CANDIDATES FACE OFF AT NWBCCC FORUM

By EMILY SAWAKED

The Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC) hosted a candidates’ forum at Monroe College, at 2501 Jerome Avenue in Fordham Manor, on Wednesday, May 25, 2022.

CANDIDATES RUNNING IN Assembly Districts 78 and 81 answer questions during a forum hosted by Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition at Monroe College, at 2501 Jerome Avenue in Fordham Manor, on Wednesday, May 25, 2022.

By EMILY SAWAKED

The Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC) hosted a candidates’ forum at Monroe College on Wednesday, May 26, for candidates running in the 78th and the 81st Assembly Districts in the June primaries. Both Assemblyman José Rivera (A.D. 78), who was not in attendance, and Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (A.D. 81), who was, face younger challengers.

Of those candidates running for office, present for the District 78 forum were community leader, Shanequa Charles, previously profiled by Norwood News, and Emmanuel Martínez, chair of Bronx Community Board 7 (CB7) since 2019. Meanwhile, of those candidates running in District 81, both Dinowitz and progressive community organizer, Jessica Altagracia-Woolford, attended.

(continued on page 23)
Norwood: Police Appeal for More Info on Man Charged with Child Pornography

By SÍLE MOLONEY, EMILY SAWAKED, DAVID GREENE & MIRIAM QUINONES

The NYPD has asked for the public’s help in providing additional information on the individual seen in the accompanying photo who was arrested for allegedly possessing multiple pornographic images of sex acts with children.

Sílfredo A. Castillo Martínez, 32, of Decatur Avenue in The Bronx was employed at a daycare center located at 3525 Decatur Avenue #1AA & 1AB in Norwood, between July 2011 and May 2022.

He was arrested and charged with violating NYS penal code 263.16 and 263.15, the latter “promoting a sexual performance by a child when, knowing the character and content thereof, he produces, directs or promotes any performance which includes sexual conduct by a child less than seventeen years of age.”

NYS penal code 263.16 covers “possessing a sexual performance by a child when, knowing the character and content thereof, a person knowingly has in his possession or control, or knowingly accesses with intent to view, any performance which includes sexual conduct by a child less than sixteen years of age.”

Norwood News attempted unsuccessfully to speak to anyone at the suspect’s home for comment. We also went to the daycare center to speak with some of the staff/parents. There was a sign outside the center, informing residents that it was temporarily closed.

We observed some people at the location who were discussing the arrest of Castillo Martínez, while others appeared to have no idea what had happened. One parent said the incident was the reason why she never leaves her kids with anyone. Another parent said that she was praying the suspect had not harmed the children at the center. Nobody wanted to disclose their name or have their photo taken.

One apparent neighbor, who answered the phone in an apartment in the building where the suspect lived on Decatur Avenue, and who declined to give his name, told us, in part, “I’m sorry sir, but I don’t have a comment about that. You know, this is a serious situation that we’re passing on right now, so I don’t want to comment about it, all right? I’m so sorry.”

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

Anyone with information regarding this incident or person 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 @NYPDcrimeStops. All calls are strictly confidential.
Tracey Towers Mgmt & DOB Dispute Violations Status

By DAVID GREENE & SÍLE MOLONEY

The public relations firm representing Jerome Park’s Tracey Towers housing complex, responded to a Norwood News story published in our April 21-May 4 edition, in which we reported on a wall collapse and stop work order in place by New York City Department of Buildings (DOB), which temporarily shut the Tracey Towers playground.

In the statement issued by Bill Corbett of Corbett Public Relations, with copy to a second PR firm representative, Don Miller of West End Strategies, on Monday, May 2, Corbett wrote, “The safety of residents and the public remains the number one priority of Tracey Towers Associates. All repairs in the park were completed to cure the vacate order that you are inquiring about. The playground is open and available to resident families.”

The statement continued, “All elevator inspections and upgrades that are required by the Department of Buildings are up to date and have been filed with the DOB. The deck and the ramp are built above the MTA train yard and require regular maintenance. When there is a location that requires a repair, ‘Tracey Towers’ must coordinate with the MTA for track closures below to execute the repair.” Norwood News asked for clarification as to who exactly is meant by “Tracey Towers,” in this context.

The statement concluded, “In some instances, the area needing repair will have a steel plate installed over it until the repair is executed. We believe this may be what you were referring to. The vacate order and violations that you have cited have been cured, some years ago. In most cases they are awaiting administrative closure by the DOB.”

After receiving a copy of the PR statement, Andrew Rudansky, press secretary at the DOB told Norwood News, “As discussed on April 21st, the partial vacate order for the playground at 40 West Mosholu Parkway South [the location of the towers] is still in effect. We were last on scene on April 20, 2022.”

Rudansky added, “According to DOB records of filed elevator inspection reports, these elevators were last inspected by the owner’s elevator service contractor on 5/19/21 and 5/20/21. There are several, previously issued DOB violations related to non-hazardous, related defects, and the owner’s failure to file the required elevator inspection reports with the building. The owners are responsible for resolving and closing out these violations.”

When presented with Rudansky’s response, the vacate order was still in effect, and that the elevator violations had not yet been resolved, Miller told Norwood News, “The previous vacate order for the playground and the non-hazardous elevator violations are purely administrative and no corrective work is required. The removal and dismissal of these violations are presently being processed with the NYC Department of Buildings.”

Norwood News followed up again with DOB to ask if they agreed with the latest response from the PR firm.

We also asked the PR firm for clarity on the exact role played by “Tracey Towers Associates” a private limited partnership, vis-a-vis Tracey Towers, since we had previously been in touch with RY Management last year in relation to several other repair issues raised by tenants during a Tracey Towers Tenants Organization meeting held on July 22, 2021. We were provided with the following explanation by Corbett: “RY Management is the Managing Agent for Tracey Towers Associates.”

In addition, Norwood News asked for an update on the status of the repair issues raised at that time with RY Management. We received the following responses to our questions:

Residents had complained that the washing machines did not work and were eating their money. Corbett PR replied, saying, “Residents should not be leaving items on terraces. When management discovers a resident has items on their terrace that should not be there, management instructs the resident to remove the items. Most residents comply but there are instances where management must move to court proceedings because a resident will not comply with the request.”

Residents had complained that security is not adequate, that the security team were young, that they did not know the building layout and could not direct people to the right area, did not recognize the residents, and did not lock the doors. Corbett PR replied, saying, “The current security company has been providing services for many years. The majority of the supervisors for this site have been at Tracey Towers for more than 10 years. Security supervisors are well acquainted with the property and know many of the tenants by name.”

Residents had asked to know when the fire alarm had last been tested, and if it had gone off during the fire at the towers on July 23, 2021, as one resident said he never heard it. Corbett PR replied, saying, “All building fire alarm systems are operational, and all apartments have smoke detection systems that are tested annually. Management will send staff to any resident’s apartment to test smoke alarms upon request.”

No response was provided regarding the resident’s question on the fire dated July 23, 2021. Norwood News has contacted FDNY for an update.

Residents had complained that people were leaving too many things on their terraces and there was a fear they would become a fire hazard if someone dropped a cigarette from a higher floor. Corbett PR replied, saying, “Residents should not be leaving items on terraces. When management discovers a resident has items on their terrace that should not be there, management instructs the resident to remove the items. Most residents comply but there are instances where management must move to court proceedings because a resident will not comply with the request.”

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(continued on page 16)
Following the recent mass shootings in the U.S., this week, we asked readers how they felt about school security in The Bronx.

“I work in a school, and I don’t think they’re doing enough for gun control either, and with all the mass shootings, I am concerned for myself and my family, and I do have a son going to kindergarten, so I’m pretty concerned because the public schools are not too safe. I think the gun violence is terrible in The Bronx. There are shootings all over the place, and it comes out on the news all the time, and it’s just not safe. I think they need to do a better job on gun control. People can buy guns from Walmart all over the place and just bring them on up here. They need to regulate them better. It starts with the politicians all the way at the bottom, and we need to pay more attention to who we’re electing.”

Jasmin Seabrook, Norwood

“I have grandkids in school here in The Bronx, and I’m concerned that what happened at the school in Texas could happen here. The most important thing I see as a solution is if the Republicans get together with the Democrats to stop the states where young people are allowed to buy guns. Why don’t the politicians get together? I think the people should only donate money to politicians who support these measures during an election. We need the police, but they must be concerned with the residents, and the residents must be concerned with the officers as well. Republicans want to arm the teachers, but that’s not a good message to send to the students. It’s better to have a security guard with a gun and metal detectors.”

Jorge Davila, Kingsbridge Heights

“Yes, I am concerned. Who wouldn’t be? I understand more of the crazy ones are in Texas, which I’m glad about, but they’re everywhere. I feel like the only thing that can be done to prevent these things is changing the laws regarding weapons, keeping guns out of the hands of the 16 to 20-year-olds, but they’re going to get them illegally anyway. I really don’t know how to stop this. Someone was saying that they should put metal detectors in the schools, because this guy just walked in with the stuff. Get metal detectors, and update the security system. They don’t update anything, and I think they should arm the teachers. There’s no solution to any one problem, without creating another problem. The only thing I do is pray. It’s the only thing that’s going to stop this, Jesus.”

Oprah Reid, Bedford Park

“Yes, of course I’m concerned because it could happen at any time. If it happened in one place in the States, it could happen anywhere. It’s dangerous, because it’s just kids, and they’re losing their lives due to gun violence, and it’s just not fair and something has to be done. If kids are losing their lives, I don’t know what other message you can send that would just end it all. I feel if they’re not going to get rid of the guns anytime soon, then maybe it’s best to arm the teachers. I’m not sure if they can stop the guns coming in because people still find ways to sneak them in. There are so many guns on the street and it’s crazy because so many young people have access to firearms, and it’s wild, and these ghost guns are so freaking scary. I heard that they can’t be traced and that’s just dangerous.”

Pam Rose, East Tremont

“Yes, I am concerned about it. I heard the one about teachers and don’t think teachers should be carrying guns in school because children, like in kindergarten, may think it’s a toy or something. Just lock the doors: that’s what my teacher is doing right now. He locks the doors because it’s not safe in New York. If I can be honest with you, they should not be selling guns to 16-year-olds. That should be illegal. I feel safe with the safety agents at my school. I feel really safe. They need to limit the guns, but I don’t even know. This world is crazy, Bro.”

Kami Rosendo, Fordham Heights

INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE

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New Federal Bill on Affordable Housing

U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand announced on May 31 the Senate introduction of the bicameral bill, the Affordable Housing and Area Median Income Fairness Act of 2022, which addresses core challenges that have led to a lack of affordable housing in New York City and the nation's urban areas. If passed, the bill will invest $15 billion in affordable housing each year for 10 years, and reexamine a key metric used in determining eligibility for low-income housing.

EMT’s Killer Will Not Stand Trial

Bronx District Attorney, Darcel D. Clark, vowed to continue efforts to prosecute, Jose Gonzalez, for allegedly killing EMT, Yadira Arroyo, after a judge ruled on Thursday, May 26, that Gonzalez was unfit to stand trial. Arroyo was killed in the Unionport section of The Bronx in the line of duty on March 16, 2017, when she was struck and killed by the impact of her own ambulance while attempting to stop the vehicle’s theft during an emergency response.

Missing Norwood Girl Found

The NYPD confirmed that 13-year-old Vida Gonzalez, who had been reported missing in Norwood has been found. Prior to being located, police said Vida of DeKalb Avenue had last been seen on Friday May 20, at 9:30 a.m. On Sunday, May 22, a person, who wishes to remain anonymous, contacted Norwood News for a second time to confirm from police that, indeed, both girls had been located.

Missing Woman from Kingsbridge Heights

The NYPD is asking for the public’s help locating a 76-year-old woman, Laura Silva, who was reported missing from Kingsbridge Heights. Police said Silva, of 2840 Sedgwick Avenue, Apt 1F, was last seen Tuesday, May 24, at 7:14 a.m., leaving her home and walking along Sedgwick Avenue towards West Kingsbridge Avenue. She is described as female, around 5 feet, 5 inches tall, weighs 115 pounds, is Hispanic, is of a medium build, and has brown eyes and brown hair. She was last seen wearing a green T-shirt, black pants, black shoes, a black purse, and a black stocking cap.

Fordham Manor: Missing 25-Year-Old Man

The NYPD is seeking the public’s help locating a 25-year-old man reported missing in Fordham Manor. Police said Isaac Vekez, 25, of 2707 Briggs Avenue was last seen inside his home on Sunday, May 22, at around 8:30 a.m. He is described as male, around 6 feet, 2 inches tall, weighs around 290 pounds. He was last seen wearing a red, hooded sweatshirt, blue jeans, and black sneakers.

North Riverdale Housing Lottery

An affordable housing lottery has launched for units at 6375 Broadway, a seven-story, residential building in North Riverdale, The Bronx, as reported by YIMBY. Designed by Marin Architects, the structure yields 65 residential units and 36 parking spaces. Available via NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development’s online portal are 23 units for residents at 130 percent of the area median income (AMI), ranging in eligible income from $61,715 to $187,330. Go to the following link, for more information about the lottery: https://housingsconnect.nyc.gov/PublicWeb/details/2860.

Prospective renters must meet income and household size requirements to apply, and applications must be postmarked or submitted online no later than June 17. To request a hard copy application form to complete and return via mail, send a request to 6375 Broadway Apartments, PO Box 9 Purchase, NY 10577.
Gender-Affirming Care, Pride in Our Kids

By DR. MICHELLE COLLINS-OGLE

During the month of June, the LGBTQA community celebrates across the world with various events, to recognize the many positive ways LGBTQA people have contributed significantly to every country and every community. June is chosen as Pride month in memory of the Stonewall Riots which happened in 1969. Patrons and supporters of the Stonewall Inn in New York City staged an uprising to resist the police harassment and persecution to which LGBTQ Americans were commonly subjected. This uprising marked the beginning of a movement to outlaw discriminatory laws and practices against LGBTQ Americans.

The Children’s Hospital at Montefiore has a long history of delivering cutting-edge care for LGBTQA youth. For 30 years, Montefiore has been at the forefront in providing care for children and young adults living with HIV. Over recent years, our program has expanded services to include comprehensive, gender-affirming care for pediatric, adolescent, and young adults, seeking this medically necessary care.

Transgender and gender non-conforming youth need the affirmation, and support from family, peers, and their healthcare providers. Their emotional, physical, and mental health depends on their ability to access gender-affirming care in a healthcare setting that “affirms” their gender identity. Multiple studies have shown that access to gender-affirming healthcare decreases the incidence of depression and suicidality among transgender children and teenagers. To better meet the needs of our increasingly younger, gender-diverse community in The Bronx, our program has expanded access to gender-affirming healthcare to include counseling and evaluation of prepubertal children for pubertal suppression.

The Montefiore Youth and Adolescent Sexual-health (MAYS) Clinic is housed under the divisions of infectious diseases and adolescent medicine, and led by me, a former member of the presidential advisory council on HIV/AIDS, under the Obama administration. Our expert team provides comprehensive gender-affirming care for transgender adolescents living with HIV/AIDS, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV, post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for HIV, as well as diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections.

Our gender-affirming program for transgender youth is composed of a multidisciplinary network of infectious disease and adolescent medicine physicians, a licensed clinical social worker with special training in transgender counseling, PrEP and PEP navigators, as well as partnerships with community LGBTQ centers.

MAYS has recently expanded services to provide care for prepubertal children, requiring gender-affirming counseling, medical care, and referrals for supportive services. An increasing amount of published data shows that pediatric people with gender dysphoria experience severe depression when forced to experience pubertal changes consistent with the sex assigned at birth. The clinic has expanded its focus with strategies for families with transgender children requesting pubertal blockers.

Studies show that children who identify as transgender or non-binary have a dramatic decrease in suicides, suicide attempts, and depression when they have the opportunity to receive pubertal blockers or hormones. Under the status neutral approach, we provide comprehensive care for children, adolescents, and young adults living with HIV in need of gender-affirming hormone therapy as well. The goals of the newly structured MAYS Clinic are to meet youth and families where they are, and to:

- destigmatize sexual health and gender-affirming care;
- expand access to pediatric and adolescent people at risk for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV;
- expand access to gender-affirming care for pediatric and adolescent people;
- provide options to care for people living with HIV so they can access the same healthcare services as their HIV negative cohorts;
- collaborate and network across divisions within the Montefiore Healthcare System to provide comprehensive care for MAYS clinic patients;
- identify champions within our community whose participation is essential in providing comprehensive medical care; and
- offer youth access to medical care in a non-judgmental, gender-affirming, welcoming environment.

As we observe what is inarguably the worst year in recent history for legislative attacks against transgender and gender non-conforming kids in several states across this country, let’s remember that these children need holistic wraparound care, which focuses on their mental health, it being equally as important as their physical well-being.

Dr. Michelle Collins-Ogle is a pediatric infectious disease specialist at the Children’s Hospital at Montefiore.
Fordham Opens New Student Center, Honoring Departing President

By SARAH HUFFMAN

Fordham University held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on April 27 to mark the official opening of its newly renovated student center at the college’s Rose Hill campus. Previously named the Laurence J. McGinley S.J Center, the newly renovated building was renamed the Joseph M. McShane S.J. Campus Center in honor of the University’s current president who is wrapping up his final term at the college.

The ceremony was hosted by David Ushery, television news anchor at NBC 4 New York, and was attended by Assembly Member Nathalia Fernández (A.D. 80) and Michael Bloomberg, philanthropist, businessman, and a former mayor of New York City.

Addressing the crowd at the ceremony, Bloomberg said, in reference to McShane, “Over the years, we developed a friendship. I came to see what an exceptional leader Joe really is. His mind is always racing. His drive is always relentless. His compassion is always boundless, and his Irish wit is always on.”

The new center is four stories tall and includes a 71,000-square foot addition to the original campus center. It has been open to students and staff since February 2022, and features a state-of-the-art fitness center, large spaces for gatherings and events, and student life offices. Further renovations will take place over the next three years and eventually, the new center will also connect with the Lombardi Center and the Rose Hill gym.

During his address, Robert Deleo, chair of the Fordham University Board of Trustees, also acknowledged McGinley, who was the 26th president of the university and for whom the original center was previously named. He said the board members were looking into another way to honor the previous president. Deleo then went on to describe McShane’s accomplishments as the longtime president of Fordham, and the reasons why the new center now bears his name.

“It [the center] has been transformed into a beautiful, modern heart of the university, a transformation truly representative of Father McShane’s tenure at Fordham,” he said. “Father McShane is a visionary leader, building upon Fordham’s solid foundation. He has transformed academic life, he’s raised academic profile, overseeing a dramatic increase in the diversity among our students, our faculty and staff,” he said.

Deleo also read a letter from U.S. President Joe Biden sent to McShane in honor of the occasion. “For nearly 19 years, you have led the university with faith, dedication, love and through unprecedented challenges, in an ever-changing world,” the letter read. “Your strong leadership has prepared the next generation of students to succeed and inspired them to find purpose through hard work and passion.”

Students and members of the Class of 2022, Thomas Reuter, president of the United Student Government, and Patricia Santos, vice president of the Commuter Student Association, also spoke, explaining what the student center meant to both them and to the student body.

Reuter described his first experience walking into the center, explaining how he felt he got a real sense of student life on campus from what he saw. “This space allows us to become what Father McShane envisioned for us, to be people for others,” he said. “As he steps away from Fordham, it will be for us, students, to carry on that legacy, and this campus center will help us to do just that,” he said.

Santos later talked about the importance the campus center played in her Fordham experience as a commuter student. “To many people, the campus center is just a physical structure. To commuters, it is a place we call home. It creates an intentional community that sets the highest standards of academic, social, moral and spiritual [attainment],” she said.

Before cutting the ribbon to officially open the building, McShane gave a short speech, thanking everyone and describing the wonders of Fordham and the students who attend the University.

“I do want to thank all of you,” he said. I want to stress on, it’s not about me it’s about the university. This board chair knows I fought against this, the naming, the ceremony, everything about it. This is about Fordham, and that’s the important thing for us all to remember,” he said.

McShane announced he was stepping down as the university’s president in September 2021 and as reported, the university announced its incoming president, Tania Tetlow, in Feb. 2022.
69-Year-Old Man Hit by SUV Crossing Mosholu Parkway

By DAVID GREENE & SÍLE MOLONEY

Police say a 69-year-old man is recovering after being struck by a vehicle as he crossed Mosholu Parkway. NYPD officials confirmed that the incident was reported at 4:10 p.m. on Friday, May 20, as the unidentified man was crossing the intersection of Mosholu Parkway and West Gun Hill Road on the border of Norwood and Van Cortlandt Village.

An unnamed police official told Norwood News, “A preliminary investigation determined that a 56-year-old male operating a 2015 Honda SUV was traveling northbound on West Mosholu Parkway North when he began to make a left turn” striking the victim.

Police said the victim was transported to St. Barnabas Hospital with head trauma and was reported to be in stable condition. They added that the driver remained at the scene and was uninjured in the crash.

Norwood News asked both DOT and the NYPD what measures were being taken to address accidents caused by speeding and reported car racing, following a number of other recent road accidents.

Two people were transported to hospital following a road accident which took place in front of 2300 Sedgwick Avenue at 9:05 p.m. in University Heights on Thursday, May 19. A police official said, “An 18-year-old male of The Bronx was operating a 2021 Jiajue motorcycle was traveling along Van Cortlandt Parkway and West Gun Hill Road, on the border of Norwood and Van Cortlandt Village.

Meanwhile, a 49-year-old motorcycle driver remains in critical condition in hospital, following a single-vehicle accident on the southwest border of Woodlawn Heights on Friday, May 27, at approximately 4:13 a.m. Police responded to a 911 call regarding the collision which occurred at the intersection of Van Cortlandt Park East and East 233rd Street.

Upon arrival, officers found a 49-year-old male motorcycle driver, lying on the roadway, with head trauma. A police spokesperson said, “EMS responded to the location and transported the aided male to Saint Barnabas Hospital, where he remains in critical condition.” They added, “Further investigation by the NYPD Highway District’s Collision Investigation Squad determined that the male operator of a 2021 Jiajue motorcycle was traveling along Van Cortlandt Park East, and approached the intersection of East 233 Street, when he traveled through the intersection and struck a pedestrian signal lamppost located on the southwest corner.”

The department responded to our inquiry, saying that decreasing traffic fatalities was at the core of the NYPD’s traffic safety initiatives. “This year, we have experienced an increase in overall traffic fatalities, and vehicle occupants have been driving the increase in the number of deaths,” officials said.

“It should be noted that as of April 26th, the month of April 2022 has shown a 75% reduction in overall traffic deaths when compared to the first 26 days of April 2021. Traffic deaths are most prevalent on our Northern Manhattan and Bronx highways, mostly during the overnight hours.”

The statement continued, “To address this unacceptable trend and reckless driving behavior, the NYPD’s Highway Unit has stepped up enforcement on highways where the data has shown a rise in injury and fatal collisions. On local streets, 51% of pedestrian deaths occur at intersections, which is caused by drivers failing to yield to pedestrians as well as not slowing down. Pedestrian deaths in 2022, as of 4/26/22, decreased 23% as compared to the same period in 2021. When looking beyond the month of March and reviewing the 28-day period of 3/28/22 to 4/24/22, hazardous violations have increased 44% overall.”

The NYPD noted that this included an 88% increase in speeding summons issued. “Precision enforcement is taken against drivers that fail to yield to pedestrians and cyclists at intersections,” the department continued. “This year, the hazardous violation enforcement in this area has increased 33% to 13,354 from 9,998.”

Officials added, “We have also continued to conducted Vision Zero High Visibility Corridor Enforcement and Education operations, which strategically deploys personnel to conduct traffic enforcement and education in precincts where it is needed most; at locations where the data has shown a high number of vulnerable road users injured in traffic collisions. This layered enforcement strategy is a collaboration with our Vision Zero partners to drive down fatalities as well as to protect pedestrians and bicyclists.”

Meanwhile, DOT officials said the State legislature recently reached an agreement to extend DOT’s speed camera program, expanding the hours of operation from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., to 24 hours, seven days a week. Asked about the scope of the camera program, we were informed that the new State law relates specifically to [the expansion of] hours of operation [of camera usage] and that DOT continues to operate the cameras within a radius of 750 school zones across the City, employing roughly 2,000 cameras.

A 69-YEAR-OLD MAN was struck by a car at the intersection of Mosholu Parkway and West Gun Hill Road, on the border of Norwood and Van Cortlandt Village on Friday, May 23, 2022.
Norwood News

Violations of first-degree rape, from State prison on parole 39
sex offender and was released Court and charged. He is due
raigned at Bronx Criminal
Center. transported to Jacobi Medical
$112 dollars. The victim was
her at knifepoint, also stealing
where he proceeded to rape
40-year-old woman into a resi-
dential building in the vicin-
yty of Bolton Street and Lydig
21st Street in Brooklyn was
charged with predatory sexual
abuse, and fourth-degree crim-
nal possession of a weapon.

Ramon Roletsen, 46, of
Webster Avenue in The Bronx,
was arrested following a rape
and robbery that occurred on
Monday, May 9, in Pelham
Parkway, according to police.
They said on May 9, at around
10 p.m., he allegedly followed a
40-year-old woman into a resi-
dential building in the vicinity
of Bolton Street and Lydig Avenue, and into the elevator, where he proceeded to rape her at knifepoint, also stealing $112 dollars. The victim was transported to Jacobi Medical Center.

Roletsen was later ar-
raigned at Bronx Criminal
Court and charged. He is due
back in court on Aug. 16. Clark
said Roletsen is a registered
sex offender and was released
from State prison on parole 39
days prior to the attack for convic-
tions of first-degree rape, sexual
abuse, and robbery. Norwood News asked the New York State Parole Board under what circumstances Roletsen was released on parole, if he had to wear an ankle brace-
let, and who was the judge that
oversaw the parole hearing and
await feedback. A person
arrested andcharged with a
crime is innocent unless and
until convicted in a court of
law.

Fordham Manor: Man Ar-
rested for Attempted Murder

Police said a 21-year-old
man has been arrested fol-
lowing the shooting of a man in
Fordham Manor on May 21. The incident took place at around 11:21 p.m. at East 194th Street and Marion Avenue. Police said the 31-year-old victim was shot in the arm and transported to St. Barnabas by EMS in stable condition. A police official said it looked like the victim was in a crowd and the shooter fired into the crowd striking the victim.

Alain Yameogo, 21, of East
21st Street in Brooklyn was
arrested and charged with at-
tempted murder, assault, and
reckless endangerment, police
said.

A person arrested and
charged with a crime is deemed
innocent unless and until convic-
ted in a court of law.

Pelham Parkway: Woman
Kicked, Stomped on Ground
by Three Men

The NYPD is asking for the
public’s help identifying the
three individuals seen in the
accompanying photos who are
sought following an assault on
a woman that occurred in Pel-
ham Parkway. Police said on
Wednesday, May 18, at around
9:14 p.m. at the northwest cor-
er of Lydig Avenue and White
Plains Road, officers responded
to a 911 call regarding a woman
who had been assaulted.

Upon arrival, they dis-
covered a 37-year-old woman
with a broken jaw. She said
she had engaged in a verbal
dispute with an unknown indi-
dividual, which escalated into
a physical encounter. Police
said they were told two of the
three assailants drove off but
the third assailant repeatedly
forced and kicked the victim
around at knifepoint and stomped
her in the face and body, be-
fore fleeing to parts unknown.
EMS responded to the scene
and transported the victim to
Jacobi Medical Center where
she has since been treated and
released.

Suspect 1 is described as
male, has a medium complex-
ion, a medium build, brown
eyes, and short, dark hair. He
was last seen wearing a
black, hooded sweatshirt with
a graphic on the front which
read, “Legends never die,” a
blue baseball cap, gray sweat-
pants, a red backpack, and
white sneakers.

Suspect 2 is described as
male, has a medium complex-
on, a slim build, brown eyes
and short, close cut, dark hair.
He was last seen wearing a
blue, white, and red, hooded
sweatshirt, a light-colored,
baseball cap, blue jeans, a
black backpack, and boots.

Suspect 3 is described as
male, has a medium complex-
on, a medium build, brown
eyes, and short, dark hair. He
was last seen wearing a
dark-colored, hooded sweatshirt,
a red t-shirt, dark colored pants,
and white sneakers.

A video taken from the inci-
dent location records the
event. Some bystanders were
seen seemingly not reacting to
the assault as the woman was
on the ground being stomped
on and kicked in the face sev-
eral times. One person is seen
attempting to pull an assailant
away from her.

In a Facebook post dated
May 27, in the Friends of Pel-
ham Parkway group, a longer
version of the video [which
doesn’t include the part where
the three assailants collectively
attack the victim], has been
shared on the platform. There
appeared to be some sort of
dispute that escalated be-
tween the parties, though it’s
unclear from the longer ver-
sion of the video what started
the incident.

Wakefield: 65-Year-Old Man
Assaulted, Robbed

The NYPD is asking for the
public’s help identifying the
two people seen in the accom-
panying photo who are sought
in connection to a robbery
that occurred on the border of
Wakefield and Mount Vernon.
It was reported to police that on
Saturday, May 7, at around 2:40
p.m., in front of 2565 Barnes
Avenue, a 65-year-old man
was walking in the location
when he was approached by the
two.

An NYPD official said,
“One of the individuals dis-
played a firearm while de-
manding money.” According
to police, the victim was hit about
the head multiple times with
the gun by the assailants and
they also stole his wallet which
contained multiples forms of
identification and a debit card.
“The individuals fled the loca-
tion northbound on Barnes Av-
ene,” police said. “The victim
suffered minor injuries and
did not require any medical at-
tention on scene.”

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, anonymously, by logging
onto the Crime Stoppers website
at https://crimestoppers.nyp-
donline.org/, or on Twitter @
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COVID-19 UPDATES

Omicron BA.4 and BA.5

The Omicron BA.2 (stealth) variant continues to be the dominant COVID-19 strain in the U.S. since March, according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). The Omicron variant comprises several lineages and sub-lineages, including BA.1, BA.1.1, BA.2, BA.4 and BA.5.

As of May 24, citywide COVID-19 cases and deaths were stable while hospitalizations had decreased, according to NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). The department is using an alert level system that tracks COVID-19 transmission and health care capacity in the city.

Current Risk Rating

The risk rating was high as of May 24. The citywide 7-day percentage positive rate was 9.26 percent as of May 24. As of the same date, the 7-day percentage positive rate in ZIP code 10468, covering Fordham / Kingsbridge / University Heights, was 7.81 percent (up from 5.54 percent in mid-May), according to DOHMH. In ZIP code 10467, covering Allerton / Norwood / Pelham Parkway / Williamsbridge, it was 7.79 percent (down from 9.07 percent as of mid-May). In ZIP code 10458, covering Belmont / Fordham University / Kingsbridge, it was 5.71 percent (down from 8.9 percent in mid-May). Meanwhile, in ZIP code 10461, covering Riverdale, North Riverdale and Fieldston, it was the highest in the borough at 10.49 percent (down from 13.06 percent as of mid-May).

Managing the Pandemic

Additional at-home testing kits are being distributed to all New Yorkers to allow people to stay at home if sick, and a telemedicine service is being launched to help isolate safely and receive COVID-19 treatments, including oral antiviral prescriptions and monoclonal antibody treatments. In addition to the resource portal, the quarantine and isolation guidance tool offers personalized guidance to New Yorkers who are exposed to, tested positive for, or have symptoms consistent with COVID-19. For more information, go to https://covid19.nyc/healthandhospitals.org/COVID19help or call the NYC Test & Trace Corps COVID Hotline at 212-COVID19.

COVID-19 Updates & Key Info

On May 17, the FDA expanded eligibility for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine booster dose to all children 5 through 11 years old. All New York resident, and make less than $1,473 a month or $17,677 a year. New York resident, and make less than $1,473 a month or $17,677 a year. New York resident, and make less than $1,473 a month or $17,677 a year. New York resident, and make less than $1,473 a month or $17,677 a year.

How is DSNY helping the buildings comply? DSNY is reaching out to trade publications, Building Congress, REBNY and others to inform them of the new requirement.

Construction Help Wanted

At 101 Lincoln Avenue, Building Skills NY is providing free construction help. The minimum requirements to apply are 30 hours of OSHA training, 10 hours of SST training, construction site or other related experience, authorization to work in the U.S. There are several full-time positions available in electrical, masonry, painting, HVAC, general labor, plumbing, and more. If interested, call or text (646) 973-1524. Those interested may also email info@buildingskillsny.org.

Free Haircuts

SUNY Bronx Educational Opportunity Center is offering free haircuts by appointment. Taking place Mondays through Fridays, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Bronxites can call the following number if interested: 718-530-7043. The haircuts will be given at the following location: SUNY Bronx EOC, 1666 Bathgate Avenue, Bronx, NY 10457. Vaccination or a negative test within three days is required in order to receive a haircut.

Free Parenting and Prenatal Classes

The Parenting Resource Center at Catholic Guardian Services, located at 3356 Fort Independence St., Bronx, NY 10463, is providing free, parenting and prenatal classes for new and expecting parents. Classes will be held in person and will be taught in English and Spanish. Parents that complete the classes will be given a free crib. The four classes will be on breastfeeding, stress or trauma, safe sleep, and women’s health. To sign up, contact Marie at (718) 828-6300 Ext. 209.

NYC Pride Virtual Job Fair

To celebrate pride, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and NYC Citywide Administrative Services and Fund for Public Health will be hosting a Pride 2022 Virtual Job Fair on Friday, June 3 from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. The department is currently seeking City medical specialists, City research scientists, an executive assistant, and a senior development associate for strategic partnerships and institutional philanthropy. More details will be provided at the event. The Zoom registration link is https://lnkd.in/eBYAUJx.

Free Monthly Food Packages

On Wednesday, June 8, at Risse Park, at 3235 Grand Concourse, as part of the Nourish of New York Community Pantry program, food will be handed out to seniors from 9 a.m. to noon. To be eligible, you must be over 60 (with a State or City ID showing proof), a New York resident, and make less than $1,473 a month or $17,677 a year.

One Block at A Time

On Friday, June 17, at 9 a.m., a trash pickup, graffiti removal, and sidewalk clean-up initiative will be held with the 52nd Precinct at Decatur Avenue. No parking will be allowed between East 195th Street and East 197th Street from noon to 8 p.m. All vehicles will be towed.
Bainbridge Nursing & Rehabilitation Center is pleased to offer the following services:

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- Social Work Services
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Issues of Concern for MTA Subway Riders

In Larry Penner’s letter [Norwood News, May 19-June 1], he writes about how MTA riders release flatulence, cough, or sneeze without covering their mouths. I agree, but that’s a huge benefit of masks: while not perfect, they prevent larger offending particles from entering our noses and mouths. Is the author for real on flatulence? Does he really think any policeman can stop people from being vulgar and disgusting?

The author also talks about conductors closing doors on riders who are transferring from local to express. Fair enough, but is there some magic in the author’s world in which conductors don’t close doors on passengers switching from express to local? And how could the author work 31 years for FTA, call himself a “transit historian and advocate,” and not understand it is not the conductors making the decisions, but the conductors following the orders of the control tower?

The author mentions the homeless on the subway. I agree on that as well, but when the subway was closed during the early morning hours and the homeless were being forced off for cleaning and disinfection, the author advocated for the subway to be open 24/7. It’s a very complicated issue, but the bottom line is now that the subway is open 24/7, the homeless have returned.

Rather than write opinion pieces (his constitutional right) that accomplish nothing other than state the problem, why doesn’t the author run for State Assembly or Senate? Even if he lost, I would respect him for being an “also ran” candidate, rather than a “keyboard warrior.”

Nat Weiner, Parkchester

DOMA

The DOMA or Defense of Marriage Act was overturned by a very narrow 5-4 vote by the U.S. Supreme Court, allowing same sex marriage in our beloved country. That, in itself, should tell someone that it was not an overwhelming decision to destroy what was considered a traditional marriage between a man and woman.

Well, now with the potential for a 6-3 vote outlawing abortion, let us hope DOMA will be restored by that same vote tally. The Good Lord wanted Adam and Eve to be joined together in the sanctity of holy matrimony, and not Adam and Steve!

Richard Marias, Norwood

Treason? Crime?

So, Richard Marias, in his Norwood News May 19-June 1 letter, believes that leaking a memo to the public of a draft U.S. Supreme Court opinion on striking down Roe v. Wade is treason, and should be punished by death. But he has expressed support for Donald Trump, who committed actual treason when he tried to overthrow the government, rather than accept that he lost an election. If the leaker were executed, that could reasonably be defined as murder. Does that mean Marias, who constantly touts his belief in the Bible, advocate a violation of the Sixth Commandment? Also, if the Republican Party is actually tough on crime, as Marias asserts in his Norwood News May 5-18 letter, how come so many Republicans are still supporting Trump?

Richard Warren, Van Cortlandt Village
Bedford Park Health Fair & Small Business Event Held

By DAVID GREENE

A host of local businesses joined several, local non-profits for an event aimed at promoting good health, while also supporting businesses and shops in the 78th Assembly District. The Bedford Park event, which was organized by Assemblyman José Rivera (A.D. 78), and District 15 City Councilman Oswald Feliz, took place before the launch of National Small Business Week, which kicked off on May 2.

Several local businesses on the block participated in the fair, with many others invited to set-up tables as well. Shereese Morris, a representative for Rivera, said of the event, which was held on Saturday, April 23, “It’s to show support for the small businesses that have been open since COVID, and we just want to show them some support, that we’re here with activities.”

All along Bedford Park Boulevard, between Decatur Avenue and Webster Avenue, tables were manned by groups like Job Corps, the Bridgefield Civic League, and MetroPlus Health. The fair was supported by more than two dozen local groups, businesses, and organizations.

During the fair, at the Bridgefield Civic League booth, members were busy selling cucumber, lemon, and ginger-flavored water, as well as dandelion tea which they said helps people fighting diabetes or high blood pressure. Funds raised from the sales of the drinks and other items at the booth were to help support programs at the Laconia Avenue-based nonprofit, including its wellness center, an arts program, and a program for young entrepreneurs. The Bridgefield Civic League has been in existence for over 60 years.

Bedford Pizza owner, Mario DeBona, was pleased with the success of the event, saying, “It was beautiful, and there was a great turnout from the neighborhood. You had MetroPlus Health and North Central Bronx Hospital, and all these people coming here helps liven up the neighborhood, and it’s great for the people to see that there’s help if they need it.” DeBona added, “And the extra traffic helps local businesses; it’s great! We should do it more often!”

During the event, Rivera told Norwood News, “Some people asked me, ‘Why are you doing this here, because there’s not too many people around here?’ But this is just the beginning. We’re doing it here so that we can let small businesses like Mario of Bedford Pizza, the barber shop, and the other stores know that we care about them, and that we’re going to continue to work with them locally and within government.”

Regarding future funding for many of the nonprofits in attendance, Rivera added, “I’m going to continue to make noise...as the [State] budget [negotiation] is never over until June 30, so I have to keep making noise to make sure that I get the funding necessary for the nonprofits who provide services in my district.” Rivera had planned two other small business events that were still in the early stages on the day. They were expected to take place at Fordham Plaza, and at East 19th Street and Valentine Avenue, respectively.

We followed up with the assemblyman’s office on May 31 about the other events and were informed that a resource fair was held at Poe Park on Friday, May 20, with over 20 agencies in attendance. A representative for the assemblyman said they were waiting to hear back from the chief of staff about the status of the other events.

Meanwhile, back on Feb. 23, Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (A.D. 81) joined members of New Yorkers for a Fair Economy in announcing the 21st Century Antitrust Act that aimed to define “actions or practices that establish or maintain a monopoly or restraint of trade” and would authorize class action lawsuits to be brought against violators.

Outside of the Green Deli Grocery, located at 3187 Webster Avenue by East 205th Street in Norwood, Dinowitz said at the time, “Smaller businesses and medium-size businesses, and even bigger businesses are being squeezed out by these mega-giants, and we have to do something about it.”

Speaking for the small, deli owners in New York City, Francisco Marte, owner of the Green Deli Grocery and founder of the Bodega and Small Business Association, explained his position, saying, “We’ve been suffering for a long time,” in reference to large companies like Amazon getting millions of dollars in tax breaks. Marte added, “It is impossible for a local business like mine to compete.”

The 21st Century Antitrust Act has since passed through the State Senate, but still has to be passed by the State Assembly before it can become law.
residents.”

Corbett PR replied, saying, “The current intercom system is wired ‘in series,’ and this is outdated. It is being upgraded to an internet-based system.” No target implementation date was given.

Residents had complained that there was a lack of safety crossings outside the building, and that too many drivers were in a hurry to overtake other cars in the vicinity outside the towers. Some residents said it was not safe for seniors, especially those who could not move quickly and get out of the way of speeding traffic.

Corbett PR replied, saying, “Management is committed to the safety of all residents and visitors. Management will work with residents to see what the New York City Council can do about installing stop lights and other traffic controls.”

Norwood News has asked three different Tracey Towers residents to confirm if they agree with these responses from Corbett PR firm and will continue to follow up on the story.

In the meantime, DOB responded on the DOB violation discussion saying in part, as of May 31, “There are a total of 19 open DOB violations at the 40 West Mosholu Parkway South, Bronx, all of which were issued in relation to the building’s elevator devices.”

Meanwhile, there has been a build-up of graffiti on the wall extending from Towers Towers to Dewitt Clinton campus at Paul Avenue, between West Mosholu Parkway South and East 205th Street, by the MTA maintenance yard. Some parents, including Sirio and Heather Guerino, whose kids attend DeWitt Clinton High School, expressed their wish for it to be removed ahead of their kids’ graduation ceremonies to be held later this summer.

Heather Guerino told Norwood News some parents had written to Sen. Jamaal Bailey (S.D. 36), Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (A.D. 81) and District 11 City Councilman Eric Dinowitz to see what could be done about the issue, adding that the wall had reportedly been repainted in 2019 with city funding secured by former District 11 City Councilman, now Judge Andrew Cohen. Norwood News has reached out to the elected officials for comment. A representative for Eric Dinowitz said his office was aware of the issue and was working on a solution.
EVENTS

Give away items you no longer need or take away something new-to-you, at Stop & Swap on Saturday, June 4, from noon to 3 p.m. at Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, located at 3225 Reservoir Oval East, Bronx, NY. You don’t have to bring something to take something. No furniture, large items, open or expired food, unsealed personal care products, medicine, dirty or ripped clothing, fabric scraps, incomplete toys or games, non-working electronics, tube TVs, magazines or sharp objects. Items accepted include clean, reusable, portable items such as books, clothing, houseware, electronics and toys.

The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG), 2900 Southern Blvd, Bronx, NY 10458, is hosting its annual Conservatory Ball on Thursday, June 2. This year’s theme is Around the Table: Stories of the Foods We Love, a celebration of the variety of plants that contribute to different cuisines around the world. Proceeds from this year’s gala will go to the Garden’s botanical research, children’s education, and several horticulture programs. For more information, go to: https://www.nybg.org/event/around-the-table-in-the-conservatory-tour/.

On Saturday, June 18, the Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Park Blvd W, Bronx, NY 10468, will be hosting Manny Manuel, for his show, “Lleno de Vida”. The show will start at 8 p.m, and tickets are available at https://www.lehnancenter.org/events. Proof of vaccination is required.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Saturday, June 11 marks the beginning of a photo exhibition hosted by En FOCO at Romanesque Revival Row House Gallery, 413 E 140th Street in Mott Haven in the South Bronx. Reflejos/Reflections: Adeline Lulo and Erika Morillo, curated by Oscar J. Rivera will run to July 13, 2022, by appointment only at info@enfoco.org. Both photographers are previous winners of the En Foco Photography Fellowship and are of Dominican heritage. The exhibition explores and highlights the multifaceted nature of diasporic cultures and in particular, the Dominican experience, told and nurtured by femmes. Each artist works in different ways to document, uplift, and celebrate their families, their communities, and their cultural legacies.

MUSIC

On Sunday, June 5, at 5 p.m., Woodlawn Cemetery, 4199 Webster Ave., Bronx, NY10470, will hold a free, live, Jazz Concert, starring Victor Goines and Friends. Victor Goines is a renowned composer and musician who has cultivated musical biographies about the notable figures resting at Woodlawn Cemetery. Tributes will be given to Duke Ellington, Bert Williams, Florence Mills, Coleman Hawkins, and Madam C.J. Walker. While the event is free, residents must register beforehand. For more information, go to: https://www.woodlawn.org/tours-events/.

On Saturday, June 17, the Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Park Blvd W, Bronx, NY 10468, will be hosting Dance Nights with Shagari at Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, located at 3225 Reservoir Oval East, Bronx, NY, on Friday, June 17, at 6 p.m. for Oldies.

MOVEMENT

Adults and seniors are invited to join a free Pickleball Festival on June 11 at 8 a.m. at Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, located at 3225 Reservoir Oval East, Bronx, NY.

NYBG

AROUND THE TABLE: STORIES OF THE FOODS WE LOVE

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New York Botanical Garden
Report: Quarter of the Bronx Still Food Insecure

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Special Needs Students Pedal for St. Jude’s

By EMILY SAWAKED

Preschool aged children with special needs at the New York Institute for Special Education’s readiness program were busy putting on their helmets ahead of a three-lap ride around their school on Tuesday morning, May 24, and it was all in aid of cancer research.

Bikes and tricycles of various sizes and functionalities were lined up along the walls ahead of the event, with aides, physical therapists, and occupational therapists assisting the kids mount their respective “wheels.” A red ribbon held high in the air by Deborah Korn, one of the readiness program’s occupational therapists, signaled the end of the course.

The “Trike-a-Thon” has been running annually at the institute, located at 999 Pelham Parkway North in Allerton, for twenty years now, according to Cindy Flowers, also a readiness program physical therapist who has been working at the institute for over twenty-six years.

The readiness program is a full day program for children aged 3 to 5 who live in The Bronx, and is a preschool, special education initiative, meant to prepare children for elementary school. Class sizes are small, with one teacher and two aides assisting the children with their everyday needs. Speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and counseling are all offered through the program.

The novel trike-a-thon event organized by St. Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital is held each year to raise money for the hospital. Each class at the institute was sponsored for their part of the institute, to participate in the trike-a-thon. “We test out the bikes for the children and gain more ‘play skills’ so that interacting with friends becomes less of a challenge. “Even being able to focus,” was yet another benefit highlighted by Flowers.

Chris Busone, executive assistant at the institute, said, “All the activities are based on the kids’ benefit, while not taking away the fun.” He stressed the importance of education being exciting for the children and emphasized the measures taken by the staff to achieve that goal.

While learning to ride the tricycles, the students practiced every week, according to the staff. As part of their class time, if the tricycles were available, students went out a few times a day to ride around. This practice was also part of their therapy with occupational and physical therapists.

In preparation for race day, Korn said, “We test out the bikes for the kids, find out what’s appropriate for them. We’re always practicing with them, making sure they have helmets and comparing [the bikes/tricycles] for what to anticipate.” Korn said even in the wintertime, students are able to ride the tricycles, and on an average day, children can be seen riding around the halls with their therapists, working one-on-one with staff members.

The staff said that students of different backgrounds, needs, and abilities were all able to participate in the event, including students who are blind, accompanied by their teachers and aids as their guides. Indeed, the sound of the joy of each child could be heard, even from the other side of the building.

There were a few changes to this year’s Trike-a-thon. Unlike in previous years, parents were unable to attend and cheer their children on. “It’s sad, I think,” said Finkel, who noted that in the past, parents would stand out in the lobby to root for their kids.

“It is different,” said Flowers. “There usually is a cheering section. We were always able to invite the parents, and the class that would be riding next would be here cheering the class that’s riding.”

Other than the reduced audience, there weren’t many other constraints pertaining to COVID-19 in terms of getting ready for the event, according to the staff. Flowers said that because of procedures that have been put into place by the institute’s administration, the children are able to practice riding one-on-one, “without being exposed to the other kids.” During the event, most of the kids were unmasked while some, at certain points, were masked.

As the various classes of children hopped off their tricycles, staff members were seen wiping down the handlebars and disinfecting the seats for the next class set to ride. With everyone coming into the school required to take a COVID-19 screening test, there was little standing in the way of the children and staff having a good time.

Between the upbeat music that accompanied the various races and the enthusiasm of the children, who were seen cheering on their classmates, the event turned out to be a wonderful success. The staff all agreed it was inspiring to see the kids ride with such joy and ability, with Finkel adding, “Some of the kids couldn’t even ride before!”
Photo Exhibit Shows Four Decades of Humanity

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

A steady stream of family members, friends, and fans fill up the Bronx Museum of the Arts one hour before the exhibit, “Eyes on the Street” opens for a private reception at 6 p.m., on Tuesday, April 5. The retrospective exhibit reviews four decades of photographs from Jamel Shabazz.

“It’s a joy to be here in The Bronx,” Shabazz told Norwood News at the exhibit’s opening. “This great institution has always been so kind to me. It’s the Bronx Museum that gave me one of my most important shows about, maybe, 15 years ago.... They’ve always respected the work I’ve done [so] I’m honored to be here.”

The body of photographic work Shabazz has created is impressive. His work clearly resides within the genre of documentary, and in the subcategory of street photography. The exhibit also works as a historical record of how New York City has changed since 1980. Curated by the museum’s own Sergio Bessa, the exhibit covers Shabazz’s career from 1980 to 2020.

The photographs from the ‘80s will certainly elicit smiles and chuckles from visitors too young to remember a time when Kangol hats, Adidas track suits, and Cazal glasses dominated urban styles. But although the clothes and accessories have changed, where Shabazz excels is at capturing the humanity he sees in front of his lens.

A common feature throughout his photographic journey is how often the people he photographs appear at ease as he clicks his shutter. Historically, street photography has often focused on the more tragic or seedy sides of life, whether it be homelessness, drug abuse, or crime. Conflict and tension are also often key components in the work of influential documentary photographers like Leonard Freed and Gordon Parks, who Shabazz credits with inspiring him.

In March 1968, a story titled, “A Harlem Family” appeared in LIFE magazine with both photographs and text by Parks, described by National Geographic as “one of the 20th century’s most influential interpreters of African American life and culture.”

A current summary of the Harlem Family story describes the faces of the profiled family as “showing despair, anguish, bone-deep weariness, and a grim perseverance.” Parks wrote in 1968, “For I am you, staring back from a mirror of poverty and despair, of revolt and freedom. Look at me and know that to destroy me is to destroy yourself.... I, too, am America. America is me.”

Parks was a master of photography and was just as famous for capturing high fashion models on the pages of LIFE magazine. However, his documentary work, at least the work for which he is most known, captures a Black America exhausted from “poverty and despair.”

Shabazz, on the other hand, walks the streets of some of the most poverty-ridden neighborhoods of the five boroughs, and gets the mostly teenage and young adult subjects to preen, primp, and in general, assume a pose of confidence and bravado.

The streets he walked display a fresh style, rich in originality, but his interactions with his subjects seem to elicit a positivity that is rarely associated with street photography.

On Instagram, Shabazz has over 146,000 followers. One of them, Carmelo Nieves, was at the show’s opening to support the photographer who has, in turn, inspired him and others. “I want to be Jamel Shabazz,” Nieves said, before letting out a good-natured laugh. At 45, he met Shabazz in 2018 at Photoville, a free, annual, outdoor photo festival held by Brooklyn Bridge Park.

As a fellow street photographer, Nieves looks to the work of Shabazz as a source of inspiration. “I finally got to meet him at Photoville [and] one, it was an honor,” Nieves said. “I want to emulate what he does but just take it to another level.”

Working as a corrections officer on Rikers Island gave Shabazz a visceral view of how life on the streets can become a terrible turning point for some, drawing them into crime. Bedford Park resident, Earl Gray, spent years as a fellow officer with Shabazz, both rising to the rank of captain.

“We shared our correction’s journey together,” Gray said. Both men, now retired from the department, have known each other since the 1980s. “[Photography] was his dream; that was his passion,” said Gray. “That’s where his love is.”

The photographs from the 80s will also remind viewers of the abundance of empty lots filled with garbage, subway cars covered with graffiti, and children jumping on discarded mattresses as a leisure activity. But, it is our common humanity that ties the faces and places together, the need to play, to socialize, to feel like our lives matter, and are worthy of being captured for posterity. It was a necessity in 1980, as it is through 2020, and today.

However, Shabazz is not tethered to the past as if his greatest moments are memorialized in gelatin silver or chromogenic prints. When asked for his fondest memory of his photography tour in The Bronx, Shabazz quickly responds, “It would have to be today.”

Acknowledging that the City is going through another rough time, he’s grateful to have this exhibit shown in the borough. “This would be one of the greatest memories I have about The Bronx; to be here in 2022, with everything going on in the City and the world, and see people come together in a spirit of love and unity.”

Jamel Shabazz: Eyes on the Streets is showing through Sept. 4. It is part of the 50th Anniversary celebration of the Bronx Museum of the Arts.
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Elections 2022: Biaggi Changes Course, Announces Campaign for NY-17

by SILE MOLONEY

Democratic State Sen. Alessandra Biaggi (D.S. 34) announced a change in her bid to become a New York congresswoman on Tuesday, May 24, as she unveiled that she had switched her candidacy for Congress in the upcoming New York Democratic primary from New York’s third congressional district (NY-3) to New York’s seventeenth congressional district (NY-17), setting the scene for another showdown between who some voters see as a moderate, establishment, Democratic incumbent and a progressive Democratic challenger.

The open NY-17 seat is in a newly redrawn congressional district in the lower Mid-Hudson Valley and the incumbent congressman in NY-17 is Demo- crat Antonio Delgado, who has represented the district since 2018. However, Delgado announced last year that he would not seek re-election.

As reported, Biaggi, who recently announced he would also be changing course and running in the now open 10th congressional district, was a progressive, Black congressman, seemingly “prompted” to make the switch, following the recent redistricting debate which has been dragging on for months, as reported, and which has also caused Democrat Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney to ditch his current, now redrawn, 18th congressional district to run, instead, in the newly redrawn, district 17, a district seemingly regarded as easier to win. Some Democrats, including Biaggi, see Maloney’s move as pushing out a fellow Democratic Party member for personal gain.

As reported, Biaggi announced her campaign to run for the NY-3 congressional seat, prior to a court ruling in late April which overturned a vote taken in early February in the Democratic majority-led, State legislature on redistricting maps, following the 2020 census, the result of accusations by Republican partisans and gerrymandering. The senator had gained a steady group of endorsements which, among others, included three prominent Westchester elected officials: Ken Jenkins, Westchester county executive, Yadira Ramos-Herbert, a New Rochelle councilwoman, and Melanie Ledes, another New Rochelle councilwoman, Rep. Jamaal Bowman (NY-16), New York City Comptroller Brad Lander, and 12 New York State senators.

Following that latest court ruling, revised redistricting maps were redrawn by a “special master” and approved by a judge last week. The latest final maps for NY-3 and NY-17 are included further below.

Part of Biaggi’s current seat in district 34 includes parts of Westchester County, which was removed from NY-3 under the latest redistricting reshuffle, thereby reducing her chances of winning that congressional seat. NY-3 is currently represented by moderate Democrat, Rep. Tom Suozzi, who is running for governor.

NY-17, on the other hand, includes Rockland and Putnam Counties, Northern Westchester and Southern Dutchess Counties. In the context of her latest announcement regarding her new seat, NY-17, the senator said, “I’ve lived in Westchester my entire life. I know this district, and I’m looking forward to representing it.”

Additionally, Biaggi added, “I decided to run for Congress because I’m so frustrated by what’s not happening in Washington: combating the climate crisis, expanding access to affordable healthcare, reducing the cost of prescription drugs, passing stricter gun laws, protecting abortion and voting rights.”

She continued, “I have a record of getting big things done on Democratic priorities. In the State Senate, we codified Roe in New York State, something Democrats had tried to do for a decade, passed groundbreaking climate change legislation, strengthened gun laws, expanded voting access and much more.”

The senator went on to say that a sense of urgency was needed in Washington D.C. around such issues. “We need Democrats who want to expand access to healthcare for all, who embrace Affordable Care Act, and want to push further, unlike Sean Patrick Maloney, who voted with Republicans to weaken it after it passed, and refused to even say whether he would have voted for it or against it.”

Biaggi said voters needed Democrats who fought for everyone, and not just special interests, “Maloney has gladly taken hundreds of thousands of dollars from corporate PACs who poison our political system with endless sums of dark money,” she said. “We need Democrats who fight to expand our majority so we can pass our agenda, not Maloney, who selfishly moved to a slightly safer district, forcing out a strong, Black congressmember.”

Biaggi, also a progressive legislator, who currently represents 11 of the Bronx in addition to parts of Westchester county, added, “I’m no stranger to taking on well-funded, powerful opponents. When I won my race for State Senate in 2018, by primarily a powerful seven-term, fake Democrat [Jeff Klein], we were outfought nearly 10-to-1, with outside special interests spending millions of dollars more trying to stop us. We’re building a grassroots movement all across the 17th district that will mobilize, organize, and win.”

Biaggi said she defeated the powerful head of the group that kept Republicans in power (the Independent Democratic Caucus or IDC) to put Democrats back in control of the State Senate. Since taking office, her team said she has worked to create a more equitable New York, delivering wins for working families and paving the way for progressive Democrats to run for office and win.

Biaggi’s primary opponent in the NY-17 race, Maloney, is chairman of the Democratic congressional campaign committee and a former advisor to President Bill Clinton. In the context of the latest discussions around redrawing the congressional districts, Maloney had said, “While the process to draw these maps without the legislature is against the will of the voters, if the newly announced maps are finalized, I will run in New York’s 17th Congressional District. NY-17 includes my home and many of the Hudson Valley communities I currently represent.” The congressman added, “Further, I believe I am the only sitting member who resides in NY-17.”

Maloney’s comments about the redrawing of the maps being against the will of the voters echoed those of other Democrats. Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (A.D. 81), for example, recently told Norwood News he disagreed with the basis of the latest lawsuits brought by Republic which challenged the redistricting maps submitted by Democrats to the State legislature voted on in early February. As reported, Democrats believed the political jurisdiction of the New York State Senate.

Meanwhile, Norwood News reached out to Maloney’s campaign for comment on Biaggi’s various remarks on his record as a congressman. Mia Ehrenberg, a campaign spokesperson for the congressman, replied, saying, “Rep. Maloney has served the Hudson Valley for nearly a decade, spending every day fighting for working families, good jobs, and to protect the environment. From banning oil barges anchorages on the Hudson River to cleaning up local drinking water, Congressman Maloney has always been there for the Hudson Valley. We will always fight for the Hudson Valley. Maloney is the leader that New York State needs to protect our environment.”

Meanwhile, also on Tuesday, Gov. Kathy Hochul signed into law– putting power back in the hands of adult survivors by giving them the opportunity to hold both their abusers and the institutions that protected them accountable in the courtroom.

Biaggi added, “Today is a watershed moment for our state, as we work to build a legal system that centers survivors and their experiences. I could not be more grateful for the activists, survivors, bill sponsors, Senator Hoylan and Assemblymember Rosenthal, as well as Gov. Hochul for prioritizing survivor-centered legislation. The Adult Survivors Act will bring us one step closer to achieving survivor justice in New York.”

As previously reported, Biaggi evolved into a critic of Cuomo both in terms of his handling of the nursing home crisis amid the pandemic, and amid the allegations brought against him of sexual harassment, while his resignation and the legal challenges on which they have been dropped, despite the courts finding the victims’ testimonies credible.

Meanwhile, New York City Mayor Eric Adams also tweeted his support of the Adult Survivors Act, on Tuesday, saying, “This is a momentous day for our state. Survivors have fought hard for the Adult Survivors Act, and they deserve their day in court. New York City stands behind anyone who comes forward to share their story. Public safety and justice must go hand in hand.”

The primary elections for congressional office are scheduled for August 23. The filing deadline for congressional office is June 10. According to Ballotpedia, another Democratic candidate running in the NY-17 Democratic primary, in addition to Biaggi and Maloney, is Michael Parietti.

In the Republican primary, Charles Falciglia and Jack Schrepel have declared their candidacies.
Candidates Face Off at NWBCCC Forum

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Few audience members approached the podium to greet the candidates ahead of the forum, which began with a moment of silence to remember those lost during the preceding weeks. The purpose of the forum was then laid out, and the moderator, Dinowitz, who, since the forum was held, has announced his sponsorship of a new climate bill, said he had only been made aware of the event two weeks ahead of time and thus had to leave towards the beginning of the evening. “I have three events which I am going to be late to all of them,” he said.

In her opening statement, Charles, also executive director of the nonprofit, Miss Abbes Kids Inc., described her origin as the community work to date. “On Feb. 18, 2012, a few things became abundantly clear to me,” she said, explaining that this was the day she lost her mother. Stressing the importance of family, especially mothers, she outlined some of the societal problems prevalent in the borough, adding, “People should not be criminalized for the chemical drugs that have infected our community.”

Charles later emphasized both educational equity and health equity, adding, “I’m trying to bring my people with me to freedom. Nobody 30,000 miles in the sky is going to save a community from suffering.” Her core message was one of community, saying only Bronxites could improve their own lives.

Martinez opened, saying, “We need a representative who is present.” He said he had built the necessary relationships to be the right person to represent and uplift The Bronx. “Our schools need funding; our police officers need support,” he said, emphasizing also the need for better housing, food, and jobs. The CB7 chair added that he was leading a “community-based program in Kingsbridge” that he vowed would generate a “community-based program in Kingsbridge” that he vowed would generate more employment.

Meanwhile, Altagracia-Woolford began in Spanish, introducing herself and saying where she was from [Kingsbridge]. She said she grew up in The Bronx and would watch her “abuela” [grandmother] take care of others despite dealing with her own hardships. “I have a responsibility to keep my own apartment, and I’m one of the more lucky ones,” she said.

She highlighted the importance of women being afforded dignity, LGBTQ+ rights, housing access, and the need to tackle the climate crisis. “We can no longer wait for any politician to catch up to us,” she said.

The candidates were each asked as part of a lightning round about their support for the following policy areas: the New York Health Act, better education and employment, the Climate and Community Investment Act, voting rights, community control of public land and the Community Land Trust Act, taxation, and the Banking Act.

Since Dinowitz had to leave early, he answered the lightning round questions in his opening statement, saying he was in favor of bettering all of them. On his support for the New York Health Act, in particular, he said, “Already doing it and will continue to do it.”

Questions from residents focused on issues of importance to them. The first was about support for “solutions not suspensions” in schools, to combat the referenced “school to prison pipeline” in communities of color and LGBTQ+ communities. The candidates were asked what, in their view, was the role of State legislators in addressing the pipeline.

Altagracia-Woolford said, “It’s essential we listen to leaders like you.” She then announced her position as the only “openly queer candidate” in the race, adding that, in her opinion, there should be no cops in schools. “We need to start listening to students who have to walk through metal detectors on the way to history class,” she said. “In one of the richest cities in the United States, you can’t tell me we don’t have enough funds,” she added, referencing the need to fund alternate ways to address such situations.

In her response, Charles said, “It has to be in conjunction with the community and the people.” She added, “We have to give access to young people without money.” She emphasized the need for State legislators to work with the community to improve the way education was valued and handled.

Martinez referenced his own background and schooling, saying, in his opinion, the educational system in The Bronx demoralized students. He explained how his own friends and other classmates had dropped out of school because they saw no value in continuing education in The Bronx. To increase morale, he said more work was needed to improve the educational system.

Another audience question was on the need for clemency and its accessibility, as deportations and incarcerations take place, leaving communities of color and immigrant families the most vulnerable.

Altagracia-Woolford emphasized the need to protect small businesses. “I’ve seen too many small businesses shut down,” she said, clarifying that they were also mostly owned by immigrants and families of color. “We need to listen to community members, not just when you can tweet about it, but every day.”

The last question was about whether the candidates would support the Community Land Trust Statewide Collective Fund. Altagracia-Woolford said, “It is essential for us to imagine after the pandemic what we can do.” She also asked, “How can we address historic redlining?” Much of her answer focused on the latter point but also included points about solving the hunger crisis and making sure everyone was cared for and fed.

Charles based her answers around her views on keeping land in the hands of the people [who were there before the explosion of development in the borough] and on rising up as a collective community. “The people of The Bronx are the owners of the land we sit on,” she said.

In reference to The Bronx still ranking 62nd out of New York State’s 62 counties in terms of health rankings, Charles said, “We don’t have to be number 62 for the rest of our lives.”

Martinez curtailed his response to his views on housing policy, while commenting on the use of statistics by New York State government officials when developing policy. “They look at us like numbers, but it’s people that live in those buildings,” he said.

Later, Altagracia-Woolford wrapped up, saying, “I grew up believing this lie that you had to go somewhere else to make it. I grew up believing that I wasn’t worth the investment.” Like in her opening statement, she spoke clearly and passionately, rejecting both the idea that The Bronx wasn’t worth it as well as the notion of people over profit.

“We don’t have to accept the status quo or the lies,” Altagracia-Woolford said, ending with, “I’m ready, so let’s go.”

Charles’ concluding message was based on her own journey of hope and determination in terms of improving the lives of her neighbors. She spoke with a sense of urgency, saying, “Our town is in peril! We do not have all the things we need!”

By then, she said, “There’s still hope. When I see young people out on the streets [marching and protesting], there’s power in their name.” She added, “We are all one person, and promised never to give up, "until the breath in my lungs [is gone].”

Martinez was last to wrap up, speaking with equal fervor. “The heart of our district depends on it,” he said. “We have the most beautiful resources at home. We need to break the cycle.”

The moderator closed the forum by reminding the audience that voting in the upcoming primary would be either in person or via absentee ballot on Tuesday, June 28.

District 81 includes Riverdale, Kingsbridge, Van Cortlandt Village, Kingsbridge Heights, Marble Hill, Norwood, Woodlawn, and Wakefield, while District 78 broadly includes Fordham Manor in the West of the borough through Bedford Park, Belmont, the New York Botanical Garden and Bronx Zoo. According to Ballotpedia, Charles’ candidacy has since been disqualified.

*Síle Moloney contributed to this story.*
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