



NORWOOD NEWS

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RESIDENTS OF THE Sage Center, located in Fordham Heights, join community residents as they celebrate Three Kings Day on Saturday, Jan. 7, 2023.

By **DAVID GREENE**

Several thousand children received gifts, and in some cases, enjoyed one last encounter with Santa Claus before the end of the holiday season, as sev-

eral local organizations hosted traditional "Three Kings Day" events across The Bronx. The annual holiday, traditionally celebrated on Jan. 6 each year, recognizes the journey detailed

in The Bible of the three kings, also known as the "three wise men" who traveled to Jerusalem to bring gifts to Baby Jesus on the occasion of his birth.

One "Three Kings Day"

event was held on Wednesday, Jan. 4, at the Latino Pastoral Action Center on West 170th Street in Mt. Eden. Hosted by the Office of the Bronx Borough

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Mosholu Preservation Corporation is a non-profit support corporation of Montefiore Medical Center.



Bronx CB7 Looks Forward to Subway Upgrades & More in 2023

By **ARIEL PACHECO**

Bronx Community Board 7 (CB7) held their final board meeting of 2022 on Dec. 13, following a successful holiday tree-lighting event in Bedford Park on Dec. 8. The meeting was attended by around two dozen people, updates were shared by the different CB7 committee chairs and concerns of some community members were also heard.

The meeting was the first to be presided over by recently elected Bronx CB7 chair, Yajaira Arias, following her election to the position on Nov. 15. As reported, Arias, the incumbent CB7 secretary, succeeds Emmanuel Martinez, who stepped down as chair in the summer of 2022.

As also reported, CB7 Parks' committee chair, Barbara Stronczer, served as acting chair until the election of Arias in November. The new chairwoman continued to act as secretary during the December meeting since the latter position has not yet been filled. Nominations for secretary were accepted during the meeting, and those nominated were Helene Redd and Ruth Caraballo. The board are currently reviewing the nominations.

After attendance was taken, the meeting began with elected officials sharing updates on various bills they are currently working on. District 11 City Council Member Eric Dinowitz discussed a bill he is sponsoring which would establish a program aimed at assisting students with disabilities who are entering higher education.

The bill would allow such students to, for example, transfer certain accommodations they currently avail of, such as extended test-taking time, from high school or middle school through to college.

"What's really important about some of these bills is that they come from you [constituents] when you call my office," Dinowitz, a former special education teacher, said. A motion was later tabled requesting Bronx CB7 to write a letter of support for the In-



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

DUSTIN JONES (SEATED), a transit advocate for the disabled, joins local politicians, including (l to r) State Sen. Jamaal Bailey (S.D. 36), State Senator for S.D. 34, then-assemblywoman for A.D. 80, Nathalia Fernandez, then-district leader, now City Councilman Eric Dinowitz (C.D. 11), and Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz A.D. 81 (not pictured), together with Jean Hill (in red), former Bronx CB7 chair and current president of Tracey Towers Tenants Organization, in August 2018 as they call for an elevator to be installed at Mosholu Parkway station on the Jerome Park / Norwood border.

dividualized Education Program (IEP) bill. The motion passed, with three members abstaining from the vote.

The councilman also mentioned that, as reported, the MTA are moving forward with the installation of a long-awaited elevator at Mosholu Parkway subway station. The station serves the 4 train and is located close to two Bronx hospitals, NYC Health + Hospitals/North Central Bronx and Montefiore Medical Center.

"That is happening," Dinowitz said of the new elevator. "It is happening very soon. I don't have the exact date, but the MTA is moving forward on that, and I am very pleased because I think we started this process in 2018," he said, in reference to a petition calling for the installation of a station elevator. The move was supported by many in the local community, including president of Tracey Towers Tenants Organization, Jean Hill, and transit advocate for the disabled, Dustin Jones.

The two high-rise, Tracey Towers buildings which make up the Mitchell-Lama housing complex, housing 871 units, are located adjacent to the subway station, while another large residential hous-

ing complex, Scott Towers, is also located a short distance away. The Mitchell-Lama program provides affordable rental and cooperative housing to moderate- and middle-income families.

Norwood News contacted the MTA on a few occasions to obtain a timeline regarding the Mosholu Parkway elevator installation. We have not received a response as of press date.

As also reported, the MTA announced that replacement elevators are also set to be installed at three existing, accessible Bronx subway stations: 161st Street-Yankee Stadium station, serving the B and D lines, 161st Street-Yankee Stadium Station, serving the 4 line, and 3rd Avenue-149th Street station, serving the 2 and 5 lines, as part of two new, public-private partnerships.

A first in MTA history, officials said the new model requires the developer to finance a portion of the project with equity, which will only be repaid if the project is built and maintained to MTA standards.

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (A.D. 81) also attended the CB7 meeting and mentioned he was the sponsor of the Climate Change Super-

fund Act, the aim of which is to charge oil companies and their shareholders \$30 billion over the next decade in efforts to reverse the climate crisis.

"We're also working on creating a utility consumer advocate's office," the assemblyman said. Dinowitz, a Democrat, also used the occasion to thank voters who helped re-elect him to office in the November general election.

Meanwhile, Rachel Ferrari, deputy chief of staff for State Sen. Gustavo Rivera (S.D. 33), mentioned some of the bills Rivera had sponsored and which, Ferrari said, were being delivered for signature to Gov. Kathy Hochul. One such bill aims to prohibit hospitals from seeking liens over patient's homes or wage garnishment in order to collect medical debts.

"This would also prohibit any predatory debt collectors from trying to take away folks' homes or wages simply to collect medical debt for care that they needed," said Ferrari.

Later, Pam Cora of the Bronx Library Center notified residents that the library is offering free English classes. Class registration began on Jan. 9. Residents can join an English class at noon, 3 p.m. or 6 p.m. The library is also offering a free, tax preparation service which is available on Sundays.

It was also announced during the December meeting that Karla Cabrera Carrera, Bronx CB7 deputy district manager, was elected as one of 20 Bronxites to the Bronx Borough Assembly Committee, a committee which will vote on those community projects which will most benefit the borough.

The next general board meeting for Bronx CB7 will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 24, at 6.30 p.m. Bronx CB7 serves the neighborhoods of Bedford Park, Norwood, Fordham, Jerome Park, Kingsbridge Heights, Mosholu Parkway, and University Heights.

**Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*

Fair Chance for Housing Bill Divides New Yorkers

By **ARIEL PACHECO**

Protestors from across the five boroughs gathered on the steps of City Hall on Dec. 7 to rally against Intro. 632, a bill that, if passed, would prohibit some building owners and landlords from conducting background checks on prospective tenants at any point during the rental process.

The bill has been named the “Fair Chance for Housing Act,” and its supporters say it is needed in order to give the formerly incarcerated who have served their time the opportunity to find housing, as New Yorkers continue to grapple with the ongoing affordable housing crisis.

According to its text, the Fair Chance for Housing Act would apply to people who have been convicted of a crime or who have a pending legal case against them, even if the offense in question is for a high-level crime like murder. If passed, the law would be enforced by the City’s Commission on Human Rights.

Also, according to the bill’s text, if passed, landlords would still have the ability to vet prospective tenants, just not by way of background checks. The law would still allow landlords to interview prospective tenants, contact references, and ask for financial information. They would also still be able to check if prospective tenants were on the New York Sex Offender Registry.

The bill has faced backlash from some activist groups as well as from some city council members. Those opposed to it are concerned that, if passed, landlords would be placing tenants in unintended danger. They say without access to background checks, landlords won’t have the resources necessary to properly vet potential tenants.

“They need to kill the bill; it’s just bad legislation,” said Myrna Calderon, president of Fordham Hill Owners Corporation. Located in the southwestern edge of the Fordham Manor section of The Bronx, at 1 Fordham Hill Oval, the housing complex sits on seven acres of property and comprises nine high-rise, apartment buildings consisting of 1,130 apartments.

The private co-op celebrated its 40th anniversary amid much fanfare on Oct. 15, 2022, during an event which was attended by both Mayor Eric Adams and by Gov. Kathy Hochul. “New Yorkers are already not feeling safe, and people should feel safe in their homes,” added Calderon, who is also a Bronx Community Board 7 board member.

The bill, if passed, would not ban background checks on prospective tenants of public housing units operated by the New York Housing Authority (NYCHA) due to federal regulations. Meanwhile, according to the Brennan Center for Justice, there are over 2.3 million New Yorkers who have some sort of criminal record.

The bill is sponsored by City Council majority leader, Keith Powers, (D-Manhattan), and has garnered the support of 30 city council members as well as from the City’s public advocate, Jumaane Williams.

Advocates of the bill have argued that many felons are prone to recidivism because they lack access to the basic human right of housing. The City Council Committee on Civil and Human Rights held an initial public hearing on the bill on Thursday, Dec. 8. The forum allowed both sides to discuss the merits of their argu-

ments. The hearing lasted over 5 hours.

Those in favor said that providing housing to the formerly incarcerated will help reduce recidivism and in turn make New York City safer, since the formerly incarcerated are less likely to re-offend if they are granted a fair chance to acquire housing.

They also argued that the law is necessary to help combat what has become a common form of housing discrimination that they said disproportionately impacts Black and brown communities.

Advocates for the bill also said that to date, landlords have been able to legally discriminate against

people with criminal records. “It is clear, and every New Yorker knows, we are facing a devastating affordable housing crisis that impacts every single community across the five boroughs,” Powers said during the hearing.

“Thousands of our fellow New Yorkers are sleeping on the streets, in our shelters every night, and it is incumbent upon our City leaders to use every tool we have to tackle that crisis,” he added.

However, opponents of the bill are not sold on the

(continued on page 7)

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week, we asked readers their thoughts on 2022 and their hopes for the New Year.



"I did not feel safe in 2022 and I couldn't enjoy my summer. A few people dear to me passed away. Despite the few accomplishments that we had, 2022 was filled with disappointments, empty promises, and uncertainty. I hope that in 2023 we can put an end to the reckless motorcycle and motorized bike riding on the sidewalk and the senseless loud noise coming from passenger cars and SUVs. My hopes are to raise awareness to the needs of our folks with disabilities, encourage our youth to learn needed skills, and empower our residents who are facing challenges directly related to where they live."

Chad Royer,
Fordham Manor



"I think 2022 was challenging. It was cold and it was like we were living in a fog; one couldn't get their thoughts straight. But my hope for 2023 is peace and harmony within our thoughts. That's my goal and my hope for 2023."

Elizabeth Nunez,
West Farms

All Photos By David Greene



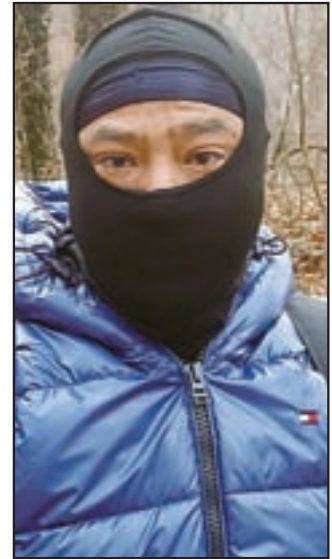
"I think 2022 was probably the most trying year we've had in a few, trying to get back to what everyone calls 'normal.' So, I think we have to have a little leeway with everyone as we try and get back to normal. We're getting there, but 2023 is going to be even more challenging because I think everyone is trying to get to that point but are still coming back from working from home or trying to get the resources that are available. I think we're going to have to have a lot of patience moving forward. If not, we can fall back into a rut, especially business-wise."

James Rodriguez,
Pelham Bay



"I think 2022 was a very...I don't even know what to say. I mean I think it was a step in the right direction. I think when Trump was president there was a lot of disharmonies, I would say. It seems that once President Biden got sworn in, all that went away. I think that was good for the country. I hope everything continues in the right direction [with] less violence, and hopefully we can survive."

Bruce Nigro,
Morris Park



"For me, 2022 was a good year. I don't have my family here, but my family back home is good. The crisis started for everybody with the coronavirus and some people don't have food, don't have money to pay their rent, it caused a lot of problems in the city. Right now, on the trains it's [expletive]; people have guns, people fight on the train. That's the problem in the city right now. I would like things to improve and get rid of some of these problems like mental illness, and we need jobs."

Rudy Garcia,
Fordham Heights

Norwood: Man Found Dead Outside Decatur Avenue Building

By DAVID GREENE

Police are looking to identify a man found dead on the sidewalk outside a Decatur Avenue building in Norwood. Offering few other details, an NYPD spokesperson said police officers from the 52nd Precinct observed a 55-year-old male "unconscious and unresponsive" outside of 2656 Decatur Avenue at East 204th Street, on Tuesday, Jan. 4, at around 4.35 p.m., when other City officials were notified.

The spokesperson said EMS pronounced the man deceased at the scene and the Office of the City's Medical Ex-

aminer will determine the exact cause of death. According to one neighborhood source, the still-unidentified man was discovered by a sanitation crew on the sidewalk near a pile of garbage.

Anyone with information regarding this incident 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 WWW.NYPDCRIMESTOPPERS.COM or on Twitter @NYPDTips.

All calls are strictly confidential.

A Loving Tribute in Memory of Kevin Maurice Cruz

By ANGIE ALEXIS

The announcement of the loss of Kevin Maurice Cruz, a longtime dedicated employee of NYC Health + Hospitals/North Central Bronx (NCB), has had a serious impact on his family, friends and fellow employees.

He valiantly fought a battle with cancer to be here for his family. He still managed to show up for his shifts at the hospital while undergoing treatment.

Kevin leaves behind his son, Joseph, and his daughter-in-law, Rose, his wife of more than 20 years, Ivette, and his stepchildren, Nicole Montalvo and Hiram Montalvo, as well as several grandchildren.

Cruz was a dedicated employee of NCB for more than 40 years. He started working with the maintenance department as a youth program worker at the age of 19 and was hired permanently at the end of the year. He was always cheerful and would make us laugh with his sense of humor.

We could not have a bad day in his presence. His loud voice and laughter will be missed at NCB. Kevin was everyone's friend and did not hesitate to help a friend or fellow employee. He selflessly gave of himself to others without expecting anything in return.

He will be greatly missed. Rest in heavenly peace, dear friend. This world will not be the same without you.

Any donations in Kevin's name would be gratefully received by The American Cancer Society.

Angie Alexis is a longtime friend of Kevin Maurice Cruz



Photo courtesy of Ivette Cruz
Dedication artwork created by Jeannie Gonzalez

KEVIN MAURICE CRUZ

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Nurses from Montefiore and Mount Sinai Continue Strike Action

By MIRIAM QUIÑONES & SÍLE MOLONEY

More than 100 nurses from Montefiore Medical Center, Moses campus, located at 111 East 210th Street in Norwood joined their nursing colleagues at two other Bronx locations, Montefiore Weiler, located at 1825 Eastchester Road in Morris Park and Montefiore Hutchinson, located at 1250 Waters Place in Pelham Bay on Monday, Jan. 9, for the first day of strike action.

It followed the breakdown of contract negotiations between the New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) and Montefiore Health System.

Nurses at Mount Sinai Health System also walked out the same day, with media outlets reporting that over 7,000 nurses across Mount Sinai Health System and Montefiore Health System went on strike on Monday, demanding increased staffing, better wages, and an end to benefit cuts.

Wearing bright red scarves and hats on a cold winter's day, the frigid temperatures didn't appear to bother the nurses as they marched side by side, holding signs that said it all: "On strike for better patient care." Others cited fair wages and a fair contract.

Some nurses arrived as early as 7 a.m. to join the picket line and marched in the vicinity of 210th Street, East Gun Hill Road, and Bainbridge Avenue in Nor-

wood. They vowed to continue the strike until an agreement was reached.

Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson and Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine issued a statement in support of the nurses saying, "Mount Sinai and Montefiore's nurses were at the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic, putting themselves in harm's way to help their neighbors and fellow New Yorkers through one of the worst public health crises in a generation. These heroes deserve a contract that fairly compensates them for their commitment and expertise, and ensures safe working conditions."

They continued, "Our commitment is to community, and the safety of patients receiving care in these hospitals. Improving nurse-to-patient staffing ratios provides the best patient outcomes. When both sides align with this highest priority the negotiated contract will be a win-win for all stakeholders, ensuring the best quality metrics for hospitals, and the wellbeing of patients and essential nursing staff."

Montefiore Health System comprises 10 hospitals, including the Children's Hospital at Montefiore, Burke Rehabilitation Hospital, and more than 200 outpatient ambulatory care sites. Officials say the advanced clinical and translational research at its medical school, the Albert Einstein College of Medi-



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

NURSES RALLY OUTSIDE Montefiore Medical Center at 111 E. 210th Street in the Norwood section of The Bronx on Monday, Jan. 9, 2023, on the first day of a strike action, after negotiations broke down between the hospital and New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) on Sunday, Jan. 8, 2023.

cine, directly informs patient care and improves outcomes.

On Tuesday, Jan. 10, representatives for Montefiore Health System said their existing and standing offer includes enhanced staffing by adding 8 RN educators, increased IVF benefits of \$24,000 for medical and prescriptions, a new vision benefit with no monthly premiums, \$2,250 annual maximum for dental, \$3,000 lifetime for orthodontia, and the addition of 150 spots for nursing school students to serve as clinical assistant student nurses.

This offer also includes tuition relief of up to \$16,000 over three years for participants of the clinical assistant student nurse program, and RN licensing assistance with prep and payment of costs associated with NCLEX examination for up to 150 new graduates, a wage increase of 19.1 percent compounded over three years, a charge / preceptor differential of \$5 / hour and enhanced staffing levels in the ED of 115 RNs, 11 RNs in Labor & Delivery, and 23 NPs.

In addition to this, Montefiore also offered an "experience pay increase" comprising a \$300 increase for each step 1-32 in 2024, plus the creation of step levels 33-35, and an increase of \$300 for each step 1-35 in 2025. The additional offer also includes the establishment of average ratios based on patient acuity levels in each of the EDs.

It also includes enhanced staffing enforcement aligned with policies proposed and accepted as part of NYSNA's tentative agreement with New York

Presbyterian dated December 31, 2022, the elimination of hallway patient placement except in circumstances mandated by certain regulations, the option to work 13 shifts per month with a 20 percent differential in base wage rate or 12 shifts with no differential, binding arbitration with expanded remedies when it comes to enforcement, and a new nurse practitioner fellowship.

As of 4 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 11, Mount Sinai provided an update on the negotiations with NYSNA, writing in part, "NYSNA has finally agreed to meet us back at the negotiating table. We reiterated our offer for an agreement to end this strike and put nurses first."

Among other outlined ben-

efits, Mount Sinai officials said they offered NYSNA a 19.1% pay raise compounded over three years, which means at least \$51,000 for every Mount Sinai nurse. "We offered NYSNA better health care benefits for working and retired Mount Sinai nurses, the same as 8 other hospitals," they said.

Meanwhile, Montefiore representatives issued the following statement regarding the strike on Tuesday, Jan. 10, "Montefiore remains at the bargaining table, committed to an equitable agreement that reflects the priorities of our dedicated nurses. Contingency plans remain in place to ensure our hospitals remain open, because Montefiore is, and always will be, here for The Bronx."



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

NURSES MARCH IN front of Montefiore Medical Center's Gun Hill Road entrance in the Norwood section of The Bronx on Monday, Jan. 9, 2023, on the first day of a strike action, after negotiations broke down between the hospital and New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) on Sunday, Jan. 8, 2023.



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

NURSES MARCH IN FRONT of Montefiore Medical Center at 111 E. 210th Street in the Norwood section of The Bronx on Monday, Jan. 9, 2023, on the first day of a strike action, after negotiations broke down between the hospital and New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) on Sunday, Jan. 8, 2023.

NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Rivera Statement on Hochul Veto of Health Cost Bill

State Sen. Gustavo Rivera (S.D. 33) issued a statement following a veto of his bill S4540A by the Hochul administration to reform New York's current Medicaid and Public Assistance overpayment recovery and collections processes. "This bill would have put protections in place to prevent New Yorkers from being railroaded into debt for overpayment of benefits they rely on and were deemed eligible for, through no fault of their own and often without opportunity to effectively counter these claims," he said.

He continued, "While these reforms will not be enshrined into law, I am glad Gov. Hochul's veto memo recognizes that change is necessary in our State's callous overpayment recovery system and that the administration intends to implement some of the measures in this bill, including altering current policies and ceasing recovery of medical assistance payments from Medicaid recipients incorrectly paid as a result of agency error."

He added, "Her veto memo further directs the State Health Department to issue a directive on retroactive recovery following final clarification from the Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) regarding federal provisions allowing recovery of incorrectly paid Medicaid benefits, an effort that we will be monitoring."

Rivera concluded, "Social safety net programs are supposed to uplift New Yorkers out of poverty by providing them basic yet critical benefits. No family should fear that the State will renege on benefits eligibility, and wrongfully tie their hands with unwarranted and overwhelming debt for accepting health services or household assistance. I hope the administration and my team can work together to further restrain aggressive and often predatory actions towards public assistance recipients who are not at fault for the agencies' errors."

Villa Avenue Road Closure

Metro Erectors Inc. are advising Bronx residents of a full roadway closure at 3054 Villa Avenue, Bronx from Jan. 20 to Feb. 20, 2023, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Villa Avenue will be closed to vehicular traffic between Bedford Park Boulevard and East 204th Street. This is required for crane operations to lift mechanical units. The street will be closed intermittently throughout the time permitted. Signage will be posted in advance to alert the neigh-

Cop Recovering After Christmas Eve Stabbing

By DAVID GREENE

Local NYPD officer, Zhen G Lin, who was stabbed in the arm as he came to the aid of a female resident of Norwood on Christmas Eve, is recovering from his injury as his commanding officer credits him with saving the woman's life.

The incident unfolded at 5.45 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 24, when officers from the 52nd Precinct were called to respond to an incident involving an Emotionally Disturbed Person (EDP) in the vicinity of Dekalb Avenue and East 212th Street.

According to police officials, a 34-year-old male police officer and a 46-year-old woman were stabbed during the incident by a 26-year-old man. We understand each victim was stabbed in the right arm. However, when we sought clarification from the NYPD, we did not receive it.

Lin was transported to St. Barnabas Hospital, police said. An NYPD spokesperson said the "individual" was brought to NYC Health + Hospitals/North Central Bronx for evaluation. When asked if police were referring to the female victim or the perpetrator, the NYPD referred us to the original incident report and declined to clarify.

Police said a 26-year-old man was

taken into custody following the incident. The man, later identified by police as Paul Christie of Dekalb Avenue, was charged with assaulting a police officer, three additional counts of assault, a hate crime assault, and two counts of criminal possession of a weapon.

On Tuesday, Jan. 10, Deputy Inspector Jeremy Scheublin, commanding officer of the 52nd Precinct, was asked by *Norwood News* if the officer had returned to work. He replied, "He's still out. He undoubtedly saved a woman's life. It was a family dispute, and the son was stabbing the mother and he just intervened right in between... and the knife got stabbed into his arm. It actually stuck in his arm. They [doctors] removed it at the hospital. I'm glad he's okay."

The officer was further praised in a late Christmas Eve Tweet posted by New York City Mayor Eric Adams, who wrote, "Visited Officer Lin Zhen at St. Barnabas Hospital. He suffered a knife wound to the arm while he and his partner were responding to a person with mental health issues. Thank God they are okay."

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

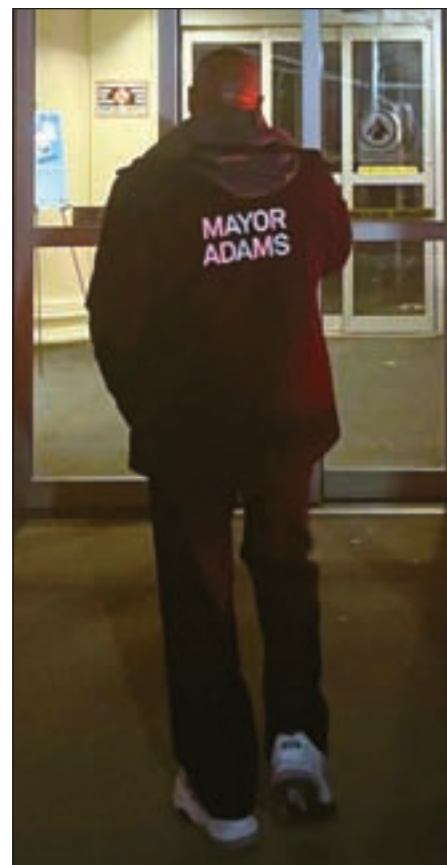


Photo courtesy of Mayor Eric Adams

MAYOR ERIC ADAMS enters St. Barnabas Hospital on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, 2022, to visit Police Officer Zhen G Lin who was admitted, after being stabbed in the arm earlier that day when he responded to a domestic violence incident in Norwood.

borhood of the approaching closure.

City Employee Arrested for Menacing

A City employee was arrested in The Bronx, police said. According to the NYPD, Tonya Simmons, 47, an off-duty employee with NYC Department of Homeless Services was arrested on Monday, Jan. 9, at 9.24 p.m. within the boundaries of the 48th Precinct, which covers the neighborhoods of Belmont, East Tremont, and West Farms, while Fordham University's Bronx campus is nestled in the precinct's northern corner.

Simmons was charged with menacing 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.

No Parking on Phelan Place

There will be no parking on Phelan Place between

Billingsley Terrace and West Burnside Avenue on the border of University Heights and Morris Heights, with effect from Wednesday, Jan. 14, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week until further notice. This is necessary to facilitate the installation of 36 water mains in the area.

NYCHA Employee Arrested for Assault

A 28-year-old City employee was arrested following an incident in The Bronx, police said. An NYPD spokesperson said on Saturday, Jan. 7, an on-duty New York City employee was arrested at around 10.01 p.m. in the 47th Precinct which covers the neighborhoods of Woodlawn, Wakefield, Williamsbridge, Baychester, Edenwald, Olinville and Fishbay, as well as Woodlawn Cemetery.

Police said Malik Fogg, a NYCHA employee, was charged with assault. No further details were provided, and the location of the incident was not confirmed. A NYCHA

complex, named "Edenwald," is located within the border of the 47th Precinct catchment area.

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

Bedford Park: Search for 67-Year-Old Missing Woman

The NYPD is seeking the public's help locating a 67-year-old woman reported missing from Bedford Park. It was reported to police that Linda Rubbo-Padilla of 2974 Bainbridge Avenue, Bronx, NY was last seen leaving her home on Friday, Dec. 30, 2022 at around 1 p.m. Rubbo-Padilla is described as being 5 foot, 2 inches tall, weighs 170 pounds, has brown eyes and gray hair. She was last seen wearing blue pants and a white t-shirt.

Anyone with information regarding this missing person is asked to call the NYPD's Crime Stoppers Hotline at

1-800-577-TIPS (8477) or for Spanish, 1-888-57-PISTA (74782). The public can also submit their tips by logging onto the Crime Stoppers website at <https://crimestoppers.nypdonline.org/>, or on Twitter @NYPDTips. All calls are strictly confidential..



Photo courtesy of the NYPD
LINDA RUBBO-PADILLA OF 2974 Bainbridge Avenue, Bronx, NY was last seen leaving her home on Friday, Dec. 30, 2022, at around 1 p.m.

Fair Chance for Housing Bill Divides New Yorkers

(continued from page 3)

belief that simply giving housing to the previously incarcerated is enough to curb recidivism.

"This correlation of felons that are released not having housing, and [that] that's tied to them not really having a stable place to stay, there's no correlation there," said Rachel Bradshaw, board secretary of Fordham Hill Owners Corporation, who attended the City Hall rally on Dec. 7. "The data is not proven," she added.

Bradshaw said if landlords are unable to conduct background checks, minority communities will be affected as much as anyone, as landlords will be more inclined to racially profile prospective tenants, compounding the problem of housing discrimination.

"This is going to lead to more discrimination," said Bradshaw. "Absent a criminal background check, landlords and co-op boards around the City are bound to revert to a pattern of racial profiling under the facade of protecting their current tenants, shareholders, and

property."

Council Member Inna Verkinov (R-Brooklyn), also opposes the bill and argued that landlords deserve to know who they are housing. She also argued that tenants who may end up living next to people who have been charged with an offense will be placed in danger.

"This is a very dangerous bill that would harm mostly law-abiding New Yorkers," said Verkinov, while speaking at the rally. "We cannot support a bill that would strip a property owner from their right to know if a murderer or drug dealer will move onto their property."

In terms of ongoing dialogue on the bill, opponents are concerned their voices are being ignored. "There needs to be an inclusive and collaborative dialogue amongst all parties like tenants, residents, property owners, and developers because if not, this bill will be flawed," said Susan Lee, a former city council candidate and the organizer of the rally.

An earlier version of the bill failed to pass last year with 27 members of the council supporting it along with then-New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. On that occasion, the bill in question was also introduced and sponsored by Powers.



Photo by Ariel Pacheco

PROTESTORS FROM ACROSS the five boroughs gathered on the steps of City Hall in Manhattan to rally against Intro 632, which would prohibit some building owners and landlords from conducting background checks on prospective tenants at any point during the rental process. Susan Lee, a former city council candidate and organizer of the rally, is at the podium.



Cardinal McCloskey
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Letters To The Editor

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

LaSalle & Chin Unfit

It's amazing how many words of nonsense have been wasted on the Hector LaSalle nomination for chief judge of the New York Court of Appeals. Unions need to be able to freely defend their workers' interests. Any judge who rules, as LaSalle did, that an employer can sue a union for criticizing them, is unfit to serve. It doesn't matter how "conservative" that is. It's simply irrational and unjust. The same can be said for a ruling made by Brooklyn Supreme Court Judge Danny Chin in a non-jury trial (see Nov. 22 NY Daily News article).

Chin found Zidon Clarke guilty of manslaughter, not murder. In fact, Clarke shot his victim in the back of the head and bragged about his good aim. Chin does not belong on the bench, not because he is too "progressive," but because he is too irrational to not be able to see that this killing was intentional. On a different irrational note, how is it that Robert Zimmerman did not have enough sense to check out George Santos' record before losing to him in a congressional race. Investigating your opponent is usually something a candidate routinely does, especially nowadays when we have this new-fangled thing called the internet. The words that would best describe him are from another Robert Zimmerman, better known as Bob Dylan, "You're an idiot, babe. / It's a wonder that you still know how to breathe."

**Richard Warren,
Van Cortlandt Village**

Open Letter from Dexia Billingslea to Her Late Son, Prince Shabazz, 14

Dear Prince,
When a child is born, it is the mother's instinct to protect her baby; a mother is not supposed to bury her children.

My baby, it's been one month since you transitioned. I sit on your bed often. I smell your pillows and look at notebooks in your bookbag just to see your handwriting. I look at your texts, I look at your pictures every day. I can't believe you're gone; my heart is bleeding for you every day.

Wednesday, Nov. 30, I woke up. It was a normal day. We sat in the kitchen together and cooked. You had me cracking up as always; you made me laugh harder than any comedian. I was making chilli and I put too much seasoning, messing around with you, but you tasted it and you said, "Yo, this is busting!"

And I just shook my head and laughed, 'cuz it was horrible, but that was the thing about you; you always found the good in everything. You've always seen the good in me. We've been through so much and you never



Photo courtesy of Dexia Billingslea

PRINCE SHABAZZ, 14, at his school graduation ceremony

failed to let me know how much you loved me, and made me feel like super mom.

I wish I could've saved you. I would give my life for you at the drop of a dime. That smile, that personality...you excelled at anything you did, even if it was your first time. You always wanted to be the best at everything: the best cook, the best student, the best artist. You could draw so well.

Your time on earth was so very short. However, I feel there was nothing left unsaid for us. For that, I am grateful. I bet I am not the first mom to write their child in heaven, but this is my first letter to you since you died. I hope you get it because I am not sure how to have something sent to heaven. It's been a month since you left us and I miss you all the time, every day, and I always will.

There are days I wake up and the realization that you are gone just hits me like a Mac truck in my heart.

I love you so much yesterday, today, forever.

Love Mom

**Dexia Billingslea
Fordham Heights**

Editor's Note: Dexia Billingslea is the mother of Prince Shabazz, 14, who was tragically and fatally shot, as reported, in the Fordham Heights section of The Bronx on Nov. 30, 2022.

To ensure sufficient time for review of all letters to the editor, please send them to norwoodnews@norwood-news.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 300 words and, ideally, in response to published articles. Thank you.

Out & About

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY

EVENTS

Van Cortlandt Library, located at 3882 Canon Place in Van Cortlandt Village, is hosting a number of **Events for Teens** throughout January. A game night will be hosted every Monday at 4 p.m., Teen Art Hour will be held each Friday at 3.30 p.m., a teen movie night will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 24, at 4 p.m., and there will be a "Regents Brain Break" on Wednesday, Jan. 25, and Thursday, Jan. 26, at 3.30 p.m. Additionally, **January CCP** hybrid model programs consist of one-to-one Monday meetings with a YA librarian to discuss personal college and career plans. The remaining meetings will take place on Jan. 23 and Jan. 30 at 4 p.m. Contact vancortlandt@nypd.org or call (718) 543 5150 for more information.

The **Holiday Train Show**® continues at New York Botanical Garden, located at 2900 Southern Boulevard., through Monday, Jan. 16. See model trains zip through an enchanting display of more than 190 replicas of New York landmarks, each delightfully recreated from natural materials such as

birch bark, lotus pods, and cinnamon sticks. For more information, visit <https://www.nybg.org/event/holiday-train-show/> or call (718) 817 8700.

ART

Bronx River Art Center (BRAC), located at 1087 East Tremont Avenue, presents "**Scaling Nature**" a show of large-scale, mixed-media installation works by three artists, Michele Brody, Linda Cunningham and Wildriana Paulino, curated by Gail Nathan from Jan. 19 to March 4, 2023. An opening reception will be held on Thursday, Jan. 19, from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m. The following events will also be presented in conjunction with "Scaling Nature." A **Paper-Making Community Workshop** will be held on Friday, Feb. 3, from 3.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. as part of BRAC's new "Open Studios Fridays." An "**Artist Talk: In Conversation**" will be held on Thursday, Feb. 9, from 5.30 p.m. to 7 p.m. and a closing reception will be held on Saturday, March 4, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. For more information, visit <https://www.bronxrivart.org/index> or call (718) 589 5819.

MUSIC

The Bronx Opera Company presents a rare NYC production of the landmark musical, "**Lady in the Dark**," based on the book by Moss Hart, with music and lyrics by Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin. Performances will be given on Saturday, Jan. 28, and Saturday, Feb. 4, at 7.30 p.m. and on Sunday, Jan. 29, and Sunday, Feb. 5, at 2.30 p.m. at the Lovinger Theatre at Lehman College, 250 Bedford Park Boulevard West, The Bronx.

All productions are sung in English with full orchestra and chorus. For more information, and for tickets (at \$40/\$30, with discounts available), visit www.bronxopera.org. Bronx Opera will also present, "**Dialogues of the Carmelites**," by Poulenc on May 6, 7, 13 and 14, also at Lehman College.

Lehman Center for the Performing Arts 2022-2023 season continues with **Merengue con Amor**, featuring Rubby Perez, Ramon Orlando, Pablo Martínez, Carlos David, Ravel, Charlie Rodríguez, and Dioni Fernandez on Saturday, Feb. 4, 2023, at 8 p.m. Coming together for a night of the most romantic voices in merengue, faithful fans will be treated to their favorite love songs. For more information and for tickets, visit <https://www.lehmancenter.org/>.

NYC & Company, the official marketing organization for the five boroughs of New York City, in partnership with Mastercard®, announced the

opening reservations for **NYC Winter Outing 2023** began Jan. 10. The NYC Winter Outing program will run from Jan. 17 through Feb. 12, offering savings on winter experiences across all five boroughs, including fixed price NYC Restaurant Week menus at nearly 500 restaurants, 2-for-1 tickets to 22 NYC Broadway Week shows, and 2-for-1 tickets at more than 40 museums, attractions, tours and performing arts for NYC Must-See Week.

Additionally, NYC Hotel Week is currently underway with 23 percent off standard retail rates at more than 140 hotels through Feb. 12. Reservations for all programs are bookable at nycgo.com/winterouting.

MOVEMENT

Join a free class of **Zumba with Gigi** at the Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, 3225 Reservoir Oval East, on Saturday, Jan. 14, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Move to the beat with easy-to-follow, fun, choreographed, bodyweight and cardio routines. All levels are welcome. For more information, call (718) 543-8672 or email sarah.bishow@parks.nyc.gov.

Join a free class of **Adult Circuit Training** at the Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, 3225 Reservoir Oval East, on Saturday, Jan. 20, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Enjoy sport conditioning through various exercises. For more information, call (718) 543-8672 or email sarah.bishow@parks.nyc.gov.

CRIME FILE

BY SÍLE MOLONEY & DAVID GREENE

**Norwood: Arrest Made in Sept Shooting of Man, 31**

NYPD officials said a 39-year-old man has been arrested in connection with an early morning shooting that occurred in Norwood in September 2022, as reported. Police said that on Monday, Sept. 19, at around 5.45 a.m., in front of 365 East 204th Street, an armed person chased a 31-year-old man on foot and fired multiple shots, striking the male victim in the back, chest, ear, and hand.

The victim was transported by EMS to St. Barnabas Hospital in critical but stable condition, and the shooter fled in a gray-colored sedan, westbound on Bedford Avenue, police said. They said the shooter was described as male and was last seen wearing a baseball hat.

The NYPD later released footage and photos of the shooting and asked for the public's help locating a person of interest. On Jan. 3, officers from the 52nd Precinct said that Darren Monroe, 39, from Brooklyn was arrested in connection with the incident and has been charged with attempted murder, assault, criminal possession of a weapon and reckless endangerment.

Norwood News asked the NYPD if the person arrested is the same person who was previously sought in connection with the case. They confirmed it was. A person arrested and charged with a crime is deemed innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law.

University Heights: Suspects Sought in Murder of Johnny Gaston

The NYPD is asking for the public's help locating the people seen in the accompanying photos who are sought for questioning in connection to an armed robbery and fatal shooting of 32-year-old Johnny Gaston, in front of 1920 Osbourne Place in the University Heights section of The Bronx.

The NYPD launched a murder investigation after the 32-year-old died from gunshot

wounds, after he was found in front of 189 Burnside Avenue, also in University Heights. Another person, who was also shot during the incident, was hospitalized and is in stable condition.

An NYPD spokesperson initially reported that officers responded on Thursday, Dec. 15, at 10.02 p.m. to a 911 call regarding a man who had been shot in front of 189 Burnside Avenue. "Upon arrival, police discovered two individuals shot," the spokesperson said. "Victim 1, a 32-year-old male, was shot in the head and removed to St. Barnabas Hospital where he was pronounced deceased."

Victim 2, a 27-year-old man, was shot in the groin and removed to St. Barnabas Hospital in stable condition police said. There are no arrests, and the investigation is ongoing. The deceased, Gaston, is from the Foxhurst section in the South Bronx.

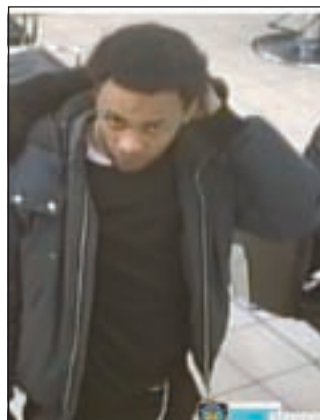


Photo courtesy of the NYPD
POLICE ARE LOOKING to speak to this person regarding a murder which occurred at 1920 Osbourne Place, The Bronx, on Dec. 15, 2022.

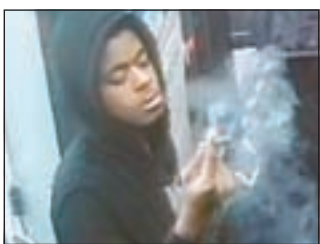


Photo courtesy of the NYPD
POLICE ARE LOOKING to speak to this person regarding a murder which occurred at 1920 Osbourne Place, The Bronx, on Dec. 15, 2022.

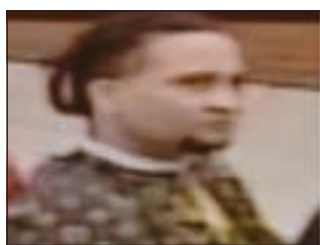


Photo courtesy of the NYPD
POLICE ARE LOOKING to speak to this person regarding a murder which occurred at 1920 Osbourne Place, The Bronx, on Dec. 15, 2022.

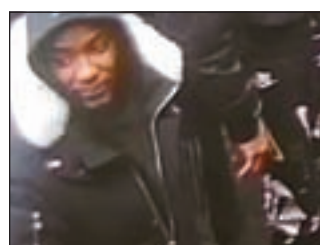


Photo courtesy of the NYPD
POLICE ARE LOOKING to speak to this person regarding a murder which occurred at 1920 Osbourne Place, The Bronx, on Dec. 15, 2022.

Fordham Manor: Norwood Man, 26, Fatally Shot

The NYPD said a man was fatally shot in the Fordham Manor section of The Bronx, saying officers responded to a 911 call regarding a male who had been shot inside 2650 Briggs Avenue on Sunday, Dec. 18, at 11.13 a.m.

A police spokesperson said, "Upon arrival, they discovered a 26-year-old male with multiple gunshot wounds throughout the body. EMS transported the male to St. Barnabas Hospital where he was pronounced deceased."

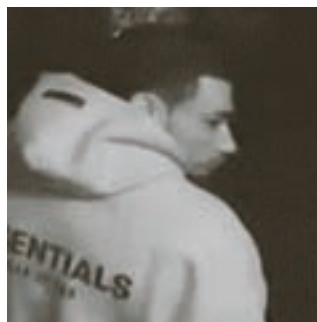
The spokesperson said that there are no arrests or suspects at this time and the investigation is ongoing. Police said the victim has since been identified as Angel Cua-sant, 26, of Decatur Avenue in Norwood. The address of the incident is beside a Deli & Grocery, which was cordoned off by police while they carried out their investigation. No other injuries were reported, and no description of

a suspect was available.

University Heights: Man, 30, Shot following Road Collision

The NYPD is asking for the public's help identifying the person seen in the accompanying photo who is sought regarding an assault that occurred in University Heights. Police said that on Saturday, Dec. 17, at around 4 a.m., in the vicinity of West Fordham Road and the Major Deegan Expressway, a 30-year-old man was involved in a vehicle collision with an unidentified person.

"A dispute followed the collision at which point the unidentified individual discharged a firearm, striking the victim in the right leg," an NYPD spokesperson said. "EMS responded to the location and transported the victim to St. Barnabas Hospital in stable condition." The shooter fled in a white Mercedes-Benz sedan in an unknown direction,



police said.

Kingsbridge Heights: Armed Store Robbery

The NYPD is asking for the public's assistance identifying the person seen in the accompanying photo who is sought for questioning in connection to an armed robbery that occurred in Kingsbridge Heights.

Police said that on Wednesday, Dec. 7, at around 7.30 p.m. inside a deli located at 117 West Kingsbridge Road, an 18-year-old male store employee was approached by an unidentified man who displayed a gun and stole around \$2,500 before fleeing on foot. No injuries were re-



ported.

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

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Sepúlveda Installs Fire Alarms ahead of Twin Parks Fire Anniversary

By SÍLE MOLONEY

State Sen. Luis Sepúlveda (S.D. 32) joined forces with Greater New York Red Cross in December 2022 to physically install free smoke alarms in the homes of residents in his district, which covers parts of the central and South Bronx.

The installation of the fire alarms came ahead of the first anniversary of the Twin Parks fire tragedy in Fordham Heights in January 2022, the cause of which was found to be a combination of a “malfunctioning space heater” and reportedly malfunctioning self-closing fire doors. The tragic event claimed the lives of 17 Bronxites, including 8 children, mostly of Gambian descent.

With legal proceedings against the Twin Parks building owners still pending, Mayor Eric Adams and other Bronx elected officials attended a private event, closed to the press, on Monday, Jan. 9, at the high-rise, Bronx housing complex on the one-year anniversary of the tragedy. The mayor also ordered all flags on all city buildings, as well as stationary flag-staffs throughout the five boroughs, to be lowered to half-staff as a mark of respect in memory of the 17 lives lost.

“One year ago, a devastating fire took the lives of 17 people in the Bronx at the Twin Parks apartment complex,” said Adams. “On that day, our city lost 17 of our neighbors and friends; they were our brothers and sisters, our mothers and fathers, our children and spouses.”

The mayor added that since that day what he described as critical legislation has been passed to educate and protect New Yorkers from fires and to help prevent another tragedy. “Today, we honor and remember the lives lost,” he said.

For her part, Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson said, in part, “While we continue to mourn those we lost on that tragic day, we must also never forget our shared responsibility to ensure our residents are safe from catastrophic fires of this magnitude.”

She added, “I want to thank the first responders, city agencies, community organizations, and everyone else who stepped up to support our neighbors, as well as my colleagues in government, for their partnership in passing meaningful legislation to address the root causes of these residential fires. Jan. 9 will always be a time of mourning and remembrance for our borough, and we ask that Bronxites continue to keep the loved ones of those we lost in your heart and prayers during this time.”

Meanwhile, fire officials highlighted that space heaters need space. “Be sure to keep your space heater at least 3 feet away from combustibles,” they said. “Always plug the heater directly into the wall and turn it off if you leave the room or go to bed,” they added.

Adams, District 15 City Council Member Oswald Feliz, District 14 City Council Member Pierina Sanchez, and Congressman Ritchie Torres (NY-15) were among those instrumental in passing various mayoral, City and federal fire safety and fire prevention laws in the wake of the Twin Parks tragedy, as previously re-



Photo courtesy of the Mayor's Office

NEW YORK CITY Mayor Eric Adams places a floral tribute at the site of the Twin Parks North West fire at 333 181st Street in Fordham Heights on the first anniversary of the tragedy on Jan. 9, 2023.

ported. Both Torres and Feliz represent the residents of the Twin Parks housing complex.

District 12 City Councilman Kevin Riley also used the anniversary to remind his constituents of the importance of fire safety, tweeting on Jan. 9, “As we remember the lives lost a year ago in the deadly Twin Parks fire, we want to make sure those we lost are not forgotten. Today, we raise awareness to the community on fire safety by properly installing smoke alarms.”

Fire officials had warned residents to take fire safety precautions extra seriously in December in light of the increased use of holiday lights and candles, and amid freezing weather conditions, the increased use of space heaters by New Yorkers. They also advised residents never to use an oven/stove to heat a home.

Meanwhile, Sepúlveda has also introduced a bill to regulate the sale of e-bikes run on lithium-ion batteries, which FDNY officials found were the cause of some City fires in recent years, including one early morning “all hands” fire that broke out at 2230 Grand Concourse in Fordham Heights the same day as the Twin Parks blaze. In late 2022, another fire, also caused by an e-bike, required a very complicated and dramatic rescue by firefighters from a midtown, Manhattan high-rise building.

In the context of the bill’s announcement, Sepúlveda said some of the tools that help him the most to legislate on behalf of his constituents are community meetings and police precinct meetings where he said he gets feedback from constituents on their priorities.

“In these meetings, I am able to listen and get a first-hand sense of the needs of our people,” Sepúlveda said. “It has been in these meetings where I have repeatedly heard the challenge that the current situation with the so-called ‘scooters and e-bikes’ represents for the authorities and for the communities.”

He continued, “While it is true that

these [e-bikes] are an important transportation resource, it is also true that the police are having great problems in preventing crimes that are committed using these vehicles as a means of escape. Precinct commanders and patrol officers have explained to me how criminals are taking advantage of the lack of regulation and the public danger posed by pursuing people who commit crimes with these vehicles.”

Norwood News previously reported on the seizure of hundreds of illegal e-bikes across The Bronx during a press conference held at the 52nd Precinct on Aug. 2, 2022. Ahead of that event, several scooter riders and one scooter salesman we spoke to all *incorrectly* believed scooters under 50 CCs (cubic capacity) did not have to be registered with the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles.

However, a flyer provided by the NYPD showed that a driver’s license is required to drive all motorized scooters and mopeds, even though bike shops were, at least then, not required to ask for a driver’s license before purchase.

The senator said listening to the concerns of the community, he submitted bill S9614 which seeks to establish clear rules for the use of e-bikes. “The bill mandates a safe use manual, establishment of a license and insurance, and the obligation of in-person or online sellers to ensure that people comply with these requirements in order to sell one of these items,” Sepúlveda said.

According to the FDNY, lithium-ion batteries are commonly used in cell phones, laptops, tablets, electric cars, and scooters. Officials said such batteries store a large amount of energy and can pose a threat if not treated properly. “Like any product, a small number of these batteries are defective,” fire department officials said. “They can overheat, catch fire, or explode.”

When it comes to disposing of lithium-ion batteries, officials said putting them in the trash or recycling at home is illegal. They encouraged residents to,

instead, recycle batteries by taking them to a battery recycling location. Residents can also visit nyc.gov/batteries for disposal instructions.

The FDNY also shared the following fire safety tips for those using devices powered by lithium-ion batteries:

- Purchase and use devices that are listed by a qualified testing laboratory.
- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for charging and storage.
- Do not charge a device under your pillow, on your bed, or a couch.
- Always use the manufacturer’s cord and power adapter made specifically for the device
- Keep batteries/devices at room temperature. Do not place in direct sunlight.
- Store batteries away from anything flammable.
- If a battery overheats or you notice an odor, change in shape/color, leaking, or odd noises from a device discontinue use immediately. If safe to do so, move the device away from anything that can catch fire and call 911.
- Individually bag batteries or tape the ends before disposal.

Meanwhile, Sepúlveda said his e-bike bill aims to regulate and protect those who were referred to as legitimate users of e-bikes who take advantage of the benefits of this transport.

“It will also help the police to identify and apprehend those who take advantage of the lack of regulations to commit crimes with impunity and steal our tranquility,” he said. “I look forward to the beginning of the legislative session to discuss this project with all sectors and work together on practical solutions.”

To receive free fire detectors and even have them installed in your home, contact the Red Cross, by calling (877) 733 2767. For more tips, go to FDNYSmart.org.

**David Greene contributed to this story.*



Photo courtesy of the Mayor's Office.

A FLORAL TRIBUTE is seen outside the site of Twin Parks North West at 333 181st Street in Fordham Heights on the first anniversary of the Twin Parks fire tragedy on Jan. 9, 2023.

The Bronx Welcomes the first Babies of 2023!

By SÍLE MOLONEY

The City's public health system's first baby of 2023 was welcomed at NYC Health + Hospitals/South Brooklyn Health at the stroke of midnight on Jan. 1, 2023. Named Kingsley Mei, the baby boy weighs 6 pounds, 7.6 ounces, and measures 19 inches. Kingsley was born to parents, Dexin and Holly. This is the Brooklyn couple's first boy.

The City's public health system delivers approximately 15,000 babies annually. Its 11 hospitals provide prenatal care, labor and delivery services, family planning, comprehensive gynecology, women's health, and primary care outpatient medical support for women at every stage of life.

The City's health department announced that, once again, the most popular baby names for 2021 were Emma and Liam. Since 2016, Liam has been the number one name for boys since 2016, and Emma has been the number one name for girls since 2017. In total, 434 Emmas and 703 Liams were born in 2021, according to New York City birth certificate records. Numbers for 2022 are not yet available.

"We are so pleased to welcome the Liams, Emmas, Olivias, Noahs and every other newborn, to our city and the world," said Health Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasan. "The joy they bring will make for a happier 2023 and beyond."

Resources for Expectant Parents

The Health Department has a webpage

to guide parents with filling out legal paperwork related to their child including birth certificates, acknowledgement of paternity for unmarried fathers, and information for same-sex couples. For additional details, visit: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/services/birth-death-records-birth.page>.

Parents who need additional time to name their child for religious or other reasons may register their child's birth without a first name and go back to add their child's name later. They may do this without a fee either through DOHMH, within 60 days of birth, or through the birthing hospital within 12 months of date of birth. Once the name is added, it is final and requires a correction to

change.

The Health Department also provides information on free or low-cost services for new parents, ranging from pre-pregnancy health related issues to offering resources to new parents for keeping their babies healthy. For more information, visit <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/pregnancy.page>.

The Health Department's Bureau of Vital Statistics compiles baby name lists from birth certificates and collects other data, including total births by year and demographic characteristics. To learn more about the information gathered from birth certificates, visit <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/data/data-sets/vital-statistics-data.page>.



Photo courtesy of Montefiore Health System
THE FIRST BABY to be born in the Montefiore Health System in The Bronx in 2023 was a little baby girl, Nova Marie Holder, born at 2.50 a.m. on Jan. 1 at Montefiore's Jack D. Weiler Hospital in Morris Park to parents, Kiana Baez and Brandon Holder.



Photo courtesy of Montefiore Health System
THE SECOND BABY born in the Montefiore Health System in The Bronx in 2023 was Yeniel Plasencia. The beautiful, little baby boy, who was delivered at Montefiore Wakefield campus, arrived at 2:57 a.m. on Jan. 1, 2023. Pictured from left to right are Yenelsi Mendez Arias (mom of Yeniel) and Emmanuel Plasencia (dad of Yeniel).



Photo courtesy of Montefiore Health System
THE SECOND BABY born within the Montefiore Health System in The Bronx in 2023 was Yeniel Plasencia. The beautiful, little baby boy, who was delivered at Montefiore's Wakefield campus, arrived at 2:57 a.m. on Jan. 1, 2023.



Photo courtesy of Montefiore Health System
THE FIRST BRONX baby of the New Year born in the Montefiore Health System was a little baby girl, Nova Marie Holder, born at 2.50 a.m. on Jan. 1, at Montefiore's Jack D. Weiler Hospital in Morris Park, and pictured here with her proud parents, Kiana Baez and Brandon Holder.



Photo courtesy of NYC Health + Hospitals
AT THE STROKE of midnight, the City's public health system welcomed the system's first baby of 2023 at NYC Health + Hospitals/South Brooklyn Health. Kingsley Mei was born at midnight, weighing in at 6 pounds, 7.6 ounces and measuring 19 inches.



Photo courtesy of NYC Health + Hospitals
ON JAN. 1, 2023, New Year's Day, at 9:04 a.m., NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln welcomed newborn baby boy, Emilio Araujo, who weighed in at 8 pounds and 15.7 ounces.



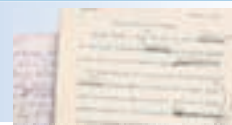
Photo courtesy of NYC Health + Hospitals
AS NEW YEAR'S Day drew to a close, at 11:30 p.m., NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi welcomed the arrival of another new little Bronxite, Legend Hough, who weighed in at 4 pounds, 15 ounces.



Photo courtesy of NYC Health + Hospitals
JUST SHY OF New Year's day, on Monday, Jan. 2, 2023, at 2:34 a.m., NYC Health + Hospitals/North Central Bronx welcomed a new little baby who weighed in at 6 pounds, 3.2 ounces. The baby's name is as yet undecided.

NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY



Health Commissioner Issues Advisory

NYC Health Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasan issued a new advisory on Dec. 9 as NYC faces high levels of triple onslaught of COVID-19, flu, and RSV cases. New Yorkers are strongly urged to wear masks in public, indoor settings, and crowded outdoor settings, to get vaccinated, test regularly, wash hands regularly and stay home, if sick. For more information, visit <https://on.nyc.gov/3ULqGDZ>. This is especially important for people who are – or are meeting – those who are at increased risk for complications from COVID-19, RSV, or the flu, such as those age 65 and older and people who are immunocompromised.

What is RSV?

NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene is also educating New Yorkers on the spread of the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), which is a common respiratory virus that often causes mild, cold-like symptoms but may result in severe illness in some people. Anyone can be infected, but RSV can be serious, especially in infants and older adults. Symptoms often include runny nose, sneezing, cough, shortness of breath, wheezing, fever, and decrease in appetite. Learn more at <http://on.nyc.gov/rsv>.

COVID-19 Updates

An NYC COVID-19 hotline provides residents with COVID-19 updates, including testing sites, advice from medical staff, quarantine information and mental health support. Call 212-COVID19 or (212) 268-4319. Find a vaccine or booster location today at ny.gov/vax-toschool.

MPV Updates

A two-dose MPV vaccination is available for those eligible. A Bronx mass vaccination site is open at Lincoln Hospital, 234 E 149th Street. Book an appointment by calling 877-829-4692. Visit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/monkeypox.page> for more information.

Social Security Increase in 2023

The U.S. Social Security Administration has announced an 8.7 percent benefit increase for 2023. On average, social security benefits will increase by more than \$140 per month, starting in January. Social security recipients can create their own account online by visiting www.ssa.gov/myaccount.

Free English Classes

Practice your English while getting to know your community, regardless of immigration status, with free English classes offered by the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. Visit <https://wespeaknyc.cityofnewyork.us/> for more information.

New Car-Sharing Plans by DOT

As confirmed by Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (A.D. 81), NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) has unveiled plans for a pair of carsharing companies (Getaround and Zipcar) to establish four carsharing sites in the local Northwest Bronx community. Each site would come with two parking spaces.

The sites they are looking to use are at:

- Cambridge Avenue between West 235th Street and West 236th Street
- Arlington Avenue between West 227th Street and West 230th Street
- Manhattan College Parkway between West 242nd Street and Manhattan College Parkway

- West 236th Street between Irwin Avenue and Tibbett Avenue

The assemblyman welcomes feedback from the community on the proposal at DinowitzJ@nyassembly.gov or on (718) 796-5345.

Student Loan Forgiveness Repayment Deadline Extended

The Biden administration has extended the pause on federal student loan repayments to allow for the Supreme Court to rule in the case on the student debt relief program. The pause will end no later than June 30, 2023. Payments will resume 60 days after the pause ends.

The David Prize

Kingsbridge Library is advising Bronxites that The David Prize is giving away \$200K to New Yorkers with big ideas. The David Prize is a celebration of individuals and ideas to create a better, brighter New York. Open to any individuals working in the five boroughs, the Prize welcomes those with the grit and vision to change their communities, culture and future for good. Head to the official website at <https://thedavidprize.org/> to submit your idea, or nominate someone!

GoFundMe Page for Bedford Congregational Church

Residents are being kindly asked to donate to support the upgrading of the heating system at Bedford Congregational Church, located at 309 East 201st Street in Bedford Park. Founded in 1889 and a designated landmark since 2000, the church is a 501c3 charity and provides space for local support groups battling addictions, as well as other congregations. A replacement oil tank is needed before the water pipes freeze and burst. To donate, visit: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/warm-hearts-cold-church>.

KHCC Needs to Fund Repairs

Kingsbridge Heights Community Center (KHCC) has been providing cradle-to-career services to the local community for nearly 50 years. It is now calling on the local community to help fund urgent repairs which are needed to its building (owned by NYC Parks) which cost \$4 million. If not completed soon, KHCC will be forced to leave Kingsbridge. KHCC is asking residents to share this on social media tagging @khccnyc, contact local elected officials to request that they secure \$2 million to fund the repairs, and ask the City administration to repair the building in 2023.

College Prep and Leadership Classes

Learn how to navigate the process of choosing a school that is best for you, what to expect after graduation, and how to become a leader at Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, 3225 Reservoir Oval East in Norwood, each Wednesday from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. Email shagari.allyene@parks.nyc.gov for more information.

Ombudsperson Call Center

Did you know that if you are not happy with NYCHA's response to your mold or leak complaint, a court-appointed independent Ombudsperson Call Center ("OCC") is available to help. To learn more about the OCC, visit ombnyc.com or Call 1-888-341-7152.

Heating and Cooling Assistance (HEAP) 2022-2023

The HEAP season for 2022-2023 opened on Nov. 1, 2022. More information including 2022-23 ben-

efit amounts and eligibility requirements can be found <https://www.ny.gov/services/apply-heating-and-cooling-assistance-heap>. The Emergency HEAP Benefit opens on Jan. 1, 2023. The Emergency HEAP Benefit assists those in a heat-related emergency. More information, including 2022-23 benefit amounts and eligibility requirements, can be found at <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/heap/#emergency-benefit>.

New Affordable Internet Access Program

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has launched the Affordable Connectivity Program to help connect families and households struggling to afford internet service. Find out how you can immediately save \$400 per year. Under this new federal program, you may be eligible for a discount on internet access. Visit <https://www.fcc.gov/acp> for more information.

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz Legislative Priorities for 2023

Among his legislative priorities for 2023, Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (A.D. 81) said he is working to establish a statewide, independent Office of the Utility Consumer Advocate, as is the case in other states. He said he is currently in need of a new sponsor in the State Senate for the proposal after the previous sponsor retired. The aim is to save New Yorkers money from rate increases.

The assemblyman is also working to increase the number of judges serving The Bronx. He said there is a formula which determines how many State Supreme Court Justices each county in New York is entitled to elect, and that currently, this formula disadvantages places like The Bronx, leaving the court system with major backlogs, which in turn curtails the advancement of justice.

Additional priorities for Dinowitz are ensuring "record amounts of state funding for New York City public schools," including ensuring that Foundation Aid payments are spent efficiently to benefit students and teachers. He said the State has given record funding to public schools in New York and it needs to be ensured that these tax dollars are spent on teachers and students, and "not on bureaucrats and frivolous expenses."

The assemblyman also aims to promote common sense public safety policies to combat shoplifting, auto crimes, graffiti, and other crimes which are increasing. He said going after repeat offenders for all types of crime was required. "We need law enforcement to arrest people who commit these crimes — period," he said.

The assemblyman said he is also introducing legislation to extend the ability for voters concerned about the transmission of a communicable disease while voting, to instead cast absentee ballots. He said this was a vital policy change in empowering New Yorkers to vote during the COVID-19 pandemic and said it ought to continue.

Affordable Housing Lotteries

Search for affordable housing lotteries organized by NYC Department of Housing, Preservation & Development (HPD)'s online portal, <https://housingconnect.nyc.gov/PublicWeb/search-lotteries>. Searches can be refined by borough. The Affordable Housing Lottery Helpline can also be reached on (212) 863-7990 or via email at nychousingconnect@hpd.nyc.gov. For information on applying for affordable housing for people with disabilities, call (212) 863-6486 or email: accessibility@hpd.nyc.gov. HPD housing ambassadors can be reached at ambassadors@hpd.nyc.gov.

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Public and Community Meetings

The **52nd PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meetings take place on the third Thursday of each month, usually at 6 p.m. 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 next **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 7** board meeting will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 24, at 6.30 p.m. Contact KCabreraCarrera@cb.nyc.gov to be added to the distribution list. All meetings are being held virtually, via Zoom, until further notice. The meeting ID is 859 4776 2187 or if joining by phone, dial (646) 558-8656.

The last **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 8** board meeting was held on Jan. 10, 2023. Contact cgannon@cb.nyc.gov to be added to the distribution list.

The **BEDFORD MOSHOLU COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION** meetings are usually held on the first Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m., sometimes in person and sometimes online. For details of future meetings, please contact bedfordmosholu@verizon.net.

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The Bronx Celebrates Three Kings Day

(continued from page 1)

President, the borough president, Vanessa Gibson, herself, was in attendance on the day.

According to Bishop Raymond Rivera, the Latino Pastoral Action Center has been hosting Three Kings Day events for the last 30 years, but this was the first event sponsored by the borough president's office. The center currently hosts an after-school program, is home to five local basketball teams, and distributed 1,000 gifts to local children at the Three Kings Day event.

Afterward, Gibson told *Norwood News*, "We are grateful to the Latino Pastoral Action Center for donating space to host my inaugural 'Three Kings Day Celebration' in their school auditorium that featured a performance by the nation's only dual-language, children's theater, Teatro Seas." She added, "While we celebrate Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, Three Kings Day is also recognized by several of our residents and families across the borough."

Another notable Three Kings Day event was held on Friday, Jan. 6, on Broadway in the Marble Hill section of the borough. Hosted by Kingsbridge Unidos, a nonprofit founded by former Democratic candidate for Assembly District 81, Jessica Altagracia Woolford, nearly a dozen volunteers joined forces to repair around 30 second-hand bicycles.

Volunteers included Cash Cow NYC, D'Arrigo New York, Art for AID, State Sen. Gustavo Rivera (S.D. 33), Kevin Daloia of Transportation Alternatives Bronx (TABx) / Uptown committee and other Bronx cycling groups. The groups later distributed the repaired bikes as well as helmets to local children, along with free fresh food produce to local families.

Bronx Bike advocate, Daloia, said of the event, "It was not just amazing to see the excitement of the raffle winners' faces when presented with a choice of bikes, but we were also able to give away over 400 cases of mangos, asparagus, onions, Swiss chard, avocados and coconut water, donated by many to hundreds of local community members."

Daloia said many volunteers were involved from the beginning after they got a phone call saying there were 300 bikes available for the taking. "We

contributed to the overall, final distribution of the refurbished bikes," he said and added that TABx also reached out to NYC Department of Transportation (DOT), NYC Department of Education (DOE) outreach teams and were able to secure free bike helmets which were given to each bike recipient.

Later, on Saturday, Jan. 7, Gonzalo Duran, CEO of Devil Dog USA, Inc., teamed up with MusArt Music Management to also host another "Three Kings Day" event at the SAGE Center on East 188th Street in Fordham Heights. According to the group's website and as previously reported, SAGE is the world's largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQ+ seniors.

"SAGE is dedicated to helping the LGBTQ's elderly population, but we also want to help the community across the board," Duran said. "Today's event was meant to give their clients, other groups of the LGBTQ community and the community as a whole, a safe place to learn and come together."

The first ever "Three Kings Day" event at SAGE was also open to the surrounding community and featured a traditional Spanish meal of "Sancocho" as well as musical artists organized by MusArt. A group of actors reenacted the 'nativity scene' which was followed by a final visit of the holiday season by Santa Claus.

Duran slipped on his Santa suit, and as he has done for the last 15 years at various events, distributed, along with his helpers, 300 toys and games as well as new clothing to youngsters from the local community.

He shared with *Norwood News* his memories of first playing Santa at home, then later during his service as a U.S. marine. When he founded Devil Dogs, he once again played Santa and began visiting local homeless shelters and churches. With a big smile, Duran said, "This year, we gave [out] thousands of toys and I'm super excited!"

Asked what he gets out of the event, Duran replied, "For me, growing up in an underprivileged family, my mom was only able to give me one toy a year, so coming back here, and to do it for the community that I live in, seeing a kid with three or four toys takes the burden off the parents."



Photo by Miriam Quinn

A YOUNG BOY holds up his new Mister Potato Head toy, received during a Three Kings Day event held at the James Monroe Community Center on Story Avenue in Soundview held on Saturday, Jan. 7, 2023.

He added that he always tries to include the military and local community in all his events. Several U.S. marines from the East Bronx recruiting station assisted Santa in passing out gifts at the SAGE event.

According to Daniel Guzman, founder and CEO of MusArt, the organizers also invited different, local com-

munity groups to the event to educate guests and provide free services in a friendly environment. There was live music, a DJ, face-painting for the children, and free hygiene products for men and women. The event highlight was the arrival of the Three Kings and the gift-giving.

Having hosted a Three Kings Day event last year, members of The Albanian American Open Hand Association, Inc. (AAOHA), located on Barnes Avenue in the vicinity of Indian Village/Little Yemen, held a traditional Christmas event at their pantry this year. Once again, Santa visited those gathered and distributed 300 toys and games, as well as winter hats and gloves to neighborhood children.

Also on Jan. 7, in the Soundview section of the borough, the female members of nonprofit, B.A.B.E.S., which stands for Berry Awesome Blossom Empowered Sisters, including president, Maribel Mercado, vice president, Regina Padilla, Emily Toro, Betsy Torres, Regina Padilla and Miriam Quiñones, were joined by the group's only male member, James Rodriguez, for the occasion. The nonprofit hosted its first "Three Kings Day" event at the James

Monroe Community Center, located at 1780 Story Avenue.

Having organized a Christmas-themed event a year earlier at the same center, Mercado explained, "Because everybody is always giving (gifts) for Christmas but not for Three Kings Day, for those that believe in the Three Kings, that's why we did it." She added, "We started fundraising in the beginning of (last) November." Quiñones added, "We collected over 300 gifts."

Formed in 2022, Mercado said of the founding of B.A.B.E.S., "We just put our heads together one day because we always seemed to be doing some volunteer work for the community or we'd come up with ideas, and we said, 'Why don't we form our own group?'"

Rodriguez, a Pelham Bay-based artist, assists the group with the artistic side of promoting their various events. Asked how it feels when a child is given a toy, Rodriguez replied, "Oh, it's wonderful of course! I do that on my own with other causes, but just to see them grab something without expectations of anything... and they're not even expecting it to be free, and they're looking around like they can actually have it. It's great!"



Photo by David Greene

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT Vanessa Gibson (2nd left) joins members of the Latino Pastoral Action Center on West 170th Street in Mt. Eden, as they joined the Three Kings in passing out 1,000 toys and games to children from the community on Wednesday, Jan. 4, 2023.

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