



NORWOOD NEWS

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MOM: WHY WAS SON SHOT 17 TIMES?



Photo by David Greene

CRIME SCENE TAPE cordons off the corner of East 194th Street and Briggs Avenue in Fordham Manor, after Norwood resident, Angel "Pookie" Cuasant, 26, was shot and killed on Sunday, Dec. 18, 2022.

By **DAVID GREENE**

A Bronx mother is still seeking answers more than five weeks after her son, a Norwood resident, was shot and killed in Fordham Manor just

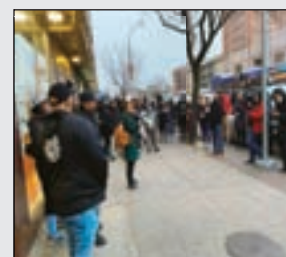
seven days before Christmas. She alleges her son was shot 17 times.

An NYPD spokesperson said officers responded to a 911 call regarding a male who had been

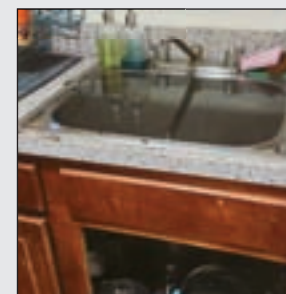
shot inside 2650 Briggs Avenue on Sunday, Dec. 18, at 11.13 a.m. "Upon arrival, they discovered a 26-year-old male with multiple gunshot wounds throughout the body," the spokesperson

said.

Police said 26-year-old Angel "Pookie" Cuasant of Decatur Avenue in Norwood was inside a Grocery and Deli, *(continued on page 15)*



Shooting of Pregnant Woman Condemned
pg 2



Resident Endures Black Water in Sink
pg 9



Kingsbridge Revisioning Process Continues
pg 13

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Fordham Manor: Community Gathers to Condemn Shooting of Pregnant Woman, 35

By SÍLE MOLONEY & DAVID GREENE

Community members, clergy, law enforcement, elected officials and other leaders gathered in Fordham Manor on Jan. 5. to condemn the recent shooting of a pregnant woman on the Grand Concourse earlier this month. She is expected to survive, police said.

An NYPD spokesperson said that on Monday, Jan. 2, at around 7:38 p.m., police responded to a call regarding a person who had been shot in the vicinity of 2535 Grand Concourse. "Upon arrival, officers observed a 35-year-old female with a gunshot wound to her leg," the spokesperson said. "EMS responded and transported the female victim to St. Barnabas Hospital, where she is listed in stable condition."

According to the 52nd Precinct Community Council, witnesses said two men were involved in a dispute when one man opened fire. Police Officer Stephen Eschevarria from the 52nd Precinct said of the incident, "The victim appears to be an innocent bystander and not involved in this dispute." He added that to date, the incident does not appear to have placed the woman's pregnancy at risk.

Police said no arrests were made and the investigation is ongoing. Brenda Caldwell-Paris, president of the 52nd Precinct Community Council, said the rally held in response to the incident was orga-



Photo courtesy of Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT Vanessa Gibson addresses members of the community, clergy, law enforcement and community leaders at a rally organized at 2535 Grand Concourse in Fordham Manor by Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence (B.R.A.G.) on Jan. 5, 2023 in response to a shooting which took place on Jan. 2, 2023, at the same location, in which a 35-year-old pregnant woman was shot in the leg. She is expected to survive

nized at the shooting location by Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence (B.R.A.G.) on Jan. 5.

Addressing the community on the day, Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson said, "Today, I joined with my colleagues in government, clergy, community leaders, @NYPDPBBronx, and violence interrupters to condemn gun violence in our

Fordham community." She added, "When a pregnant woman is senselessly shot, it is a call to action for us to do more."

Meanwhile, District 14 City Council Member Pierina Sanchez, who was also in attendance, later tweeted, "We will not accept continued violence; enough is enough! Each time there is violence, community violence interrupters organize demonstrations to call for a ceasing of violence. Violence is not normal and must be called out."

She added, "These demonstrations happen as we continually serve our communities, seek opportunities, affordable housing and jobs for our youth and more. It's an all /and approach, not an either/or approach."

The incident comes almost a year after 11-month old Baby Catherine was shot in the cheek in crossfire in Bedford Park.

On the same day as the rally took place, New York City Mayor Eric Adams and Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell held a press conference to discuss the latest available crime statistics from December 2022 (attached).

During the Bronx Community Board 7 general board meeting held Jan. 24, NYPD community affairs officer at the 52nd Precinct, Stephen Eschevarria, said as of that date, most crimes in the 52nd Precinct had dropped since December 2022, apart from robberies. To prevent car thefts, residents are reminded never to leave their keys in running cars, even for short periods of time.

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

Police Department City of New York		CompStat		Bronx	
Volume 30 Number 52		Report Covering the Week 12/26/2022 Through 1/1/2023		Crime Complaints	
Week to Date		30 Day		Year to Date*	
2023	2022 % Chg	2023	2022 % Chg	2023	2022 % Chg
Murder	5 3 46.7	12 12 0.0	5 1 0.0	***	***
Rape	8 4 50.0	31 27 14.8	3 1 200.0	200.0	***
Robbery	105 105 0.0	402 374 7.5	10 11 -9.1	-33.3	-14.4
Fel. Assault	135 121 11.6	531 455 16.7	27 35 -22.9	-14.4	-28.9
Burglary	38 60 -36.7	186 201 -7.5	7 9 -12.5	133.3	-22.2
Gt. Larceny	132 181 -27.3	582 721 -19.3	3 7 -57.1	-57.1	-19.0
G.L.A.	176 61 66.2	396 289 36.4	7 3 40.0	210.0	600.0
TOTAL	539 539 0.0	2,070 2,070 0.0	68 68 -0.0	3.57 36.78	-44.67
Transit	10 7 42.9	18 25 -28.0	1 2 -50.0	***	***
Housing	38 28 35.7	127 121 5.0	10 6 66.7	600.0	150.0
Petit Larceny	255 304 -16.8	1,388 1,217 14.1	3 11 -72.7	-40.0	-78.6
Mid. Assault	201 189 6.3	728 724 0.4	27 29 -6.9	8.0	-12.8
LOCH Rape*	11 8 22.2	40 49 -18.0	4 1 300.0	300.0	***
Other Sex Crimes	14 12 16.7	62 65 -4.6	4 0 ***	300.0	***
Shooting Vic.	11 9 22.2	39 31 25.8	2 0 ***	-33.3	0.0
Shooting Inc.	8 7 14.3	38 27 37.2	2 0 ***	-33.3	-33.3
Hate Crimes	0 0 100.0	0 2 -100.0	0 0 ***	***	***
Historical Perspective					
Historical perspective is a complete border print of data					
	1990	1993	1996	2001	2002
Murder	613	512	166	190	128
Rape	644	718	633	562	384
Robbery	17,862	16,378	7,571	5,178	5,154
Fel. Assault	9,338	8,925	6,479	5,339	7,301
Burglary	19,326	18,918	8,247	5,813	2,890
Gt. Larceny	8,856	7,551	4,661	4,373	8,957
G.L.A.	22,946	19,345	7,168	5,522	4,007
TOTAL	79,625	68,427	34,827	26,913	27,871
					3.8
					-38.8
					-88.7
					-45.6

Source and flier courtesy of the New York Police Department
CRIME COMPLAINTS FOR The Bronx for the period Dec. 26, 2022, to Jan. 1, 2023.

Opinion

The Work Never Stops & E-Cigarettes Are Not Helping

By SARASWATHI CUFFEY

Tobacco remains the number one cause of preventable death and disease with over 28,000 New Yorkers continuing to die every year, according to the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids Fact Sheet: The Toll of Tobacco in New York, May 18, 2021. Although the rates of youth smoking cigarettes are declining, the rate of e-cigarette use by high school youth continues to rise, according to a 2019 survey on New York City Youth Risk Behavior conducted by NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene.

The same survey found that 37,000 New York City high school students use e-cigarettes and are starting to do so as early as 13. The misconception of e-cigarettes being less harmful and safer than the traditional cigarette by youth is far from the truth.

According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), e-cigarettes contain the same amount of nicotine as 20 cigarettes, and e-cigarettes are highly addictive and can be harmful for adolescent brain development. Meanwhile, the New York State Tobacco Control Program found that the earlier youth start smoking, the more addicted they become, and the harder it is to quit.

Work still needs to be done. Educating our youth on the tobacco industry's deceptive tactics and the harmful effects of smoking cigarettes is necessary to reduce the rates of first-time smokers. Reality Check, a program run by NYC Smoke-Free at Public Health Solutions, educates the youth on the negative effects of tobacco use, through advocacy efforts.

NYC Smoke-Free works to protect the health of New Yorkers through tobacco control policy, advocacy and education.

Youth who follow this program are given the tools to advocate for themselves and for their communities to fight back against the tobacco industry. Community-based and local education efforts are essential to raise awareness among our youth of the dangers of all tobacco products, and Big Tobacco's influence in our communities.

For more information on NYC Smoke-Free, or to lend support in ending NYC's devastating tobacco epidemic please visit www.NYCSmokeFree.org.

Saraswathi Cuffey is the youth engagement manager for Bronx Reality Check, a health program run by NYC Smoke-Free at Public Health Solutions.



Photo courtesy of vaping360.com via Flickr

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week, amid new allegations of financial misconduct, reports of a federal investigation, and widespread calls for his resignation, we asked readers their thoughts on newly sworn-in, Republican congressman, Rep. George Santos (NY-3), who represents parts of Long Island and who, according to media reports, has admitted to lying about his experience and education.



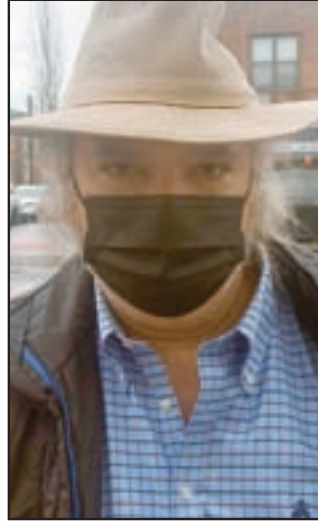
"You shouldn't be a politician if you can't be as honest as you're supposed to be. If he was my representative, I would be angry, yes."

Alexander Mata,
Bedford Park



"I spend a good amount of time and energy trying to bring in balanced integrity into local politics, and it is frightening that someone could get all the way to becoming a congressman with false information. If this sort of thing is allowed to continue to perpetuate, that would be a very serious thing for our democracy, but we can't have a boldfaced liar like that in office - period."

Gary Axelbank,
Van Cortlandt Village



"It's terrible; I think he should be out! I wouldn't have voted for him. You know how it is in Congress; they're going to let him slide. You know how it is, unless they get rid of him to make themselves look like they're doing the right thing. They cover everything up... it's terrible."

Alex Cruz,
Morris Park



"I think Santos will serve his 2-year term as 'a junior congressman with no power.' They won't let him do anything. His career is over; he's done! No one will have anything to do with him! He doesn't even warrant any of my time to discuss. It's over, dead issue.... just like bye! Done!"

Sal Russo,
Pelham Gardens



"He was elected under fraudulent circumstances; he should be removed. He is a joke! I don't know if they will remove him, but the idiot says he wants to ask the people who elected him. Okay, have another election - tomorrow."

Walter Pofeldt,
Schuylerville

Photos 1 and 3 by David Greene. Photos 2, 4, and 5 are courtesy of Gary Axelbank, Sal Russo and Walter Pofeldt, respectively.

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Beth Abraham Center Staff Help Families in Need

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Staff at Beth Abraham Center nursing facility held a successful holiday wellness clothing drive in December 2022, designed to support both residents and some of the residents' families. This included both long-term and short-term residents at the Allerton-based, 448-bed, skilled nursing facility.

This year, organizers said staff members focused on low-income residents who may not have a family to support them, as well as on the families of some residents. Staff members donated old jackets and other items and let both the residents of the center and their families pick out the items they needed.

"We always accept any donation for clothes year-round and this was the first time that we displayed all of the clothes to let the residents pick out what they want," said Leduc Le, recreation director at the center. "If you think about it, it's similar to an experience at a local mall."

Nearly 300 items, from winter coats,

hats, gloves, jeans, and long-sleeve shirts to sweatpants, were distributed to both Beth Abraham Center's residents as well as to about 80 residents and family members who stopped by the drive, according to Jeffrey Jacomowitz, the center's communications director.

Organizers said, overall, about five to seven families of residents benefited greatly from the event, each receiving up to 5 items of clothing amid the frigid temperatures experienced in recent weeks. Jacomowitz added that the center, located on Allerton Avenue and Bronx Park East, has held similar drives over the past two years.

Representatives at the center said they are looking to hold a similar event for the 2023 holiday season. Meanwhile, Le concluded, "It's so important, especially these days when many people live from paycheck to paycheck. All they need is maybe a coat or [a] pair of gloves to get them through the winter months. It can be dangerous to not have what you need during these cold days and weeks."



Photos courtesy of Beth Abraham Center

STAFF AT BETH Abraham Center in Allerton help residents pick out clothes during the center's annual clothes drive in December 2022.

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STAFF AT BETH Abraham Center in Allerton help residents pick out clothes during the center's annual clothes drive in December 2022.

NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY

New Space Observatory for Jerome Park

During the Bronx Community Board 7 general board meeting held Jan. 24, the board approved a request from the Amateur Astronomers Association to the Parks' department to move an observatory from Nassau Community College to a location on a 250-300 sq. ft. grassy area by Jerome Park by Harris Field and Goulden Avenue. The observatory will be open to the public, with dedicated timeslots for citywide schools and community groups. Priority will be given to Bronx High School of Science and Lehman College. One resident wanted to ensure middle schools also had access.

A pathway and some tree-planting are also planned for the location, and it is intended that the area be ADA compliant. As it would be New York City's first public observatory, to avoid large crowds on a regular basis, the association plans to hold "Star Parties" on specific dates for crowd control. Outside of these events, requests for use would be made through a website in advance. The association confirmed that the observatory would work in concert with the New York Botanical Garden roof planetarium. A groundbreaking is planned for April.

Residents Concerned Over Shelters

During the Bronx Community Board 7 general board meeting held Jan. 24, board member, Lowell Greene, said the community was concerned that some floors of the site of a former convent / nonprofit, located at Bainbridge Avenue and East 211th Street in Norwood, may be used as a shelter, adding she heard of plans to convert some of the building into condominiums. *Norwood News* reached out to both NYC Department of Buildings (DOB) and NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS) for comment and will share any updates we receive.

Meanwhile, in January, Bronx Community Board 6 and District 15 City Council Member Oswald Feliz have each called on DHS to cease plans for a new shelter, planned for Webster Avenue in the Fordham/Bathgate neighborhood. They said the proposed shelter is within half a mile of 10 other shelters, and that they have formally contacted Gary Jenkins, DHS commissioner, calling for reform of the shelter siting process.

They said both Bronx Community Board 6 and City Council District 15 are home to over 20 shelters, with others planned, while many affluent neighborhoods across the City have none. They added that DHS siting policy is causing "the warehousing of shelters in low-income neighborhoods," further concentrating poverty, and inhibiting community development. *Norwood News* asked DHS for comment. A spokesperson did not directly address the residents' points about being inundated with shelters. She added, in part, that the planned Safe Haven site on Webster Avenue will have "a very small footprint," serving 42 New Yorkers to help stabilize their lives. The general DHS policy appears to be to close larger operations, and open smaller shelter facilities across the City.

New Board Member at Woodlawn Heights High School

The Saint Barnabas High School (SBHS) Board of Trustees has announced that Guylaine Harrison, Esq., MBA, dean of the School of Criminal and Social Justice at Monroe College, has joined the SBHS Board. Harrison is an attorney and was in private practice prior to working full-time at Monroe College, which she joined in 2007.

An advocate for criminal justice reform, school

officials said Harrison has visited numerous correctional facilities, and has conducted presentations for the incarcerated population. As dean at Monroe, Harrison is responsible for administration and management, and leads curriculum and program development for the undergraduate and graduate programs in criminal justice and human services.

Nastasio to Challenge Velázquez in CD13

Phyllis "Tiz" Nastasio has announced her candidacy for city council, challenging Democratic incumbent, Council Member Marjorie Velázquez, for her District 13 seat, which the latter won in 2021. Nastasio, a Republican, most recently ran unsuccessfully in the 2022 State general elections in Assembly District 80, for the seat formerly held by now-State Sen. Nathalia Fernandez (S.D. 34). The assembly seat was ultimately won by Democrat, John Zaccaro Jr.

During her assembly race campaign, Nastasio was endorsed by the Northwest Bronx Democrats, and The

Committee of 100 Democrats. She also received the backing of The Bronx NY Free Thinking Democrats. Nastasio's campaign manager is founder of the Northwest Bronx Democrats, Anthony Rivieccio, who, after the 2022 general election, announced his retirement from his involvement with the Northwest Bronx Democrats.

City Council District 13 covers the neighborhoods of Allerton, City Island, Country Club, Edgewater Park, Ferry Point, Locust Point, Morris Park, Pelham Bay, Pelham Gardens, Pelham Parkway, Schuylerville, Silver Beach, Spencer Estates, Throggs Neck, Van Nest, Waterbury LaSalle, Westchester Square, and Zerega.

Meanwhile, in CB17, Gonzalo Duran, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran and CEO of Devil Dog USA, Inc., an organization which assists veterans transition to civilian life, recently announced his candidacy for city council. Duran plans to challenge incumbent Democrat, Councilman Rafael Salamanca Jr. in the upcoming Democratic primary in City Council District 17.

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Letters To The Editor

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

Phony Ethnic Politics

Democrat, State Sen. Luis Sepúlveda (S.D. 32) is quoted by the NY Daily News ("Latino Pols Urge State Senate to back Hochul's Pick for Top Judge," Jan. 15, 2023) as saying, "I normally don't make it a practice of calling out a colleague of mine, but this fight is bigger than me. It's bigger than anyone on this stage. This fight is for the Latino community to get their place at the table."

Really? So, will Latino union officials be helped by a judge who would allow for them to be sued by their employers in response to criticism? Would this help Latino workers? This shows the madness of the Democrats' identity politics. Either that, or it's just corporate donors getting people of color and women to do the dirty work that in the past was exclusively done by white men.

In support of nominee, Judge Hector LaSalle, Democrat, U.S. Rep. Nydia Velazquez (NY-7) who represents parts of Brooklyn, insists, "I am progressive to my bones." What does this mean? Former New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio billed himself as progressive and gave City workers contracts that did not keep up with inflation. LaSalle is also getting support from Democrat, U.S. House Minority Leader, Hakeem Jeffries (NY-8).

In 2016, he acted as a hatchet man for Hillary Clinton against Bernie Sanders during the Democratic primaries. He claimed that Clinton was always with African Americans while Sanders was "missing in action." In fact, Sanders was active in the Civil Rights movement at a time when Clinton was working on the campaign of a presidential candidate who opposed civil rights legislation, Barry Goldwater.

While fighting off attacks from Republicans, workers must also beware of their enemies in the Democratic Party. That includes New York City Mayor Eric Adams, who's trying to stick retired City workers with an inferior Medicare Advantage plan as well as all the union leaders who are conspiring with him.

If you're being oppressed by someone from the same ethnic group or political party as you, you're still being oppressed.

Richard Warren
Van Cortlandt Village

A Hero for Us All

We need more men in our society to stand up for their beliefs and to condemn the behavior of sodomites, as this great athlete has done. Philadelphia Flyers defenseman, Ivan Provorov, did not participate in warm-ups before the team's home game against the Ducks on Tuesday night, Jan. 17, because he refused to wear a Pride Night jersey and use sticks wrapped in rainbow Pride tape. Provo-

rov, who said he is Russian Orthodox, cited his religious beliefs as to why he chose not to partake in the warm-ups.

Richard Marias
Norwood

Keep Those Letters Coming...

Congratulations to my fellow 2022 Letter to the Editor writers. Surveys reveal that "Letters to the Editor" is one of the most widely read and popular sections of any newspaper.

Most newspapers will print letters submitted by any writer regardless of where they live so long as the topic is relevant to readers. It helps to have a snappy introduction, good hook, be timely, precise, have an interesting or different viewpoint to increase your odds of being published. Many papers welcome letters commenting on their own editorials, articles, or previously published letters to the editor.

Let us thank those few brave souls who are willing to take on the establishment and powerful special interest groups in the pages of your Letters to the Editor section. They fill a valuable niche in the information highway.

I continue to be grateful that you afford both me and my fellow letter writers the opportunity to express our views, as well as differing opinions on issues of the day.

Please join me, along with your neighbors, in reading the *Norwood News*. Patronize their advertisers; they provide the revenues necessary to keep them in business. This helps pay to provide space for your favorite or not so favorite letter writers.

Larry Penner
Great Neck

Mental Health & Youth

Gov. Kathy Hochul's plan to increase funding for school-based clinics clearly is what our children need most. Youth are facing unprecedented mental health needs, not just in New York but nationally. We must address this now to set them up for success in school, at work, and in life.

Access to mental healthcare resources in schools is pivotal. We've witnessed the increased need as students have returned to schools full-time, and to our afterschool programs in impoverished communities across our city.

At New York Junior Tennis & Learning, we believe mental and physical health are equally important, as families have undergone significant challenges during the pandemic. We partnered with graduate social work interns to consult students at several sites and hired a full-time social worker to train staff on trauma-informed practices and counsel participants experiencing stress, anxiety, and depression.

We all bear the responsibility of safeguarding our youth's mental health and well-being; schools, community-based organizations, parents, and community leaders all must play a role in ensuring students have the means to succeed during this critical time.

Udai Tambar
President & CEO, New York Junior Tennis & Learning (NYJTL)

Editor's Note: NYJTL's Cary Leeds Center is based in Crotona Park, and there are also afterschool (ACES) and Community Tennis Programs operating throughout the borough. Links below:

Cary Leeds: <https://www.nyjtl.org/caryleeds/>

ACES - <https://www.nyjtl.org/aces-afterschool/>

Community Tennis -Programs <https://www.nyjtl.org/programs/ctp/>

Thank You to Bronx Residents!

I am writing to thank Bronx-area residents for sharing the true meaning of Christmas with children in need this past holiday season. Generosity throughout contributed to a successful shoebox gift collection season at drop-off locations for the Samaritan's Purse project, Operation Christmas Child. Across the U.S., the project collected over 9.3 million shoebox gifts in 2022. Combined with those collected from partnering countries in 2022, the ministry is now sending nearly 10.6 million shoebox gifts to children worldwide.

Through shoeboxes, packed with fun toys, school supplies, and hygiene items, Bronx-area volunteers brought joy to children in need around the world. Each gift-filled shoebox is a tangible expression of God's love, and it is often the first gift these children have ever received. Through the continued generosity of donors since 1993, Operation Christmas Child has collected and delivered more than 209 million, gift-filled shoeboxes to children in more than 170 countries and territories.

This year, Samaritan's Purse delivered its milestone 200 millionth shoebox, packed on a country-wide tour and then hand-delivered to a young girl in Ukraine. Across NY, shoebox packers often shop for deals on shoebox items throughout the year, and many serve at a deeper level by becoming a year-round volunteer.

Information about ways area participants can get involved year-round can also be found at samaritans-purse.org/occ or by calling 518-437-0690. Although local drop-off locations for gifts are closed until Nov. 13 - 20, 2023, anyone can still be a part of this life-changing project by conveniently packing a shoebox gift online in just a few simple clicks at samaritanspurse.org/buildonline.

These simple gifts, packed with love, send a message to children worldwide that they are loved and not forgotten.

Lizette Miller, Samaritan's Purse,
North Carolina

To ensure sufficient time for review of all letters to the editor, please send them to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org or by mail to Norwood News, 3400 Reservoir Oval East, Bronx, NY 10467, by the Friday before each publication day. 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.

Tenant's Problems Continue with Black Water

By SÍLE MOLONEY & DAVID GREENE

Longtime Bedford Park resident, Joy LaFontaine, told *Norwood News* she is fed up complaining to both 311 and her landlord about various, ongoing problems in her Decatur Avenue building, including disruptive neighbors, alleged rat sightings, and lack of heat, adding that she has seen little in the form of results for her efforts.

Based on 311 public data, her complaints are reflective of those logged by thousands of other New Yorkers, particularly those living in Section 8 housing, who often bear the brunt of the City's ongoing housing crisis, where access to quality housing is an ongoing battle among the masses and ongoing needed repairs are the norm. Yet, the latest catastrophe has brought her to the end of her tether.

In December, black-colored water started to emerge from the plughole in her sink, flooding her kitchen and causing damage to her utensils. Her third-floor building, located at 2960 Decatur Avenue is managed by JK Management/Decca Briggs LLC and though she said the team has attempted to resolve some of the issues, there is much which still remains to be addressed.

In late November, LaFontaine told *Norwood News* she was experiencing extreme cold inside her second-floor apartment, especially between 10 p.m. and 5.30 a.m., when she alleges the management team don't provide heat. "I have been calling 311 for some time," she wrote on Nov. 30. "I have my complaint numbers. I reached out to management via telephone calls and text." LaFontaine added that she had previously contacted the

building's super who she said referred her to "John," the building manager, who, the super said controls the heat.

LaFontaine added, "Yesterday, I got home at 6.30 p.m. and there was no heat until this morning at 6 a.m. when management usually puts it on. We have hot water, just no heat." She continued, "I have a compromised immune system and now really sick. I keep warm with a heating pad in my bed."

She said previously the window frames were not properly sealing in the heat, even though attempts were made to address the drafts with a temporary fix. "So, it doesn't matter how long they put the heat on," LaFontaine said. "My apartment was freezing on those dangerous [cold] nights, especially when I had COVID. In December, I have the pictures with a window. The window frame from the inside, had like ice and snow on the inside of my house."

By Dec. 4, the Bedford Park resident had more issues to contend with. "I now have hot, black water coming out of my kitchen sink," she said. "It has flooded my kitchen, messed up my rugs, and pots, cabinets." She shared photos and a video of black-colored water in her sink and streaming down under it and onto her kitchen floor. LaFontaine said part of the building was being renovated, and added that she believed the work involved in the renovation was impacting upon the plumbing system, and was causing her water to turn black.

Norwood News visited the apartment to witness the issues first-hand. In a follow-up telephone interview, LaFontaine also complained of a disruptive neighbor, adding that other building residents



All photos by Miriam Quiñones except for the black water in the sink and the ice inside the apartment which were taken by Joy LaFontaine

THE APARTMENT OF Joy LaFontaine at 2960 Decatur Avenue in Bedford Park is seen in various states of disrepair due to drafts, flooding and dampness.

had also complained about him, but were not comfortable speaking to the press or disclosing their names for fear of retribution by the landlord or by the tenant in question.

Norwood News spoke with "John" from the building's management company about LaFontaine's complaints. He said he had received many complaints about the disruptive resident in apartment 32-A and said attempts were being made to talk to him. However, John said he continues to do what he wants.

Asked if anything could be done to

have the disruptive resident removed from the building, John said the resident was on a specific program and that his apartment was rented out to the Jewish Board of Human Services for All New York, located at 463 7th Avenue in Manhattan. *Norwood News* contacted the board for comment. We spoke with Laurie and were informed that someone would "see if they'll reach out to you." As of press date, we had not been contacted with any response. We will continue to follow up on the issues.



CRIME FILE

BY SÍLE MOLONEY & DAVID GREENE

**DOE Employee Arrested in Fordham Manor**

Police announced the arrest of an off-duty NYC Department of Education (DOE) employee who allegedly struck a pedestrian with a vehicle and later fled the scene. Officials said police were called to West Fordham Road and Cedar Avenue in Fordham Manor at 10:51 a.m. on Thursday, Jan. 12. Officers from the 52nd Precinct reported that a 28-year-old pedestrian was struck as the hit & run driver was on East Fordham Road, turning right onto Cedar Avenue.

The pedestrian suffered minor injuries and reportedly refused medical attention at the scene. Police later arrested DOE employee, Eric Morales, 53, who was charged with leaving the scene of an accident with injury. When contacted for comment, a DOE representative confirmed the driver was a DOE employee but did not confirm his occupation. He also said that as the incident was not school-related, no disciplinary action had been taken and added that the matter is not yet resolved. A person arrested and charged with a crime is deemed innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law.

Three DOC Officers Charged with Misconduct

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark announced Jan. 17 that three NYC Department of Corrections (DOC) officers were charged with falsifying business records, official misconduct, and related charges for allegedly making false and misleading reports after one of the correction officers allegedly struck a Rikers Island inmate.

Clark said defendants, Carl Williams, 31, Roy Dewar, 58, and Jatan Das, 64, were arraigned on Jan. 17, on charges of first-degree falsifying business records,

first-degree offering a false instrument for filing, second-degree falsifying business records, second-degree offering a false instrument for filing, and official misconduct. She said Williams was additionally charged with third-degree assault before Bronx Supreme Court Justice George R. Villegas.

According to the investigation, at around 6:15 a.m. on Oct. 14, 2021, inside the Otis Bantum Correctional Center on Rikers Island, Williams entered a housing area and began speaking with an inmate who was standing with his hands by his sides when Williams was allegedly observed on surveillance video striking the man in the face and adopting a fighting stance.

Das and Dewar both allegedly observed the assault. The investigation found that the defendants allegedly submitted reports to the DOC, alleging the inmate was the aggressor and that use of force was justified.

In a statement, the president of the Correction Officers' Benevolent Association, COBA, Benny Boscio, classified the charges as "trumped up," saying, "The fact that the Bronx DA has chosen to indict these three officers over allegations that were made over two years ago tells us that this case is being driven more by the politics of our times than by the facts."

A person accused of a crime is deemed innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law. The defendants are due back in court on April 19.

Former SBA President Ed Mullins Pleads Guilty in Financial Fraud Case

Former president of the NYPD Sergeants Benevolent Association (SBA), Ed Mullins, has pled guilty to misappropriating \$600,000 from the SBA, it was an-

nounced on Thursday, Jan. 19. The news was confirmed in a brief press release by the SBA, whose current president is Vincent J. Vallelong.

"During his plea allocation, Mullins admitted to defrauding the union by submitting inflated expense reimbursement reports as well as characterizing personal expenses as SBA expenses, which he knew to be false," the SBA statement read. "As part of the plea, the court entered a preliminary forfeiture order in the amount of \$600,000. As such, Mullins is required to make full restitution to the SBA," the statement continued.

The U.S. Department of Justice announced that Mullins pled guilty before U.S. District Judge John G. Koeltl to one count of wire fraud. According to the prosecution, the SBA is the fifth-largest police union in the U.S. with membership of all active and retired sergeants of the NYPD, approximately 13,000 members. From 2002 until October 2021, Mullins served as president of the union.

The court heard that beginning in 2017 Mullins used his personal credit card to pay for meals at high-end restaurants and to purchase luxury personal items, among other things, and then submitted false and inflated expense reports to the SBA, representing that his charges were legitimate SBA expenditures, when in fact they were not.

The court further heard that Mullins routinely included meals on his expense reports that were not SBA-related. He also inflated the costs of his meals, whether SBA-related or not. For example, if the actual cost of a meal was \$522.55, Mullins would seek reimbursement from the SBA for \$822.55 and pocket the difference.

The court also heard that Mullins would also take personal expenses like supermarket bills and claim them on his expense reports as SBA-related meals for which he also sought reimbursement. According to the case information, his fraudulent expenses were paid through the SBA's contingent fund, which is funded primarily through annual dues paid by SBA members. In total, Mullins stole at least \$600,000 from the SBA, according to court records.

The guilty plea of Mullins, 61, of Port Washington, New York, carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. As part of his plea agreement, the prosecution team said Mullins agreed to forfeit \$600,000 to the United States, and to make restitution in the amount of \$600,000 to the SBA.

On July 17, 2020, CNN reported that Mullins appeared on a Fox News show with a QAnon mug visible in the background. As reported by The New York Times, one of the central conspiracy theories behind QAnon is the belief in a group of Satan-worshipping elites who run a child sex ring and are trying to control politics and media. It has been

widely reported that QAnon supporters were involved in the attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

The *maximum* potential sentence in the case is prescribed by Congress. Any sentencing of Mullins will be determined by the judge. Mullins is scheduled to be sentenced on May 25.

Man Injured during Car Theft in Norwood

Police are looking for a man who reportedly jumped into an unlocked car and fled the scene in Norwood. Police said the incident took place at 7 a.m. on Thursday, Dec. 29, at the corner of Mosholu Parkway and Paul Avenue. The unidentified 33-year-old male victim and car owner reported to police that the suspect jumped into his 2012 Hyundai Elantra, and that he attempted to stop the thief by reaching into the driver's side window as the vehicle drove away. The victim suffered a minor injury to the arm during the incident. Police reported no arrests in the case.

Trio Robbed on West Fordham Road

Police are looking to identify two men who robbed a driver and two passengers in Fordham Manor. They said officers from the 52nd Precinct were flagged down near West Fordham Road and Landing Road at 5:20 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 3, and learned that a 28-year-old male driver and two female passengers, aged 27 and 21 had been robbed at gunpoint. They said the driver told them the three had parked and were eating food inside the vehicle when two males approached them, displaying guns. They said the perpetrators stole the victims' jewelry and an unknown amount of cash before fleeing in a dark-colored SUV. No injuries were reported.

Police reported that a short time later, officers in the 34th Precinct were also flagged down by a member of the public, opposite 423 West 204th Street in the Inwood section of Manhattan. The unidentified, 41-year-old victim told police he had been standing by his vehicle when he was approached by two males wearing facemasks, and one produced a handgun. He said the suspects stole \$150 from the victim before fleeing in a dark-colored SUV. Police could not immediately confirm if both incidents were the work of the same suspects, reported no arrests in either case. They are continuing to investigate.

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 @NYPDTips. All calls are strictly confidential.

Fordham Manor: Search for Missing Senior

By SÍLE MOLONEY

The NYPD is asking for the public's help locating an 85-year-old man who is reported missing from Fordham Manor. Police said Robert Cofield of 2505 Grand Avenue was last seen Tuesday, Jan. 24, at approximately 7:50 a.m. walking up the stairwell to the southbound platform of Fordham Road subway station, located at Fordham Road and Jerome Avenue.

Cofield is described as male, is around 5 feet, 11 inches tall, weighs 165 pounds, has brown eyes and gray hair. He was last seen wearing a dark gray jacket, was carrying a purple duffel bag with the words "University Center" printed on it.

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-



Photo courtesy of NYPD

ROBERT COFIELD, 85, from Fordham Manor is reported missing.

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.

By NAOMI PEMBERTON

January is Glaucoma Awareness Month, an important time to share information about one of the leading causes of blindness. Glaucoma is part of a group of common eye diseases and disorders that effect vision. It is the second leading cause of blindness worldwide, so it is essential to know the risks and how to prevent the disease.

What is Glaucoma?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Glaucoma effects about 3 million Americans. Glaucoma is part of a group of diseases that damage the eye's central nerve, also known as the optic nerve. The optic nerve does the important job of carrying messages from the eye to the brain.

Our eyes need the right amount of fluid to work properly. When the amount of fluid in the eye is not balanced, or not draining properly, the eye can build up pressure. This pressure in the eye causes damage to the optic nerve, and can lead to blind spots, or loss of vision in a specific area of the eye. If left untreated, damage to this nerve can cause vision loss or blindness.

Unfortunately, the CDC reports that half of people with glaucoma don't know they have it, and there is no cure, so it's important to learn the signs of glaucoma, take steps to prevent or slow



Focus on Your Eye Health During Glaucoma Awareness Month

the progression of glaucoma, and reduce the risk of vision loss.

According to the National Eye Institute, signs of glaucoma include sudden blurry vision, severe eye pain, headaches, nausea, a halo or rainbow-colored rings within your vision.

Anyone can get glaucoma; however, some groups have a greater risk of developing the condition. People aged 60 years and older with a genetic history of glaucoma and diabetes are at a higher risk. African Americans and Latin Americans aged 40 and over are also at a higher risk, and African American women are at a higher risk than African American men, according to the CDC.

What can you do to protect your eyes?

- **Get covered:** Medicare and most health insurance plans cover glaucoma tests under your primary coverage. If you have health insurance, call your health plan to learn about what services are covered. If you do not have health insurance, visit the NY State of Health website at this link: <https://nys-tateofhealth.ny.gov/> or call their help line at 1 (855) 355 5777 to learn about your options for health insurance. The New York State Marketplace is currently open for enrollment in health insurance

plans. Go to the website or call to learn about your options.

- **Get an annual, physical exam:** Many insurance plans cover an annual health exam. During this exam, your provider will check your vision, weight, blood pressure, and run tests to identify or rule out possible illnesses, including chronic conditions like diabetes, which has been linked to glaucoma.
- **Get regular eye exams:** The National Eye Institute recommends getting an eye exam once a year. It is important to have regular eye exams with an eye doctor. Regular eye exams allow the doctor to identify early signs of the disease and help you get the treatment you need.

Although glaucoma cannot be reversed or cured, the earlier you treat the condition, the more you can slow the damage to your eyes and your vision. Make an appointment if you have not seen your primary physician, eye doctor, or ophthalmologist. Make sure to get your annual check-ups to review your weight and blood pressure and get tested for chronic diseases.

Naomi Pemberton, MPA, CPC is senior project manager at Montefiore's Office of Community & Population Health.

Out & About

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY

EVENTS

Celebrate the **Lunar New Year of the Water Rabbit** on Saturday, Jan. 28, at 3 p.m. in the Main Theater of Hostos Center, 450 Grand Concourse, The Bronx, and the acclaimed Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company. The company's acclaimed dancers, stunning acrobats and wonderful musicians provide for a spectacular afternoon for all ages. They will perform traditional and contemporary dances dressed in dazzling costumes of dragons, peacocks, and lions, playing bamboo instruments, twirling ribbons, and premiering a new lion dance with a hip hop beat! For more details, visit <https://www.hostos.cuny.edu/culturearts/> or call the box office at (718) 518-4455.

ART

City as Living Laboratory (CALL) presents **Tibbetts Estuary Tapestry** by artists, Ana de la Cueva and Matthew López-Jensen, at the Van Cortlandt House Museum, located at Broadway and West 246th Street, The Bronx. Following its opening on Dec. 10, 2022, this exhibit will continue through March 2023. Creating a quilt, the artists devised

an intricate process, offering in-person and on-line workshops and tutorials to over 100 volunteers, inviting them to embroider their visions of a greener, future Broadway corridor onto 10"x10" fabric squares.

The 15-foot-long quilt is displayed within the historical context of the 18th century farmhouse, the oldest building in The Bronx. Accompanied by other historical quilts, the installation creates a dialogue between the borough's past, present, and future. For more information, email lucas@cityaslivinglab.org or call (212) 966-4287.

A reception to launch the exhibition, **"Queer Love: Affection and Romance in Contemporary Art,"** will be held at Lehman College Art Gallery, 250 Bedford Park Boulevard, on Tuesday, Feb. 14. The exhibit presents paintings and photographs that illuminate both individual and universal stories of vulnerability, tenderness, and desire in the LGBTQIA community. It gathers the work of almost 50 artists and will run from Feb. 14 to April 23. The works explore the power and significance of intimate queer familial, romantic, and sexual relationships. For more

information, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/#search> and search with the event title.

Bronx River Art Center (BRAC), located at 1087 East Tremont Avenue, The Bronx 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. Visit www.brac.org for more information.

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.bronxriverart.org/index> or call (718) 589 5819.

Families are invited to join a **Winter Wonderland Snack & Paint** event to be held in the Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, 3225 Reservoir Oval East, The Bronx, on Thursday, Jan. 26, at 6 p.m., with music, art & refreshments served. Artists will learn about elements of shapes to create a piece of art to their liking of snowflakes, snowmen, trees and mountains. Supplies will be provided. For more information, email Pamela.Coleman@parks.nyc.gov.

gov or call (718) 543 8672.

THEATER

Bronx River Arts Center (BRAC) is proud to host a performance of **Shakespeare's Henry IV, Part 1**, by the Stella Adler School of Acting, affiliated with New York University's undergraduate program. The play depicts a dramatization of the reign of King Henry IV of England up until the Battle of Shrewsbury. The performance will be held at BRAC, 1087 E. Tremont Ave., Bronx, on Feb. 2 at 3.30 p.m.

MUSIC

Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Park Boulevard, The Bronx, is proud to present the return of **Grupo Niche** for an unforgettable concert to celebrate Valentine's Day on Saturday, Feb. 11, at 8 p.m. The best-known Colombian salsa group, Grupo Niche, is known for both up-tempo and vigorous dance music as well as slower-paced salsa romántica numbers. Musical director Maestro José Aguirre oversees every small detail in keeping with the Grupo Niche style created by the late Maestro Jairo Varela. For more information, call the Lehman Center box office at (718) 960-8833 or visit <https://www.lehmancenter.org/events/grupo-niche>.

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, 250 Bedford Park Boulevard, The Bronx, presents **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/>.

Bronx Arts Ensemble (BAE) String Quartet presents "BAE Virtual Concert Hall: Caribbean Music and More," performing works by Black musicians in the Americas on Thursday, Feb. 16, at 1 p.m., a free virtual event. From the folk songs of Jamaica and Haiti to Florence Price's monumental Five Folksongs in Counterpoint, this online show is not to be missed. For more information, visit <https://www.bronxartsensemble.org/events/>.

NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY



New 8-Story, Building at 3020 Valentine Avenue

Building applications have been filed with NYC Department of Buildings (DOB) for a new, 8-story, residential building at 3020 Valentine Avenue in the Bedford Park section of The Bronx, as reported by YIMBY. Located at the intersection of East 202nd Street and Valentine Avenue, the lot is one block from the Bedford Park Boulevard subway station, serviced by the B and D trains. Boris Babakhanov of Bolex GC Corp. is listed as the owner behind the applications, according to YIMBY.

The proposed 80-foot-tall development will yield 28,685 square feet designated for residential space. The building will yield 42 residential units, most likely rentals, based on the average unit scope of 682 square feet. The concrete-based structure will also have a basement, lobby, mail and package room, and bike storage, but no accessory parking. The firm, Issac & Stern Architects, is listed as the architect of record. Demolition permits have not yet been filed and an estimated completion date for the new building has not yet been announced.

BFRDC Considers Endorsement of Bronx DA, Endorses Dinowitz for City Council

On Wednesday, Jan. 25, The Benjamin Franklin Reform Democratic Club (BFRDC) were due to hold club leadership elections via Zoom and potentially consider an endorsement for the role of Bronx District Attorney among two recognized DA candidates, incumbent, Darcel Clark, and Tess Cohen. As of press date, the meeting had yet to take place.

Meanwhile, Virginia Krompinger, BFRDC club president, elected in early 2022, said during the club's November 2022 meeting, members voted to endorse incumbent District 11 City Council Member Eric Dinowitz in the 2023 city council primary election, as they had done in 2021. Among others, the club also endorsed, in 2022, Gov. Kathy Hochul, Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (A.D. 81), State Sen. Jamaal Bailey (S.D. 36), Rep. Adriano Espaillat (NY-13), Rep. Ritchie Torres (NY-15), and candidate, Miguelina Camilo, who ran in the senate district 33 Democratic primary, won ultimately by incumbent, State Sen. Gustavo Rivera (S.D. 33).

New Management at St. Patrick's Home

Jeffrey Jacomowitz of Centers Health Care, located at 4770 White Plains Road in Wakefield, The Bronx, said Centers Health Care took over management of St. Patrick's Home & Rehabilitation Center, located at 66 Van Cortlandt Park South in Van Cortlandt Village, on or about Nov. 1, 2022. "Many staff personnel feel good to be part of a large, post-acute care network," he said, adding that there would be no change to the day-to-day operation of the facility.

Clothing Drive

Destination Tomorrow, Bronx LGBTQ+ Resource Center, in conjunction with Amida Care NY, New Alternatives, New Pride Agenda, NY Trans Advocacy, are holding a clothing drive on Tuesday, Jan. 31, for those in need clothing. Donations are welcomed at the Destination Tomorrow office located at The Center, 208 West 13th St, Room 101.

Tibbett's Brook Daylighting Gets Green Light

The Adams administration has given the green light to uncover Tibbetts Brook and extend the Putnam Greenway in the Van Cortlandt Park through Kingsbridge to the Harlem River. Following years of stalemate, an agreement was reached with railroad freight company, CSX Transportation, to

purchase some old railroad property for \$11.2 million. This will enable the city to reroute the underground brook above ground, an engineering feat known as "daylighting."

City officials said removing Tibbetts Brook from the sewer system will create much-needed additional capacity in the borough's drainage network and is expected to reduce combined sewer overflows by 228 million gallons annually, improving the health of the Harlem River.

Jerome Park Reservoir Access

Access to the fenced off Jerome Park Reservoir has long been a top concern for Bronx residents. Last year, *Norwood News* repeatedly asked for updates from NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Press Office as to when public access would be made available, following news from that department in February 2022, of the completion of a \$15.7 million upgrade. Our numerous requests by phone and email went unanswered.

Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz (A.D. 81) recently said giving people access to walk across the reservoir should be relatively easy to allow for DEP, and said he has never received a legitimate excuse as to why it has been denied. *Norwood News* continues to pursue the matter with DEP also and will share any updates we receive.

Torres Calls for Investigation into Santos

U.S. Congressman Ritchie Torres (NY-15), who represents parts of Bronx Community District 7, including Norwood, has called for a federal elections commission investigation into the campaign finances of U.S. Rep. George Santos (NY-03), the newly elected, controversial lawmaker who represents part of northern Nassau County on Long Island and northeast Queens. Santos has already reportedly admitted to lying about his education and work experience.

Torres made the announcement during a news conference on Long Island on Tuesday, Jan. 17, and called on the Federal Election Commission (FEC) to launch an investigation into potential illegal activity and alleged irregularities with Santos' campaign finances, alleged in various media reports. Santos denies any allegations of wrongdoing. Torres is also sponsoring new legislation that would punish candidates for federal office who knowingly lie to voters about their background.

Norwood News reached out for comment from Santos to the New York number listed on his website. Our call was answered by a staffer in the office of Republican congressman, Nick LaLota (NY-01), who also represents parts of eastern Long Island. LaLota's staffer said he had been getting calls for Santos all morning. The staffer said Santos had been forwarding his calls to LaLota's office.

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!

Free Family Law Legal Clinic

District 11 City Council Member Eric Dinowitz said the Bronx Women's Bar Association and The Office of the Bronx Borough President will honor

the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy with a free family law legal clinic on Friday, Jan. 27, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Bronx Supreme Court Rotunda.

Call (646) 250-8482 to make an appointment.

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.

Misdemeanor Mental Health Court Launches in Westchester County

Westchester County District Attorney Miriam E. Rocah joined advocates and government partners on Jan. 19 in announcing the launch of the Westchester Misdemeanor Wellness Court (WMWC), which will offer eligible individuals community-based, mental health treatment and services as an alternative to conventional prosecution.

Health Commissioner Issues Advisory

NYC Health Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasan issued an advisory on Dec. 9, 2022 as NYC faced high levels of a 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.

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/vaxtoschool.

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.

Man Gets 5 Years for Pulling Gun in Bronx Playground

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark announced Jan. 25 that a Manhattan man was sentenced to five years in prison after a jury convicted him of weapon possession for displaying a loaded gun in a Marble Hill playground.

“The defendant threatened the safety of the community, striking fear in people who use the Marble Hill Playground as a place to take their family,” Clark said. “The jury in this case was able to review the evidence and came back with a guilty verdict. We are sending a clear message that we are not tolerating gun violence in the Bronx.”

She said the defendant, Charles Cherry, 34, of Riverside Drive, Manhattan was sentenced to five years in prison and five years post release supervision by Bronx Supreme Court Justice Steven Hornstein. The defendant was found guilty of one count of second-degree criminal possession of a weapon on Nov. 15, 2022, after a jury trial.

According to the investigation, on Aug. 28, 2020, the defendant was arguing with another man at the Marble Hill Playground. Cherry left but later returned and pointed the gun at the other individual. The NYPD was notified about the alterca-



Photo courtesy of the NYPD

THREE PEOPLE ARE sought following a shooting in a playground in Morton Place Playground in Morris Heights on Saturday, May 22, 2021, at around 3.42 p.m.

tion and an officer arrived at the playground and pursued Cherry, who ran behind a building at 5250 Broadway.

At the location, police recovered a loaded 9-mm pistol, which had DNA on it belonging to Cherry. Nearby surveillance video from a storage facility also captured Cherry on camera.

In March 2021, *Norwood News* reported that three men were sought by police following a daylight shooting in front of a playground in Morris Heights. Police said that on Saturday, May 22, 2021, at around 3.42 p.m., the three were walking northbound on University Avenue in front of Morton Place playground, which was occupied at the time by numerous children and their guardians.

As two other men exited the basketball court, two of three sought produced guns and fired at least nine gunshots in the direction of the two other men. The three suspects then fled on foot, southbound, on University Avenue. There were no injuries reported following the incident.

Also in March 2021, police asked for the public's help identifying the vehicle and individuals seen in the accompanying photo in connection to another Bronx playground shooting. They said on Friday, March 12, 2021, at around 5.36 p.m. at Magenta Playground (Olinville Avenue and Rosewood Street) in Olinville, near Gun Hill Houses, an individual discharged several rounds from a gun into a crowd inside the playground.



THESE TWO ARE sought for questioning following a shooting on Friday, March 12, 2021, at Magenta Playground in Olinville.

The shooter fled southbound on Olinville Road on a scooter driven by a second person. The gunfire caused damage to three parked and unoccupied vehicles. There were no injuries reported following the shooting.

The case of the Marble Hill playground shooting was prosecuted by assistant district attorney, Alessandra Ambrosi, and senior investigative assistant district attorney, Kevin Griffin, of the special investigations bureau (SBU), under the supervision of Howard Feldberg, deputy chief of the SBU, Craig Cecchini, chief of the SBU, and under the overall supervision of Denise Kodjo, deputy chief of the investigations division, and Wanda Perez-Maldonado, chief of the investigations division.

Clark thanked trial preparation assistant, Emily Lugo Rosario, of the SBU, NYPD Officer Michael Johnson of the 50th Precinct, NYPD Detective James Haskell of the NYPD police laboratory, Detective Luke Maddock of the violent crime squad, Officer Christopher Multari from the evidence collection team and Elizabeth Valle, criminalist with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for their assistance in the case.

In addition, Clark thanked former NYPD Officers: Officer Brandon Day of the Westchester Police Department and Officer Nicholas Kraft of the Blooming Grove NY Police Department.

Revisioning Process Continues for Kingsbridge Armory

By MIRIAM QUIÑONES & SÍLE MOLONEY

The revisioning process to decide on the future use of the Kingsbridge Armory, located at Jerome Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights is continuing. Additional revisioning workshops took place on Saturday, Nov. 5, 2022, and once again on Saturday, Jan. 21.

District 14 City Council Member Pierina Sanchez gave an overview of the project during Bronx Community Board 7's general board meeting on Jan. 24, adding that at the Jan. 21 workshop, they had several hundred people in attendance, and the school safety agents were even telling her they had to stop letting people in for safety reasons.

“I just want to say thank you, thank you, thank you to everyone who was able to join because it really helps us, the elected officials, have a stronger leg to stand on when we advocate for funding,” Sanchez said.

The “Together for Kingsbridge / Jun-

tos Para Kingsbridge” working group, together with NYC Economic Development Corporation, have been asking the public to submit their ideas of what they would like to see in place in the armory for several months now, since that the controversial Kingsbridge National Ice Center project was abandoned, as previously reported.

The group is particularly interested in hearing from young people on what they envision for the City-owned historical site and the types of “good jobs” they hope to see emerge from the project. Some potential options, like schools, are not on the cards since the site is somewhat limited due to its protected status as a historical landmark. EDC held an explanatory session on these restrictions in mid-January. *Norwood News* will provide further reporting on this session in future editions.

Mambo and Latin jazz musician, Tito Puente Jr., spoke about being part of the event and looked forward to working with

everyone to bring entertainment, workshops, and classes not only for children but also for adults.

Meanwhile, Willy Rodriguez, co-founder and executive director of the planned International Salsa Museum, still wants to house the museum in the armory, as previously reported. Some others voiced their impatience with so many meetings being held on the topic, adding that they were eager for more action and less talking.

Summing up the latest session and the high numbers in attendance, Sanchez said, “This is what the committee wants to see. We discussed redevelopment scenarios for other armories in the City, other redevelopment projects in the country that we could learn from.”

She said there will be recaps from the first sessions, two more workshops and eventually a presentation of the community's vision in a final vision document in the next month or so.



Photos by Miriam Quiñones

RESIDENTS AND PARTICIPANTS from various local organizations including Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition join elected officials, including District 14 City Council Member Pierina Sanchez, for an revisioning workshop for the Kingsbridge Armory at P.S. 340 Annex, 2751 Jerome Avenue on Nov. 5, 2022.



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Public and Community Meetings

The next **52nd PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meeting will take place via Zoom on the Thursday, Jan. 26, at 7 p.m. The Meeting ID is (516) 509 8952 and the passcode is 4R4Uiu. 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, February 28, 2023, 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 last **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 8** board meeting was held on Jan. 10. The February meeting date is to be confirmed. 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.

Dolphins Spotted in Bronx River

By **SÍLE MOLONEY**

NYC Parks officials said dolphins have been spotted in the Bronx River. "It's true - dolphins were spotted in the Bronx River this week!" the agency tweeted on Jan. 19, along with an accompanying video filmed by Nick Banco. "This is great news - it shows that the decades-long effort to re-

store the river as a healthy habitat is working, department officials added. "We believe these dolphins naturally found their way to the river in search of fish. We encourage you to welcome these dolphins to the Boogie Down! Make sure that they're comfortable during their visit by giving them space and not disturbing them."

Bronx Puerto Rican Day Parade Chair Remembered

By **MIRIAM QUINONES**

A celebration of life was held in honor and memory of Francisco Gonzalez on Saturday, Jan. 21, at Harding Park Center, 1820 Gilderlee Avenue in Clason Point. Gonzalez was a former chairman of the Bronx Puerto Rican Day parade and a much-loved and respected member of the Bronx community. Various tributes to Gonzalez, on died Nov. 30, 2022, were shared on social media by both elected officials and residents from across the borough.



Photo by Miriam Quiñones
FRANCISCO GONZALEZ, OCT. 28, 1950 to Nov. 30, 2022.

Mom: Why Was Son Shot 17 Times?

(continued from page 1)

located on the corner of 194th Street and Briggs Avenue when he was shot and killed. EMS responded and transported the victim to St. Barnabas Hospital where he was pronounced deceased. There were no arrests, and the investigation remains ongoing.

On Dec. 27, the 52nd Precinct reportedly tweeted two photos of an unidentified person sought for questioning in connection with the incident, along with the following comments, "Wanted for homicide inside of 2650 Briggs Avenue on 12/18/22 at approximately 11:10 a.m. Pictured individual did discharge a firearm several times, striking the victim, causing his demise. Seen him? Any info?"

However, the post was removed the following day. The NYPD did not respond to an initial request by *Norwood News* at the end of December as to why the post was taken down.

Norwood News conducted an exclusive interview on Saturday, Jan. 21, with the victim's heartbroken mother, whose name we are withholding amid fears for her safety since the killer remains at large. She

spoke of a possible love-triangle involving her son, an older woman, and another man, and said she believes this situation may have led to her son being killed.

She also said she is afraid the case will go cold and alleged two officers at the 52nd Precinct are childhood friends of the woman she believes was involved in a relationship with her son.

The mom further alleged the woman in question was 45 years old in either 2019 or 2020, when her son, then 25, first met her. The mom recalled, "She would spend all his money and then throw him out." The mother alleged her son was arrested more than a dozen times, often after the woman called him to her home. She added, "But my son was in love with this woman."

Recalling the fateful day her son was shot, the mom then said, "From what I heard, because people who have seen the video... they don't want to show it to me... there was an argument because of her [the woman she believes was involved with her son], and the guy left and came back with a gun and shot my son 17 times."

The mom also said she has her son's phone and that it contains text messages from the woman in question in which she allegedly asks her son to get her a bag of weed at the store in which he was shot. Because of these messages, she said she believes her son was set up. "Nobody shoots anybody 17 times in a random case, no!" she said. "They'll shoot you once or twice because they're scared; they run." *Norwood News* has not seen the alleged text messages. We were just informed that they exist.

The victim's mom alleged that in additional text messages sent to her daughter, the woman in question allegedly denied initially having anything to do with the situation, but later allegedly backtracked on her position.

When the question arose as to why the Tweet containing the photos of the apparent suspect which were posted by the 52nd Precinct were later removed, the mom said, "Exactly! And my question is why? And then, they had the nerve to say they never put it out!"

Norwood News made several calls to the deli in question to

ask about the weed allegations. Our calls were never returned. We also visited the store on Jan. 21 and were told to come back when the owner was there. The man behind the counter on the day said he didn't know anything about the incident.

The NYPD has had a patrol car stationed diagonally across the street from the deli for about two years since another killing took place in the area. The patrol car was also there on Saturday, Jan. 21.

Multiple sources, who requested their names to be withheld, confirmed to *Norwood News* the person in the photos released on Twitter by the NYPD and later removed, was an employee of Foodtown on East 204th Street in Norwood.

On Jan. 9, Noah Katz, president of PSK Supermarkets, which owns the East 204th Street Foodtown branch, told *Norwood News*, "We have no comment about the incident you are investigating other than the following: 'We are working with the NYPD as they request our cooperation.'"

Norwood News has had contact with a friend of the apparent suspect whose photo was shared on Twitter by the NYPD. She defended the apparent suspect, writing, "Apparently, he was being harassed in the store by a group of guys who would follow him. They hit him in the back of the head when he was working, so it had been happening for a while."

She continued, "He is really great with the Spanish kids in the community." Asked if the apparent suspect had ever reached out to police regarding the alleged harassment, the source replied, "He was never fond of cops. I was told he did ask the Foodtown security and management, but I believe the guys kept coming into the store. I don't know what precautions Foodtown took."

When asked about the alleged incidents of harassment involving the apparent employee of the store and apparent suspect, Katz said, "Our company has a strict harassment policy whereby any form of harassment in the workplace shall be promptly investigated and resolved."

The victim's mother alleges her son's friends saw the video of the shooting, knew who the shooter was. She said they alleged the apparent suspect

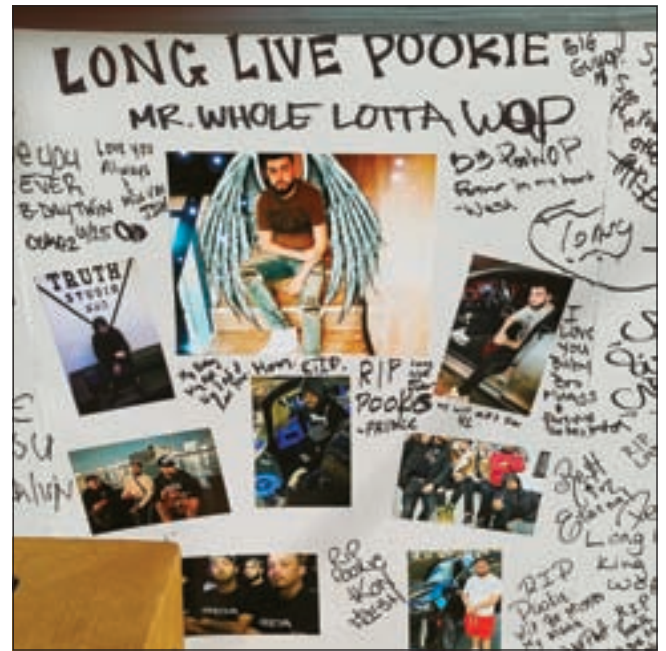


Photo by David Greene

WRITTEN TRIBUTES SURROUND photos of Norwood resident, Angel "Pookie" Cuasant, 26, who was shot and killed on Sunday, Dec. 18, 2022, in Fordham Manor.

reportedly went to work after the incident, like nothing happened, and that they later confronted him. Sources told *Norwood News* police reportedly showed up at the supermarket after the apparent suspect had fled.

According to Cuasant's mom, the family moved to Norwood in 1996, and her son attended M.S. 80, which explains why more than 500 people jammed the McKeon Funeral Home on Perry Avenue on Dec. 29 for his wake. Friends of Cuasant and of his family collected money for his burial at St. Raymond's Cemetery.

His mom said she still worries about the \$6,000 funeral costs still owed. She said her daughter set up a GoFundMe page to help cover the funeral costs and they did receive some money towards it but took the page down after the burial.

Norwood News followed up again with the NYPD press office for a comment on the deleted Tweet from December. We did not receive an immediate response. We also queried the allegations made by the victim's mom regarding the police denying they posted any pictures on Twitter. We also asked if any suspects were currently sought or in custody in connection to the shooting.

In addition, we inquired about the allegations made by the victim's mother's that her son was shot 17 times, and whether there was any possi-

ble conflict of interest regarding a detective working on the case.

On Jan. 10, we contacted commanding officer of the 52nd Precinct, Deputy Inspector Jeremy Scheublin, about the tweet and its removal, and he said he was aware that someone had queried the point with the NYPD press team already.

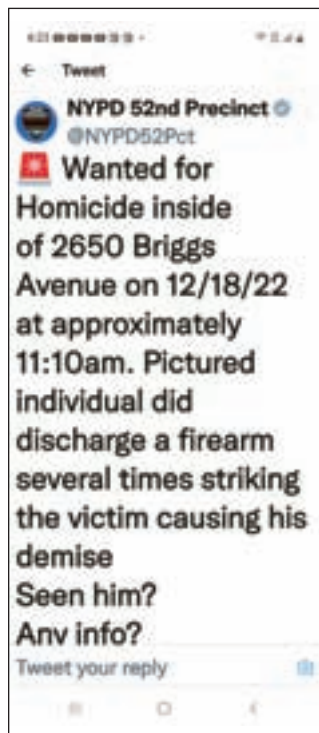
"Yes. Yeah, I have to find out exactly what the story is with that," Scheublin said. "I know DCPI (NYPD press office) called and asked. Somebody asked DCPI why it was taken down. I don't know what it was taken down, I've got to look exactly when it was taken down."

We asked Scheublin about reports the apparent suspect grew up, frequented and reportedly worked in Norwood. "I think they're all there on (East) 204th Street, without getting too much into it," he said. "I would assume that they were known to each other. I had heard that they were looking for him after the homicide [before he was identified as a suspect]," he said, adding, "We're surely looking for him."

Separately, we reached out to the Office of the City's Medical Examiner for details on the number of shots fired but did not receive an immediate response.

For now, the victim's mom waits for answers, and justice.

**Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*



Twitter screenshot by David Greene
A TWEET POSTED by the 52nd Precinct in December 2022 asks for the public's assistance identifying an apparent suspect in the murder of Angel "Pookie" Cuasant, 26, who was shot and killed in Fordham Manor on Sunday, Dec. 18, 2022. It was later removed by the 52nd Precinct.

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