

New flood zone maps by FEMA

BY KIRSTEN SANCHEZ

Bronxites are bracing for a flood of increases to their flood insurance premiums as the Federal Emergency Management Agency prepares to release its new flood zone maps for the borough this month.

After Hurricane Sandy smashed through the city, 35,000 homeowners whose properties were left in ruins will now be forced to raise their homes by several feet or face large increases in their flood insurance premiums.

FEMA officials were already updating the maps, from the 1980's, when Sandy hit.

Bronx elected officials will get a first hand look at the new maps before they are released, said FEMA representative Hannah Vick, to let them "know what we are looking at and why the new zones are where they are."

The agency uses scientific modeling and data from storms similar to Sandy and area flood patterns to determine the new flood zones, she said.

Vick said there will be a public notice, comment period and open houses.

Locust Point change

Chrys Napolitano, president of the Locust Point Civic Association, said her mortgage company has already notified her that she has gone from a Zone B to a prime Zone A flood zone and that her insurance will be increased.

Continued on Page 4



Photo by Josiane Banke

TD BANK HELPS KIDS MAKE 'CENTS'

Learning how to save your pennies makes "cents" for Hector Gerardo, giving the thumbs up to a kid-friendly financial literacy course. The Mott Haven Charter School fourth grader was one of several dozen kids learning the basics of banking Feb 11. The course was sponsored by TD Bank, one of many donors for the charter school.

ST. RAY'S VANDAL CAUGHT

Cemetery's bronze fixtures stolen

BY BOB KAPPSTATTER

A homeless drug addict was under arrest, charged as the St. Raymond's Cemetery ghoul believed responsible for ripping off up to \$180,000 in bronze and copper mausoleum fixtures there.

Louis Peduto, 56, was arrested late Tuesday afternoon near the Throggs Neck cemetery.

He was charged with larceny and possessing burglary tools and drugs, police said.

Law enforcement sources said

the suspect treated the cemetery as his own scrap yard, returning over the past several months to rip off the fixtures to sell for drug money.

"You can tell from the green oxidation where the cuts were made that it's been going on for awhile," said one source.

One of the busiest cemeteries in the nation with about 4,000 plots, officials there and their private security firm finally became aware of the one-man grave robbing opera-

Continued on Page 4

Diaz delivers State of the Borough address

BY DAVID CRUZ

Amid the national debate on gun control, the Bronx's chief executive officer has an idea to win the war on gun violence

Orating at his fourth State of the Borough address, Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. pitched a proposal for an online gun regis-

try akin to those for sex offenders.

"The registry would require perpetrators of gun violence to keep updated records with the police regarding their living and employment arrangements," said Diaz Jr., speaking before a packed crowd of lawmakers, dignitaries and civic groups at his Tuesday,

Feb. 19 address inside James Monroe High School.

"We know that a lot of the people who commit these crimes have done it before," said Diaz. He plans to hold meetings with the Bronx Democratic caucus on ironing out his idea.

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BOROUGH PRESIDENT RUBEN DIAZ, JR. MORE PHOTOS ON PAGE 6

The Bronx Polar Bear Swim 2013

BY DAVID CRUZ

Call them crazy, but these Bronxites wanted to make a big splash – plunging into Orchard Beach in the dead of winter.

“It’s a natural high,” said Jim McDonnell of Country Club. He was one of dozens of thrill seeking locals sprinting into the sandy shores as part of the third annual Bronx Polar Bears swim on Saturday, Feb. 16.

They teamed with the Brooklyn Polar Bears, the

popular sister group known for taking its eccentric swim into Coney Island Beach every New Years Day.

McDonnell joined his fellow polar bears for about 20 minutes, his adrenaline jacking up once he climbed into the 34-degree water.

“It clears the head,” said McDonnell, a custodial engineer who swam with wife Lisa, honoring the Valentine’s Day theme of swimming with “someone you love.”

He’s been treading the



Can someone tell them it's winter!?! It may be freezing but these Polar Bears feel right at home, swimming Orchard Beach as though it were the peak of summer. **SEE MORE PHOTOS ON PAGE 7**

Photo by Josiane Bauke

frigid ocean for 11 years, an activity he credits to curing his bronchitis.

“I haven’t had it in a long time,” he boasted.

He’s now become a regular polar bear, swimming in Coney Island or in a backyard beach belonging to his Locust Point neighbor.

McDonnell brushed off feelings of hypothermia,

Sharon Harris, an hon-

orary polar bear who was invited to the weekend swim, prepared by taking cold showers.

Harris strapped on her pink swimsuit and boxing gloves, a symbolic gesture of her “knocking out” breast cancer.

Her remission has given her a second chance at life, embracing venues like the swim.

“Being that I beat cancer everything,” said Harris. “I said ‘this is my second time at life; I’m going to do it.’”

She later grabbed a cup of soup from celebrity chef and fellow swimmer Terry French, and drove back home without drying up. “I just came back home wet.”

Back in the early 2000s, the Bronx Polar Bears were active until funding for per-

mits and insured dried up. But public access station BronxNET stepped in to donate money needed to rejuvenate the annual swim.

“It’s cathartic, it’s refreshing,” said Michael Knobbe, head of BronxNET and avid swimmer.

So long as funding is in place, he said, the Bronx Polar Bears intend to come back every Valentine’s Day.

Monte advisory board mystery

Community Board 10 says there is one; Monte says maybe

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

Depending on who you talk to, there is an advisory board for the Westchester Square Medical Center taken over by Montefiore Medical Center. Or there isn’t. A Montefiore spokesperson said they were “not aware” on any advisory board being created for the soon-to-be-renamed Montefiore Westchester Square.

But Community Board 10 chairman John Marano said that Montefiore had asked the board to supply names for a community advisory panel.

Several local people confirmed they were asked to sit on such a panel.

Einstein and Jacobi medical centers have similar boards, and consumer or

community advisory boards are common for many medical facilities.

The new Westchester Square facility would have an emergency room and ambulatory care with specialty services, but will not be a full-service hospital.

“They don’t need to do an advisory board, from what I understand,” Marano said of Montefiore, “but felt that it would be a good idea. We said, ‘Yes, we thought it would be a good idea also.’”

Marano said the idea of an advisory panel came up after a January board health and human services committee meeting.

He said among those recommended were Deborah Hunt, a nurse who chairs the committee; Lou Rocco,

president of the Westchester Square Civic Association; Mohamed Ali of the square’s Muslim community, and local activist Hannah Acampora. Marano stressed it is still a tentative plan.

“I don’t want to lose an opportunity to have an advisory board,” he said. “They are going to be the eyes and the ears of Montefiore. They are going to bring the different needs, wants and concerns of the community.”

Several Westchester Square area community leaders contacted by the Bronx Times Reporter confirmed that they were asked by CB 10 about sitting on an advisory board. They included Sandi Lusk of the Westchester Square Zerega Improvement Organization;

Lisa Sorin, executive director of the Westchester Square Business Improvement District; and Rocco.

Rocco said he hoped the board would provide some much needed input between the community and Montefiore. While there were issues in the community with the existing hospital, he said he was glad the building would not be vacant.

“The building is not going anywhere,” he said.

Some of the community’s concerns include idling ambulances causing pollution, he said. Montefiore’s spokeswoman did not confirm that they are creating a community advisory panel, but said they are already working with the community.

“Montefiore has a his-



Assemblyman Benedetto (r) speaks to nurses and their supporters at Feb. 7 last-ditch rally to save Westchester Square Medical Center. The rally was held outside Federal Building in Manhattan where bankruptcy sale of hospital’s assets to Montefiore was approved.

courtesy of New York State Nurses Association

tory of being a committed member of the communities in which we operate,” she said a statement from Montefiore. “In that tradition, we have already been working closely with members of the Westchester Square community and feel very grateful

for the the input and support we’ve already received from so many. We look forward to offering accessible, high quality health care services in the neighborhood and to deepening our engagement with our community partners over time.”

Boro reacts to news of Pope Benedict XVI's departure

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

The news of Pope Benedict XVI's historic resignation drew surprise in the borough, as it did around the world, among faithful Catholics.

But many of the faithful called the news good news, because it shows the humility of the pope, "papa" of an estimated billion Catholics around the world.

Timothy Cardinal Dolan, the Archbishop of New York and spiritual leader of 2.6 million Catholics, said that Pope Benedict had a "message for eternity," with his belief in the significance of eternal truths.

"The Holy Father brought the tender heart of a pastor, the incisive mind of a scholar and the confidence of a soul united with his God in all he did," said Dolan, who will be one of the electors of the new pope. "His resignation is but another sign of his great care for the church. We are sad

that he will be resigning but grateful for his eight years of selfless leadership as successor of St. Peter."

Monsignor John Graham, pastor of St. Raymond Church and East Bronx Vicar, said that being pope is very demanding. It requires endless meetings, receptions of visitors from around the world, interviews, talks, and travel.

He added that he was surprised, but not shocked, because in the past few months, the Pope, who will soon be 86, looked exhausted.

St. Raymond's congregation prayed for Pope Benedict this past Sunday, and are saying a special prayer this week for the pontiff.

A change of office while the pope is alive, and selection of a new pope, is virgin territory for the Catholic Church, said Graham.

"The process is moving along smoothly and methodically. It has just never happened this way before," said



Pope Benedict XVI acknowledges a cheering crowd of faithful and pilgrims during the Angelus prayer from the window of his apartments at the Vatican, Sunday, Feb. 17, 2013. AP Photo/Domenico Stinellis

Graham. "He is writing a new chapter in church history."

Other Bronx Catholic clergy said parishioners initially expressed some surprise over the news.

"Certainly it is has generated a number of specula-

tions and a lot of questions," said Father Stephen Norton, pastor of St. Benedict Church in Throggs Neck.

Having the pope step aside because of the physical demands of the office is a beautiful example of his humility,

said Norton.

Pope Benedict will now spend his time in quiet prayer, preparing to meet God whenever he is called, said Fr. Norton.

"It could be as simple as just stepping back," he said,

adding that it sets a wonderful example for all people.

Msgr. Anthony Marchitelli, pastor of Our Lady of Assumption Church in Pelham Bay, said that after the initial surprise, people saw wisdom in the pope's decision.

"The consensus seems to think it is a good thing," said Marchitelli. "If he doesn't think he is able to physically do the job, it is good for him to go into a life of prayer."

Marchitelli said he had met the Pope when he was Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, and found him to be a kind and competent human being.

Pope Benedict XVI was elected pope by the Cardinal electors in 2005.

According to a Feb. 17 New York Times article, Cardinal electors are already speaking and e-mailing about potential candidates.

Pope Benedict's resignation becomes official at the end of February.


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Insurance premiums to rise with new flood zone mapping by FEMA

From page 1

"It was not really a surprise. It really shouldn't be to anyone who lives in this area," she said. "I am not really that upset about it, what am I going to do? This is just part of the grand scheme of things."

Community Board 10 chairman John Marano said he is worried his Lafayette Avenue home may now be included in a flood zone.

"Although I am at the highest point in Throgs Neck, I am not too far from the water, so sure, I am concerned," Marano said. "Insurance companies are the ones who gain because they are going to start charging us crazy ridiculous premiums. The homeowners lose again, and it's sad."

"If the federal government wants people's homes elevated — they should pay

to do it," he said "Everyone is going to be living on stilts and in tree houses. It's ridiculous."

Senator Jeff Klein said he understands people's concerns about zoning changes.

"I cannot understate the importance of addressing disaster planning fairly and seriously," he said. "But I also am committed to holding FEMA accountable to informing property owners what the changes in their property zoning may mean in terms of insurance costs, property values and general safety so that individuals can make educated and responsible decisions for their businesses, homes and families."

The maps already released include the worst-hit parts of Staten Island, Brooklyn, Queens and Westchester County, and

double the number of structures now in flood zones.

Property values
Homeowners in those areas now face new building codes and shrinking property values, among other costs.

People choosing to ignore the new elevation guidelines could be stuck paying insurance premiums of \$9,500 a year for a typical single-family home, compared to \$1,410 a year for a homeowner whose house is built at the recommended level.

Building a home three feet higher than the recommended guidelines could bring premiums down to \$427 a year.

Homes newly added to the flood zone will also now be required to buy flood insurance for the first time if they have a federally backed mortgage.

Homeowners within flood



Tony Macchia finds alternate transportation to make his way along flooded Locust Point street. Photo by Walter Pofeldt

zone will have two years to elevate their properties, and increased premiums will be phased into effect once the maps are put into place in 2015.

Getting help

They can look up their addresses at region2coastal.com to see what measures they'll have to take.

Homes damaged by Sandy may qualify for up to \$30,000 from FEMA to help pay rebuilding costs, but that might not be enough for some buildings.

Meanwhile, FEMA said the deadline for Hurricane Sandy survivors to register for aid is Feb. 27, the same deadline for returning di-

saster loan applications to the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Those in need of help can call the FEMA helpline at 800-621-3362 from 7 a.m. to 1 a.m. EST, seven days a week until further notice. To register, go to www.DisasterAssistance.gov or on smartphone at m.fema.gov.

St. Raymond Cemetery vandal arrested for stealing bronze fixtures

From page 1

tion in the last week or two after they noticed several brass door knobs to mausoleums had been loosened — "with the anticipation that they would be taken at some future date," said Jonathan Greenspun, spokesman for FJ Security.

A security employe on alert surprised Peduto at a mausoleum over the weekend, and had the presence of mind to snap his picture on his cell phone, said Greenspun.

"The employee walks up to the guy and asks him 'What are you doing,'" said a



LOUIS PEDUTO

police source. "He takes a picture of him and the guy takes off, leaving his bag behind, with burglar tools in it."

The worker later identified the suspect in "a six pack" photo array, police

said.

The photo was circulated to police on Tuesday and they began "checking out scrap metal places, subways, relatives places drug C.I.'s (confidential informants)," said a police source.

Two uniformed cops arrested Peduto, described as "a homeless heroin junkie," later that afternoon at a pizza shop on E. Tremont Avenue, a block north of the cemetery.

"He's a bottom feeder, with a string of 30 collars for drugs, farebeating and other minor arrests," said the police source.

Local City Councilman Jimmy Vacca responded to the thievery, saying he was outraged.

"Only desperate and rotten people would do something like this," said Vacca. "The words disgusting and beneath contempt only begin to describe how I feel about anyone who would vandalize a grave site.

As for cemetery security, one local funeral director said the 180-acre cemetery can make for difficulty patrolling, even by car.

The cemetery is divided into the 130-year-old cem-

etry which runs along E. Tremont Ave. and the newer cemetery on the south side of Lafayette Avenue next to the Hutchinson River Parkway and the Throgs Neck Bridge approach.

"To do it right, you probably need at least three cars to cover both cemeteries," said the funeral director, who asked not to be named. "That's a lot of territory to cover."

But a person answering the phone at the cemetery office said it has two cars usually patrolling. They declined to give any further comment.

The cemetery is home to a mix of the famous and the infamous, including singer Billie Holiday, boxer Hector "Macho" Camacho, R&B/Doo-Wop great Frankie Lymon, several congressmen, gangsters, and "Typhoid Mary" Mallon.

Joseph Zwilling, spokesman for the Archdiocese of New York, said the Catholic cemetery "is attempting to contact the families of the mausoleums that were involved in this crime." He thanked the police "for their careful handling of this matter."



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Big Deal Supermarket 'Lents' a hand to churches

BY KIRSTEN SANCHEZ

If you're looking for something to give up for Lent this Easter season, how about a grocery receipt?

The chapters of the National Association of the Holy Name Society of St. Francis Xavier and St. Clare of Assisi have once again joined a Morris Park supermarket to raise money for the local parishes.

Miguel Garcia, owner of the Big Deal Supermarket at 1018 Morris Park Ave., is encouraging shoppers to spend a little extra money on groceries between now and March 31 – and remember to drop their sales receipts in a collection jar by the exit.

In 2010, Martin Dolgow of the Holy Name Society at St. Francis Xavier approached Big Deal owner Garcia to develop a plan to raise money that could benefit both parishes during these tough economic times.

Ultimately, the Big Deal Shop and Drop was created, a fundraiser that would result in Big Deal Supermarket making a generous donation to help the parishes make repairs to their churches, schools, rec-tories and convents, as well as aid other parish projects.

"To donate to the fund raiser, customers simply have to drop their receipt in a bucket by the exit of the store," Garcia said. "A percentage of all sales tallied up from the receipts in the jar are then distributed evenly to each of the two churches we work with."

Big Deal has run the fundraiser for the past four years, with last year's fundraiser bringing in over \$6,000.

"It was something we did to help the neighborhood churches when they were in need of construction," Garcia said.

"In this neighborhood, these Catholic churches are still highly attended and a staple in our community. We wanted to give back to them for their years of services."

Garcia said he hopes to surpass the amount of money they raised last year.

"Normally every year we've raised more than the year before," he said. "The more we sell, the more we donate. We've actually had people come in here and thank us for helping the churches."

Rev. Matthew Furey, pastor of St. Francis Xavier Church and Rev.

Richard Guarnieri, pastor of St. Clare of Assisi Church, said they were excited for the Lenten Fundraiser which in the past has been a success.

"It is a very nice thing Big Deal Supermarket does," Furey said. "Our Holy Name Society initiated it with the owner and we've done it for the past couple of years. It is very generous of Big Deal to help the local parishes. It is a big help in the community. I know the owner is a dedicated Catholic as well, so it is a nice expression of his faith as well."



Owner of Big Deal Supermarket Miguel Garcia. -Photo by Kirsten Sanchez

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What ever happened to the days when people prided themselves on honesty and when their word was their bond? What ever happened to the days when people tried to help others instead of taking advantage of each other?

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I'm sure you have heard of all the horror stories told by people who either sold their gold to gold buying stores or went to events in those convention centers and hotel conference rooms or who even sent their gold through the mail only to find out later that they got paid only a fraction of the money that their gold and diamonds were really worth. You hear this all the time, on the news or on the internet warning you not to go here or send your gold there.

When customers go to LJI to sell their gold or diamonds, they are pleasantly surprised, and in many cases stunned when they hear what they are offered. Some have even, believe it or not, been on the verge of tears. The customers always come back and send all their friends because they know they are being treated fairly, honestly and know they are getting the highest prices.

LJI always wants its customers to feel comfortable in knowing that the prices they are getting for their old gold is the highest price! LJI has put signs up in their stores encouraging people to shop around to see what offers they get for their old gold. Then, they want them to come back to LJI without saying what the other offers were, and then see how much more money LJI pays them.

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2013 State of the Borough



Say hello to the New Bronx. That was the theme to Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.'s fourth State of the Borough address Feb. 19 at James Monroe High School. It was inside the packed auditorium full of lawmakers, dignitaries and civic groups the BP outlined the Bronx's accomplishments and what lies ahead. Overall, crime is down and investments are up.

(Top) BP Diaz Jr. promised education and health reforms. He also called for a gun offender registry list similar to one for sex offenders.
Photo courtesy of the Borough President's Office

(left top) Reporters crowd Borough President Diaz Jr., elaborating more on the Kingsbridge Armory redevelopment proposals.
Photo by Walter Pofeldt

(Left bottom) Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. glad-hands the crowd as he makes his way to the podium.
Photo by Walter Pofeldt

Borough President Diaz Jr. touts borough's accomplishments including drop in crime and rise in business.
Photo by Walter Pofeldt

Bronx Polar Bears



The Bronx Polar Bears plunged into the cold waters of Orchard Beach for the third annual Bronx Polar Bear swim Feb 16. Sponsored by public access station BronxNET, the Valentine's Day-themed venue drew dozens of Bronxites into the frigid waters, where temps were down to the low 30s. It also drew sister group Coney Island Polar Bears, and celebrity chef Terry French. But locals felt charged up by the dip. "It's a natural high," said one swimmer.

(Top) Feeding off each others energies, the Polar Bears circle the waters in solidarity.

(Left) Brrrrrrrr. Decked in only their swim gear (l-r) Liga Freimane, Carime Dethomasl and veteran Polar Bear Jim McDonell frolick about Orchard Beach shores.

Mr. Snowman struts his stuff on the beach.

Pretty in Pink. Breast cancer survivor Sharon Harris joins in the swim, clad in her pink boxing gloves that "knocks out" cancer.

Photos by Josiane Bauke

(Middle Top) Assemblyman Mike Benedetto (far right) offers some humor ahead of the nautical plunge. He stands with (l-r) Michael Knobbe, executive director of BronxNET, and Polar Bears Liga Freimane, Anna Romanovich, and Dace Mazure-Bennett.

(Middle Bottom) Hail to the chef. Celebrity chef Terry French decked in his black bandana hangs with Polar Bears Al Volante, and Lisa and Jim McDonnell. The foursome warm up to some hot soup prepared by Chef Terry.

POLAR BEAR NOT INCLUDED. STOCK PHOTO FOR BACKGROUND

Valentine's Day



in the Bronx



Love was in the air around the Bronx during Valentine's Day. From dating games to sweetheart luncheons, there were activities for lovers of all ages.

(Bot. left) Senator Jeff Klein helped spread love around the borough by hosting his annual "Valentines for Veterans" at the James J. Peters VA Medical Center on Thursday, Feb. 14. The Senator, joined by Miss USA 2012, Nana Meriwether, visited with veterans and handed out Valentine's Day gifts in honor and commemoration of their service.

Photo by Josiane Bauke

(Middle left) At Workmen's Circle Multi Care Center, patients celebrated Valentine's Day by participating in a 1960's style dating game on Fri. Feb. 13. Residents at the center watched while a selected group of contestants compete to win a date. Lucky Bachelor Steve Gold is chosen as one of three male contestants. Photo by Alex Belisle

(Middle right) Sen. Jeff Klein and Miss USA Nana Meriwether prepare to hand out gifts at Workman's Circle Multi Care Center. Photo by Josiane Bauke

(Bottom right) The winning couples (l-r) Jeannette Foglia, Steve Gold, Robert Woods and Emma Welch celebrate with Stephanie Aponte (center), a facility worker.

Photo by Alex Belisle

(Top) Northeast Bronx Senior Center celebrated Valentine's Day by honoring seniors who have been married 50 years. Pictured are the long time sweethearts (l-r) Dorothy and Arthur Dipierro, married 51 years; Gloria and Ed Snow, married 64 years; Josephine and Nino Valenti, married 59 years; Margaret and George Mangiaracina, married 50 years; and Alice and Steve Papajohn, married 51 years.

Photos by Walter Pofeldt

Sen. Klein sponsors free flu shots



North Central Bronx Hospital and Senator Jeff Klein sponsored a flu vaccine event at Vladeck Hall in Van Cortlandt Village on Thursday, Feb. 7. Klein was joined by Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz and City Council candidate Andrew Cohen. Pictured are registered nurse Kyliia Easter giving a flu shot to Emmanuel Badger with Dinowitz, Cohen, and Klein looking on.

Photo by Patricio Robayo



Open House at Bronx YMCA

Let's open up the house! The Bronx YMCA at 2 Castle Hill Avenue held an open house to showcase itself on Saturday, Feb. 2. Attendees were treated to activities including basketball, gymnastics, and karate classes.

(Left) Jainisse Moeslinger (r) and son Julian Rosa have fun during one of the activities.

Photo by Aracelis Batista



Luis Rafael Sanchez (r) helps Allyssa Rivera (l) build a house.

Photo by Aracelis Batista

Bronx women featured in national Red Dress Campaign



EHE International, an organization dedicated to proactive management of health through annual physical exams, selected four Bronx women to be part of an awareness campaign in Rockefeller Center in Manhattan. The organization is celebrating its 100th year by kicking off their 10th annual Red Dress Campaign, an ongoing effort designed to promote women's heart health. Among the women pictured here, are Bronxites Darlene Caraballo, Erica Melendez, Katelyn Heredia and Wendy Rodriguez.

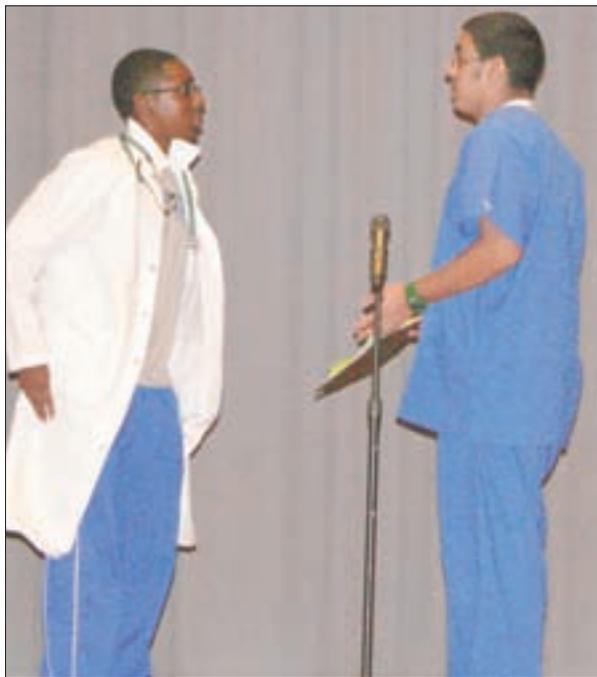
Photo courtesy of EHE International

Yankee Leadership Awards for Community Board 10 kids



Students from high schools and youth programs were on hand at Community Board 10 on Monday, Feb. 4 to receive their New York Yankee Youth Leadership Awards. Five winners got \$750 awards for their leadership and volunteerism. Seen here (l-r) Michael Haspil, NYPD Explorer; Angelina Claudio, Preston High School; Elise Clarke, Truman High School; Kimberly Cionca, Lehman High School; and Abraham Gonzalez, Monsignor Scanlon High School. Photo by Patricio Robayo

Mentoring with Morality skits



Students from St. Raymond High School for Boys recently performed morality skits to help St. Raymond eighth grade students better prepare themselves for overwhelming scenarios that can arise in high school. Teaming up with girls from St. Raymond Academy, five skits of difficult situations were acted out and performed on stage at the Msgr. Tierney Auditorium at St. Raymond Elementary School. Pictured, Students address what happened to a friend who died in a car crash due to drinking. Photo courtesy of St. Raymond High School for Boys



Skate for the Park at Van Cortlandt

A fund raiser for the Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy was held at the park's ice skating rink on Tuesday, Feb. 12. The fees for entrance and ice skating rental that night went to support outdoor programming in the park for children and families.

(Above) Van Cortlandt Park Conservatory leaders (l-r) Tony Cassino, Margot Perron and Pauline Mohamed. Photo by Ken Carozza



Kobe Ortega enjoys a skate around the rink with an Elmo on his right skate. Photo by Ken Carozza

Celebration of Kosovo 5th Anniversary of Independence



It was a proud day for Bronx Kosovars as they celebrated their native land's 5th anniversary of their independence from Serbia. Several groups joined Bronxites in the celebrations featuring singing, dancing and dinner. Families stopped by Maestro's to hear from several groups, dignitaries and elected officials including Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj, the state's first Albanian-American lawmaker. The Republic of Kosovo went through a tumultuous time in the 90s when Serbia launched an "ethnic cleansing" conflict that resulted in the killing of thousands of Albanians from Kosovo.

(Above) (l-r) Albert Veliu, Minister Counselor Petrika Jorgji, Deputy Ambassador of Rep. of Kosovo Jetish Jashari, Rev. Nathan Preston, Imam Edin Gjoni, Dr. Gjon Bucaj, Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj, and Valeza Oruci, 08_Akosovo1_2013_02_21_bx Consul at Consulate General of Rep. of Kosovo.

(right) Dancing the afternoon celebration away is Irena and Sami Ahmeti. Photo by Edwin Soto

(Far right) Kino Gara lays the soundtrack for his fellow Kosovars. Photo by Edwin Soto



Two borough firehouses preserved as landmarks

Protecting the Bronx for over 100 years

BY KIRSTEN SANCHEZ

Two historic Bronx firehouses have joined the ranks of city landmarks.

They were among five firehouses designated by the city Landmarks Preservation Commission to preserve their historic facades.

All five architecturally distinctive firehouses, in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens, have been in use for more than 100 years.

They were built at a time of unprecedented population growth and development in the neighborhoods they served.

The new Bronx landmarks are Engine Company 46/Hook & Ladder 17 at 451-453 E. 176th Street in

Bathgate and Engine Company 73/Hook & Ladder 42 at 655-659 and 661 Prospect Avenue at East 152nd Street in Longwood.

Engine Co. 46 is a three-story firehouse consisting of two nearly identical buildings and faced with brownstone and light brick.

The ladder company was completed in 1894 and 1904 as the population and number of buildings increased in the neighborhood.

"The buildings form an incredible composition that speaks volumes about the vital role of the Fire Department and about New York City's commitment to providing the best municipal services possible," said

Chairman Tierney.

Engine Co. 73/Hook & Ladder 42, located near the intersection of East 152nd Street, is a two-story Renaissance Revival style firehouse was built in 1900.

The building is clad in orange-colored, iron spot brick, limestone and terracotta decorative details.

The adjacent building, which houses Hook & Ladder 42, was built in 1912.

"These buildings have stood as dignified sentinels against fires in this neighborhood for more than a century," said Tierney. "They are excellent examples of how the FDNY was keeping up with an evolving neighborhood and its safety needs."

"Each of these buildings is a clear expression of civic spirit and pride of purpose that existed at the time they were built and continue to this day in our City's municipal architecture," Tierney continued. "The FDNY has done an exemplary job of protecting these structures that have a vital role in protecting New Yorkers, and we're grateful for its support of the proposals to landmark them."

Fire Commissioner Salvatore Cassano said FDNY firehouses are important symbols of bravery, safety, and service in each of the communities they serve.

"With these latest landmark designations,



Engine Co. 73/Hook & Ladder 42 at 655-659 and 661 Prospect Ave., Longwood

the Landmarks Preservation Commission has not only recognized the beautiful architecture and rich histories of these firehouses, they've also paid tribute to every FDNY firefighter who has called them home for more than a century," Cassano said.

Diaz touts 'New Bronx' model at the State of Borough address

From page 1

The pitch was part of his 50-minute speech touting the Boogie Down's accomplishments last year, which saw an increase in economic investments to a borough once blighted by poverty and high crime.

"Crime is down, investment is high, our neighborhoods are cleaner, and our economy is growing," boasted Diaz.

Dubbing the borough's feat as examples of "The New Bronx," Diaz declared the borough is rebranding itself. Some of his tools appear to be the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation, Borough Hall's economic arm, and the Bronx Tourism Council.

A majority of his speech focused on business development. Companies such as Fresh Direct, Smith

Electric, Macy's, the Marriott have inked deals to do business in the borough. Investments in the mental

Crime is down, investment is high, our neighborhoods are cleaner, and our economy is growing.

Ruben Diaz, Jr.
Borough President

health industry, breweries, and east Bronx malls are also settling into a borough that saw an overall crime rate bottom out to the lowest since the 1960s.

These days investments in The Bronx have jumped

from \$789 million in 2011 to \$1.7 billion in 2012, a 116% bump, according to a report by the BP's office.

"The New Bronx is... safer than Boston," said Diaz Jr. "Safer than New Orleans, which had the Super Bowl."

But while the New Bronx settles into one of its safer period in decades, it's still combatting some old issues such as a double-digit jobless rate, the worst in state.

"When you look at the economic development, that's how we're going to address the unemployment rate," said Diaz, urging big chains to fill thousands of estimated jobs set to come by 2014.

But while economic development was key in his speech, Diaz made only a brief mention of the Kingsbridge Armory, where ne-

gotiations between the city and a potential developer have dragged for months, with no end in sight. "I hope that the mayor not only announces quickly but picks the project that I support," said Diaz, who supports the Kingsbridge National Ice Center, a massive concert hall and ice skating

rink.

But education reform was also on the agenda, crafting a plan for college readiness at Truman High School and improving test preparation classes to poorer school districts.

To combat poor health in the Bronx, Diaz said he has summoned Bronx hospitals

for a health summit set for April 6th.

With 2013 being billed as a big year for the borough, the borough president said he looks forward to 2014 when the Bronx celebrates its 100th anniversary as a county.

"The best is yet to come," said the borough president.

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PROFILE

Bronxite Mauric Elmalem is something like a jack of all trades, and definitely a master of some.

Living quietly in Riverdale, one would never guess the many talents Elmalem possesses.

Elmalem is a martial arts master, holding seven world championships in Tae Kwon Do, eight Guinness world records and enough trophies to showcase his 45 years of training.

Born in Morocco, he lived in both France and Israel before coming to the United States in 1971.

Elmalem decided to begin training in martial arts after getting into a series of scuffles when he was 12 years old.

"Growing up in places like Morocco and Israel, you have to learn to defend yourself," he said. "My brother enrolled me in martial arts classes and I took an interest because of the gymnastic which I was also interested in."

Before leaving Israel to come to the United States, Elmalem trained with the Israeli Army.

He is a sixth degree black belt, a seven time U.S. Cup Gold Medalist, and has been witnessed by millions on television, live shows at Madison Square Garden, Nassau Coliseum, Studio 54, Apollo Theatre and the Gleason Arena, featured in over 200 newspapers and magazines, participated in over 600 Championships worldwide, and has accumulated over 550 trophies and 47 gold medals in fighting and breaking.

And although the Riverdale resident can smash through towers of brick, he has made a career out of building them up.

A graduate of Columbia University, where he studied architecture and engineering, he has a passion for creating things — on large and small scales.

The owner of Maurice



Photo by Kirsten Sanchez

Contractors & Designers, Inc. on Britton Avenue was listed in "Who's Who in the East" in 1986 and 1987, where he was cited for his outstanding contributions to architectural design.

Some of his work can be seen at the Royal Athena Art Gallery on 57th Street in Manhattan, as well as Bloomingdale's interior decorating department, several Citibank locations, Fourth Federal Savings Banks, and many other commercial projects.

"Someone said to me once, 'if you ever want to make it in life, it is by stone,'" he said. "And that was best advice I ever got because when you invest in gold or stocks there is always risk involved, but with stone it never moves, it's always there."

He recently finished two condominium buildings in Riverdale, for which he personally handled the design and layout.

"Weakness for luxury," Elmalem said. "Everything I build I put the best I can. Most people appreciate it."

But don't let his hard exterior fool you; Elmalem has a much softer side as well.

After visiting a butterfly farm while vacationing in Rhode Island, he became mesmerized by the colorful creatures.

"I became fascinated, so I went home and started researching them," he said.

Elmalem started buying deceased butterflies from manufacturers over the internet and creating 3-D works of art.

"I mount them in plexiglass," he said. "Butterflies only have 10-30 days to live before they die. When they die, they fold their wings and people don't know what to do with them, they throw them away. I thought this was a way to preserve them and their beauty."

Elmalem has created over 65 frames, available on his website www.mauricebutterflyart.com, and he is in the process of looking for a space to sell and display them.

BIO BITS

FAVORITE MOVIES:

Casablanca and Gone With the Wind

FAVORITE BOOK:

Moby Dick

FAVORITE PLACE IN THE BRONX:

The New York Botanical Garden

MOST ADMIRE PEOPLE:

Michaelangelo and Leonardo DiVinci

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IT'S FAST AND SLICK FOR STATE OF BOROUGH

All hail Bronx Borough President **Ruben Diaz Jr.** - and his inner circle - for putting together a neat State of the Borough speech Tuesday at his old alma mater, James Monroe High School in Soundview.

Not only did it break a speed record (a flat out 50 minutes, including applause) - the fastest we've seen in almost 20 years of covering Bronx SOB's - but he also managed to slide right through the white elephant in the room in the blink of an eye.

We're talking about the Kingsbridge Armory, over which Ruben has little say in what appears to be some pretty intense behind-the-scenes hard bargaining over a community benefits agreement with the Kingsbridge National Ice Center folks. A deal was supposed to be announced in September.

Problem is the deal is racing the clock before **Mayor Bloomberg** leaves, since the city's Uniform Land Use Review Process

takes nine months.

Ruben deftly glossed over the issue in one sentence, saying "With local Councilman **Fernando Cabrera** and Mayor Bloomberg, we will bring responsible development to the Kingsbridge Armory."

Scenes from an SOB:

- Ruben scoring media points with a proposal to create a gun crime registry, with reporting requirements similar to those as a sex offenders, including on-line listings of names.

- A phalanx of mayoral wannabe's in the audience to show their props, including ex-BP/ex-Democrat **Adolfo Carrion**, now likely to be a Hispanic vote-drainer on the Independence Party line (see item below) and getting an extra blip or two on the applause meter from the audience.

- Soundview Councilwoman **Annabel Palma** joking she was holding an aisle seat for Congressman **Eliot Engel** to shake Ruben's hand, "but he never showed up!"

- Ruben giving a shoutout to his longtime sweetheart and wife

Hilda, married 24 years and both turning 40 this year.

- Facing off, with Ruben's goatee trimmed down to a straight mustache. Hey, inquiring minds wanna know....

WIN/LOSE FOR ADOLFO

Until his expected endorsement late Wednesday by the Independence Party, it was an up/down week for ex-Bronx BP **Adolfo Carrion**.

First a Marist poll showed the 51-year-old mayoral wannabe only one percentage point (at 4%) above the bottom candidate in a mayoral race on the Republican line, with MTA head **Joe Lhota** at the top.

Then the Post's (and ex-Rivertdale Review reporter) **Candice Giove** broke the story that Adolfo had pushed Bronx Dems to nominate wife **Linda Baldwin** for a Civil Court judgeship shortly before he dropped his Democratic Party registration to go rogue.

HALF A LOAF

Melissa Mark-Viverito still "sorta grumbling" after the city Council Districting Commission re-

stored a major chunk of E. Harlem to new proposed lines that take in most of Mott Haven.

Of course, many concerns remain about the new boundaries of the El Barrio/East Harlem section of District 8 -- 30 blocks are still being cut out, including several housing developments that have historically been a part of this district -- but the residents of East Harlem will ensure that these new lines do nothing to diminish our strength as a historic community of interest.

"I have been consistent throughout the redistricting process that I more than welcome the opportunity to represent more of the Bronx," sayeth Melissa. "I stand fully prepared to represent this new district and I look forward to working with all of my Bronx colleagues and community leaders in the months and years to come to advance issues of importance for our communities."

HOSPITALIZED

Mayor Bloomberg has reapointed retired longtime Boro Hall staffer **Bob Nolan** to a full five-year term to the board of the Health and

Hospitals Corp. Bob, was first appointed in June 2011 to an interim term. He's the only Bronxite serving on the board.

KOSOVA PROPS

Senator **Jeff Klein** and Assemblyman **Mark Gjonaj** passing a joint resolution commemorating fifth anniversary on Feb. 17 of the Declaration of Independence of Kosovo. This after American and NATO-led military intervention to end ethnic cleansing under Slobodan Milosevic. Many Kosovar nationals, Kosovar-Americans and Albanian-Americans from Kosovo have made their home in New York - and especially the Bronx.

ELIOT PHONE HOME

Congressman **Eliot Engel** is back in his old digs at Co-op City, where he grew up.

He reopened his former office last week in Room 3 at 177 Dreiser Loop (718-320-2314). Originally his old office, it was taken over after redistricting ten years ago by Congressman **Joe Crowley**, and after the latest round of redistricting based on the 2010

Census, moved Engel back in.

"When I saw the new redistricting lines," he said, "and saw I was representing Co-op City again, it was like I was coming home."

Long-time Co-op City resident **Maxine Sullivan** will be Engel's new staff assistant there to deal with constituent "problems and issues, great and small."

And check out the birthday listings below....

CONDOLENCES

To the family of **Mickey Maye**, a two-fisted walking hurricane out of 138th Street in the south Bronx, who became a two-time Golden Gloves champ and head of the Uniformed Firefighters Association. Died of a heart attack in Boynton Beach, Fla., on Friday, Feb. 15 at age 83. He earned his reputation as a fearless firefighter working out of Ladder 31 on Intervale Ave. during the Bronx is Burning years.

BRONX BIRTHDAYS

Feb. 18 - Congressman **Eliot (aisle seat for one, please) Engel**

Parkway group claims tree victory

Trees spared with new safety barricades along Pelham Parkway

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

The fight to save Pelham Parkway's mature trees has succeeded.

No trees will likely need to be removed due to the installation of new guardrails during the latest phase of the parkway's reconstruction, officials said at a technical working group meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 13 between the Department of Design and Construction and the Pelham Parkway Preservation Alliance.

Joe Menta and George Zulch, two activists involved in the PPPA's push to save mature trees along the parkway, both confirmed the good news.

The PPPA held protests against large-scale tree removal, beginning in 2010.

"I believe that in our per-

sistence in working with the DDC and others, we were fortunate enough to save these trees," said Menta, who attended the meeting.

The technical working group meetings between the PPPA, Community Board 11, and DDC were the result of a settlement of a lawsuit brought against the city by the PPPA.

The DDC had initially said that installing guardrails would have required 42 mostly mature trees to be removed.

"I'm pleased to report that in cooperation with the Pelham Parkway Preservation Alliance, our engineers have devised a creative way to install much-needed guardrails along the Parkway without removing any trees," said DDC commis-



Work crews are seen here digging the pits for the posts of a new guardrail on Pelham Parkway on Tues. Feb. 19. The guardrails will co-exist with rows of mature trees on the parkway, instead of replacing them. by Patrick Rocchio

sioner David Burney. "This result is truly the best of all worlds, and it shows what can be accomplished when government and concerned citizens work together to tackle tough problems."

Burney added: "The Pelham Parkway reconstruc-

tion project is a substantial city investment that will give area residents and motorists a safe, functional, and attractive streetscape that will benefit the neighborhood for years to come."

A DDC spokesman said plans call for five trees to

come down for construction of new on and off ramps - four for an off-ramp at Lurting Avenue and one for an on-ramp at Stillwell Avenue.

But Zulch said that those trees being removed, along with about 26 to 30 dis-

eased or dying trees that are already gone, cannot be helped.

Menta, Zulch, and community leader David Varrenne were among the key members of the PPPA.

Menta said that the group is planning a celebration of what it considers a successful outcome to what was at times a furious fight to save the parkway's trees.

"The end result is a fine roadway with guardrails which are consistent with the Parkway aesthetic theme, and meet the safety standards," said Zulch, "yet allow for the continuation of the rows of magnificent 100-year-old lindens which so characterize the Parkway and enhance our neighborhood."

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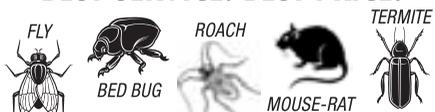
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