



NORWOOD NEWS

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VOLUNTEERS CLEAN VCP POND

Photo by José A. Giralte

WATER CHESTNUT VEGETATION is gathered from Hester & Piero's Mill Pond in Van Cortlandt Park on Wednesday, July 12, 2023. The clean-up of the invasive aquatic species by Van Cortlandt Park Alliance volunteers has many benefits, including flood mitigation ahead of the daylighting of Tibbetts Brook.

By **JOSÉ A. GIRALT**

For most of the year, visitors to Van Cortlandt Park's Hester & Piero's Mill Pond are usually entertained by throngs of duck and geese flying and landing on the water. However, when the weather gets warm, an un-

welcome, invasive guest makes an appearance, hindering the fowls' routine of take-off and landing. That invader goes by the name "water chestnut."

Water chestnut is not, in fact, a nut but an aquatic vegetable that, according to New York

Invasive Species Information Clearinghouse (NYIS.INFO), is "inexorably spreading throughout New York State, clogging waterways, lakes and ponds and altering aquatic habitats."

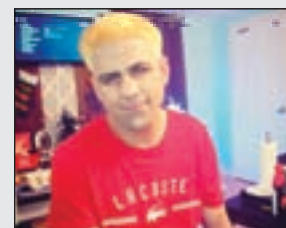
Not to be confused with the edible water chestnut that can

be purchased in cans at the local supermarket, the species in Van Cortlandt Park's pond has simulated a green carpet over the pond with just a few patches of water visible, and nary a duck or goose in sight.

(continued on page 15)



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Cricket Stadium Debate Ongoing pg 12

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P.S. / M.S. 95 Students Hone Governance Skills

by P.S. / M.S. 95 STAFF

Under the direction of Principal Serge Marshall Davis, a multi-layered, student government is currently active at P.S./M.S. 95, The Sheila Mencher School, located in Van Cortlandt Village. Instructional coach and student council advisor, Andrea Faulkner, says students are encouraged to join the student council to broaden their educational experience.

At the school, located at 3961 Hillman Avenue, students have the opportunity to develop leadership skills, advocate for a variety of causes, get involved in community service (at grade appropriate levels), and engage in two-way communication with both the school's administration and the student body on both school issues and on current events.

Lois Badji, a student at the school, said of her experience on the council, "I like being a part of the student council because my thoughts, opinions, and voice are able to be heard."

A spring term highlight at the school is the celebrated, annual Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) walk. Senior students walk from the school around Jerome Park Reservoir and back, while junior students walk several times around the large school block to raise awareness about juvenile diabetes.

The event is organized and coordinated by the student government and includes planning efficient, staggered walk schedules, organizing color-coded tee shirts by grade level, and preparing spirited songs sung by the students as they walk along the reservoir's mile-plus route.

Upon the students' return, teachers and community board representatives typically present fun, educational classroom activities on juvenile diabetes and healthy living topics.

The student government also hosts other fun events like school dances e.g. the Valentine's Day Dance and the "Spring Fling." This requires preparing decorations, refreshments, coordinating school staff chaperones and help from parents, and arranging exciting DJ music. The council also leads Field Days, which are great occasions for students to get some outdoor exercise.

Student council member, Dariela Hildago, likes how the student government helps students get the most out of school life. She said she feels school is a place to be enjoyed and she sees the efforts being made to help younger children feel that way too!



Photo courtesy of P.S. / M.S. 95

P.S. / M.S. 95 STUDENT COUNCIL members pose for a photo.

Other projects the student government leads from time to time include educational awareness fundraisers for causes like breast cancer, autism, and childhood cancer. For breast cancer, this includes promoting the annual American Cancer Society's Orchard Beach Walk and selling pink bracelets.

For autism, it includes posting fliers around the school and selling blue bracelets, and for childhood cancer, it includes sharing educational materials, and selling bracelets to benefit St. Jude's medical research efforts. The council has also supported the non-profit, City Harvest, building on this year's theme to "feed the hungry."

Bendji Pierre notes that the student council basically represents all the students at the school and they "come up with things that the students would like and help kids that need things."

The council also represents the student body in holding student forums to discuss school issues with the administration. These have included whether students can wear crocs to school, and proposed changes to the cafeteria seating arrangements.

Other forums have been held on more serious topics such as the death of George Floyd. Educational forums are also held on topics like Women's History Month.

Of her experience on the council, student government representative, Yvette Adwubi-Bissah, enthusiastically said, "We are able to have plans and speak, and we are able to make presentations to the students when we have an educational topic that we want to get out to them."

Meanwhile, student council representative, Zarique Nelson, said he focuses on "spreading awareness to students to be the best they can be." He gave examples like learning healthy living habits and deterring unhealthy practices like smoking and vaping. He said he feels the council "is a place where you can express your ideas and it's just amazing!"

For her part, Ms. Faulkner summed up her thoughts on the council, saying, "It's a wonderful thing that students have a voice, and I feel good to be helping them learn how to use it!"

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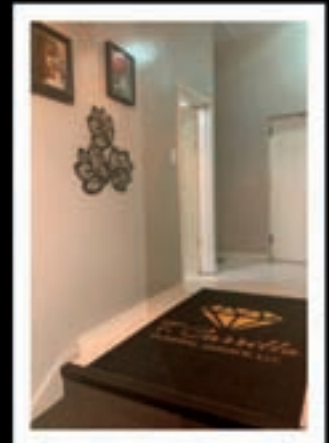
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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week, we asked readers their thoughts on the pilot program now expanding to all public schools whereby bulletproof vests are being provided to all school safety agents.



"I think it's a good idea. I don't think it's really a dangerous job. It would be better if they all had metal detectors. Now, down south, they want to give teachers guns; that's kind of tricky."

Angel Caraballo,
Norwood



"I haven't heard about the pilot program. I'd say investing in prevention of intrusions of dangerous people coming into schools [is needed]. Of course, they should have metal detectors; I thought they all had them by now. That's for sure, and good people for security. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Henry Kelly,
Woodlawn Heights



"I'll be honest; they should get it because of all the mass shootings in schools and things of that nature, so they really should get bulletproof vests. The teachers should get them too, the children also. That's my take on it. I think they should arm the teachers."

Matthew Brown,
Wakefield



"I graduated last year, and I did not hear about it. I feel it's good because now they are safer. They have more protection. That's what the security guards are there for. My school did have metal detectors. There were no reports of guns coming in. I don't mind if teachers [are] armed if that's what they need to do. I really don't care either way if you need to carry a gun in school. It's like sometimes the students get a little crazy; they'll bring a weapon, or someone from the outside can come in and start shooting up the school."

Lisandro Santana,
Allerton



"I heard about the pilot program. Basically, I feel it's very unnecessary because the kids don't need to bring weapons to school. They're there to learn; that's it. People bring weapons for different reasons.....protection.....they feel scared. Some people get bullied in school. There's a lot of reasons, but it shouldn't be necessary. They're there to learn and get a degree."

Clarence Dillard,
Red Hook, Brooklyn visiting Belmont

All photos by David Greene

Crotona: Ten Injured in Multiple Car Crash

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Ten people were injured following a multiple vehicle collision which involved an MTA bus and at least two other cars in the Crotona section of The Bronx on Sunday. Police said that cops responded on Sunday, July 23, at around 7.20 p.m. to a three-vehicle accident in the vicinity of East 180th Street and Mohegan Avenue.

Cops said it was reported to them that a 2020 Toyota was

travelling eastbound on East 180th Street when it collided with a 2012 MTA Bus. They said the Toyota proceeded to then hit and collide with a 2019 Nissan. They said the second vehicle (the Nissan) was parked on East 180th Street and a third vehicle was travelling westbound on East 180th Street.

The NYPD said all ten individuals reported minor injuries and were reported to be in stable condition. The investiga-

tion is ongoing. *Norwood News* also reached out to the FDNY for more information on the incident. We did not receive an immediate response.

One Bronx resident, who declined to be identified, shared the attached photos and a video of the scene obtained from a nearby deli. In the video, the Toyota appears to be traveling at high speed before it rear ends the MTA bus. "Another 'speedy outcome' TLC (Taxi & Limousine Commission) vs MTA," the resident wrote. "Life saved by Hustler barber shop and the deli on 180th and Crotona Pkwy, and neighborhood people."

She added, "Update – driver was NOT intentionally speedy. He was having a seizure." *Norwood News* cannot confirm if this was the case or not. The resident had no further details on the event, when contacted. We have also reached out to the City authorities and will share any updates we receive.

The NYPD investigates any criminal aspects of collision



Photo courtesy of a Bronx resident

FIREFIGHTERS ASSESS THE wreckage after a multiple car accident in the vicinity of Mohegan Avenue and E 180th Street in the Crotona section of The Bronx on Sunday, July 23, 2023.



Photo courtesy of a Bronx resident
NYPD OFFICERS ASSESS the wreckage after a multiple car accident in the vicinity of Mohegan Avenue and E 180th Street in the Crotona section of The Bronx on Sunday, July 23, 2023.

investigations, while NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) examines the street design and signage.

During May 2023 (latest data available), according to NYPD data, there were 1,114 collisions at Bronx intersections, involving 1,167 vehicles, and 525 injured people.

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 <https://crimestoppers.nypdonline.org/> or on Twitter @NYPDTips. All calls are strictly confidential.

Friends Honor Man who Died after Being Held in Police Custody

By DAVID GREENE

More than two dozen friends of Justin “Gusto” Gidora, 36, gathered at Indian Field in Van Cortlandt Park just after sunset on Saturday, July 22, to remember a good-natured and apparently troubled, young man who died under mysterious circumstances after being held in police custody, as previously reported.

Details of the events leading up to the young man’s death remain unclear but friends of Gidora say they believe he may have been arrested at a Bronx subway station (possibly the East 180th Street Station) on Thursday, July 6.

Meanwhile, FDNY officials said they got a call at 9:50 p.m. on Thursday, July 6, and paramedics were sent to Bronx Central Booking inside Bronx Criminal Court at East 161st Street after Gidora suffered a “major injury.”

According to friends of Gidora, he was taken off life support at Lincoln Hospital and died on July 13. FDNY officials remained silent when asked for the arrival and departure times from both Bronx Central Booking and Lincoln Hospital, as well as on the type of injuries Gidora suffered.

Some friends said Gidora battled alcoholism, which some attributed to the death of his brother, Peter, a decade ago. Gidora also lost his mother and grandmother in the last five years. Friends said with nowhere else to go, he had recently been living at a homeless shelter on East 183rd Street.

On Wednesday, July 12, Sgt. Feno of the NYPD press office provided few details on the circumstances leading up to



Photo courtesy of social media

JUSTIN “GUSTO” GIDORA of Woodlawn Heights reportedly died on July 13, 2023, after being taken off life support at Lincoln Hospital. Prior to that, he had been held in police custody.

Gidora’s death, telling *Norwood News*, “At this point, the incident is being investigated as a medical episode, which occurred inside of Bronx Central Booking.”

Asked if Gidora’s injuries occurred during a fight, as alleged by some of his friends, Feno “So, like I said, at this point the incident is under investigation as a medical episode. The medical examiner will determine the cause of death.” He added that the incident was being investigated by the NYPD’s Force Investigation Division.

Asked for details of Gidora’s arrest, Feno said he did not have that information but promised it would be provided by Friday, July 14. Despite several follow-up requests, the requested information had not been provided by July 25.

Shortly after news of Gidora’s death became known in Woodlawn Heights, someone painted “Gusto,” Gidora’s nickname, on the side wall of the Woodlawn Gift Shop located at Katonah Avenue and East 237th Street, across the street from P.S. 19, the elementary school Gidora attended as a child. Friends quickly arrived afterwards, placing candles and flowers at the site.

An apparent NYPD screenshot file seen by *Norwood News* on a cell phone belonging to one of Gidora’s friends listed Gidora as being arrested at a subway station within Transit District 12 for “theft of service.” Further extracts read, “Subject was transported to Lincoln Hospital from Central Booking for a medical emergency. Subject was pronounced deceased on 7/11/23. The matter is being investigated as under FID [Force Investigation

Division].”

Because the NYPD has not issued a statement or written report providing details of Gidora’s arrest or death, his friends have been left to draw their own conclusions, with some alleging he was arrested for illegally selling MetroCard “swipes,” while others say he may have been charged with an old outstanding warrant for carrying an open container of alcohol.

On July 12, one male friend of Gidora’s had told *Norwood News*, “I just called Central Booking and they’re telling me that they released him today. Meanwhile, he’s dead.” The friend was referring to Gidora’s then vegetative state at Lincoln Hospital where he had been visited and witnessed by friends as non-responsive.

The friend continued, “There’s a story floating around that he got beat up in central booking, terribly.” In another photo seen by *Norwood News* of Gidora in Lincoln Hospital, no facial or arm injuries, at least, were visible.

Later on July 12, the same friend said, “I just found out he’s still alive. They’re pulling the plug on him tomorrow.” The friend added, “They [other friends of Gi-



Photo by David Greene

AT A VIGIL on Saturday, July 22, 2023, at Indian Field in Van Cortlandt Park held in memory of Justin Gidora who died on July 13, 2023, are his friends (l to r) Irene Toneli, 26, and Sabrina Toneli, 41, who are wearing t-shirts honoring the Woodlawn Heights native.

dora] were telling me they found out that he had a seizure, but they don’t think so because he’d never had a seizure.” According to friends of Gidora, the young man was later taken off life support on July 13.

(continued on page 6)



Photo by David Greene

A PHOTO OF Justin Gidora surrounded by candles rests on the Bocce court at Indian Field in Van Cortlandt Park on Sunday, July 23, 2023. Indian Field honors Chief Abraham Ninham and the 17 Mohican Indians who died here during a mission to aid the Americans in the Revolutionary War.

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Food Program 'Prescribing' Fresh Produce Launches in The Bronx

By **ARIEL PACHECO**

Healthcare professionals will now get the opportunity to prescribe healthy fresh foods to select families in The Bronx through a new pilot program. Retail chain, Stop & Shop, The Children's Hospital at Montefiore (CHAM), About Fresh nonprofit, and Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson announced the launch of a new program on July 12.

As previously reported, The Bronx has consistently ranked as the unhealthiest of New York State's 62 counties, with high levels of obesity. Meanwhile, food insecurity has also been a longtime issue in the borough.

About Fresh is a Boston-based nonprofit, the aim of which is to allow healthcare professionals connect patients to healthy food. Their Fresh Connect program provides prepaid debit cards to families to buy fresh fruit and vegetables at local Stop & Shop stores.

The pilot program aims to ensure Bronx families have access to well-balanced, nutritional meals, and is being made possible through a \$75,000 grant from Stop & Shop, the first major retailer in the country to partner with About Fresh.

During the announcement of the new program at the Stop & Shop store, located

in the Bay Plaza Mall in Co-op City at 2136 Bartow Avenue, Gibson said, "Today we take a bold step in our overall efforts to address food insecurity across The Bronx and the City of New York."

She added, "For too long our borough has been associated with everything bad: highest rates of asthma, heart disease, obesity, so many preventable diseases that our residents and families live with today."

Through the program, one hundred Bronx families will be provided with fresh produce for six months. The families will receive a \$100 pre-paid, debit card for each month the pilot program lasts. The debit card can only be used to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables at any Stop & Shop location.

Jennifer Barr is director of external communication and community relations at Stop & Shop and said, "Stop & Shop is particularly focused on the issue of childhood hunger because we know that lack of food is very closely tied to lack of opportunity."

The families participating in the initiative were identified by pediatricians and community health workers through Montefiore's social needs screening. CHAM is the first hospital in the New York area to partner with Stop & Shop and offer the



BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT Vanessa Gibson and Janiera Moore, holding her son, pose for a photo, alongside representatives of Stop & Shop, the Children's Hospital at Montefiore, and About Fresh at the launch of the Fresh Connect program at the Stop & Shop store in the Bay Plaza Mall in Co-op City, at 2136 Bartow Avenue.

program to families in The Bronx. Stop & Shop has also donated \$10,000 to the hospital to renovate a playroom for children with cancer.

Janiera Moore who, along with her 15-month-old son, is a participant in the program, said, "There's a lot of children with food insecurity that I personally know who have to rely on free lunch from the school system and bring that home sometimes in order to have their next meal."

Moore added, "Fresh Connect allows people to have the opportunity to not have to choose between different foods or have to trade-off between different foods."

A year ago, Stop & Shop successfully implemented the program in Massachusetts. Stop & Shop then expanded the program to all its 400-plus chain stores across New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New York.

Josh Trautwein, co-founder and CEO of Fresh Connect, said, "This program is going to be so powerful from the standpoint of health equity. We know food is essential to our health from a healthcare transformation and pain innovation standpoint." He added, "We know that it is driving an exorbitant amount of avoidable costs."

Meanwhile, Gibson summed up the event, saying, "Every investment that we make in this grant is an investment in our children and when we invest in our children, we invest in their future."

**Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*

Friends Honor Man who Died after Being Held in Police Custody

(continued from page 5)

Requests sent to City officials for information on cameras in the holding cells and requests on how many deaths there have been, if any, at Bronx Central Booking in the last five years have not been answered. *Norwood News* reached out to the Unified Court System, NYC Health + Hospitals, and the Office of the Mayor. All deferred questions on the matter to the NYPD.

When contacted for an update on the cause of death, a representative from the Office of the City's Medical Examiner, said on July 17, "The cause and manner of death remain under investigation by the medical examiner." We also contacted The Office of the Bronx District

Attorney. We did not receive an immediate response.

As Gidora's friends gathered for the vigil on July 22 at Indian Field near the northeast corner of Van Cortlandt Park, some said they believe his death was caused from withdrawal from alcohol. Some also said they felt police should have known about Gidora's condition and should have taken him to an emergency room to detox.

"Gina," who organized the vigil, said, "I already kind of knew what happened and knew he was in trouble, and he was in the hospital and something bad happened to him. I called Central Booking... the lady on the phone kind of went quiet, and then she put me on mute for like two

minutes."

Gina continued, "Then someone else came on the phone and she was like, 'Oh, I can't release any information.'" Gina said she was instructed to call the 47th Precinct. She continued, "They were like, 'We have no information. We don't know what you're talking about.'"

Gina said she also called Lincoln Hospital and was told that Gidora was "released" from the hospital on July 13, the day other friends say doctors took Gidora off life support.

In reference to the City's handling of Gidora's death, Gina said, "They definitely [expletive] up big time." She added, "If there's nothing to hide, they should just release the footage of what happened in the cell that day."

A GoFundMe page set up in Gidora's memory has so far raised \$1,770 of the \$3,000 his friends hope to raise to fund a permanent memorial to their friend, a mural on the side wall of Woodlawn Gift Shop. Friends are also expecting to hold a memorial mass for Gidora at St. Barnabas Roman Catholic Church, located on East 241st Street at 9 a.m. on Sunday, July 30.

After donating money to the GoFundMe page, Sam Papadopoulos wrote, "Nicest guy out of all The Bronx. You'll be missed... Woodlawn won't be the same without you." Papadopoulos added, "No matter what you were going through, you were always positive energy... Sad

as hell."

Norwood News attempted to contact any surviving family members of Gidora but were unsuccessful. We will continue to monitor any developments in the case and report any details on his death, should they become available.

**Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*

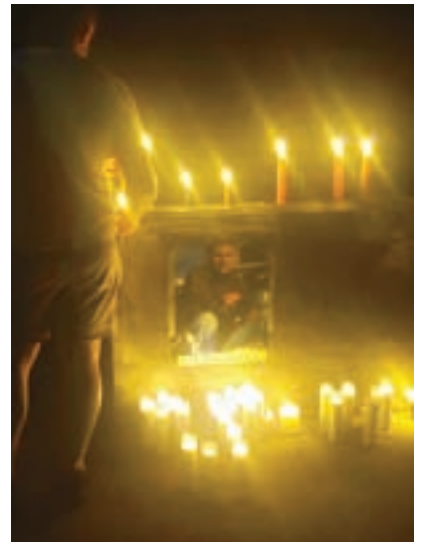


Photo by David Greene

LIFE-LONG FRIENDS OF Justin Gidora, 36, who died on July 13, 2023, at Lincoln Hospital, gather at Indian Field in Van Cortlandt Park on Saturday, July 22, 2023, for a vigil in his memory.

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- **Response Due Date:** 9/7/2023 at 11:00AM
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NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Celia Cruz to be Honored on Quarter

According to the United States Mint, the 2024 Celia Cruz Quarter will be the 14th coin in the American Women Quarters Program, honoring Cruz, a Cuban American singer, cultural icon, and one of the most popular Latin artists of the 20th century.

The obverse (heads) will depict a portrait of George Washington, originally designed, and sculpted by Laura Gardin Fraser to mark George Washington's 200th birthday. A recommended design for the 1932 quarter, then-Treasury Secretary Mellon ultimately selected the familiar John Flanagan design.

The reverse (tails) features a dynamic depiction of Cruz flashing her dazzling smile while performing in a rumba style dress. Her signature catchphrase "¡AZÚ-CAR!" is to be inscribed on the right.



RENDERING COURTESY OF the U.S. Mint
A RENDERING OF the 2024 Celia Cruz Quarter

District 13 Gets Over \$800K in PB Funding

District 13 City Council Member Marjorie Velázquez was joined by the commanding officer of the 45th Precinct, Captain Johnny Orellana; New York Public

Library (NYPL)'s associate director of Central Bronx Neighborhood Libraries, Melissa Davis; and assistant principal of P.S. 392 Bronx Delta School, Damaris Ramirez-Bello, to announce on July 24 the allocation of over \$800,000 for various community projects in the district. Through the City Council's participatory funding program, the community chose which local projects received the funds.

Seven NYPL branches in District 13 received \$455,000 for upgrades for computers, laptops, and printers, while \$202,000 is going to fund five NYPD ARGUS camera boxes to be installed across the district in consultation with local precinct officials. In addition, \$175,000 is going to P.S. 392 Bronx Delta School to build a new hydroponic science laboratory. The lab will be used to teach students about food sustainability while growing fruits, vegetables, and herbs, using the latest state-of-the-art hydroponic technology



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OFFICE OF THE
BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT
VOLUNTEERS CLEAN UP Kingsbridge Heights

Kingsbridge Heights & Norwood Clean-Up

Dozens of volunteers turned up to join Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson and her team to clean up the Kingsbridge Heights neighborhood on Friday, July 21. "Thank you to our fabulous volunteers that joined us in Kingsbridge Heights to

remove litter in our community," Gibson wrote after the event. "Join us this Saturday 7/29 for the next stop in our Third Annual Bronx Clean-up Series."

Participating volunteers can win free Yankees tickets. See our Neighborhood Notes section for more details. On the same day between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., Assemblyman John Zaccaro Jr. (A.D. 80) joined Friends of Moshulu Parkland and NYC Parks to clean up the area around Moshulu Parkway North and Jerome Avenue in Norwood.

Hearing on Proposed Gas Rate Increases

The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) will hold virtual public statement hearings on Tuesday, Aug. 1, and Wednesday, Aug. 2, on proposed increases in the gas delivery rates by National Grid. On April 28, National Grid formally proposed increasing its annual gas delivery revenues effective March 31, 2024.

National Grid said although the impact on any customer class will vary, a typical, residential heating customer would have an average monthly bill increase of between \$28.52 and \$30.95. It said this is largely due to the need to invest in critical infrastructure to comply with federal and State pipeline safety mandates, increased costs to deliver expanded energy efficiency, and other demand reduction offerings, and economic factors, such as the rising cost of material due to inflation, increased contractor costs, and increased local property taxes.

To access the Aug. 1, 1 p.m. hearing, go to www.webex.com, and enter meeting number 2338 061 1494 and password Aug1-1pm. Phone-only access is available via (518) 549-0500, using access code 2338 061 1494 and password 28410176.

To access the Aug. 1, 6 p.m. hearing, go to www.webex.com, and enter meeting number 2348 462 8182 and password Aug1-6pm. Phone-only access is available via (518) 549-0500, using access code 2348 462

8182 and password 28410676.

To access the Aug. 2, 1 p.m. hearing, go to www.webex.com, and enter meeting number 2334 693 7249 and password Aug2-1pm. Phone-only access is available via (518) 549-0500, using access code 2334 693 7249 and password 28420176.

To access the Aug. 2, 6 p.m. hearing, go to www.webex.com, and enter meeting number 2336 515 1615 and password: Aug2-6pm. Phone-only access is available via (518) 549-0500, using access code 2336 515 1615, and password 28420676.

Those joining electronically and wishing to provide a public statement must register by 4.30 p.m. on July 31, for the Aug. 1 hearings, and by 4.30 p.m. on Aug. 1, for the Aug. 2 hearings at <https://signin.webex.com/join>. Registrants should enter the appropriate meeting number for the hearing, the appropriate webinar password and then click "Register" and provide all requested information.

Those joining by phone must also register in advance by the same deadlines cited above, by calling 1-800-342-3330, where they should follow prompts to the appropriate hearing, and provide the following information: first and last name, address, and phone number.

On the appropriate day and time of the hearing, dial 1-518-549-0500 and enter the relevant access code to join. Time limits may be set for each speaker as necessary. It is recommended that lengthy comments be submitted in writing and summarized for oral presentation.

Those who don't wish to make a statement can access the hearings without registering. The hearings will be livestreamed on the internet and available for viewing on the Department of Public Service's YouTube channel on the dates and times listed above.

To access the YouTube channel, visit the Department's website www.dps.ny.gov and click on the YouTube icon at the bottom of the homepage or listen to the hearings by phone by calling 1-518-549-0500 and entering the applicable access code.

Norwood: Fire Breaks Out Over Cigar Store

By SÍLE MOLONEY

FDNY officials said nobody was injured after a fire broke out on the 4th floor of a residential building in Norwood shortly after midnight on Saturday morning, July 15, though one neighbor told us he saw some bandaged residents exiting the building during the incident.

An FDNY spokesperson said the department received a call for reports of smoke on the 4th floor at 323 East Gun Hill Road, a 6-story dwelling, at 00:05 a.m. on Saturday. He said the fire was brought under control at 00:33 a.m. and there were no injuries. We asked if the apartment number could be confirmed. We did not receive an immediate response.

Photos of the building taken on Saturday afternoon, July 15, showed some windows on the 4th floor at the corner of the building (by Hull Avenue) were either broken or boarded up.

We spoke to some residents

of the building to ask what they knew of what happened. Speaking in Spanish, one 4th floor female resident told us, "We were sleeping. It was late into the night. We heard the alarm go off, saw the smoke and that's it. I saw people going out." Asked if she also evacuated the building, the resident said, "We stayed here because the firefighters said we could because they were resolving the issue."

Asked if she knew in which apartment the fire broke out, she said she wasn't sure. Asked how long the incident lasted, she said, "Very fast, under half an hour." We asked how she felt overall about the incident. She said, "It's a little frightening," she said. "Thanks be to God it has passed."

We also spoke to a male resident on the third floor. He said he didn't really know much about what happened because he said most people in the building speak Spanish, but he does not, and therefore it was



Photo courtesy of the Citizens' App
FIRE FIGHTERS RESPOND to a fire which broke out on the 4th floor of a residential building located at 323 East Gun Hill Road in Norwood on Saturday morning, July 15, 2023.

difficult to find out from neighbors.

"My dog was barking a lot," he said. "He would not stop, and he don't do that. He's quiet so I thought it would be fine be-

cause the people who were leaving, they didn't look too worried, but it was a commotion so when I heard glass breaking and stuff, that's when I said, 'Let's just get outside.'"

Asked where in the building he heard the glass breaking, he said over him but not directly over his apartment. He said he thought the fire was on the fourth floor. "I saw one person bandaged up. I don't know from the fire or not."

Asked to describe the person, he said it was an older man. "Then, I believe it was another older man that was in the fire, but I didn't see anything else. I came back in from downstairs because nobody stopped me from coming in. So, it has been fine since."

Asked if the alarm went off, he said, "Yeah, I heard the alarm before I heard my dog, but I didn't hear anybody else. That's why I wasn't worried at first, but I know the officers would let me know or every-

body know to get out [if needed] but again, once the glass was breaking, I'm like, 'Let's get out and see what's going on.'"

The resident said some of his friends were asleep and others were playing a game and he eventually woke them up when somebody else knocked on the door and said, "Let's go!"

We spoke to another person who declined to be identified and who said, in Spanish, that they believe the apartment where the fire broke out is occupied by the people who run "Rosario Family Cigars," located on the ground floor of the building on East Gun Hill Road.

Norwood News attempted to speak to the people working inside the Cigar store later on Saturday about the fire, but they declined to be interviewed. Police were later seen on Saturday afternoon patrolling the area. All local businesses appeared to be open, as normal.



All Photos By Miriam Quiñones

CJ JOHNSON, A recent high school graduate, meets NYC Mayor Eric Adams and talks with him at another Bronx "Hiring Hall" hosted by NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) at Lehman College in Bedford Park on Wednesday, June 21, 2023.

"Hiring Halls" Continue as Bronx Unemployment Rises

By MIRIAM QUIÑONES & SILE MOLONEY

About five hundred applicants showed up for another "Hiring Hall" job fair in The Bronx on Wednesday, June 21, this time at Lehman College in Bedford Park. Hosted, once again, by the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), the event is part of a series of city government job fairs being held citywide in recent months.

The face-to-face contact with City agencies affords New Yorkers the opportunity to bypass some of the more lengthy and bureaucratic steps required when applying for City jobs. A similar event was hosted at Monroe College in May, as reported, and another at Hostos Community College on July 25.

The fairs are timely. According to the latest data released from New York State Department of Labor, The Bronx's unemployment rate is climbing and leads the five boroughs. As of June 2023, the unemployment rate in The Bronx reached 7.6 percent, a substantial jump from April's 7 percent rate.

Meanwhile, as of June 2023, unemployment in Queens was 5.2 percent; in Brooklyn, 6.2 percent; in Manhattan, 5.2 percent; and on Staten Island, it was 5.5 percent.

The average unemployment rate across the City in June 2023 was 5.9 percent, a jump from June 2022's 5.5 percent. Further north, in Orange-Rockland-Westchester counties, the combined unemployment rate was 3 percent as of June 2023, down from 3.1 percent in June 2022.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams, Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson, and her team, including Kenny Agosto, were also present for some of the event, encouraging job seekers, ranging in age from 18 to 60, to put their best foot forward in applying for positions with the NYPD, the NYC Department of Sanitation, and more.

Perseverance was the order of the day as some seated job seekers were seen being interviewed by City agency officials,



BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT VAN-ESSA L. Gibson delivers remarks at another Bronx "Hiring Hall" hosted by NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) at Lehman College in Bedford Park on Wednesday, June 21, 2023.

while others patiently waited in line, resumes in hand.

Jesus Cabreja, Janeva Clarke and Dilmer Martinez were representing the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit on the day and said they were helping residents, especially those over the age of 65, with rental issues. "We're here offering people information on our agency and our unit and how we help tenants out with their rights whenever they're facing housing-related issues, or being harassed by their landlord, unexpected rent increases, things like that or repair issues," Cabreja said.

"We let them know they can call us on the tenant helpline, and we can provide them [inaudible] and help them out and inform them on their general tenant rights," he added. "So that's what we're here for today and they can just easily call 311, and 311 will redirect them to the tenant helpline."



Letters To The Editor

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

Weight Control & Health

I'm a Bronx grandmother, raising four grandkids. Thank God, I had the chance to learn steady weight control and lost 120 pounds BEFORE I got Covid-19! I didn't die but thousands of grandparents who never had that chance to learn to improve their health did die. Their deaths left their grandchildren shattered.

The End Diabetes Neglect Initiative, a demonstration project of the Black Leadership Commission on Health (Black Health) and Health People, will confront the unprecedented escalation of diabetes in our communities. Through life-enhancing diabetes education, prevention, and self-care services, it proposes to bring much needed support and education for preventing and controlling diabetes to high need neighborhoods in all five boroughs.

The community doesn't have to accept mass vision loss, the 100% increase in New York City's diabetes-related amputations in the past decade, and neighborhoods being overwhelmed by a highly preventable illness!

New York City can and MUST do better, and communities must have the support to fight this epidemic. Please email the below mentioned officials now, and urge them to support the End Diabetes Neglect Initiative!

Please email Lynn Schulman, chair of NYC council health committee at District29@council.nyc.gov, Adrienne E. Adams, NYC city council speaker at SpeakerAdams@council.nyc.gov, Dr. Ashwin Vasan, NYC health commissioner at AVasan@health.nyc.gov, and Dr. Michelle Morse, NYC deputy health commissioner at MMorse1@health.nyc.gov. Thank you.

**Sandra I Marin
Mott Haven**

To ensure sufficient time for review of all letters to the editor, please send them, along with supporting sources, 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 on local issues or in response to published articles. We do not publish op-eds from political candidates or from elected officials [with some exceptions for health-related matters]. Thank you for reading and for your continued support.

CJ Johnson attended the fair with his mom who couldn't stop smiling at how happy she was for him. "I'm 18 years old," he said. "I just recently graduated high school and I'm here at this hiring hall to find new opportunities and careers involving anything, to be honest, but my passion really is technology and engineering."

Johnson said he signed up for some openings in the information technology sector, and with NYC Department of Parks & Recreation. "I think it's called

the Parks' department," he said. "I did that because I like to try to give back to the community and help, like, with the environment. So, I think that'd be good for people my age."

The young high school graduate also gave us his reaction to meeting the mayor at the event. "It was very nice to meet the major of New York City, and I think he's doing a wonderful job creating job opportunities for people in all five boroughs and not just in New York too, but all over the world," Johnson said.



WHILE SOME JOB seekers are interviewed by City agency officials, others patiently wait in line, resumes in hand, at another Bronx "Hiring Hall" hosted by NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) at Lehman College in Bedford Park on Wednesday, June 21, 2023.

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NORTHWEST BRONX NEIGHBORHOOD



CRIME FILE

BY SÍLE MOLONEY

**Norwood Man Murdered**

A 33-year-old resident of Norwood has been murdered in the Highbridge section of The Bronx, police said. NYPD officials said that on Thursday, June 22, at around 9.03 p.m., cops responded to a 911 call regarding an aided male/calls for help inside 1165 Shakespeare Avenue in Highbridge.

They said upon arrival, officers observed a 33-year-old man in a semi-conscious state in the fifth-floor hallway, "with a sustained laceration under his chin." They said EMS responded to the location and transported the man to NYC Health & Hospitals/Lincoln, where he was pronounced deceased on Sunday, June 25.

Police said the incident has been deemed a homicide, and the victim sustained an apparent traumatic head injury. They said there are no arrests, and the investigation remains ongoing. The deceased has been identified as Jermaine Jones of Webster Avenue in Norwood.

University Heights: Further Arrest Made in Feb. Shooting

NYPD officials said they arrested a 26-year-old man in relation to an attempted assault in University Heights in early February. Police said that on Feb. 7, at around 10.22 p.m., three male individuals approached a large group of people in front of 2065 Jerome Avenue. They said two displayed guns and fired several rounds, striking a 28-year-old man and a 20-year-old man. They said both victims were taken to area hospitals and treated for gunshot wounds to the ankle.

Police said all three were arrested and charged on Feb. 8. During the incident, police said an additional male also displayed a gun and fired rounds at the three shooters. They said the return gunfire resulted in no injuries or property damage and the shooter fled on a scooter westbound on Loring Place.

Pursuant to an ongoing investigation, police said Dickson Urena, 26, of East 175th Street in Mt. Hope was arrested on July 11 in connection with the incident. They said he was charged with three counts of attempted assault, two counts of criminal possession of a weapon, and reckless endangerment.

Fordham Heights: MTA Employee Assaulted

NYPD officials are asking

the public for help identifying the person seen in the accompanying screenshot below who they say is sought in connection with an assault on an MTA employee that occurred in Fordham Heights.

Police said that on Wednesday July 5, at around 5.30 a.m., a man approached an on-duty MTA employee at the 182nd-183rd Street subway station and got into a verbal dispute with him. They said the man displayed a knife, threatened to stab the employee, and punched him in the face. They said the assailant later fled the station and the victim was removed by EMS to an area hospital and was treated for minor injuries.

Police said the person sought is described as male, has a medium complexion, is around 50 years of age, is around 5 feet, 7 inches tall, and was last seen wearing a gray baseball cap, black shorts, a black t-shirt, and sneakers.

**Bedford Park: Two Sought for Assault on Woman**

NYPD officials are asking for the public's help identifying the two people seen in the accompanying screenshot above who they say are sought in connection with an assault that occurred in Bedford Park.

Police said that on Thursday, July 13, at around 4.25 p.m., a 52-year-old woman was on a moving, northbound 4 subway train that was approaching the Bedford Park Boulevard-Lehman College station. They said that as the doors of the train opened, two people approached her, one punched her about the head, before the other pushed

her off the train onto the platform area.

Police said the victim fell to the ground and sustained abrasions to her body, while the assailants exited the train and fled in an unknown direction. They said EMS responded to the location and transported the woman to St. Barnabas Hospital in stable condition.

**Fordham Manor: Two Sought in Shooting by St. James Park**

NYPD officials are asking the public for help identifying the two people seen in the accompanying photos above who they said are sought in connection with a shooting that took place by St. James Park in Fordham Manor on July 6, days before another shooting of two adults and two children occurred in the same general area on July 11.

Police said that on Thursday, July 6, at around 8.15 p.m., shots were fired in the vicinity of St. James Park causing a grave risk of death or serious physical injury to members of the public. They said the two sought fled on foot into 2244 Creston Avenue in Fordham Heights. No injuries were reported following the incident.

**Fordham Heights: Four Sought in Robbery/Assault**

NYPD officials are asking for the public's help identifying the people seen in the accompanying photo above who they say are sought in connection with a robbery and assault that occurred in Fordham Heights. Police said that on Saturday, March 18, at approximately 1 a.m., four people approached a 30-year-old male victim walking down Creston Avenue at East 181st Street.

They said the group punched

the victim repeatedly before stealing his wallet which they said contained \$50. They said the four were last seen fleeing northbound on Creston Avenue, and that the victim suffered bruising to his face and back and was removed to St. Barnabas Hospital by EMS in stable condition.

**Norwood: Man Mugged at Knifepoint**

NYPD officials are appealing to the public for help identifying the person seen in the accompanying photo above who they said is sought in connection with an armed robbery and assault that occurred in Norwood.

Police said that on Thursday, July 13, at around 8 p.m., a 22-year-old male victim was exiting the turnstiles of the Mosholu Parkway subway station, which serves the 4 train, when he was approached by the assailant, who displayed a knife and demanded the victim's property.

They said the suspect also slapped the victim in the face and stole his headphones and

various other items, including \$100 in cash. They said the suspect was last seen fleeing into "Mosholu Parkway Park," and that the victim was not injured as a result of the incident. Police said the suspect is described as male, has a medium complexion, is estimated to be between 21 and 28 years of age, is around 5 feet, 7 inches tall, has a slim build, and was last seen wearing a white hat, a white tank top, gray shorts, black socks, and gray sneakers.

Norwood: Woman Injured in Apparent Hit & Run

A person described as a pedestrian was injured after being struck by a vehicle on Jerome Avenue by East Gun Hill Road in Norwood, FDNY officials said. They said the call was received at 11.48 a.m. on Friday, July 21, and that one person was transported to St. Barnabas Hospital. FDNY officials had no description or status of the injured person.

According to a video posted to the Citizens' App the same day, the incident was described as a hit & run. According to the post, 911 was called and a woman was described as being injured. "A pedestrian was reportedly hit by a black sedan that fled the scene near a bank," the post read.

In the video, what looked to be a relatively young person was seen lying on Jerome Avenue with her head resting on something soft to support it, while a black and pink bicycle was seen on its side near her. The injured woman was conscious and was seen holding her head at certain points.

Police and bystanders were also seen in the video standing around the injured person near what seemed to be East 208th Street. Some bystanders were heard in part seemingly explaining to police what they witnessed but the overview was unclear.

At one point, one of the police officers is seen wheeling the bicycle away from where the person was lying on the street towards a police vehicle. It was unclear if the bicycle belonged to the injured person or not.

Norwood News contacted the NYPD on July 21 for more information about the incident. An NYPD spokesperson said that if it was not a very serious incident, the official NYPD central press unit may not have received an official report from the local precinct about it. In any case, the police official had nothing to share at that point. We will share any updates we receive.

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 CrimeStoppers website at <https://crimestoppers.nypdonline.org/>, or on Twitter @NYPDTips. All calls are strictly confidential.

EVENTS

New York Botanical Garden (NYBG)'s Bronx Neighbors Program offers free **Grounds-Only Admission to Bronx Residents** Tuesday to Sunday, and Monday federal holidays, offering the local community access to nature in their backyard, programs for the whole family, and more. Get your tickets (up to 6 tickets per transaction) at any NYBG ticket window with proof of Bronx residency, or online at <https://www.nybg.org/?keyword=BXNEIGHBOR>.

The Bronx Night Market returned to Fordham Plaza on May 6, bringing together over 50 diverse vendors, live performances, and a cultural extravaganza. Visitors are invited to experience the market magic on the last Saturday of each month from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. until October. With a diverse array of international cuisine, live music, and captivating performances, visitors will immerse themselves in the bustling energy of the market. More information can be found at <https://www.restaurantji.com/ny/bronx/bronx-night-market-2/>.

Join **Monday Fundays 2023** for free snacks, music, and street performers in front of 505 West 236th Street. See attached flier below for more information.

Free Movies will be screened at Mosholu Library,

Out & About

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY

285 East 205th Street, Bronx, NY10467, throughout July and August, including "Wonder," "Coming to America," "Stand and Deliver," and "Norma Rae." Visit nypl.org/events for more information on dates and times.

Explore **The Allerton Coops in Living Color** and read about the recovered histories of African American and multiracial residents of the Allerton Coops, located at 2700 Bronx Park East, a hub of working-class radicalism and avant-garde Yiddish and African American cultures during the 1930s to 1960s. The exhibit opens on Aug. 12 from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Museum of Bronx History, 3266 Bainbridge Avenue, The Bronx, NY 10467. For more information, visit bronxhistoricalsociety.org or call (718) 881-8900.

MUSIC

Join the **Bronx Arts Ensemble String Quartet** as they perform exciting new works and old favorites that have gained popularity through TikTok and

other social media platforms on Saturday, July 29, at 2 p.m. at Van Cortlandt House Museum. Bring a lawn chair, snacks, and enjoy compositions ranging from Shostakovich to Ariana Grande.

The Office of the Bronx Borough President & partners are hosting a series of **Summer Concerts** each Sunday through Sept. 3 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. at various locations throughout the borough. A concert will be held on Sunday, July 30, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. in Van Cortlandt Park at the Events Lawn, north of Broadway and 242nd Street. All are welcome.

The **Hip Hop 50 Live** concert will take place in Yankee Stadium on Friday, Aug. 11, 2023, with Snoop Dog, Lil Wayne, Ice Cube and more. Tickets can be purchased at Livenation.com, Ticketmaster.com, and Axs.com.

MOVEMENT

Join the **Summer Sports Experience** program at the Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center located at 3225 Reservoir Oval East in Norwood through Aug. 30. The fun summer program is for all ages and will introduce participants to some of the most loved sports through clinics and game play. The next session takes place on Wednesday, July 26, from 4 to 6 p.m. and will cover soccer.

Food & Farm Walking Tour Takes in Bedford Park & Norwood

By SÍLE MOLONEY

New York Botanical Garden/Bronx Green-Up, Montefiore Einstein, Friends of Mosholu Parkland, The James Baldwin Outdoor Learning Center, and B Blossom Catering, a plant-based gourmet food company, joined forces on Saturday, July 22, for the 2nd Bronx Food & Farm Walking Tour of 2023 around the historic Bedford Park and Norwood neighborhoods.

From 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., the group set out from The Keeper's House Edible Garden at 3400 Reservoir Oval East in Norwood, and learned about the histories of growing food, composting, and living in the local area. The 1.3-mile tour took in a visit to the Museum of Bronx History, at the historic Valentine-Varian House on Bainbridge Avenue in Norwood, passed through Mosholu Parkland, and closed at the James Baldwin Outdoor Learning Center Community Farmers Market (JBOLC) at DeWitt Clinton High School in Norwood.

Participants learned about the histories of each of these spaces, as well as how people are transforming them to grow food and community today. Melissa Cebollero from the Office of Community



Photo courtesy of Melissa Cebollero
PARTICIPANTS ON THE 2nd Bronx Food & Farm Walking Tour of 2023 stop along the route for some healthy food on Saturday, July 22, 2023.

Affairs at Montefiore Einstein said the visit to the Edible Garden was wonderful, and that it was amazing to see what could be produced in such a small community space. Check out www.nybg.org for details of future, similar events.

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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY



Kids in Hot Cars

Being out of routine and having a lot on your mind can cause forgetfulness. NYS Department of Health encourages drivers to get tips on how to avoid making the heartbreaking mistake of leaving kids in hot cars by visiting the following site health.ny.gov/KidsInHotCars.

Fire Hydrants, Cooling Sprinklers, & Cooling Centers

Opening a fire hydrant at “full throttle” is illegal. Blocking a fire hydrant is also illegal. Sprinkler devices (caps) are available from local FDNY fire houses and can be affixed to street fire hydrants to allow water to be sprayed gently onto the street, a practice which is legal, as confirmed by NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Cooling sprinklers (showers) are also available in some local parks. Visit <https://www.nycgovparks.org/about/health-and-safety-guide/cool-it-nyc> for details on where to find them. Report any broken sprinklers to 311.

During heat emergencies, the City will open cooling centers throughout the five boroughs. Visit <https://finder.nyc.gov/coolingcenters/deactivated> or contact 311 to find out whether a cooling center is open near you.

Heat Exhaustion v Heat Stroke
Know the difference between heat exhaustion and heat stroke. The symptoms of heat exhaustion include being faint or dizzy, excessive sweating, possibly cool, pale, clammy skin, nausea or vomiting, a rapid weak pulse, and muscle cramps. The symptoms of heat stroke include a throbbing headache, NO sweating, a body temperature over 103 degrees, skin that is hot, dry and may turn red, nausea or vomiting, a rapid, strong pulse, possible loss of consciousness.

Water Safety
City Health officials are reminding residents to read the following water danger prevention tips before spending time in the water. Drowning is associated with all kinds of watercraft: motorboats, canoes, rowboats, rafts, paddleboats, sailboats, and kayaks. Visit “Safe and Healthy Swimming” for water safety tips today as follows: www.health.ny.gov/SwimSafe.

Free Gym Access through the High School Summer Pass Program
Through the High School Summer Pass program, NYC teens aged 14 to 19 can get free access to Planet Fitness clubs across the five boroughs. After registering, participants can work out for free at participating Planet Fitness locations through Thursday, Aug. 31. Terms and conditions apply. More information is available at on.nyc.gov/SummerPass.

Free Summer Meals

Free Summer Meals are still going strong, even on the weekends.

Anyone aged 18 years old and under is eligible. Find a site near you at <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/food/summer-meals>.

Affordable Housing Lotteries

NYC Department of Housing, Preservation and Development (HPD) launched an affordable housing lottery for units at 739 East Gun Hill Road in Williamsbridge, with a deadline of Aug. 16 and another lottery for units at 2279 Barker

Avenue, in Allerton, with a deadline of Aug. 9.

Another lottery was launched for units at Marion Creston Apartments located at 2997 Marion Avenue and 2861 Creston Avenue in Bedford Park, with a deadline of Aug. 1, another for units at 1135 Teller Avenue in Concourse, with a deadline of Aug. 29, and another for units at St. Francis Commons, at 1544 Shakespeare Avenue in Morris Heights, with a deadline of Sept. 6. Another lottery launched for units at 1818 Prospect Avenue in Crotona, with a deadline of Aug. 1. Visit www.norwoodnews.org, and search for “affordable housing” for more information.

Bronx Summer Clean-up 2023 Series

The Office of the Bronx Borough President and partners are organizing a Bronx Summer Clean-up 2023 series to coincide with Hip Hop’s 50th Anniversary. Volunteers receive free Yankee tickets subject to certain conditions. All those interested in participating can register and find full details at sanitationfoundation.org/bronx-series. Registration is required.

On the VCP Cricket Stadium, the Bats are Out

By SÍLE MOLONEY

News of a planned 34,000-seat cricket stadium in Van Cortlandt Park shook the Kingsbridge community to its core when The City media outlet published details on July 15 of the as-yet tentative plan for the stadium.

Details remain sketchy and despite having sent requests on July 15 to several City agencies, City Hall, and other impacted entities, *Norwood News* has yet to see sight of the draft plans.

Following a flurry of calls, exchanges, and ad hoc meetings between various parties since July 15, at a Bronx Community Board 8 (CB8) “emergency” meeting held on July 20, Deb Travis, chair of the board’s Parks’ committee said there was a potential proposal to construct a temporary 34,000-seat modular cricket stadium in the southern portion of the Van Cortlandt Park Parade Grounds for the 2024 International Cricket World Cup.

According to Travis, beginning roughly in January 2024, at least 19.5 acres of the 62-acre Parade Grounds would be closed to the public for construction for a minimum of six months. It was further confirmed that a letter was sent to New York City Mayor Eric Adams from the board on July 18 as the board hadn’t received any information on the project.

they appreciated the mayor’s efforts around the project and saw how meaningful it would be for Van Cortlandt Park to host a World Cup.

“It is encouraging to see that the ICC (International Cricket Council) and the Adams Administration recognize what we, in The Bronx, have known for so long: Van Cortlandt Park is the premier park in NYC,” they said in part.

They highlighted the lengthy timeframe requirement for the City to obtain approval from the State legislature to “alienate” the parkland. “The State Legislature is not scheduled to reconvene until next year,” they wrote. “In addition, approval of this project may require a ULURP and an environmental impact statement.”

They also spoke of the likely damage to the Parade Ground and its underlying infrastructure. “The impossibility of ensuring a full restoration and upgrading is concerning,” they wrote, while also referencing the close proximity of the project and therefore possible damage to the Enslaved African Burial Ground located in the park.

In addition, they raised security concerns, saying their request for more PEP officers to the park had been denied despite

the issue of ongoing, large-scale parties at the Shandler Recreation Area. They also cited ongoing sanitation issues related in part to these parties and in part to the sheer size of the park.

“Given these existing issues, we have concerns about the City’s ability to address security and quality of life concerns for the duration of the tournament and in perpetuity afterward,” they wrote. The assemblyman also suggested Yankee Stadium as an alternative venue or other potential Bronx sports grounds.

Jeffrey Morrishaw is a cricket player in The New York League with DJ Morrishaw Cricket Club, and also attended the July 20 CB8 meeting, though he had apparently not asked beforehand to address the attendees and therefore, did not get a chance to speak. Though he said he has been involved in cricket administration in the City since 1985, he said he was not consulted on the project either.

He acknowledged the way the project has been handled to date has not been ideal and said he too has concerns about the damage to the grounds and the unavailability of the cricket field during construction. However, he said, with the right input from the right stakeholders, he believes the project could be a good thing

and said compromise was key. He told *Norwood News*, in part, “I respect those individuals that live in that area, and I hear their complaints and their concerns.” He added, “I would want them to understand that if they take the time out and listen to us, the users, the cricketers, we’ve been down this road before where they oppose certain things taking place in that area.” [He later referred to prior work relating to the former water filtration project.]

He continued, “I can say to them it is something good for their community. It might be a little discomfort with the parking and the noise, and all of that stuff for a very short period but for the long term, if we can get some kind of agreement, a confirmation to better the facility, for cricket, it will go a long way [inaudible].”

We pressed Morrishaw on the environmental concerns raised which obviously have a long-term impact. He said he understood them. “But at the end of the day, something of this magnitude is bigger than us, and it’s an opportunity that I wouldn’t want us to miss, because there are many countries out there and other communities who would

(continued on page 14)

B.R.A.G. BBQs Serve Hope One Burger at a Time

By DAVID GREENE

A series of summer community barbecues are, once again, being held across the borough to the delight of hundreds of community residents, and the only beef is on the grill!

Cure violence group, Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence (B.R.A.G.), under the umbrella of the nonprofit, Good Shepherd Services, have been hosting the annual barbecue series for nearly a decade in neighborhoods like Fordham Manor, Kingsbridge and Olinville.

As previously reported, the group comprises seasoned “violence interrupters,” who work with local communities, including the youth, to show them a different path to gun violence. Some of their methods include boxing training, as previously reported.

B.R.A.G.’s third event of the summer, the “North West’s Peace BBQ” was held on Saturday, July 8, along East 193rd Street between Jerome Avenue and Morris Avenue, adjacent to St. James Park in Fordham Manor. Just three days later, four people, including two children under the age of 7, were shockingly gunned down in broad daylight at the very spot where the barbecue was held. Two youths have since been arrested following the incident.

At an earlier Olinville barbecue held Saturday, June 10, along East 216th Street between White Plains Road and Barnes Avenue, Yadira Moncion, director of B.R.A.G. North, told *Norwood News*, “This is our annual peace barbecue. We want to make sure we bring awareness to peaceful gatherings and non-violence throughout the summer.”

Moncion said B.R.A.G. has been hosting the peace barbecues in Kingsbridge since 2014 and in Olinville since 2016. Asked about possible precautions taken to help keep the event safe, Moncion replied, “This is not about policing. It’s about our community. Cure violence is about credible messengers. We maintain our community’s safety, so this is about coming together as a community and making sure we denounce violence, and what we do is done in a peaceful way.”

Moncion said the bouncy house, games, face-painters, DJ, and food served on the day were funded by the Good Shepherd Services’ cure violence program. Looking out over the crowded street, Moncion concluded, “The crowd is amazing! This is an awesome turnout; I love this community!” She added, “We hope the community keeps coming out to our events, and coming together and sharing and getting to know each other.”

During the same event, Bronxwood Avenue resident, Britney, was enjoying the festivities with her son, Connor, aged 5. “This was a fun event,” Britney said. “We both enjoyed ourselves with the free food and free entertainment and free prizes.” She added, “It was definitely a lot of fun! This was my first time; I will come back.”

Another peace barbecue was held on Saturday, July 22, and the remaining barbecues will be held on Saturday, Aug. 12, along Morris Avenue between East 183rd Street and East 184th Street, and on Saturday, Aug. 26, on Morris Avenue between East Burnside Avenue and East 181st Street.

According to their website, B.R.A.G. currently operates in three locations. B.R.A.G. North covers Wakefield, B.R.A.G. Northwest serves Fordham and Belmont, while B.R.A.G. West covers University Heights and Morris Heights.

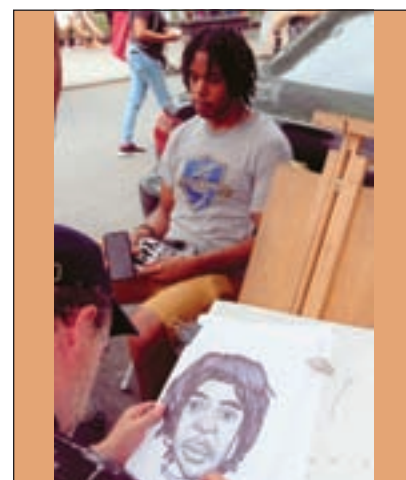
The group also works with teens and young adults between the ages of 16 and 25, mentoring and assisting in their development of conflict resolution skills. According to their website, between July 2017 and June 2021, B.R.A.G. responded to 1,035 disputes, organized 10,973 “interruption activities,” and worked through 2,353 “completed mediations.”

Meanwhile, Good Shepherd Services officials say the nonprofit operates 80 different programs that assist nearly 30,000 people across New York City. For more information on B.R.A.G., visit their website at <https://goodshepherds.org/program/brag>.



Photo by David Greene

DESTINY DURU, 5, gets her face painted at the B.R.A.G. peace barbecue held on East 216th Street in Olinville on Saturday, June 10, 2023.



Photos by Miriam Quiñones

KENNA POSES FOR a sketch as Ed Giorano, a sketch artist and caricaturist, draws his face during the Gun Violence Awareness Peace BBQ hosted by Good Shepherd Services’ B.R.A.G. Program Saturday, July 8, 2023, 12 PM - 5 PM at East 193rd St. and Morris Ave in the Bronx.



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

KIDS PLAY AN inflatable basketball game at the Gun Violence Awareness Peace BBQ hosted by Good Shepherd Services’ B.R.A.G. Program on Saturday, July 8, 2023, at East 193rd Street and Morris Avenue in Fordham Manor.



Photos by Miriam Quiñones

NELLY LUGO PUTS the hamburgers together while Rosey Santos gets the hot dogs ready at the Gun Violence Awareness Peace BBQ hosted by Good Shepherd Services’ B.R.A.G. Program on Saturday, July 8, 2023, at East 193rd Street and Morris Avenue in Fordham Manor.



Photos by Miriam Quiñones

A GUN VIOLENCE Awareness Peace BBQ is hosted by Good Shepherd Services’ B.R.A.G. program on Saturday, July 8, 2023, at East 193rd Street and Morris Avenue in Fordham Manor.



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Public and Community Meetings

The next **52nd PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meeting will take place in September. Call the 52nd Precinct Community Affairs office at (718) 220-5824 to be added to the email distribution list. National Night Out will be held on Thursday, Aug. 1, from 3.30 to 6.30 p.m. at Poe Park (Grand Concourse and E 192nd Street).

The next **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 7** general board meeting will be held in September. Contact KCabreraCarrera@cb.nyc.gov to be added to the distribution list. All meetings are being held virtually, via Zoom, until further notice.

The next **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 8** full board meeting will be held in September. Contact BX08@cb.nyc.gov for more details and 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. The next meeting will be held in September. For details, please contact bedfordmosholu@verizon.net.

CORRECTIONS

In the *Norwood News* edition dated July 13-26, 2023, in the story on page 9, entitled "Hip Hop Meets Art at the Oval," the senate district represented by State Sen. Gustavo Rivera was incorrectly referenced as S.D. 31, when in fact it is S.D. 33. We apologize for this error.

On the VCP Cricket Stadium, the Bats are Out

(continued from page 12)

give up everything to get an event like this in their neighborhood, so we cannot take it lightly when something like this comes around," he said.

Morrishaw added, "We kind of think about ourselves at this stage of the game. I think about the future of our youth, our community, and the game of cricket is the

second most popular sport in the world. Cricket is bigger than any of us."

He added, "Today, you can make a living from cricket, and you never know which little boy in The Bronx, Brooklyn, or Queens may get an opportunity out of this to go and play at a higher level, and have equilibrium with the football, basketball or baseball players."

Flood Mitigation Improvements For Battery Park Underpass And West Street Underpass - EPIN: 84123B0003

This Competitive Sealed Bid (CSB) is being released through PASSPort, New York City's online procurement portal. Responses to this CSB must be submitted via PASSPort. To access the solicitation, vendors should visit the PASSPort Public Portal at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/mocs/passport/about-passport.page> and click on the "Procurement Navigator." This will take you to the Public Portal of all procurements in the PASSPort system. To quickly locate the CSB, insert the EPIN 84123B0003 into the Keywords search field. In order to respond to the Competitive Sealed Bid, vendors must create an account within the PASSPort system if they have not already done so. This procurement is subject to DBE participation goals. The DBE goals for this project 13%. Any inquiries concerning this Competitive Sealed Bid should be directed by email to agency contact nkumar@dot.nyc.gov, under the subject line EPIN: 84123B0003.

• Advertisement Date	7/26/2023
• Pre -bid meeting date	8/7/2023
• Deadline for the submission of questions	8/14/2023
• Bids Due:	9/7/2023 @ 11:00 a.m.
• Bid Opening date and time:	9/7/2023 @ 11:30 a.m.



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VCP Pond Cleaned, “Daylighting” Advances

(continued from page 1)

To rid the pond of this unsavory, aquatic invader, on July 12, Van Cortlandt Park (VCP) Alliance gathered a team of workers, which included high school interns from the Urban Eco-Teens program and other volunteers.

Duly suited up in waterproof overalls known as waders, for the second time this summer, the group waded through the shallow parts of the pond, armed with rakes, and duly cleaned the waterway. Starting at 9 a.m. on what VCP Alliance calls “Water Chestnut Wednesdays,” the team will continue to gather each Wednesday through Aug. 9 in the clean-up effort.

VCP Alliance officials said the overgrowth of water chestnuts is not new to the park’s pond and has been cleared during the summer months for several years now. “For a while it looked like we were making good progress,” said Christina Taylor, deputy director of the Alliance. “This year, I’m not quite sure if it was because it was such a mild winter, but the water chestnut came up much sooner and much faster than it has in the past, and it’s just covering the entire Mill Pond.”

Interestingly, the invasion does not originate in any flora located in the Bronx park but in Yonkers, just a few miles north. “The seeds were coming down from Tibbetts Brook Park,” Taylor said. “We talked to them [Yonkers’ park administration] and said, ‘Hey, you guys need to get your pond under control because until you do, we can’t get ours under control.’”

She credits Yonkers for doing a “pretty good job” in managing their water chestnut problem. Taylor does, however, point to a potential long-term problem with the clean-up efforts. “The seeds can actually stay dormant in the soil at the bottom of the pond for 10 years,” she said. “So, this is going to be a continual problem.”

Taylor acknowledges that future clean-up efforts may be beyond the capacity of the manual labor the interns and volunteers provide. She said one option is to bring in a harvester, a machine that floats on the water and is designed to remove aquatic weed.

This would eliminate the need for most of the manual labor needed to clean up Hester & Piero’s Mill Pond, with a few exceptions. Noel Hefe is the volunteer coordinator with VCP Alliance and points out what those exceptions would be.

“We do need the help of the harvester machine,” he said. “Hand pulling alone is not going to win the battle, but hand pulling is essential for areas where the machine will not be able to access. We can do the finer detail work such as pulling around some of the species we want to keep in the lake, like the lilies and the spatterdock.”

Hefe said the turnout on July 12 of 27 volunteers and interns was “inspiring” and added, “That’s what gives me hope. When I look at the water chestnut

coming in, I get a pit in my stomach. But seeing the people that show up to work on this problem, as a community, gives me hope that we can find a way forward.”

Volunteers from both near and far collaborated in the effort. While one volunteer wading through the pond said she drove from Brooklyn to help, another lives a few blocks away on Tibbett Avenue in Kingsbridge.

Chip Wilcox, 22, has been volunteering with the Alliance since the beginning of 2023 as a New Year’s resolution. He knows that Tibbett Avenue originally got its name from the brook that flowed from the park’s pond (previously known as Van Cortlandt Lake) to Spuyten Duyvil Creek near the Marble Hill Metro North station.

“I’ve come to the park all my life, and you’ve seen it [the pond] over the last few years get progressively overtaken by the water chestnut,” Wilcox said. Besides the ecological impact to the lake, the rampant growth of water chestnut presents an environmental threat to homes, highways, and side streets in the Kingsbridge and surrounding neighborhoods.

As reported by *Norwood News* in September 2021, in the wake of Storm Ida, the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality (BCEQ) repeated calls for funding and construction to speed up the proposed “daylighting” of Tibbetts Brook, which has been partially rerouted underground and covered over. The engineering feat known as “daylighting” rivers or streams, like Tibbetts Brook, is the process of removing obstructions like concrete or pavement which cover and block natural drainage ways and restores them to their previous condition.

According to City officials, Tibbetts Brook was dammed in the 18th century to form the mill pond in Van Cortlandt Park, and by 1912 it was completely buried underground. They said, today, it is redirected (via sewer piping) into the city’s sewer system at Wards Island Wastewater Resource Recovery Facility. They said the daylighting project would return the brook closer to its natural open-air path, which winds through Kingsbridge (or Kingsbridge Heights) on through Fordham Manor (or Marble Hill) and empties into the Harlem River.

Officials said redirecting Tibbetts Brook (once again) this time *away from* the sewer system, instead of towards it, is expected to remove roughly 4 to 5 million gallons of water from the system each day, and more on rainy days, reducing treatment costs and greenhouse gas emissions.

They said it should also reduce combined sewer overflows by 228 million gallons annually, improving the overall health of the Harlem River. Additionally, officials said it will instead add much-needed, additional capacity to the borough’s natural drainage network, which could lessen flooding in some areas of the Tibbetts Brook watershed.

After years of stalemate, as reported earlier this year by *Norwood News*, Mayor Eric Adams announced in January 2023 that the City hit a key milestone

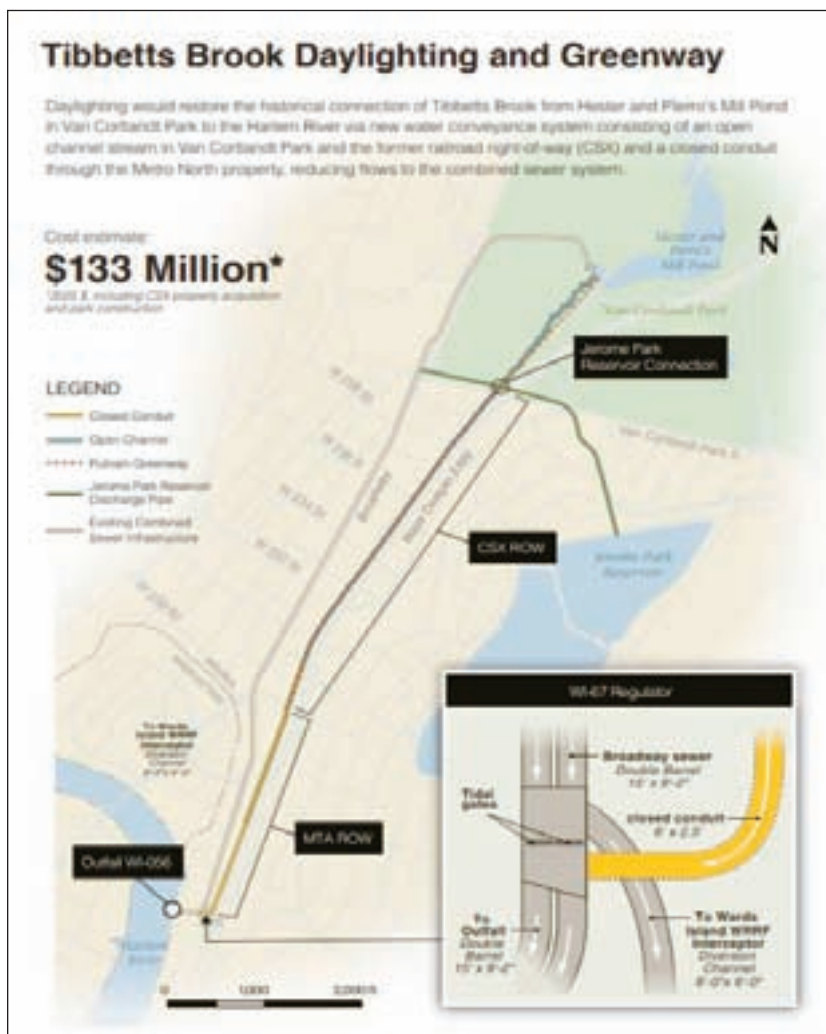


Diagram courtesy of NYC Department of Environmental Protection

TIBBETTS BROOK DAYLIGHTING and greenway plans

in the project, when an agreement was reached with railroad freight company CSX Transportation to purchase a piece of property close to the Harlem River critical to the project for \$11.2 million.

Meanwhile, the overall project budget is targeted at \$133 million, and is part of an agreement between New York City and New York State to further improve the ecological health of city waterbodies across the State. The project will also create new parkland on the former CSX rail line property, extending the existing Putnam Greenway south. The greenway currently runs from the 750-mile Empire State Trail south down through Van Cortlandt Park. Acquisition by the City of the former rail line property, for use as parkland, is subject to approval by the federal Surface Transportation Board.

There has already been significant community engagement on the project, which has been presented to Bronx Community Board 8, and it is now in the final stages of the design process. Actual construction is expected to begin in 2025.

When the remnants of Hurricane Ida overwhelmed the underground pipes in September 2021, the result was a flooded Major Deegan Expressway, as reported, where dozens of vehicles became trapped. Taylor is concerned that without the constant vigilance and removal

of the invasive water chestnut plant, clogging issues could develop, and contribute to more serious flooding in the area between Van Cortlandt Park and the Harlem River.

“We want to make sure that this problem is taken care of before Tibbetts Brook is daylit, because when they do the daylighting and this water starts flowing down to the Harlem [River], we want to make sure that the water chestnut is not going to travel to the Harlem River,” she explained.

For volunteers like Wilcox, ridding the Hester & Piero’s Mill Pond of its unwelcome plant invasion brings a special sense of communal achievement. He wants to do his part to protect the environment, especially as it relates to his beloved Van Cortlandt Park.

“There’s something very satisfying about being able to see your work product at the end of the day,” he said. “With school and college, there’s not the same satisfaction, in my mind, of the well-written paper versus [what] I can look at [at] this lake and see what we’ve taken care of.”

To learn more about volunteer opportunities with the Van Cortlandt Park Alliance, email info@vancortlandt.org or call (718) 601-1460.

**Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*

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