



NORWOOD NEWS

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"COACH D REMEMBERED"

Photo by Sile Moloney

FAMILY, FRIENDS, COLLEAGUES, and players, young and old, who were trained by 60-year-old volunteer football coach, Dwight Downer, gathered in the Williamsbridge Oval park in Norwood on Friday, Dec. 6, 2024, to pay tribute to the man who died tragically following a multiple-vehicle road collision on Saturday morning, Nov. 30, 2024, in the East Bronx.

By SILE MOLONEY

Family, friends, colleagues, and players, young and old, who were trained by 60-year-old volunteer football coach, Dwight Downer, gathered in the Williamsbridge Oval Park in Norwood on Friday, Dec. 6, for a moving candlelit vigil to pay

tribute to their relative, friend, and mentor who died tragically following a multiple-vehicle road collision on Saturday morning, Nov. 30, a few minutes after midnight.

Downer, who was also a father, coached local football team the Bronx Buccaneers,

who train regularly in the Oval, as well as Bedford Park's DeWitt Clinton football team. Nicknamed "Coach D," Downer lived on Eastchester Road in the East Bronx, and was a partner to Tasha Andrews, a member of Bronx Community Board 7 who is also an organizer with

the Buccaneers.

Addressing those who had gathered at the vigil around life-size images of Downer illuminated from the ground up by electric torches, Andrews said Downer believed that how a person showed up in life was

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Laal Celebrates its 5th Anniversary
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Reaction to Kimberly Hanzlik's Release after 13 Years

By DAVID GREENE

Nearly a dozen friends and family members were at the back of a Bronx courtroom on Tuesday, Nov. 26, when Administrative Judge Alvin Yearwood approved a request from the Office of Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark to vacate the 2011 second-degree murder conviction of Kimberly Hanzlik, 59, for her role in the 1999 killing of Joseph Brown. The victim was shot and killed inside a bar formerly known as Frenchy's on East Tremont Avenue in Throggs Neck.

After a trial in Bronx Supreme Court, Hanzlik and her co-defendant, Joseph Meldish, were convicted by a jury on March 9, 2011, of second-degree murder. Hanzlik was sentenced to 20 years to life and Meldish to 25 years to life.

The vacating of the conviction, the dismissal of the charges, and the sealing of the case came after the DA's Conviction Integrity Bureau (CIB) yielded new evidence that Hanzlik's conviction was based on unreliable identification of her as a suspect.

In the context of the announcement, Clark said, "Ms. Hanzlik served 13 years in prison based on trial testimony that would not meet today's threshold of credibility given the discovery of new information, which casts doubt on the integrity of her conviction, and we cannot stand by it. I realize this causes pain and anguish for the victim's family, but in the interest of justice, we are dismissing the indictment against Ms. Hanzlik."

Having served nearly 14 years of her 20-year-to-life sentence, Hanzlik's gratitude was conveyed through her attorney, Irving Cohen, who told the judge, "There aren't words to express the appreciation [for] the District Attorney's office and the Conviction Integrity Bureau of that office, and I'm astounded by how diligently and hard-working they have been to arrive at this point."

Before vacating the conviction, Yearwood said, "The court trusts that the district attorney's investigation was accurate, and the district attorney believes if this conviction in this case was vacated, they would not have enough evidence in which to prosecute Mrs. Hanzlik a second time."

Still in handcuffs during her court appearance, Hanzlik looked towards the ceiling as she took in news of her impending freedom before being embraced by her attorney.

Outside the courtroom, Cohen said, "It's amazing! We knew she was innocent right away." He added, "She's totally innocent; she wasn't there when this event



Photo by David Greene

DEFENSE ATTORNEY IRVING Cohen embraces still-handcuffed Kimberly Hanzlik on Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2024, after a judge vacates her 2011 murder conviction in connection to the 1999 fatal shooting of Joseph Brown.

happened."

However, not everyone was happy with the decision. Although she has been interviewed and publicly identified in the past, Brown's widow asked that we not identify her by name for this story. Hours after Hanzlik's release, the widow told *Norwood News* that she and her family members were invited to attend the release proceedings, but none chose to do so.

The widow fumed, "I don't know why they're letting her out. It's b-----t that the witness.....they screwed around with his testimony." She continued, "The arresting officer who passed away, they're taking advantage that he died because he isn't here to defend himself."

She continued, "I testified. I saw her in the bar. The guy testified he drove her." Brown's widow added that Hanzlik and her co-defendant, Joseph Meldish, "went into Frenchy's to kill Tommy Brown." The widow added, "Unfortunately, they got Joe Brown instead."

She then alleged the two 45th Precinct detectives originally assigned to the case retired within days of the homicide. "It went into a cold case file [until 2011]," she added.

Published media reports at the time the incident occurred alleged Meldish was suspected of carrying out dozens of contract killings for three of the five New York crime families.

"Joe Meldish was fighting with my brother-in-law [Tommy Brown]," the widow said. "They were always fighting, and he wanted money from him, and he sold drugs. It was all about drugs and money. It had nothing to do with my husband [Joe Brown] or myself at the time; we were at the wrong place at the wrong

time."

The widow said her husband grew up in Throggs Neck, was a member of the Air Force Reserves, and was a "sandhog" or tunnel worker. She said they met through mutual friends.

Asked what life had been like for the last 25 years since the murder, the widow replied, "Horrible! I'm without a husband. My son is without a father." She added that her son was four-and-a-half years old when Joe Brown was fatally shot.

Coincidentally, the widow said she had worked at the Bronx DA's office for 12 years, only leaving the year before her husband's murder. "I am so disappointed in the justice system," she said. "I think it sucks, and all the criminals have the rights now. You open one door like this. Now, you're going to open up a whole bunch of doors."

Norwood News asked the NYPD for comment on the widow's claims that the two detectives initially assigned to the case subsequently retired. We did not receive an immediate response. We also asked the NYPD for the work history records of now-deceased Det. Kevin Tracy. We were directed to file a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request.

The Bronx District Attorney's office confirmed that Brown's widow was employed at the office but could not immediately confirm for how long. Hanzlik's conviction was the second that involved Tracy to be vacated this year. Given Tracey reportedly oversaw hundreds of cases over the course of his career, we asked the Bronx DA's office about the possibility of other cases being overturned. We will share any updates we receive.

Meldish, 68, remains incarcerated and is not eligible for parole until 2032.

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By **DAVID GREENE**



Lehman College announced in November it received federal funding of \$8.4 million to train multilingual teachers for Bronx schools. This week, we asked readers if, in their opinion, public school teachers are equipped to handle the high percentage of Bronx students in their classrooms for whom English is not the first language spoken at home.



"No, they're not equipped. First of all, a lot of the teachers cannot really identify with the [affected] children. Whether they're African American children, or Latinos, whether they speak Spanish or another language because to me, they're not being properly trained. A lot of teachers have backgrounds where they live upstate or are coming from backgrounds where they can't really identify with a particular child."

Heather Speakeasy,
Norwood
Photo courtesy of Heather Speakeasy



"No, I don't think all of them are prepared, and I've been saying this for a while that they need a major upgrade in the education system. The CUNY money given to [Herbert H.] Lehman College will help, yes, because a lot of them don't have what they need. We know how the education system started, and it wasn't properly funded, and we know they're not getting an Ivy League education so that should tell us something right there."

Tyrone Randolph,
Burnside
Photo by David Greene



"No, I don't think they are. I think they need to be more educated on how to teach the students that don't speak English [as a first language] at home. I remember I grew up in a bilingual class and most of the subjects taught to me were in Spanish and English, so it was both languages. So, we had Spanish teachers, but they also spoke English. Most of our teachers were bilingual. I believe they no longer have that in schools today, just English."

Clara Martinez,
Kingsbridge
Photo by David Greene



"My thoughts on this are from the perspective of a parent with children that go to public school. Also, my husband is a teacher, so I would have to say I haven't seen this necessarily, because my children go to a school where they're not necessarily set up to handle people who are new to the country. My children go to a school where there's people that are not born in the United States, but their English is functional."

Lisa Perrine,
Pelham Parkway
Photo courtesy of Lisa Perrine



"I think it's a case-by-case situation. There have always been students who don't speak English at home. This is nothing new. These students should be offered English as a Second Language (ESL)-type class that native speakers don't have to take."

Charlie Vazquez,
Pelham Parkway
Photo courtesy of Charlie Vazquez

Editor's Note: Norwood News contacted NYC Department of Education to ask if they could share the percentage of bilingual or multilingual public-school teachers in The Bronx. We will share any updates we receive.

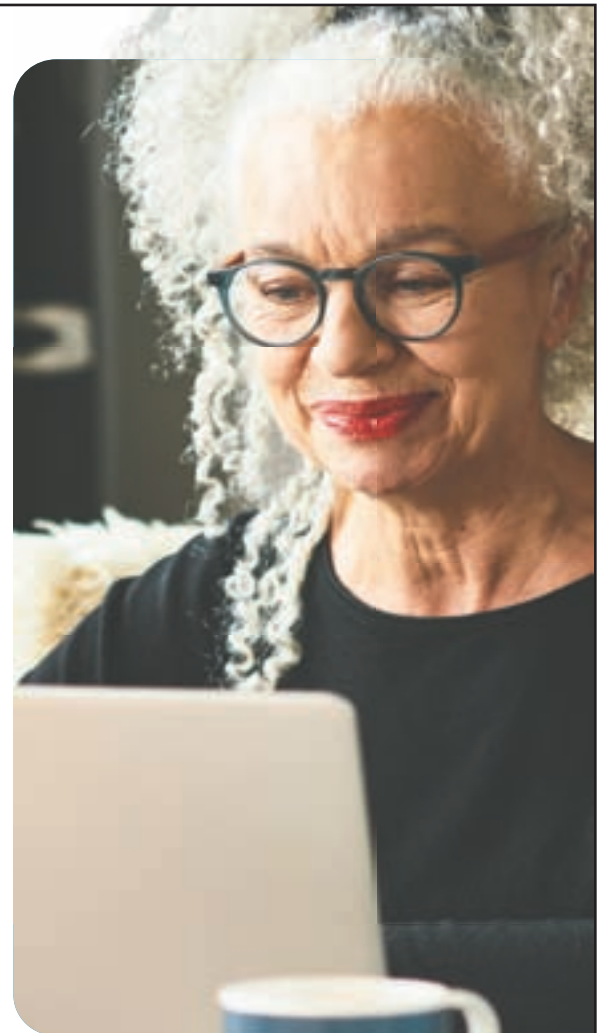
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Michael Blake Launches Candidacy for Mayor

By SÍLE MOLONEY

The Hon. Rev. Michael Blake, a former Bronx assemblyman for Assembly District 79, announced his campaign for Mayor of New York City at Sankofa Haus in the South Bronx on Tuesday, Nov. 26, under the theme “Tomorrow Begins Today.”

Blake is also a former vice chair of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and served as a White House aide to former U.S. President Barack Obama. His campaign also describes Blake as “a small business owner, entrepreneur, and national democracy leader.”

Campaign officials said Blake brings 20 years of public and political service and said he is focused on creating jobs, raising wages, advocating for affordable housing, and improving public safety, schools, and health in all communities.

“We need a fresh start at City Hall so that the headlines are not about the Department of Justice and investigations but about jobs, justice and education,” said Blake.

At the launch, Blake was introduced by Chef Grace Ramirez and small business owner, Alfredo Angueira, who both praised his dedication to New Yorkers during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure families were fed and healthcare workers received masks.

Rev. Frederick Crawford later concluded the event highlighting that in his opinion, many people simply talked about helping people, whereas Blake actually got things done for New Yorkers and Americans across the country.

As a member of the State Assembly, Blake’s campaign team said he ensured New York businesses contracting with the State were paid faster by spearheading the bipartisan “Prompt Pay bill,” which later became law and led to more jobs and better wages.

They said Blake also created the “My Brother’s Keeper” program, the only statewide initiative of its kind in the U.S. for Black and Brown boys and young men. An initiative of the Obama administration, the organization works “to unleash the power of communities, working together to solve problems for boys and young men of color, at a level to improve real life outcomes.”

Meanwhile, as chair of the Mitchell-Lama subcommittee, Blake’s campaign said he also advocated for housing rights and secured historic funding for NYCHA repairs. The New York State Mitchell-Lama program provides affordable rental and cooperative housing to moderate- and



Photo courtesy of the Michael Blake for Mayor campaign.

HON. REV. MICHAEL Blake, a former assemblyman for Assembly District 79, announced his candidacy for mayor at an event in the South Bronx on Nov. 26, 2024.

middle-income families. Tracey Towers in Bedford Park is a Mitchell-Lama housing complex.

“I am running for mayor with a bold “Our City, Our Home, Our Dreams” policy platform, which advances universal childcare, faster payments to nonprofits, tax incentives for college graduates and businesses to return to the city, and a balanced approach to public safety, public housing and public schools in our neighborhoods,” said Blake.

Blake’s campaign said the former assemblyman also co-led the successful effort to pass “Raise the Age,” a law that prevented 16 and 17-year-olds from being unjustly tried as adults. He also spearheaded initiatives to increase the number of Black and Brown doctors statewide.

During his time as a White House aide to Obama, they said he led African American, county and state elected officials and minority-owned and women-owned business outreach. They said he helped pass the Affordable Care Act, the economic stimulus package that ended the Great Recession, and a student loan bill lowering college costs. They said he also created the White House Urban En-

trepreneurship series to generate jobs nationwide and co-led the administration’s initiative for small, minority, and women-owned businesses, increasing access to contracts, capital and counseling.

Norwood News asked Blake how he plans to address mental health crisis and if he would be open to launching mental health courts like those in Westchester County, where people are offered mental health support as an alternative to incarceration.

“One hundred percent,” he said. Citing his work on the Affordable Care Act, Blake added in part, “Firstly, there’s truly no one in this race that has done more on healthcare than me. We can’t continue to treat health in isolation. It’s the totality of the individual. It’s mental, it’s emotional, it’s social, all intertwined.”

He continued in part, “When we think about New York City and what the Department of Health is, and mental health collectively, that will be a cornerstone of our approach. Touching on the public safety impacts of poor collective mental health, Blake said, “A lot of times right now, people are not feeling safe because they’re ac-

tually not helping those that are in mental health crisis, and so not only would it be a priority, but we would provide funding and additional support around this as well.”

Meanwhile, the Area Median Income (AMI) for all cities across the country is defined each year by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The 2023 AMI for the New York City region is \$127,100 for a three-person family (100% AMI). The AMI is used to determine eligibility for affordable housing. Given the cost of living is higher in New York City than in other parts of the country, we asked Blake, among other questions, if he would be open to renegotiating the Area Median Income (AMI) with the federal government. He said he would be.

We also discussed with Blake an October 2024 report by New York Focus about the Bronx Democratic Party’s failure to disclose more than \$400,000 in campaign contributions over the past four years, an apparent violation of campaign finance law, which the Party put down to an oversight and has committed to rectifying. We mentioned there had been speculation about what the purpose of such funds could have been, and whether they were potentially used to help centrist Democrats beat progressive Democrats in given primary races. We asked Blake if he was looking for the endorsement of the Bronx Democratic Party.

He said he hasn’t received any endorsements to date as he had just launched his campaign and added, “Of course, there has to be transparency in how funds travel through all entities. I don’t know what happened in that situation. I do think we have a moment right now where New Yorkers desperately want to know that they can trust you, and I do think one thing that distinguishes me in this race, twofold. I was a national vice chair of the Democratic Party so I know how it’s supposed to be done, and I’m a reverend from the community. If there’s someone who can come in and give people someone they can trust, I think it would be me.”

Blake’s campaign said he chose Nov. 26 to launch his campaign because 1/1/26 marks the start of the next mayoral term, with mayoral elections taking place in 2025.

“We still believe in jobs and justice, public safety, public housing and public school, housing and healthcare,” Blake said. “For us to achieve that vision for our City, our home, our dreams, it’s time for a new leader to declare that Tomorrow Begins Today.”

NEWS BRIEFS

By **SÍLE MOLONEY**

Bronx Assistant District Attorney Honored by NYC Bar Association

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark announced Dec. 9 that Assistant District Attorney David Birnbaum was a recipient of the Thomas E. Dewey Medal from the New York City Bar Association. Clark said, "David is one our most effective prosecutors and, after 32 years of faithful service at the Bronx District Attorney's Office, rightfully deserves this prestigious award. He has tried over 80 cases to verdict, most of them resulting in convictions, bringing justice for countless victims." The DA's office said Birnbaum began his legal career in the Bronx District Attorney's Office in 1992, and that as senior trial counsel to the office's Domestic Violence Bureau, he has mentored assistant district attorneys and professional staff. They said he recently began assisting in evaluating defendants seeking post-conviction consideration for re-sentencing under the Domestic Violence Survivors Act. Birnbaum was honored during a ceremony on Dec. 9 at the New York City Bar Association.

The Dewey Medal is given annually to an outstanding prosecutor in each of the City's five district attorneys' offices and in the Office of the City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor. It is named for Thomas E. Dewey, a gang-busting prosecutor who was elected district attorney of New York county in 1937, and who officials say

brought integrity and professionalism to the office of district attorney. Dewey later became governor of New York.



ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

David Birnbaum (pictured) was a recipient of the Thomas E. Dewey Medal from the New York City Bar Association on Dec. 9, 2024. Photo courtesy of the Office of the Bronx District Attorney

Feliz Calls for "Greenification" of Paved Street Medians

Councilmember Oswald Feliz (C.D. 15) has written to NYC Department of Transportation Commissioner Ydanis Rodriguez to call for the "greenification" of paved street medians in three Bronx locations: Fordham Road, from Decatur Avenue to Southern Boulevard; Boston Road and Thwaites Place; and East Tremont and Webster Avenues.

In his letter, Feliz cited the "countless environmental and health benefits" of green spaces to communities, including improved air quality, reduced noise pollution, improved mental health, and protection from environmental threats like flooding.

He lamented that unequal access to green spaces over generations has had harmful effects on the borough's poorest communities, adding that one region of the South Bronx with particularly bad air pollution is known as "Asthma Alley." The City Council recently passed Feliz's bill entitled "Operation Green NYC," which requires that DOT greenify at least one linear mile of paved medians in disadvantaged communities.

Bronx Chamber of Commerce & BIDs Call for MRTA Update

The Bronx Chamber of Commerce and various Bronx Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) have recently called on Gov. Kathy Hochul, NYS Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and NYS Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie to update the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA) of 2021 to address a legal loophole which they say is threatening the viability of the borough's commercial corridors due to ongoing illegal cannabis sales, impacting Bronx small businesses.

The legal loophole centers around two different ways of weighing drugs like cocaine, heroin and marijuana. The "pure weight" of a drug is determined by excluding the weight of all nontoxic additives, while the "aggregate weight" is found by weighing the entire amount of the drug, including additives. According to law enforcement, while tests exist to measure the "pure weight" of drugs like heroin and cocaine, no such test exists to measure the "pure weight" of marijuana.

In 1979, when this loophole was first identified, the law was changed to explicitly state that marijuana should be measured in "aggregate weight" rather than in "pure weight." However, in 2021, the "pure weight" definition slipped back into the law under the passage of MRTA. According to the Bronx BIDs and the

Bronx Chamber of Commerce, this makes it "virtually impossible" to prosecute any illegal cannabis possession and sale, even after such cannabis is confiscated from unlicensed smoke shops.

The coalition cited the high rents paid by business owners and the long hours worked and said many small businesses are struggling to remain economically viable "due in large part to illegal activities in surrounding areas." They said two cases were recently dismissed in Brooklyn due to the "pure weight" loophole, and they anticipate that any cases going to trial in The Bronx will be dismissed on the same grounds. They said updating MRTA to include the "aggregate weight" definition, for which a test is available, would allow for the prosecution of those found with illegal cannabis confiscated from unlicensed smoke shops.

They also said that while the criminal justice reforms, passed in 2020, to both bail and discovery laws were laudable in their intent to bolster a fair and equitable criminal justice system, there are some collateral consequences of these reforms that allow the release of people who they say continue to commit crime without accountability. They said that while there were some revisions in 2023 to factor in aggregated larceny charges by a person, retail theft recidivism still needs further analysis. They said bail reform, along with discovery laws, should be reexamined.

They said whether it's because of judges choosing not to set bail for offenses involving damage to property [only], or because of the [often onerous] volume and deadline requirements around discovery when prosecuting a case, retail theft is still a real problem [as it appears to go unpunished too often]. Discovery is the process of exchanging information and evidence between parties in a legal case to prepare for trial.

Fordham Manor: Minivan Combusts on Street Damaging Two Other Parked Vehicles

By **SÍLE MOLONEY**

A minivan seemingly burst into flames on a residential street on Saturday evening in the Fordham Manor section of The Bronx, damaging two other vehicles, as at least one young child was playing nearby.

An FDNY spokesperson said the fire department received a call at 2.23 p.m. on Saturday afternoon, Dec. 7, for a report of a car fire at 84 West 188th Street by University Avenue. The spokesperson said two units responded to the blaze and added that there were no injuries reported.

Norwood News later observed the burned-out minivan still on the street on Saturday evening, along with two other damaged vehicles and an FDNY unit parked nearby. We spoke to two young

male residents of the area, Wraithin and Vingacy, and asked them what they knew about what happened.

Wraithin said, "So the car was parked, and nobody was in the car and then it just started.... the engine started getting in flames." We asked if the driver had left the engine running and the vehicle unoccupied, and Wraithin replied, "Uh huh. Then it exploded, and everything just ended up exploding, and then the front car too. The one that was in front of it; it got damaged."

We asked if anyone had been in the front car. "No, nobody was there," Wraithin said. Asked if there were a lot of people around at the time, Wraithin said, "Yeah, there was a little girl right here, and there was people in front of the build-



Screenshot courtesy of "Frank" the barber

FIREFIGHTERS RESPOND TO a minivan fire on East 188th Street at University Avenue in Fordham Manor on Saturday afternoon, Dec. 7, 2024, after it erupted into flames.

ing."

Asked if the little girl had been playing outside, Wraithin said, "Yes." We asked if the owner of the car that seemingly spontaneously combusted eventually ap-

peared. "No, he hasn't seen it yet, not yet," Wraithin said.

Asked if somebody had called the fire department, Vingacy said, "I feel like ev-

(continued on page 12)

NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

COMPILED BY ARIEL PACHECO



Open Call for Curators

BronxArtSpaces invites applicants with a strong affiliation with The Bronx to submit proposals for a thematic group exhibit as part of an exhibition on display from March 20 through April 19, 2025. The deadline to apply is Friday, Dec. 13, at midnight. For more information, visit <https://www.bronxartspace.com/open-call>.

NYC Seeks Snow Shovelers

NYC Department of Transportation is seeking emergency snow shovelers to help remove snow and ice from bus stops, street steps, and other locations throughout the winter. Shovelers will be paid \$18.54 per hour, and \$27.81 per hour after the first 40 hours worked in a week. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dot.

Volunteers Needed

BOLD Boutique is seeking volunteers to help operate a community-inspired boutique in aid of cancer patients in The Bronx, run by the Montefiore Einstein Comprehensive Cancer Center. The boutique is open most Tuesdays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, email cancersupport@einsteinmed.edu.

Larry Lederman Photography Fellowship

The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) has announced the third annual photography fellowship established by noted landscape photographer, Larry Lederman. The \$20,000 fellowship is awarded annually to an outstanding established or emerging photographer whose work focuses on gardens or landscapes and demonstrates excellence and

a creative approach to the art of landscape photography. This year's application period runs through Jan. 6, 2025. For more information, visit <https://www.nybg.org/education/humanities-institute/research-opportunities/the-larry-lederman-photography-fellowship/>.

MTA Mobile Sales Van

Visit the Mobile MTA Sales Van in Kingsbridge at 231st Street and Broadway on Wednesday, Dec. 18, from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. MTA Mobile Bus Van sales are cash only. For more information, call (718) 549-7300.

Nurse Recruiting Event

NYC Health + Hospitals/North Central Bronx is hosting nurse recruiting events every Friday at 3424 Kossuth Avenue, Bronx, NY 10467. Submit your

resume to Alexis Jacob at Jacoba10@ny.chhc.org to register for the event with the subject line "NCB Recruitment Event."

Affordable Housing Lotteries

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

- 113 East 184 Street, with a deadline of Jan. 16, 2025
- 2880 Jerome Avenue, with a deadline of Dec. 30, 2024
- 2077 Ryer Avenue, with a deadline of Dec. 19, 2024
- 215 West Kingsbridge Road, with a deadline of Dec. 19, 2024

Visit <https://housingconnect.nyc.gov/PublicWeb/searchlotteries> for more information.

BP Gibson Hosts Men's Wellness & Resource Fair

By ARIEL PACHECO

Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson hosted a men's wellness and resource fair alongside numerous local organizations at the P.S. 246 Poe Center gymnasium on Wednes-

day, Nov. 20, as part of "Mov-ember," a month-long campaign by medical professionals focused on raising awareness about men's health.

Speaking to *Norwood News*, Gibson said, "I think we have to make it easy for men to acknowledge that they need to address their health. I think we have to remove the stigma by talking about [it], having very important yet sensitive conversations, and also bring men to the table. It's really important when we have male doctors that are talking to men, and we have fathers talking to sons, we have credible messengers in our communities that look like us and speak the language."

Gibson continued, "We also have to look at some of the elements when it comes to social determinants of health. So, when it comes to stable housing, access to healthy food, good jobs, that matters. Breathing clean air, that matters. In our communities, we struggle because we have unstable housing,

we have food inequity, we have processed poison that is not good for us, and we have to change that."

Local organizations that joined the borough president on the day included Planet Fitness; Good Shepherd Services; Men, Let's Talk, initiative; Bronx Works Fatherhood Initiative; NYC Children ACS; Spreading Love Foundation; Inc.; Friends 2 Fathers; and STRIVE. In addition, the Civilian Complaint Review Board, NYC Department of Social Services, Metro Plus, and Montefiore Einstein Health and Hospitals also participated in the event.

Marcus Payne, representing Bronx Fathers Taking Action, said, "Men die at an average rate of 4.5 years younger than women, almost half a decade because of stress and inactivity. Another thing that's scary is that about four out of five people [who] commit suicide are men. So, it's also the stress and mental health taking a toll on men and that's men in our community."

Representatives from the Planet Fitness branch located on Fordham Road led a group exercise with the men in attendance. One representative said, "We take pride in taking no judgment. Anybody can come to the gym. We value welcoming people, making them feel like they're at home."

The exercises included jumping jacks, push-ups, and planks. About a dozen men participated in the short

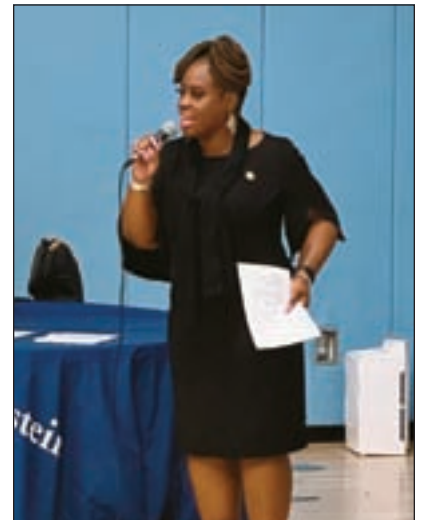


Photo by Ariel Pacheco

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT Vanessa L. Gibson addresses the Men's Wellness & Resource Fair at the P.S. 246 Poe Center gym in Fordham Manor on Nov. 20, 2024.



Photo by Ariel Pacheco

PLANET FITNESS LEADS a short workout at the Men's Wellness & Resource Fair held at the P.S. 246 Poe Center gym in Fordham Manor on Nov. 20, 2024.

workout.

Presentations were given by NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi's Dr. Ignacio Medina and Dr. George Lederer, and Rasheeda Peterson from Bronx Metro Plus Health. They discussed the challenges of battling stigmas, the importance of pre-cancer screening, and generally dealing with mental health.

Lederer said, "There's still a feeling that mental health is something that women pay attention [to] but men don't have to. Men are supposed to be tough, and that's just not true. Men's mental health is very important.

LAAL Celebrates 5th Anniversary

By **SÍLE MOLONEY**

LAAL, the Norwood-based, Bengali women's empowerment group, celebrated "Laal Biye," its 5-Year Anniversary Fundraiser Gala, on Friday, Dec. 6, at Andrew Freedman House, located at 1125 Grand Concourse in the Concourse section of The Bronx. There was food, dancing, musical performances, both traditional and modern, henna painting, as

well as crafts, gift ideas, and lots of joy.

The event's organizers, led by Sanjana Khan, executive director of Laal, said it was a truly special occasion. "It was an unforgettable evening filled with joy, culture, and connection as we reflected on five incredible years of impact!" they said. They went on to thank all who attended for making the night so vibrant and memorable. "Your energy and

enthusiasm brought our celebration to life!" they said.

"LAAL provides resources that Bengali women need to live healthy, engaged and joyful lives," according to marketing materials. The event was held in conjunction with the Asiyah Women's Center, the first Muslim women's shelter in New York City, according to its representatives.



All photos by Sile Moloney
(FAR LEFT) **SANJANA KHAN**, EXECUTIVE director of LAAL, the Norwood-based, Bengali women's empowerment group, attends "Laal Biye," Laal's 5-Year Anniversary Fundraiser Gala, on Friday, Dec. 6, at Andrew Freedman House, located at 1125 Grand Concourse in the Concourse section of The Bronx.

(LEFT) **LAAL**, THE Norwood-based, Bengali women's empowerment group, celebrated "Laal Biye," its 5-Year Anniversary Fundraiser Gala, on Friday, Dec. 6, at Andrew Freedman House, located at 1125 Grand Concourse in the Concourse section of The Bronx.



'Tis the Season to Eat Healthy

By **RAISHA HERNANDEZ**

Is it possible to eat and drink healthier during the fall and winter holidays, and still indulge in the family's favorite recipes? Think steaming Mac 'n Cheese, juicy pork shoulder, sweet potato casserole, collard greens, or piping hot chocolate. Eating and drinking healthier during the holidays can be challenging, but manageable with thoughtful planning and a balanced approach. Thankfully, you can still enjoy your beloved dishes and drinks while minding your health. Here are some tips to help you enjoy the festive season:

Be Mindful of Drinks

Drinks like eggnog, coquito, hot chocolate, and alcohol are typically high in sugar, fat, and calories. Try using low-fat milk, unsweetened non-dairy liquids, or low/no-sugar

options to reduce the number of calories you drink during this time. Also try shrinking your drinks and having fewer. Drink plenty of water during and between your meals. Water is calorie-free, refreshing, and helps your digestive system and overall wellbeing.

Avoid Skipping Meals

Skipping breakfast and lunch to eat an overloaded plate for dinner makes you hungry and uncomfortable. It causes low blood sugar, which leads to fatigue, brain fog, and even fainting. Try to eat small, healthy meals before a big one. Choose healthy snacks high in protein and fiber to eat between your meals.

Illuminate Your Plate

The holidays are the time to decorate, so why not fill up your plate with colorful fruits and vegetables? The more options you have, the better. Fruits and vegetables are low in calories, high in fiber, nutritious and delicious. They pair nicely with saltier, richer dishes too e.g. kale and apple salad with Mac 'n Cheese.

Enjoy Your Meal

After spending hours in the kitchen or waiting patiently for the cook, don't rush the meal! Instead, take the time to sit and really enjoy your food. Speak to loved ones about the food and call out your favorite dish. Holiday meals don't happen often, so savor the moments!

Brighten Your Moves

Staying active during the holidays helps boost your energy levels and mood and also helps maintain the healthy habits you've begun! Skipping physical activity for several weeks makes it mentally and physically hard to restart. Take a group walk before or after meals or play your favorite song and show off those dance moves.

The holiday season can be a stressful time of year. We face many factors outside of our control: cold weather, traffic, increased costs, health issues, and family challenges. Focus on healthy habits you can control like your eating habits and physical activity. Wishing you a joyful, fulfilling holiday season!

Here's a healthy recipe for **Curried Sweet Potato Puree** to try, courtesy of the Food Network. (<https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/food-network-kitchen/curried-sweet-potato-puree-recipe-2112305>).

- Prep: 5 mins
- Cook: 1 hr., 10 mins
- Total: 1 hr., 15 mins
- Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients

- 4 medium sweet potatoes (about 1 3/4 pounds)
- 1/2 cup unsweetened almond milk
- 1/2 teaspoon curry powder
- 4 thin slices peeled fresh ginger
- Kosher salt
- 1/2 lime

- Toasted sliced almonds, for garnish, *optional*

Directions

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Wrap each sweet potato in foil, put on a baking sheet and bake until soft for one hour. Let cool slightly.

Combine the almond milk, curry powder and ginger in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer until the mixture is reduced by a third, for about 5 minutes. Discard the ginger.

Pour any sugary juices from the sweet potato foil wrappers into a food processor. Peel the sweet potatoes and add the flesh to the food processor. Add the almond milk mixture and 1/2 teaspoon salt and puree until smooth.

Transfer to a serving bowl and squeeze the lime over the finished puree. Garnish with almonds and cilantro if desired and serve warm.

Raisha Hernandez, MA, is a health equity program manager at Montefiore Health System.



Courtesy Food Network
CURRIED SWEET POTATO PUREE

CRIME FILE

BY SÍLE MOLONEY, DAVID GREENE



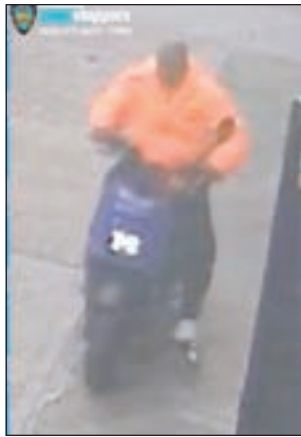
Kingsbridge: Man Sought for Group Assault

The NYPD is asking for the public's help identifying the person seen in the accompanying photo who they said is wanted in connection to an assault that occurred in Kingsbridge. Police said that on Wednesday, Nov. 6, at around 11.36 p.m. in front of 5716 Broadway, an unidentified person struck a 46-year-old male victim, a 32-year-old male victim, a 30-year-old male victim, a 43-year-old male victim and a 30-year-old female victim after a verbal dispute.

Police said EMS transported the 43-year-old male victim to NYC Health and Hospitals/ Harlem in critical but stable condition and transported the other victims to NYC Health

and Hospitals/North Central Bronx in stable condition. They said the suspect fled the location in a gray BMW X5 to parts unknown.

They said the suspect is described as male, has a dark complexion, is around 50 years of age, has a medium build, is 5 feet 8 inches tall, weighs 210 pounds, and has brown eyes. They said he was last seen wearing a yellow sweater, black pants, a black baseball hat, and black shoes with yellow shoelaces.



Williamsbridge: 3-Year-Old Child Hit by Scooter, Driver Flees the Scene

The NYPD is asking for the public's help locating the person seen in the accompanying photo who they say is wanted in connection with leaving the scene of a collision that occurred in Williamsbridge in which a 3-year-old child was injured. Police said that on Friday, Nov. 29, at around 1.05 p.m., the 3-year-old little girl was walking in front of 3041 Holland Avenue when she was struck by a two-wheeled vehicle riding on the sidewalk, driven by an unknown male individual.

"EMS responded and transported the victim to NYC Health and Hospitals/Jacobi for minor injuries," police said. "The wanted individual fled on the vehicle northbound on Holland Avenue to parts unknown." Police said the suspect is described as male, has a heavy build, and a medium complexion. They said he was last seen wearing an orange jacket, black sweatpants, and black sandals. They said the vehicle was described as "a moped scooter, blue in

color, with black stripes on the side." The NY Post has since reported that the little girl's injuries are more than minor, and she remains hospitalized.

Fordham Heights: Man Sought in Nonfatal Shooting

The NYPD is asking for the public's help identifying the person seen in the accompanying photo who they say is sought in connection to a non-fatal shooting that occurred in Fordham Heights. Police said that on Friday, Nov. 22, at around 7.50 p.m., a 30-year-old female victim was walking on the corner of Grand Concourse and Field Place when the unidentified male suspect fired multiple shots in the direction of four other unidentified males.

"As a result, the victim sustained a gunshot wound to the right hip/upper thigh area," police said. "The shooter then fled on foot to an unknown location." Police said the victim was transported by EMS to St. Barnabas Hospital in stable condition and there were no other reported injuries arising from the incident.

They said the suspect is described as male, is estimated to be between 18 and 22 years of age, has a dark complexion, a medium build, and black braided hair. They said he was last seen wearing a black jacket, a dark-blue sweater, dark-blue sweatpants, and black sneakers.



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.

Compstat Book	Week of 12/02/24 - 12/08/24					
	28 Day		Year to Date			
	% Chg	2024	2023	% Chg	2024	2023
Murder	0.0%	0	1	-100.0%	20	13
Rape-150.0%	1.0%	2	2	-80.0%	32	21
Robbery	-41.7%	29	29	-3.4%	369	336
Felony Assault	-10.0%	67	62	8.1%	838	756
Burglary	-1.0%	17	2	750.0%	202	148
Grand Larceny	-57.8%	43	36	25.0%	640	519
Grand Larceny Auto	-62.5%	14	18	-22.2%	303	367
Total	-31.1%	172	180	14.7%	2,308	2,056
Police	-30.0%	168	144	16.7%	2,280	1,886
Transit	-100.0%	0	2	0.0%	23	30
Housing	0.0%	2	4	-50.0%	26	26
Shooting Victims	0.0%	0	1	100.0%	84	81
Shooting Incidents	0.0%	0	1	200.0%	46	42
UCR Rape*	-100.0%	0	0	-46.7%	46	52
Other Sex Crimes	-33.3%	0	0	-33.3%	93	98
Petit Larceny	13.0%	77	69	11.6%	919	917
Med. Assault	-47.8%	58	64	6.3%	1,063	1,121
Hate Crimes	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	2
Traffic Fatalities	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	3	4

Source: NYPD

MAJOR CRIME STATISTICS for the 46th Precinct for the 28-day period ending Dec. 8, 2024, compared to last year (left), and year-to-date major crime statistics for the 46th Precinct as of Dec. 8, 2024, compared to last year (right).

Compstat Book	Week of 12/02/24 - 12/08/24					
	28 Day		Year to Date			
	% Chg	2024	2023	% Chg	2024	2023
Murder	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	1	5
Rape	0.0%	2	0	-1.0%	13	8
Robbery	-25.3%	9	14	-35.7%	131	149
Felony Assault	100.0%	22	12	83.3%	243	191
Burglary	-10.0%	2	9	-77.8%	147	136
Grand Larceny	41.7%	46	45	2.2%	693	639
Grand Larceny Auto	-46.7%	31	22	50.0%	329	327
Total	-8.9%	114	102	11.8%	1,567	1,404
Police	-13.8%	104	100	4.0%	1,484	1,370
Transit	0.0%	1	2	-50.0%	9	12
Housing	-1.0%	0	0	-1.0%	67	72
Shooting Victims	-1.0%	2	0	-1.0%	9	9
Shooting Incidents	-1.0%	2	0	-1.0%	9	9
UCR Rape*	0.0%	0	0	-1.0%	22	22
Other Sex Crimes	-100.0%	0	1	-100.0%	44	33
Petit Larceny	-13.0%	69	62	-25.0%	1,036	1,086
Med. Assault	40.0%	27	31	-12.9%	346	303
Hate Crimes	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	2	3
Traffic Fatalities	0.0%	0	1	-100.0%	1	3

Source: NYPD

MAJOR CRIME STATISTICS for the 50th Precinct for the 28-day period ending Dec. 8, 2024, compared to last year (left), and year-to-date major crime statistics for the 50th Precinct as of Dec. 8, 2024, compared to last year (right).

Compstat Book	Week of 12/02/24 - 12/08/24					
	28 Day		Year to Date			
	% Chg	2024	2023	% Chg	2024	2023
Murder	0.0%	1	0	-1.0%	11	9
Rape	0.0%	3	1	200.0%	43	33
Robbery	-28.6%	35	36	-2.8%	498	458
Felony Assault	-28.6%	48	58	-14.3%	736	661
Burglary	-40.0%	16	26	-38.5%	191	217
Grand Larceny	122.2%	67	55	21.8%	823	663
Grand Larceny Auto	25.0%	18	15	-15.8%	328	314
Total	4.3%	196	167	-8.3%	2,537	2,349
Police	9.1%	162	163	-0.5%	2,386	2,291
Transit	-66.7%	4	4	0.0%	47	49
Housing	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	4	9
Shooting Victims	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	36	15
Shooting Incidents	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	21	12
UCR Rape*	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	62	59
Other Sex Crimes	0.0%	4	0	-55.6%	98	97
Petit Larceny	-23.7%	115	161	-36.6%	1,724	2,409
Med. Assault	-6.3%	66	69	-4.3%	844	790
Hate Crimes	0.0%	0	1	-100.0%	3	4
Traffic Fatalities	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	3	5

Source: NYPD

MAJOR CRIME STATISTICS for the 52nd Precinct for the 28-day period ending Dec. 8, 2024, compared to last year (left), and year-to-date major crime statistics for the 52nd Precinct as of Dec. 8, 2024, compared to last year (right).

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Opinion

What Went Wrong? Everything

By **SILVIA BLUMENFELD**

Americans have voted for Donald Trump again. Forty-five will become forty-seven come January and Donald Trump will again have the most powerful job on the planet. It's a sobering, heartbreaking, but undeniable fact. The billionaires who enabled and engineered his campaign are celebrating.

Maybe it's time for some introspection by the rest of us. Some analysis is called for in addition to preparing to resist the abuse of power to come. White supremacy, xenophobia, misogyny, homophobia, and Christian nationalism have won the battle, but we must not al-

low them to win the war. To some, the MAGA victory seems inexplicable, but is this really the case?

Today, many working-class Americans of all different ethnic and racial backgrounds have been captured by right-wing populist rhetoric, and those who espouse such rhetoric falsely claim to represent the interests of those same working-class Americans.

History informs us that demagogues, authoritarians, and fascists can win when a people come to feel unseen and unheard. Perhaps this sense of alienation began with some policies first conceived by Republicans, but later actualized by Democrats.

There was only muted opposition when the Democratic Clinton administration enacted the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a trade agreement between the United States, Canada, and Mexico that aimed to eliminate trade barriers and create a free-trade zone, and other free trade deals. These policies had a profound effect on working-class Americans. In our industrial heartland, manufacturing plants closed, and the good jobs lost were never recovered.

In our urban areas, and across the country, those who worked in the care economy, in child or elder care, for ex-

ample, earned poverty-level wages too.

Did American workers abandon the Democratic Party or did the Party abandon them? The deterioration of the social fabric is a story told in small towns and large cities. The country saw increased substance use, homelessness, violence, and mental illness. There appears to be little acknowledgment that certain economic policies gave rise to these conditions.

Americans struggling to get by day-to-day or paycheck-to-paycheck have real concerns. Among these are housing, healthcare, education, and even basic safety. Republicans offered no real solutions, but skillfully deflected and redirected the rage by calling out "woke" policies.

Suddenly, attention was turned to book bans in our schools and libraries. A perceived threat stemming from the presence of transgender people in bathrooms became a focus of their campaign. No one was really addressing economic issues, but the incumbent Party took the blame for high prices and stubborn inflation.

I would have liked to see Democrats talk about raising the minimum wage. It would have been great to hear some solid plans for more affordable housing. How about a robust plan for ex-

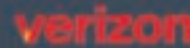
panding Obamacare to a real national health plan? Sadly, for the first time in many decades, the popular vote has gone to the Republicans.

Democrats need to organize, fight back, and articulate a different and fuller vision, but we will need to work hard. Trump sold his deeply cynical world view in a particular way. The MAGA movement is essentially a fascist movement. Fascists gain traction by scapegoating marginalized groups. Trump's repeated attacks on immigrants, people of color, LGBTQ+ and non-binary people, and women were largely successful. Many Americans bought into the idea of a zero-sum game. White grievance has grown.

It now appears that many Americans are ready and willing to accept all manner of atrocities for a chance at a ride on Trump's elusive golden escalator. They will, of course, be deeply disappointed, but by that time, the oppression and destruction unleashed by a second Trump administration may not be so easily overcome. We have a lot of work to do- and the hour is getting late.

Silvia Blumenfeld is a Bronx resident and a founding member of the Northwest Bronx Indivisible chapter.






PRESENTS

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Letters To The Editor

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

Th Bronx Might Have a Chance after All

Some good news came out of NYC Board of Elections recently where Democratic enrollment is down and Republican enrollment is up 2%. I would encourage all Bronxites to change their enrollment from the disastrous Democratic Party and join a party of hope - either the Republican or Conservative parties. [U.S. President Joe] Biden will go down in history as the greatest liar for constantly telling us he would not pardon that bum of a son of his, Hunter. Of course, in typical Democratic Party style, he waits until after the election, right near the end of his term, and goes off to Africa to minimize the public outrage. (Didn't Gov. [Kathy] Hochul use the same playbook move with congestion pricing?) He even took that farce of a press secretary with him who defended

his denials all along. I would urge U.S. President [Donald] Trump to buy a carton of Lysol to spray in the Oval Office upon his arrival in January.

**Richard Marias,
Norwood**

[Alleged] Rudeness on MTA & Bee-Line Buses

Over the course of the past several months, starting this year, I've learned about what they call a "courtesy ride" on many MTA buses. Because I am partially disabled due to arthritis, and perhaps have partial sciatica, I get to have bus rides for free, and I can literally go anywhere I want to free of charge!

However, and I'll say this briefly, some bus drivers I've encountered on both the MTA and Bee-line routes have been rather unkind to their disabled brethren, particularly those from, dare I say, Black and Brown communities. The irony is they, [the drivers] themselves, are minorities of many kinds. But I will get my sense of justice when I sue the pants off both these

riding entities. I hear the law firm of Rubenstein and Rynecki is especially good in this field! More to follow..

To conclude, I feel I should embark on a journey that perhaps will take me all the way from, say, the very tip of Downtown Brooklyn to the very grand heights of Westchester County and write about it like a travelogue by author Jack Kerouac, except I'm a man of color, both of African American and Native American descent. This is a great journey that many readers would come to love, and love to read about, and even witness, if I record parts of my journey on social media such as IG, or even X.

**Bryan Briggs
Wakefield**

Editor's Note: Norwood News asked Mr. Briggs which bus routes he typically takes, what type of [alleged] rudeness he typically encounters, and whether he has witnessed other riders of color experience rudeness from bus drivers.

We also reached out to both the MTA and Bee-line bus service for comment on Mr. Brigg's letter. We will share any feedback we receive.

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.

Fordham Manor: Minivan Combusts on Street Damaging Two Other Parked Vehicles

(continued from page 7)

everybody was just paying attention to how, like... everybody was watching it blow up. So it was just...everybody was just in there watching and nobody called.. Nobody.. nobody told nobody."

Wraithin continued in part, "Then the firefighters came." Vingacy added, "I think someone in the building called the firefighters but the few that was outside didn't call nobody."

Wraithin said, "Once it exploded, that's when the firefighters came and then turned off the flames." Asked if they were scared. laughing, one said no and the other said he had been a bit scared. Vingacy added, "I was just like, 'What the [expletive] is it?'"

Asked if they were 100 percent sure there was nobody inside the vehicles, they said, "Yeah, you could see." Asked if they could see what was in the back of the minivan, they said, "No, no, it looked like a lot of stuff right there. Probably chairs. Who knows?" Inside the burned-out vehicle, there appeared to be a possible wall mirror, but it was difficult to make out the rest.

We also spoke to Frank, owner of a local barber shop, Nana's Beauty Center, located on University Avenue opposite East 188th Street, about the incident. "I just saw the van smoking and I call the fire department," he said. "Then, I went with the fire extinguisher with a guy from the store to [inaudible] the fire."

Frank continued, "But it was too much. Then, the fire department took longer today, so I tried to do the best I could by putting it out, but it was too much." He said he emptied his fire extinguisher in his efforts to tackle the blaze. Asked if he knew how



Photo by Síle Moloney

THE CHARRED REMAINS of two vehicles are seen on East 188th Street at University Avenue in Fordham Manor on Saturday evening, Dec. 7, 2024, after the white minivan (right) erupted into flames earlier that day causing damage to the second vehicle (pictured) and to another third vehicle parked nearby.

it started, Frank said, "No, I've no idea. Somebody told me the car was smoking and I called the fire department right away."

Norwood News previously reported on an occupied car which suddenly exploded into flames in December 2023 in Norwood. The two male occupants of the vehicle managed to escape on that occasion. We will share any further updates we receive from the FDNY on this latest vehicle fire, including the cause.

We reached out to the NYPD to ask if the department was investigating any potential criminality in relation to the incident. We were referred to the FDNY.

To read FDNY's fire safety tips, visit <https://www.fdnysmart.org/>. "During a fire, always close the door behind you!" fire officials say. "It helps contain smoke and flames, giving you precious time to escape. Your quick action can make the difference."

Out & About

Compiled by ARIEL PACHECO

EVENTS

The 52nd Precinct is hosting a **Toy Giveaway** on Friday, Dec. 20, at 4 p.m. at 3016 Webster Avenue in Norwood, The Bronx. There will also be hot chocolate and the opportunity to take pictures with Santa. Kids must be present to receive a toy. For more information, call (718) 220-5824. Meanwhile, the Precinct's Santa Float procession has been postponed to Tuesday, Dec. 17, at 5 p.m. (or if not then, Wednesday, Dec. 18, at 5 p.m.) starting on Webster Avenue and proceeding to East 204th Street, and on to Bainbridge Avenue, Jerome Avenue, the Grand Concourse, and East Fordham Road.

The Jerome Gun Hill BID and Councilmember Eric Dinowitz (C.D. 11) are hosting a **Holiday Tree-Lighting celebration** on Wednesday, Dec. 18, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Jerome-Mosholu Plaza beneath Mosholu Parkway (4) subway station. The event is free and open to the public. For more information, call (718) 549-7300.

The Office of the Bronx Borough President will host a **Chanukah Celebration and Menorah Lighting** at Bronx Borough Hall, 851 Grand Concourse, The Bronx on Thursday, Dec. 26, from 3.30 p.m. to 5 p.m. There will also be refreshments and a sing song.

Join the Bronx County Historical Society for **Forgotten New York: Central and North Bronx** on Monday, Dec. 16, at 7 p.m. on Zoom. Join Kevin Walsh of *Forgotten New York*, a website that highlights objects, neighborhoods, and aspects of New York City that have gone unnoticed by guidebooks, for a free, virtual book talk. Walsh will be taking a look at Norwood, Fordham, Belmont, Kingsbridge Heights, and more. For more information, call (718) 881-8900.

DANCE

NYC Parks is hosting a **Silent Disco** on Friday, Dec. 13, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, 3225 Reservoir Oval East, in Norwood, The Bronx. This event is free and open to the public. Come out and dance to your favorite music, using headphones. For more information, call (718) 543-8672.

The Westchester Ballet Company presents **The Nutcracker** on Saturday, Dec. 14, at 2 p.m. at the Lehman Center for Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Park Boulevard West, Bronx, NY 10468. The Nutcracker is a full-length presentation of the holiday classic featuring a cast of 100 dancers. For more information, call (718) 960-8000.

MOVEMENT

Join NYC Parks at the Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, 3225 Reservoir Oval East, Bronx, NY 10467, on Friday, Dec. 20, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. for the **Fit and Fabulous** program, consisting of choreographed exercises to music. The class is open to all levels of fitness. Participants will complete a full-body workout, ranging from low to high intensity. For more information, call (718) 543-8672.

LITERATURE

One Book One Bronx will host a **Book Talk** on "The Fire Next Time" by James Baldwin on Thursdays, Dec. 19, Dec. 26, 2024, and Jan. 2, 2025, from 7 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. on Zoom. To register, visit <https://onebookonebronx.com/>.

KIDS

The Kingsbridge branch of New York Public Library, located at 291 West 231st Street in Kingsbridge, The Bronx, is hosting a **3D Printing for Kids** class on Wednesday, Dec. 18, at 3.30 p.m. Kids aged 8 to 12 are invited to create their own mini design with Tinkercad software. Once the design is complete, it is theirs to print out and keep. Space is limited. For more information, call (718) 548-5656.

City and State Officials Celebrate Opening of St. James Terrace

By **ARIEL PACHECO**

State, City and local officials, including those from New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the opening of the newly constructed St. James Terrace, a mixed-income, affordable, and supportive housing development located at 2520 Jerome Avenue in Fordham Manor on Oct. 29.

HCR is the State's affordable housing agency, "with a mission to build, preserve, and protect affordable housing and increase homeownership throughout New York State."

The nine-story, 102-unit residence is located adjacent to St. James Episcopal Church, a designated landmark in The Bronx, and the building includes a rooftop terrace, resident lounges, multi-purpose rooms, a laundry room, bicycle storage, and a fitness room. Residents of St. James Terrace and the Church community will have access to a new landscaped courtyard located between the church and the residential building.

NYS Assembly Member Yudelka Tapia (A.D. 86) said at the ceremony, "This is one of the poorest districts that we have in the State of New York and not only that, one of the biggest crises we have right now is affordable housing."

According to officials, the \$64 million development will include a community center and a weekly food pantry along with an afterschool program that will provide tutoring and snacks to school-aged children who live in the residence.

Ruthanne Visnauskas, commissioner at HCR, said at the ceremony, "St. James Terrace is a shining example of the power of partnership and addressing a housing crisis that has impacted people throughout New York City and especially here in The Bronx."

Meanwhile, Ramon Sanchez, a resident of St. James Terrace, said of the new complex, "I found something that I've been seeking my whole life - stability. It shows me that there are resources and that there are ways for things to be accomplished."

Concern Housing, a nonprofit agency committed to helping individuals and families to live in the community with dignity and enhanced opportunities through the provision of housing and support services, manages the project. Ralph Fasano, its executive director, said, "St. James Terrace represents not only the hard work and dedication of all those who made this possible, but also a brighter future for the members of the community who will call it home."

He added, "New York City is in desperate need of more affordable and supportive housing, and we are grateful for our partners who have helped make this moment possible. Providing a stable place to live against this beautiful and historic backdrop is an immense source of pride for our organization."

For her part, Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson said, "Affordable housing is crucial in addressing the housing crisis in The Bronx. The completion of St. James Terrace is a significant

step forward, providing 102 new homes and essential services for our most vulnerable residents. I want to thank Gov. [Kathy] Hochul, St. James Episcopal Church and everyone else who was involved in bringing this project to fruition."

As reported, during the Bronx CB7 Housing Committee meeting dated Sept. 15, 2020, a spirited debate evolved among residents, committee members and church representatives over plans to build the affordable housing complex.

Some homeowners had concerns that the addition of more affordable housing in the area would affect the value of their homes. They also had concerns that the neighborhood did not have sufficient school, transportation, or other resources or amenities to absorb more residents.

During the discussion, then-Bronx Community Board 7 District Manager Ischia Bravo ensured all parties were heard, stepping in to check anyone who sought to badger homeowners over their concerns, while also contextualizing the need for more affordable housing by saying, "Being poor is not a crime."

As also reported, in May 2023, the

New York Episcopal Federal Credit Union (NYEFCU) was officially launched on the campus of St. James Episcopal Church, located at 2500 Jerome Avenue, opposite Monroe College. Officials said at the time the launch marked a major milestone in enhancing financial inclusivity for those who they described as the diocese's marginalized and unbanked populations, and signified a new chapter in the church's mission to promote justice and compassion in the world.

Meanwhile, State Sen. Gustavo Rivera (S.D. 33) also welcomed the opening of the new affordable housing complex, which he said will provide families with an affordable place to live along with the supportive services they need to achieve long-term stability. He added, "It is essential that we continue to prioritize affordable housing in our city."



ASSEMBLY MEMBER YUDELKA Tapia (A.D. 86) speaks at the ribbon-cutting ceremony marking the opening of St. James Terrace mixed-use building at 2520 Jerome Avenue on Oct. 29, 2024.

PHOTO BY ARIEL Pacheco

Fordham Manor: Man Charged for Bringing Loaded Machine Gun into Subway Released on Bail

By **SÍLE MOLONEY & DAVID GREENE**

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark announced on Tuesday, Dec. 10, that the Bronx man who was arrested for bringing a loaded machine gun into Kingsbridge Road subway station on Election Day, Nov. 5, has been charged with criminal possession of a weapon and additional charges. As reported, the man was caught by police with an assault-style rifle and a large-capacity magazine in his backpack inside the station.

"The defendant allegedly brought a disassembled semi-automatic rifle and ammunition typically used in hunting into a subway station, putting commuters at risk," Clark said. "We will not tolerate firearms in public places, especially high-powered weapons that can cause mass injuries."

She said Abraham Sosa, 20, of Fillmore Street in the Van Nest section of The Bronx, was indicted on two counts of second-degree criminal possession of a weapon, three counts of third-degree criminal possession of a weapon, criminal possession of a firearm, two counts of fourth-degree criminal possession of a weapon, second-degree assault, third-degree assault, second-degree obstructing governmental administration, resisting arrest, trespass, and possession of ammunition.

The district attorney said Sosa was arraigned before Bronx Supreme Court Justice Seth Steed on Dec. 6, when

bail was set at \$25,000 cash/\$75,000 bond/\$75,000 partially secured bond at 5%, and is due back in court in March 2025.

According to the investigation, and as reported, on Nov. 5, at around 4.31 p.m., NYPD Transit Officers allegedly saw Sosa enter a restricted tunnel at the Kingsbridge Road subway station serving the B/D lines, located in Fordham Manor, and started to urinate. Prosecutors said that when approached by officers, Sosa allegedly resisted arrest and attempted to run away, knocking three officers to the ground.

They said when he was placed under arrest, the disassembled rifle, which was in two parts, fell out of his backpack. They said the serial number on the firearm was defaced, and they said he allegedly had 24 rounds of 300 Blackout ammunition in a large-capacity ammunition feeding device and also had one in the chamber.

The NY Post previously reported that at least one Bronx detective and a representative for the Police Benevolent Association (PBA) had been critical of the fact that the defendant was released on bail. *Norwood News* asked the Bronx District Attorney's office if bail had been opposed by the prosecution during Sosa's arraignment. We did not receive an immediate response.

We had also previously reached out to the PBA for comment on the matter. We did not receive an immediate response.

As reported, police said that during Sosa's arrest, a second 21-year-old man attempted to interfere. They said the 21-year-old kicked an officer's body-worn camera onto the subway track, was subsequently taken into custody, and was later found to be in possession of an officer's cellphone.

They said the second man, Christopher Mayren, 21, from the Morris Park section of The Bronx, was arrested and charged with first-degree obstructing governmental administration, third-degree criminal mischief, fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property, petit larceny, second-degree aggravated harassment, and second-degree harassment.

Both defendants are deemed innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law.



Photo courtesy of the Office of the Bronx District Attorney

MACHINE GUN RECOVERED by police on Tuesday, Nov. 5, 2024, at Kingsbridge Road subway station in the Fordham Manor section of The Bronx.



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Public and Community Meetings

The next 52nd **PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meeting will take place on Thursday, Dec. 19, at 6 p.m. at Monroe University (formerly Monroe College), 2501 Jerome Ave, Bronx, NY 10468. 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, Dec. 17, at 6.30 p.m. also at Monroe University's Kings Hall, 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 (hybrid) meeting will be in January 2025 (date TBC). Contact BX08@cb.nyc.gov to be added to the distribution list.

The **BEDFORD MOSHOLU COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION** meetings are held the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. at 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy. South in Apt. B1 (lobby floor). For more details, please contact bedfordmosholu@verizon.net.

CORRECTIONS

In the Nov. 28-Dec 11, 2024, edition of the *Norwood News*, in the Crime File story entitled "Kingsbridge: Man Sought for Group Assault," published on page 10, we omitted the accompanying photo. We have therefore included the same story and photo in this week's edition.

In the same Nov. 28 edition, in our Page 9 story entitled, "Marcus Garvey Square Unveiled," one of the words by District 12 City Council Member Kevin Riley was misquoted due to an AI-generated transcript of his remarks. The correct quote was: "I stand on the shoulders of giants and advocates that thank you all for paving the way for moments like this."

In the same edition, on the same page and story, the bottom photo caption should have read as follows: "COUNCILMAN KEVIN RILEY (C.D. 12) organized a food giveaway to coincide with the renaming of Marcus Garvey Square on Friday, Nov. 22, 2024." We apologize for these errors.

NOTICE TO READERS

Since we're still recruiting for a salesperson, due to ongoing staff shortages, the editor of the *Norwood News* has accumulated several weeks' vacation and the only available time to take these vacation days is around year-end. The Dec. 12 print edition is the 24th and last print edition of 2024. Our next print edition will be published on Jan. 9, 2025, therefore. We thank everyone, as always, for reading, and we wish you all happy holidays and a safe, joyful and peaceful new year!

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“Coach D Remembered”

(continued from page 1)

important. “He gave 100% of himself every single day,” she said. She recalled one month when he dedicated himself to football for four weeks straight. “On Monday, he did Clinton and Bucs, on Tuesday, he did Clinton, on Wednesday, he’s with Clinton and Bucs, on Thursday and Friday, he did Clinton, on Saturday, Bucs had a game, on Sunday, Clinton had a game,” she said. “We wound up for four weeks; every single time he was there.”

She spoke of how once Downer only had 15 players show up for practice, and when she asked him what he was going to do, he said, “I guess these 15 will get the best of me that I got.” Channeling Downer’s much-lauded positive energy, and even as tears streamed down her face at times, Andrews interwove her speech with various sporting analogies and terms like “the breakdown” to encourage grieving players not to give up on life despite their sadness.

“That’s a position of stance when no one can knock you down and you have balance,” Andrews said. “The stronger your breakdown is, the better you will be able to stand against the obstacles that come before you, or that you have to face.”

She continued in part, “The strong arm, or the stiff arm as it’s called, used to defend yourself or hold back your opponent for opposition in life, you just won’t strongarm anyone physically, but mentally. Keep people away from you who are not good for you, or who are trying to hold you down, or trying to pull you away from what you need to do. Be strong. Stop trying to let people take you away from your purpose. Use that strong arm to keep them back.”

Andrews added, “So, now you have two hands to move those things out of your way. It might be hard and tough. Some of them might be big, but you have the knowledge and the ability and the power to do so. Keep your eyes on the ball. If you keep your eyes on the ball, you will never lose that ball. You won’t lose your focus.”

She went on to say there were many other football practices and mechanics that Coach D had taught his teams. “That wasn’t about football, Guys,” Andrews said, her voice cracking at times. “These things were meant for y’all to take along in your life. For all of you who were touched by him, who have been coached by him, who got to know him, the way he lived was not because he wanted accolades.”

Joking at one point, she said Downer would have been upset to know such a big crowd was standing out in the cold together thinking about him. “The way he lived was not because he wanted to be important or special,” she said. “He didn’t even know how special he was because he was so lowkey.”

Throughout the vigil, people of all ages took their turn to stand and address the crowd and to speak about how Downer had influenced them in one way

or another. In true sports fashion, there was also some slow clapping and chanting of “Coach D” at various intervals.

Another attendee named Patrick, said, “This is my first year being a part of the Bucca organization. One thing I can say about this man is he’s a real father figure to each and every one of us. He brought all of us together as a family, and like I told him, I wouldn’t trade this with nothing in the world, nothing hands down. This man is the best, the best, the best person I ever met.”

One of the younger players from the Under 14s group said in part, “Today, I’m here to speak about a great, empowering man in this community who was my coach for my last season. He was such a positive man and never looked down or belittled any of us. He always lifted us up, and instead of looking down on us when we made mistakes, he helped us get rid of our mistakes.”

The young player spoke about a time when he broke his leg and was in a Brooklyn hospital waiting for hours for his mom to arrive. He said Coach D stayed with him the entire time, even though he was tired. “He stood on my side from when the injury occurred to when my mom got there, even while my mom was there, still needed to get the results of what happened,” he said.

Recalling how Downer would gently tease him during his recovery from his injury, the young player added in part, “He’s a big part of the reason I am the great player I am today, also the reason why I don’t take jokes to heart anymore. I really wish he was here to see my progression with my injury. God bless all of you guys and rest in peace, Coach D.”

Another young player, Stanley, described Downer as a tough coach. “He was very loud, you know? I heard him. I remember the first time he went up to me. He went up to my mom. He went up to my stepdad. He said, all of us, my brothers, we had talent. My first year in fourth season, he believed in me. He saw potential, and I will never forget what he told my mom. He said that I was the key to the way out. Coach D believed me since Day 1.”

He continued in part, “He always tried to fix mistakes where it’s due, and give credit where it’s due. I know sometimes I used to get on his bad side, or even get him mad, but I know Coach D loved me, and not seeing him anymore, even him telling me to do another push up or a lap, it hurts. I still hear him too. I love Coach D a lot. I’m thankful for him pushing me to my limits and making me the better player and a better person. Rest in peace Coach D.”

We spoke to Michael Husbands at one point who said he’d been coaching alongside Downer for the last three years. “Coach was a good man,” Husbands said. “He loved these kids. He loved football. He gave his time. It was 100% effort from all his kids, and I wasn’t even aware of how much of his time he dedicated until he passed, and it’s devastating.”

He continued, “Both of my boys



Photo by Sile Moloney

TASHA ANDREWS, PARTNER of 60-year-old volunteer football coach, Dwight Downer, addresses those gathered in the Williamsbridge Oval park in Norwood on Friday, Dec. 5, 2024, to pay tribute to the man who died tragically following a multiple-vehicle road collision on Saturday morning, Nov. 30, 2024, in the East Bronx.

played with him, and just a conversation a couple months ago, one of my sons was saying, ‘Thank God for him, because I wouldn’t have had played football if it wasn’t for him.’ And I’m glad I got the opportunity to tell him that before he passed. So, he will be missed. It’s some big shoes to fill. The impact he made on me, like falling in love with football again. It’s been like learning Xs and Os from them, through him, through the boys, and it was such a blessing just having him around, and like this is a shock to the system.”

Following news of Downer’s passing, one social media post from DeWitt Clinton Football read, “Over the past 6 years, our community has been blessed to have Coach D volunteer his time and teach the Bronx youth the game of football.”

The post continued, in part, “He never missed a game or practice. Coach D was a role model for students of all ages in the Bronx. He truly cared about the person more than the player. He helped and mentored multiple student athletes and did this on his own time and never asked to be compensated for his time. Just know our community is a better place because of his hard work and love for his community. Coach D, you will be missed. And we know he’ll be with us every time we step on the field. RIP”

Meanwhile, the president of the NYC Correction Officers’ Benevolent Association (COBA)’s executive board also extended his condolences to the Downer family on social media. He said Downer was a retired NYC Department of Corrections officer, who had served the agency “admirably” for nearly 30 years. The post continued in part, “We all mourn this tragic loss to both our COBA family and to his community.”

Of the fatal accident, police said officers from the 47th Precinct responded to a 911 call on Nov 30 regarding a pedestrian [Downer] who had been struck at the intersection of Givan Avenue and Eastchester Road in the East Bronx, south of Edenwald.

“Further investigation by the NYPD Highway District Collision Investigation Squad determined that a 2013 BMW 328 XI, operated by a 24-year-old male was traveling eastbound on Eastchester Road, when he struck an unknown pick-up truck that was traveling

northbound on Givan Avenue,” a police spokesperson said.

“After the initial impact, the BMW collided with a parked and unattended 2020 Acura MDX, a 2007 Nissan Murano, and a 60-year-old male pedestrian who was standing alongside the Nissan,” the spokesperson added. “After striking the pedestrian, the BMW collided with a parked and unattended 2014 Honda Accord and a 2007 Toyota Camry.”

Police said EMS responded to the scene and transported the pedestrian to NYC Health and Hospitals/Jacobi where he was pronounced deceased. They said the driver of the BMW remained at the scene and was later also transported by EMS to NYC Health and Hospitals/Jacobi for minor injuries. They said there are no arrests, and the investigation remains ongoing by the NYPD Highway District Collision Investigation Squad.

A gofundme page has been set up for Downer’s family to help cover the cost of funeral arrangements and any other related costs incurred. Any remaining funds will be donated to the football programs where he volunteered his time. The link to the page is as follows: https://www.gofundme.com/f/honoring-coach-d-a-community-loss?utm_campaign=fp_sharesheet&utm_medium=customer&utm_source=native_options.

Funeral details for Downer were later published, with visitation on Friday, Dec. 13, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. at Eastchester Presbyterian Church, followed by a church service. Those who cannot attend in person are invited to join via Zoom using Meeting ID: 821 3561 9406 and Passcode: 577481.

Back at the vigil, Andrews ensured to make a call to action to the players, saying, “Kids, I’m begging you! Like I said in Clinton, please don’t let his life be in vain. Please don’t let everything that he gave you, that he wanted to give you be lost and forgotten. For those of you who had no other reason to be great, please let this be your reason. Love each other. Take care of each other.”



Photo by Sile Moloney

COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS of 60-year-old volunteer football coach, Dwight Downer, address those gathered in the Williamsbridge Oval park in Norwood on Friday, Dec. 5, 2024, to pay tribute to the man who died tragically following a multiple-vehicle road collision on Saturday morning, Nov. 30, 2024, in the East Bronx.

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