



# NORWOOD NEWS

Vol 36, No 16 • PUBLISHED BY MOSHOLU PRESERVATION CORPORATION • AUGUST 10-SEPTEMBER 13, 2023

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## ARMORY GETS FUNDING BOOST



Photo by Sile Moloney

**NEW YORK CITY** Mayor Eric Adams shakes hands with Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition executive director, Sandra Lobo, at the end of a press conference held inside the vacant Kingsbridge Armory in the Kingsbridge Heights section of The Bronx on Tuesday, Aug. 8, 2023. Lobo has campaigned for years to redevelop the armory into a thriving resource for residents and small businesses alike and is a staunch advocate of community-owned and led initiatives.

**By SÍLE MOLONEY**

With a few notable exceptions, including Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson, everyone who was anyone in terms of Bronx elected officials

was present for a high-profile press conference held inside the long-vacant Kingsbridge Armory on Tuesday, Aug. 8, when it was announced that the armory redevelopment project

is to receive a major boost in the form of City and State-backed funding of \$200 million.

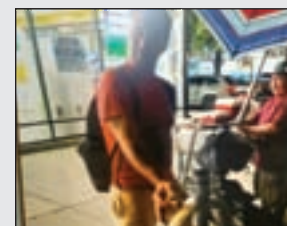
Among the elected officials present were New York Governor Kathy Hochul, New York

City Mayor Eric Adams, Congressmen Adriano Espaillat (NY-13) and Jamaal Bowman (NY-16), State Sens. Jamaal Bailey (S.D. 36) and Gustavo Rivera

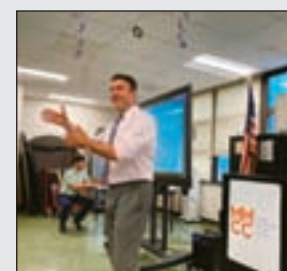
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**CM Dinowitz: Over \$30 Million for C.D. 11 pg 16**

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# NORWOOD NEWS

## Vol. 36, No. 16

Norwood News is published  
bi-weekly on Thursdays by  
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# Monument Restoration Underway at Woodlawn Cemetery

By DAVID GREENE

Nearly two dozen young people were honored during a graduation ceremony at Woodlawn Cemetery for interns who completed a 10-week course in its unique Bridge to Craft Careers Preservation Training Program.

Since 2015, the program has provided career opportunities for local youth, while supporting the continued preservation of the cemetery and its historic structures. Woodlawn Cemetery has a distinct designation as one of the country's historical national landmarks.

The graduates, all aged between 18 and 24, arrived for the ceremony on Friday, May 19, along with family members and were joined by staff and instructors of the program at The Woolworth Chapel at Woodlawn Cemetery and Conservancy, located at 3800 Jerome Avenue, just north of the Norwood border.

According to its website, graduates of Woodlawn's Preservation Training Program learn skills in the care and restoration of monuments and buildings made of granite, marble, and limestone.

Christopher Jeannopoulos, president and CEO of Woodlawn Cemetery and Conservancy told those in attendance, "I'm very proud of the graduates today and proud of the growth of the Bridge to Crafts Career Program." Jeannopoulos said that the program has now expanded to include landscape restoration.

He also explained how 11 masonry interns learned the "proper techniques" in maintaining and restoring mausoleums, retaining walls and benches. He added that the goal of the program, "is to provide our interns with life skills necessary to obtain jobs," in careers in the construction industry and masonry field.

Rick Smith, president and CEO of The Pinkerton Foundation, one of the many sponsors of the program told guests, "We have been associated with this program for a number of years." He added, "What sets this program apart for us... the level of enthusiasm, the level of excitement about the work that they are doing with the folks who have graduated today."

Funding for the program comes from foundations like the World Monuments Fund and the Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation. Additional funding was provided by the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, and City Council Members Eric Dinowitz (C.D. 11) and Kevin Riley (C.D. 12).

According to Woodlawn representatives, since the program began, interns and apprentices have restored over 250 monuments and mausoleums made of marble, limestone, and a variety of granites. Woodlawn Cemetery boasts 130,000 memorials on its 400-acre site.



PhotoS by David Greene

**INVITED GUESTS AND** family members join young graduates of a 10-week training course, the Bridge to Crafts Career Program, for a graduation ceremony at Woodlawn Cemetery on Friday, May 19, 2023.



**YOUNG GRADUATES (WEARING** orange sweatshirts) are recognized for completing a 10-week training course in masonry cleaning and repair at Woodlawn Cemetery on Friday, May 19, 2023.



**AT THEIR GRADUATION** ceremony held on Friday, May 19, 2023, at Woodlawn Cemetery, graduates of a 10-week program in masonry and repair were presented with photos of themselves taken during their training and work on the grounds.

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## INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



Following the recent apparent hate crime and murder of O'Shae Sibley, a member of the LGBTQ+ community, targeted as he was vogue dancing outside a Brooklyn gas station, we asked readers their thoughts on our tolerance of others as a society?



"Oh yes, at the gas station, I believe. Okay well, personally, everybody should live their own lives the way they like. We shouldn't judge anybody on how they live their lives, because each person has the right to do what they please. Who are we to judge people? Respect who they are. This is part of society; it's part of the norm now. Life goes on. I'm going to be honest. I've got a gay daughter and she lives her life, and I love my grandkids and everything else and I love her. She's not hurting anybody. She's living her life, and just trying to fit into the norm, and that's all there is to it."

Roger Thomason,  
Clason Point



"No, no, no. It's not about tolerance for gays; let's be clear. All I'm saying is if somebody is gay, and he's doing his gay thing, it has nothing to do with anybody. That's their business, that's their right. At the same time, there are people that are not in the same lifestyle. They're also themselves. We are all different people. So, if somebody is gay, [they're] gay. If somebody's not gay, they're not gay. What I don't like is the killing aspect of it because we're all human beings; we're all one people. That's respect, and at the same time, there shouldn't be any killing. If they're gay, it's their personal choice. It has nothing to do with anybody. It has nothing to do with me because I chose to live the lifestyle of being religious. The fact that I don't like gay, or I'm not part of it doesn't mean that I hate them. So, killing is wrong."

Evangelist Dr. Charles N. Mensah,  
Philadelphia, PA., visiting Jerome Park



"I don't really have a problem with that. I don't know why people are hating on gay people. If that person is gay, you can't judge other people for what they do. If that person is gay, just leave them alone. That's how I look at things in life. The reason why people get angry is because they've got a lot of hate in their blood. You've got to let people be; let them live their life. If a person is gay, I don't care what you do. Keep it to yourself; that's it. People like to judge people for what they do. I don't have a problem with gay people. Even lesbians, I don't have a problem with it."

Raven Chestnut,  
Norwood



"Yes, yes, he was killed because he was dancing; that's stupid. Personally, I think social media is the blame for everything. There's too much social media claiming they're giving this away, giving that away; it's all [expletive]. Yes, it's the cause of everything. The government can't crack down because people will cry 'freedom of speech.' That's the problem. So, the government can't do much about it, of course. It's a dilemma."

Dana Macri,  
Kingsbridge Heights



"I think it's just the lack of acceptance in some communities still. I think it has to do with some communities having those macho standards still. It's 2023 and homophobia, I really don't understand it, myself. Also, as a gay man, I still hear the comments so, personally, I'm still baffled. I think it's a personal macho thing and it really still puzzles me. I really don't get it. Is there a solution? I mean I can't say it's a lack of education. If social media is the problem, then what is the solution? There's not going to be a tolerance app. You can't force them; that's a really good question."

Adam Garcia,  
Norwood

All photos by David Greene

## Norwood: Woman Dies in Perry Ave Fire

By SÍLE MOLONEY

The FDNY said one person has died following an "all hands" residential fire that broke out in Norwood. FDNY officials said the alarm was raised at 21.39 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 2, for reports of a fire at 3565 Reservoir Oval East. In fact, the fire broke out at 3273 Perry Avenue, a two-story, residential home, the back of which faces Reservoir Oval East [with one other building in between], the side of which faces Holt Place, and the front of which faces Perry Avenue.

"Twelve units/60 members were utilized during operations," the FDNY official told *Norwood News*. "One patient was pronounced as deceased on scene," the spokesperson said, adding that the fire was placed under control at 11.29 p.m. and no cause had yet been determined for the blaze.

Several fire trucks, members of the NYPD, and a large crowd had gathered at the scene just before 10 p.m. Local resident, Kabir Ahmed, told *Norwood News*, "I come over here and I see the fire had started and the firefighters are coming." Asked if he saw any people coming out of the affected home, Ahmed said, "No, no, I see only the firefighters are going up."

Asked if the fire was on the second floor, Ahmed said, "No, I don't see anybody on the second floor. I see only the



Photo by Síle Moloney

**FIREFIGHTERS ARE SEEN** on the roof and inside a two-story residential home at 3273 Perry Avenue in Norwood on Wednesday, Aug. 2, 2023.

dark. There's no light on the second." Ahmed was facing the front of the building while firefighters appeared to be tackling the remains of the fire at the rear of the building where smoke was still seen rising up.

Asked again if he knew if the fire had been on the second floor, Ahmed said, "Yeah, fire on the second floor, left side kitchen. Start from kitchen." Asked if he saw any injured people,

Ahmed said, "No, I don't see anybody injured." Another male resident told us he didn't see the fire itself and only arrived once the flames were no longer visible, and the building was smoking. He said, "I just hope everyone inside is safe."

Speaking in Spanish, one young female resident who said she lives on another street one block south of Perry Avenue said she had heard [from in-

side her home] a loud boom noise earlier in the evening at around 9.40 p.m. When we asked the FDNY if they could already tell if there had been an explosion, the spokesperson responded, saying, "Nothing in the text [of the initial fire report] indicates that there was an explosion."

Asked if she saw anyone injured, the female resident went on to say, "No, they didn't take anyone out injured." She clarified that this was to her knowledge. Some stretchers and a few ambulances were seen parked down the block from the scene. The young woman was joined by another female resident, Dorca Martinez, who shared some video footage of the fire with us. At this stage, it was not known that someone had died. "Thanks be to God nothing happened," Martinez said of the incident. Asked if the fire had been big, both women said, "Yes." From the outside, at least, both the first and second floors appeared to be damaged.

Later, as fire officials were smashing the windowpanes on the second floor of the building and throwing items out the windows, we spoke with two brothers, Mohamed and Ubaidullah Ansari, who live in a home on Perry Avenue next door to the affected home where the fire broke out. They said they both live in the home with their

(continued on page 8)



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# Friends Mourn Homeless Man in French Charley Park

By DAVID GREENE

Residents of Norwood are mourning the apparent but as yet unconfirmed death of a seemingly young homeless man known locally by some as “Kevin,” and affectionately nicknamed “Russia” by others, though one friend of Kevin said he believes he was actually from

Bulgaria, not Russia.

Friends allege Kevin was found unresponsive on a bench located on a pathway near a forested area inside French Charley’s Park/Bronx Park East to the left of French Charley’s Playground when facing the park from the East 204th Street, elevated park entrance, by Webster Av-

enue in Norwood.

When contacted by *Norwood News* about the man, the NYPD said, “On [Wednesday] August 2, 2023, at 18.02 hrs, police officers responded to a 911 call at 369 East 204 Street (East 204th Street and Webster Avenue) within the confines of the 52nd Precinct. Upon arrival, the aided male was transported to a local hospital.”

*Norwood News* asked the NYPD if they could clarify if the man was found inside French Charley’s Park or at 369 East 204th Street. We did not receive an immediate response. The address specified is a block or two from the park entrance and *may* be the address of the person who reported the incident but *Norwood News* cannot currently confirm this.

Meanwhile, in reference to the man, an EMS spokesperson later told *Norwood News*, “Units were assigned to the [same referenced East 204th Street] address for reports of an unconscious patient. One patient was transported to Montefiore.”

The spokesperson said EMS received the call about the man at 4.46 p.m., which was a little over an hour before the NYPD said they were notified of the incident. EMS added at the time that the patient’s condition was unknown. *Norwood News* followed up once again and asked EMS if the man had died. We did not receive an immediate response.

On Friday, Aug. 4, standing at the street level entrance of French Charley’s Park on East 204th Street, and pointing to the park benches inside the park on the pathway near the forested area to the left of the playground, “Angel,” a regular visitor to the park, told *Norwood News*, “That’s where he was.”

Referring to EMS, he added, “They found him dead on the benches.” Other residents also allege this was the location where Kevin had been found unresponsive.

Angel recalled how he would often see Kevin sleeping in or around the park with a blanket. He continued, “He sometimes gave me a dollar even if I didn’t want it, but he would force me to take the dollar.”

A local woman was later seen paying her respects to Kevin at a makeshift memorial erected outside the PLS Check Cashers on Decatur Avenue and East 204th Street in Norwood. Gesturing to the memorial, she said, “I just saw him last week; he sleeps over here.”

The check cashers location is close to the site of another recent incident involving 21-year-old Carlos Borbon who was fatally stabbed on July 28. Police said that on that occasion, officers responded to a 911 call of an “assault in progress inside of 365 East 204 Street,” and that upon arrival, “officers observed a 21-year-old male with multiple stab wounds about the body.”

However, some residents said they believe Borbon was stabbed in French



Photos by David Greene

**A MEMORIAL FOR** a homeless man known as “Kevin” and “Russia” is seen outside the PLS Check Cashers at East 204th Street and Decatur Avenue in Norwood on Friday, Aug. 4, 2023.

Charley’s Park and returned home to the above-mentioned address before collapsing inside his building. Employees at a local barber shop on East 204th Street and Decatur Avenue, opposite Borbon’s home, recall seeing him pass by their store, injured, on the day of the stabbing.

When asked for clarification about the exact location of the stabbing, police said the matter was still being investigated. *Norwood News* has not received any information to suggest that the two incidents are in any way related.

Meanwhile, in reference to “Kevin,” the local female resident continued, “He held the door for us at the check cashing place and he gave something to the children because he’s a nice guy.”

A request for information regarding Kevin’s status and / or his apparent cause of death was also placed with the Office of the City’s Medical Examiner. We had not received a response as of press date.

*\*Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*



**SOME NORWOOD RESIDENTS** allege a homeless man known as “Kevin” was found unresponsive on one of these park benches inside French Charley’s Park pictured on Sunday, Aug. 6, 2023.



**RESIDENTS SAY** A homeless man known as “Kevin” used to hold the door for customers of this check cashing business at Decatur Avenue and East 204th Street in Norwood, pictured on Friday, Aug. 4, 2023, and often slept at the spot where a memorial for the man now stands.

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# NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY

## Fordham Manor Police Vehicle Crash

Cops said an unmarked, police vehicle which had its lights and sirens on was involved in a crash in Fordham Manor, while officers were responding to a call. Police said the incident occurred on Tuesday, July 25, at 3.11 p.m. in the vicinity of Webster Avenue and East 195th Street. They said the police vehicle was traveling southbound on Webster Avenue when a 2019 Dodge veered in front of it, causing the police vehicle to rear-end the back of the Dodge. Police said no injuries were reported following the incident.

## Feliz Seeks Federal Action to Curb Paper Plates Use

District 15 City Council Member Oswald Feliz introduced a bill earlier this year to curb the proliferation of fake license plates by increasing fines for those who sell or use fraudulent paper plates. Feliz told *Norwood News* on Friday, Aug. 4, New York has seen a drastic increase in the sale and use of

such plates. This appears to have gotten worse since 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and many administrative offices were closed to the public.

In a June 2023 hearing, Feliz said the NYPD said the department has lost its biggest tow pound and does not have enough space now to tow “ghost cars.” He said because of this, he introduced another bill to require that the NYPD obtain additional towing space so they can continue to enforce traffic laws.

In addition, because different states have different practices and rules when it comes to registering vehicles, Feliz and his colleagues have also sent a letter to U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, recommending steps to help address the issue. He said NYC must improve enforcement but given many plates are from other states, federal action was also needed, as laws in some other states were more relaxed.

In their letter, officials said cars using paper plates cannot be easily traced, posing a street safety threat to New Yorkers. “These cars are being used to violate traffic laws without accountability, since they can avoid speed cameras, red light cameras, and other parking rules; and are being used for other major crimes,” they wrote. “They are also being used to illegally avoid tolls enforced by cameras.” They added that the MTA was also losing “tens of millions of dollars every year” due to

toll evasion through fake paper plates.

They recommended that only dealerships that actually sell vehicles be granted the right to issue paper plates, saying current rules allow the creation of shell car dealerships in states like Texas, New Jersey, and Georgia which, they said, do not sell cars. They said last year a fake Texas dealership sold more than 700,000 fraudulent plates, while adding that other states prevent fictitious dealerships from licensing, by requiring them to have an actual physical space for the sale of cars, to have cars available for sale, and to provide state officials on-site inspections to confirm the validity of dealership information.

They further recommended that the length of time for which paper plates are valid should be reduced to no more than 20 or 30 days, as is currently the case in states like New York and Rhode

Island. They said some states provide paper plates for periods as lengthy as 90 days.

## Bedford Park Gas Station Robbed at Gunpoint

Police said a gas station employee was the victim of an armed robbery sometime late Tuesday night, Aug. 7, or early Wednesday morning, Aug. 9, in Bedford Park. They said the robbery took place around midnight at 2985 Jerome Avenue when two male suspects entered the business, pushed a male employee into a corner, displayed a gun, and “demanded property.” Police said the two stole a sum of money from the employee’s pocket before fleeing the location on Jerome Avenue. They said the employee, whose age was reported, was not injured as a result of the incident.



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

**A GAS STATION** employee located at 2985 Jerome Avenue in Bedford Park was robbed at gunpoint at around midnight on Tuesday, Aug. 7, 2023.

# One Firefighter Injured in Kingsbridge Residential Fire

By SÍLE MOLONEY

One firefighter was transferred to hospital after a fire broke out, apparently in the attic, in a residential building at 2846 Heath Avenue in Kingsbridge on Thursday morning, Aug. 3, at around 11 a.m. according to local residents and the FDNY. An FDNY spokesperson said they received a call at 10.55 a.m. on Thursday morning for reports of the fire, which the spokesperson said was brought under control at 11.24 a.m. The spokesperson added that one firefighter had been transported to New York Presbyterian Hospital in Manhattan following the incident for minor injuries.

Some residents of the building were waiting outside their home on Thursday morning for firefighters to complete their work. They appeared dazed, with one woman appearing to be particularly upset. Another was talking on a cell phone. They declined to be interviewed. Before receiving the official incident report on the fire from the FDNY press team, we had spoken to a neighbor, Ricky Ilanes, and had asked if he knew if anybody had been hurt. “I don’t think anyone was hurt,” he said.

“They were all outside when I came outside,” he added, referring to his neighbors. Asked if he had seen the fire and if there had been a lot of smoke,



Photo by Síle Moloney

**FIREFIGHTERS RECOIL** A fire hose after responding to a residential fire at 2846 Heath Avenue in Kingsbridge on Thursday, Aug. 3, 2023.

Ilanes said, “Yeah, a lot. That was all you could see, no fire, just smoke on the top at the back.” We asked Ilanes how he first became aware of the fire. “I was in the bathroom, and I smelled it when I was brushing my teeth,” he said. In ref-

erence to the firefighters, Ilanes said, “They came right away.”

The local firehouse is located close by at 3025 Bailey Avenue, about a five-minute walk away from the fire scene at which several fire trucks and about

two dozen firefighters and other fire officials were observed.

Some neighbors had also exited their homes to take in the scene, and at least one stretcher was seen at the ready but no injured people. We asked another neighbor, James Figueroa, for his reaction to the fire. “It’s a sad thing,” he said. “It wasn’t a big fire though thank God, but it looks like they got burned down, and they have a lot of damage.”

Figueroa added, “I just hope that they recuperate fast. That’s about it.” Another male resident reiterated the point, saying, “Hopefully there wasn’t too much damage. Fires can cause a lot of damage.” Firefighters were seen throwing items, including some furniture, out of the top windows of the affected building, once the fire had been extinguished.

We also spoke to a local employee who was manning a nearby parking lot. Speaking in Spanish, he told *Norwood News*, “I didn’t see the fire as it was happening. I just saw a lot of fire trucks arriving. I saw the smoke coming out of the building.” Referring to the firefighters, the employee said, “They worked fast.” On his thoughts on the incident as a whole, he said, “Well, it’s not good... dangerous, but it went off ok, thanks be to God.” He added, “Hopefully, nobody died.”





## Letters To The Editor

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

### OMNY Cards & Fare Evasion

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul and MTA Chairman Janno Lieber's recent celebration of the billionth rider using the OMNY fare payment to board the NYC Transit subway system was premature. In 2017, the MTA awarded a \$573 million contract to Cubic Transportation Systems to replace the Metro Card. New OMNY fare collection technology was originally promised to come online between 2019 and 2023. The cost of OMNY has grown to \$645 million. The project is currently \$130 million over budget. The MTA has never made public any detailed recovery schedule from the contractor. Long Island and Metro North Rail Roads will not reach substantial completion until late 2025.

In 2022, the MTA lost over \$600 million to fare evasion. There is no indication in 2023 that this financial loss will be significantly reduced. Neither Hochul nor Lieber can explain how OMNY will end routine fare evasion as it continues to flourish today.

Another critical failure that Hochul, Lieber, or their predecessors never acknowledge, is the failure to come to any agreement for integration of OMNY with NJ Transit, Port Authority Trans Hudson (PATH) subway and NYC Economic Development Corporation Private Ferry fare

collection systems.

**Larry Penner  
Great Neck**

### Social Security Benefits Funding Running Out

The Trustees of the Social Security and Medicare Trust funds, chaired by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellin, warn that without increases in funding, Social Security recipients might not be getting their full benefits by as early as 2033. They warn that Medicare funding also faces issues.

U.S. Sens. Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren have introduced a bill that would easily resolve this problem. Currently, there is a 6.2 percent Social Security tax on all income up to \$160,200 a year. So those who make billions a year pay nothing on any income that exceeds this threshold.

The Sanders-Warren bill would still exclude income above \$160,200, up to \$250,000, but restore it for all income above that. While some may argue it would be difficult to pass such a bill while Republicans control the House, even Republicans are swayed by the votes of senior citizens. I love [American country music singer, songwriter] Merle Haggard, but I don't want his "so-called Social Security" **Big City** lyric to become a reality.

**Richard Warren,  
Van Cortlandt Park Village**

### Are Ex-Bronx Pols Paying their Fines?

I trust our editor of the *Norwood News* will look into the amount of fines

that some recent Bronx politicians have been sanctioned with, and whether they are paying those monies back. Have liens been placed on their pensions or social security benefits? Former NYS Sen. Efrain Gonzalez has a \$750,000 fine and former NYC Councilman Larry Seabrook had a \$700,000 fine. His successor, former NYC Councilman Andy King, has a \$15,000 fine. Never mind former COBA [Correction Officers' Benevolent Association] honcho, Norman Seabrook, who had a large fine as well. I'm sure the readers of the *Norwood News* look forward to the editor's findings!

**Richard Marias  
Norwood**

**Editor's Note:** *Norwood News* followed up with the Unified Court System (UCS) administration team on Mr. Marias' original inquiry relating to fines imposed on former State Sen. Efrain Gonzalez (S.D. 33) and former District 12 City Councilman Larry Seabrook. A representative of the UCS said, "Once a case is adjudicated, the court is not involved with further notifications. You would have to ask either [NYS] Parole or the convicting DA if the sentence was carried out, and as to pensions, the OSC – State Comptroller – administers them, and would know if they were eligible to collect them." We had initially reached out to the Unified Court System for the Southern District of New York but did not receive a reply.

We duly followed up with the Office of the Bronx District Attorney. A representative replied, saying, "I don't believe either of these were cases handled by this office."

*We have since asked if the two additional cases raised by Mr. Marias, involving former District 12 City Councilman Andy King and Bronx-born union boss, Norman Seabrook, were handled by the Bronx DA's office and will update this story upon receipt of any feedback. We have also reached out to the City Council Ethics/Investigations committee to ask which entity is following up to ensure King's fines are paid. We will share any updates we receive.*

*We have also since followed up once again with the United States Court for the Southern District of New York on all four individuals as we understand this court's prosecution team handled the referenced cases and will share any feedback we receive. We have also reached out to the NY Parole Board on the status of sentences served, and to the State Comptroller's office on the status of pensions / Social Security benefits and will share any updates we receive.*

*To ensure sufficient time for review of all letters to the editor, please send them, along with supporting sources, to [norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org](mailto:norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org) or by mail to Norwood News, 3400 Reservoir Oval East, Bronx, NY 10467, by the Friday before each publication day. If sent by email, please mark them as "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line. Letter writers should aim to write no more than 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.*

## Norwood: Woman Dies in Perry Ave Fire

(continued from page 4)

wives and children, and Ubaidullah is the homeowner.

"When, in the evening, I came home from the airport to eat with my wife and kids and was just sitting at the table having dinner, all of a sudden I felt the smoke smell," Mohamed said. "Immediately, I went outside to check, and I notice the fire on second floor." Asked if he could see the flames, Mohamed said not at that stage, only smoke. [*Norwood News* could smell smoke on our approach from Bainbridge Avenue.]

"I immediately called 911," Mohamed said. "They came very fast. They start taking under control. I went [to] my rooftop to check what happened. It is burning like all throughout the floor, I believe, at the top floor." Asked to clarify if his own roof was also on fire, Mohamed said, "I check my house. I feel like good but it's very close, so there is damage. It'll come, but again, I'm worried [about] one thing. I hope they will take care of it. I went to the [fire] captain and I talked about it. I believe it's two years ago next door, not this house, the next house was burned in the afternoon, [and] after 14 hours

at midnight, [the] whole house burned again so that's my concern."

Mohamed was referring to two fires reported by *Norwood News*, which occurred a few doors down the street at 3279 Perry Avenue on Monday, June 28, 2021. Mohamed said he reminded the fire captain about that incident and said he even remembered the captain's face from the previous two fires.

When another Perry Avenue neighbor, John McCarthy, commended two young boys who lived in the affected home where the two fires had broken out on that occasion, for having raised the alarm, *Norwood News* attempted to speak to the impacted family at the time about the incident and the boys' quick reaction, but they declined to be interviewed.

"So dangerous," Mohamed said of the 2021 incident. "Kids, family, elderly like, you know? I hope it's not repeating this time. They [FDNY] will do the right job, I hope. We don't want to see the repeat again." Mohamed appeared to believe that the second fire in 2021 had reignited 14 hours after the first one at 3279 Perry Avenue. *Norwood News* has asked the FDNY the reason

for both fires and will update this story upon receipt of feedback.

Mohamed said he hoped the latest fire was well and truly extinguished and would not reignite later in the middle of the night when the families were sleeping. Ubaidullah mentioned the strong smell of smoke. "This is very harmful for kids," he said. "Very, very strong smell and it's hurting me." Mohamed added, "It's very close. I'm very concerned. I hope things get sorted out properly."

Asked if they heard the alleged explosion the other female resident spoke of, Mohamed said, "I believe that those [noises] are maybe the opening [breaking down] the door and everything [by the firefighters]. I don't think there was an explosion. It's more like throwing stuff... windows smashing, getting in."

Given that another resident had alleged the fire started in a kitchen, we asked the brothers if they thought it was potentially a gas explosion. Mohamed said, "I have no idea. I don't think so. The way I assumed the noise... everything I heard was like when fire department were breaking in."

Asked if to their knowledge, there was anyone inside the home when the fire broke out, Mohamed said, "Yes, there was an elderly lady. I called the

owner. The elderly lady lived on the second floor. We notified immediately to the fire department. I'm not sure. I didn't see her whether she made it or not."

Ubaidullah explained that he was not at home when news of the fire reached him. "My wife actually and my mother-in-law are here [at home]," Ubaidullah said, adding that he told them to stay there. "I'm coming," he said he told them. Meanwhile, he said his brother didn't even have time to finish his meal with his family.

Another resident said that the affected building where the fire broke out comprised two apartments and that an elderly lady lived alone on the second floor. "My neighbor is very kind," Mohamed later added of a male neighbor. "I came out there because of the very strong smoke. The water now become reddish color."

We later asked the FDNY if they could confirm if the deceased person had been found on the second floor. The fire official said, "I do not have the means of determining the exact location of the deceased." Another young woman who a female resident said lived in the affected building was seen crying and talking on the phone.



# Montefiore: “Discharge Lounge” Enhances Patient Satisfaction & Saves 10,000+ Bed Hours

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Endless call bells, telephone rings and conversations around the clock are all to be expected during a hospital stay. Akin to an airport, a serene space like a VIP lounge, represents calm in the middle of a storm. By creating a peaceful space, overseen by certified nurse assistants (CNA), patients can avail of enhanced hospital experiences at the end of their stay.

Following a review at Montefiore’s Henry and Lucy Moses division, hospital officials say its designated discharge lounge also frees beds up more quickly, in-turn, reducing wait times for incoming patients. Due, exclusively, to the discharge lounge, Montefiore officials said they recently hit a milestone with 10,000 bed hours saved. They said this equates to 56 additional inpatient beds.

“We often can’t control how a patient arrives at our doors, but we can control much of what happens during their stay and when they are ready to leave,” said Elodia Mercier, BS, MS, RN-C, NE, director of nursing throughput operations, who has served at Montefiore for almost 40 years. “By having a calm setting staffed by skilled clinicians, we can help people feel more like themselves, and assist them in focusing on and preparing for what matters most when they exit our doors,” said Mercier. “Our objective is clear: create an environment that is closer to where people *want* to be, versus where they *have* to be.”

Nestled near the front lobby of Montefiore’s largest campus, located on 210th Street in Norwood, CNAs pick up patients from their rooms and bring them to the lounge. They said approximately one-third of adults leaving the Bronx hospital and emergency department are cared for in this setting, where staff strike up conversations, or guests can watch television while enjoying complementary snacks.

Hospital officials said these same CNAs, or discharge lounge coordinators, who first greet the patients, escort them to their vehicles when leaving the hospital. The next day, they call to ensure people returned home safely, that discharge plans are clear, and that these former patients are starting to feel better. If there are any issues, these are immediately flagged and addressed by their medical team at Montefiore, according to hospital officials.



Photo by Síle Moloney

**MONTEFIORE MEDICAL CENTER** Moses campus on 210th Street in Norwood, The Bronx

“During prior hospital stays, I would have to wait for someone to bring me downstairs, and then wait for a cab to get home,” said 59-year-old Bronx resident, John Minena. “Now when I’m almost ready to leave, a nurse brings me to a space where I can relax, and I have water and refreshments. It is a big difference. When these same nurses who you just spent time with, call you the next day to follow up, it is like a family member checking up on you.”

On average, the lounge, which

opened in June 2021, sees as many as 43 patients a day, each person staying for 35 minutes, on average. By staying in the lounge, Montefiore officials said staff can coordinate where family members or other transportation coordinators can pick up patients when they are ready to leave the hospital, avoiding parking expenses as well as confusion over where to go.

Simultaneously, Montefiore officials said this approach frees up in-hospital transportation waits, and allows the housekeeping team to come into newly

vacated rooms and turn them over, decreasing wait times for inpatient beds that previously would still have been in use.

“In the short time it has been open, our customer-centric discharge lounge has led to increased patient satisfaction, and an extra level of trust and confidence with our staff,” said Peter Semczuk, senior vice president and executive director of the Moses and Wakefield campuses. “As a bonus, we are increasing access to lifesaving care for our Bronx community. It doesn’t get better than that.”





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# NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY

## Back-to-School Health & Literacy Fairs

The Office of the Bronx Borough President and partners will be hosting two back-to-school health & literacy fairs, one on Thursday, Aug. 10, at C.S. 134, located at 1330 Bristow Street in the vicinity of Charlotte Gardens, and another on Tuesday, Aug. 29, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at P.S. 51, located at 695 East 182<sup>nd</sup> Street in Belmont, while supplies last.

## Back-to-School Giveaway

Friends of Devoe Park will host a back-to-school "Prep & Cultural Expressions Art Installments Kick-Off" on Saturday, Sept. 9, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. in Devoe Park between Sedgwick and University Avenues. (Sponsors needed.)

## Summer Reading Program

State Sen. Gustavo Rivera (S.D. 33) is hosting a summer reading program for kids. Register at [www.nyread.com](http://www.nyread.com).

## New Rules re Trash for Businesses

NYC Department of Sanitation (DSNY) implemented a new rule on Aug. 1, whereby all food-related businesses in New York City must use rigid containers with secure lids when setting out trash and compost for collection. Join an info session to learn more. For the Aug. 3 session at 11:30 a.m., register here. For the Aug. 11 session at 2 p.m., register at <https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/ca6317b6-87fb-439b-874e-f90517c85e11@32f56fc7-5f81-4e22-a95b-15da66513bef>. For the Aug. 15 session at 6 p.m., register at <https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/d405e169-2d19-41a8->

99ef-b3721329e43a@32f56fc7-5f81-4e22-a95b-15da66513bef. If you're unable to make an info session, go to [nyc.gov/UseBins](http://nyc.gov/UseBins) for more information.

## Reporting Park Noise

During a recent meeting of Bedford Moshulu Community Association, officers from the 52nd Precinct said it was important to log noise related calls with 311 as any unanswered calls over an hour are being flagged to Police Chief John Chell who is monitoring such 311 calls. They said that anything that was flagged as "outside" in a 311 complaint, like barbecues or noise, also gets flagged, and "body cameras go on right away" so that residents can see what the officers are doing to address the situation. He said the cameras get turned off after enforcement.

The officers explained that they also now have an app on their phones where they can read off all 311 jobs. "Usually, we can call if you guys leave a number to ask what the problem is," Officer Boland said. "Right now, we get a notification on our phone. There's a police vehicle that is only assigned to 311s. They don't do 911s and within an hour, it's supposed to be answered." He also clarified, "My rule of thumb is if you need 911, you always call 911."

Boland explained that both he and Officer Arias (Sector C) worked every day except Sunday and Monday and handle mostly 311 problems. They encouraged residents to both call 311 and text them and said they will be there within 15 minutes. Boland's number is (929) 287 7212 and Arias's is (917) 374 0459.

## Pillar of the Community Award Nominations

New York City Mayor, Eric L. Adams says the wisdom, history, commitment, and passion that so many of our residents exhibit and extend to their neighbors makes them pillars of their communities and city. It is in this spirit that Adams wishes to honor residents who have lived on the block, resided in buildings, served in a civic organization the longest. He is requesting residents to join him as he travels throughout the City to pay tribute to these pillars of the communities. Nominate a block association, civic association, homeowners association, tenant association or other here: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/cau/Initiatives/mayor-adams-neighborhood-awards.page>.

## Back-to-School Giveaway

State Sen. Gustavo Rivera (S.D. 33) is hosting two back-to-school giveaways, one at St. James Park by Jerome Avenue and West 192<sup>nd</sup> Street on Thursday, Aug. 10, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. and again on Thursday, Aug. 31, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at Ben Abrams Playground at Boston Road and Bronx Park East until stocks last. Rain dates (same time) are Friday, Aug. 11, and Friday, Sept. 1.

## Subway Works Updates

Due to structural maintenance work, there will be no D service at Norwood-205th Street beginning Monday, July 31, at 5 a.m. through Friday, Aug. 25, at 11:30 p.m. The D service will run between Coney Island-Stillwell Avenue and Bedford Park Boulevard, the last stop. Free shuttle buses will run between Bedford Park Boulevard and Norwood-205th Street. Transfer from D trains and shuttle buses at Bedford Park Boulevard.

Also, from Friday, Aug. 25, at 11:30 p.m. to Monday, Aug. 28, at 5 a.m., the D will not run between 161st Street-Yankee Stadium and Norwood-205th Street.

## Back to School Fair

Freedom Youth LLC is encouraging parents to sign up now to join them on Aug. 19, 2023, from noon to 4 p.m. for a back-to-school fair, sponsored by various community partners at Target Bronx Community Garden at 1025 Anderson Avenue, Bronx, NY 10452 until stocks last. Call Marilyn Cruz Hayes on (646) 577-0027 to register.

## Congressional Redistricting Updates

Following the 2020 census, the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC) held several virtual sessions with residents to discuss the redistricting process. The IRC held a final Bronx County hearing on its proposed redrawn maps for the assembly, State senate, and congressional districts on Nov. 9, 2021. That hearing can be watched here: <https://totalwebcasting.com/view/?func=VIEW&id=nysirc&date=2021-11-09&seq=1>. The maps/plans were submitted by the commission to the State legislature on Jan. 3, 2022.

The State legislature voted on the first set of plans, rejecting it, and could not agree on a second set. Instead, elected representatives voted to approve alternate maps proposed by the New York State Democratic Party, and these were ultimately approved on Feb. 2, 2022 by the State legislature, which holds a Democratic majority, and signed off by Gov. Kathy Hochul on Feb. 3, 2022.

The NYS Republican Party mounted a legal challenge, and a judge later overruled the February 2022 vote by the State legislature as unconstitutional, saying the February 2022

maps were gerrymandered by Democrats. The court ordered new maps to be redrawn. Lawmakers had until April 11, 2022, to submit new maps, but on April 4, 2022, a judge issued a stay on the case, which retained the prevailing February 2022 maps in place, allowing candidates time to collect the required number of voter signatures needed to get on the ballot for the June 2022 Primaries before the required deadline.

On April 27, 2022, the New York Court of Appeals struck down the congressional and State senate redistricting maps approved by the State legislature in February 2022, and a court-appointed special master was required to come up with new maps by May 20, 2022. The court also ordered that the 2022 congressional and State primary elections be postponed to Aug. 23, 2022. The latest redrawn maps by the special master can be viewed here: [https://newyork.redistrictingandyou.org/?districtType=cd&propA=current\\_2012&propB=congress\\_specialmastercorrected\\_20220604%26map=5.5/42.957/-75.332](https://newyork.redistrictingandyou.org/?districtType=cd&propA=current_2012&propB=congress_specialmastercorrected_20220604%26map=5.5/42.957/-75.332).

In June 2023, AP reported that lawyers seeking redrawn congressional lines in New York argued their case before a State appeals court on June 8, 2023, in a Democrat-backed lawsuit that could have implications in the 2024 fight for control of the U.S. House of Representatives. AP reported that the lawsuit was brought on behalf of 10 New York voters who want the State redistricting commission to submit new proposed state congressional lines for 2024. A victory for the plaintiffs would scrap the lines drawn up in 2022 by the outside special master expert. Republicans flipped four congressional seats in New York under those latest redrawn lines.

## 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](http://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 50<sup>th</sup> 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](http://sanitationfoundation.org/bronx-series). Registration is required.

## 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](http://health.ny.gov/KidsInHotCars).

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# Bronxites Celebrate Annual DR Parade

By MIRIAM QUIÑONES

The 34th Annual Bronx Dominican Parade took place along the Grand Concourse on Sunday, July 30, drawing thousands of Bronxites of Dominican heritage and others to the streets to march or ride on various floats. The parade started at 179th Street and Burnside Avenue in Morris Heights and continued to 168th Street

and the Grand Concourse.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams, U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, Congressman Adriano Espaillat (NY-13), newly appointed NYPD Commissioner Edward Caban, and his wife, Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson, Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark, Assembly Member Yudelka Tapia

(A.D. 86), Assemblyman George Alvarez (A.D. 78), and District 14 City Councilwoman Pierina Sanchez were among the elected officials marching on the day.

One attendee could be heard saying, "Wow! I love this!" while another woman who was accompanied on the day by her children, said it was "a beautiful, cool day for the parade."



PhotoS by Miriam Quiñones

**NEW YORK CITY** Mayor Eric Adams attends the 34th Annual Bronx Dominican Parade on the Grand Concourse on Sunday, July 30, 2023.



**U.S. SENATE MAJORITY** Leader Chuck Schumer marches down the Grand Concourse during the 34th Annual Bronx Dominican Parade on Sunday, July 30, 2023.



**DISTRICT 14 CITY** Councilwoman Pierina Sanchez marches the Grand Concourse on Sunday, July 30, 2023, during the 34th Annual Bronx Dominican Parade.



**NEW YORK CITY** Mayor Eric Adams, Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark, Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson, Assembly Member Yudelka Tapia, and other elected officials kick off the 34th Annual Bronx Dominican Parade and march down the Grand Concourse on Sunday, July 30, 2023.



**PARTICIPANTS IN THE** 34th Annual Bronx Dominican Parade wave to the crowds on the Grand Concourse on Sunday, July 30, 2023.



**A DOMINICAN FAMILY** attends the 34th Annual Bronx Dominican Parade on the Grand Concourse on Sunday, July 30, 2023.

**PARTICIPANTS IN THE** 34th Annual Bronx Dominican Parade, right, stop to pose for a photo on the Grand Concourse on Sunday, July 30, 2023.







# National Breastfeeding Month

By **CLAIRE GARON**

Happy National Breastfeeding Month! By now, you've likely heard about the many benefits of breastfeeding. Breastmilk is the ideal nutrition for baby's growing brain and body. Breastfeeding can also improve mom's health, lowering her risk for diabetes, some cancers, and heart disease. In fact, people like to say that breastfeeding is a superpower! This National Breastfeeding Month, we're sharing some fictional stories of how popular superheroes made breastfeeding work, by following four important tips.

## Tip 1: Get breastfeeding information from reliable sources

In the age of social media, it's so important to get breastfeeding advice and information from reliable sources.

Think your OBGYN, pediatrician, or doula, and the webpages of organizations like the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, various hospitals e.g. [www.montefiore.org/breastfeedingsupport](http://www.montefiore.org/breastfeedingsupport), and health centers, or the La Leche League ([www.llli.org/breastfeeding-info](http://www.llli.org/breastfeeding-info)). Friends and family members may mean well, but may share outdated or incorrect information, even those who have years of breastfeeding experience.

## Tip 2: All breastfeeding experiences are unique; Trust yourself, your body, and your baby

Every mom and baby is different and there's no "one size fits all" approach to breastfeeding. Breastfeeding goes best when you learn about the signs of successful breastfeeding and trust your observations and instincts, rather than compare yourself to other breastfeeding parents.

Let's leave NYC to see how these two tips helped one super-powered, fictitious mom! Meet Princess Shuri from the *Black Panther* and *Wakanda Forever* movies. She just gave birth to a baby and is breastfeeding with the help of her doula and her mom, Queen Ramonda. At the hospital, she asks for help when



breastfeeding is painful. Her doula shows her the best ways to get a deep latch and prevent nipple pain. Shuri worries that her baby is not drinking enough, so her doula has her count the number of wet and soiled diapers her baby has, then compares them to the typical amount. This makes sense to Shuri, a scientist.

The Kingdom of Wakanda might have vibranium, but it doesn't have TikTok! Shuri enjoys scrolling social media but lately, she's been comparing herself to other parents, especially regarding breastfeeding, and sleep milestones. Her mom assures her that all parents and babies are different, and to speak with a lactation specialist in real life, if she has questions or concerns.

## Tip 3: Take care of yourself mentally and physically

Pregnancy and the postpartum period is a challenge. Many parents face sleep deprivation, stress, and loneliness. Some feel depressed and overwhelmed. Expert advice: Mom should attend her postpartum visits and speak honestly about her mood. She should do at least one positive thing each day for "herself." For example, a walk outside, gentle exercise, chats with loved ones, meditation, deep breathing, reading, or a good cuddle!

## Tip 4: Seek out support from your loved ones and community

You've heard that "it takes a village to raise a child." Use "your village" to help you breastfeed, particularly during those tough first weeks after baby's birth. Your loved ones can help in countless ways, but only YOU can breastfeed. Make daily breastfeeding a priority rather than spreading yourself thin

with other household tasks.

Ready to visit another famous family? Meet Anna from the movie *Frozen*. She and her partner, Kristoff, just welcomed a baby. Kristoff works some nights harvesting ice, so Anna's super sister, Elsa, helps too. Even storybook princesses need sleep, so Anna sleeps when the baby sleeps. When the baby wakes, Kristoff or Elsa brings him to Anna to feed. Afterwards, Kristoff burps and diapers the baby in another room so Anna can sleep.

Though it's cold, Anna dresses herself and the baby in warm clothes and walks around the Kingdom of Arendelle. They visit some friends. Leaving the house and having adult interactions makes her feel better during these crazy weeks. She continues to speak to the therapist she met during pregnancy. On the days when she has less help, Anna concentrates on sleep and breastfeeding, rather than dishes or laundry. It's been an adjustment, but she tells herself to "Let it Go!"

Breastfeeding is natural, but it doesn't always come naturally. Breastfeeding requires knowledge, practice, trust, and self-care. Let Anna and Shuri's experiences guide your breastfeeding journey. Follow these tips to discover your own superpower: breastfeeding!

To get breastfeeding help at Montefiore, consult your OBGYN or baby's pediatrician. To learn more before or after you give birth, check out our website: <https://www.montefiore.org/breastfeedingsupport>.

*Claire Garon, MPH, CLC is a senior health educator at the Office of Community & Population Health at Montefiore Health System.*

## People with Medicare, Mark Your Calendars!



Open enrollment is October 15th to December 7th, 2023. During this period, you can sign up for or switch your Medicare Prescription Drug Plan or Medicare Advantage Plan.

All changes are effective January 1, 2024.  
Would you like to switch your Medicare plan?  
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For more information, call Aging Connect at  
212-244-6469 and ask for "HICAP" or "SHIP"



This project was supported by a grant from the U.S. Administration for Community Living.





## CRIME FILE

BY SÍLE MOLONEY, DAVID GREENE &amp; MIRIAM QUIÑONES



**Norwood: Man Dies in Fatal Stabbing**

The NYPD is appealing to the public for help with an investigation into the fatal stabbing in Norwood on Friday, July 28, at 5.25 p.m., in which 21-year-old Carlos Borbon (pictured) died. Police said officers responded to a 911 call of an “assault in progress inside of 365 East 204 Street,” and that upon arrival “officers observed a 21-year-old male with multiple stab wounds about the body.”

However, on Aug. 1, police said Borbon had been inside French Charley’s Park that day when he got into a verbal dispute with another person. “As the dispute escalated, the individual displayed a knife and stabbed the victim approximately eleven times,” police said. According to police, the assailant then fled the location on foot in an unknown direction.

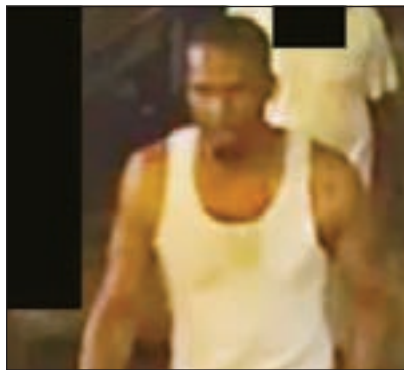
Police said EMS transported the aided victim to St. Barnabas Hospital, where he was pronounced deceased. An employee at Gilbert Barber shop, located at East 204th Street and Decatur Avenue, told *Norwood News* they saw the injured victim with a lot of blood on him on the day of the stabbing as he passed the barber shop, located opposite the victim’s home. He said the owner offered to help him but he didn’t say anything and then entered his building. Police said that no video or photos are available of the actual stabbing (at this time).

**Norwood: Man Arrested for Hull Avenue Shooting**

Cops said on Wednesday, Aug. 9 that they arrested 21-year-old Ramsey Minaya of Norwood on Saturday, Aug. 5, for attempted murder, assault, reckless endangerment, and criminal possession of a weapon in relation to a non-fatal shooting in Norwood. Police said Minaya had been sought for the assault that occurred on Thursday, July 27, at around 11.07 p.m., in front of 3349 Hull Avenue. They said the victim, a 30-year-old man, had been sitting inside a vehicle when another person fired several rounds at him, and the victim was struck once in the shoulder and once in the back.

They said he was removed to NYC Health and Hospitals/ North Central Bronx by private means in stable condition. Po-

lice said the shooter was last seen fleeing in a silver SUV traveling westbound on East 204th Street. They said he was described as male, had a medium complexion, was around 6 feet tall, and had a slim build. They said he was last seen wearing a white tank top, red striped shorts, and multicolored sneakers. A person arrested and charged with a crime is deemed innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law.



**B.R.A.G. Northwest Program Director Arrested**

Orange County law enforcement officials said Michael Rodriguez of local Bronx cure violence group, Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence (B.R.A.G.), was arrested on July 26, following the execution of the search warrant at his home, for alleged drug and gun offenses during a recent Orange County drug takedown, as first reported by The NY Post.

B.R.A.G. runs three sites in the North Bronx and Rodriguez is program director for B.R.A.G. Northwest, which covers Fordham and Belmont. B.R.A.G. North covers Wakefield, while B.R.A.G. West covers University Heights and Morris Heights.

Officials said on Tuesday, Aug. 1, at City Hall in Middletown, NY, fifteen defendants, Rodriguez among them, had been charged with various crimes including conspiracy to sell narcotics. They said the arrests followed a two-year long narcotics investigation that involved court-ordered eavesdropping. They said seven search warrants were executed during the investigation which resulted in the seizure of over 1516 grams of crack cocaine with a street value of around \$50,000, over \$167,000 in U.S. currency, and three illegally possessed handguns.

Over the years, *Norwood News* has covered several events, including the latest annual summer peace barbecue series hosted by B.R.A.G., one of several community partners involved in Mayor Eric Adams’ strategy to end gun violence. B.R.A.G., a program operated by Manhattan-based nonprofit, Good Shepherd Services, has been operating in the North Bronx for several years.

Asked to comment on Rodriguez’s arrest, a spokesperson said, “We are aware of the investigation and the charges that have been made. While we work to learn more, our primary focus remains on the

communities we serve and our programs that are helping to keep them safe.”

The group 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.”

Bronx elected officials joined various cure violence groups, including B.R.A.G., on Friday, July 14, at E 193rd Street and Morris Avenue beside St. James Park in Fordham Manor for a peace rally, denouncing the daylight shooting three days earlier at the same location of four people, including two children under the age of seven. Two people have been arrested for the incident. Rodriguez was one of the speakers at the peace rally.

Speaking to *Norwood News* afterwards, Rodriguez was asked if there was anything additional he wanted to add on the topic of gun violence other than what he had already said during his speech. He replied, “I just want to say that...you know what I’m saying? We out here just for the community not to be afraid. We shouldn’t have to be afraid. I’m asking them continue their daily routines, continued their activities, you know?”

Rodriguez continued, “We know that happened [the shooting of the four people], but I don’t want the community to feel fear, where they don’t have to come outside anymore. That’s not how we supposed to be livin’ and I’m asking the community to, you know, just love each other more and love your neighbor. You know you live in the same building. You should be knowing who your neighbors are, loving each other, spreading love, but we don’t have to come out here and be afraid to come out to the park. No kid should ever feel afraid.”

We asked Rodriguez if he felt the gun violence epidemic was more of a problem of the availability of guns or culture / fear / mindset. He replied, “Oh, we all know that guns are not made here [in The Bronx/New York].” He continued, “You know, we know that Bronx has, basically.... we’re the only borough that has an I95 pipeline, you know what I’m saying? What’s going on? The guns are accidentally falling off the truck? We know that, so we asking the State officials, elected officials to put a better stop to that.”

Orange County officials said Rodriguez, 48, of Yonkers, was charged with criminal possession of a controlled substance in the first degree, two counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the third degree, and conspiracy in the second degree.

Rumors that something was amiss within a Bronx-based, cure violence group had been circulating in the borough in recent weeks. *Norwood News* contacted City Hall on July 28 for a breakdown of funding provided to all such groups. We did not receive, and still have not received, a re-

sponse to our request.

Officials said Rodriguez was accused of supplying cocaine to narcotics dealers in the City of Middletown and the City of Port Jervis and possessing two illegal handguns. They said they seized 1516 grams (over 1.5 kilograms) of cocaine, \$165,509 in United States currency, scales, a money counter, an unlicensed Ruger .380 caliber pistol, an unlicensed Bond Arms .357 caliber handgun, a vacuum sealer, digital scales, and jewelry estimated to have a value of around \$50,000 at his Yonkers home.

Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark said of Rodriguez’s arrest, “The allegations of drug trafficking and gun possession against Michael Rodriguez are shocking and disturbing, especially since he has attended anti-violence events and peace marches portraying himself as someone who cares about stopping the violence in our community. These charges are the exact opposite of the good work cure violence groups are doing.”

Officials said Rodriguez is currently being held without bail in Orange County Jail pending his appearance in court and that the local DA has filed a notice of affirmative grand jury action in the City of Middletown Court with respect to his case.

A person arrested and charged with a crime is deemed innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law. When we asked Rodriguez on the day of the July 14 peace rally in Fordham Manor if there was any specific title he wanted us to reference in our story as regards his role within B.R.A.G., he replied, “Yes...I’m better known as ‘Love’ in a community.”



Photo by Síle Moloney

**MICHAEL RODRIGUEZ** of Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence (B.R.A.G.), in white, seen here at a peace rally in Fordham Manor on Friday, July 14, 2023, has been arrested.

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.



# Out & About

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY  
EVENTS

**Bronx Film48** in conjunction with NYC Parks will be screening all short films competing in the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual 48-hour Film Challenge at the Williamsbridge Oval Park [football field], 3225 Reservoir Oval East in Norwood on Friday, Aug. 11, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Drinks and snacks will be provided. All are welcome. 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 [brunxhistoricalsociety.org](http://brunxhistoricalsociety.org) or call (718) 881-8900.

**Free Movies** will be screened at Mosholu Library, 285 East 205<sup>th</sup> Street, Bronx, NY 10467, throughout August, including "Coming to America," "Stand and Deliver," and "Norma Rae." Visit [nypl.org/events](http://nypl.org/events) for

more information on dates and times.

## ART

Bronx Library Center, located at 310 East Kingsbridge Road, Bronx, NY 10458 presents the **Bronx Fantastic Arts Series** of cultural events on Aug. 19, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Call (718) 579 4244 for more information.

## MUSIC

Van Cortlandt Park Alliance presents the **Big Bowl of Soul** band and enjoy a funky ride back to the '60s on Saturday, Aug. 12, from noon to 2 p.m. on Van Cortlandt House Museum lawn. Bring a picnic and a blanket.

Join the **Bronx Arts Ensemble String Quartet** on the Van Cortlandt House Museum Lawn on Saturday, Aug. 19, at 2 p.m. as they perform exciting new works and old favorites that have gained popularity through TikTok and other social media platforms. This concert marks the beginning of the Bronx Arts Ensemble's 52nd season, which focuses on the human condition. Bring a lawn chair and snacks and enjoy compositions ranging from Shostakovich to Ariana Grande.

Bronx-native and electronic artist, **Adrian Martinez**, will join forces with the NYC-based electroacoustic duo, **Vessels to Motherland**,

to present a one-hour sound journey celebrating the mind, body, heart, and spirit of The Bronx on Thursday, Aug. 24 at 6 p.m. at Pelham Bay Park (Middleton Road and Stadium Avenue). Sample interviews with Bronx residents, combined with the live performance on synthesizers, drum machines, keyboards, and electric violin, will intertwine in a complex, raw, and spacious sound fabric expressing darkness and light.

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 at St. Mary's Park at 140<sup>th</sup> Street and St. Ann's Avenue on Sunday, Aug. 13, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. 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](http://Livenation.com), [Ticketmaster.com](http://Ticketmaster.com), and [Axs.com](http://Axs.com)

## DANCE

**Lori Belilove's Isadora Duncan Dance Company** returns to Untermyer Gardens, 945 North Broadway, Yonkers NY 10701, with a program of dances

by Isadora Duncan, along with original works by Belilove, including her "Tribute to Ukraine," on Sunday, Sept. 3, at 5 p.m. (Rain Date: Monday, Sept. 4 at 5 p.m.). Tickets are \$50. Receive tickets on [Untermyergardens.org](http://Untermyergardens.org).

## 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. Email [Victor.Campbell@parks.nyc.gov](mailto:Victor.Campbell@parks.nyc.gov) for more information, or call (718) 543-8672.

For New Yorkers 60 years old and over, a **Seniors Fitness program** offers free twice weekly pickleball, tennis, yoga, and fitness walking classes across all five boroughs since April 2023. Participants of all levels are welcome to come out, have fun, and socialize. Visit <https://cityparksfoundation.org/> or call (212) 360-1399 for more information.

## Dinowitz Shares Highlights of \$30M+ for City Council District 11

By SÍLE MOLONEY

City Councilman Eric Dinowitz (C.D. 11) gave a budget presentation to district residents on Wednesday, Aug. 2, highlighting some of the local initiatives that will benefit, following the adoption of the City's \$107 billion budget for the 2024 fiscal year. He said over \$30 million in capital projects funding was secured for C.D. 11, in conjunction with Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson. Around 30 residents attended the presentation, which was prefaced by a short video overview, and held at Mosholu Montefiore Community Center (MMCC) in Norwood.

"One of the really important things for me is really hearing from all of you, and making sure you are as informed as possible," the councilman said. "We are getting out into the district once a month," he said in part, adding that community forums have been held on issues including coyotes, rats, anti-Semitism, Local Law 97, ranked choice voting, fire safety, public safety, and redistricting, among others.

Local Law 97 is one of the most ambitious plans for reducing emissions in the nation, according to City officials, and was included in the Climate Mobilization Act, passed by the City Council in April 2019 as part of then-Mayor Bill de Blasio's New York City Green New Deal.



Photo by Síle Moloney

**CITY COUNCILMAN ERIC** Dinowitz (C.D. 11) gave a budget presentation to district residents on Wednesday, Aug. 2, 2023, highlighting some of the local initiatives that will benefit from over \$30 million in capital funding secured for the district as part of the City's latest adopted budget of \$107 billion.

The councilman also mentioned his regular participation at Bronx Community Board 7 board meetings, attendance at various civic group meetings like one recently organized by the Bangladeshi community and at other events like National Night Out which aims to foster relations between police and community and help prevent and address crime.

"One of the most important things is

all of you are informed about all sorts of issues about my work and the work that is impacting your lives," Dinowitz said, before explaining that the City's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30, and that the City has to have a balanced budget. "We're not federal government," he said. "We can't borrow money, we can't print money, we can't invent money. So, there are a few things we do throughout

the year to make sure our budget is balanced."

He said one way of finding out what funding was needed at a local level was via the local community board. He gave examples of capital investment requests for things like the fence outside the Williamsbridge Oval Park in Norwood for lights or "hard items, that last a long time," like buildings. He contrasted this with "expense items" like MMCC needing more money for their senior center for example. He said another way of obtaining feedback was through community surveys.

The councilman went on to say that the budgeting process comprised of various discussions with the mayor on what the priorities are across the city and then hearings are held, the councilmembers present something to him, the mayor presents something to them, and the budget is finally agreed and voted on. He said budget modifications are then sometimes made over the course of the year.

He added that as part of the discussions the mayor had proposed a 3 percent cut to the DOE and CUNY, and a 4 percent cut to all other city agencies, adding that staff couldn't be fired but services had to be reduced, if the previous year's allocated budget for such services had not been used, for example.

(continued on page 18)



# Community Comes Together for National Night Out

By MIRIAM QUIÑONES

The 52nd Precinct was one of several NYPD precincts, along with their respective community councils, to join various elected officials and residents in celebration of National Night Out on Tuesday, Aug. 1.

Held annually in New York City at more than 70 locations, according to the NYPD, the National Night Out Against Crime is a community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships with the aim of helping make neighborhoods safer, more caring places to live.

According to the NYPD, "It seeks to strengthen the relationship between neighbors and law enforcement, fostering a true sense of community." The events usu-

ally comprise barbeques, bounce houses, face-painting, food, and fun activities. They are also occasions for residents to meet leaders and personnel from their local precincts, and to interact with neighbors, community members, and local businesses, all with the common goal of partnership and safety.

This year, the 52nd Precinct hosted the event in Poe Park at 192nd Street and Grand Concourse in Fordham Manor and were also joined by representatives of the Fordham Road Business Improvement District (BID). With so many people showing up for the event, they had to form a line at the park entrance to sign up and get tickets for the free food and beverages. During the course of the evening, NYPD ADI Dave

Wong, who has been with the 52nd Precinct for over 35 years and has served for 37 years, was promoted to inspector. Meanwhile, Jerry Landron of the 52nd Precinct Community Council, received a citation of merit for his community service.

Resources and information on public safety, car theft, domestic violence support and more was also shared with residents, while hand sanitizers, pens, and phone holders were also handed out.

The next day on Aug. 2, the 52 Command also held a Play Day for children at the Williamsbridge Oval Park in Norwood. Kids played soccer, football, and other games.

*\*Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*



PhotoS by Miriam Quiñones

(L TO R) DEPUTY INSPECTOR JEREMY Scheublin, the 52nd Precinct commanding officer, presents a citation of merit to Jerry Landron of the 52nd Precinct Community Council in the presence of Assemblywoman Yudelka Tapia (A.D. 86) at National Night Out in Poe Park on Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2023.



**BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 7** District Manager Karla Cabrera Carrera and NYPD Inspector Dave Wong, attend the 52nd Precinct's National Night Out in Poe Park on Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2023.



**KIDS RECEIVE GOODIE** bags with healthy related resources at the 52nd Precinct's National Night Out in Poe Park on Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2023.



**TWO NYPD OFFICERS** attend the 52nd Precinct's National Night Out in Poe Park on Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2023.



**KIDS PLAY IN** the bounce house at the 52nd Precinct's National Night Out in Poe Park on Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2023.



**RESIDENTS RECEIVE RE-SOURCES** on public safety and more house at the 52nd Precinct's National Night Out in Poe Park on Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2023.

**NOTICE**  
Norwood News  
is on summer  
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September 13







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## Public and Community Meetings

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

The next **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 7** general board meeting will be held in September. Contact [KCabreraCarrera@cb.nyc.gov](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:bedfordmosholu@verizon.net).

### CORRECTIONS

In the *Norwood News* edition Volume 36, No. 15, the year was incorrectly referenced as July 27-Aug. 9, 2003, instead of 2023, due to a transposition error. We apologize for this.

## Dinowitz Shares Highlights of \$30M+ for City Council District 11

(continued from page 16)

He said council members argued that in some cases, their budgets should have been used and therefore shouldn't be cut.

In the end, he said there were some wins and losses on both sides, giving one example of a higher rate of reimbursement win for senior centers providing meals to older adults. He said for a meal which might cost \$18 per person, the centers were receiving \$11.78 per meal and now receive \$12.78 which he said makes a big difference when thousands of meals are involved.

In terms of local projects, some of the highlights included \$5 million for the

renovation of the athletic fields at John F. Kennedy High School, \$10 million for improvements to Williamsbridge Oval Park, \$200,000 for a new dance studio at Bronx Dance Academy, \$550,000 for auditorium upgrades to P.S. 8, \$125,000 for an A+ STEM Lab for P.S. 56 \$500,000 for STEM Learning Space and \$100,000 for a gym renovation at P.S. 94. There was also confirmation of funding of the renovation of the swimming pool at DeWitt Clinton high school.

Call (718) 549-7300 to reach the councilman's office at 277 West 231st Street, to find out about mobile office hours, which are currently being held at local district libraries.



# Armory Gets Funding Boost

(continued from page 1)

(S.D. 33), Assembly Members Jeffrey Dinowitz (A.D. 81) and Yudelka Tapia (A.D. 86), Deputy Bronx Borough President Janet Peguero, Council Members Pierina Sanchez (C.D. 14) Eric Dinowitz (C.D. 11), Marjorie Velazquez (C.D. 13) and more.

Also highly visible on the day, in their signature yellow shirts and in large numbers, were members of the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition, led by executive director, Sandra Lobo, who has long campaigned to redevelop the armory into a thriving resource for residents and small businesses alike and who is a staunch advocate of community-owned and led initiatives. Others included New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) President and CEO Andrew Kimball.

The “Together for Kingsbridge” vision plan follows a nine-month, community-led, envisioning process during which 4,000 residents provided input into what they would like to see in place inside the historic structure, the largest armory in the nation, located in the Kingsbridge Heights section of the Bronx.

Rooted in community priorities and drawing on growing industries, the vision plan “focuses on creating family-sustaining, local jobs and improving the quality of life for residents of Kingsbridge Heights and neighboring Bronx communities,” according to government officials. They said the redevelopment project also aims to deliver on a commitment in the mayor’s economic blueprint, with the potential to deliver over 1,800 jobs and up to \$10 billion in economic impact.

Officials said the latest plan will inform and kick off the request for proposal process next month and provide guidance to interested private partners on what the community and NYCEDC will look for in any future activation. They said the project also represents another example of close city-state col-



Photo by Sile Moloney

**A MEMBER OF** the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition holds up a sign advocating for community ownership of the Kingsbridge Armory during a press conference held inside the vacant Kingsbridge Armory in the Kingsbridge Heights section of The Bronx on Tuesday, Aug. 8, 2023.

laboration outlined in the “New” New York panel’s action plan, investing in job centers with access to mass transit and builds on several of Hochul’s key economic development priorities, including strategic investments in infrastructure, workforce development, and 21st century growth sectors to support good, high-paying jobs.

“After years of dwelling on the history of the Kingsbridge Armory, we are finally looking ahead to its remarkable future,” Hochul said. “I know how critical the future of the Armory is to this community and to the entire borough of The Bronx, which is why I prioritized locking in \$100 million in State funding that will allow this transformative project to move forward.”

She added in part, “The Kingsbridge Armory will anchor this neighborhood, address longstanding community needs, and boost the local economy and I anticipate a project labor agreement to create good-paying union jobs at this site as we work to bring this project to fruition.”

For his part, the mayor said, “The Kingsbridge Armory is a tremendous public asset that is not serving the community. This project has the potential to unlock billions in economic impact for the city while creating over 1,800 good jobs right here in The Bronx.” He added, “And after sitting down with more than 4,000 Bronxites over the past nine months, we are proud to deliver their vision for the armory’s next chapter: a source for good union jobs and a beacon of opportunity for the Bronx.”

Sanchez, who is the local councilmember for the area, and who was described as a “star” by Espaillat, said, “The Kingsbridge Armory is a majestic, incredible structure that could be activated to deliver so much to our community and the Bronx.” She said, “It could represent a catalyst for economic transformation in one of the neighborhoods hardest hit by the pandemic and that was already struggling economically prior to the pandemic.”

Planning efforts for the Kingsbridge Armory date back nearly three decades and include two requests for proposals that failed to advance through the City Council or obtain necessary financing. Over the last decade, the armory has served as an emergency supply and food distribution center following Hurricane Sandy, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and after the Twin Parks fire.

Rivera was credited by Hochul during her remarks with turning what had been an annual State loan earmarked for the project into a grant. We later asked the senator how that came about. He said, “It was a conversation between the City and State. A couple of years ago, it was a battle with the former [State administration] to be able to secure a

chunk of money with the recommendation that the last project [the Kingsbridge National Ice Center] required a boost and so we did that. Rivera, in turn, credited Hochul, on taking office, for ensuring that the earmarked funds remained in the budget for the armory and acknowledged that it was needed and that it would *strictly be used* for the armory site alone.

For her part, Lobo later shared with Norwood News her thoughts on the funding announcement and next stage of the process, “This is an important step,” she said. “It signifies progress but it’ll ultimately be measured by what is the development project going to invest in? Is it going to be a project that exacerbates displacement and some of the inequities of our community or is it going to be something that invests in community ownership and good jobs with benefit and that’ll be the ultimate litmus test.”



Photo by Sile Moloney

**STATE SEN. GUSTAVO** Rivera (S.D. 33), seated in the foreground, who was credited with turning an annual State loan into a grant for the Kingsbridge Armory, attends a press conference held inside the vacant Kingsbridge Armory in the Kingsbridge Heights section of The Bronx on Tuesday, Aug. 8, 2023, along with other elected officials.



Photo by Sile Moloney

**NEW YORK GOV.** Kathy Hochul and New York City Mayor Eric Adams shake hands during a press conference held inside the vacant Kingsbridge Armory in the Kingsbridge Heights section of The Bronx on Tuesday, Aug. 8, 2023.



Photo by Sile Moloney

**DEPUTY BRONX BOROUGH** President Janet Peguero shakes hands with City Council Member Pierina Sanchez (C.D. 14) in the presence of other elected officials during a press conference held inside the vacant Kingsbridge Armory in the Kingsbridge Heights section of The Bronx on Tuesday, Aug. 8, 2023.



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