



NORWOOD NEWS

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CARNIVAL UNDER THE SUNSHINE!



Photo by Sile Moloney

KIDS SLIDE DOWN the exit of a bouncy house during the Carnival de la Cultura Latina (Carnival of Latin Culture) which took place under the sunshine on Sunday, July 10, 2022 at West 195th Street and Reservoir Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights.

By SILE MOLONEY

The Carnival de la Cultura Latina (Carnival of Latin Culture) took place under the sunshine on Sunday,

July 10, at West 195th Street and Reservoir Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights. Mayor Eric Adams was due to attend the event and deliver some re-

marks to mark the occasion but cancelled on the day. Adams was already attending a number of other events in the city the same day.

A large stage was set up on one end of the booth-lined street with musical entertainment for the many fami-

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Senior Struck by Vehicle in Kingsbridge
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Bronx Cannabis Forum Held
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In-Person Graduation Returns at BCC
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N R W TO CORTLANDT STREET

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Kingsbridge Heights: Senior Critical after being Run Down at Crosswalk

By DAVID GREENE

A 75-year-old male pedestrian remains in critical condition after he was run down by a turning vehicle as he was crossing a Kingsbridge Heights street. The alleged driver, who was seen sporting house slippers as he stepped out of his vehicle at the scene of the accident, was later arrested and faces multiple charges.

Police officials say the incident was reported at 2:59 p.m. on Saturday, July 9, when the victim was hit as he crossed West Kingsbridge Road at Bailey Avenue. An unidentified police official told *Norwood News* the following day, "A preliminary investigation determined that a 29-year-old male, operating a 2019 Hyundai Elantra, was traveling southbound on Bailey Avenue. As the vehicle was making a left turn onto West Kingsbridge Road, [when] it struck a 75-year-old pedestrian crossing at the aforementioned intersection."

The police official added that the victim was rushed to St. Barnabas Hospital, where he remains in critical condition with head trauma. Police said the driver of the vehicle, identified by police as Elijah Hill, 29, of Madison Avenue, Manhattan, was later taken into custody and charged with aggravated, unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle, failure to yield to a pedestrian, driving without a license, and two counts of failure to exercise due care.

Norwood News spoke to two women at the scene who said they had observed police surround the red Hyundai Elantra, which had a South Carolina license plate, and begin their investigation shortly after the crash occurred.

One of the women told *Norwood News*, "I had seen him earlier," referring to the victim. "He was standing there waiting for the bus and he crossed the street just behind us, and he got hit. They said he still had the change for the bus in his hand when they put him in the ambulance."

Asked about the types of injuries the man suffered, the second woman replied, "His head was split wide open."

Norwood News later observed Hill, who remained in his vehicle, talking on a cell phone, before a patrolman from the NYPD's highway patrol collision investigation squad asked him to step out onto the street. As he got out, Hill was seen wearing light blue house slippers.

Another male witness at the scene said he thought the victim had already died following the collision, recalling that the man had been bleeding from the head and convulsing.

Pointing out that the incident took place in front of P.S. 310, the male witness added, "Look what it did to this guy! Imagine a kid just trying to get across [the street]." The witness added that he believed right turns from Bailey Avenue should be eliminated. However, Hill had been making a left turn when he struck the senior.

The highway officer then led Hill to the Fresh Cleaners Laundromat across the street from where the incident oc-



Photo by David Greene

EMERGENCY VEHICLES AND police officers surround a vehicle after its driver struck an elderly pedestrian at the intersection of West Kingsbridge Road and Bailey Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights on Saturday, July 9, 2022.



Photo by David Greene

ALLEGED VEHICLE DRIVER, Elijah Hill, of Manhattan follows a detective back to his vehicle after it allegedly struck and seriously injured an elderly man at West Kingsbridge Road and Bailey Avenue on Saturday afternoon, July 9, 2022.

curred. There, a pair of witnesses told *Norwood News* he took a series of sobriety tests. One female customer recalled, "They came in and locked the door." She said they then gave Hill a hand-eye coordination test.

Meanwhile, a man behind the counter at the Open Grill Deli on West Kingsbridge Road, located at the same intersection as where the collision occurred, said police had been looking at the store's surveillance video. However, in reference to the collision, he explained, "There is no clear view." The same man confirmed he had seen the victim in the area before.

As traffic was shut down in both directions for the duration of the investigation, a convoy of at least 9 buses were backed up, one behind the other, up the hill along West Kingsbridge Road as far as at least Kingsbridge Terrace.

When contacted at his home on Monday, July 11, Hill identified himself, responding, "That's me." Asked if he wished to provide any information about the circumstances of the incident, he replied, "No comment," and declined to speak further.

Norwood News will continue to monitor the case and will provide further updates as they become available. A person arrested and charged with a crime is deemed innocent unless and until found

guilty in a court of law.

During May 2022, 74 pedestrians were injured in road collisions in The Bronx. In the Bronx, year-to-date as of July 3, there were 707 pedestrians injured in road collisions, up 7.8 percent from last year.

Meanwhile, The NY Daily News recently reported on July 11 that according to data it obtained, hundreds of times every year, motorists are suspected of causing deadly and near-fatal crashes in the city — but fewer than half are criminally charged and a much smaller percentage face felony cases.

"Preliminary State Department of Motor Vehicles data for 2021 show that 74,627 vehicular crashes in the city involving pedestrians, bicyclists and other motorists were reported to the NYPD," an extract from the article read. "In those crashes, 276 people were killed and an additional 38,479 were injured."

The publication went on to report that the NYPD's collision investigation squad probed the fatal crashes and found 110 of them — less than half — were criminal acts. "Detectives made 70 arrests. Of those, 10 drivers faced charges of vehicular homicide, vehicular manslaughter, and vehicular manslaughter in the second degree, which are punishable by up to 15 years in prison," the article read.

The News found that the remaining 60 people busted were hit with low-level felonies or misdemeanor crimes such as leaving the scene of an accident, failing to yield to a pedestrian, and reckless endangerment.

The publication deduced that vehicular homicide or vehicular manslaughter charges were brought in just 3.6 percent of the crashes investigated by the collision investigation squad last year.

As reported, New York City's speed camera laws were recently expanded to operate 24/7, which City officials hope will help with the investigation into road accidents, and may deter some from speeding.

**Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*

Bronx Cannabis Forum Tackles Questions About Emerging Cannabis Market



Screenshot courtesy of BronxNet via YouTube.

TREMAINE WRIGHT, CHAIR of NYS Cannabis Control Board, speaks during a Bronx Cannabis Forum held on June 21, 2022, at Bronx Museum of the Arts, located on the Grand Concourse on the outskirts of the Concourse section of The Bronx.

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

It has been more than a year since recreational marijuana use for adults has been legal in the State of New York. Signed into law on March 31, 2021 and known as MRTA or The Marijuana Regulation & Taxation Act [sic], it also created a new Office of Cannabis Management (OCM), governed by a Cannabis Control Board to regulate adult use, medical, and hemp cannabis. The exact terminology of the product can change depending on the market and other stakeholders, whether it includes production, medical and/or recreational use.

The Office of the Bronx Borough President helped organize a forum on June 21 with elected officials, community leaders, and State administrators to help the public understand exactly what is now legal, how cannabis will be produced and distributed, and the economic impact of MRTA. Held at the Bronx Museum of the Arts and livestreamed on BronxNet, it was a jam-packed session that left some of the in-person audi-

ence wanting even more information.

"We are here because of the passage of MRTA, the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act," Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson told the audience. "This law will truly set out the framework and the guidelines to regulate cannabis in the state of New York in a balanced manner that will protect both public health and public safety while promoting social equity and economic development."

While the implications of MRTA are significant for those interested in cultivating the plant, processing it, distributing the finished product, and bringing it to market for an eager consumer base, there are a few facts about this that the public should know. Since March 2021, anyone 21 years and older can possess up to three ounces of cannabis for personal use, including having up to five pounds of cannabis in the home. Smoking cannabis is legal almost anywhere cigarette smoking is allowed, and law en-

forcement officers are not allowed stop and search cannabis smokers, because they smell it. There are exceptions, as previously reported, when it comes to driving while under the influence, etc.

The cannabis panel consisted of State Sen. Jamaal Bailey (S.D. 36), Tremaine Wright, chairwoman of NYS Cannabis Control Board, Kevin Kim, commissioner of NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS), Patricia Zube-Wilson, director of government affairs in the State's Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, Eli Northrop, an attorney with the Bronx Defenders, Coss Marte, co-founder of Con Body, a fitness program developed while he was in solitary confinement, and Derrick Lewis, co-founder of the Bronx Community Foundation, which supports and invests in community power to eradicate inequity and build sustainable futures for all Bronxites.

Social equity and economic development are critical issues in a county that consistently

ranks as the poorest in New York State. The population estimates released by the U.S. Census Bureau in July 2021 show a borough where 56.4 percent of the population is Hispanic or Latino and 24.4 percent of the borough lives in poverty. Those figures explain, at least in part, why any discussion of opportunities to create a profitable business will draw meaningful attention.

One group that is closely watching these developments in the aftermath of cannabis legalization is the Latino Cannabis Association. Sandra Jáquez is vice president of the trade organization whose members seek licenses from the State to become early entrepreneurs for the new adult-use cannabis industry.

The group has sought the support of both political and business leaders. "We work together to ensure that people of color are well represented in the adult-use cannabis industry," she said. "You can count on us and our communities in helping our people, in Albany,

working with our legislators and regulators, as well as wherever it is needed to uplift this cause."

A report in *The New York Times* from June revealed just how lucrative the City expects the legal cannabis industry to be. "In New York, Mayor Eric Adams has proposed that the City invest \$4.8 million next year in the local cannabis industry, which is expected to generate nearly \$1.3 billion in the first year of legal sales" *The Times* reported.

From a historical perspective, it was noted during the forum that whenever popular, legal industries started and began to grow in the United States, people of color were traditionally excluded from exploiting such opportunities, while other non-people of color benefited.

From the development of various means of transportation like the railroad, maritime shipping, and aviation, to media, including newspapers, radio, television, movies, and video production, people of

(continued on page 7)

INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By **DAVID GREENE**



This week, given the overcrowding at Van Cortlandt Pool amid the lifeguard shortage, we asked readers where, in their opinion, a public swimming pool should be built in Norwood or Bedford Park.



"I think the neighborhood needs a swimming pool. It would be a good investment, a good addition to the neighborhood, and all the kids could come play and all that. Probably [Williamsbridge] Oval Park would be the best because that's where we usually go. I kind of remember that the Oval had a pool way back then, but I was too little to go there back then. It was, like, 10 or 15 years ago; they had a swimming pool a long time ago. Now there is a skatepark and basketball courts and a little field. I would use the pool, most definitely."

Mahin Haque,
Norwood



"Don't they have one over there in Van Cortlandt [Park]? Alright, so we need one on this side of the Bronx Maybe they could put it by Yankee Stadium? Around here? This is a good spot over here, on this side of Van Cortlandt Park, near Mosholu Parkway. The Kingsbridge Armory is a good spot too, yeah. Oh yeah, I would go. Today I'm good, but tomorrow's another day."

Michael Perez,
Bedford Park



"Planet Fitness is there, so the pool should be somewhere along the [Poe] Park there, yeah, the park in Kingsbridge, here. Yes, I would come here, I love this area. I would love to move here if I could find a place. I mean Fordham is one of the best places here to be honest. There's not too many pools in this area."

Amin Idris,
South Bronx



"Yes, I live in the area, and I think it does need a pool. Where would I put it? I would put it further down like [East] 198th, down there. I tell you where they should put it; they should put it right over there near the Family Dollar by Fordham Plaza. That's where they should put it. The Kingsbridge Armory could be good, but that's a little too far for me. You've got to put it somewhere in the middle, but here along Fordham is the most crowded area all day long 24/7, so it would be nice to have a pool in this area. I'd support the plan; it's a great idea."

Michael Hale,
Fordham Manor



"I would love to have a pool in one of our bigger green spaces / parks, but they are either connected to another organization or there is too much going on there already. I would say the Kingsbridge Armory ice skating rink talk has died down and I think that would be a great spot for a pool. We don't really have an aquatic center in The Bronx, and this would be a good spot with all the trains and buses around it, so parking wouldn't be a big issue."

Gonzalo Duran,
Crotona Park East

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Fordham Manor Fourth of July Party ends in Gunfire

By DAVID GREENE

Police are looking for a scooter-riding gunman who opened fire on a crowd sitting outside a Fordham Manor building, as they celebrated America's independence.

Police said the incident unfolded at 11:51 p.m. on Monday, July 4 when officers received a call about a person who had been shot outside 2705 Bainbridge Avenue, near East 196th Street.

Officers from the 52nd Precinct arrived and discovered a 23-year-old male victim had been shot once in the abdomen by a scooter riding gunman. The assailant fled the scene, and the still-unidentified victim was transported to St. Barnabas Hospital, where he was listed in "stable" condition.



Photo by David Greene

A PIECE OF crime scene tape hanging from a building and some empty beer bottles are all that remain on Tuesday, July 5, 2022, a few hours after a 23-year-old man was shot by a scooter-riding gunman on Bainbridge Avenue in Fordham Manor.



Photo by David Greene

A TABLE WITH some food remains is seen on the Fordham Manor street on Tuesday, July 5, 2022, a day after an assailant shot a 23-year-old man at the location.

Police reported no arrests, and no description of the suspect was immediately available.

According to one resident of the building, the gunman had lived on the block and is now on the run from police. Asked how the victim was, the resident replied, "So, so... not really [good]." She added that she believed the victim was also shot in the arm. The NYPD later confirmed to *Norwood News* the victim had also been shot in the arm.

Four other shootings were reported across The Bronx on the Fourth of July holiday, which left at least one man dead, and six others wounded. Less than an hour into the holiday, at 12:54 a.m. a 33-year-old male was shot as he

sat on a bench at Webster Avenue and East 170th Street in Claremont Village. The victim was expected to survive, and police continue to search for the shooter.

At 5:50 p.m. police said a 24-year-old man was walking his dog at 775 Ehele Avenue in Woodstock, when a person shot him in the leg from a "dark colored" vehicle. The unidentified victim was also expected to survive, and again, there were no arrests nor any description of the perpetrator.

At 8:45 p.m. police were called to Bruckner Boulevard and Alexander Avenue in Mott Haven where police discovered a 35-year-old man who had been shot in the chest and hand after an apparent dispute with the shooter. The vic-

tim remains in critical condition at Lincoln Hospital and police continue to attempt to identify the perpetrator.

At 10:26 p.m. police were called to Prospect Avenue in the Belmont section, after three men were shot outside a residential building on the avenue. John Edwards, 62, was hit in the chest just steps away from his home. He died a short time later at St. Barnabas Hospital. Police say a 23-year-old male was shot in the right leg and a 26-year-old male was shot in the right arm during the same incident. Both men were also transported to St. Barnabas Hospital. Police would later release surveillance video of the shooter's escape vehicle.



Photo by David Greene

OFFICERS FROM THE NYPD's Crime Scene Unit were still collecting evidence along Prospect Avenue in Belmont on Tuesday, July 5, 2022, after one man was killed and two others were injured in a Fourth of July shooting.

NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Bedford Green Supportive Housing Formally Opens

A ribbon-cutting ceremony to formally mark the Phase I completion of the Bedford Green House development, Project Renewal's LEED-certified supportive and affordable housing development takes place on July 14. The 13-story building, located at 2865 Creston Avenue in Bedford Park, offers 117 units of affordable and supportive housing to formerly homeless individuals and families impacted by mental illness and substance use disorder, people living with HIV, and people earning 60 percent of area median income or less.

Integrated throughout the building are what are described as innovative design elements, amenities, and services that support residents' health and long-term stability, including a 1,500-square-foot rooftop greenhouse and an aquaponics farming system where residents grow fresh vegetables year-round. Construction will soon begin on Phase II of the development, which will include more housing and a medical clinic.

Rivera Gets Backing of 1199SEIU

State Sen. Gustavo Rivera (S.D. 33) said he was immensely proud to receive the endorsement of 1199SEIU for reelection to the New York State Senate. "1199 is the largest and fastest-growing healthcare union in the country, and its members, many of whom are my constituents, have been on the frontlines through the pandemic and beyond, at great sacrifice to their personal health and safety," he said. "These courageous men and women give their all—and then some—every single day to protect the health and well-being of all New Yorkers." Rivera has represented the district since 2011 and is running on both the Democratic Party and Working Families Party tickets.

NY Supreme Court Chief Judge to Retires

NYS Court of Appeals chief judge, Janet DiFiore, has announced she will step down from her role next month, prompting some to call for a progressive replacement. DiFiore recently oversaw the decision by the Court of Appeals to throw out the redrawn State senate and congressional maps proposed by State Democrats and approved by the State legislature in early February 2022, after the court deemed

Empire State Indivisible Regroups Post-Primary

by EMILY SAWAKED

Following the State primaries on June 28, Empire State Indivisible, a group dedicated to systematically creating political change, held a fruitful meeting on July 6 to debrief on the impact of the primary results, and how the group plans to continue supporting candidates it endorsed.

In the Bronx, that means providing support to State Sen. Gustavo Rivera (S.D. 33), the incumbent who is being challenged by Bronx Democratic Party-backed candidate, Miguelina Camilo. The latter also recently received the individual endorsements of Rep. Ritchie Torres (NY-15) and Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (A.D. 81). Empire State Indivisible had endorsed Rivera because of his progressive policies and ideals.

"He has been a progressive champion in Albany for a decade, plus he is a fantastic representative," said Shannon Stagman, co-lead organizer of Empire State Indivisible. "What's happening with his race is just a very unfortunate, but predictable tale of what happens to incumbents who dare to push [further to the left] the [Democratic] party at all, which is that they suddenly get support pulled and the party puts a more moderate establishment candidate up against them, which is what's happening to Gustavo."

The group is also supporting State Sen. Alessandra Biaggi (S.D. 34), who represents parts of Bronx and Westchester counties and is now running for Congressional District 17.

The group went on to discuss the loss in the primaries of one of their backed candidates, Kellie Leeson, a co-lead of Empire State Indivisible, who ran in Assembly District 73 against incumbent, Dan Quart. The district encompasses the

Upper East Side, Midtown East, Turtle Bay and Sutton Place. Part of the loss was attributed to the recent redistricting process.

"We had extremely low turnout, even lower than in typical primaries in off-cycle years," said Stagman. "A lot of that was due to just the mass confusion; we talked to so many voters who didn't know that there was even a primary in June. A lot of people had no idea what was going on at all, because all of the information around the redistricting, the maps were [sic] constantly changing. Folks didn't know what districts they were in anymore. When we were out for our election day volunteering, we talked to a lot of voters who went to the wrong polling [sites] because they didn't realize that theirs had moved."

The group's first plan of action, in preparation for the August primary, is educating the public, both about which policies affect them, and what redistricting means for them in terms of voting. The group hopes for a higher voter turnout in August.

The second piece is to continue providing support for their candidates by helping them campaign and by volunteering at voting booths. According to the co-leads, during the general election, they will focus heavily on flipping districts from red to blue, especially in key districts.

Aside from campaign work, Empire State Indivisible is focused on policy change, particularly with the State budget. They work closely with the "Invest in our New York Coalition" to try and prepare for "legislative advocacy and the budgeting process."

"The budget is where most policy happens," said Stagman. "It's a hard-to-

understand process that's opaque by design, and very much controlled by the governor's office; it's settled through backroom dealing." Stagman said the group was committed to reforming the process.

"If you solve the budget problem, if you make the government more transparent, if you increase public education around these processes, then you can make progress across the board on all the issues you care about," she said. "Solving the budget problem is crucial to being able to fund our programs and our policies that we have passed."

Stagman cited the example of how the group helped pass the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, but later there was no funding for it. "It's meaningless until it's funded in the budget," she said.

The group's push in recent years for a constitutional amendment to change the budget process, make power more evenly distributed, and the process more transparent, was also discussed.

The group is well aware that their targeted policy changes will take at least another year to come to fruition, but that does not mean they have stopped fighting for them. The work continues and the upcoming elections are just the next step for the group. The focus for now, according to Stagman, is on public education.

The meeting concluded with a plan to support specific candidate campaigns and a more concrete agenda and action plan set for deliberation among the co-leads, Stagman, Ricky Silver, and Kellie Leeson, who founded the group in 2017. "When the public understands how these things work, and why it's corrupt, that's when you get change," said Stagman.

them to be unconstitutional. A court-appointed special master was instead tasked with redrawing alternate maps which were not "gerymandered." The revised maps were duly redrawn, and voters will now cast their ballots in the upcoming August 23 State primaries based on these maps.

Though seen as a conservative, public defenders, The Legal Aid Society, previously praised DiFiore's calls in February 2022 to simplify and consolidate what they called a "second-class system of justice for low-income litigants of color."

On July 11, the public defenders thanked DiFiore for her public service, her efforts to improve New York's court system, bolster funding for civil legal services organizations and "for improving clients' access to justice." They then implored Gov. Kathy Hochul to nominate a jurist to the court

who has served as a public defender, civil legal services attorney, or both, and who is from the neighborhoods the court serves, "historically marginalized communities of color."

First Citywide Participatory Budgeting Process Launches

The NYC Civic Engagement Commission is launching NYC's first ever citywide Participatory Budgeting process. To kick-off Phase 1, groups, entities, and organizations can apply for up to \$20,000 in funding to hold "Idea Generation Sessions." Apply by July 15 at <http://on.nyc.gov/citywidepb>.

Free 5G Wifi Expands Across City

The first active Link5G kiosk, located in Morris Heights, was installed on July 10. The new phase of LinkNYC, which provides free Wi-Fi, nationwide phone calls, and other digi-

tal services to New Yorkers, offers 5G connectivity with priority given to underserved areas throughout the five boroughs.

Ninety percent of kiosks are being placed in the outer boroughs and above 96th Street in Manhattan to address the digital divide and priority is being given to specific community districts chosen based on lack of other broadband options, lower median annual incomes, lack of existing LinkNYC infrastructure, and high levels of pedestrian and street traffic. Once fully deployed, there will be around 2,000 new Link5G kiosks throughout the five boroughs, bringing the total LinkNYC network to at least 4,000 locations.

Adams Appoints New Director for Community Mental Health

Mayor Eric Adams appointment Eva Wong as

director of the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health (OCMH) on Monday, July 11. Wong brings over 15 years of experience in direct clinical services, program management and operations, and community development, according to OCMH and has a breadth of experience in advocacy and developing programs, including crisis intervention with a special focus on historically marginalized groups.

As director, officials said she will "bring her experience in sustained, authentic conversations with New Yorkers, including young people, families, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and those hit hardest by the pandemic to lead the city's work, promoting mental health wellness, destigmatizing mental illness, and delivering equitable access to mental health services with communities of color in New York City."

Bronx Cannabis Forum Tackles Questions About Emerging Cannabis Market

(continued from page 3)

color have had to play a game of catch-up to avail of even meager opportunities to enter such industries, if at all.

MRTA aims to reverse that trend as this new industry is created from the ground up. The hope is that those who have been disproportionately affected and most harmed by what many consider to be a failed war on drugs and a biased policy of enforcement when it comes to marijuana use, can instead actively participate in the industry and reap the expected profits from the legalization of cannabis.

Wright is tasked with making sure the nascent industry provides such an equitable path to entry. "Our State's law is really designed for equity and inclusion and diversity [and] is anti-monopolistic," she said.

"It is designed so that we have access points for individuals to get involved. It is designed so we are reinvesting in our communities that have been harmed. It is specifically designed so that we can take advantage of this opportunity that is rare. It comes, like, once every hundred years, where a new industry is legalized in our State, and we have an opportunity to create all the pathways in, and to support not just industry, but the education and the research and the learning, and also the reinvestment... that has not happened previously."

The panel regularly described the cannabis industry as burgeoning. Even if he did not use the "once every hundred years" comparison, Bailey enthusiastically urged the audience to think seriously about investing in the cannabis market as a way to move up the socioeconomic ladder.

"Social equity is more than just about one thing; eventually, everything connects, which is why it's important for us to get in on the ground floor of this emerging market," the senator said. "Just like my pops and maybe your pops... they said, 'Somebody told me to invest in this company called Apple,' and 'Somebody told me to invest in this thing called IBM.' We're telling you now, we got to get in on the ground floor."

Meanwhile, the OCM means business when it comes to enforcement also. On July 7, it publicly identified 52 illicit cannabis stores that were sent cease and desist letters, directing them to stop all illicit cannabis sales in the State. Officials said, "These stores falsely depict their operations as legal cannabis dispensaries, but they are not licensed by New York State and are selling untested products that put public health at risk."

They notified the operators that their failure to cease operations could permanently bar them from receiving any cannabis licenses in New York State.

Additionally, OCM officials said the



Screenshot courtesy of BronxNet via YouTube.

ATTENDEES LISTEN AS panelists speak during a Bronx Cannabis Forum held on June 21, 2022, at Bronx Museum of the Arts, located on the Grand Concourse on the outskirts of the Concourse section of The Bronx.

agency had also received referrals of additional illicit storefront operations that were under review. Meanwhile, if the named storefronts don't cease operations, they will be referred to the Cannabis Control Board for permanent barring from receiving any cannabis licenses in New York State.

"There are no businesses currently licensed to sell adult-use cannabis in New York State," said Wright. "You need a license to sell cannabis in New York. Licensed sales and a regulated market are the only way New York's customers will be assured that the cannabis products they are purchasing have been tested and tracked from seed to sale."

Regulated adult-use cannabis businesses will be required, in addition to being licensed by the Cannabis Control Board, to comply with all state and local laws, including providing clear and verifiable information to consumers regarding the products they are consuming, checking the identification of consumers to ensure sales are not being made to young people, and collecting and depositing tax revenue to support New York State's schools and help revitalize communities.

No adult-use retail licenses have been issued in New York State to date. Currently, the only legal means of procuring, safe, tested cannabis products is through the medical cannabis program, where becoming a patient requires getting certified from a medical provider.

In addition, illicit cannabis storefronts do not contribute to the New York state cannabis revenue fund, which is designed to invest revenue from cannabis sales back into communities.

The said revenue will cover the administration of the program and the implementation of the law and will be split to support the State Lottery Fund for general public-school support, secondly, the community grants reinvestment fund which supports job training and

placement, reentry services for justice-involved New Yorkers, system navigation services, youth-serving programs, financial literacy services and finally, the drug treatment and public education fund.

OCM officials said they remain focused on improving public health outcomes for cannabis patients and consumers and are hard at work developing regulations for the broader adult-use program, including expansive testing requirements to avoid ad-

verse reactions to cannabis products. Unregulated vaping products, including cartridges labeled as containing THC, have been cited by the CDC for being responsible for thousands of cases of acute respiratory distress syndrome across the country.

OCM officials are strongly encouraging New Yorkers not to visit these operations and to be aware that products being offered for sale are not safe for human consumption.

Government Officials said that a total of 66 cease and desist letters were sent out because in some instances the associated LLC had an address for service on file with NYS Department of State or a separate address was found for owner.

Wright concluded, "Sale of untested products put lives at risk. I implore these illegal store operators, and any other stores pretending to be legal operations, to stop selling cannabis products immediately. Selling any item or taking a donation, and then 'gifting' a customer a bag of untested cannabis does indeed count as a sale under New York's Cannabis Law."

The entire forum can be watched on BronxNet: <https://www.bronxnet.org/watch/videos/15263/>

**Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*

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- Vacation Bible School
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Van Nest Assembly of God is a body of Believers empowered by the Holy Spirit, called to worship God in Spirit and Truth, to walk in the light of the Word of God in all aspects of life, and to be witnesses of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, through word and deed, to the ends of the earth.

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A March for Angellyh

By EMILY SAWAKED

The emotions permeating the atmosphere were clear as young protestors of all ages gathered around their political leaders, teachers, parents, and relatives of the late Angellyh Yambo at a rally organized during Gun Violence Awareness Month to honor their 16-year-old school friend.

Angellyh was tragically and fatally killed in broad daylight by a stray bullet just north of the Mott Haven border on Friday, April 8, as she walked home from school. Two of her friends were also shot and injured during the same incident. Jeremiah Ryan, 17, was later charged with murder and attempted murder in connection with the shootings which took place a few blocks from Angellyh's high school, University Prep Charter School.

Two months later, on June 8, Angellyh's school friends could be heard defiantly chanting, "Enough is enough!" as they marched around the block of the South Bronx school, located at 600 St. Ann's Avenue. They were joined by Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson and Rep. Ritchie Torres (NY-15) who spoke to the students fervently, commending them for their action in arranging the march and honoring the memory of their friend.

Gibson addressed the crowd first, speaking with passion and sincerity. "Your life matters, Angie's life mattered, Kyhara's life mattered," she said, the latter in reference to 11-year-old Kyhara Tay, who was also tragically and fatally killed in cross-fire during a separate daylight shooting incident on Fox Street in the South Bronx on Monday, May 16, at 4.50 p.m. One unnamed 15-year-old, as well as 18-year-old Omar Bojang were later arrested in connection with the fatal shooting.

"I stand with you," Gibson told the students during the rally. "I proudly wear orange. Orange is a sign of peace. We want peace in our streets, peace in our neighborhoods, peace on our blocks, peace on the corners, peace in the schools, peace in the parks, peace in the playgrounds. We want peace everywhere! The only way we do it is by standing up and not giving up."

The borough president later suggested that while mass shootings such as those that

had occurred in Buffalo, in upstate New York on May 14 and in Uvalde, TX on May 24 were generally widely condemned and etched into people's consciousness, daily shootings in The Bronx, though initially shocking, tended to fade quickly from public memory and not receive the same level of long-term attention.

"When the cameras are gone, when everyone returns to day-to-day normalcy, we forget about this violence," Gibson said. "We focus on national mass shootings that are happening across the country, but we don't remember the everyday shootings that happen in our city, in our borough almost every day and the victims and the suspects all look alike, come from the same communities, younger and younger and younger. We are killing our future," she added. "[But] in the midst of pain, we will find purpose. In the midst of a storm, we will find strength."

Torres commended the youth for being the generation that he said would end gun violence and make a stand against it. "The adults in Washington D.C. have been failing you," he said. "You're the generation that's going to save us. You're the generation that is going to deliver justice and gun safety."

The congressman later called out gun manufacturers for their role in deaths caused by shootings, and proclaimed that the National Rifle Association (NRA) had "blood on its hands." He added, "Enough is enough." Torres continued, "Angie should be alive today," he said. "She should be with us today. She represented what was best in The Bronx and what was best in our city, but her life was cut short by gun violence and here in The Bronx, we have been hit the hardest by gun violence, and if we don't stand up to the epidemic of gun violence, no one else will."

During an interview later with *Norwood News*, Torres criticized his fellow congressional representatives who were pro-life politicians, saying, "If you're in public service, and you're not willing to stand for the safety of children and teenagers, then what good are you?"

Asked what legislative action she wanted to see enacted, on a local level, Gibson said she hoped to increase funding for

programs that would help keep at-risk youth and other citizens off the streets. "The fact that a shooter was 15 is unacceptable," she said. "Neighborhoods should be safe."

She said it was impossible, however, to relocate every family out of troubled areas or transfer out whole neighborhoods to keep them safe. "So, the families that are victims of a crime are stuck in the same neighborhood, the same block," she said. "We could transfer a school but you're still in the same neighborhood. That's why young people feel forced to carry a weapon, a knife or a gun to school because they need to protect themselves from someone else."

The borough president went on to say, "I want to make sure, as Mayor Adams committed, 100,000 young people have a summer job. I want to make sure cornerstones, beacons, and summer camps are open. I want to expand Saturday Night Lights," she added, saying what was needed was money and investment.

As reported, the Saturday Night Lights program provides "safe and engaging activities for young people in underserved neighborhoods to have a fun," and additionally provides a productive place to gather during peak times for high crime on Saturday evenings. "These school buildings should be open during the summer!" Gibson said. "We put [in place] a program, we put money, we put safety agents and staff, and guess what? We have a program!"

Gibson continued, "As a state, Gov. Hochul signed a package of legislation this week into law; I'm grateful for that, and we know that's going to protect New Yorkers, but that won't protect us from a gun coming from Georgia or coming from South Carolina, and that's why national attention is important." She added, "Our Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and [U.S.] Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand have been at the forefront, pushing for comprehensive gun control legislation, but we need bipartisan support."

The borough president then went on to take aim at U.S. Senate Republicans for not acting sooner on gun safety legislation. "Those damn Senate Republicans that refuse to act that sometimes, I think, they don't care. If



STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY Prep Charter School located on t. Ann's Avenue in the South Bronx begin a march from their school on Wednesday, June 8, 2022 to mark Gun Violence Awareness Month and in memory of their school friend, Angellyh Yambo, 16, who was fatally shot in April, along with two friends, while walking home from school. Her friends survived their injuries. Photo by Emily Sawaked

we didn't act after Sandy Hook, what are we doing?" she said.

"Uvalde has happened," Gibson added. "When are we going to protect children in classrooms, Black Americans in supermarkets, Latinos in bodegas, like when are we going to protect all of our people? We need Senate Republicans to also agree that gun violence is a national epidemic that must be addressed on the federal level." *Norwood News* reached out to the U.S. Republican Party for comment on this story and will update it upon receipt of any response.

Despite the criticism, most were touched by the actions of the young marchers on the day. A few of the students even spoke at the rally, reading out statements they had written. They talked of their own fears of being shot, whether in the streets or at school, and how they were tired of being afraid.

"I am tired! I am tired of hearing how many people have lost their lives to gun violence!" one student named Fatimah said. "I am tired of having to wake up every day and adapt to life without someone I saw yesterday. I am tired of hearing the screams of mothers who know they will never see their children again."

As the teenagers' speeches continued, the message of fear and fatigue was clear, and the fear of being killed by gun violence extended to their peers and family members. According to middle school counselor, Yolainny Minaya, preparation for the rally followed a lot of engagement on the topic of gun violence between staff and students. She said middle school students, at least, had received advisory lessons over the previous two weeks on the topic, what it is and how it affects them.

"More so about the inequities around why gun violence happens," Minaya told *Norwood News*. "She [Angellyh] was not able to have the chance that many other kids in other communities get to have, like walking home safely, going to and from school, and also just to raise awareness."

Minaya continued, "It's about the intersectionalities of gun violence; we have deficits in our community, programs... we don't have trash cans in the corners.. We just wanted them to understand that it [the problem] was bigger than just that [gun violence]," she said.

Spearheaded by Angellyh's aunt, Mary Hernandez, the family is currently in the process of setting up a foundation in Angellyh's memory to raise awareness of and help prevent gun violence.

On the day the rally was held, the U.S. House of Representatives voted in favor of long-awaited, bipartisan gun safety bills at a national level. They have since passed in the U.S. Senate and have now been signed into law by the president.

Meanwhile, on Saturday, July 9, Mayor Eric Adams announced the expansion of the Saturday Night Lights program to include 25 additional sites with an additional \$1.25 million investment.

Yanelly Henriquez, Angellyh's mom, had previously describing her daughter as a "young, beautiful soul, who had her whole life ahead of her." She added, "We cherish the memory of Angie—a smart, talented, and caring young woman who lost her life too soon to this senseless act of violence."

*Sile Moloney contributed to this story.

Out & About

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY

EVENTS

The Bedford Park Congregational Church, located at Bainbridge Avenue and 201st Street in Bedford Park, will be holding a **Lawn Party** on Sunday, July 17, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Donations for food: \$10 or \$5 for children. The church will also be offering tours of its historic church as part of the **Sacred Sites Open House Program** on Saturday July 23, and Sunday, July 24, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. on both days. All are welcome.

Families and their furry loved ones are invited to participate in a **Pet Fashion Show** at Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center at 3225 Reservoir Oval East. Bring your leashed pet, dressed to impress, and walk the runway, participate in obstacle courses, and take fun, memorable photos. This event takes place on Friday, July 15, at 6 p.m. and is free.

Wash your hands before attending the program. Stay home if you are sick. For more information call (718) 543-8672 or email Ingrid.Tafe@parks.nyc.gov.

Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence (B.R.A.G.) Northwest is holding a **Peace BBQ** on July 16 at 193rd Street between Jerome Avenue and Morris Avenue. (No time was provided.) All are welcome. Any questions, please text (646) 937-3754. B.R.A.G. is a group of violence interrupters who work with young people, community residents and organizations and the public to promote new community norms and safer streets, where violence is not accepted.

KIDS

"The Little Shop of Horrors" movie will be screened outdoors in Van Cortlandt Park Parade Ground, courtesy of NYC Parks, District 11 Councilman Eric Dinowitz and Van Cortlandt Park Alliance, on Thursday, July 14, at 8.30. All are welcome. The movie, "Them!" will be screened at the same location and time on July 28.

Join the **Youth Flag Football League** at Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center from July 6 to Oct. 28, on Wednesdays

and Fridays from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Youth, aged 6 to 17, are invited to learn, play, and compete at Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, 3225 Reservoir Oval East, Bronx, N.Y. Recreation Center membership is required, which is free for youth and young adults under 25. For more information call (718) 543-8672 or email Marcus.Riley@parks.nyc.gov. Stay home, if sick.

MUSIC

On Saturday, July 16, at 8 p.m. the **Bronx Music Heritage Center (BMHC)**, located at 1303 Louis Nine Boulevard, Bronx NY 10459, will host a celebration of women who changed the Blues, including the music of Sister Rosetta Thorpe, Memphis Minnie, Smith Big Mama Thornton and more. The event features the vocals of Bronx daughters, Monica Hope & Jenn Jade Ledesna. A pre-concert discussion by Jackie Lennon about Billie Holiday's Bronx connection will also take place.

Join visual artist and musician, **Eric Escalante**, on Sunday, July 17, for an interactive jam session in nature combining

a fusion of Andean styles such as Wayno, San Juanito, Pasillo, and Bomba. Groove to these contemporary, funk, jazz, and Caribbean sounds with Escalante and his fellow musicians at the Home Gardening Center at New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Blvd., Bronx, NY 10458. For more information, visit <https://www.nybg.org/visit/>.

MOVEMENT

Come and enjoy some **Outdoor Fun and Fitness** at St. James Park, 2530 Jerome Avenue at East 192 Street, Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., from June 1 to Sept. 30. This program includes spin classes, stretching, sports activities and games. The program is free and open to the public. For more information, visit: nyc.gov/parks.

NYC Parks outdoor, public pools reopened on June 28. Free summer breakfast and lunch is also available at public pools from June 28 to Sept. 2. Visit: <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/food/summer-meals> for more information.

An additional 25 city gyms and an additional \$1.25 million investment in the **Saturday Night Lights** program ensures public gyms will continue to remain open Saturdays from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. through Aug. 20, and during the school year from September 10, 2022, through June 24, 2023. To find a gym near you, visit <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/safestbigcity/keep-nyc-safe/saturday-night-lights.page>.



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CRIME FILE

BY SÍLE MOLONEY



Bedford Park: Man Arrested for Alleged Fatal Stabbing of Woman

A man has been arrested following the fatal stabbing of a woman in Bedford Park. On Tuesday, July 5, at around 2.34 p.m., police responded to a 911 call regarding an aided female inside 2860 Grand Concourse. Upon arrival, officers observed a 45-year-old woman with a stab wound to her chest, laying on a bed. EMS responded and pronounced the woman deceased at the scene. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will determine the exact cause of death.

On Wednesday, July 6, the incident was classified as a murder and the deceased was identified as Ana Amadiz-Pena of 2860 Grand Concourse. Police said that pursuant to an ongoing investigation, Raul José Santos, 40, of Morris Avenue in Fordham Manor was arrested on July 5. Santos was charged with murder, manslaughter, and criminal possession of a weapon. A person arrested and charged with a crime is deemed innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law.

#D19-NWB, and proceeded to the area where the aided man was standing at the time of the incident. A short time later, the same three men re-entered the vehicle and drove away. The vehicle was last observed on West 207th Street in Manhattan on that same day, police said.

On Saturday, July 9, police said the incident had been classified a homicide and identified the deceased as Pedro Rodriguez, 51, of Heath Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights. An NYPD spokesperson added that Nickoles Rodriguez, 24, of Tinton Avenue, north of William McKinley Houses in the South Bronx, had been arrested on July 8 at 2 p.m. in the 50th Precinct. He was charged with murder and robbery.

On Tuesday, July 12, the NYPD said two more individuals were arrested and charged on Saturday, July 9, also in the 50th precinct. They were Kelvin O'Brien, 21, of Washington Avenue in Claremont Village and Yean Santiago, 19, of East 182nd Street in Belmont. Each was charged with murder and robbery. A person arrested and charged with a crime is deemed innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law.

Man Charged with Alleged Murder of his Wife, an NYPD Officer

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark announced on July 12 that Argenis Baez, 33, last of Sedgwick Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights, was charged with second-degree murder and additional charges for allegedly stabbing his estranged wife, Arianna Reyes, 31, an NYPD police officer and mother of his child, in her home on June 13.

According to the investigation, at approximately 2:06 a.m. on June 13, Baez allegedly went to Reyes' apartment, confronted her, and made his way into her home, where he allegedly stabbed her eight times in the chest, leg, back, and torso. He then fled the scene. Reyes was pronounced dead at the location. Baez later turned himself into authorities and was arrested that day. The child was not in the apartment when Baez allegedly killed Reyes.

A person arrested and charged with a crime is deemed innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law. Reyes remains in custody and is due back in court on Oct. 12.

The Bronx District Attorney's

office urges anyone suffering at the hands of an abuser to immediately contact the Bronx D.A.'s crime victim assistance unit at (718) 590-2115. The Bronx Family Justice Center can be reached on (718) 508 1220. For more help & resources, visit <https://on.nyc.gov/2BqhBe8>. or call 1-800-621-4673 (HOPE). Anyone in immediate danger should call 911, if possible.

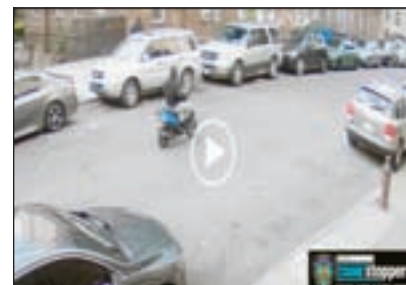
Fordham Heights: Man Fatally Shot

On Wednesday, July 13, at approximately 1.06 a.m., police responded to a 911 call about a person shot in front of 2323 Grand Concourse, police said. Upon arrival, officers observed a 34-year-old man, unconscious and unresponsive, with a gunshot wound to the torso. EMS responded to the location and transported the victim to St. Barnabas Hospital, where he was pronounced deceased. There are no arrests, and the investigation remains ongoing. The deceased has been identified as Melquan Cooper, 34, of 2327 Grand Concourse, Bronx, NY.

Norwood Shooting

The NYPD is asking for the public's help identifying the person and

vehicle seen in the screenshot below. The person is sought for questioning in connection to a burglary that occurred in Norwood. On Tuesday, June 28, at around 7.59 a.m., in front of 3572 Dekalb Avenue, an unidentified person on a motorized scooter recklessly shot in the direction of an unknown victim who was walking in the location. No injuries or property damage were reported.



Anyone with information in regard to 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.



Kingsbridge: Three Arrested for Alleged Murder of 51-Year-Old Man

Police have arrested three people after an investigation into the discovery of a deceased 51-year-old man in Kingsbridge was classified as a murder. The NYPD had asked for the public's assistance identifying the individuals seen in the screenshot above, who had been sought for questioning in connection with the case.

Police said on Saturday, June 25, at around 6.15 a.m., police responded to a 911 call regarding a robbery in progress in front of 130 West 230th Street. Upon arrival, officers observed a 51-year-old man lying on the ground, unconscious and unresponsive, with face and head trauma. EMS transported the aided man to St. Barnabas Hospital, where he was pronounced deceased on Saturday, July 2.

Police said three, unidentified men were observed exiting a maroon Kia Optima, bearing New Jersey plate

Bedford Park: Driver Refuses Medical Attention after Car Overturns

BY SÍLE MOLONEY

An SUV flipped upside down at 2763 Morris Avenue in Bedford Park when a 22-year-old male driver collided with three parked cars, according to police.

An NYPD spokesperson said, "On July 9, 2022, at approximately 00.32 hours, a 2007 Nissan SUV, operated by a 22-year-old male, was traveling

northbound on Morris Avenue when the vehicle struck three parked and unattended vehicles (possibly due to driver distraction)."

In terms of reported injuries, the spokesperson added, "The driver complained of pain but refused medical attention at the scene." There were no other reported injuries following the collision.



Photo courtesy of the Citizens' App

A 22-YEAR-OLD DRIVER of an SUV which flipped upside down at 2763 Morris Avenue in Bedford Park after colliding with three parked cars, refused medical attention on July 9, 2022.



Letters To The Editor

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

Don't Release More Criminals

A July 7 NY Daily News page 2 article tells of the arrest of 51-year-old Blaine Lee allegedly for a Bronx murder. He had been paroled in February 2021 after serving time for a 1995 Westchester murder. There's been much news coverage of 83-year-old Harvey Marcelin. He had twice been paroled after serving time for murder and is now under arrest for the alleged killing and dismemberment in Brooklyn of Susan Leyden sometime between Feb. 27 and March 3. These are just two examples of people who don't seem to have "aged out of crime." This is one issue that I'm sure cost candidate for assembly in District 81, Jessica Altgracia Woolford, a lot of votes in the recent primary election. In the June 30-July 13 issue of the *Norwood News*, it was reported that Woolford trailed incumbent, Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, in the Democratic primary on election night 31 percent to Dinowitz's 68 percent. Woolford supports the Elder Parole bill, which would automatically allow anyone 55 years or older, who has served 15 or more years in prison, to be considered for parole, regardless of the crime for which they've been convicted. In Woolford's *Riverdale Press* "Point of View" published Feb. 14, she writes about two men who would be eligible for parole if this bill is passed. Conspicuous in its absence is any mention of the crimes for which these men are in prison. Considering that Dinowitz and Altgracia Woolford differ little on other issues, advocating for the release of more criminals is not a position that will get you more votes.

**Richard Warren,
Van Cortlandt Village**

Editor's Note: A person arrested and charged with a crime is deemed innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law.

Wrong Priorities

I'm watching the news today and see the headline that Mayor Eric Adams reached out to President Biden with an urgent request. Great, I thought; more help to solve all the open murder and rape cases. No, and I was wrong big time! It was for more vaccines for Monkeypox which affects a very small population of men who engage in deviant and promiscuous sexual activity.

Wow! All you good people who practice morality can go back to the end of the line (no pun intended). This mayor is well known for his night-life partying with celebs like JLO but does not realize JLO has done little or nothing for The Bronx which gave her a very nice life. Elections have consequences, and for everyone who voted for Democrats, you get what you now have, which is a disaster in NYC!

**Richard Marias
Norwood**

Editor's Note: While there are some clusters of monkeypox which have broken out among gay men, according to NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOH), Monkeypox is not restricted to the LGBTQ+ community. "Anyone can get and spread it," a City official said. According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), Monkeypox spreads in different ways. The virus can spread from person-to-person through:

- direct contact with the infectious rash, scabs, or body fluids
- respiratory secretions during prolonged, face-to-

face contact, or during intimate physical contact, such as kissing, cuddling, or sex

- touching items (such as clothing or linens) that previously touched the infectious rash or body fluids
- pregnant people can spread the virus to their fetus through the placenta

CDC officials said it's also possible for people to get monkeypox from infected animals, either by being scratched or bitten by the animal or by preparing or eating meat or using products from an infected animal.

CDC officials said Monkeypox can spread from the time symptoms start until the rash has fully healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed. The illness typically lasts 2-4 weeks. People who do not have monkeypox symptoms cannot spread the virus to others. At this time, it is not known if monkeypox can spread through semen or vaginal fluids.

For more information about monkeypox, including vaccine eligibility, please visit the Department of Health's website here: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/monkeypox.page>.

Award-winning entertainer, entrepreneur and philanthropist, Jennifer Lopez has been supporting philanthropic initiatives in New York City since at least 2001, in the aftermath of 9/11, later helping those affected by Hurricane Sandy.

Together with her sister, author and journalist, Lynda Lopez, she formed what is now known as the Lopez Family Foundation in 2009, which aims to provide quality health-care and health education to women and children, regardless of their ability to pay. It aims to achieve maximum impact through a commitment to a form of healthcare using telecommunications technology to treat patients.

In 2014, Montefiore Medical Center partnered with the Lopez Family Foundation to establish the Center for a Healthy Childhood in The Bronx to promote healthy living through community health programs.

The Healthy Steps Program focuses on mothers and children of 5 and younger, to improve their physical and mental health through preventive screening, assessments, counseling and interventions.

The Bronx Collective Action to Transform Community Health (CATCH) program is dedicated to improving health, nutrition, and opportunities for physical activity on a neighborhood level in communities around six Montefiore Medical Group primary care sites throughout The Bronx.

The Montefiore School Health Program, the nation's largest school-based health program, with NYC Department of Education, offers medical, mental health, dental, and community health services to 30,000 students on 22 school campuses in The Bronx through school-based clinics.

The Bronx Nutrition and Fitness Initiative for Teens (B'N Fit) program is dedicated to helping adolescents with obesity, providing a safe environment for teens in need of comprehensive services to control and reduce obesity while addressing their complex emotional issues. It aims to help participants maintain or lose weight during the 9-month program cycle, which reduces body mass index (BMI) as the teens continue to grow in height.

In September 2021, Lopez visited indie bookstore, The Lit. Bar, to announce a new partnership with Goldman Sachs, the "10,000 Small Businesses program," which elevates and supports Latina entrepreneurs to grow and create jobs by providing them with greater access to education, capital, and business support services. To date, more than 10,000 business owners have graduated from the program across all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico.

Participants gain practical skills such as financial statements negotiation, marketing, and employee management. They also gain the tools to develop a customized business plan for growth, for free.

Last year, Lopez performed in New York in support of

the *Global Citizen Live* concert. *Global Citizen Live* calls for action to halt climate change, and for wealthy countries to deliver on the \$100 billion climate pledge, \$6 billion for famine relief, and COVID-19 vaccine justice for all. On Sept. 25, 2021, over 60 million COVID-19 vaccines, 157 million trees, and more than US\$1.1 billion in commitments to climate, famine, and COVID-19 response efforts were announced as part of the partner-led campaign. The campaign continued in the lead-up to the G20 Summit and the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) later that year.

Happy 58th Birthday to Bronx Public Transportation

July 2022 marks the 58th anniversary of federal government support for public transportation. The success of public transportation can be traced back to one of the greatest accomplishments of the late President Lyndon Johnson, which continues benefiting many Americans today. On July 9, 1964, he signed the "Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964" into law. Subsequently, this resulted in the investment, over time, of several hundred billion dollars into public transportation.

Millions of Americans, including many residing in The Bronx, today, utilize, daily, various public transportation alternatives. They include local and express bus, paratransit, ferry, jitney, light rail, subway, and commuter rail services. All these systems use less fuel and move far more people than conventional single occupancy vehicles. Most are funded with your tax dollars thanks to President Johnson.

Depending upon where you live, consider the public transportation alternative. Try riding a local or express bus, commuter van, ferry, light rail, commuter rail or subway. Fast forward to today. Fortunately, we have the MTA and its various operating agencies, including NYC Transit subway, bus, and Staten Island Railway, Metro North & Long Island Rail Roads, MTA Bus, and Westchester Bee Line Bus.

Using MTA Metro or OMNY cards provides free transfers between the subway and bus. This has eliminated the old two fare zones making public transportation an even better bargain. Purchasing a monthly Metro North or MTA subway/bus pass reduces the cost per ride and provides virtually unlimited trips.

In many cases, employers can offer transit checks which help subsidize a portion of the costs. Utilize this and reap the benefits! It supports a cleaner environment.

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

The ability to travel from home to workplace, school, shopping, entertainment, medical, library etc. is a factor when moving to a new neighborhood. Economically successful communities are not 100 percent dependent on automobiles as the sole means of mobility. Seniors, students, low and middle-income people need these transportation alternatives. Investment in public transportation today contributes to economic growth, employment, and a stronger economy. Dollar for dollar, it is one of the best investments we can make.

**Larry Penner
Great Neck**

Editor's Note: To ensure sufficient time for review of all letters to the editor, please send them to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org or by mail to Norwood News, 3400 Reservoir Oval East, Bronx, NY 10467 by the Friday before each publication day, and if sent by email, please mark them as "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line. Thank you.

NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY



COVID-19 UPDATES New Dominant Variant

The Omicron BA.2.12.1 and BA.5 variants are now the dominant coronavirus strains in the U.S. since early July, 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.2.12.1, BA.4 and BA.5.

Current Trends

As of July 12, citywide COVID-19 cases had increased substantially since end of June, though hospitalizations and deaths were still trending downwards, according to data from NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).

The citywide 7-day average positive percentage rate was 15.2 percent as of July 12, up from the 9.95 percent rate recorded at the end of June. As of July 12, the 7-day percentage positive rate in ZIP code 10468, covering Fordham / Kingsbridge / University Heights, was 16.55 percent (up from 8.55 percent as of June 30), according to DOHMH.

In ZIP code 10467, covering Allerton / Norwood / Pelham Parkway / Williamsbridge, it was 18 percent (up from 10.03 percent as of June 30). In ZIP code 10458, covering Belmont / Fordham University / Kingsbridge, it was 16.5 percent (up from 6.47 percent as of June 30). Meanwhile, in ZIP codes 10465, covering Country Club and Throggs Neck, and 10455 covering Mott Haven, they were the highest in the borough, both at 21 percent.

Managing the Pandemic

NYC offers free, at-home, COVID-19 testing for all New Yorkers. The service is available 7 days a week from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., and appointments can be scheduled by calling (929) 298-9400. Testing kits are also available at many public libraries.

On July 12, the City expanded its network of over 1,200 at-home test distribution sites at 57 NYC parks, pools, nature and recreation centers. City officials said NYC Parks' initial allocation of 35,000 tests will continue each month.

A telemedicine service is available to ascertain whether New Yorkers who contract the variant need access to lifesaving COVID-19 medication or not. New Yorkers who test positive for COVID-19 can receive treatment that helps prevent severe disease and hospitalization. Such treatment can be delivered the same day to homes, curtailing the spread of the virus and keeping the city open.

On May 25, the NYC Test & Trace Corps announced it had expanded its COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation Guidance Tool, which provides New Yorkers direct access to order care packages to help isolate safely and receive COVID-19 therapeutics, 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.nychealthandhospitals.org/COVID19help> or call the NYC Test & Trace Corps COVID Hotline at 212-COVID19.

On June 30, City officials announced a new mobile-based "Test to Treat" program. Participating mobile testing units, managed by NYC Test & Trace Corps, now include a clinician to provide instant prescriptions for no-cost, antiviral medications for eligible New Yorkers who test positive for COVID-19 at these sites.

The initial Test to Treat units are partnering with local pharmacies to provide immediate distribution of COVID-19 medication based on prescriptions obtained from clinicians in the mobile units.

The program will later evolve to over 30 mobile units over the month of July and will both prescribe and distribute the antiviral medications from the mobile units, themselves. In the Bronx, a mobile unit will be partnered and deployed to Burke Avenue Pharmacy, 759 Burke Avenue, Bronx, NY 10467.

COVID-19 Updates & Key Info

All eligible New Yorkers, 6 months and older, should get vaccinated and get their booster dose, when eligible. If you are experiencing symptoms or were exposed, get tested. If you test positive, stay home, and talk to your healthcare provider about treatment.

Masks are still required in healthcare facilities, nursing homes, correction facilities, domestic violence shelters, and on public transit. All travelers, domestic and international, should continue to follow all CDC travel requirements.

Legionnaires' Disease Cluster in The Bronx

The City's health department announced on June 17 that the investigation into the Highbridge community cluster of Legionnaires' disease has been closed. "No new cases of Legionnaires' disease have been identified in residents of the area with symptom onset in the last four weeks," health officials said. There were 30 cases of Legionnaires' disease associated with the cluster. Twenty-eight people were hospitalized, 24 have been discharged, and two New Yorkers died.

Norwood News Hiatus

Norwood News is usually on hiatus for a few weeks in August. However, due to the second Primary Election Day falling on Aug. 23, we will continue to publish throughout August, and our last print edition will be on Aug. 25. The next print edition after that will be on Sept. 22.

August 23 Primary Election

As reported, the NY Supreme Court postponed the congressional and State senate primary elections to Tuesday, Aug. 23, amid the latest court decisions around redistricting which followed the 2020 Census. A court-appointed special master approved new congressional and State senate districts in New York State on May 20, which replace those approved by the State legislature in February 2022.

The CUNY Graduate Center has made available online comparative maps at the following link <https://newyork.redistrictingandyou.org/> to enable voters to determine their current congressional and State legislative districts and to see how the latest redistricting maps impact them.

The Aug. 23 primary election voter registration deadline is July 29, the absentee ballot request deadline is Aug. 8, and early voting runs from Aug. 13 to Aug. 21.

Meanwhile, a further court decision on June 10 determined that the assembly districts approved by the NYS legislature in February 2022 are finally invalid "based on procedural infirmity," according to court documents, and therefore, new assembly district maps will finally be redrawn by a court-appointed special master, but not until 2024.

New Yorkers voted, based on the *latest assembly district maps*, approved in February 2022, in the June 28, 2022 primary elections for statewide offices, the State assembly, for judicial delegates, alternates and local offices.

Temporary Bus Stop Relocation

NYC Department of Design & Construction (DDC) has issued a bulletin regarding a temporary Jerome Avenue bus stop relocation for Buses 4 and 20 at East

233rd Street, effective 24/7 from June 13 to Aug. 31. Please walk 300 ft south on Jerome Avenue to the temporary bus stop.

Affordable Housing Lotteries

An affordable housing lottery launched for units at 304 East 134th Street in Port Morris. The deadline to apply is July 15, 2022. For more information, visit: <https://housingconnect.nyc.gov/PublicWeb/details/2895>.

An affordable housing lottery launched for units at Williamsbridge Gardens in Williamsbridge. The deadline to apply is August 18, 2022. For more information, visit: <https://housingconnect.nyc.gov/PublicWeb/details/2977>.

An affordable housing lottery launched for units at 6327 Broadway. The deadline to apply is Sept. 8, 2022. For more information, visit: <https://housingconnect.nyc.gov/PublicWeb/details/2917>.

An affordable housing lottery launched for units at 2434 Bronx Park East, Bronx, NY 10467. The deadline to apply is Aug 1, 2022. For more information, visit <https://housingconnect.nyc.gov/PublicWeb/details/2997>.

An affordable housing lottery launched for units at The Allerton, 683 Thwaites Pl, Bronx, NY 10467. The deadline to apply is Sept 10, 2022. For more information, visit <https://housingconnect.nyc.gov/PublicWeb/details/2838>.

Free Breast Cancer Screenings on July 17

Breast cancer screenings for women over 40, hosted by District 11 City Council Member Eric Dinowitz, will take place in a mobile clinic on West Mosholu Parkway and Jerome Avenue on Sunday, July 17, from 9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Schedule a no cost mammogram by calling (718) 549 7300 or 1-877-628-9090.

Free Summer Meals

NYC Schools is providing free, summer breakfast and lunch for everyone 18 years old and younger under from June 28 to September 2 at select public schools, pools, and parks. No registration, documentation or ID is required. Find a location at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/summermeals>.

NYC Redistricting

The NYC redistricting process is underway, and some initial hearings have already been held. The July 6 hearing at Hostos Community College can be watched on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_Orh_v_E_Y.

The City's redistricting commission is responsible for redrawing 51 new City Council maps based on the results of the 2020 census and is soliciting public comments via Zoom, by email, by web portal and via QR codes.

Email testimony can be submitted to publictestimony@redistricting.nyc.gov also. The commission can be followed on Twitter at @districtingNYC and on LinkedIn at NYC Districting Commission. The commission's website is nyc.gov/districting.

The commission will vote on new council maps on July 18. Further public hearings will be held on Aug. 15, 16, 17, 18 & 22. The commission will vote on council maps on Sept. 15 and will submit the final plan to the City Council on Sept. 16.

NYCHA-CUNY Scholarships

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)-City University of New York (CUNY) resident scholarships for \$1,000 are now open for applications. Go to on.nyc.gov/nycha-cuny for more information.

Bronx Community College Celebrates Class of 2020 through 2022

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

After a two-year hiatus from the usual on-campus graduation ceremonies, without the need for social distancing, it was a welcome return to normal as Bronx Community College (BCC) Class of 2022 held their commencement ceremony on the college grounds on June 3. The students were joined on the day by the Class of 2020 and the Class of 2021, as well as family and friends, all sitting comfortably under expansive white tents to witness the conferring of associate degrees in the fields of science and arts, on what was a bright sunny morning.

Like many others, the graduating classes of 2020, 2021 and 2022 had encountered some once-in-a-lifetime obstacles along their respective academic journeys to graduation. "It's been [a] last two difficult years," said Dr. Thomas A. Isekenegbe, president of BCC, during his address to the students on the day. "Did anyone here hear of Zoom before 2020?" he joked, in reference to the common experience of so many students at all manner of educational institutions who, throughout the pandemic and along with faculty members, were forced to become adept at learning and teaching remotely through the web conferencing platform. "Did anyone have you on mute or muted before 2020?" Isekenegbe added.

Under normal circumstances, according to the BCC graduates, students take two to four classes per semester for two years, depending on their major. Bruce Mata commuted from Washington Heights for his in-person classes. "Most of [my classes], the majority were online," the 21-year-old told *Norwood News*. "We were experiencing hardships and challenges and obstacles from being on the [computer] screen, learning differently." By the end of his time at BCC, Mata said he had attended just five physical classes on campus. He is now making plans to attend Lehman College for an advanced degree in nursing.



Photo by José A. Giralt

SOON-TO-BE GRADUATES OF Bronx Community College gather under a tent on the college campus for the conferring of degrees as part of the commencement ceremony in the University Heights neighborhood on Friday, June 3, 2022.

Overall, the printed commencement program brochure listed 731 students graduating as part of the Class of 2022. The school offers a selection of more than 40 academic majors or certificate programs. This year 327 graduates received their associate of arts degrees in fields such as criminal justice, English, history, and psychology. Associate in applied science degrees were conferred on 180 students, including the fields of accounting, automotive technology, graphic design and digital arts. Associate of science degrees were conferred on 224 students in fields ranging from biotechnology to business administration to dietetics and nutrition science among others.

Living just two blocks away from the college, Angely Estevez decided BCC was a logical choice when it came to starting her academic career. Once admitted, however, she realized it was more than just the proximity that made the school the right fit. "I felt supported by the teachers and the students here," she told *Norwood News*. With an associate degree in biology, Estevez, 21, is now also considering pursuing a bachelor's degree in nursing at Lehman College.

In addition to taking in the words of praise and encouragement from the faculty, school trustees and a few fellow students, graduates also heard from some of New York's elected



Photo by José A. Giralt

NEW YORK CITY Council Member Pierina Sanchez (C.D. 14) addresses the 2022 graduates of Bronx Community College in the University Heights neighborhood on Friday, June 3, 2022.

officials. Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson also took the occasion to acknowledge that the students' paths to graduation had not been easy. "Today's commencement is a culmination of commitment, dedication, hard work, and a true labor of love," Gibson told the crowd. "Graduates, you have done an incredible job.... Make sure that you hold your head up high and be proud of your journey, because you have earned your right to be here. You have set your footprint in the history of Bronx Community College!"

Another elected official,

who currently represents the college's neighborhood of University Heights at the City Council level, actually started her college preparation journey at BCC. Before attending the universities of Harvard and Princeton, District 14 Council Member Pierina Sanchez was enrolled as a 13-year-old in the "Upward Bound Program" at BCC. The program helps high school students interested in attending college with tutoring, counseling, and workshop/seminars to help explain the college application process.

Sanchez reminded the graduates of how their journey at BCC could inspire others. "Nobody is more resilient than our Bronx people," she said. "Nobody has been through what you've been through. You've heard this before, and I'm saying it again. You got this! This is a beginning; this is an opportunity. People are watching you... and you are an inspiration!"

Perhapsthemarqueeplayer among the invited speakers on the special day was U.S. Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer. However, he was nowhere to be found during the speeches nor during the conferring of degrees by the school's president and provost. Minutes before the end of the ceremony, the senator showed up with an understandable excuse for his tardiness. "I had a very nice speech I prepared,

but I have an excuse why I was late," Schumer explained.

"I was at the hospital at 2:16 yesterday morning where my daughter gave birth to my granddaughter," he added. The senator then promptly tore up the pages of his speech amid cheers from the crowd, ended his brief visit instead by praising the latest three classes of graduates. "Congratulations to the great class of Bronx Community College 2020, 2021, 2022!" he said. "You're the greatest!"

BCC campus consists of 34 buildings, spread across 45 acres of the University Heights-based campus. The college's website describes it as the "most historic" in the CUNY system and it has been designated a national historic landmark. The oldest buildings, including the famous Hall of Fame colonnade, were originally built in the 1850s as part of New York University (NYU)'s uptown campus. Eventually, NYU sold the property and BCC started operating at the location in the fall of 1973.

Meanwhile, for the Class of 2022, graduating in-person with their fellow classmates meant a lot, especially in view of the year and a half most of them had spent attending classes on Zoom. Jeffrey Laryea, 20, wanted to attend a community college with a campus that had green open spaces in addition to a rigorous academic training. BCC fit the bill for this student who commuted from his home in the Concourse neighborhood. "I'm really grateful for this because a lot of my friends graduated over Zoom," Laryea said.

Graduating with an associate science degree in business administration, Laryea has set his eyes on a bachelor's degree from Baruch College's Zicklin School of Business. "[I want to] pursue my dream of owning my own business" he said. Reflecting on the specialness of the day, Laryea kept it simple, summing it up by saying, "I'm blessed!"



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Public and Community Meetings

The 52nd PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL meetings usually take place on the third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m., sometimes physically and sometimes virtually. Call the 52nd Precinct Community Affairs office at (718) 220-5824 to be added to the email list. Proof of vaccination is required for in-person meetings.

The council's Fellowship Recognition Breakfast will be held on Tuesday, July 26, at 10 a.m. at Monroe College. Donations of \$10 are being accepted.

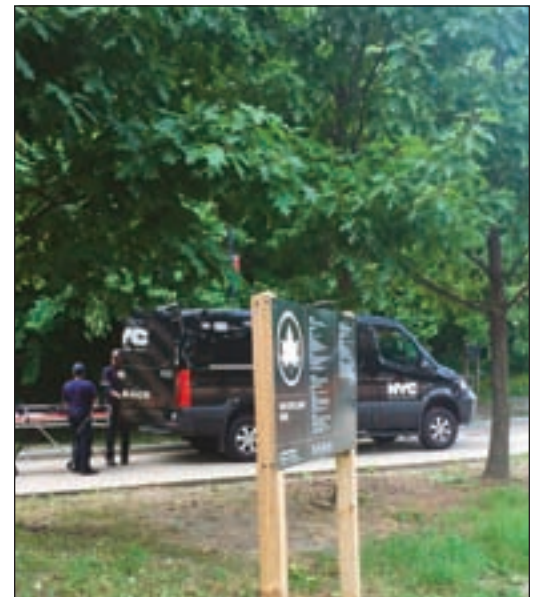
Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 7** meetings have been held via ZOOM. The next full board meeting will be held in September (date TBC) after the summer hiatus and is targeted to be held physically but this is to be confirmed. Contact KCabreraCarrera@cb.nyc.gov to be added to the distribution list.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, **BEDFORD MOSHOLU COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION** meetings have been held via ZOOM. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 7, at 8 p.m. For further details, contact bedfordmosholu@verizon.net.

Body Found in Van Cortlandt Park

By SILE MOLONEY

Police said an unidentified adult male was discovered hanging from a tree inside Van Cortlandt Park on July 6 and was pronounced deceased at the scene. There was no identification on the person. No apparent criminality is suspected but the Medical Examiner is to determine further. *Norwood News* was made aware of the incident at around 3 p.m. that day and spoke to some people at the nearby Woodlawn subway station. One worker at Last Stop Convenience Store had just arrived for his evening shift when he heard from his colleague that a man had died. He said he understood he was from a nearby residence.



VEHICLES AND SOME officials from the Office of the City's Medical Examiner, the NYPD, and NYC Parks are seen outside a cordoned off section of Van Cortlandt Park at Jerome Avenue and Bainbridge Avenue, close to Woodlawn subway station, in Norwood on July 6, 2022. Police later confirmed a body had been found in the woods.

Carnival Under the Sunshine!

(continued from page 1)

lies and members of the Latin community who showed to join in the festivities.

Speaking in Spanish, festival participant, Anny, said, "We're very grateful for the activities that the community has here in The Bronx, grateful for everyone to have this festival for all the residents here. We're having a great time, thank you," she said.

Another younger festival goer, Esther, 8, said the best part of the festival was the trampoline as it was her first time to try it. She said she wished they had one at school. Asked what else she liked about the festival, she said, "You could get toys and it's fun!" She added that she'd like to see more festivals like it in the neighborhood. Asked about the importance of her Latin heritage, Esther said, "I'm very proud."

A senior female resident, Carmen Gomez, who has lived in the Bronx for many years, said it was the first time such a festival had been arranged at the Kingsbridge Heights location. Speaking in Spanish, she said, "It's well organized." She added that she would have liked to have heard more "Spanish" music.

Food vendor, Janet, who was manning the La Braza booth with her dad, Luis, and her colleague, Joen, said they are participate in the Bronx Night Market, the Queens Night Market and another market in New Jersey, as well as in other events like the Puerto Rican Day Parade and another organized by the Ecuadorian Center. She said business had been kind of slow on the day, which she put down to the weather being so hot.

Miley Ramos, 13, had just celebrated her birthday recently and was attending with her family. Asked for her reaction to the festival, she said, "It's actually really fun. I really like it. I'm really enjoying it." Asked if it was the first Latin festival to take place in the area, she said, "Yeah, usually no one would do this around here. It [a regular day] would just be simple...people walking past, going to school and stuff like that."

Asked about the importance of Latin culture, Miley said, "Basically, it means to, like, support your country with other people and stuff, to show that you're actually Latina, to dance. Basically, the music comes from Latinos. Basically, "reggaetón" comes



Photo by Sile Moloney

LOCAL RESIDENTS ATTEND the Carnival de la Cultura Latina (Carnival of Latin Culture) which took place under the sunshine on Sunday, July 10, 2022, at West 195th Street and Reservoir Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights.



Photos by Sile Moloney

LA HAPPY BRONXITE enjoys the Carnival de la Cultura Latina (Carnival of Latin Culture) which took place under the sunshine on Sunday, July 10, 2022 at West 195th Street and Reservoir Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights.

PERFORMERS ENTERTAIN THE crowds during the Carnival de la Cultura Latina (Carnival of Latin Culture) which took place under the sunshine on Sunday, July 10, 2022 at West 195th Street and Reservoir Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights.

A YOUNG FAMILY attends the Carnival de la Cultura Latina (Carnival of Latin Culture) which took place under the sunshine on Sunday, July 10, 2022 at West 195th Street and Reservoir Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights.

from the Dominican Republic and Salsa, but the food, it comes from Puerto Rico so it's really actually fun to be Dominican and Puerto Rican. I'm Dominican only.

Asked if it was nice to have a day where all Latin communities could celebrate together, in addition to individual days for



ESTHER, 8, ENJOYS THE Carnival de la Cultura Latina (Carnival of Latin Culture) which took place under the sunshine on Sunday, July 10, 2022 at West 195th Street and Reservoir Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights.

each country, she said, "Yeah, you can do it any day if you feel like it. Dominican people, we just go to like a street and cover the street"

She said on Dominican Day, itself, "There's like this suit that Dominican people wear and there's like this long rope and they start whipping the air and stuff and it makes a lot of noise, and that's also how Puerto Rican

people do it [too] but us, Dominican people, we do it way different. It's actually fun both ways. I like it. The masks are really scary, but like it's funny at the same time because they make different designs.

Asked if it was a bit like the Chinese dragons, she said "Yeah! It's like that. We do it in DR too. We do it down here too [in The Bronx] but somewhere farther [on Dominican Day] so that we can't get in trouble or nothing bad happens."

She added, "Mexican people do the same thing. It's just that they do it in Mexico. They do the same thing as we do. They take a mask and start whipping. My friend is Mexican, and she does the same thing for her culture. I actually thought it was pretty cool that Mexicans and Dominicans are doing the same thing when they celebrate their own culture.

Miley said she wasn't really into the music that was being played but it was ok. "Basically, I like reggaetón so...particularly, I like Bad Bunny and stuff. I'm a really big fan of him." Asked if it would be a good idea to mix up the music to cater for all generations, she said, "

Yeah, because there's some people that don't really know these kinds of music so I think they should.

"Consuelo" was manning the Mary Kay make-up and skincare stand. "We're very happy to return to being in physical contact with people again, no longer doing business virtually here, taking in the sunshine, getting to know the people, and sharing," she said in Spanish. "This festival is important to get to know everyone."

She said there had been a lot of people passing by and that people seemed to be now more comfortable going out and walking in the streets. She said physical interaction was good for people's mentality too in terms of "love" and "hugs that they needed."

Asked what being Latina meant to her, Consuelo said, "It represents love, community, connection, human warmth, happiness, joy, music, enthusiasm, sol, to be successful!"

Meanwhile, when asked the same question, Elisa Alemin said, "I don't know. I just love it! I love the culture. I love the food. Everybody is free, not only Latina, just being alive. It's so important for everybody to just love each other."

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