A little portion right here, by the tree, right here...” He added that a cardboard box had been seen in the area of the fire.

Asked if the person who had reduced the spread of the fire had prevented it from reaching the tree trunk, he said, “Yeah, and then it expanded a little bit and then it went down.”

Norwood News also spoke to a woman who declined to give her name, who was with another woman and

two small children, standing outside the playground when the FDNY truck arrived. We asked her if she knew what had happened. Speaking in Spanish, she said, “The truth is we don’t know.” Asked how many people were in the playground at the time the fire broke out, she said, “There were a lot of kids, but I couldn’t say how many..... about 20.”

Meanwhile, Kotcebue summed up the incident saying, “Nothing too major... we’re all still alive.”



Photo by Síle Moloney

ONE FIRE TRUCK arrives to put out a brush fire that broke out in Whalen Playground in Norwood on Friday, March 11, 2022, at around 3.20 p.m.



Photo by Síle Moloney

AN ELDERLY MAN attempts to put out a brush fire with his walking cane in Whalen Playground on Friday, March 11, 2022, at around 3.20 p.m.

LGBTQ+ Coalition Makes Bronx History

(continued from page 1)

push for Irish LGBTQ+ representation in the Manhattan St. Patrick's Day parade, in 1994, Fay founded Lavender and Green Alliance (L&GA)/*Muintir Aerach na hÉireann*, which celebrates Irish LGBTQ+ culture and identity. Five years later, in 1999, he was arrested at the annual Throggs Neck parade for attempting to march with the group.

Fay told the *Norwood News* that at the time, the office of Former Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer contacted both the parade's organizers, Throggs Neck Benevolent Association (TNBA), and L&GA in the context of discussions relating to funding for the parade. Following this, TNBA extended an invitation to Fay's group to march. "They reached out to us and said, 'We would welcome you!'" Fay said.

Delighted with the breakthrough, he shared the news during an L&GA event ahead of the parade day. The announcement was picked up by local City newspaper, *The Irish Echo*, who wrote a story about it. Fay explained, "Then, basically, groups began to contact the [Throggs Neck] parade organizers and said, 'We will not march in that parade if....' Three days later, the group's invitation to march in The Bronx was withdrawn.

Undeterred, on parade day, Fay and then-State Sen. Tom Duane, the Senate's first openly gay and first openly HIV-positive member, and then-City Council Member Christine Quinn, the first female and first openly gay speaker of the council, prepared to step off anyway as part of the procession, but were arrested. "I like to say to people I wasn't arrested for disturbing the peace," Fay said. "I was arrested for disturbing the prejudice."

The history behind the movement for Irish LGBTQ+ inclusion in St. Patrick's Day parades both across the City, and across the United States is in many ways like the history of Irish independence – long, bloody, complicated, and ever-evolving.

In 1991, the late New York City Mayor David Dinkins was the first mayor to march with an Irish LGBTQ+ group in the Fifth Avenue St. Patrick's Day parade in Manhattan, albeit without an identifying banner, and as part of another parade contingent. Dinkins compared the experience to the civil rights marches of the 1960s. The group dodged beer cans and were subject to ugly, homophobic slurs along the parade route.

The legal path to parade inclusion, on discriminatory grounds, ended with the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in June 1995 when, as reported by The New York Times, it ruled that private sponsors of a parade had a constitutional right to exclude marchers whose message they rejected, including those who sought to identify themselves as



Archive Photo, photographer unknown
BRENDAN FAY, FOUNDER of Lavender & Green Alliance, *Muintir Aerach na hÉireann*, which celebrates Irish LGBTQ+ culture & identity, is arrested at the Throggs Neck St. Patrick's Day parade in The Bronx on Sunday, March 14, 1999.

gay, lesbian, and bisexual Irish Americans. Activists like Fay had been repeatedly arrested for years for attempting to peacefully march.

In the years since the ruling, the movement focused on changing hearts and minds, which was why the initial 1999 Bronx outreach was such a turning point. Following the Bronx debacle, Fay founded "St. Pat's for All," an all-inclusive St. Patrick's Day parade in Queens, welcoming all manner of diverse groups from all cultural backgrounds, as well as those with disabilities, for a day of celebration and inclusivity. The annual event has been going strong for about 20 years, with many elected officials at one point refusing to march in the main Manhattan parade and joining the Queens gathering instead.

Through dialogue, and ongoing campaigning, L&GA was eventually welcomed to march under their own banner in the Fifth Avenue St. Patrick's Day parade in 2016 (which, coincidentally, also marked the centenary of Ireland's 1916 revolution, leading the way to independence for the Rep. of Ireland). In 2019, BILGO, a local Brooklyn Irish LGBTQ group marched for the first time under their own banner in a local Park Slope St. Patrick's Day parade.

To date, the Pride Center of Staten Island is still precluded from marching in the annual St. Patrick's Day parade, the island's largest community parade, though its representatives continue to formally apply each year. In Ireland, where St. Patrick's Day is the country's national holiday, no such parade restrictions apply. Indeed, in 2015, Ireland became the first country in the world to vote in favor of same sex marriage by popular vote, and two years later, elected its first openly gay prime minister (*taoiseach*), Leo Varadkar, whose

father happens to be Indian.

On March 13, at the 24th Annual Throggs Neck St. Patrick's Day parade, L&GA said they were thrilled to return as welcomed guests to share in what they said was an Irish tradition of inclusion of all people to celebrate the immigrant history and heritage, Irish and Celtic.

Under the L&GA banner, the LGBTQIA+ marching contingent included members of the Stonewall Democrats, the Third Avenue Business Improvement District (BID) and other LGBTQ+ and allied community members who were warmly welcomed by hospitable crowds in the Throggs Neck neighborhood. Fay's husband, Dr. Tom Moulton, carried the group's historic, silk, Irish tricolor flag created by Gilbert Baker, who also designed the LGBT rainbow flag.

Reflecting on the historic nature of the group's inclusion in the Bronx parade this year, Fay said, "Look, when the history is written of the parades, down the road, the original breakthrough in the entire parade controversy, which had gone to the Supreme Court, came from The Bronx." Though the 1999 invitation was short-lived, it spurred on the wider movement in New York City, and slowly paved the way for incremental change across the boroughs.

Referencing the atmosphere on the day of the Bronx parade, Fay said, "There was a lot of cheering for our group and the joy of our inclusion!" he said. "A few of us arrived early for the mass at St Benedict's. Back in 1999, last time I was here was with Barbara Mohr and Stanley Rygor. Both have been gone some years, but they are still present in love, remembered as we joined the parade. They prayed and advocated for this day of welcome and hospitality."

Fay, who is also a filmmaker, a member of Dignity New York and an active campaigner for nuclear disarmament, said that at the church, the group thanked the Throggs Neck parade organizers and joined prayers for an end to the tragic war in Ukraine. "Along the parade route, a family stood waving their Ukraine flag, their faces weary with [the] sadness of war," he said. "In the middle of our celebration, we were all mindful of the world we live in, and the tragedy of war."

Meanwhile, Michael Brady, Bronxite, LGBTQ leader, and CEO of the Third Avenue BID and the Bruckner Blvd Commercial Corridor, said of the occasion, "The contributions of the Irish and Irish American community have had a great impact on The Bronx. It was an honor to march with Lavender and Green Alliance as part of this year's Throggs Neck St. Patrick's Parade and be part of history as we continue the Irish mission of fostering inclusion and diversity among our people." He added,

"As a business owner and leader of a business organization, I have a message: inclusion and diversity are good for business, and good for The Bronx."

Norwood News asked Brady if he had any words of encouragement for the Pride Center of Staten Island in the context of their ongoing mission to be included in the St. Patrick's Day parade. He replied, "It breaks my heart; it's truly disheartening that Staten Island has not kept up with the times and have really not opened hearts and minds to the LGBTQ+ community, particularly on St. Patrick's Day when, you know, we celebrate everything that is Irish."

He added, "And if there's one thing that is Ireland, it is inclusion, it is diversity, and it is going out of the oppression and into the healing, and I think that it would be Tom foolish if Staten Island continued the practice of exclusion."

That message was echoed by Justin Sanchez, president of Stonewall Democrats, who said, "The LGBTQ+ community is a diverse puzzle that only truly comes together when all the pieces unify to create one beautiful image. We are thankful to the organizers of the Throggs Neck St. Patrick's Day Parade for opening their hearts and their march to celebrate the tremendous contributions and proud heritage of the Irish and Irish American LGBTQ+ community."

The parade stepped off at noon at the corner of East Tremont and Lafayette Avenues. The route was just about a mile and a half ending on Harding Avenue, close to Brinsmade. On March 17, Lavender and Green Alliance marched, once again, in the Manhattan St Patrick's Day parade.

"We thank the parade organizers for their welcome," Fay concluded. "The inclusion of our Lavender and Green Alliance group in the Bronx St. Patrick's parade is a moment of healing and history that sends a positive message of equal belonging to our LGBT youth and our families. Parades are always more joyful celebrations when all are welcome. This is a huge day for the LGBT Irish community, for The Bronx and for New York City."

Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson, Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark, District 13 City Council Member Marjorie Velázquez and Deputy Bronx Borough President Janet A. Peguero were among the elected officials who joined the parade celebrations on the day. Gibson later tweeted, "With our Deputy Borough President @jpegnyc, on a wonderful Sunday Afternoon celebrating St. Patrick's Day in our Throggs Neck community with elected officials, schools, businesses, residents and families. Happy Irish Heritage! -#Bronx"

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