



NORWOOD NEWS

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MPC HOSTS SMALL BUSINESS CELEBRATION



Photo by Síle Moloney

SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS and vendors gathered at the New York Botanical Garden in Bedford Park for Mosholu Preservation Corporation's "Beyond Survival" event, supporting small businesses in the North Bronx, on Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2023.

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Around 130 people gathered at the New York Botanical Garden on Wednesday, Dec. 6, for a small business celebratory event hosted by Mosholu Preservation Corporation (MPC) called "Beyond Survival."

According to MPC, the non-profit provides support to small businesses by connecting them with resources to help their businesses grow and thrive. These resources can include workforce development, local community hiring, access to

capital, financial education, storefront improvement grants, and legal services, among others.

Through earmarked funding from Congress, MPC had since created the "Beyond Survival" program to help local,

small businesses in the North Bronx not only survive but thrive. Attendees, comprising a mix of small business owners and vendors aiming to support small businesses, gathered for an evening of networking over

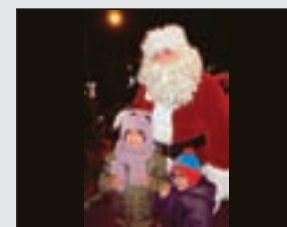
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Civil Service Career Fair Held at Bronx Community College

By SÍLE MOLONEY

In response to what was described as a critical labor shortage impacting public service sectors across New York State, with 12,500 vacancies, State Sen. Robert Jackson (S.D. 31), chair of the NYS civil service & pension committee, in conjunction with NYS Civil Service Commissioner Timothy Hogue, held a civil service career fair at Bronx Community College on Tuesday, Dec. 19.

What was described as a landmark pivotal event included stands from 30 public service agencies and partners like the Workforce Development Institute and the New York State Department of Labor. Jackson said the goal was to dismantle barriers to employment, attract a diverse pool of skilled candidates, and retain a knowledgeable and experienced workforce.

“As chair of Civil Service and Pensions, I am acutely aware of the challenges we face due to understaffing in our state agencies. The ripple effects of this shortfall are felt across our communities, from hospitals struggling to meet patient needs to the management of our mental health services, the maintenance of our roads and transportation systems, and the protection of our environment.”

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bronx County is experiencing an unemployment rate of 7.3%, higher than the New York State average, and nearly double the national average. By increasing access to public service careers in communities most affected by understaffing, officials said the fair was not just about filling vacancies; but was seen as a vital step towards empowering individuals in these communities.

The senator added, in part, “It’s about ensuring the wellbeing and safety of our citizens, and the effective functioning of services that are the backbone of our society. We must come together to address these gaps, for the health of our communities and the strength of our state.”

State and city agencies had recruiters on site ready to expedite employment opportunities for applicants, while across all levels of public service industries, the State of New York is grappling with labor shortages, affecting vital sectors such as education, healthcare, public safety, infrastructure, and more.

For his part, Hogue said of the event, “The Department of Civil Service is working proactively to help recruit the next generation of the New York State workforce. We are pleased to partner with Sen. Jackson to promote the thousands of jobs available right now, in a wide variety of occupations, at many of our partner state agencies.”

He added, “I encourage all interested jobseekers to reach out to us to learn more about beginning a rewarding career in public service that offers many benefits from paid time off to generous health plans to being able to make a dif-



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

BRONX COUNTY, NY Unemployment Rate (I:BCNYUR) January to October 2023



Photo courtesy of the Office of State Sen. Robert Jackson
PARTICIPANTS ATTEND A Civil Service Jobs Fair at Bronx Community College on Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2023.

ference in the lives of your fellow New Yorkers.”

Hundreds of community members were welcomed on the day, each keen on exploring varied, rewarding careers in the public sector.

Dr. Milton Santiago, president of Bronx Community College, part of the City University of New York (CUNY) public education system, thanked Jackson and Hogue for holding the job fair at Bronx Community College (BCC). “We appreciate the opportunity to assist in helping to fill the twelve thousand available civil service positions that are open throughout New York State and here in our community,” he said.

From serving in the court system, electrifying buses, to supporting individuals with their mental health, the organizers said the event participants gained critical insights into career pathways, and the intricacies of civil service recruitment and

selection processes.

Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson was unable to attend the fair as she was attending the funeral of Bob Nolan, who had served under former Bronx Borough Presidents Stanley Simon, Fernando Ferrer, and Adolfo Carrión.

“Jobs, jobs, and jobs!” Gibson later said of the fair. “As we attempt to rebound our borough’s economy, it is imperative that we eliminate barriers that prevent our residents from having access to employment opportunities, workforce development, and pathways to future careers.”

In addition to speaking to agency employment recruiters on site, organizers said participants were exposed to civil service examination schedules, appointment processes, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, as well as comprehensive career preparation resources.

Amy Desjardins, Workforce Development Institute executive director, said, “Public sector careers offer pathways to family-sustaining wages, family-securing benefits, and future career growth while providing crucial services to our communities and neighbors.”

She added, “The Workforce Development Institute (WDI) supports our partners from government, organized labor, employers, and education and training institutions to ensure workers have opportunities to build and grow their careers and attain economic self-sufficiency. We are proud to be a part of today’s event and grateful for those who heed the call to serve and improve their communities.”

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Representation & Equity, Factors in Operation of Van Cortlandt House Museum

By SÍLE MOLONEY

At the November Parks committee meeting for Bronx Community Board 8, Parks chair Deb Travis moderated a discussion on the license to operate Van Cortlandt House Museum, the oldest historic house in The Bronx. The Parks committee discussed how the National Society of Colonial Dames of New York, the oldest public/private partnership in New York City, has held the license since the 1896.

Travis shared that, according to its rules, to be a member of the Colonial Dames, a person must be a direct descendant of “a person of prominence in the American colonies prior to July of 1776.” Travis said that as the operator of an important Bronx public and historic site, this obviously raised questions of representation and equity. “We also believe

that the nature of the organization may present a significant disadvantage for it in accepting grants and soliciting funds for the house, which may be responsible for its state of decline and reduced staffing,” she said.

The kick-off discussion on the topic by Parks can be watched on YouTube at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKk40AWWUKU>. Travis said that Lee Potter, executive director of the Dames is due to join the Bronx CB8 Parks’ committee meeting scheduled for Jan. 24, 2024, to explain the organization’s role and to answer any questions. No Parks committee meeting is scheduled for December.

Residents of Bronx Community Board 8 are encouraged to watch the previous meeting and join the next one to provide input.



Screenshot courtesy of NY Landmarks via YouTube

VAN CORTLANDT HOUSE Museum

Arson Ruled Cause of Bainbridge Ave Commercial Fire

By SÍLE MOLONEY

The NYPD said the cause of the commercial fire that ripped through several small businesses on Oct. 10 on Bainbridge Avenue in Norwood was arson. The news was shared in the context of a crime overview report during the last meeting of the Bedford Moshulu Community Association (BMCA) held on Wednesday, Dec. 6.

NYPD Community Affairs Officer with the 52nd Precinct Stephen Echevarria later said, “Fire was deemed arson by the Fire Marshal, and we have a criminal complaint report for that.” He added, “No arrest at this time.” The investigation is ongoing.

Firefighters initially said there were no injuries resulting from the four-alarm fire which broke out at 3:49 a.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 10, at 3117 Bainbridge

Avenue between East 205th Street and East 206th Street at a one-story, commercial building. However, it was later confirmed that one person was transported to North Central Bronx Hospital.

FDNY officials confirmed a total of 39 units, comprising 168 firefighters and EMS personnel, responded to the blaze in the end. It was finally brought under control at 8:50 a.m. on Oct. 10, FDNY officials said.

Norwood News had followed up on different dates with FDNY since the fire occurred to ask for a status update on the investigation and the cause. We were informed each time that the investigation was still ongoing. We are, once again, following up with FDNY for more information on the incident and will share any further updates we receive.



Photo by Síle Moloney

FIREFIGHTERS RESPOND TO a 4-alarm fire on Bainbridge Avenue in the Norwood section of The Bronx in the early hours of Tuesday, Oct. 10, 2023.

New Laws Introduced to Protect Children from Opioid Exposure

By SÍLE MOLONEY

State Sen. Gustavo Rivera (S.D. 33), Councilmember Pierina Sanchez (C.D. 14), Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson, Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark, and childcare advocates joined Ottoniel Feliz Samboy and Zoila Dominici, the parents of the late Nicholas Feliz Dominici, 1, for a press conference on Fordham Road and Grand Concourse on Thursday, Dec. 14, to announce the introduction of a series of bills in the New York State Legislature and the New York City Council to protect children from opioid exposure in childcare facilities.

In the wake of the tragic death of one-year-old Nicholas Feliz-Dominici at El Niño Divino childcare facility in Kings-

bridge Heights on Sept. 15, Rivera and Sanchez said they had worked in tandem to coordinate an appropriate, public health focused response to prevent a similar tragedy from occurring again and to ensure that communities and children were safe.

Rivera’s bill (S.7815) will provide education and training for providers on overdose prevention, ensure thorough training for inspectors on how to identify illicit drugs, and will empower parents, who, they said, are by far their children’s strongest advocates, by ensuring they are informed about avenues for inquiries and complaints to the State’s Office of Children and Family Services, as well as their rights to inspect childcare facilities.

The fentanyl exposure incident at a daycare in my district was a horrifying tragedy,” said Rivera. “The heart-wrenching death of one-year-old Nicholas Dominici and the terror that families experienced due to the negligence and callousness of the facility’s providers cannot happen again.”

Sanchez will introduce a legislative package in the forthcoming legislative session. The first bill of the package dovetails with Rivera’s bill by requiring the NYC Department of Mental Health and Hygiene to specifically advertise to health inspectors and childcare providers training on opioid antagonists. The second bill within the proposed legislative package will explore a pilot program

to support working families in need of childcare. The third and final bill will be a resolution calling on the State Legislature to pass and the governor to sign the proposed changes in Rivera’s bill.

“Nicholas Feliz Dominici should have been safe at this daycare facility,” said Sanchez. “The Feliz Dominici family did everything right, from working with trusted community institutions, to vetting licensed daycare providers. Yet, government protocols failed to catch possible warnings at this facility, and the ongoing scourge of the illegal opioid drug trade robbed us of a beautiful young life. As a mother of a child that even looks like little Nicholas, my heart remains broken from this devastating tragedy.”

INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week, we asked readers their opinion on Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives opening impeachment proceedings against U.S. President Joe Biden.



"I think more or less they despise each other; it's a power struggle. It's not so much what Biden's done. I've seen presidents come and go, and none of them are perfect. The people are the power that gets them elected. Mr. Biden has done pretty good for a president as far as I'm concerned. The Republicans need to focus on the needs of the people."

Casey Hunter,
Morrisania



"I feel like Mr. Biden should never have gotten into office in the first place. You know that his son was running a sex trafficking ring, and they had something to do with the 'Lolita Express,' and they be talking [expletive] spaghetti and ice cream... all of these [expletive] need to be impeached. It was the same thing when they tried to impeach [former U.S. President Donald] Trump when he had the good old boys to come up there and [expletive] the office."

Sonata James,
Fordham Manor



"I like President Joe Biden because Biden is coming to New York and everything is fine. Joe Biden is good for everything. He helps the people with the programs for giving checks to old people. He helps a lot of people. I don't know why the Republicans are trying to take Joe Biden out, because Trump's no good. When Trump was president, he [was] no good. Joe Biden is better. Joe Biden is good for the country."

Raymond Rivas,
Parkchester



"I'm kind of aware of Joe Biden's track record when he was V.P., and his son and family's influence peddling his position as V.P. and also, he made a statement. I think it was to a VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] audience where he claimed he threatened the president of Ukraine with a billion-dollar contribution if they didn't fire the prosecutor who was prosecuting the company that his son was working for, and he was highly paid. Absolutely there's something to this."

Wayne Price,
Norwood



"Biden is destroying the country, he is. There are people crossing the border, middle-aged men with no children and no women. What's the country going to look like? I believe there are sleeper cells in this country, and all that's going on with Israel and America backing them up and giving them guns and weapons, and doing what they're doing to Palestinians, that's going to affect us."

Linda McCoy,
University Heights

Editor's Note: Norwood News could not find any reports or evidence that Hunter Biden ran a sex trafficking ring, is suspected of running a sex trafficking ring, nor any reports or evidence of his alleged involvement with the so-called Lolita Express.

It has been reported that an indictment, brought in California, alleges Hunter Biden spent money on prostitution, online pornography, and hiring luxury cars, among other things, including \$10,000 on a sex club membership. USA Today reported in October 2020 that while it is true that then-U.S. Vice President Joe Biden leveraged \$1 billion in aid to persuade Ukraine to oust its top prosecutor, Viktor Shokin, in March 2016, it wasn't because Shokin was investigating Burisma, the company on which Biden's son, Hunter, sat as a board member. It was because Shokin hadn't been pursuing corruption charges against Ukraine's politicians, a condition for the financing. According to a New York Times article dated Sept. 23, 2020, "Republican Inquiry Finds No Evidence of Wrongdoing by Biden," an election-year investigation by Senate Republicans into corruption allegations against U.S. President Joe Biden and his son, Hunter, involving Ukraine found no evidence of improper influence or wrongdoing by the president.

Kingsbridge: 5-Alarm Fire Destroys Several Small Businesses

By SÍLE MOLONEY

A five-alarm fire ripped through several small businesses on W 231st Street in Kingsbridge in the early hours of Wednesday morning, Dec. 13, almost two months to the day after a separate eerily similar commercial fire destroyed a row of small businesses in the Norwood section of The Bronx on Tuesday, Oct. 10. Arson has been reported as the cause of the latter fire according to the NYPD.

Meanwhile, video footage recorded by Kingsbridge neighbors showed huge fire flames and clouds of smoke billowing out of the one-story building (30 x 50) where the fire broke out at Cold Cut City Bunny Deli, located at 228 West 231st Street, by Godwin Terrace as dozens of firefighters tackled the blaze.

Fire officials later said, "At around 3:30 this morning [Dec. 13], the FDNY was called to 228 West 231st Street in The Bronx for a fire in several businesses. It was quickly elevated to a five-alarm fire."

"Our units found heavy fire condition in multiple stores. We originally tried an interior attack and got into a couple of stores but had to transition to an exterior attack due to the volume and body of fire and its extension," said FDNY Assistant Chief Thomas Currao. "There



Photo by Síle Moloney

OVERHEAD VIEW OF the damage caused to several businesses destroyed when a fire ripped through an area around West 231st Street between Broadway and Godwin Terrace in Kingsbridge on Wednesday morning, Dec. 13, 2023.

are multiple ceilings in these stores and occupancies. It takes a lot of time to get to the fire and knock it down."

FDNY added that one civilian who they believe is a resident of the building located to the rear of the fire scene, was treated on scene for minor smoke inha-

lation. "The investigation into the cause of the fire is ongoing," FDNY officials said. The fire occurred just two days after a building partially collapsed in the Morris Heights section of The Bronx, where miraculously nobody was killed, according to the latest updates from City

officials.

Firefighters had been working well into Monday night and early morning on Tuesday on search and rescue efforts in attempts to find any survivors under the rubble in nearby Morris Heights.

All lanes of traffic on West 231st in both directions at Kingsbridge Avenue were closed earlier on Dec. 13 but were later reopened in both directions as of 5:33 p.m.

One local resident told *Norwood News* that a residential building, which also houses a children's daycare center, located directly behind the row of affected businesses, was evacuated, and added that a school located on Godwin Terrace a few doors behind the residential building was closed on Wednesday. FDNY later clarified that the building in question had been evacuated temporarily due to smoke but no fire.

The 231st Street subway station was also temporarily closed in the early hours of Dec. 13, but the MTA later confirmed that normal 1 train service resumed at 5:19 a.m.

Firefighters said the fire originated in the deli on the corner of West 231st Street and Godwin Terrace and that 44 fire units comprising 200 firefighters

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Opinion

Armory Plan Must Adhere to Community's Vision

By THORNE NUGENT

Four generations of my family were born in The Bronx. The Kingsbridge Armory on Kingsbridge Road by Jerome Avenue has been a vacant space for all of my existence and now I'm working alongside many others to change that, to make that 500,000-square-foot land-

mark serve the community and the entire Bronx.

We want the space to be for businesses and jobs that benefit Bronxites, especially for young people to enjoy, learn and thrive in as many ways as possible. The Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC) is continuing its three-decades-long campaign for equitable redevelopment of the Kingsbridge Armory. This time, they have built unity with labor partners to ensure that this development not only delivers employment opportunities and meaningful space that supports our diverse community, but also creates union jobs and community ownership.

My support of the Armory aligns with the values of the NWBCCC. Community organizations and community-labor coalitions ensure we are creating

solutions and opportunities for local Bronx residents. We believe the community and workers that will build, patronize, and ultimately sustain this project must share in the wealth it generates and make decisions together to invest back into the health and well-being of The Bronx and our region.

My aunt, a lifelong Bronx resident, who relishes the beauty of the borough, encouraged me to get involved with the Coalition. I did, and I passionately believe in its vision of creating a new, giant and engaging space that will benefit my family and the entire community.

The City recently issued an unprecedented vision document with its Request for Proposals for potential developers, which is strongly connected to what the Coalition and community members worked towards over the last 18 months.

We strongly encourage every potential developer to adhere to that vision. Unlike previous Armory redevelopment failures by outside developers, the community's vision is the only path forward that would lead to success.

If you'd like to get involved, visit: <https://www.northwestbronx.org/get-involved>. The Coalition's "Our Armory" report can be read at:

<https://online.fliphtml5.com/newzo/hhfg/#p=1>. New York City's vision document for the Armory can be read here: <https://edc.nyc/sites/default/files/2023-08/NYCEDC-Together-for-Kingsbridge-Vision-Plan-English.pdf>.

Thorne Nugent is a Kingsbridge resident and a member of Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition, who is actively involved with its efforts vis-à-vis the Kingsbridge Armory redevelopment.

Norwood: Car Explodes in Flames, Two Male Occupants Escape

By SÍLE MOLONEY

An occupied car being driven along Bainbridge Avenue in Norwood spontaneously combusted on Saturday afternoon and later exploded and became engulfed in flames on East 206th Street.

The two male occupants had gotten out before the car exploded and had survived the ordeal, one of them told Norwood News, and the car, itself, was completely destroyed and burnt out. According to one of the occupants, neither occupant was injured.

Asked what happened, one of the two, a young man who declined to be identified, and who was not the owner nor the driver of the vehicle, told *Norwood News*, "We don't know the cause." He said they were both in the car and had been out driving for a while and were on their way home when they suddenly saw flames coming out of the exhaust in the rearview mirror.

The young passenger said they turned onto East 206th Street from Bainbridge Avenue to get a fire extinguisher from



Image courtesy of the Citizens' App

A CAR EXPLODES into flames on Saturday, Dec. 9, 2023, on East 206th Street by Bainbridge Avenue in Norwood, The Bronx.

their home but then the flames entered the trunk and that's when they stopped and got out. He said the fire department

was called and put out the fire.

Asked what model car it was, the young passenger said he believed it was a 2000 Mustang GT. *Norwood News* has reached out to the car manufacturer for comment. A spokesperson referred us to "the local authorities." When asked, the young man said that the driver has insurance.

The car was later seen being towed away from the location by a truck as stunned onlookers took in the crazy scene, which happened at around 4 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 9. Asked if there was any damage, the young man shrugged and said, "My jacket." He added, indicating there was more stuff in the trunk, "I tried to keep the trunk open." He then said, "As you can see, there's still a pile of stuff back there."

The FDNY later said they responded

to a call at 15.49 p.m. of a fire at 325 E 206th Street (between Perry Avenue and Bainbridge Avenue). They said two fire units responded, and the fire was extinguished at 4:38 p.m. They confirmed there were no injuries. We asked if the fire department would be looking into the cause of the fire. An FDNY spokesperson responded, saying, "No investigation, no cause. We don't generally investigate car fires unless deemed suspicious and it has not been." The department also confirmed there was no evidence of any lithium-ion batteries in the car.

Separately, we asked the NYPD if they had investigated the incident and a spokesperson said that, in general, the NYPD would only investigate such incidents if there was a suspicion of criminality.



Photo by Síle Moloney

A CAR IS seen burnt out on East 206th Street by Bainbridge Avenue in Norwood after it exploded into a ball of flames on Saturday afternoon, Dec. 9, 2023.

NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY & DAVID GREENE

Man Injured in West Fordham Road Crash

Police officers from the 52nd Precinct were called to the intersection of University Avenue and West Fordham Road on the border of University Heights and Fordham Manor for a report of a pedestrian who was struck by a vehicle.

A police spokesperson told Norwood News that the unidentified victim was struck at 6:37 a.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 6. The spokesperson said that upon arrival, officers provided emergency care to a conscious 47-year-old male victim who was transported to St. Barnabas Hospital in "stable condition."

Police said a preliminary investigation determined that a 57-year-old man was driving a Jeep SUV, traveling southbound on University Avenue when he struck the pedestrian inside the crosswalk. They said the driver remained at the scene and no charges against him were immediately filed.

Community Mourns Howard E. Kamiel

Representatives of the Amalgamated Housing Corporation said they are deeply saddened to announce the sudden passing on Tuesday, Dec. 12, of the president of its board of directors, Howard E. Kamiel, at the age of 70. "Howard was a longtime resident of the Amalgamated, his family having moved here in 1970," first vice-president, Jack Spiegel, wrote on behalf of the corporation. Spiegel said that at the time of his passing, Kamiel lived with his wife Teresita, in the same apartment his family originally moved into.

"He went to William Howard Taft High School and continued his education at Lehman College, graduating in 1976 with a B.A. degree in accounting," Spiegel said. "Following his father's lead, he was a carrier for the United States Postal Service for 34 years, until his retirement in 2008."

Spiegel said that since his retirement, Kamiel had been very active in service to Amalgamated Houses as well as several other community organizations. He added that Kamiel had been president of Amalgamated since May 2010, had served as secretary for the Herman Liebman Memorial Fund, and was a former president of A.H. Consumers Society, Inc.

He said Kamiel was also a board member of the Bronx Jewish Community Council, serving on its finance committee, and was also on the advisory committee for the Amalgamated-Park Reservoir's NORC (Naturally Occurring Retirement Community) program.

Spiegel said that recently, Kamiel was appointed to the board of directors of the Kingsbridge Riverdale Van Cort-

landt Development Corporation. He said Kamiel leaves behind his wife, Teresita, his daughter, Stephanie, his brother, Marvin, and his sister, Denise. Spiegel said that until the stockholders meeting in May, he will assume the president's responsibilities.



Photo courtesy of Jack Spiegel

HOWARD E. KAMIEL, PRESIDENT of the Amalgamated Housing Corporation, died on Dec. 12, 2023, aged 70.

Community Mourns Bob Nolan

Bronxites are mourning the death of Bronx community leader, Bob Nolan, who died Friday, Dec. 15, in The Bronx at the age of 70. According to details posted to Schuylerhill Funeral Home, a beloved son of The Bronx, Robert Francis Nolan passed away painlessly on the evening of Friday, Dec. 15.

According to the post, Nolan had been diagnosed with aggressive forms of adenocarcinoma in the abdomen organs on Nov. 24, and entered home hospice with Calvary Hospital soon thereafter. At the time of his passing, according to his obituary, he was surrounded by his beloved family at his bedside. His obituary continues as follows:

"Born in the Bronx on Nov. 16, 1948, Bob was raised on Amethyst Street by his parents Benjamin and Agnes Nolan, with his older sister Carol and younger brother James. In August 1974, Bob met Susan Gannascoli of Graves End, Brooklyn, after Bob befriended Susan's brother, Rudy, at a New York State Young Democrats Convention. On August 2, 1975, Bob and Susan were married in Brooklyn on a day that was said to be a 99-degree scorcher.

Thirteen months later, they welcomed their first child, Christopher Rocco, into the world at Victory Memorial in Brooklyn. Two-and-a-half years later, they welcomed their second child, Vivian Kathryn, at Einstein Hospital in The Bronx. In 1981, they settled into their 'starter home' in The Bronx neighborhood of Indian Village, finding a lovely, semi-attached, Tudor house on Narragansett Avenue, where they would raise their family and build their life of public service.

Bob's life of public service is beautifully detailed in the Congressional Record dated Dec. 9, 2008, in a tribute entered by the Hon. José E. Serrano, following his retirement from the Bronx Borough President's office, which spanned over four decades of service un-

(continued on page 8)



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Bronx Youth Use Art as Catalyst for Change

By SILE MOLONEY

The Office of the Bronx Borough President, NYC Department of Youth & Community Development, in conjunction with the New York Yankees, joined forces for the opening of an art exhibition showcasing the creative artworks of Bronx youth on display in the rotunda of Bronx Borough Hall.

“Never count out our Bronx youth and their ability to be creative!” said Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson of the exhibition. “At Bronx Borough Hall, we unveiled three murals from young Bronx artists that are on display this week in our rotunda.”

The exhibit, called “First Pitch,” is the work of 10 middle and high school students whose after-school programs were winners in a competition that invited 200 after-school programs to submit a social impact initiative that addressed violence and its effects on mental health. The competition was sponsored by NYC Department of Youth & Community Development and the New York Yankees with the purpose of using art as a catalyst for change.

Of the 24 that formally submitted their pitches, the three winners announced were The Claremont Neighborhood Cen-

ter with their mural themed “Youth Violence and the Impact on Mental Health,” the Kips Bay Boys and Girls Club with their mural themed “Violence Afflicted by Lack of Mental Health Intervention in Bronx Communities,” and Learning Through An Expanded Arts Program Incorporated with their mural themed “Silenced Violence: The Unspoken & Unresolved Issue.”

According to authors, M. Ezell and M. Levy, (2003), for at-risk and justice-involved youths, the arts can provide an outlet for addressing emotional and/or problem behaviors through opportunities to learn new skills, develop new talents, and express thoughts and ideas in creative and therapeutic ways (Ezell and Levy 2003).

Similarly, according to author Donalyn Heise (2014), for youths dealing with trauma or victimization (including exposure to violence), the arts can help them to cope with painful experiences by fostering resiliency. Meanwhile, according to authors, Nadine Van Westrhenen and Elzette Fritz, (2014), creating art can strengthen a youth’s problem-solving skills, autonomy, sense of purpose, and social competence. Moreover, art can help encourage positive emotions



Photo courtesy of the Office of the Bronx Borough President

ONE OF THE artworks on display at the Rotunda in Bronx Borough Hall until Thursday, Dec. 21, 2023, as part of an exhibition highlighting how Bronx youth use art as a catalyst for change.

and strength, allowing youths to view themselves as survivors and not as victims.

Residents are encouraged to catch the exhibition while it’s showing. The organizers are also reaching out to Bronx cultural institutions to find a permanent home for “First Pitch.” The artworks are roughly 9 feet by 10 feet in dimension, and the exhibition is on display until Thursday, Dec. 21 at 1 p.m.



Photo courtesy of the Office of the Bronx Borough President

ONE OF THE artworks on display at the Rotunda in Bronx Borough Hall until Thursday, Dec. 21, 2023, as part of an exhibition highlighting how Bronx youth use art as a catalyst for change.



Photo courtesy of NYC Department of Youth & Community Development

THE WINNERS OF an art contest relating to the use of art as a catalyst for change pose with their artworks and with Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson, her team, and representatives from NYC Department of Youth & Community Development and the New York Yankees after an unveiling ceremony held at Bronx Borough Hall on Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2023.

NEWS BRIEFS

(continued from page 7)

der Borough Presidents Stanley Simon, Fernando Ferrer, and Adolfo Carrión. Bob was proudly known as one of “Freddie’s Guys” at his retirement, forever loyal to Freddy Ferrer.

Following his retirement, he was appointed by [New York City] Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the NYC Council in June 2011, as a Member of the Board of Directors for the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation as the City Council Designee for the Borough of the Bronx.

In his family life, Bob and Susan en-

joyed traveling the world together on over 45 cruises. On the home front, they traveled from Little League games to community and law firm softball games alike. Bob was even known to toe the rubber for Fernando’s Commandos on the Borough President’s softball team. They also enjoyed a passion for watching movies together, with Bob’s legendary love for countless watchings of The Godfather Parts I and II.

Bob is survived by his beloved wife of 48 years, Susan; his son Chris (Trisha Rich), his daughter, Vivian (Dr. Sonia Patel, engaged December 8), his brother, James, family matriarch aunt, Ann Affriol, and countless treasured cousins and other family members. He is predeceased by his parents Benjamin and Agnes and his sister Carol.”

According to details posted on Schuylerhill Funeral Home’s website, interment took place at St. Johns Cemetery, 80-01 Metropolitan Avenue, New York,

New York 11379. Visitors to the wake and funeral were encouraged to share in Bob’s lifelong passion for baseball by wearing baseball gear from their favorite Major League Baseball team or local Bronx Little League team.

“From the co-founding by his father, Ben Nolan, of Van Nest Little League, est. 1956, to playing baseball in Little League at Salesian High School and at Fordham University, to supporting the New York turned San Francisco Giants, his summer days and nights were filled with baseball memories shared with his wife and children. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Van Nest Little League in the Bronx (Venmo to @vannestlittleleague),” it read.

To plant a tree in Nolan’s memory, please visit Heartfelt Sympathies Store. The Congressional Record and his HHC bios detailing his service can be read at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CREC-2008-12-09/pdf/CREC-2008-12-09->

[pt1-PgE2347-4.pdf#page=1](https://www.nyhealthandhospitals.org/leader/robert-f-nolan/) and <https://www.nyhealthandhospitals.org/leader/robert-f-nolan/>.



Photo courtesy of NYC Health + Hospital
BOB NOLAN, NOV. 16, 1948 to Dec. 15, 2023

Morris Heights: “Unsafe” Building Partially Collapses in Broad Daylight



Photo by Síle Moloney

FIREFIGHTERS RESPOND TO a partial building collapse at 1915 Billingsley Terrace in the Morris Heights section of The Bronx on Monday evening, Dec. 11, 2023.

By SÍLE MOLONEY

The FDNY responded to a major emergency at a 6-story, residential building located just south of University Heights in the Morris Heights section of The Bronx on Monday afternoon, Dec. 11, after the corner of the building partially collapsed.

Rescue operations continued by emergency services well into the night and morning, according to the FDNY. Initial reports by City officials were that there were unknown injuries, but by Tuesday, officials said miraculously, they had not found anyone buried under the rubble, that there had been no fatalities, and that people who had been in a deli located underneath the building at the time of the collapse had all been evacuated.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams, FDNY Commissioner Laura Kavanaugh, Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson, District Attorney Darcel Clark, Dis-

trict 14 City Council Member Pierina Sanchez, Assembly Member Yudekla Tapia (A.D. 86), NYC Emergency Management Services (EMS) Commissioner Zach Iscol, NYC Department of Buildings (DOB) Commissioner James Oddo and other City officials held a press conference on Dec. 11 at the site to provide an overview of the situation.

FDNY officials had earlier told *Norwood News* they received a call of a structural collapse at 15:38 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 11, at 1915 Billingsley Terrace [a 100 x 100 building] by Phelan Place and West Burnside Avenue in Morris Heights. According to FDNY, a 10-60 alert was transmitted in response to the incident indicating a major emergency.

EMS Commissioner Zach Iscol said in part at the scene, “Fire department units were on scene within a minute 36 [seconds] was their response time and almost immediately we started the interagency

process.” Iscol said, “So, we brought out all of the utility companies to shut off power and gas in the building.” He said the Red Cross were also engaged to help assist with displaced individuals.

Iscol said the NYPD cordoned off the area as a security measure, DOB and HPD began their preliminary investigations into the collapse, and residents were directed to a service center set up at P.S. 390. For her part, Kavanaugh said, in part, “All of our specialized training and resources that we have for an incident like this have gone to work. We have our drone opp, surveying the area, seeing if we can find additional information about potential patients, and areas of potential instability. We have our canine unit here helping us search for potential victims, and we have all of our special, specially trained firefighters, tactical units, collapse units, and our EMTs and rescue medics trained specifically to treat someone in a collapse.”

FDNY Chief John J. Hodgins added, in part, “We immediately vacated, evacuated the building, got all the residents out, and started to concentrate on the debris pile in front of the building, working that, and trying to search for any victims.”

He said they used dogs to search also as their main objective was to get to the bottom of the pile at street level to make sure there weren’t any victims. “It’s this type of operation we train for every day at our training facility. Our specialized units, we have a pile of debris at the Rock [training facility], and we train exactly under these conditions for this day that hopefully doesn’t happen too often,” he

said.

Oddo later said, “This is a 1927 building, and 7 stories. Any building that’s higher than six stories falls within the jurisdiction of our “Facade Law” in New York City. These folks, the owner of this building, submitted their most recent report in March of [2021]. That report *did* find unsafe facade conditions, seven of them, mortar that was deteriorating, cracked bricks. There is an active [DOB work] permit, a permit that’s valid until next summer. Work was being done on this building as recently as a few days ago.”

He added, “I know you’ll be interested in the history of the building in terms of violations. Right now, we see seven open violations, five ECB (Environmental Control Board), two DOB (NYC Department of Buildings), but they are not structural violations. It has to do with the sidewalk shed, the fact that it didn’t have proper lighting, etc. There are drawings that were submitted as part of the process to pull the permit that speaks to the part of the right lower corner that is collapsed.”

Oddo continued, “So, obviously, we’ll take a strong look at that. Our engineers and our inspectors hope to be able, once given the green light from FDNY, to get into the building into the second part of each building to do an inspection and we’ll have more answers after that.”

Officials were asked about reports from residents who allegedly saw some drilling into the building and later the collapse. Oddo replied, “Can’t tell you much more. Certainly can’t speak to what

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DIVORCE SUMMONS BY PUBLICATION AND MAILING		Docket No. 042203214 (EM)	Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court
Benjamin Pena		vs.	Narcisca Remona Zapata
To the Defendant:		Suffolk Probate and Family Court 24 New Chardon Street Boston, MA 02114	
The Plaintiff has filed a Complaint for Divorce requesting that the Court grant a divorce for Indefinite Breakdown			
The Complaint is on file at the Court.			
An Automatic Restraining Order has been entered in this matter preventing you from taking any action which would negatively impact the current financial status of either party. SEE Supplemental Probate Court Rule #11.			
You are hereby summoned and required to serve upon:			
Benjamin Pena 14 Yull Circle Hyde Park, MA 02136			
your answer, if any, on or before 01/09/2024. If you fail to do so, the court will proceed to the hearing and adjudication of this action. You are also required to file a copy of your answer, if any, in the office of the Registrar of this Court.			
WITNESS, Hon. Brian J. Dunn, First Justice of this Court.			
Date: November 22, 2023			
[Signature]			
Registrar of Probate			
CJ-D 142a (11/09)			

CRIME FILE

BY SÍLE MOLONEY



A representative for the Bronx District Attorney's Office advised during the Bronx Community Board 7 board meeting held on Dec. 19 that the office runs a crime victim's assistance bureau and can help with counseling and other services. Call (718) 590-2114 for more information.

Below, summaries of the main NYPD crime statistics both across The Bronx, and in the 52nd Precinct specifically, both for the 28-day period ending Dec. 10, and year-to-date as of Dec. 10, are included



below.

Fordham Manor: Man, 76, Assaulted & Robbed by Group

Police said a 13-year-old boy has been arrested following an assault and robbery of a 76-year-old man that occurred in Fordham Manor, close to Devoe Park. Police had been asking for the public's help identifying the people seen in the accompanying photo above who they said were sought for questioning in connection to the incident.

They said that on Sunday, Dec. 17, at around 2.07 a.m., the victim, a 76-year-old man, was walking in the vicinity of Webb Avenue and Sedgwick Avenue when he was approached by three males on mopeds. "One of the individuals punched the victim in the head, causing him to fall to the ground," police said.

"While the victim was on the ground, the individuals forcibly went through the victim's pockets and removed a cell phone," police added. Police said one of the three then threw the phone onto the sidewalk, damaging the screen and then they fled on mopeds westbound on West Fordham Road.

The victim was treated on scene by EMS for a laceration and pain to the head. Police said the unnamed 13-year-old boy who was

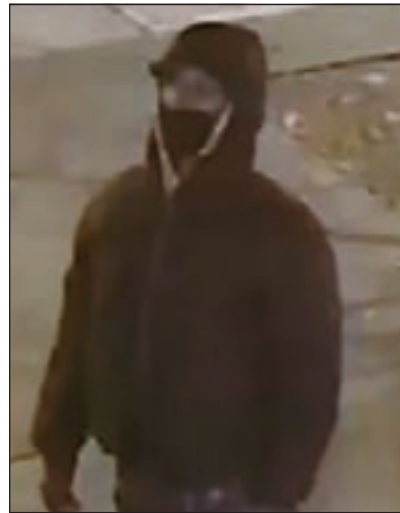
arrested was charged with robbery on Monday at around 6.40 p.m.

Bedford Park: Person Sought for Armed Robbery

Police are searching for a person who carried out an armed robbery of a UPS delivery worker in Bedford Park on Saturday, Dec. 16. Police said a 19-year-old woman reported to police that on Saturday, Dec. 16, at around noon, at the intersection of Valentine Avenue and East 198th Street, a person displayed a gun and forcibly stole a package from her while she was making a delivery.

"The individual then fled the location in a gray BMW X5," police said, adding that there were no injuries as a result of the incident. "There is no arrest, and the investigation remains ongoing," police said. We asked the NYPD if they could confirm if the delivery was being made to a store or to a residential building. We did not receive an immediate response.

Norwood News spoke to some residents in the neighborhood, including a male employee working in a corner store, but they either didn't see anything or declined to be interviewed.



Fordham Heights: Attempted Assault

The NYPD is asking for the public's help identifying the person seen in the accompanying photo above who they say is sought for questioning in connection with an attempted assault that occurred in Fordham Heights. Police said that on Monday, Dec. 4, at around 1.39 p.m., in front of 2072 Creston Avenue, an unidentified person fired a gun on a public sidewalk in the direction of an unidentified victim.

The gunman then fled on foot southbound on Creston Avenue towards Burnside Avenue. No injuries were reported following the incident, police said. The person sought is described as male, has a light complexion, a medium build, and was last seen wearing a blue, Nike hooded sweatshirt, a camouflage jacket, ripped blue jeans, and black sneakers.

Olinville: Two Sought in Stabbing of 40-Year-Old Man

The NYPD is asking for the public's help identifying the people seen in the accompanying photos who they say are wanted for questioning in connection with a stabbing that occurred in Olinville. Police said the incident took place on Wednesday, Dec. 6, at around 12.15 p.m., when a 40-year-old male victim was speaking with the two suspects in the vicinity of White Plains Road and East Gun Hill Road.

"One of the unknown individuals then pulled out a knife and stabbed the victim in the lower back," police said. "The individuals then fled the location on foot. The victim was transported by private means to NYC Health and Hospitals/Jacobi in stable condition." Police said the first suspect is described as male, is around 40 or 50, has a dark complexion and a heavy build. They said he was last seen wearing a black skullcap, a black puffer jacket, and black jeans.

They said the second person is also described as male, is estimated to be

(continued on next page)

Patrol Borough: Bronx		Precinct: 52					
Complaint Book				Weeks of 12/04/23 - 12/10/23			
		28 Day			Year to Date		
	% Chg	2023	2022	% Chg	2023	2022	% Chg
Murder	-100.0 %	0	1	-100.0 %	8	13	-38.5 %
Rape	50.0 %	4	3	33.3 %	36	36	-0.0 %
Robbery	157.1 %	41	22	86.4 %	444	375	18.4 %
Felony Assault	57.1 %	54	40	35.0 %	856	874	14.1 %
Burglary	33.3 %	18	10	80.0 %	217	181	19.9 %
Grand Larceny	-0.1 %	59	46	28.4 %	667	625	6.9 %
Grand Larceny Auto	200.0 %	18	16	12.5 %	315	239	31.8 %
Total	53.1 %	194	141	37.6 %	2,362	2,045	15.5 %
Patrol	51.6 %	190	138	36.7 %	2,308	1,987	16.6 %
Transit	100.0 %	4	2	100.0 %	48	48	-0.0 %
Housing	0.0 %	0	0	0.0 %	0	2	100.0 %
Shooting Victims	0.0 %	0	1	-100.0 %	15	34	-55.9 %
Shooting Incidents	0.0 %	0	1	-100.0 %	12	29	-58.6 %
UCR Rape*	0.0 %	0	0	0.0 %	62	71	-12.7 %
Other Sex Crimes	-100.0 %	0	0	33.3 %	36	34	14.3 %
Petit Larceny	55.6 %	174	136	27.9 %	2,415	2,483	-2.7 %
Med. Assault	-25.6 %	71	70	1.4 %	787	758	3.8 %
Hate Crimes	0.0 %	1	0	- %	5	4	25.0 %

Patrol Borough: Bronx		Precinct: A4					
Complaint Book				Week of 12/04/23 - 12/10/23			
		28 Day			Year to Date		
	% Chg	2023	2022	% Chg	2023	2022	% Chg
Murder	-66.7 %	0	11	-27.3 %	115	122	-5.7 %
Rape	15.1 %	21	20	-16.0 %	344	367	-6.3 %
Robbery	0.0 %	385	378	1.8 %	4,642	4,862	-4.5 %
Felony Assault	-11.4 %	589	576	2.3 %	7,819	7,140	9.5 %
Burglary	-13.6 %	188	183	2.7 %	2,732	2,749	-0.6 %
Grand Larceny	0.0 %	681	641	3.1 %	7,645	7,663	-0.2 %
Grand Larceny Auto	-6.6 %	301	320	-5.9 %	4,940	5,694	-13.0 %
Total	-6.6 %	2,104	2,134	1.4 %	26,143	26,587	-1.7 %
Patrol	-6.3 %	2,032	1,986	2.3 %	26,200	24,730	5.9 %
Transit	233.3 %	28	17	64.7 %	367	341	7.6 %
Housing	-28.6 %	104	122	-14.8 %	1,636	1,506	8.6 %
Shooting Victims	-75.0 %	16	31	-48.4 %	360	454	-20.7 %
Shooting Incidents	-60.0 %	17	27	-37.0 %	302	366	-17.8 %
UCR Rape*	7.7 %	41	38	8.1 %	817	822	-0.6 %
Other Sex Crimes	0.0 %	62	64	-3.1 %	1,871	584	14.4 %
Petit Larceny	-0.5 %	1,324	1,404	-5.9 %	15,309	17,549	-12.8 %
Med. Assault	20.1 %	777	646	18.9 %	9,871	9,341	5.7 %
Hate Crimes	0.0 %	2	1	100.0 %	28	42	-33.3 %

Kingsbridge: 5-Alarm Fire Destroys Several Small Businesses

(continued from page 4)

and EMS personnel were dispatched in response to the blaze, which they said was brought under control at 7:48 a.m. "Cause and origin is under investigation by fire marshals," fire officials said.

During a press conference held earlier on Wednesday, Currao said the fire operations would be prolonged due to "the stubborn nature of the fire." EMS officials said they had been fortunate that the one injured person had been treated at the scene and did not require transfer to a hospital.

Currao went on to say that battling the fire was difficult because like in similar commercial fire scenarios, there were "multiple ceilings" which had been put up in the stores at different times and this had meant it took longer to access the fire and "knock it down."

The chief was asked about reports of possible chemicals stored inside one of the affected businesses. He said that had been where the multiple ceilings were located and where they were still concentrating their efforts and added that he couldn't comment further as the operations and investigation were still ongoing. "We've made remarkable headway in all the rest of the occupancies," he said.

Deputy Bronx Borough President Janet Peguero and City Councilman Eric Dinowitz (C.D. 11) visited the fire scene on Wednesday morning and said five businesses had been completely destroyed. Another two businesses appear to have incurred some damage.

Representatives from the councilman's office later said his office, the office of Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz (A.D. 81), and that of Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson were actively engaged in providing assistance and support to those affected by the incident, coordinating with various agencies, including the FDNY, NYC Department of Buildings (DOB), and NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and with local business owners to address their needs.

According to representatives from the councilman's office, an MTA Bus was on site, providing shelter to around



Photo by Síle Moloney

SEVERAL BUSINESSES WERE destroyed when a fire ripped through several buildings on West 231st Street between Godwin Terrace and Broadway in Kingsbridge on Wednesday morning, Dec. 13, 2023.

30 to 40 residents from 3508 Godwin Terrace on Wednesday morning. They said officials for the elected representatives canvassed nearby residential buildings to provide information about the situation and to ensure neighbors were safe.

They said all neighbors canvassed were given contact information for the elected officials' offices, emphasizing that the affected individuals could continue to reach out to them to receive services. "I am deeply saddened by the impact of the fire on our community," the councilman said. "Our immediate focus is on supporting those affected and working closely with the relevant agencies to address their needs. I want to assure all constituents that my office is here to provide assistance and support during this challenging time. The safety and well-being of our community are our top priorities."

Meanwhile, the assemblyman said in part, "Our hearts are with the impacted businesses. Working with the FDNY, DOB, and DEP, we stand in solidarity

with the entrepreneurs and employees whose livelihoods have been affected. The destruction of several businesses is a significant blow to our local economy."

For her part, Gibson, who was already coordinating efforts to help those affected in the aftermath of the partial building collapse in Morris Heights two days earlier on Monday, Dec. 11, also offered condolences and support to those affected by what she called, "this horrible tragedy." She added, "I want to thank our first responders, the FDNY, NYPD, DOB and DEP for their swift response and for providing support for those affected."

Norwood News spoke to a number of people in the area on Dec. 13, all of whom lamented the destruction of the businesses caused by the fire. One man who declined to give his name said, "I heard it could have been a half a dozen things; that they were hanging out, and they neglected something, or the power wasn't shut off, or it was a grease fire. I'm not

sure. I don't know. They tried to put out the fire with water. You're not supposed to use water on a grease fire. You're supposed to use dirt or sand."

Sam from Sam's Pizzeria, located opposite the fire scene, said "It's very sad, and I feel so bad for the business owners and families. I know most of them a long, long time, nice people, hardworking people, yes. So, I don't have anything else to say. They've been over there, those businesses, forever. It's not just for me or for them [that it's sad], but it's for everybody in the neighborhood."

Local resident Charlotte Lewis said all the shop owners were well known to the community and they were community members for many years. "We have had the pleasure of them serving us, the community," she said in part. "It's a tragedy for the community because these are people we work with, we live with. It's going to take a while for them to rebuild, and we will not know whether they can rebuild in this environment right now in a recession."

CRIME FILE - CONTINUED

BY SÍLE MOLONEY



(from previous page)

around 30 to 35, has a dark complexion and a slim build. They said he was last seen wearing a black, hooded sweatshirt, black jeans, and black boots.

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



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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY



Affordable Housing Lotteries

NYC Department of Housing, Preservation and Development (HPD) has open affordable housing lotteries for housing units at the following locations:

- 3470 Fort Independence St., Bronx, NY 10463 with a deadline of Jan. 2, 2024;
- 2072 Anthony Ave., Bronx, NY 10457, with a deadline of Feb. 12, 2024;
- 1761 Walton Ave., Bronx, NY 10453, with a deadline of Feb. 13, 2024;
- 1739 Grand Ave., Bronx, NY 10458, with a deadline of Jan. 2, 2024;
- 3073 Barker Ave., Bronx, NY 10467, with a deadline of Feb. 1, 2024;
- 2330 Cambreleng Ave, Bronx, NY 10458, with a deadline of Jan. 18, 2024;
- Betances VI Family Apartments, 405 E 146th St, Bronx, NY 10455, with a deadline of Feb. 13, 2024.

Visit <https://housingconnect.nyc.gov/PublicWeb/search-lotteries> for

more information.

Rent Freeze Program

Eligible New Yorkers with disabilities and older New Yorkers can stop their rent from increasing with the City's Rent Freeze program. Find out if you're eligible! Call the Mayor's Office for Public Engagement's Rent Freeze Hotline at (929) 252-7242. More information is also available here: <https://nyc.gov/site/rentfreeze/index.page>.

Reparations Commission Launched

NYS Gov. Kathy Hochul signed legislation on Tuesday, Dec. 19, to continue what was described as New York's leadership on racial equity by creating a new commission to study reparations and racial justice. State officials said the commission acknowledges the horrific injustice of slavery and will be tasked with examining the legacy of slavery, subsequent discrimination against people of African descent, and the impact these forces continue to have in the present day.

"Today, we are continuing our ef-

forts to right the wrongs of the past by acknowledging the painful legacy of slavery in New York," Hochul said. "We have a moral obligation to reckon with all parts of our shared history as New Yorkers, and this commission marks a critical step forward in these efforts."

NYC Comptroller Brad Lander said on Dec. 14, "My office researched racial wealth disparities in New York. Among our findings: The net worth of white New Yorker[s] is 15X that of Black New Yorkers, on average. Our report strongly supports @JSandersNYC's efforts to establish a commission on reparations in NY state. State Sen. James Sanders Jr., a Democrat, represents Southeast Queens."

Black-Jewish Cultural Exchange Project

The Riverdale Y and Mosholu Montefiore Community Center are inviting Bronx Jewish youth to apply to a Black-Jewish Cultural Exchange Project, comprising three in-person sessions at different Bronx locations on Jan. 11, 18, and Feb. 1, 2024, from 6.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. Join 12 Black and / or Jewish teens committed to building and strengthening relationships between the African American community and the Jewish community, while engaging in thoughtful and meaningful dialogue around race, religion, and culture. Apply by Dec. 29 at www.riverdaley.org/bjtcep.

RFP Open for Kingsbridge Armory

NYC Economic Development Corporation is accepting Requests for Proposals for the development of the Kingsbridge Armory in Kingsbridge Heights. The deadline to apply is Jan. 18, 2024, at 11.59 p.m. For more information, visit <https://edc.nyc.gov/kingsbridge-armory-redevelopment-rfp>.

Open Call for Curators

Bronx Arts Space (BAS) advises of the 2024 Emerging Bronx Voices Open Call for curators. BAS is looking for more up and coming curators to apply to an open call. They welcome anyone (no exhibit curation experience needed) who lives or works in The Bronx to submit an idea for a thematic exhibition at BAS. Email applications to sabine@bronxartspace.com by midnight, Feb. 11, 2024. Selected ex-

hibitions will be on view at BAS from April 11 - May 18, 2024.

Applications Open for En Foco Media Arts Fund 2024: Works-in-Progress Initiative Support Grant

Applications for the En Foco Media Arts Fund 2024: Works-In-Progress Initiative opened on Nov. 15 and close on Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024, at 11.59 p.m. The fourth Annual En Foco Media Arts Fund: Work in Progress (WIP) Initiative Support Grant, in collaboration with BronxNet, is designed to support New York City-based, early career artists of color who engage with digital media technologies within their art-making processes. For this opportunity, early-career artists are defined by a 2 to 9-year artistic working history. Artists who have also applied for the 2024 Photography Fellowship are only eligible to receive one award if selected for either opportunity. Contact grants@enfoco.org for more information.

Unused Commissary Funds

NYC Department of Correction (DOC) is advising formerly incarcerated individuals that the procedure for reclaiming any unused commissary funds has changed with immediate effect. According to DOC, only the released individual can claim the funds, and can do so in person and receive cash at a DOC Cashiers Window at Rikers Island Central Cashiers, Manhattan Court, or Brooklyn Court for amounts of up to \$200. Photo ID, a New York State ID number, a former book / case number, a valid, physical address, and active contact number (if receiving funds exceeding \$200) must be provided to claim the funds. Funds exceeding \$200 will be paid by check. The portal to input the request can be accessed at on.nyc.gov/3MQndmG. Commissary Reports are also available at on.nyc.gov/3R3blup.

Apply for Citizens NYC 2024 Grants

Applications are now open to apply for Citizens NYC 2024 grants of up to \$3,000 for community projects and up to \$5,000 for small businesses. The closing date is Friday, March 31, 2024. Winners will be selected, and grants will be distributed in the summer of 2024. Learn more and apply at www.citizensnyc.org.

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Antiwar Protesters Hold 2nd Rally Outside Torres' Office

By DAVID GREENE

For the second time in less than two months, members of the Bronx Anti-War Coalition held a “Speak Out” rally outside the Bronx office of Congressman Richie Torres (NY-15) in Belmont on Friday, Dec. 15. The group called for a ceasefire to the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas and demanded an end to financial support of Israel’s war efforts by the United States.

About 50 demonstrators gathered outside the congressman’s office, located at 540 East Fordham Road in Belmont for the rally, which coincided with eight others held at various locations across New York City.

Ahead of the event, Torres had posted on X [formerly Twitter] “Anti-Israel agitators are planning an action against me outside my office in The Bronx. In the event the action turns violent, I have been advised to shut down my office out of an abundance of caution.”

His post continued, “Let me be crystal clear: no amount of intimidation will bully me into supporting a ceasefire that enables Hamas to remain in power, regroup, rearm, and launch even deadlier terror attacks than the atrocities of Oct. 7th.”

Of the rally, Janet Clarke of the Anti-war Coalition told *Norwood News*, beforehand, “It’s envisioned as a peaceful “speak out” and vigil for the now-20,000-plus Gaza casual-

ties.” Clark, a Norwood resident, added, “Torres is already agitating and intimidating on social media that it’s bullying and dangerous.”

At the Dec. 15 rally, Clark recalled her group’s previous Bronx rally held Oct. 24, when Torres also shut his office to join pro-Israeli demonstrators from the SARS Academy for a rally in Riverdale.

Clarke told the crowd, “Since Torres is a recipient of more than \$500,000 within his career from AIPAC [American Israel Public Affairs Committee]...that’s a half million guys, he’s more than happy to overlook such human rights horrors. He also doesn’t care that the IDF [Israel Defense Forces]...that’s an organization which, you all know, trains our NYPD in military tactics to occupy Bronx civilian streets. It’s a disgrace.”

According to one report from Amnesty International, the NYPD does train with the IDF. We reached out to the NYPD for comment. We did not receive an immediate response.

We asked Matthew Smith, a Belmont resident, and Fordham University student, why he wanted to attend the latest rally. He replied, “I moved here from the Midwest, actually came here for the promise of a progressive New York, one that supports all people.”

Smith said of Torres, “He vetoes any bill that supports



Photo by David Greene

PROTESTERS OUTSIDE THE office of Rep. Richie Torres on East Fordham Road in Belmont, The Bronx, call for a ceasefire in Gaza and an end to the funding of Israel by the U.S. on Friday, Dec. 15, 2023.

a ceasefire, a humanitarian ceasefire that would save so many lives. He personally blocked me on social media, one of his constituents, because I called him out from the beginning on his clear Islamophobia, clear hatred toward the Palestinian people.”

Also attending the rally was Julie Norris of Mott Haven, who told *Norwood News*, “I live in The Bronx, and we see how The Bronx is crumbling to the ground. Literally day to day, our schools are crumbling, our subways are crumbling, buildings are falling down, and people need to know why this is happening.”

Norris continued, “The reason that’s happening is because of sell-out politicians like Richie Torres. [They] are just sell-outs and slimy and have their own interests at heart, but they’re sell-outs to people who are funding a genocide.”

Hours after the rally concluded, it was announced that IDF soldiers had accidentally killed two of the Israeli hostages taken by Hamas from Israel on Oct. 7. According to the Gaza Health Ministry, as of the

date of writing, the death toll in Gaza stands at 19,000 Palestinians, including 7,000 children, plus 50,000 injured.

According to the United Nations, there are currently 1.5 million Palestinians living in 58 refugee camps, but the number of those displaced is estimated at 5.8 million.

In 2017, former U.S. President Donald Trump was sued for blocking people from his personal social media account. However, in July 2019, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals determined that Trump used his Twitter account to conduct official government business and could not block constituents based on their political views.

Also in July 2019, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY-14) was sued for similar actions, but that suit was dropped when Ocasio-Cortez apologized and unblocked the constituent in November 2019.

In October, the U.S. Supreme Court listened to two related cases involving the blocking of members of the public on social media. One case involved school board members in California, and another a city man-

ager in Michigan. A decision on whether a public official can block someone from their social media accounts is expected by the end of June 2024.

We reached out to Torres for a comment on the rally as well as the specific remarks made about him by protestors. He replied, saying, “I remain hard at work delivering for the people of The Bronx, whether it is securing over a billion dollars for the public hospital system, securing over \$25 million in federal funding for Montefiore (the largest health care provider and employer in The Bronx), securing over \$150 million for environmental justice, or establishing multiple programs educating and employing our youth.”

The congressman added, “I strongly disagree with protestors who defend the terrorism and barbarism of Hamas. There is no justification for murdering and maiming civilians and children, raping women, and butchering babies. I will continue to stand for peace between Israelis and Palestinians and against the terrorism of Hamas.”

Torres concluded, “The notion that AIPAC [American Israel Public Affairs Committee] has contributed a half a million dollars to my campaign is a factually false claim based on a misunderstanding of federal campaign finance law. AIPAC has both a PAC and a SuperPAC. The PAC CANNOT contribute more than the legal limit of \$10,000, and the SuperPAC has spent nothing on my behalf.”

When *Norwood News* previously reviewed the congressman’s campaign contributions, we found that 18.1 percent of contributions to his campaign were from AIPAC, a total of \$222,040, the second highest contributor after Act Blue (a Democratic Party PAC). We reached out to the congressman for comment and will share further updates, should we receive them.

**Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*



Photo by David Greene

PROTEST ORGANISER AND Norwood resident, Janet Clarke, speaks to a crowd of around 50 gathered outside the Fordham Road office of Rep. Richie Torres in Belmont, The Bronx, on Friday, Dec. 15, 2023.



Letters To The Editor

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

Letter from Richard Marias re Fines on Former Bronx Elected Officials

Editor's Note: In response to a previous letter to the editor by Richard Marias of Norwood on the status of sentences served, pensions paid, and fines imposed on various former Bronx elected officials and other public servants for fraud, *Norwood News* is continuing to follow up on these matters with various City, State, and federal agencies.

Further to updates shared in previous print editions, the Office of the NYS Comptroller (OSC) said they wouldn't have knowledge of the status of fines and referred us instead to the courts, with whom we are already in contact, and await feedback.

OSC officials also confirmed that former NYC corrections officer and union president, Norman Seabrook, former City Councilman Larry Seabrook (C.D. 12), and former City Councilman Andy King (C.D. 12) are not in New York State's pension system (NYSLRS) and

referred us to the NYC Comptroller's office. We have duly contacted the office and await feedback.

OSC also said that any potential pension forfeiture requires the district attorney to commence a separate court action to have the pension forfeited, and advised us to check with the DA's office, which we have done. They referred us to federal prosecutors from whom we await feedback. OSC also said if there is no forfeiture action, then the State has to continue paying the benefits.

OSC further said that former State Sen. Efrain Gonzalez (S.D. 33) is a retiree of NYSLRS. His date of retirement was May 14, 2009. They said his gross monthly pension is \$3,239.19. We will share further updates as they become available.

Citibike Stations & Parking Availability

There are now two CitiBike stations on the part of Van Cortlandt Park South in our area. This takes away numerous more parking spaces. Seldom are any of the bikes being used. If the government wants less cars on the road, maybe they need

to add more and better public transit and make the subways safer.

**Richard Warren,
Van Cortlandt Village**

Adam's Budget Cuts

I am appalled at Mayor [Eric] Adams for hurting the most vulnerable in our society with his budget cuts. Erasing after-school programs and cutting library hours is unnecessary when he could look elsewhere. I stealthily and discreetly attended the last Pride parade in NYC, wearing a fake beard and dark sunglasses with a baseball cap. I observed very few spectators and witnessed the utmost display of perversion by some of the parade marchers.

I would never want my fellow neighbors and friends in Norwood to think of me as supporting this event. I asked a cop working the assignment what time it would end. He told me they had orders to let it go on for as long as the organizers wanted. This event, the annual Pride parade in NY, costs the City millions of dollars in overtime for all the city agencies

working it. End this parade and the mayor can then restore programs for the most needy.

**Richard Marias
Norwood**

Editor's Note: Destination Tomorrow, located at 452 E 149th St. 3rd floor, Bronx, NY 10455 is the Bronx's dedicated LGBTQ+ resource center. Visit the group's website at www.destinationtomorrow.org. Anyone experiencing depression can also call a hotline where professionals answer the phone 24-hours a day. The service also has a "queer therapist" if needed. The number is (212) NYC-WELL. Other general numbers are: Toll Free: 833.DT.4LGBT or (646) 723-3325.

Please send all letters to the editor, along with supporting hyperlinked sources, to norwoodnews@norwood-news.org or by mail to Norwood News, 3400 Reservoir Oval East, Bronx, NY 10467, by the Friday before each publication day. Letter writers should aim to write no more than 300 words on local issues or in response to published articles.

Holiday Tree-Lighting Brings Festive Cheer

**By MIRIAM QUIÑONES &
SILE MOLONEY**

Around 100 happy people gathered on Mosholu Parkway and Bainbridge Avenue on the border of Norwood and Bedford Park on Thursday, Dec. 7 for an annual, beloved tradition as Bronx Community Board 7 (CB7), in conjunction with Future of Mosholu Parkland (FOMP), held their year-end, festive, tree-lighting event.

Bronx CB7 chair Yajaira Arias welcomed those gathered for an evening filled with joy, musical performances, smiles, treats, hot chocolate, games, a surprise visit from Santa and more! "Thank you for coming out to our wonderful, annual, ceremony of our tree-lighting," Arias said. "I wish you all a happy and safe holiday season. So, welcome and enjoy! Have a great time!"

The CB7 chair paid tribute to each of the CB7 committee members who she said had given of their time to help the neighborhood. "We're here for you. You're more than welcome to come to the office at 204th Street," she said. Gently reminding residents that all committee members are volunteers, she added, "We're here to represent you, to help you in any way that we possibly can."

All were given a warm round of applause, amid some cheers, in response. Elizabeth Quaranta, executive director of FOMP, said it was nice to see familiar faces at the event but also great to see new

faces who have moved into the Bedford Park and Norwood communities. "Welcome to those families who we hope will make this their home for many years," she said.

Adding to the festive atmosphere were staffers from the Office of Assemblyman George Alvarez (A.D. 78) who dressed up as walking snowflakes and Christmas trees. Meanwhile, longtime Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (A.D. 81), also delivered some remarks.

"We have such a beautiful community in Norwood and Bedford Park. I represent the Norwood section, and it's so great to see such a large turnout today. We have a large turnout because we have a great community!" he said. "Anyway, I just want to wish you all a happy holiday! Merry Christmas! Happy Hanukkah! Happy Kwanzaa! Happy whatever holiday you celebrate! We're a great community; we should stick together at all times. Have a lot of fun tonight. Thank you!" One attendee was heard saying, "Amen!" in response.

Other sponsors of the event included Montefiore Einstein, Ridgewood Savings Bank, State Assembly Member John Zaccaro Jr. (A.D. 80), the 52nd Precinct, Part of the Solution, Bedford Mosholu Community Association, and the New York Botanical Garden.

The Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Dancers gave a high-energy performance



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

A VOLUNTEER SERVES a warm beverage to a child who was patiently waiting to get one at the Bronx CB7 & FOMP Annual Tree-Lighting event on Thursday, Dec. 7, 2023, on Mosholu Parkway and Bainbridge Avenue in The Bronx.

to "Get Right" by Jennifer Lopez. This was followed by a choral recital of "Winter Wonderland," "Carol of the Bells," and "This is my Wish" by P.S./M.S. 20. Mia closed out the musical program with a rendition of "O Holy Night." The performing students were deemed an inspiration by Deputy Bronx Borough President Janet Peguero.

Other event participants included NYC Parks, Public School 8 Isaac Varian, Bronx Nomads running group, the 52nd Precinct Explorers, and Spontaneous Entertainment.

Karla Cabrera Carrera, district man-

ager for Bronx CB7, with Barbara Stronzcer, Parks chair of Bronx CB7, did much of the organizing for the event, in conjunction with FOMP. The two also shared their well wishes with residents on the night, as did City Councilman Eric Dinowitz (C.D. 11).

Sarah Bishow from NYC Parks gave an overview of upcoming programming at the Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center. Later, at the Bronx CB7 board meeting held on Dec. 19, board member Lowell Greene encouraged residents to make use of the center, especially in the context of recently announced City budget cuts.

Back at the tree-lighting event, NYPD Community Affairs Officer with the 52nd Precinct, Stephen Echavarria, encouraged everyone to take time to enjoy the moment. "Last year, we had many members who passed away and are not here with us this year," he said in part. "So, take advantage of the time we have with everyone here. Our NYPD officers are here. If you need anything, let us know. Thank you. Enjoy the night!"

Morris Heights: “Unsafe” Building Partially Collapses in Broad Daylight

(continued from page 9)

the drilling is. Don't know what it's about. Again, we're taking a look at the drawings that they submitted as part of the permit, and I want to be clear. Unsafe facade conditions is not the same as an unsafe building, but we are taking a good look at the paperwork, the drawings that they submitted and as soon as we have answers, obviously, we'll share them.”

Asked if there was construction ongoing at the building on the day of the collapse, Oddo said, “We don't believe there were folks working on the facade work today. So far, as of now, we think the most recent work on the facade was several days ago.”

According to City records, the building is owned by 1915 Realty LLC, with an address in Brooklyn. *Norwood News* attempted to reach the company for comment. We were not successful. A full vacate order is in place at the site, with some residents being housed at Bronx Community College.

On February 21, 2020, a Façade Inspection & Safety Program (FISP) report classified the building as “unsafe.” An extract from the report available on DOB's website reads, “While nothing on the building was imminently hazardous, the building was considered “unsafe” because the 7th cycle SWARMP conditions [Safe with a Repair & Maintenance Program] had not been corrected, and there was significant masonry damage throughout the façade. The conditions of damage are identified on the repair drawings which are included in the supporting documents.”

It continued, “Since the 8th cycle report was filed before the outbreak of COVID-19, it was expected that the work would be complete by February 2021. However, the outbreak of COVID-19, delayed the start on the repairs. A sidewalk shed is present along the south elevation on Billingsley Terrace, along the east el-

evation on Phelan Place, and along the north elevations on West Burnside.”

According to the report, an initial inspection was conducted on February 18, 2020, which included a visual inspection of all facades from the ground and the roof. The roof was accessed to inspect the parapet interior, bulkhead conditions, roof surfaces, and roof appurtenances. According to the inspection report, no “hands-on” inspection was conducted since the building was deemed “unsafe.” It was also noted that during a follow-up visit on March 23, 2021, the conditions observed in 2020 had not changed.

The report concluded that “the owner or property manager should have someone qualified check the façade regularly to be certain that no loose items or objects (such as potted plants) are placed on sills, ledges, fire escapes or other areas where they could fall.” It continued, “He should also be certain that window sills are kept free of debris. Similarly, the owner or property manager must take measures to make sure that window air conditioning units are properly installed, maintained, and supported at all times. Qualified personnel should regularly examine the premises and monitor conditions of this nature and require the removal or correction of potentially unsafe items of this kind.”

It further concluded, “It is advisable to require window air conditioning units be installed by competent professionals in accordance with the manufacturers' recommendations and good safety practices. Items of this nature are frequently installed on a temporary basis and cannot be the responsibility of the engineer. It is recommended that the owner or property manager keep records of all exterior building repairs and of all problems related to the building's exterior. These records should be made available to the QEWI performing the Local Law



Photo by Sile Moloney

PART OF A building collapsed at 1915 Billingsley Terrace in the Morris Heights section of The Bronx on Monday evening, Dec. 11, 2023.

#11/98 inspection or providing services relating to the exterior façade.”

On Friday, Dec. 15, the Adams administration announced it had suspended the associated engineer's authority to inspect exterior walls of buildings to assess their condition, while they also sought to permanently revoke that authority through the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings. They said the City was also working collaboratively with the New York City Department of Investigation and the Office of Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark, with their investigation into the incident.

Norwood News contacted the engineer for comment. They answered our call but had no comment. We asked DOB if, given the engineer had deemed the building unsafe, and had issued instructions for it

to be repaired, was it also up to the engineer to call for its evacuation. We did not receive an immediate response.

For those wishing to assist the victims, the following GoFundMe pages have been confirmed as having been screened and deemed legitimate by GoFundMe:

Bronx Building Collapse Victims Ana and Ramon:

<https://gf.me/v/c/c9sg/bronx-building-collapse-victims-ana-and-ramon>

Bronx Building Collapse 1915 Billingsley Terrace:

<https://gf.me/v/c/c9sg/bronx-building-collapse>

Bronx Partial Building Collapse: Acosta Family:

<https://gf.me/v/c/c9sg/bronx-partial-building-collapse-acosta-family>

In April 2023, *Norwood News* reported that three building contractors were charged on April 12 in the first Bronx case to bring charges of manslaughter and criminally negligent homicide for a construction fatality which took place, as reported by *Norwood News at the time*, at 94 East 208th Street in Norwood in 2019.

In May 2023, we reported that three construction workers filed a lawsuit against the Stagg Group following a fire at a construction site in the Williamsbridge section of The Bronx. Also in May, the Bronx district attorney announced that a mechanic was charged with negligent homicide following a fatal, 6-story, elevator plunge which crushed a construction worker in the Mt. Eden section of The Bronx in February 2021.

In June 2023, a construction worker fell 30 feet from a building site in Wakefield. In July 2023, as reported, six people were injured after a partial wall collapse at a construction site in Olinville. Also in July, two construction workers were injured in a building site collapse at Orchard Beach. On Nov. 30, a fire was reported at a construction site in Bedford Park. There were no injuries reported.



Photo by Sile Moloney

AN FDNY COLLAPSE rescue truck is seen at the site of a partial building collapse at 1915 Billingsley Terrace in the Morris Heights section of The Bronx on Monday evening, Dec. 11, 2023.

Out & About

COMPILED BY SÍLE MOLONEY

EVENTS

The 52nd Precinct will be hosting a **Winter Wonderland event** on Friday, Dec. 22, at 4 p.m. at the Precinct. Come along and join for some hot chocolate, photos with Santa and more.

The Office of the Bronx Borough President & Partners are hosting a **Three Kings Celebration**, for as long as supplies last on Friday, Jan. 5, at 3 p.m. at Sotomayor Cornerstone, 1000 Rosedale Avenue, Bronx in Soundview.

The Bronx Zoo's **Holiday Lights** has returned and is ongoing through Jan. 7, 2024. During the evenings, the park comes to life with holiday cheer as immersive light displays, custom-designed animal lanterns, and animated light shows sparkle across the zoo. This year, you'll experience new lantern displays showcasing the wildlife of New York's ocean waters and wetlands, plus a new interactive experience celebrating bioluminescent creatures. Tickets are required and must be reserved in advance. Holiday Lights operates 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. (last entry 8 p.m.). Lights go on at 4:30 p.m. Visit <https://bronxzoo.com/holiday-lights> for more information.

The **Holiday Train Show** is ongoing at New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, NY 10458-5126, through Jan. 15, 2024 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., with more trains and an all-new, outdoor train display. Start on the lawn to capture your perfect holiday photos at the outdoor mountainscapes and then watch trains zip past nearly 200 iconic New York landmarks under the warmth of the Conservatory. After dark, join for **NYBG GLOW** and discover the beauty of our landscape and historic buildings, illuminated across the grounds, and don't miss the return of fan-favorite Bar Car Nights, 21-and-over evenings featuring the *Holiday Train Show* and curated cocktails. These special evenings feature music, experiences, food, and more—making for the ultimate night out this season. For more information, visit <https://www.nybg.org/event/holiday-train-show/>.

ART

Michael Richards: Are You Down? is the first Bronx Museum retrospective of Michael Richards's visionary artworks, exhibiting the sculptures, drawings, installations, and video work he created during a prolific decade between 1990 and 2001. The exhibit is showing until Jan. 7, 2024. Of Jamaican and Costa Rican lineage, Richards was born in Brooklyn in 1963, and raised in Kingston, Jamaica. Integral to a generation of Black artists emerging in the 1990s, Richards's

artwork gestures toward both repression and reprieve from social injustices and the simultaneous possibilities of uplift and downfall, often in the context of the historic and ongoing oppression of Black people. The curators of the exhibit are Alex Fialho and Melissa Levin, and the museum is located at 1040 Grand Concourse, The Bronx, NY 10456. For more information, visit the [Bronx Museum website](https://www.bronxmuseum.org). You can also call (718) 681 6000 or email info@bronxmuseum.org.

MOVEMENT

Dance, Fun & Fitness classes will take place on Wednesdays from 6.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. at the Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center at 3225 Reservoir Oval East in Norwood. The classes consist of nonstop rhythmic cardio conditioning, utilizing different genres of dance and basic bodyweight exercises, all set to high-energy music, designed to give you a full body workout.

The only operational **Ice Rink** in The Bronx has been renovated and reopened on Nov. 20 at Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club in Castle Hill. As a part of the Frederic R. Coudert Sports Complex, the ice-skating rink provides professionally trained staff and visiting coaches that feature individuals with over 15 years of professional experience of ice skating. The rink is managed by ASAC Management and with over 30 years of ice skating management, ASAC has

specialists from a wide variety of diverse backgrounds offering expert training techniques. The age range for the ice rink (during program hours) is 6-18. For more information, contact athletics director, Darril Almonte, on darril.almonte@kipsbay.org or visit <https://www.kipsbay.org/icerink>.

On Nov. 21, NYC Parks began offering free public tours of **Hart Island**, the City's public cemetery since 1869, and the country's largest. It is the final resting place of over one million individuals. The tours aim to enhance access to the island, reduce historical stigmas surrounding its past, and educate the public about its role as an important piece of City infrastructure. NYC Parks' Urban Park Rangers offer free walking tours of the island twice per month. Registration is required through an online form and participants are selected by lottery. All public history tours are carried out on foot, and last around 2.5 hours, with ferry transportation provided to and from Hart Island.

The next tour dates are Jan. 16, Jan. 30, Feb. 13, Feb. 27, March 12, March 26, April 9, April 23, May 14, and May 28. The tours will encompass the history of the Island, including how it became a municipal cemetery, wildlife and natural aspects, the burial process, and island advocacy. More information on public Hart Island tours can be found on this page <https://www.nyc.gov/site/hartisland/index.page>.

Are Kingsbridge Heights Small Business Owners Being Pushed Out?

By DAVID GREENE

With a Jan. 18 deadline fast approaching for receipt of applications by the City of New York to a Request for Proposal (RFP) to redevelop the Kingsbridge Armory in Kingsbridge Heights, supporters of 12 local small businesses located along nearby Jerome Avenue and East Kingsbridge Road held a rally on Thursday, Dec. 7, calling on the merchants' landlord to renew the merchants' leases, rather than sell to the soon-to-be selected developer or associate partner.

The impacted buildings include 2-12 West Kingsbridge Road and 2647-2659 Jerome Avenue, and some of the affected small businesses include the Double Dragon Chinese Restaurant, Pace Copy Center, Lucy's Flower Shop, and the popular New Capital Restaurant.

Juan Nunez of Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC) provided some context behind the rally and press conference, saying that a lot of commercial landlords in the area started offering month-to-month leases, or no leases at all, after a Community Benefits Agreement, partially negotiated by NWBCCC, in respect of a prior, now-abandoned Kingsbridge Armory redevelopment project [the Kingsbridge National Ice Center] was signed in 2013.

Members of NWBCCC were joined at the rally by Dominicanos USA, the Street Vendor Project, the Association



Photo by David Greene

AT A RALLY in support of several small businesses held on Jerome Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights on Thursday, Dec. 7, 2023, are (l-r): Juan Nunez of the NWBCCC, City Councilwoman Pierina Sanchez (C.D. 14), Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson and Assemblyman George Alvarez (A.D. 78).

for Neighborhood Housing Development, and the Kingsbridge Road Merchants Association at the corner of Jerome Avenue and East Kingsbridge Road. The groups also called on local officials to pass new legislation that would protect those affected, as well as other similar small businesses.

The group was also joined on the day by a handful of the affected busi-

ness owners, as well as Democrats, Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson, Assemblyman George Alvarez (A.D.78), City Councilwoman Pierina Sanchez (C.D. 14) and State Sen. Robert Jackson (S.D. 31), all of whom spoke of that very need to pass legislation to protect small business owners.

Sanchez said, "To the owners of this property who are putting forth a

sale that would drive out all of these businesses that are part of the fabric of our community, we say, 'No!' We say, 'Shame on you!'"

For her part, Gibson said, "My message is that The Bronx is open for business with regards to working with public and private partners that want to invest in the borough, and I realize owners, landlords all want to make revenue. I understand, but I want them to see the value of the people and the services that are here. How we address this is through commercial rent stabilization, making sure that safeguards are in place."

Attempts by Norwood News to reach the property owner, Marcus & Millichap, of Madison Avenue and property manager, Henri Kessler, were unsuccessful.

One woman who declined to be identified who was coming out of the New Capital Restaurant on the day of the rally said she had been visiting the popular eatery since 1978. When informed the restaurant didn't have a lease renewal and could close, she replied, "Really? I didn't know that!" The woman was directed to the new 'For Sale' sign above the restaurant's doors. She gasped and said, "Oh wow!"

For more information on the RFP, visit <https://edc.nyc.gov/kingsbridge-armory-redevelopment-rfp>.

Youth Cite Benefits of Restorative Justice Program

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (A.D. 81) presented a check for \$250,000 to Mosholu Montefiore Community Center (MMCC) on Monday, Nov. 6, to support its restorative justice program at the Norwood-based center (MMCC), in the presence of some of the young course participants and course facilitators. Dinowitz said the funding will help support “anti-gun, anti-drug, anti-violence, and anti-gang programs for teens.”

Addressing those gathered, the assemblyman said, in part, “I’ve been coming here for a very long time... really... since I was your age. I’m not kidding, and that was a while back, and this organization has grown over the years.” He said though he had been familiar with the center when he was first elected to office, he was given a tour of the building at the time.

“This center had more than I ever dreamed of,” Dinowitz said, adding that it was also used as a polling site during elections. “They took me down two levels where there’s a basement and there’s a sub-basement. So, the gym is in the sub-basement and then up on each level and then we got to the top floor, they say, ‘Oh we’re not finished!’”

The assemblyman explained how there were more facilities on the roof, including a playground. “For teenagers, for younger kids, even little kids, senior citizens, really it has something for everybody and one of the things I get a lot of pleasure out of doing is helping in my way to get some money to the center,” he said, adding that he also worked with other elected officials on such funding.

Explaining briefly how government worked and addressing the youth directly, he said, “The center wouldn’t be able to operate without funding because the people who are in charge of it, the people who will work to make sure the programs run, they got to get paid! You know, there might be some volunteers here, but most people have to get paid.”

Dinowitz later said, “We want our teens to have opportunities and positive

activities in the community, and MMCC provides that. This center serves 35,000 Bronxites yearly. Thank you to the MMCC staff and MMCC teens for being such excellent tour guides and hosts!”

Norwood News later spoke to Drego Moore Jr., one of the facilitators of the program, which runs in the evenings from 6 to 9 p.m. “The kids are coming in from the after-school programs, sports teams, and they’ll come in and we’ll have food for them: sandwiches, pizza,” he said. “So, that first 30 minutes, a lot of them may not have eaten since lunch in school, so the goal is to give them a bit of nourishment.”

Moore Jr. said after that they cover different topics. For the last week or two, he said they had been discussing about what a debate is, and what are the pillars of what makes a healthy debate. “The goal is to have them be able to have discussions and discourse around any topic that they can be going through as young people, but it should be healthy, right?” he said.

Moore Jr. added, “And so, we’ve adopted some of the tenets of the natural debate team, and so they get to persuade the audience, if you will, on the affirmative side or the negative side of their topic. So, they also learn that they do not have to agree on everything. So, we make them pick sides that they may not agree on.”

Moore Jr. said the topics can be simple or complex. The debate on Nov. 6 was, “Is marijuana legal?” He continued, “So, we all know that obviously 18 and up is kind of the thinking. Some people say 21, but working in the high schools, I was able to see a lot of kids...16, 17, sometimes even 14, 15, already experimenting, and worse, right? It’s a part of their routine and so where do you meet them at? Do you say, ‘Hey, don’t do it,’ but they’re doing it before school, after school, some even during school, locker rooms, stairwells?”

He asked, “Do you arm them with enough information to make good decisions on how they’re using it or is it just a harsh ‘no,’ knowing that, as an adult, if I say no, they just won’t do it in front of me, but then they’ll go do it with their friends and subject themselves to some other type of harmful chemicals.

Moore Jr. said the program is partly about mentorship. Other topics covered have been on prison reform and the age of consent. “Just topics that their parents may not have a conversation with them about...what is the age of consent?” he said.

Moore Jr. continued, “What does the State say? You know, some people feel because they’re in the same school...if I’m 17, and this person is 15...well, we’re in the same school...and that’s not the case. That’s not how the law works, right? So, 16 and 17.....a 16-year-old is not at a legal age of consent, right? 17 is, right? We don’t sugarcoat.”



Photo by Sile Moloney

ASSEMBLYMAN JEFFREY DINOWITZ (A.D. 81) presents a check for \$250,000 to Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, located at 3450 DeKalb Avenue in Norwood for its restorative justice program on Monday, Nov. 6, 2023, in the presence of some of the facilitators, including Drego Moore Jr., and course participants, including Michal Steadman, 17, Angela Marie, 16, and Shiloh Ackon, 16.

He said they also invite different speakers to the center to share their insights, ranging from judges to law enforcement, and from gang members to people who have spent 30+ years in the prison system.

Moore Jr. said they also talk about strengthening the family. “How do we take young people who may be subjected to certain ails of the neighborhood and really arm them with ways to navigate the environment, because we can’t necessarily pull them out of their home, or out of their environment,” he said. “But we can kind of give them some tools to help them move forward in a way that’s beneficial to them, and their families, and the community at large.”

He said a core aim is to give the participants ways to interact with their family members to have more peaceful environments in the home, and at school with teachers. “So, that’s kind of why I love it because I think it empowers them,” he said.

We spoke to three young female participants of the program, Michal Steadman, 17, Angela Marie, 16, and Shiloh Ackon, 16. Asked how long she’d been coming to the program, Michal said about a year. She said she heard about it from her basketball coach. “He brought us here and we played basketball and also in this restorative justice program,” she said.

Asked if she felt the program was important and why, Michal said, “Because in our society today, a lot of our young people are going through hardships and just struggle with identity, and I feel like it’s helpful to come to these types of programs and see why it’s good to be on the right track, and be around the right people, and just limit being at the wrong place at the wrong time.”

Michal referenced the talks by visitors to the group, including those who had been in penitentiaries and in confinement. “I feel like real life scenarios and people who have been through the things that they’re talking about, coming, is helpful for us to really get a feel of what we don’t want to be,” she said.

We asked Angela what she liked about the program. “I started coming

around a year ago and I feel like it gave me a purpose,” she said. “I feel like I have something to do after school, and I’m not just sitting around at home, and I feel like I’m doing something with my life, and I’m on the right track, around the right people that can guide me to do the right things,” she said.

Asked if it had changed her mindset on the topic of restorative justice, she said, “Yes, I feel like I’m more enlightened, and I feel like I’m up to date on everything.” Asked if she had any other thoughts about the program, Angela added, “People be tellin’ you, ‘Oh, stay off the streets!’ They don’t dictate to you. I feel like this place kind of shows you instead of telling you, and more people are bound to listen that way.”

Asked for her thoughts on the program, Shiloh said, “I feel like it’s a good place for kids to come and like stay out of trouble, and it can be helpful because a lot of kids don’t have an outlet or a place to go.” She added, “So they’re not on the street doing stuff that they’re not supposed to do, and that gives them a place to like do their homework, chill with their friends...like, really just be.”

Asked how she heard about the program, Shiloh said through her best friend, Angela. “I’ve been coming here for almost a year,” she said. Asked if she felt society’s perception of restorative justice had changed in recent years, she said, “I wouldn’t say, per se, shifted, but I think that people know more about the topics that we learn about here, and they’re more aware of the stuff that goes on in our community. So, they’re not just like walking around the place they live. They actually, like, know what’s going on, and the stuff around them and the people around them.”

The three young women agreed the instructors were fantastic and “great people.” Asked what they would say to anyone interested in joining the program, one of the three said, “I would say to definitely speak to the directors of the program. So, that could be to Nikko, or it could also be Drego, and just ask about everything that we do here, and see if it’s the right fit for you. I definitely believe that we’re doing something good here.”



Photo by Sile Moloney

MICHAL STEADMAN, 17, ANGELA Marie, 16, and Shiloh Ackon, 16, pictured on Nov. 6, 2023, are participants in Mosholu Montefiore Community Center’s restorative justice program.



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Public and Community Meetings

The next **52nd PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meeting will take place in January 2024. 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 (CB7)** general board meeting will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2024, at 6.30 p.m. at Monroe College, 2501 Jerome Avenue, Bronx, NY 10468. Contact KCabreraCarrera@cb.nyc.gov to be added to the distribution list. All meetings are in person unless otherwise notified by Bronx CB7.

The next **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 8** full board meeting will be held in January 2024 (date tbc). Contact BX08@cb.nyc.gov to be added to the distribution list.

The next **BEDFORD MOSHOLU COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION** meeting will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 3, 2024, at 7 p.m. Usually, the meetings are held at 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy. South in Apt. B1 (lobby floor). For more details, please contact bedfordmosholu@verizon.net.

THE CITY OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION DIVISION OF BRIDGES CONSULTANT PROGRAMS REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The City of New York has Request for Proposals available for qualified Consulting Engineering Firms interested in the following Proposed Contract.

Project or Contract Title:

Request for Proposal – REI Services in Connection with Replacement of East 14th Street Pedestrian Bridge over Belt Parkway, Borough of Brooklyn
Contract No. HBKA23308
PIN: 84124BKB633

Expected Contract Term: 728 Consecutive Calendar Days starting from the date of the Notice to Proceed.

Description of Services Required:

The services to be procured is the REI Services in Connection with Replacement of East 14th Street Pedestrian Bridge over Belt Parkway, Borough of Brooklyn

A Pre-Proposal Conference (Optional) has been scheduled for December 28th, 2023, Time: 10:00 AM through Zoom. Proposers who wish to attend the virtual meeting can access by using the Link provided in the "Prepare RFX" Section - SETUP Tab - Pre-Proposal/Pre-Bid Conference Section in PASSPort.

This Procurement is subject to participation goals for Minority-Owned Business Enterprises (MBEs), as required by Section 6-129 of the New York Administrative Code. The M/WBE goal for this project is 30%.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is released through PASSPort, New York City's online procurement portal. Responses to this RFP must be submitted via PASSPort. To access the RFP, vendors should visit the PASSPort public Portal at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/mocs/systems/about-go-to-passport.page> and click on the "Search Funding Opportunities in PASSPort" blue box. Doing so will take one to the public portal of all procurements in the PASSPort system. To quickly locate the RFP, insert the 84124P0006 into the Keyword search field. To respond to the RFP, vendors must create an account within the PASSPort system if they have not already done so.

Release Date: December 20, 2023

Pre-Proposal Conference: December 28, 2023, at 10 AM

Submission of Request for Proposals are due on or before 2:00 PM on January 22, 2023

MPC Aims to See Small Businesses Thrive “Beyond Survival”

(continued from page 1)

food and drinks. *Norwood News* spoke with some of the vendors and small businesses at the event.

Froylan Mendoza is founder and CTO [chief technology officer] of Fulcrum Solutions. “We’re based in New York,” he said. “We all work from home. I’m based in Westchester, Scarsdale. We provide services to small and medium-sized enterprises, start-ups.” Mendoza said his service, which focuses on small businesses, provides technology support and software development.

Asked about the range of services Fulcrum Solutions provides, Mendoza said, “Inventory, point-of-sale (POS) systems, website development.” Asked more about point-of-sale systems, he explained, “So, when they swipe it, the magic that happens behind the scenes.” He continued, “Taking out of the actual cost from the payment processing and getting it out on the inventory and then, until they actually ship out the product, anything that has to do with technology or platform, we build that in the backend,” he said.

Mendoza said, “Some businesses and start-ups require or need help in terms of setting up their system or they have an idea, they want to make that a reality. So, our sort of mantra is ‘from idea to launch,’ and then ‘from launch to scale.’ So, we have clients where they already have an MVP [minimum viable product] or Version 1, but they want to add more features, make it more scalable, and so on. So, we that’s our sweet spot.”

We also spoke to business partners and sisters, Lissette Ramirez, accountant and real estate broker, and Leslie Ramirez, tax preparer, with LR Multi-services, located at 2984 Webster Avenue in Bedford Park.

“So, we are a family business,” Lissette said. “We’ve been in business for over 22 years, and we’ve been at this particular place for 20 years. We do accounting, real estate as well. We do personal taxes, and we do small business taxes as well.”

Leslie added, “So, this opportunity to not only meet with our current clients, but also to focus on new clients, we’re very grateful.” She added, “We have taken it very personally because we are very happy, and we want people to take the opportunity that MPC is giving them through this event,” Leslie added.

Lissette said, “And not just about the event. Like we work very closely with MPC. She said they were happy when the nonprofit mentioned the need to infuse the streets with some Christmas spirit. She also credited MPC with arranging things like cameras for small businesses. “It was an issue and MPC provided, you know?” Lissette said.

She mentioned that their street has extra lighting now also, thanks to MPC. “We were very happy about that,” she said. Staying on the topic of security, we asked the business owners if they would like to see more police on the streets.



Photo by Sile Moloney

DANIELA BEASLEY, EXECUTIVE director of Mosholu Preservation Corporation, delivers remarks at MPC’s “Beyond Survival” event supporting small businesses in the North Bronx on Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2023, at the New York Botanical Garden in Bedford Park.

“The police department is doing pretty good,” Leslie said. “I think the issue in the past was the [lack of] illumination on the street. We’ve seen some improvement but still...” She said now that it’s getting a bit darker earlier, businesses may be closing a little bit earlier for security reasons.

We also spoke to vendor, José Salcedo, about his service offering. “So, the name of the company is “TryyLo” which means “Bring it” [*traelo*] in Spanish,” he said. “So, Tryylo is a platform where we help local businesses with online ordering. We’re here to kind of help a lot of the businesses compete with Uber and DoorDash. So, essentially, our app allows them to pay for their customers to order on the app, and then also to select delivery or pick-up without being charged the heavy fees [30%] that a lot of the third parties are doing right now.”

His partner said Tryylo works with around 60 restaurants, local businesses, groceries, and meat markets in the North Bronx. Salcedo said his business also partners with Doordash with “last-mile delivery.”

“Thanks to MPC, we’re able to give them [small businesses] not a less expensive option, but an option where it is zero cost to them,” Salcedo’s partner said. They explained that Tryylo is both a competitor and a partner with the likes of Doordash.

“There’s a technology that we use where we partner with DoorDash to help the local businesses with last-mile delivery without having to pay the 30%,” Salcedo said. “It’s more, you could just pay \$2, and then you’d be able to have the delivery, and it’s cheaper for the customer to order direct.”

He said what they learned during COVID was that customers preferred to support small businesses, but the technological set-up required for delivery was not always in place to allow small businesses to compete with the giant chains.

“I think that now, if we can empower these local businesses with the technol-

ogy to compete with the big box stores, that’s what’s been missing and obviously, being able to learn what it is to compete in the digital world,” Salcedo said.

We also spoke to small business owner, Zahkiya Brown, who owns Vibe N Juice Café, located at 754 East 233rd Street. Asked about the main challenges faced by small businesses post-pandemic, Brown said it was a bit difficult for her to say as she opened her business during the pandemic.

“Some of the challenges are dealing with the influx of pricing and just adapting to the consumer, and how the consumer is spending their money, right?” she said. “But I think it’s also this education piece of sustainable living, healthy consumption, and making that affordable for, especially, Bronx residents. So, how do we still make profit and maintain our small business, and be able to sustain?”

She continued, “Just finding creative ways to market the business to the community, and be visible to the community as well, and then be in need, so I started doing workshops in schools around smoothie-making, and ice-bowl making with students.” Asked what an ice-bowl was, she said, “It’s like a smoothie in a bowl, but it’s more with different toppings and things like that. I’m educating middle schoolers and elementary school students on healthy consumption and what that option looks like for them.”

Later we spoke to Samuel Berkoh who was in attendance with his mom, Tina, business owner of Tina Fabrics & Accessories, located at 3752 White Plains Road, under the 2 and 5 train station. “Tina Fabrics & Accessories has been in the community for almost 10 years now,” Berkoh said. “It really started as like a passion project of my mother’s. Ever since I was a little kid, she’s always been doing some type of selling: African fabrics, make-up, little knickknacks here and there; her whole thing was to sell.”

Berkoh continued, “I think a lot of that’s with her upbringing in Ghana.”

He said his mom would always tell him stories about how her mother, his grandmother, would always have her and her siblings go out and sell water or delicacies from Ghana to passing cars. “So, from a young age, she’s always had that hustle,” he said. Berkoh concluded, “So if you just so happen to be in the neighborhood and are looking for the Shiki traditional African wear, even just things from back home, cocoa butter, sponges, things of that nature, come on by.”

Edwin Reyes, community outreach coordinator for MPC, who was behind much of the organization for the event, encouraged vendors, while setting initial appointments with prospective clients, to have fun in the process. Meanwhile, Daniela Beasley, executive director of MPC, encouraged the vendors to get to know each other as well as getting to know the small businesses they might eventually service.

“So, all of the businesses that are in this, we want to make sure that there’s a sense of community [among them],” Beasley said. “So, we want a sense of community between you guys as well, because each one of you is touching on a different part of their business. So, meet each other, get to know each other, because you’ll be going through this whole process together.”

Last month, NYC Small Business Services launched the “My City Business Site” a one-stop, online portal for businesses which includes the My-City Chatbot, “a cutting-edge” AI virtual assistant to help businesses quickly find information, NYC Funds Finder, an online lending marketplace for small businesses, Step by Step Guides to find the licenses and permits that a specific business needs, and Emergency Preparedness Resources to ensure a business is ready for anything, including floods and fires. More information can be found at <https://nyc-business.nyc.gov/nycbusiness/>.

Summing up the evening, the executive director thanked everyone for attending and thanked the merchants for being a part of the program. “We are so excited to bring you all of the wonderful services that you just signed up for in the other room [with the vendors],” she said. “Additionally, everybody else that came out, we love that you came out to support all of our merchants in all three of our corridors in Wakefield, Norwood, and Bedford Park. All of you guys are so important to us.”

She added, “This is really the start of a program that we can continue on in the years to come. And all of you guys will be a part of that, you know, showing that this program is beneficial to you in meeting you where you are, and hopefully bringing your businesses to a place where you’re not just surviving from COVID, but you’re thriving, and that’s why we named this program Beyond Survival.”

Editor’s Note: MPC is the publisher of the Norwood News.

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