By SÍLE MOLONEY & DAVID GREENE

The future of Van Cortlandt Jewish Center (VCJC), as well as the many programs it provides, continues to remain in jeopardy as its representatives negotiate with a developer to sell the property, along with a private home the center owns on the block. Simultaneously, community residents, congregants, and users of VCJC are hoping the center’s management will listen to their concerns and how its potential closure would leave a void in the community.

According to its website, VCJC was established in 1927 and for the past 60 years has been located at 3880 Sedgwick Avenue in Van Cortlandt Village for the last 60 years and its management is currently in negotiations with a private developer to sell the building.

VAN CORTLANDT JEWISH Center, seen here on Sunday, Feb. 25, 2024, has been located at 3880 Sedgwick Avenue in Van Cortlandt Village for the last 60 years and its management is currently in negotiations with a private developer to sell the building.

Photo by David Greene

(continued on page 15)
Norwood: Woman & 7 Men Arrested for Alleged Drug, Gun Possession & Child Endangerment

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Seven men and one woman were arrested and charged with various offenses including criminal drug and weapon possession, following a police raid on a Hull Avenue home in the Norwood section of the Bronx on Wednesday night, March 27, police said.

An NYPD spokesperson said that at around 10:04 p.m. on the night in question, officers from the 32nd Precinct responded to a 911 call regarding a person who had a firearm at the Hull Avenue home, located between East 207th and East 209th Street.

“Upon arrival, officers observed a 24-year-old male with a firearm,” the spokesperson said. “Officers pursued the male into a basement apartment of the location where he is apprehended.” Police said a 22-year-old male was also taken into custody after attempting to leave the location with a gun.

They said the execution of a search warrant gave rise to the discovery in the basement apartment of two additional guns and a large quantity of a controlled substance and that six people were later arrested and charged in addition to the initial two.

Police said Hector Desousa-Villalta, a 24-year-old man, Javier Alborno, a 22-year-old man, Yoessy Pino Castillo, a 20-year-old woman, Yerbin Lozado-Munoz, a 23-year-old man, Yojaire Martínez, a 42-year-old man, Miguel Vaamondes-Barrés, a 31-year-old man, Jefferson Orlando Abreu, a 39-year-old man, and Johan Cardenas Silva, a 35-year-old man, were each charged with criminal possession of a weapon, criminal possession of a controlled substance and acting in a manner injurious to a child.

The two-story structure appears to be a multi-unit, residential home and there were still some people seemingly living in the building on April 1, though we were unsuccessful in our attempts to speak with them. According to NYC Department of Finance records, it is a two-family dwelling.

The NYPD later said of the guns and drugs recovered at the location, “[Four] less guns on NYC streets thanks to NY Finest. Officers from the @NYPD32Pct in the Bronx recently responded to a dispute with a gun. As a result of their swift response & brief investigation, 4 illegal firearms, ammo, & narcotics were safely recovered & 8 arrests were made.”

In an interview with Pix11 News, NYPD Chief of Patrol John Chell, who was also joined by NYPD Deputy Commissioner Tarki Sheppard, said of the raid, “Well, it was a 911 call for a person with a firearm. Our 32 Precinct personnel show up, and we quickly engage one person with a gun, chase him into a basement apartment. In that basement apartment, [...] engages with a second male with a second gun. We extract them, make the arrest and we do a search warrant on the location.

Chell continued, “We find two additional guns, one being a ghost gun. We find ketamine narcotics, which is used to enhance narcotics. The landlord says they’ve been squatting there, and unfortunately, these are also migrants. So why are our cops there a second time arresting people that had an open gun indictment walking the streets? One had an open attempted murder shooting in Yonkers.” He added that the attempted murder was recent.

Chell added, “So this is the problem. We’ve already made these arrests, and our cops are out there on the week of Officer [Jonathan] Diller’s death, Detective Diller’s death now, confronting evil a second time. They shouldn’t be in that situation. We have to have a discussion as to why they were out of jail.”

On the topic of recidivism, Chell was asked who the NYPD needed to speak to with to address the problem. He said, “If the process works, the process works well. So who’s in charge of the process? The stakeholders, myself, the police department, the police commissioner, our district attorneys, our judges, our elected officials, we have to get together and see how we could do things better. Like I said, when the process works, the process works well, but sometimes it breaks down. What is that breakdown, and how are we going to fix it?”

On those arrested, Sheppard said he believed at least two had prior arrests. On the question of why police tend to focus so much on the topic of recidivism when they speak about policy, he said, “I think the recidivism issue is more about us thinking about victims. That’s really us being victim-centric, and recidivism is about the victims.”

Norwood News attempted to reach the Hull Avenue building owner for comment. We also reached out to the Bronx District Attorney’s Office for comment on the prior arrests. We will share any updates we receive.

During the same interview with Pix11, in response to a separate question about crime numbers being down but people not feeling safe, for example, on the subways, Chell said, “Right, the [crime] numbers are the numbers, right? The [crime] perception piece? The community wants to see more cops, more cops in places like transit for instance.”

When asked about it being a delicate balance between reassuring the public and not making them overly anxious when they see a big police presence in the subways, for example, Chell said in part, “Well, we have to be strategic in where we put our cops. Transit, of course we’ve seen our cops also down there.”

He continued, “The mentally ill and homeless? We’re going to take a new look (continued on page 6)
Norwood Residents React to Daycare Owner’s Child Sex Offenses Guilty Plea

SILE MOLONEY & DAVID GREENE

A person who said she is the new owner of a Norwood daycare center located on Decatur Avenue and other Norwood residents have given their reaction to the recent guilty plea by the owner of the former daycare center [located at the same site] to sexual exploitation and child pornography charges. The victims of the former owner attended the daycare center, prosecutors said.

According to an excerpt posted last year on ACS’s website, the “EarlyLearn” programs are “now” managed by the NYC Department of Education (DOE). Norwood News contacted DOE about the case at the time and asked what, if any, oversight or involvement it had with regard to the former daycare center. A DOE representative said, “This is not a DOE site.”

Asked if DOE could provide details, generally, of its oversight and screening process of daycares centers, the DOE representative said, “Only if it is a DOE-contracted program. You have to go to DOHMH (NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene) and ACS who have more oversight of this than we do.”

We contacted ACS, once again, about their general oversight process of day care centers. We were, at that point, also referred to DOHMH, which referred us to their website for details of their screening process and offered to answer any questions. We asked if DOHMH had overseen or had had any involvement with the “new” center. A DOE representative said, “This is not a DOE-contracted site. We have no sightlines into this.” ACS referred us once again to DOHMH.

As reported, Nicholas Feliz Dominici, tragically died following an apparent fentanyl overdose at Bronx-based Divino Niño Daycare Center in Kingsbridge Heights on Friday, Sept. 15, 2023. His parents were joined by District 14 City Council Member Pierina Sanchez and other Bronx elected officials and clergy at Our Lady of Angels church on Webb Avenue in Kingsbridge Heights on Sunday, Oct. 15, for a remembrance service held in memory of Nicholas, along with friends, neighbors and residents. March 15, 2024, recently marked the 6-month anniversary of the infant’s death.

A female resident later said of the “new” center on March 29, “I wouldn’t leave my kids here. I wouldn’t. I wouldn’t feel secure leaving my kids here. I don’t know why the City would open this again. I don’t know why.”

Anyone who may have been a victim of child sex abuse or who has information about perpetrators is encouraged to call the NYPD Bronx Child Abuse Squad at (929) 265-3638.
By DAVID GREENE

Former Female 52nd Precinct Cop Gets 5 Years for Helping Murderer Flee U.S.

A former, female, NYPD cop assigned to the 52nd Precinct, based in Norwood, was hit with a 5-year, 8-month prison sentence on Friday, March 29, for helping a now-convicted murderer, who was also a gang leader, flee the United States, federal prosecutors said.

Damian Williams, U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced on Friday that Gina Mestre was sentenced for her involvement in obstructing a federal grand jury investigation into the “Shooting Boys” gang and serving as an accessory after the fact to a murder committed by a member of the gang. Williams said Mestre pled guilty to the charges on Dec. 7, 2023, in Manhattan federal court before U.S. District Judge Denise L. Cote, who imposed the 70-month sentence.

“Gina Mestre betrayed and abused the trust placed in her by the NYPD and the people of New York,” Williams said. “She swore to protect the public from criminal activity, but instead participated in significant crimes of her own by passing confidential information to a gang leader and helping him evade capture for the murder of a rival gang member.”

He added, “For violating her oath to the citizens of New York City and her fellow police officers, Mestre has been sentenced to spend more than five years in federal prison.”

According to the allegations in the indictment, other documents filed in federal court, and based on statements made in public court proceedings, Mestre was assigned to the public safety unit at the 52nd Precinct, located at 3016 Webster Avenue in Norwood. In the summer of 2020, a major focus of both the precinct and that unit was the reduction of gun violence in the area, with much of that violence attributed to members of the Shooting Boys, a violent street gang based in the University Heights section of The Bronx.

The court heard that in or about June 2020, Mestre began communicating with Andrew Done, a/k/a “Calaboo,” the leader of the Shooting Boys, and that she and Done communicated through secret social media accounts and phone numbers, eventually beginning an intimate relationship during which Mestre provided Done and other gang members with confidential, non-public, law enforcement information about the federal grand jury investigation into the Shooting Boys.

According to the investigation, Mestre warned Done, and other gang members, that federal investigators were preparing to bring a federal indictment against the Shooting Boys, and also warned Done about impending law enforcement operations, which enabled him and other gang members to dispose of weapons, and conceal other criminal activity before law enforcement arrived on scene.

In addition, Mestre disclosed the identity of a cooperating witness who provided information about the gang to law enforcement. Armed with this information, Done and other Shooting Boys assaulted the witness to prevent said witness from further cooperation, and to send a clear message within the gang that the punishment for cooperation would be severe.

The court heard that on or about Nov. 5, 2020, Done shot and killed a rival gang member (“Victim-1”) as the victim sat in his car on Cromwell Avenue in The Bronx. NYPD Detectives investigating the murder recovered security camera video capturing Done’s commission of the murder. Several members of the 52nd Precinct, including Mestre, were tasked with identifying the shooter in the video. Mestre was ultimately one of several officers who identified Done as the perpetrator.

However, despite identifying him as the shooter and ostensibly participating in the NYPD’s efforts to apprehend him, Mestre sent Done a copy of the video to his phone, and secretly communicated with Done the day of the murder and in the weeks afterwards. Specifically, she warned Done about law enforcement’s efforts to capture him, allowing him to eventually flee from the United States.

The court heard that in March 2022, 10 members of the Shooting Boys were charged in a 15-count indictment with various federal crimes, including racketeering conspiracy and murder. Done was charged with the murder of Victim-1 and was apprehended in the Dominican Republic several months later.

Federal prosecutors said on Nov. 17, 2022, Done pled guilty to racketeering conspiracy and admitted to his role in the murder of Victim-1. On Feb. 22, 2023, he was sentenced to 35 years in prison.

For her part, in addition to the prison term, Mestre, 33, of Muhagan Lakes, New York, was sentenced to two years of supervised release.

The 52nd Precinct covers some or all of the neighborhoods of Norwood, Bedford Park, Fordham Manor, Fordham Heights, Kingsbridge Heights, University Heights, as well as Bronx Park.

Last October, we reported on the arrest and charging of another female NYPD officer, Grace Rosa Baez, from the Bronx who, along with her Yonkers partner, Cesar Martinez, were busted for attempting to sell fentanyl and cocaine.
Family of Angelly Yambo Sues Gun Manufacturer for Wrongful Death

BY SÍLE MOLONEY

The family of 16-year-old Bronx teen Angelly Marie Yambo filed a civil lawsuit on March 27 against Polymer80, Inc., the ghost gun manufacturer and dealer who equipped Angelly's 17-year-old shooter, Jeremiah Ryan, with an untraceable firearm.

The lawsuit alleges that the loss of Angelly's life was made possible due to Polymer80, Inc. through the company's network of dealers and online sellers which flooded New York City streets with unserialized and untraceable gun kits that can easily be assembled into functional handguns without background checks.

The lawsuit was filed in Bronx County, and the causes of action in the complaint include negligence and violations of New York General Business Law 899-e. Attorneys for the family issued the following statement in the context of the announcement, “The family of Angelly Marie Yambo deserves justice. No child should lose their life to senseless gun violence. The ghost gun industry continues to place profit over public safety and the lives of our children. This lawsuit will hold them accountable for putting these dangerous and untraceable weapons on our streets.”

As reported, Angelly, who spent much of her childhood in Kingsbridge Heights and who was honored during a street co-naming ceremony in the neighborhood last year, was fatally shot while walking home from University Prep Charter High School in Mott Haven along with two of her friends on April 8, 2022.

Ryan was later sentenced to 15 years for the shooting. In July 2023, the最高 rate of opioid overdose death in the City. In addition to substance use support, patients will also be able to access connections to community-based organizations for other critical services supporting recovery, such as housing, food, and employment. Care teams will be comprised of medical and behavioral health providers, including social workers, community health workers, and certified peer counselors with lived experience of substance use disorder.

Meanwhile, specific points around the park were also seen marked with NYC Parks flags denoting planned locations for new tree plantings. Some were seen beside the steps leading to the park exit by Reservoir Oval East and Putnam Place for example. Norwood News had reported previously on the frustrations of Bronx Community Board 7’s Parks’ committee with the length of time it had taken the City’s forestry unit to proceed with the tree renewal following delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gov. Kathy Hochul issued a statement in support of Adams’ call, saying in part, “Gun violence is a public health and public safety crisis, and all levels of government must continue working together on aggressive action to crack down on the distribution and possession of dangerous weapons.”

She continued, “To combat the rise of ghost guns, I took action in October to criminalize the sale of ghost guns and require gunsmiths to register firearms they assemble. I also established a nation-leading Interstate Task Force on Illegal Guns, bringing together ten states, federal agencies, and local law enforcement agencies.” She said the task force was having an effect and ghost guns were being recovered by law enforcement.

Polymer80 has also been sued in the State of California for allegedly not performing background checks on the purchasers of the gun components it makes.

Norwood News contacted both Polymer80 for comment on this story. We did not receive an immediate response.

Torres gave his reaction to the lawsuit, telling Norwood News, “No family should ever have to suffer the devastating consequences of gun violence. The lawsuit the Yambo family has filed against Polymer80 Inc. is a crucial step towards holding manufacturers accountable and seeking justice for Angelly and all victims of ghost gun violence. We must continue to advocate for stronger gun safety measures to prevent further senseless tragedies.”

The Angelly Yambo Foundation held its 1st Youth Gun Violence Prevention Summit on Friday, Jan. 19, in the South Bronx.
What is Public Health and How Does it Impact You?
RAISHA HERNANDEZ

This year, National Public Health Week takes place from April 1 to April 7. It’s intended to remind us of the importance of public health and the power of teamwork to improve health outcomes. Public health describes the activities carried out by communities, governments, and organizations to promote good health for the whole population. At Montefiore, one of the largest healthcare institutions in the city, public health takes center stage.

Public health programs are particularly important in The Bronx, a vibrant borough that faces unique health challenges. Let’s celebrate our achievements and learn about the ways Montefiore is working to improve the health of Bronxites.

Access to Healthcare Services
Access to quality healthcare is a big concern for many in the borough. Limited access can worsen existing health disparities like the high rates of obesity, heart disease, asthma, and depression. Expanding healthcare services so that all residents have fair access is essential.

One area we are particularly focused on is mental health. Mental health services can include inpatient treatment programs, virtual or in-person appointments with mental health professionals, support groups, medication, and resources to help improve living conditions, stress, sleep, nutrition, and physical activity. Improving mental health leads to better outcomes in our overall health, behaviors, relationships, and life expectancy.

Social Determinants of Health
Social determinants of health are non-medical factors that influence a person’s health. They include the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, as well as the wider set of forces and systems that shape living conditions.

At the Montefiore Community Health Worker Institute, Montefiore professionals work in outpatient settings to link patients to resources that can strengthen patients’ social determinants of health. These can include financial benefits, food, housing, legal services, childcare, recreational programs and more.

Community Health Education
Providing education about relevant health topics improves public health. Montefiore provides health education in The Bronx through health fairs, screening events, educational classes, unique programming and research, and traditional medical appointments.

Montefiore’s Office of Community & Population Health hosts workshops and seminars throughout the community, addressing popular topics like healthy eating, exercise, mental health, asthma, cancer, elder health, and more. For more information about these programs, contact our community health specialist, Carlos Tejeda, at etejeda@montefiore.org.

Health and the Environment
The environment plays a significant role in public health. Clean and safe living spaces are essential for the well-being of Bronx residents. Urban planning projects and environmental policies contribute to creating healthier environments. You can get involved by volunteering at local parks and community gardens or becoming part of your local community board.

National Public Health Week is a great time to recognize all the ways we can work together to create healthier lives. By improving access to physical and mental health care, and providing health education, we can build a healthier and more resilient Bronx.

Raisha Hernandez is manager of health equity programs at Montefiore Health System.

Norwood: Woman & 7 Men Arrested for Alleged Drug, Gun Possession & Child Endangerment

(continued from page 2)

at what we’re doing collectively with home- less and mentally ill people that we transfer above ground. What can we do better? What can the inter-agencies do better? We’re doing a lot but what can [we] do better? We always got to be looking.”

Asked about what happens to mentally ill people once they are taken out of the subways, Sheppard said, “That part of it is something that we’re concerned about. We don’t have the psychiatric wards that we had in the past for many reasons, but we have to come up with a solution that once we remove people, they can’t just bring themselves back on the street.”

He added, “And even the removal or the visit to the hospital doesn’t ensure that they’re going to take their meds. The other part about the perception piece is that this is why we come here. This is why we do television. This is why we do interviews. This is why we go out and do our social me dia because we need people to know the ef forts that we’re making to keep the transit safe.”

Norwood News spoke to some of neighbors and employees in the Hull Avenue area on the night of April 1 about the raid but nobody spoke to at the time was aware it had taken place.

Norwood News is following up with the NYPD on a separate, unconfirmed report of an attempted break-in at the same Hull Avenue address on April 1, and will share any updates we receive. The eight people arrested are presumed innocent unless and until convicted in a court a law.

About two weeks prior, on March 19, as reported, federal law enforcement officials joined police at a separate Norwood home at 3405 Gates Place and arrested a formerly deported man and seized cocaine and $3 million in cash, following the execution of a search warrant.

As also reported, during a separate cocaine-trafficking interception and take down by law enforcement in Yonkers on March 13, Carlos Almonte Palmers of Massachusetts was arrested and faces charges of criminal possession of a controlled substance in the first and third degrees. Federal officials said Almonte Palmers was deported from New York to the Dominican Republic in 2022. At a subsequent arraignment since March 13, in Manhattan Criminal Court, a judge ordered him held without bail.

Later, on March 22, Westchester County District Attorney Miriam E. Rocah announced that day that three people were sentenced to a combined 31 years in state prison for selling more than 30 ghost guns in Yonkers after traffick ing them from Washington, D.C. to Westchester County in 2022.

Norwood News reached out to the NYPD and ACS to ask about the whereabouts/welfare of any impacted children following the arrests and will share any updates we receive.

GUNS AND PACKETS of narcotics recovered from the basement of a Hull Avenue home in the Norwood section of The Bronx on Wednesday, March 27, 2024

Photo courtesy of the NYPD
Bronx BP Hosts Annual Iftar Dinner Dialogue

By SÍLE MOLONEY & ARIEL PACHECO

Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson joined the Bronx Muslim community on Thursday, March 14, in the Rotunda of Bronx Borough Hall for her annual Bronx Iftar Dinner Dialogue to mark the holy month of Ramadan, a time for fasting, prayer, and acts of kindness, which this year started on March 12 and concludes on April 4.

Iftar is the meal eaten by Muslims to break their fast after sunset every day during Ramadan. According to the Spirit of Islam website, “Iftar is a source of spiritual learning. It is the moment when physical food is converted into spiritual food.”

Over 200 guests gathered for the evening’s dinner and discussion, which according to Gibson’s office, centered on “ways to engage the Bronx’s diverse Muslim community.” The event was held in conjunction with NYC Votes, Metropolis Health, ICNA Relief, the African Advisory Council, Fouta Halal Restaurants, Muslim advocates, faith leaders, and community partners.

Gibson said of the event, “I want to thank all of our honorees and everyone who played a role in making this event a success. We are proud to be home to one of our country’s largest and most diverse Muslim communities and appreciate their invaluable contributions to our borough.”

Yahay Obeid, originally from Yemen, a current resident of Little Yemen and who is both the executive director of the Bronx Islamic Center and, by day, an air traffic controller at John F. Kennedy International Airport, served as emcee for the celebration, and was also honored by the borough president at the event.

Obeid estimates the Bronx Muslim population at well over 250,000, which includes a large Bengali community in Norwood. The North Bronx Islamic Center is located at 261 East 206th Street in Norwood and last year, one member of the Muslim community explained to us that sometimes, members prayed collectively in the Williamsbridge Oval park on Muslim holidays as the center is not big enough to hold everyone for such occasions.

The event was held ahead of the April 2 presidential primaries in New York State. SeQuoia King, outreach manager with NYC Votes, said in part that every New Yorker, no matter where they’re from or what language they speak should be able to engage meaningfully in our local democracy.

“During Ramadan, a season of community and collective care, NYC Votes is honored to partner with the Bronx Borough President’s Office to provide education about upcoming elections and help members of the Community Iftar get registered to vote,” she said. “The more New Yorkers who make their voices heard at the ballot box, the closer we can get to just and truly representative democracy.”

U.S. President Joe Biden won the Democratic Primary and former U.S. President Donald Trump, currently besieged by several investigations, won the Republican primary.

Also in attendance were Jumaama Williams, New York City public advocate, Sidiki Donzo, chair of the Bronx borough president’s African Advisory Council, and NYPD Detective Mohamed Amen of the NYPD’s Clergy Outreach Unit, who provided remarks along with other prominent community leaders in attendance.

Recently elected West Harlem City Council Member Yusuf Slaama (C.D. 9), also one of the Central Park 5, served as the keynote speaker. The Central Park 5 were wrongly convicted of raping a woman in Central Park in Manhattan in 1989. Film director Ava du Vernay’s 2019 Netflix mini-series, “When They See Us” is a dramatization of their story.

Others honored by the borough president on the night were Zara Kandic, a recent graduate of the State University of New York and a member of the Bosniak Islamic Center, and director of “Collective Work of Sisters;” Gbenga Subair, founding member of New York City Mayor Eric Adams’s NYC African Council and a member of Bronx Community Board 12’s economic committee, and Ramatu Ahmed, founder and executive director of the African Life Center.

Asked for his feedback on the event, Norwood resident by Perry Avenue and Bronx Community Board 7 board member, Monjur Chowdhury told Norwood News he appreciated the Bronx borough president’s office’s efforts to connect with him and with the Muslim community all year around. Of the Iftar celebration, he said, “This year it was a little different; it was better than other years, so that was good.”

Asked in what way, he said, “Not different but decoration was different and different people announced; nothing else so that was good.”

After a New York State Appeals Court ruled that a law allowing non-citizens to vote in local elections was ruled unconstitutional in February, a coalition of elected officials, voters, and advocates came together to support an appeal of the ruling on the steps of City Hall on March 25.

Local Law 11 (or Our City, Our Vote) was enacted in 2022 by the New York City Mayor and City Council. Advocates of the law said it enshrined the rights of nearly one million New Yorkers to have a say in decisions about the communities in which they live, work and raise their families.

BP Honors Bob Nolan with Posthumous Award

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Former city official and aide to four former Bronx borough presidents, Robert “Bob” Francis Nolan, who died on Dec. 15, 2023, was honored with a posthumous award at a celebration hosted by the Office of the Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson on Wednesday, March 27.

Held at the Rambling House on Kato-nah Avenue in Woodlawn, the borough president’s office partnered with Montefiore Medical Center for the event, which was emceed by former commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services and current president of the Bronx Economic Development Corporation, Robert Walsh. District 11 City Councilman Eric Dinowitz was also in attendance.

Paying tribute to Nolan, Gibson, jokingly dubbed “O’Gibson” by Walsh for the duration of the evening, paid tribute to Nolan, saying he had served alongside former Bronx Borough Presidents Stanley Simon, Fernando Ferrara, Adolfo Carrión Jr., Ruben Díaz Jr., was the Bronx representative for NYC Health + Hospitals, and also a member of the community advisory board.

“I want to say thank you to his family, to his beloved wife, Susan, to his daughter, Vivian, and to his son, Chris,” Gibson said in part. “Thank you for sharing your husband and your father with all of us. We are a better borough because of Bob Nolan’s service.” The borough president also presented a posthumous tribute to the Nolan Family by issuing a proclamation declaring March 29, 2024, Robert Francis Nolan Day in The Bronx and introduced the creation of the Robert F. (Bob) Nolan Memorial Award. Presenting the award to the family, Gibson delighted in adding, “And...Ladies & Gentlemen, it’s green! It’s green!”

Irish American community leader and union representative, Joe McManus, also paid tribute to Nolan, saying he had a great heart and was a great friend. “God bless the borough president for recognizing that he was a solid, important person in Bronx County, and from now on, he always will be,” he said.

The evening featured special performances by the New York State Court Officers Pipes and Drums, the New York Celli Band, comprising musicians, Sean Geraghty, Aoife Fleming, and Sean Tierney, and Irish Celtic dances performed by both Tierney and 14-year-old Flem-ing, who was also honored on the night with the youth award. She has competed in various international Irish dance and music competitions.

“Other honorees this year were Ti-ana Sloan, director for the Office of Vet-eran and Military Services at the Uni-versity of Mount St. Vincent; Michael Carey, president of Cardinal Hayes High School; Bronagh Harmon; manager of the Jéal Bohí Café, Delirdre Branley, executive director of communications & public affairs of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine; and Daniel O’Keefe, president of Cardinal Spellman High School.”

Of Nolan, Gibson concluded, saying, “I am so grateful to have known him and to have been a part of his life, and it is my solemn commitment that as long as I am borough president, and as long as we celebrate any recognition of Irish Ameri-can heritage and culture, we will always have a Bob Nolan Memorial Award.”
CRIME FILE

Bronx Car Theft Ring Convicted for Stealing 45 Cars in Six Months

New York Attorney General Letitia James and NYPD Commissioner Edward A. Caban announced on March 11 that nine members of a Bronx car theft ring pleaded guilty and were recently sentenced for their roles in the theft and criminal possession of 45 vehicles during a 6-month period from April to October 2020.

According to officials at the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), the defendants carried out a systematic, auto theft operation during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, targeting cars in New York City and Westchester County that were parked on the street for days at a time. They said crew members would reprogram vehicles’ computers to disable alarms and quickly gain access to the cars, which they then resold across the United States and the Dominican Republic.

OAG officials said the group obtained key code information for these vehicles from unlawful websites and created keys that allowed them to breach and steal the vehicles. They said in December 2023, James and the NYPD’s auto crime division charged two brothers with crimes related to theft and possession of vehicles in The Bronx, and in August 2023, James announced the convictions of six Bronx-based members of a crew responsible for over 200 burglaries of businesses in the Lower Hudson Valley, New York City, and on Long Island, including car dealerships.

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

All calls are strictly confidential.

By SÍLE MOLONEY & DAVID GREENE

Fordham: Boy, 2, Shot & Man Shot, Dies Same Day

A 2-year-old child was shot and hospitalized on Saturday, March 30, in Fordham Manor, police said. An NYPD spokeswoman said the young boy was grazed by a bullet at 1:44 p.m. at the Grand Concourse and East Fordham Road. “He was removed by EMS, to Jacobi hospital in stable condition,” the spokeswoman said. “The perpetrator is described as a male, Black, wearing a green hoodie, a black jacket with fur on the collar, light-blue jeans, and possibly red sneakers, and fled northbound on Creston Avenue towards 190th Street.”

Officer Stephen Echevarria from the 52nd Precinct later said, “When officers arrived, they located a 2-year-old male shot once in the abdomen. The child was transported to Jacobi hospital and is in stable condition.” Echevarria said the perpetrator had been firing his gun in the direction of two other male individuals at that location, missed them, and instead hit the little boy.”

The shooting took place a block and a half from where an Easter Egg hunt for young children was taking place in St. James Park, hosted by local District 14 City Councilwoman Pierina Sanchez, Assemblyman George Alvarez (A.D. 78) and partners.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams arrived on the scene after the incident. Speaking to reporters, he said, “The 2-year-old child that was injured, I’m going to see the child’s mom now. But you know when you’re coming from a police funeral when a gun took the life of a young police officer [Jonathan Diller], now, you’re hearing of a shooting like this, [it] just tells you, the city, why we are just so committed to taking illegal guns off the street.”

As previously reported, an 11-month-old baby girl, who became affectionately known in The Bronx as “Baby Catherine,” was grazed on her face by a bullet in the Bedford Park section of The Bronx on Jan. 19, 2022. The incident caused outrage in the local community and occurred right at the beginning of the mayor’s first term in office.

Adams was also at that shooting scene on the night it occurred, and later attended a vigil organized by the 52nd Precinct Community Council president, Brenda Caldwell, to pray for the little girl’s recovery. Two people were later arrested and charged in connection with
WHAT IS ELDER ABUSE?
Elder Abuse, the mistreatment or harming of an older person, is an injustice that we all need to prevent and address.

- Physical
- Emotional/Psychological
- Financial
- Sexual
- Neglect

FACTS ABOUT ELDER ABUSE
- About 1 in 10 Americans age 60+ have experienced abuse.
- Without decent health care and public resources, our population becomes more at risk for abuse as we age.
- The impact of elder abuse is felt by people of all ages.
- Elder abuse also reduces older people’s participation in the life of our communities.
- Elder abuse creates health care and legal costs that are often carried by public programs like Medicare and Medicaid.

ABOUT US
We provide FREE services and supports designed to promote elder justice by helping them to navigate systems and ensure their safety within the home and their community.

OUR SERVICES
- Advocacy
- Safety planning
- Information & Referral
- Supportive Counseling
- Assistance with Order of Protection & Evictions
- Crisis Intervention
- Security Lock Installation
- Educational Workshops, and more

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SHOPP Elder Justice Program is Funded by the NYC Department for the Aging (DFTA)
with adequate supplies of toilet paper, secure, safe, subway station bathrooms previously closed bathrooms. Reopening part of the scope of work repairs to reopen. When these funds are programmed for elevators or on platforms and stairs.

urinating or defecating inside station el— and 1 p.m. for cleaning. Many with a full

and 7 (Bronx), 21 (Brooklyn), 21 (Manhattan) and 9 (Queens), and are open only between

subway station bathrooms. They include there are only 58 out of 472 NYC Transit

24/7. Today, according to the MTA website, subway bathrooms were plentiful and open

cents to relieve yourself. In those days, sit subway bathrooms. There was a time

and University Heights.

cess to bathrooms in all five boroughs in— through President Mark Levine's proposed

section of the state are open to civil lawsuits from other pa—

misdemeanor charges, punishable by a fine

of up to a $1,000, and up to one year in jail.

The law would also make whoever owns an establishment where such “crimes” take place open to civil lawsuits from other patrons for violating their “privacy” rights.

Artiles claims that HB 583 is intended to protect families, privacy, and public safety, notes The Tampa Tribune. He explained his argument in a recent subcommittee meeting, alleging trans people, especially trans women, are predatory and threaten the safety of others in public bathrooms, and that cisgender men could “claim” they were trans women and attack cisgender (nontrans) women and children.

We need such a law here in The Bronx and in the greater NY area and also politicians like Rep. Frank Artiles.

Larry Penner
Great Neck

Florida Proposed Bill
Needed in NY

A Florida House subcommittee recently approved a bill that aims to bar citizens from using single-sex, public restrooms, dressing rooms, and showers that do not correspond with the gender listed on their legal identification documents, reports the Tampa Bay Times.

House Bill 583 was introduced by Rep. Frank Artiles on Feb. 4 and if it becomes law, will subject any citizen “caught” using a single-sex public facility that does not match the gender listed on their legal identification to first-degree misdemeanor charges, punishable by a fine

Editor's Note: Destination Tomorrow is the designated LGBTQ+ Resource Center in The Bronx and provides a range of services to LGBTQ+- youth and adults. The center can be reached Monday to Friday, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. at 452 East 149th Street, Bronx, New York 10455, United States, or by phone at 646 723 3325 or by email info@destinationtomorrow.org.

The Treasures of the New York Public Library

You know something, readers? Since I have had the pleasure of renewing my New York Public Library card, I have become re-acquainted with all the treasures that the library system has to offer. Take, for example, all the great books and record—

(continued on page 14)
Fordham: Boy, 2, Shot & Man Shot, Dies Same Day

(continued from page 8)

Meanwhile, local Councilman Oswald Feliz (D.C. 15) said in part, “Earlier today, an individual [with] no regard for the life of others decided to commit gun violence on Fordham. A 2-year-old became the latest victim. There must be real accountability for those that carry/use guns! The excuses are leading to horror in our communities!”

Norwood resident and Bronx CB7 board member, Betty Arce, said of the latest tragedy, “How very sad that a little baby has had to suffer because of the lawlessness in our neighborhoods. Pray for this little one’s complete recovery and for his family.”

Meanwhile, members of cure violence group, Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence, organized an anti-gun violence gathering on Tuesday evening, April 2, at the location of the shooting to denounce those responsible.

The group said the boy had been out walking with his mother on the day of the incident, the infant is expected to survive, and he and his family are receiving support. They added, in part, “But, make no mistake, WE CANNOT STAND FOR THE IDEA, THE IDEA, THAT IT IS OK FOR ANY KIND OF VIOLENCE, LET ALONE VIOLENCE THAT IMPACTS A CHILD WILL EVER BE OK!! If there ever was a moment to join B.R.A.G. to DENOUNCE these violent acts, it is NOW!!! United, we can defeat this.”

A “Stomp the Violence” event was recently organized by My Brother’s Keeper, cure violence groups, and the Office of the Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson, who said it was to “provide resources and education to better prepare our young Kings for the future.”


Later that night, a man in his early 20s died, and another man, also in his early 20s, was hospitalized following a second shooting incident also in Fordham Manor, police said. An NYPD spokesperson said the second incident was reported at around 8:53 p.m., when officers responded to multiple 911 calls regarding shots fired at East 187th Street and Tiebout Avenue in Fordham Manor.

Officers arrived at around 30 minutes later, it was all over, police but added that when they arrived to the crime scene, officers did not see it.”

Another employee described one incident that he said happened around two weeks ago. “There was some customers that came [inside] to buy some food and this Hispanic guy outside who has some wounds on his face, he was standing outside and insulting them,” he said in part. “He probably [mis]took them for some people. At some point, he came inside, and they ran outside. I heard someone say he was having a knife, but I’ve not seen it.”

He said he reported the incident to police but added that when they arrived around 30 minutes later, it was all over, and nobody had been hurt. Another store employee said he and his colleague had been busy working earlier that evening and didn’t know what had happened. He said, “You should be careful going around asking questions. When people see a light-skinned woman, crazy things go through their minds, and you don’t know who’s going to be next.”

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to call the NYPD’s Crime Stoppers Hotline at 1-800-577-TIPS (8477) or for Spanish, 1-888-57-PISTA (7482). The public can also submit their tips by logging onto the Crime Stoppers website at https://www.nypdcrimestoppers.com or on Twitter @NYPDTipLine.

All calls are strictly confidential.
**NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES**

**MMCC Summer Camps**
Norwood's Mosholu Montefiore Community Center (MMCC) offers eight fun-filled weeks of friends & adventure. For 80 years, Mosholu Day Camp has been providing affordable quality camping to children ages 5-16 from all over the area. Sitting on beautiful Lake Cohasset at Harriman State Park, the center offers children a place to develop, experience, and enjoy nature, while taking part in unforgettable summer activities like swimming, boating, sports, music, arts, and everything else you’d come to expect. Visit [https://www.mmcc.org/camp-request-info/](https://www.mmcc.org/camp-request-info/) for more information.

**Winter II Media Education Classes**
Winter II media education classes are ongoing Monday to Friday at the Williamsbridge Oval Recreation center, 3225 Reservoir Oval East in Norwood, through April 13. Call (212) 360-2702 or email Media.Ed@parks.nyc.gov for more information.

**Trauma Recovery Support**
The Trauma Recovery Center at Astor Services provides help, healing and hope to survivors of trauma, with the aim of reducing the long-term effects of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms. To be eligible, an applicant must be 5 years of age or older, a Bronx resident and a survivor of a violent crime within the past three years, including but not limited to child abuse and neglect, sexual assault, battery, community violence, human trafficking, and grief and loss. Call Jaida Richardson, program director, on (845) 372-3032 or email jrichardson@astorservices.org for more information.

**Food Drive**
The Gambian Youth Organization is helping to support Muslim refugees with a Food Drive during Ramadan and is asking for the public’s help with the effort. Visit bit.ly/gyamadan to donate.

**Prom & Suit Drive**
The Office of the Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson will host her 2nd Annual Prom Dress & Suit Drive on May 9. Donations of new or gently used formal dresses and suits can be dropped off until May 9 at Bronx Borough Hall, 851 Grand Concourse, Bronx, NY 1051. To be 5 years of age or older, a Bronx resident, submit an application through the IOBY platform. To do so, visit [https://ioby.org/project/GPB-Prom-Suit-Drive](https://ioby.org/project/GPB-Prom-Suit-Drive) or email jrichardson@astorservices.org for more information.

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The Gambian Youth Organization is helping to support Muslim refugees with a Food Drive during Ramadan and is asking for the public’s help with the effort. Visit bit.ly/gyamadan to donate.

**Bronx Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) Upcoming Home Health Aide Course**
Bronx EOC’s upcoming Home Health Aide (HHA) course begins on April 29. Get ready to embark on a fulfilling career path in healthcare. Limited seats available, so register now to secure your spot! Visit [http://www.bronxvoc.org/vocational.html](http://www.bronxvoc.org/vocational.html) for more information.

**POTS Free Workshop on Online Business Start-ups**
Part of the Solution (POTS) will host a free, workshop on online business start-ups with Rachel Perez on Saturday, April 13, at 10 a.m. at 2450 Grand Concourse. For more information, visit [https://fitnesslaunch.com](https://fitnesslaunch.com). POTS also offers “Get Tech Savvy” for beginners to learn more about email, phones, and computers each Wednesday in April at 10 a.m. Call (929) 566-7963 for more information on the location as there is more than one.

**Fresh Air Fund Free Summer Sleepaway Program**
Applications are open for the Fresh Air Fund Free Summer Camp. Visit [https://freshairfund.my-site.com/app/](https://freshairfund.my-site.com/app/) to login and search for “US” to apply. Youth, 8-15, who live and go to school in NYC, and meet income eligibility requirements can apply for camp. Youth, 16-17, who live and go to school in NYC are eligible to apply for the CIT Program. POTS, located at 2450 Grand Concourse, offers help to those wishing to complete the application.

**West Bronx Housing Services**
West Bronx Housing Services, 220 E 204th St., Bronx, NY 10458, offers various types of housing support, including problems with owed rent, issues with landlords, help applying for SNAP benefits, using the NYC Housing Connect platform, immigration assistance and more. Applications Open forTile, Marble & Terrazzo Worker Apprenticeships
Applications are open for tile, marble, and terrazzo worker apprenticeships. Applications will be available at the International Masonary Institute, located at 12-07 44th Avenue, Long Island City, NY 11101 from 8 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. on April 15, April 16, April 17, April 18, April 19, Oct. 21, Oct. 22, Oct. 23, Oct. 24, and Oct. 25. Applications must be completed, and exams taken, on the day of application. Doors open at 8 a.m. There will be no admittance after 8:30 a.m. Processing will be until 10 a.m. Applications will not be accepted by mail.

**Here Comes the Sun, A Celebration of Solar Power**
University Neighborhood Housing Program presents, “Here Comes the Sun, a Celebration of Solar Power in Bronx Buildings” on Thursday, April 18, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Serviam Hall, 2848 Bainbridge Avenue, Bronx, NY 10458. Visit [https://unhp.org/blog/heres-comes-the-sun-a-celebration-of-bronx-solar-power](https://unhp.org/blog/heres-comes-the-sun-a-celebration-of-bronx-solar-power) for more information.

**Applications Open for 2024 NY Yankees Youth Leadership Award**
Applications for the 2024 NYC Yankees Youth Leadership Award are open, as confirmed by Bronx Community Board 7. Apply by April 7, 2024, at noon. Visit [https://bit.ly/30fmlRk](https://bit.ly/30fmlRk) for more details.

**Summer Folk Culture Internship**
Applications are open for a summer folk culture internship with Mind-builders Creative Arts Center. Apply at [https://www.mind-builders.org/programs/folk_culture.html](https://www.mind-builders.org/programs/folk_culture.html) through April 15.

**Jazz Fellowship**
Applications are open for a jazz fellowship with The Brooklyn Conservatory of Music. Applications must be submitted by May 15 and the winners will be announced in June. For more information, visit [https://bkcm.org/](https://bkcm.org/)
Time for you to get tested for colon cancer?

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Though even the “Li’l Folks,” as they were once called, had a sort of grown-up depth to them, and the characters possessed a philosophical bent which seemed to resonate with the more mature and astute reader. Then, there’s the movie, “Line 41,” written and directed by Tanja Cummings. It has a running time of 96 minutes, and it’s a story of a man who, 70 years later, returns to a town named Lodz, which I believe is in Poland. He returns to find out the apparent fate of his long-lost sibling, a brother. It is a powerful story, and quite a grueling experience for those who have gravely suffered countless atrocities - worth watching.

So, there you have it! I have shared my personal picks and treasures from the NYPL. Feel free to choose your own. It will be quite the ultimate, learning experience.

Bryan Gerard Briggs
Wakefield

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

CORRECTION

On page 10, Letters to the Editor, of Norwood News Edition No. 6, dated March 21-April 3, 2024, Nat Weiner’s name and neighborhood (Parkchester) was inadvertently deleted from his letter on student loan forgiveness during the production process. We apologize for this oversight.
Future Of VCJC Still Uncertain

VAN CORTLANDT JEWISH Center, seen here on Sunday, Feb. 25, 2024, has been located at 3880 Sedgwick Avenue in Van Cortlandt Village for the last 60 years and its management is currently in negotiations with a private developer to sell the building.

(continued from page 1)

hood education center run by Moshoul Montefiore Community Center (MMCC). News of the prospective sale was previously published in The Riverdale Press and The Bronx Times.

Retired architect Petr Stand, a longtime Sedgwick Avenue resident, who for 30 years has worked with community development corporations to curb gentrification and to preserve other Bronx neighborhoods like Melrose, said, “fighting the city’s development plans” is now another battle in the northwest Bronx.

Stand was approached by members of the local community about the issue, telling Norwood News, “They’re appropriately terrified of what’s going to be put there.” He added, “Some people are afraid of affordable housing for instance. Some people are afraid of market-rate housing.”

According to Stand, the developer in question, Innovative Construction, LLC, based in Miramar, FL., is currently in negotiations with VCJC to purchase two parcels of land. Stand said the developer, “does not want to discuss their plans with the community,” and alleges Innovative Development plans to build housing in the form of market-rate apartments.

He continued, “The Van Cortlandt Jewish Center is a really important cultural institution to many people in the neighborhood. They’re really concerned about the loss of this building and everything else, the services the building provides.”

Stand says that because VCJC is a religious organization and a non-profit, in order to save it and the programs it offers, “a number of us feel that they kind of have this ethical obligation to open up discussions.”

In reference to the Van Cortlandt Village neighborhood, Strand said, “This has been a changing but ultimately a very stable neighborhood that has been a nurturing place for many generations of working people.”

According to Jack Spiegel, a VCJC board member, the members decided to sell the building in 2019. He added that VCJC congregants in the 1960s numbered about 700, whereas today, they stand at about 60.

Spiegel said there have been discussions with the community but also maintained VCJC is selling the building. He said the congregation will remain intact, however. He said JASA has informed them they would be moving out of the building, and that MMCC pre-school’s lease of the space needed to run their program expires on Aug. 31. Of the preschool’s future, he added, “I’m not sure what they will be doing.”

Steve Bobker, a longtime resident of the area, recalled growing up during VCJC’s heyday when both his grandmother and aunt attended the center, when it had a thriving congregation. Today, he said the congregation has dwindled as many Jewish people have moved from the area.

Bobker called the current development in the neighborhood “bittersweet.” adding, “I walk around The Bronx and every little piece of land is now these ugly complexes.” He said such housing complexes have been “jammed” into small parcels of land.

Norwood News reached out to VCJC and Innovative Development for comment to ask if there was any change regarding the negotiations with the developer and the community. We did not receive an immediate response from Innovative Development. Spiegel responded saying the negotiations were continuing, “In my experience, negotiations usually take a long time,” he said.

Free Solar Eclipse Glasses Available at NYPL

By SÍLE MOLONEY

On Monday, April 8, 2024, a total solar eclipse will occur during which the moon will pass between the sun and the earth and block the sun’s light for several minutes. While New York City is not in the path of totality, the five boroughs will experience a partial solar eclipse, according to astrology experts, who also warn that it is not safe to look directly at the sun without specialized solar eclipse glasses.

New York City’s three public library systems will be distributing free solar eclipse glasses starting March 29. Glasses will be available while quantities last on a first-come, first-served basis at all New York Public Library (which includes The Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island) and Queens Public Library locations. Brooklyn Public Library locations are also giving away glasses at select dates and times. A liability waiver must be signed before receiving your eclipse glasses. Patrons under 18 must have a parent or guardian sign the waiver on their behalf. Library locations throughout the five boroughs have also planned events leading up to the eclipse. You can browse NYPL’s events calendar for eclipse-related programming.

A WOMAN WEARS a pair of solar eclipse glasses in an undated photo.
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