



# NORWOOD NEWS

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## RIVERA & CAMILO FACE OFF IN S.D. 33



Photo of Gustavo Rivera by Miriam Quiñones.

Photo of Miguelina Camilo courtesy of Miguelina Camilo

**STATE SEN. GUSTAVO** Rivera (S.D. 33) and former NYC Board of Elections commissioner, Miguelina Camilo, faced off in a debate hosted by Schneps Media on Monday, July 25, 2022, in the context of the State Democratic primary race for redrawn senate district 33.

By **EMILY SAWAKED & SÍLE MOLONEY**

The recent State and congressional redistricting process has been confusing to put it mildly,

but it has had one benefit. Because the State senate and congressional primary elections have been delayed to Aug. 23, it means voters have had more

time to get to know the candidates aiming to represent them in 2023.

On Monday, July 25, Schneps Media hosted a debate between

the two Democratic candidates running for the “new” Senate District 33 seat. They are incumbent, progressive State Sen.

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**Tracey Towers' Monica Akua Remembered** | pg 2



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# NORWOOD NEWS

## Vol. 35, No. 15

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# Memorial Held at Tracey Towers for Monica Akua

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

Eight days after the tragic and fatal stabbing of Tracey Towers mother, Monica Akua, neighbors, community members, church friends, and elected officials gathered at the Jerome Park twin-tower housing complex to remember a beloved resident.

The memorial follows a candlelit vigil, also held at the towers, in memory of Akua on Monday, July 18, organized by “We All Really Matter (W.A.R.M.)” a Harlem-based organization supporting people affected by domestic violence. Akua’s daughter, Doris, flew in from Georgia to attend the July 22 memorial and grieve along with her brother, Joel, who, we understand, lives in New York. Their mother was 52.

With the emotional pain of her loss still too raw, neither Doris nor Joel was ready to speak about their mother to *Norwood News*, but Joel made sure to direct some of his mother’s friends and fellow churchgoers to us to share some memories of their mom.

A topic that came up repeatedly, as a stream of her friends shared stories about the late 52-year-old, was how much she loved to cook for others, especially at special events. “She loved to cook,” said fellow church member, Hilda [last name withheld], who referred to Akua as her “sister.” She added, “Whether somebody’s having a party, a funeral, whatever, you call her; she’s there. She [didn’t] mind cooking for 50 people, 100 people. She loved to cook, and she loved to give. We’re going to miss her.”

Indeed, at first, it was a little confusing to understand exactly how many sisters Akua had, since so many women identified themselves as Akua’s “older sister” or “younger sister,” a term of endearment. Felicia Omari said Akua had treated her as “a big sister.” In return, Omari said she gave her friend the nickname “Lovey.”

Omari added, “She came into my life and supported me a lot. Even when I’m at work, she called me [and would say] ‘Miss Felicia, I cook for you, so when you get here, come to my house and pick up the food. I’m not going to close the door; just come in.’ So, when I go, I just open the door and say, ‘I’m here!’”

As reported by *Norwood News*, Akua’s partner, Anthony Erzuah, 59, was charged with alleged murder, manslaughter and criminal possession of a weapon in the context of her death, shocking the residents of the 876-unit Mitchel Lama housing complex, known for its tight-knit Ghanaian community.

In a sad twist to the tragedy, according to her friends, Akua had used up all her sick days from her job to take care of her partner since he reportedly suffered



Photo by José A. Giralt

**A FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH** of the late Monica Akua is placed on a chair in front of family and friends attending a memorial at Tracey Towers, located at 40 West Mosholu Parkway in the Jerome Park section of The Bronx on Friday, July 22, 2022. Akua, 52, a resident of the towers, died during an apparent act of domestic violence in her home on July 14, 2022.

from an undisclosed illness. A memorial attendee who worked closely with Akua knew of the dilemma the Tracey Towers resident had been facing. The person said they saw in Akua a person who relied on her faith to get through tough times. “She had always had God inside her,” the person said. When Monica needed help resetting her password, she requested it be set to “God’s Love.”

The plague of domestic violence and the need to both address it and help prevent it was also discussed at the July 22nd memorial. Representatives from the Mayor’s Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence were in attendance to help anyone in need of more information.

District 11 City Councilman Eric Dinowitz, State Sen. Gustavo Rivera (S.D. 33), and Assemblymember Nathalia Fernandez (A.D. 80), the latter two running for reelection on Aug. 23, were seen and heard offering both condolences and help, via their respective offices, to Akua’s family.

Officially starting at 4 p.m. and held in an open space next to Tracey Towers’ reopened playground atop the parking garage, the memorial was still going strong by sunset at around 8.15 p.m. When asked what time it was expected to end, Joel replied, “I think we’ll be here till midnight.”

Jean Hill, president of Tracy Towers Tenants Organization, said she knew of Akua’s reputation for cooking and sharing with others. “Here was a beautiful soul who reached out to everyone in her community, always working to do something positive,” Hill said. Asked about whether the tragedy could be used to shed a light on the issue of domestic violence, Hill expressed optimism that it could.

“If anything, this really shone a spotlight on how people can be suffering in silence and we intend to be silent no more,”

she said. “We intend to do programs here at Tracey Towers to educate people on domestic violence, because it not only happens to women, it also happens to men. We need to let people know there’s help out there for you. We’re going to make sure that you have all of that information.”

Meanwhile, Victoria (last name withheld) told us that back in Ghana, her sister had directed her to meet up with Akua when she arrived at Tracey Towers to learn how to navigate The Bronx. “When I came here, I met her and she took me as a little sister,” Victoria said.

“She always [came] to my house. We [went] shopping. She [was] in my house with my children. She loved children, she loved my kids,” said Victoria. “She loved everybody. She’s a lovely sister. She’s our dear sister and I miss her dearly. She has a big heart, and she has a kind heart. She loved everybody.”

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).

From July 1, 2020, to Dec. 31, 2021, The Bronx recorded the highest percentage (7 percent) of chronic domestic violence complaints (797) of all City boroughs, relative to its population. The NYPD offers help and support in relation to domestic violence and guidance on how to protect against stalkers. If you are in immediate danger, if you can, call 911.

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

*\*Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*

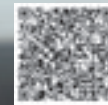


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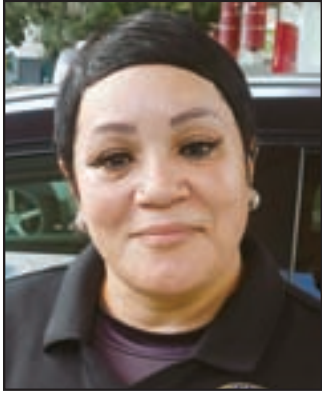
## Montefiore Einstein Neurosurgery

# INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



With U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand calling for an investigation into potentially unfair business practices by the airline industry during record delays and cancellations, we asked readers about their recent experiences at City airports.



"I've had some problems changing flights; we had delays, yes, all of that. Right now, my grandson is coming back from Florida, and they just switched his flight to Sprint. So right now, we're waiting for his COVID test. He's been stuck for two days already. No, the airline didn't put him up in a hotel; my son took him home and now he has to go back to the airport. My problem was switching flights, but I made it home. Getting out of New York is not the problem; coming into New York is the problem. The airlines aren't helping people at all. Yes, I do think they should investigate the industry. I think the companies should reimburse people. At the very least, they should not charge extra for the ticket in order to change flights, as it's not your fault."

Debra Richards,  
Mt. Vernon, NY  
Photo by David Greene



"While driving up to the airport ramp, there was nowhere for me to pick up my brother, whose flight was delayed coming in from Puerto Rico. There were all these double-parked cars and taxis, but no police present. I called my brother and he told me he's still on the plane, and the plane had no permission to open the gates and they had no air conditioning, and the planes were coming in back-to-back. On the plane, babies were crying, and they offered no water to passengers, and then they couldn't find the planes' luggage due to the delay. We just drove around and around until he got his luggage, a waste of time and gas, horrible! My brother has a medical condition, and it could have been really bad because his medication was in his luggage. There was turmoil all around, people running to other airlines to rebook flights, crowds pushing and yelling. My brother made it out after a 3-hour delay. Yes, an investigation is needed into the practice of double-booking a flight."

Sandra Pabon,  
Norwood  
Photo courtesy of Sandra Pabon, Norwood



"As I travel, I haven't been impacted too much so far. I'm now in Valencia. First, it was Iceland and no delays with Icelandic Airlines, which was sort of a nice surprise. From Iceland to Ireland, I used a little-known carrier with no delay. We have been using trains for now and the next stop is Italy, and then the United Kingdom. I can understand the delays and cancellations as airlines cope with the higher cost of fuel and health issues. There were many, many tourists at all of the places we've visited, and it's been hot all over, except for Iceland."

Lewis Chaim,  
Pelham Bay  
Photo courtesy of Lewis Chaim



"It's frustrating when you have dancers that you've booked at events, and they miss out on events when they come back home. Last week, two of my dancers got stuck. They were supposed to leave early from Miami so they could get to another show in New York, but that didn't work. They were delayed again so they came the next day. Today, another dancer's plane was delayed. What's the cause? This not only affects the person, but the projects or jobs they're involved with. To go through all these headaches is sad, especially when you're working as a nonprofit organization and these delays affect our projects and programs."

Violeta Galagarza,  
Manhattan  
Photo courtesy of Violeta Galagarza



"My friend left for his flight at 3 p.m. yesterday, and he just texted now, a whole 24-hours later, that he just got home from a 3-hour flight. He was there on time and the flight was cancelled and he wasn't told why. He's just been waiting out there. It kind of sucks because people have jobs they have to go back to, and it affects their everyday life because they could get fired or serious consequences can happen from things that they can't control, like a cancelled flight, and they're not giving any explanation. They should investigate because I'm taking a flight in September, and I don't need that happening to me or anyone else. We live in a busy city, and we can't afford our time to be wasted."

Angeli Pagan,  
The Hub  
Photo by David Greene

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# Project Renewal's Bedford Green House Opens

By EMILY SAWAKED

Nearly 1,500 people are recorded as being homeless every month in The Bronx, according to City data, with many living in shelters located around the borough. According to State Sen. Gustavo Rivera (S.D. 33) and one city agency representative we spoke to, various non-profits, government representatives, elected officials and some candidates running for office have been pushing over many years to reduce these numbers and raise awareness of the homelessness crisis in the borough.

One positive result of these sustained local efforts is the opening of Bedford Green House, a supportive permanent housing project located at 2865 Creston Avenue in Bedford Park. Designated for people previously living in shelters, the complex was formally opened on Thursday, July 14, following its conception in 2014.

Built by the nonprofit, Project Renewal, which serves the entire City, in conjunction with NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development, Bedford Green House offers various support services to its residents. It also houses a community room, two elevators, a bicycle storage room, a laundry room, a 24-hour front desk concierge, a rooftop terrace, a rooftop greenhouse and a playground.

Eric Rosenbaum, CEO and president of Project Renewal, told *Norwood News*, "The site was acquired in 2014. We closed on the financing in 2015, and that meant that the demolition of construction could start then. The building got its temporary certificate of occupancy at the end of December of 2021, and we started moving our first residents in, in January."

However, the project faced several challenges along the way, according to Rosenbaum, ranging from a conflict with the contractor to the giant boulder rock that is now a per-



Photo by Sile Moloney

**MAYOR ERIC ADAMS**, Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson, State Sen. Gustavo Rivera, Bedford Green House resident, Alexis Reid, join other government officials at a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the opening of the supportive housing complex, located at 2865 Creston Avenue in Bedford Park on Thursday, July 14, 2022.

manent fixture on the property.

Rosenbaum said one challenge was understanding the scope of the rock interface at the site, the second was on September 11, 2019, when the general contractor went bankrupt. "The building was, at that point, 90 percent completed, but they just stopped, and the clock is ticking for us, whether they're building it or not," he said, adding that their insurance policy only remained active as long as construction was ongoing.

Then, the pandemic hit. "When we brought a [new] contractor in, labor was a problem. Getting people to show up to work was a problem, and then the supply chain disruptions happened," Rosenbaum said. "I remember there were 21 increases in the price of dry-wall while we were building the rest of the building. So, it took at least three years longer than it should [have] to bring the building to completion."

Now, residents spoke to appear to appreciate their new home, whether it be the playground out front or the rooftop garden which includes a fish tank. The apartments, too, are quaint and cozy, with a modern style to each of the hallways and living spaces.

Alexis Reid, one of the

here."

Reid and her son lived at a women and children's shelter in The Bronx prior to their move. Now, she said, she gets to live rent-free with her son in the new building. She said because there is only one bedroom, her son gets to use it, while she sleeps in the living room. Still, living in the building, she said, has been a dream come true.

Reid added that as she watched construction on the project unfold, she always wondered if she could eventually live there and luckily, she got selected. Because of the garden, she and her son get to eat the vegetables they grow,

ect come to life in the neighborhood. "I'm an enormous believer in supportive housing," he said. "When I first began my tenure 11 years ago, I didn't know what it was. When it was explained to me, when I started to talk to folks like Alexis, folks who have been served by it, these are folks that, whatever situation they've had in their lives, have never had real stability."

The senator said housing like Bedford Green provides stability for people who have experienced a lot of instability. "It has absolutely demonstrated that not only does it provide stability to them as individuals but by extension, to their families and to the communities that they live in. Affordable housing structures like this one actually strengthen the community as a whole," Rivera said.

He is also pushing for more State funding for more supportive housing in the district. "I think we need to do more at the state level, honestly. Not only will I come to things like this, and [will] talk endlessly about how essential it is, I will talk to my neighbors," he said.

Project Renewal will soon start Phase II of the project, which includes the opening of an additional building on Jerome Avenue, and even more amenities. Rosenbaum said the new building will house 116 apartments, a primary care clinic and a children's library and the two buildings will be connected by a garden courtyard and pathway.

He said the nonprofit is constantly scouting the borough for new sites that have the potential to help the neighborhood and those living in it, and said he encouraged residents to reach out to him if they know of any such sites.

Meanwhile, of her new home, Reid said, "I feel like it's an outlet and it gives so many of us a chance to experience things that we otherwise wouldn't have experienced."



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

**MAYOR ERIC ADAMS**, Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson, Adolfo Carrión Jr., Housing commissioner and a representative from Project Renewal check out the rooftop garden at Bedford Green house, located at 2865 Creston Avenue in Bedford Park during the grand opening of the housing complex on Thursday, July 14, 2022.

building's residents who spoke at the opening ceremony, said, "It's helped me make great strides in my mental health. It's helped me get on a more stable, better foundation; it's really been amazing here!" She added, "I really take advantage of the amenities. I love everything here from the occupational groups to gardening. I spend a lot of time in this front park with my son. He takes advantage of the amenities as well. We both love it

which she said makes grocery shopping a little easier. Now, Reid is starting her journey to become a nurse.

Among other officials, present for the grand opening were Mayor Eric Adams, Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson, and Rivera, each of whom was presented with a piece of the Bronx boulder rock that forms part of the building's façade.

Rivera said it was incredibly exciting to see the proj-



# NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY

## Clark Leads Fight against Gun Manufacturers

Prosecutors Against Gun Violence (PAGV) led by co-chairs, Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark and Joyce Dudley, Santa Barbara County district attorney, joined 16 American cities, including New York, and three Texas district attorneys on July 8 to oppose, through the courts, legal attempts by Texas gun kit manufacturer, Division 80, to prohibit the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) from regulating “ghost guns.”

Division 80 filed suit in May in Texas on Second Amendment grounds, after a new federal rule in April, curbing the manufacturing of ghost gun kits was announced. The Biden administration's opposition brief to the lawsuit was filed on July 1. PAGV and allies support the federal government's position.

Clark and Dudley said prosecutors were already seeing the benefits of the new ATF rule. PAGV's court filing cites several incidents involving ghost gun kits, stressing how their widespread availability undermines efforts by law enforcement and prosecutors to keep the public safe. PAGV and allies also stressed the importance of laws prohibiting convicted felons and domestic abusers from possessing firearms.

## DOC Employees Charged with Reckless Endangerment

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark, and NYC Department of Investigation Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber announced that an NYC Department of Correction (DOC) captain and three DOC officers have been charged for failing to help an inmate who had attempted suicide by hanging himself in a holding cell in Rikers Island in 2019. The inmate suffered significant brain damage.

After almost 8 minutes, the employees ultimately attempted to cut down the victim and he fell to the ground, limp. They began CPR and called for medical assistance. We have asked for clarification from the District Attorney's office as to the reason for the delay.

## Jacobi Doctor Leads National Healthcare Research & Quality

NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi chief executive officer, Christopher Mastromano, announced on Monday, July 25, that Dr. Komal Bajaj, Jacobi's chief

# 17-Year-Old Apparent Sex Trafficked Victim Found in Wakefield

By SÍLE MOLONEY

A 17-year-old girl who had been reported missing in Brooklyn was found by a nonprofit representative at a motel in the Wakefield section of the Bronx on Saturday, July 23. The nonprofit's representative, whose name we are not disclosing but who spoke with *Norwood News* directly, said the girl is a likely victim of sex trafficking. The nonprofit works with sex trafficking victims and survivors to educate youth on the dangers of falling prey to what is an estimated billion-dollar, worldwide industry, as previously reported.

The girl's mother, whose identity we are also withholding, and who drove to the Wakefield location from Brooklyn on Saturday, told *Norwood News*, “This morning, I got a call saying that they spotted my daughter.” Asked if she had been missing, the mother said, “She's been a runaway. I've been calling the precincts, telling them. They come out, and they do absolutely nothing,” she added.

The girl's mother said when she contacted the NYPD about her daughter's whereabouts, officers allegedly told her they knew her daughter, that she was safe, and that she answered her phone and responded to them when they checked on her. The girl's mother said the situation was very difficult to manage for the victim's family.

She explained that when she was

alerted by the nonprofit to her daughter's sighting in The Bronx, she went to the motel and asked the staff, “Have you seen this girl?” She said they allegedly replied, “No.” She eventually reached her daughter by phone and her daughter agreed to go outside and meet her.

NYPD officers and EMTs were seen at the location and attempts were made to encourage the 17-year-old to leave the area and accept medical and other assistance, which she eventually did, though she appeared somewhat agitated and distressed. Bills of varying amounts of varying amounts could be seen stuffed inside her clothing.

*Norwood News* is not disclosing the name of the motel until the manager has had a chance to provide a comment on the incident. We have attempted to speak with him but have been unsuccessful to date.

We also reached out to both the NYPD and Homeland Security [since sex trafficking is a federal crime] to inquire about the circumstances of the incident. We did not receive an immediate response.

The nonprofit representative said the incident was not untypical of the many other days she spends trying to extricate young girls from sex trafficking rings, which she said are run by known gang members in the borough. She said she does her best to house them temporarily, in agreement with Homeland Security

representatives, but that it all costs money. It's also dangerous work and the representative said she has no protection.

She added more laws, programs and funding were needed to assist survivors in starting a new life in a new neighborhood, after an intervention takes place and they receive support and social services. She said this was to prevent them from falling prey to the same gang members in the same neighborhoods once again. Asked if she meant programs similar to witness protection programs, she said, “Yes.” We have raised these points with Homeland Security and will continue to follow up with the agency.

The nonprofit representative has also called for new laws requiring silent alarms to be installed in motels for the benefit of victims, similar to a law recently signed by Gov. Kathy Hochul for the benefit of victims of a mass school shootings. *Norwood News* had asked the governor's office for a comment. We did not receive an immediate response.

Meanwhile, on Saturday, State Sen. Jamaal Bailey shared that bill S3374 has been signed into law and will “combat the scourge of human trafficking by requiring establishments serving liquor to post visible signage with contact info for the trafficking hotline.” Hotels already provide such information. Bailey added, “This is long-overdue and will help save lives.”

quality officer, has been appointed to national advisory council of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).

The AHRQ is a 21-member panel of healthcare experts which contributes a varied perspective on the health care system and the most important questions that AHRQ's research should address in order to promote improvements in the quality, outcomes, and cost-effectiveness of clinical practice. The panel provides advice to the secretary and director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Bajaj is the sole representative for both NYC Health + Hospitals and for New York City on the council and her term will run until May 2025.

## Bronx VA Gets New Executive Director

Dr. Balavankatesh Kanna has been appointed as the new executive director of the James J. Peters

Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center located in Fordham Manor. The news was confirmed on June 13 by Patrick H. Cordova, Major USAF (Ret.), supervisory public affairs specialist at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. According to Cordova, Dr. Kanna received his medical degree from Coimbatore Medical College in India and has served the Bronx community since then, completing his residency in internal medicine 25 years ago in 1997.

## New York Accelerates Electric Bus Adoption

On July 27, 19 U.S. and Canadian jurisdictions, including New York State, which are participating in a multi-state medium and heavy-duty Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) initiative, released an action plan to help fight rising diesel exhaust pollution and greenhouse gas emissions by accelerating the transition to zero-

emission trucks, vans, and buses. The coalition, which includes 17 U.S. states, D.C., and Quebec, developed the plan working through the multi-state ZEV task force facilitated by the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management. The U.S. jurisdictions collectively represent 43 percent of the population, nearly half of the economy, and 36 percent of the nation's medium and heavy-duty vehicles. The initiative will also ease the country's reliance on gas, amid record high prices.

## The Hon. Aurelia Greene Honored at Street Co-Naming

The Hon. Aurelia Greene, former deputy Bronx borough president and former New York State assembly member, was honored on Saturday, July 23, during a street co-naming ceremony at East 168th Street and Teller Avenue, south of Claremont Park recognizing her life and legacy.

Greene served as a mentor to current Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson during her early career, with Gibson describing Greene as her “political mother.” The revered legislator represented District 77 in the State Assembly which comprises Highbridge, Morrisania and Morris Heights. Greene died on May 8, 2021.

## Montefiore Performs Historic Transplant

The world's first HIV-positive to HIV-positive heart transplant has been successfully performed at Montefiore Health System in The Bronx. The patient, in her sixties, suffered from advanced heart failure and received the life-saving donation, along with a simultaneous kidney transplant, in early spring. After the four-hour surgery, she spent five weeks recovering in the hospital and now sees her transplant physicians at Montefiore for monitoring.



# 1961 Freshman Graduates from BCC!

By EMILY SAWAKED

Donning a green cap and gown, and cheered on by countless family members, one Bronx native had an extra special reason to celebrate receiving her associate degree from Bronx Community College (BCC) last month. Having first embarked upon her collegial path in 1961, Mercedes Yadron walked, for the first time, in a college graduation ceremony this past June, following a long life and varied career.

Yadron said she got married and had children soon after she started her studies the first time around. She said it meant she had to leave college, bringing her foundational time in academia to a halt. For a long time, she worked hard, supporting her family with a variety of stable jobs. She started off working as a secretary and then went into the travel business. Her longest career, though, was working for a hotel company for 31 years, but she never let go of her dream of graduating college.

"I worked in the travel business and then in the hotel business, and I did fine, career wise, but I always wanted to go back to school," Yadron told *Norwood News*. "All my sisters are college grads; I'm the oldest, and I'm not and I wasn't [a college graduate]. Every time that I said, 'Okay, that's it! I'm going back,' something else happened."

Yadron continued, "My kids graduated, then it was *their* turn to go [to] school, they finished, I'm going back, then my mother was too elderly, and I had to take care of her." She added, "But I decided to [eventually] go to Bronx Community College and I put in a request. They asked, 'Would you like to speak to an advisor?' She [the advisor] said, 'You used to be a student here; this was the last school you went to, so we can just reinstate you. That's how I went back.'"

However, Yadron had no idea what was coming next. She started back at BCC at the start of the spring semester in 2020, just before the pandemic hit! She said the challenge during the pandemic was that not all professors were computer savvy, with some older professors knowing how to use a computer for certain tasks only. "To transition to Zoom and to run a class [was difficult], and so every single one of them using the same system would have different set-ups," said Yadron. She also noted that most of the students would have their cameras off, making class participation lackluster, which was disappointing to Yadron.

"You made a commitment; that's the commitment you made and if you couldn't honor that commitment, you shouldn't have made it," she said.

Despite these frustrations, because of her hard work, Yadron was a well-loved student by her classmates and professors alike. One of her more difficult professors, she said, sent her a "very kind message" at the end of the semester, offering her an internship at a business



Photo courtesy of Mercedes Yadron  
**MERCEDES YADRON WITH** her son and daughter at her graduation at Bronx Community College, located at 2155 University Avenue in the University Heights section of The Bronx, on Friday, June 3, 2022.

with which he had a connection. She was one of six students offered the position.

"I didn't do it because I wasn't interested in this," said Yadron. "I told him, 'I'm not interested at all in going into business but thank you very much for considering me.' So, we ended up on a nice note," she said.

Despite her lack of interest in working in business, it was an associate degree in business Yadron earned, since she had already accumulated some credits in that field. She said she originally pursued it back in the day for several reasons, most of which were practical, like her interest in math. Now, though, she is pursuing something different.

"What I wanted to do, honestly, was go to a school and say 'Look, let me take whatever courses I want.' I found this course of study called religion and part of it is that it's an interdisciplinary situation, and what's involved is the anthropology department, sociology department, archeology, all those things," Yadron said. "So that's what I'm registering for now, starting September." She is set to attend Hunter College in the fall.

As for the BCC graduation, itself, Yadron described it as something akin to a pep rally, with around 1,500 graduates waiting to receive their diplomas

and the families of the students waiting eagerly in their chairs, set up on the lawn.

"It was really well done, really well

done, by some good speakers," said Yadron. "Getting ready for it and all that was good. They had these beautiful big tents and one, it was set up when we were doing rehearsal, and I thought, 'Oh, okay, this thing is big enough that the graduates will be in the front and the visitors will be in the back. No! The entire tent was graduates, but the grounds were big enough that they had chairs towards the back, or everybody was on the sides of it. All the professors were actually like a color guard in a way; we marched in, and they were on either side,'" she said.

Yadron only had good things to say about the BCC faculty and staff, noting they were always there to help the students out. "They do everything in their power, the whole organization, for people to succeed," she said.

The new graduate also had plenty of nice comments for her fellow classmates, who helped get her back into college life. "Beautiful campus, professional and caring professors, and staff whose purpose it is to see you succeed," she said. Yadron also had a piece of advice for anyone who has a dream like hers.

"If you want to do something, just do it! Just ask the question. Find someone who can help you, look for resources that can guide you, but just do it! Put one foot in front of the other and just do it and don't get discouraged!"

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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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# Rivera & Camilo Face Off in S.D. 33

(continued from page 1)

Gustavo Rivera, who represents the existing District 33 until Jan. 1, 2023, at which point the “new” S.D. 33 lines [approved in May 2022] take effect, and his challenger, lawyer and former NYC Board of Elections commissioner, Miguelina Camilo.

The S.D. 33 showdown has been tipped as a race to watch, mainly due to what some perceive as a surprise decision by the Bronx Democratic Party to throw its weight behind the District 33 challenger over its incumbent. While the race may appear to some as another microcosm of the push and pull dynamics that prevail within the wider Democratic Party in terms of center-left versus far-left ideology, there are other factors at play.

The new District 33 broadly encompasses Norwood, Bedford Park, Fordham, Belmont, parts of Tremont, Van Nest and Allerton, Spuyten Duyvil, Fieldston, Riverdale and North Riverdale. Rivera said the new District 33 will include about 50 percent of the current District 33. Meanwhile, until the end of this year, Norwood, parts of Bedford Park, Spuyten Duyvil, Fieldston, Riverdale and North Riverdale fall under District 36, currently represented by State Sen. Jamaal Bailey.

As background, Camilo originally ran to represent Senate District 34, when the incumbent, State Sen. Alessandra Biaggi, announced she was running for Congress. The party endorsed Camilo for *that* seat at that time. After the redrawing of the district maps by a court-appointed special master in May 2022, Camilo switched to run in S.D. 33, being that it is the new senate district in which she lives [previously S.D. 34]. As such, she retained the endorsement of the party. Meanwhile, Rivera continues to live in S.D. 33, despite the redrawing of the district lines.

Camilo was first to provide her opening statement. “I am a first-generation immigrant daughter of a bodega owner,” she said, in part. “I worked in that bodega with my father and I, firsthand, saw the value of hard work and the importance of an education as a path to a better life. I am the first in my family to go to college and law school, and I’ve been an attorney now for over 10 years, working throughout the Bronx in family and criminal court matters, where I looked out for the most vulnerable families in our community.”

She added, “I offer a unique perspective to the ongoing troubles in our district. I am running for office because in

my 10 years as an attorney, I have seen people in their most difficult moments and have witnessed how easy it is to be overlooked.”

In his opening statement, Rivera, who is also running on the Working Families Party ticket, said in part, “For those of you who don’t know me, I’m originally from Puerto Rico, got to New York in 1998, moved up to The Bronx in 2000. I was a labor organizer / college professor who ran for Senate in 2010, defeated a guy by the name of Pedro Espada Jr., who then served six years in federal prison after I defeated him for stealing public money.”

He continued, “I’ve been in the Senate for 11 years, and I’m currently the chair of the health committee in the Senate, which is the first time that a person of color or a Bronxite has had that position. In my time in the Senate, I’ve been incredibly proud - whether it’s my legislative achievements or the work that I’ve done, and my community affairs team has done in those last seven years, just in the last couple of years... Bottom line is my commitment to the public, to public service, is the reason I ran in 2010. I want to continue to do that.”

During the Schneps Media debate,

the moderator pressed Rivera about the party’s decision to back his opponent, suggesting that it was perhaps because he was considered too “radical” for the party. Rivera replied, “It’s not radical to want universal healthcare for people, which is my number one legislative priority. I don’t think it’s radical to say that we need to have higher taxes on the wealthy, which is something that I’ve been fighting for, for my entire time in the State Senate. I don’t think it’s radical to say that we need to work on criminal justice reforms that actually treat communities of color more fairly.”

To set the record straight, we asked the Bronx Democratic Party directly why it had not backed Rivera several months ago as it had done for Camilo, before the districts were redrawn in May.

Ariana Collado, the party spokesperson, replied, saying in part, “We did not make endorsements in races where an incumbent did not have an opponent. Before the redrawing of the maps, we did not need to make endorsements because the senators, including Sen. Rivera, did not have a primary. The Bronx Dems endorsed Miguelina when she first an-

(continued on page 15)

## NYBG

AROUND THE TABLE:  
STORIES OF THE  
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# Out & About

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY

## EVENTS

Win Yankees tickets while also helping your community! The **Bronx Clean-Up Series** continues on Aug. 7 in Morris Park. All volunteers get complimentary Yankees tickets and other benefits. Sign up at <https://www.eventbrite.com>, and search using the words "Bronx Clean."

## KIDS

The movie, "**Them!**" 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 28, at 8.30 p.m. All are welcome.

## MUSIC

**Co-op City Concerts** take place on Aug. 2, 9, 10, 16, 23, 24 and 30 at 7 p.m. at Co-Op City. On Aug. 2, Baba Don will be performing (across from Little League). Bring your own chair or blanket. Seating is not provided. For more information, contact the Office of District 12 Councilman Kevin Riley.

**The Bronx Summer Concert Series**, sponsored by Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson and partners, continues each Sunday, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. All are welcome. The event is free.

## MOVEMENT

On Saturday, July 30, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., the FDNY will host a **Football Skills and Drills Camp** in the Williamsbridge Oval, located at 3225 Reservoir Oval East, Bronx, N.Y. There will also be fire safety

education, CPR training, giveaways and more.

Join the **Youth Flag Football League** 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](mailto:Marcus.Riley@parks.nyc.gov). Stay home, if sick.

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](http://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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Letters should be 400 words max, and include the author's name. Anonymous letters will not be published, but names will be withheld upon reasonable request.

## CRIME FILE

BY SÍLE MOLONEY



### Norwood Robbery & Assault

The NYPD is asking for the public's assistance identifying the people seen in the accompanying photo above who are sought for questioning regarding a robbery that occurred in Norwood. Police said that on Monday, July 18, at 9.50 p.m. in front of 3200 Perry Avenue, six people approached an 18-year-old male victim who was walking home, and they demanded his property.

Police said they punched the victim, one male displayed a knife, and they later fled with the victim's t-shirt, keys, shin guards, wallet, AirPods, shoes and backpack. The victim sustained minor cuts and bruises to his face but was not hospitalized.

### Norwood: Forcible Touching Incident

The NYPD is asking for the public's help identifying the person seen in the accompanying photo at right who is sought for questioning regarding a forcible touching incident that occurred in Norwood. Police said on Monday, July 4, at around 4 p.m., in front of 3083 Webster Avenue, a 34-year-old female victim was walking, when a person riding a Citi bike approached her from behind. The person slapped the victim on the buttocks with an open hand before fleeing southbound on Webster Ave-

nue, making a right onto East Mosholu Parkway North, and heading westbound to parts unknown.

The individual is described as an adult male, has a thin build, brown eyes, a medium complexion, a goatee, and short dark hair. He was last seen wearing a white t-shirt, dark colored pants, a Nike black backpack, a black New York Mets baseball cap, and black sneakers. The photo of the suspect was taken in front of 320 East 204th Street.



### Kingsbridge Heights: Non-Fatal Shooting

Detectives from the 52nd Precinct are requesting the public's help locating the person seen in the accompanying photo at right who is sought for questioning in re-

lation to a non-fatal shooting that occurred on the border of Fordham Manor and Kingsbridge Heights. They said the incident took place at the corner of West Kingsbridge Road and Grand Avenue on July 16 at 2.30 a.m. According to police, the person fired a gun, striking a victim in the leg. A reward of up to \$3,500 is available for those with information.

lance is requesting information following an attempted felony assault that occurred in front of 330 East Gun Hill Road in Norwood on Tuesday, July 26, at 3:45 p.m. Police said the suspect shot at a group of people multiple times from the back driver side window of a car (pictured). A reward of up to \$3,500 is being offered for information on the incident. A local business owner



### Norwood: Non-Fatal Shooting

Police are seeking the public's help in relation to a non-fatal shooting that occurred in Norwood. The 52nd Pre-

who is based in the vicinity of the incident said he heard six gunshots, ran into the back room of his store, and called the police. He did not see anyone injured.

### Stabbing in Kingsbridge Heights

Police said a 29-year-old man was arrested following an apparent domestic violence incident at 3300 Bailey Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights on Saturday, July 23, at around 10.30 p.m. Po-

lice said Gilbert Abraham Lopez, 29, of 3044 Bailey Avenue was arrested and charged with alleged assault, menacing, criminal possession of a weapon, and harassment. A person arrested and charged with a crime is deemed innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law.

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).

From July 1, 2020, to Dec. 31, 2021, The Bronx recorded the highest percentage (7 percent) of chronic domestic violence complaints (797) of all City boroughs, relative to its population. The NYPD also offers help and support in relation to domestic violence, and guidance on how to protect against stalkers. If you are in immediate danger, if you can, call 911.

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

**Like us to look into a news story for you? Call us at (718) 324-4998!**





## Letters To The Editor

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

### License the Pot Dealers Now!

The difference between the two major parties is that Republicans are quick to do the wrong thing while Democrats take forever to do the right thing. The latest example is in an article in the Norwood News July 14-27 edition, "Bronx Cannabis Forum Tackles Questions about Emerging Cannabis Market."

Legalized possession and use of recreational marijuana became law [under the Marijuana Regulation & Taxation Act (MRTA)] on March 31, 2021, just shy of one year and four months from the date I'm writing this letter. It took long enough for a Democratic legislature to vote for legalization, and for a Democratic governor to sign the bill.

Now, Democrats are taking their time setting up the structure to actually license people to legally sell it. So, it's legal for you to buy, possess and use, but not for anyone to sell it to you.

The law creates an Office of Cannabis Management (OCM). The job of its representatives is to make sure no one is illegally selling marijuana. Since no licenses have yet to be issued by the State, that is now everyone, except those in the medical marijuana business.

The OCM has sent "cease and desist" letters to 52 stores found to be "illegally" selling this now "legal" product. The store [owners] have been warned that they may be barred from consideration for a State Cannabis license [if they do not cease operations].

The OCM complains that the marijuana they [store owners] are selling has not been "tested." Who will do the "testing?" Can I volunteer? I'd be as eager as the late Victor McLaughlin would have been to "test" whiskey.

Since it takes Democrats forever to do anything, how about this? Let people who are selling a quality product continue to do so. When the licensing system is finally set up, you can license them and others. I suspect that at the turtle speed Democrats work at, the licensing will start around the time Demi Lovato starts collecting social security.

Richard Warren,  
Van Cortlandt Village

*Editor's Note: MRTA applies to those over the age of 21 only. Up to three ounces of cannabis for personal use is allowed, including possession of up to five pounds of cannabis in the home. MRTA legalizes the production, distribution, and use of cannabis.*

*Under MRTA, a proficiency test (PT) means a test that requires a laboratory to produce analytical results within acceptable limits on an analyte or group of analytes, of which the concentration and identity is unknown to the laboratory or its employees but known to a proficiency test provider.*

*"Analyte" means a contaminant, chemical and/or physical property, element, compound, organism, or group of any of the foregoing, the existence and amount of which a laboratory testing facility tests for or identifies in a sample [of cannabis].*

*According to Aspen Recovery Center, cannabis mixed with other depressants [like heroin] can be fatal or cause serious health complications.*

### TV Dinners

July 18, 2022, marks the 70th anniversary of the passing of "TV dinner" inventor, Mr. Gerry Thomas. His employer, Swanson & Company, overestimated the demand for Thanksgiving turkey in 1953. They were stuck with 260 tons of frozen turkeys. The birds were stored for many weeks in ten refrigerated train cars which traveled back and forth on a train between Nebraska and the East Coast. The train had to be moving so the compressors which supported the refrigerators preserving the turkeys could keep working.

In the early 1950s, Thomas observed how airlines provided passengers with meals in aluminum serving trays. He modified this by adding separate sections for the main course, vegetables, and potato. This resulted in the first Swanson TV dinner. For only 89 cents, over 25 million were sold in 1954, which was the first year of production. Many were consumed by customers watching television, which was also still a relatively new invention in the 1950s. Thomas was the marketing genius for Swanson & Company which came up with the name "TV dinner."

Growing up in the 1960s as a teenager, my dad was a teacher during the day and a high school librarian sev-

eral nights per week. On those evenings, I would have to prepare dinner for my younger sister and me. When we tired of the local options such as McDonalds, Wetsons, pizza or Chinese take-out, TV dinners were a quick solution. Selections were provided by either Swanson's, Banquet or Morton's. They were the big three competitors during that era. The standard choices were either chicken, turkey, roast beef or meatloaf, referred to as mystery meat. Cooking time was 30 minutes in the oven, as microwaves hadn't yet been invented.

A real treat in those days were the TV dinners which provided a fourth compartment, containing a brownie for dessert. Sometimes, two TV dinners were required to satisfy your appetite as the portions were never that big. Recycling was unheard of in those days as millions of aluminum TV dinner plates went straight into the garbage can. I can only imagine today how much space was taken up at the local community landfill site over the decades.

The selection of TV dinners at your local supermarket today is much different from those of past generations. Besides Swanson's, Banquet and Morton's, there are many more competitors such as Healthy Choice, Lean Cuisine, Stouffers, Boston Market, Marie Callender's, Hungry Man, and others. Their various product lines offer far more variety and selections. Far healthier choices are available for today's generation on the go.

Even during college and in my post-college bachelor days, TV dinners always found some space in the freezer compartment of my refrigerator. Lucky for me, my wife, Wendy, is a great cook and I've learned some skills in the kitchen, myself, since then. Perhaps the United States Post Office should consider issuing a stamp for Thomas and the TV dinner, still as American as apple pie, 70 years later.

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](mailto:norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org) or by mail to Norwood News, 3400 Reservoir Oval East, Bronx, NY 10467, by the Friday before each publication day. If sent by email, please mark them as "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line. Letter writers should aim to write no more than 450 words. Thank you.*

# Norwood: Beloved Resident Murdered during Downpour

By SÍLE MOLONEY &  
DAVID GREENE

Police said a 19-year-old male has been arrested on murder charges following the fatal stabbing of 35-year-old Nathaniel Rivers of Decatur Avenue in Norwood on Thursday, July 21.

Neighbors told **Norwood News** Rivers was murdered amid a thunderstorm and downpour while sitting in a car with his partner, eating pizza. A pizza box was seen inside the cordoned off car at the crime scene.

One witness said police attempted to save the victim following a stabbing to the chest but to no avail. Another resident, speaking in Spanish, said there was no blood on the street after the incident as the rain had washed it away. The same resident said, to her

knowledge, the victim's partner had not been harmed, and she managed to raise the alarm to get help.

The NYPD later confirmed officers responded to a 911 call at around 1.15 p.m. on Thursday, July 21, regarding an aided man at East 205th Street and Decatur Avenue in Norwood. The Bronx was experiencing a thunderstorm at the time.

"Upon arrival, officers discovered a 35-year-old male with a stab wound to the chest," a police spokesperson said. "EMS responded and transported the victim to St. Barnabas Hospital, where he was pronounced deceased."

The same Spanish-speaking resident, whose name has been withheld, said Rivers was well-known in the neighborhood and well liked. She said

he was often seen facilitating games for local kids.

On hearing of the man's fate, neighbors began to post messages on social media. One user wrote, "Damn I'm in disbelief. R.I.P Nate," while another wrote, "S.I.P. My condolences to his Family n friends." Yet another user wrote, "Rest in Peace Nate. Such a great guy will def be missed. My thoughts and prayers to Lydia his son n his family," while another, "He was well liked but his building has been the sight of problems over the past few years. May he rest in peace."

At around 8.30 p.m. that day, police confirmed Franklin Mesa, 19, also of Decatur Avenue in Norwood was arrested on charges of 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.

Meanwhile, another murder that took place on the same block remains unsolved. Taxi dispatcher, Michael Lorge, 42, lived in the same building as Mesa. Ironically, Lorge was behind the wheel of his car, across the street from his home at 3228 Decatur Avenue, when he was shot two times in the head in the early hours of Feb. 14, 2009.

Police exhausted all leads in the investigation. On Monday, July 25, the NYPD confirmed that Lorge's case remained unsolved. Anyone with any information is asked to call Crime Stoppers at 1 (800) 577-TIPS, all calls remain confidential.

# NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY



## COVID-19 UPDATES Current Trends

As of July 25, citywide COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths had fallen since mid-July, according to trends from NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).

The citywide 7-day average positive percentage rate was 14.2 percent as of July 25, down from the 15.2 percent rate recorded in mid-July. As of July 25, the 7-day percentage positive rate in ZIP code 10468, covering Fordham / Kingsbridge / University Heights, was 13.31 percent (down from 16.55 percent as of mid-July), according to DOHMH.

In ZIP code 10467, covering Allerton / Norwood / Pelham Parkway / Williamsbridge, it was 16.3 percent (down from 18 percent as of mid-July). In ZIP code 10458, covering Belmont / Fordham University / Kingsbridge, it was 13.58 percent (down from 16.5 percent as of mid-July). Meanwhile, in ZIP codes 10470, covering Woodlawn and Wakefield, it was the highest in the borough at 21.16 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.

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

The City's COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation Guidance Tool provides New Yorkers access to order, online, care packages to help them isolate safely and receive COVID-19 therapeutics, including oral antiviral prescriptions and monoclonal antibody treatments. It also offers personalized guidance to those 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.

The mobile-based "Test to Treat" program consists of mobile testing units with clinicians who can provide instant prescriptions for no-cost, antiviral medications for eligible New Yorkers who test positive for COVID-19 at these sites. The mobile units are partnering with local pharmacies to provide immediate distribution of COVID-19 medication based on the prescriptions obtained from the clinicians.

The program is evolving to over 30 mobile units over the month of July and eventually, the mobile units will both prescribe *and distribute* the antiviral medications from the actual mobile units, without the need to go to a pharmacy. Currently, in the Bronx, a mobile unit is partnered and deployed to Burke Avenue Pharmacy, 759 Burke Avenue, Bronx, NY 10467.

## COVID-19 Updates & Key Info

NYSDOH officials say all eligible New Yorkers, 6 months and older, should get vaccinated and get their booster dose, when eligible. Those experiencing symptoms or who have been exposed, should 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.

## August 23 Primary Election

As reported, the NY Supreme Court postponed the congressional and State senate primary elections to 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 replaced the maps previously 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 last day to *postmark* an application to register to vote in the Aug. 23 primary is **July 29**, the last day an *in-person application* to register to vote in the primary *can be received* by the Board of Elections is **July 29**, the last day a *mailed application* to vote in the primary can be received by the Board of Elections is **Aug. 3**, and the change of address deadline for the primary is **Aug. 3**.

The last day the Board of Elections *can receive* an absentee ballot request by application, letter, telefax, other written instrument or via absentee portal request for the primary is **Aug. 8**, early voting for the primary runs **from Aug. 13 to Aug. 21**, and the last day to apply *in person* for an absentee ballot for the primary is **Aug. 22**.

Election Day is **Aug. 23** and polls are open from **6 a.m. to 9 p.m.**, the last day to *postmark* a primary election ballot is **Aug. 23**, the last day to *deliver* a primary ballot *in person* to your county board or any poll site in your county by close of polls is **Aug. 23**, the last day a primary election ballot can be received by the county board is **Aug. 30**.

The poll site typically used by many voters changed "due to redistricting" according to the Board of Elections ahead of the June primaries, preventing many voters from casting their ballot before the polls closed. **Voters are therefore encouraged to check their designated polling site well in advance of voting in the August primary.**

## MoneyPox Outbreak

As of July 25, 1,040 people in New York City have tested positive for monkeypox, and it has been declared a global emergency by the World Health Organization. New York City is considered the epicenter in the U.S. A two-dose vaccination is available, but doses are scarce, and appointments are necessary. Health officials recommend signing up for at least one-dose for those who are eligible.

Mass vaccination sites are available at Bronx High School of Science, 75, W 205<sup>th</sup> Street, and at Lincoln Hospital, 234 E 149<sup>th</sup> Street, on July 30 and 31. Book an appointment by calling 877-VAX-4NYC or 877-829-4692. For more details on vaccine eligibility and more, visit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/monkeypox.page>.

## NYC Redistricting

The NYC redistricting process is underway. The July 6 hearing at Hostos Community College can be watched on YouTube at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K\\_0rh\\_v\\_E\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_0rh_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](mailto: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](http://nyc.gov/districting).

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.

## 2022 Community Needs Assessment

Do you have ideas about what your local community needs? Take a few minutes and fill out a survey to help inform how future funding is spent across the city. Visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2022CNANYC> today. Some residents had raised the need for a public swimming pool in Bedford Park / Norwood, a YMCA in the Northwest Bronx, an east-west subway service, and platform seats in all Bronx subway stations.

## Van Cortlandt Jewish Center Blood Drive

Van Cortlandt Jewish Center (VCJC), 3880 Sedgwick Ave, Bronx, NY 10463, is hosting a blood drive on Sunday, July 31, from 9.30 a.m. to 2 p.m. to address a citywide blood shortage. Organizers are looking for donors and volunteers. To donate, call (800) 933-2566. When donating blood, sign-ups are preferred, but walk-ins are always welcome. To volunteer, call the VCJC office at (718) 884 6105 and leave a name and a contact phone number.

## D Line Subway Limited Service

From July 2022 to 2023, major structural repairs on the D subway line between Norwood-205<sup>th</sup> Street and 145<sup>th</sup> Street by the MTA will impact subway times, reducing rush hour service to local service, and causing partial suspensions on week-nights and weekends. Use the 4 service instead.

## Win Free Yankee Tickets Through Community Service

Win free Yankees tickets by helping to clean up the community. The next clean-up event is in Morris Park on Aug. 7. For more information, visit: <https://www.sanitationfoundation.org/volunteer>.

## 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. Our last print edition will be on Aug. 25, and the next print edition after that will be on Sept. 22.

## Bronx Bus Redesign

As reported, the Bronx Bus Redesign Plan is now live. For more information, visit: <https://new.mta.info/project/bronx-local-bus-network-rede-sign>.

## Affordable Housing Lotteries

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>.

## 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>.

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



# Disability Rights NY Highlights Healthcare Inequity

By EMILY SAWAKED

From maltreatment by medical professionals to overpriced medication, disability rights activists say people with disabilities have been fighting for equity in healthcare for years.

July marks Disability Pride Month and on Thursday, July 14, Disability Rights NY met to discuss this topic of healthcare equity. Spearheaded by disability rights activists in the medical field, the discussion focused on the concerns of impacted individuals while the panelists answered questions on ableism.

Ableism is defined as bias, prejudice, and discrimination against those who are not able-bodied. While most people look at this as obvious physical discrimination and verbal abuse, ableism runs much deeper than this, according to the activists.

Diana Cejas, pediatric neurologist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a faculty member of the Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities, gave some examples of the feedback she's received from her patients. "They think that it is always this in-your-face kind of a thing, like, someone saying something rude to you, calling you rude names, using ableist language," she said, of those unfamiliar with other more subtle forms of discrimination.

Cejas continued, "Of course, all of those things are examples, but I have a table over here which we ask our patients to get up on and that is completely inaccessible to a person who might have some mobility issues, who might be a wheelchair user."

Pepper Cyr, a medical student at Washington University in St. Louis, said when it comes to eligibility for certain medication or procedures, especially things like transplants, certain categories of disabled people are, because of prevailing rules, excluded.

Cyr added, "A lot of places, this can be a lot less, sort of, in-your-face obvious. Particularly egregious, in my opinion, are situations where you have a healthcare service that is specifically for a particular disabled group, and yet is also specifically inaccessible to that same population," she said.

In response to a question about the impact of inaccessibility to healthcare options by people with disabilities, Cejas and Cyr referenced a study carried out in the UK that showed that autistic people have shorter life expectancies due to lack of access to immediate healthcare.

"So much that is within medicine is inherently ableist, where you have people who, for example, [are] working with patients who might need a mobility device, who are younger than whatever is supposed to be the age you're supposed to be able [eligible] to have one," said Cejas.

"The stigma that comes with someone trying to access those devices from



Screenshot by Emily Sawaked

**PEPPER CYR, A** medical student at Washington University in St. Louis, addresses attendees of a virtual Disability Rights NY seminar on Thursday, July 14, 2022.

the medical providers, who will say things like, 'I don't want you to have this as a crutch. I don't want this to be something that you rely upon,' and really saying things that are very negative can really contribute to the deterioration of the doctor-patient partnership," she added.

Cejas said this can also cause people to delay seeking the care they need. "Why would you want to come to a place where you're thought to be either trying to gain something from the system, or access[ing] something that you're not supposed to access?" she said.

"Quality of life," according to the two panelists, is also a concept that has been defined by able-bodied people. According to Cyr, when people contemplate a poor quality of life, they immediately think of the possibility of being disabled from doing certain things, without ever considering the experiences and voices of those who are already disabled. This was something that became more apparent to able-bodied people when the pandemic hit, according to Cyr.

Cejas concurred. "There were so many different discussions about who should receive ICU-level services, rationing care, who should receive a ventilator," she said. "Every time you look at it, if you look at someone who has any kind of disability, particularly those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and particularly those people who might have more significant physical limitations, or maybe who are already using different kinds of technologies like ventilators, it seems like their lives are considered to be less valuable," she said.

Indeed, the idea behind mask-wearing is to help protect the vulnerable, like people with disabilities, from COVID-19 exposure. This was especially true prior to the availability of a vaccine. However, those who oppose mask-wearing indeed do not seem to care, which speaks to Cejas's point.

According to the panelists, even while studying to be a medical profes-

sional, ableism is at play, stunting progress when it comes to healthcare equity and discouraging and surprising people with disabilities.

"One of the products I've been working on more recently has been trying to get more disability content into our medical school curriculum, making sure that our students are learning how to take care of disabled patients," said Cyr. "I was a little bit surprised that I got pushback early on when I tried to integrate that into our preclinical time. This is like inherently advanced content [according to the curriculum]," she added.

Cyr said the addition of such material would help negate stigma or ignorance and would be beneficial to both the disabled community and the medical community alike. With education comes the opportunity to improve conditions for all people, according to the two panelists.

Cyr said, for good reasons, one medical team she knew of didn't want a specific patient standing, walking around, or trying to do things alone. "But this resulted in the patient being kept in their room, in their bed, or in the chair next to their bed pretty much all of the time for a while," she said.

"When I brought up to the team later, 'Has anyone asked the patient how much they're upset about not being able to get up versus being stuck in their room? Maybe we could get a wheelchair and let them out a little?' just that fact seemed to blow their minds," she added.

According to data by disability-compendium.org, in The Bronx, there were 209,900 people with disabilities in 2018, making up 14.8 percent of the borough's population. This was higher than all other New York City boroughs, where the rate in Manhattan was 11.5 percent, in Brooklyn, 10.2 percent, in Queens, 9.5 percent, and on Staten Island, 10 percent.

The borough is also home to sev-

eral hospitals with one of the main complaints from residents being that the subways nearest the hospitals are not all accessible. The MTA has committed to making the following Bronx subway stations accessible, as part of its 2020-2024 Capital Plan: Wakefield-241st Street, Kingsbridge Road, 167th Street, Burnside Avenue, 3rd Avenue-138th Street, Van Cortlandt Park-242nd Street, Tremont Avenue, Parkchester, East 149th Street, Brook Avenue and Moshulu Parkway.

In addition, not all subways, such as the Kingsbridge Road subway serving the D line, have seating on every platform. *Norwood News* recently queried this with the MTA. We were informed that at Kingsbridge Road station, "as at many stations," benches are placed to prioritize seating opportunities for the platform that serves the highest number of waiting customers "i.e. in the direction of peak travel." An MTA official said at Kingsbridge Rd, this is the southbound platform, where they said there are two benches.

The official said the addition of benches is done as needed based on community requests and reviews by station management and the MTA's planning teams. *Norwood News* asked if there was not also peak travel on the northbound platform at different times during the day. We did not receive an immediate response.

On July 26, on the 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Gov. Kathy Hochul signed a package of State bills into law relating to supported decision-making by people with intellectual, developmental, cognitive, and psychosocial disabilities, as well as legislation which establishes a public awareness campaign to combat the stigma and stereotyping of individuals with developmental disabilities.

In addition, new legislation was passed which replaces certain instances of the term "mentally retarded" with the term "developmentally disabled," legislation which replaces certain references to "mentally retarded" or "mentally ill" persons with the term "individuals with a developmental disability," as well as legislation which eliminates the State residency requirement for designated beneficiaries in the New York ABE program.

The latter allows New Yorkers with disabilities to save money in their own names without risking their Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid, and certain other means-based benefits.

Also on July 26, Mayor Eric Adams announced that several of the students signed up for the Summer Youth Employment Program in 2022 included students with disabilities.

*\*Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*





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## Public and Community Meetings

The **52<sup>nd</sup> 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.

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](mailto: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](mailto:bedfordmosholu@verizon.net).



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Photo by Miriam Quiñones

**THE STORM ON** Monday, July 18, 2022, flooded the street at the corner of Goulden Avenue and 205th street near Bronx High School of Science.

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# Rivera & Camilo Face Off in S.D. 33

(continued from page 8)

nounced she was running back in March [in S.D. 34], and that endorsement was not conditional.”

Collado went on to say that numerous conversations were also had with the senator and others about how they could avoid a problem [being primaried] and said other senate districts could have presented an opportunity for the senator to avoid such a conflict.

“For the record, District 32, represented a significant portion of his current district after the new lines were drawn, and in order to run in any other district, except for District 31, he would have had to move from his current residence,” Collado added. “But as is his right, he chose to seek office where he desired. We are confident in the abilities of Miguelina, and we know she will be a great senator in Albany.”

Some speculate that perhaps another reason for the Bronx Democratic party's backing of Camilo over Rivera was in response to Rivera not toeing the party line during the June primaries and backing progressive candidate, Jessica Altgracia Woolford, in A.D. 81 over incumbent, Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz.

When contacted, Collado also addressed this point, saying, “While we cannot speak on behalf of Assemblyman Dinowitz, his endorsement of Miguelina Camilo was prior to Sen. Rivera's endorsement of Ms. Woolford.” *Norwood News* has reached out to the assemblyman for comment in this regard.

In reference to the redistricting process, Rivera said he opposed the way it had been handled and the “mess” it had caused and laid the blame with former Gov. Andrew Cuomo for allegedly devising the State redistricting commission model.

Camilo agreed the redistricting process had been extremely confusing for voters and communities who she said had to grapple with all the changes it caused. “They are the victims in all this,” she said. “It's not who's chosen to run for office or who has held the seat that is no longer there, it's really the people that now have to deal with such a big change on Election Day.”

Both candidates emphasized that they had no hard feelings towards each other and accepted that the situation at hand.

Bail reform was later discussed and the case of Manhattan bodega owner, José Alba, was referenced. Alba was initially arrested and held on Rikers Island for fatally stabbing a customer who assaulted him amid a dispute inside his store earlier this month.

Camilo said the matter had hit home to her, having worked in a store with family members. “Usually what we try to do is have more than one person at the store at a time,” she said. “Seeing the facts of the case, where Mr. Alba was approached behind the counter, I knew immediately that he was in that store by myself, and he was confronted with that situation.”

Referencing that the Manhattan district attorney had since dropped the charges against Alba, she said, “I stand by protecting our small businesses. That is one of my main platform issues, to advocate for our small businesses so that, in turn, we have a more vibrant economy.”

She also acknowledged the rationale for bail in terms of ensuring people show up to court for offences, and added, “Everyone has a right to have those constitutional protections in court, to have their day in court, to have a speedy trial.”

Rivera agreed with the decision to drop the charges against Alba. “Bail was ultimately a way to criminalize poverty,” he said, before talking about Kalief Browder, his former constituent, who spent three years in prison for allegedly stealing a backpack. “He was ultimately let go but he spent most of that in solitary confinement, and ultimately committed suicide in the district that I currently represent in his mother's house because of the PTSD that he suffered, and the reason he was there is because he could not afford bail.”

The senator continued, “On the other side, you've got Harvey Weinstein, somebody who was obviously an unrepentant predator, but because he was a millionaire, he was able to be in court for less than an hour [and] go back home.”

The discussion later moved on to universal healthcare. Camilo said she grew up not being able to afford healthcare and suggested the pending New York Health Act had languished under Rivera's watch. Rivera, a longtime advocate for universal healthcare, said the bill had more sponsors now than ever and equated the fight to that of marriage equality which he said also took many years to pass. Camilo expressed a desire to find a sort of happy medium of affordable healthcare that also protects those with their own private health insurance.

The moderators later pressed the candidates on the matter of fiscal responsibility within the State Legislature in the context of balancing long-term policy ideas. The questions were mostly directed at Rivera who said the pandemic had shown that emergency healthcare was more expensive than regular healthcare, another

reason why investing in planned healthcare was cheaper in the long run.

Meanwhile, Camilo said having a deep knowledge of the real needs of a community and working in partnership with other colleagues was one way of knowing where best to make cuts to the State budget in order to be fiscally responsible.

The two candidates broadly agreed on how best to tackle and prevent gun violence and are both supportive of the latest State legislation passed in this regard. Rivera said more needed to be done at a federal level to tackle the flow of guns into the State from other states, and also talked about investing in programs like Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence (B.R.A.G.) to prevent gun violence from occurring in the first place.

He also acknowledged that there was a role for school safety agents in terms of keeping kids safe. Camilo broadly agreed, and also supported investment in after-school and other programs for youth in order to show them another path in life and also highlighted the importance of setting an example for youth.

The two candidates later had a chance to ask each other questions. Rivera questioned Camilo's alleged ties to the Independent Democratic Caucus, a now disbanded

group of Democrats in the State Assembly who worked with Republicans in the past slowing down or blocking progressive-led legislation.

Camilo it was a false statement and that she didn't support the IDC since she wasn't involved in politics at the time they existed. “I absolutely will say now that I would have joined you in fighting against the IDC because caucusing with the Republicans and opposite party is not something that I would ever support,” she said.

Camilo then asked Rivera if accepting campaign contributions from PACs in the healthcare industry was in conflict with his role as chair of the senate health committee. Rivera suggested that many of these were union related and that he was happy to accept their contributions.

He added that he was also not afraid to oppose large private hospitals on the subject of healthcare. “I'm going to tell them when I agree with them and tell them when I don't agree with them,” he said. “I want to pass the New York Health Act, and I'm committed to that because I believe that healthcare is a human right.”

Primary Day is Aug. 23. Update your address by Aug. 3. Request your absentee ballot by Aug. 8. Early voting will begin on Aug. 13.



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