

Making Strides kickoff

BY JAIME WILLIAMS

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer of the Bronx is hosting its official kickoff breakfast on Wednesday, August 6 at Marina del Rey.

The kickoff breakfast marks the official kick off of fundraising season for the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Bronx Walk said Bronxite Lizzette Dorado, interim senior manager for the NYC Metro Area and Director of the Bronx Walk.

The breakfast is usually attended by past team leaders for the walk, new team leaders, community activists and business leaders, who will hear stories from past participants and survivors.

The Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Bronx Walk will take place at 8 a.m., Sunday, October 19 at Orchard Beach.

The main event is the 3-mile walk, but the morning also includes other activities, refreshments, and entertainment.

The walk has a great energy and atmosphere, said Dorado, and the event typically draws about 11,000 people.

"The Bronx walk is one of the most vibrant walks I've been to," she said.

She feels the extra energy comes from the pride Bronxites take in coming together as a community to help one another.

Money raised by the walk goes towards American Cancer Society programs for women with Breast Cancer. These include Look Good, Feel Good, a makeover program to help newly diagnosed women feel more comfortable with their hair loss or change in skin pigmentation; a free wig program;

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Photo by Laura Stone

St. Theresa Feast Balloon Art

Bronxite Aralyn Lopez was full of smiles at the St. Theresa Feast on Friday, July 25. For more photos of residents enjoying the feast, see page 7

TN BIZ: WE'RE NO TARGET

Retailer opens on Lafayette Ave.

BY BEN KOCHMAN

Target has finally opened in Throggs Neck — and local shops nearby are hoping to stay out of its crosshairs.

The national retailer opened Sunday, July 27 at the Throggs Neck Shopping Center, a massive mall at Lafayette Avenue and the Hutchinson River Parkway.

National chains TJ Maxx, Petco, Applebees, Subway and Sleepy's are among the other shops that will soon follow, in

what developer Simone Development is hoping will be a "back-to-school" opening.

Just a few miles north, the Bay Plaza mall — anchored by a three-story Macy's — is scheduled to open sometime in the next month in Co-op City.

With the malls on their way, local businesses on E. Tremont Avenue in Throggs Neck are now scrambling to keep the loyalty of the neighborhood customers who

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Rent hikes for shops near Armory frozen

BY BEN KOCHMAN

The businesses facing huge rent hikes across the street from the Kingsbridge Armory are safe — for now.

The new property owner of 2-12 W. Kingsbridge Road and 2643-2647 Jerome Avenue, in the shadow of the soon-to-be ice center, has agreed at least until September to freeze a rent spike that would have pushed out the local shops.

Rents were set to double on August 1 for the 13 mom-and-pop stores in the building, including

the New Capital Restaurant on the corner. But representatives for property manager Levites Realty confirmed to the local merchant coalition and community board chairperson at a meeting Tuesday, July 29 that the new owner will wait on the rent hikes until meeting with each business one-on-one.

In August, the shops will still pay the same rent they have currently been paying.

The merchants were relieved to hear that they had at least another month to come up with a

long-term plan — though they are still casting a wary eye on future prospects.

"We are very happy to finally have a meeting, to hear both sides," said Chris Ramos, vice president of the Kingsbridge Road Merchants Association. "But without a new lease in hand, we don't really know anything."

Staff from Levites, the Yonkers-based company handling the one-floor, 19,000 square-foot property, said they are willing to negotiate new leases with existing tenants,

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An aerial view shows some of the 13 stores (right side of photo) impacted by stiff rent increases due to their proximity to the Armory (l).

School spirit brightens up hallways

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

The passion of one of St. Benedict School's teachers and many of its parents is infectious.

That was the message of Father Stephen Norton, the pastor of St. Benedict's Church and School, as he spoke of the efforts of parents and the school's middle school social studies teacher and sports program director to spruce up the gym and the school's hallways and build school spirit over the past school year.

The teacher, Ben Piacquadio, coordinated a fundraiser, selling t-shirts with the St. Ben's Raven logo. The money raised went to refurbishing the gym floor, he said.

After that, with a group of concerned parents and the principal's blessing, he also coordinated an all-volunteer group that painted the hallways the school's colors: navy blue and gray.

"His heart is there at St. Benedict's, and that is a major part of the gift for us," said Norton of Piacquadio, who is also a St. Ben's school alum. "This is his love and enthusiasm for his alma mater, and the place he finds himself as a

teacher and sports coach."

Norton added: "His enthusiasm, I believe, has been infectious with the parents who turn around and ask how can they help. The painting, the sprucing up, and bringing life into St. Benedict's School is a real positive in terms of the parents being supportive, and the faculty, parents and students getting actively involved."

A group of parent volunteers who were working on painting parts of the gym to match the work done on the floor came up with the idea to paint the hallways the school colors.

The paint was provided by the school after parents and Piacquadio approached principal Carole Arbolino. Many parents helped, said Piacquadio.

"They worked tirelessly for many long days to improve the scenery of the school," he said. "After the hallways were painted, the school's Parent Organization along with the sports program replaced the light fixtures in the hallways to make the hallways much brighter."



The newly refurbished gym at St. Benedict's School was made possible through the efforts of parent volunteers and school staff working together.
Photo courtesy of St. Benedict's School/Benjamin Piacquadio

The new color scheme has the added benefit of not showing much wear and tear, said Piacquadio.

"The hallways had white walls, and with the children leaning up against the walls, there were marks on them," he said. "Now with the darker paint, it doesn't show marks from children leaning up against the wall."

One of the parents who helped in the effort, Hank Livia, 48, said that some of the other teachers at the school also pitched in. The core of the volunteers was a group of parents involved in the school's volleyball program, he added. In addition to being a parent, Livia said he also works at St. Benedict's.

"It is making the school brighter and vibrant," he said of the changes. "It is looking like a new school again."

Piacquadio also volunteered on a 2010 refurbishment of the St. Benedict's gym. Livia said that more is in the works.

"Little by little, things are happening," he said.

Bronx loses Italian delicacy wager

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

Stop the presses!

This an important bulletin about a battle of little league prowess, canolis vs. Italian Ices, and a friendly wager between two councilmen from rival boroughs.

Councilman Jimmy Vacca, who many know and love, and Councilman Paul Vallone, from that borough on the OTHER side of the Throgs Neck Bridge, held a friendly bet of food delicacies based on the outcome of a Borough Cup Little League game held at Throgs Neck Little League field on Thursday, July 17.

The terms of the wager were a box of cannolis and sfogliatelle, Italian pastries, from the famed LaSalle Bakery on East Tremont Avenue in Waterbury-LaSalle, against ices from Pes-

so's and sandwiches from Cherry Valley Deli in Whitestone.

Unfortunately, the borough's own Bronxchester Little League dropped the game to the little league team from Whitestone, Queens in a heartbreaker, with a final score of 4 to 3.

Not to welch, Vacca made good and settled the bet with Vallone when he presented him with a box of pastries at the City Council's stated meeting on Thursday, July 24.

"It's too bad Bronxchester lost, but either way, I'm happy to give Paul some real Italian baked goods that he can't get in Queens," said Vacca. "At the end of the day, I had to put my money where his mouth is."

Vallone graciously accepted what Vacca brought

him.

"While of course I am thrilled that the Whites-tone Renegades beat Bronxchester, I'm sad that Jimmy won't have the opportunity to experience the culinary masterpiece that is a Cherry Valley TCS sandwich washed down with a mouth-watering Pessò's Ice," said Vallone.

The councilman from that OTHER borough added: "I will relish my prize of Italian baked goods as I watch the Renegades continue to play!"

But it was really all in good fun, a source close to both men confirmed.

With serious issues facing our city, state and country, it was good to see these electeds still have a sense of humor, and play fair by the rules.



Vallone and Vacca settle the bet.

Photo courtesy of Councilman Jimmy Vacca's office

Young Irish dance groups travel overseas

BY JAIME WILLIAMS

Two Bronx-based music groups are headed to Ireland this month to compete at the largest Irish music festival in the world.

Students from Erin Loughran School of Irish Music & Arts and St. Cecelia's Grupai Cheoil (St. Cecelia's Music Group), both of which are based in the Woodlawn House of Music and Art, will be attending the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann (The Music Festival of Ireland).

The festival

The festival and competition draws huge crowds from across Ireland, Britain, the U.S. and beyond, said Annmarie Acosta, the teacher of St. Cecelia's. The students have to qualify in order to attend the festival, which includes intensive classes for youth before the competitions.

"It's kind of like the Olympics of Irish music," said Acosta.

Acosta herself attended



Martin O'Grady, the philanthropist behind the Woodlawn House of Music and Art.

Photo by Alex Belisle

the festival when she studied Irish music as a child, and her students have been attending for several years. She said Irish music is part of a long oral tradition that was passed down for many generations before anyone wrote it down. Although the majority of her students are of Irish heritage, she said the music has become popular across the board.

"It's a very catchy kind of music," she said.

The Woodlawn House

Acosta said she owes a lot to Martin O'Grady, who founded and funds the Woodlawn House of Art and Music, where arts educators teach without paying to use the space. Before she came to the Woodlawn House two years ago, Acosta said she was struggling to make ends meet with her lessons.

"I was going broke trying to pass on the tradition of Irish music," said Acosta.

She said it means a lot to her to have the space to teach her students.

"We really appreciate what he's doing," said Acosta.

O'Grady carries the \$900 a week costs for the studio so that teachers can offer affordable lessons in music and the arts.

"I'm trying to make it more accessible to children and adults," said O'Grady



St. Cecelia's Grupai Cheoil (St. Cecelia's music group), who practice at the Woodlawn House of Music and Art, will be traveling to Ireland for a music festival this month. Photo courtesy of Annmarie Acosta

said about arts education.

The house on 236th Street is open seven days a week and serves about 500 students through a collection of teachers. There are a wide variety of types of art and music taught at the house, with students of every instrument imagin-

able, said O'Grady. While there is an abundance of Irish music in the house, O'Grady said it's very important to him that it be a multicultural place.

"There's a tremendous amount of joy there," he said about the house.

O'Grady said he is not

a musician himself, but he cares deeply about the future of arts education, and he hopes others will take up the philanthropic torch so his mission can continue and expand.

"I think it's terrific for the development of young people," he said.

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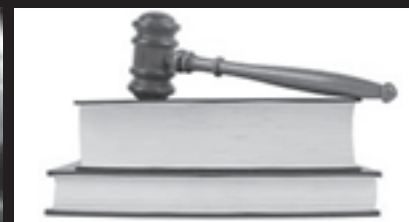


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*Past Results Do Not Guarantee Future Outcomes

Neighborhood merchants urge Throggs Neck community to shop locally

From Page 1

have frequented them for decades.

Calling on locals

"Nobody wants a mall, but we got one," said Steve Kaufman, president of the Throggs Neck Merchants Association. "Now we need to find a way to stay in business."

The shops are making the appeal to locals to play their part in keeping the neighborhood filled with mom-and-pop stores.

"We need them to realize that if they don't shop here, there will be abandoned stores," said John Cerini, a treasurer of the merchant association who runs a tax office on E. Tremont Avenue. "And no one wants that."

It won't be easy to convince locals not to at least take a peek at the new Throggs Neck mall, which includes over 600 parking spaces.

But nearby merchants

are hoping that the combination of neighbors supporting local stores, and the new exposure from mall visitors passing through the area, will be enough to keep businesses running.

"We are trying to deflect some of the mall visitors to come into this area," said Kaufman.

Sprucing up strip

To help with that, the merchant coalition is seeking funding for street improvements on the E. Tremont strip. They're also trying to find a way to ease parking for local shoppers. There's also talk of forming a business improvement district, in which landlords would pay an annual fee toward street cleaning and other strip spruce-ups.

The malls also bring with them looming traffic issues. A coalition of the community board and local community groups has been working with the Department of City Planning to brainstorm

ways to ease the pressure of all the new visitors.

"We're going to see what the traffic will bring, and then address those issues," said Martin Prince, chair of Community Board 10.

Local Biz: No worries!

For now, many of the businesses themselves said they weren't too concerned about the new mall.

"You gotta reinvent yourself all the time," said Wayne Baker, owner of Frank Bee's variety store on E. Tremont Avenue, which sells similar items to some of Target's stock.

Baker said the majority of his business now comes providing supplies for parties, rather than through retail.

He said the mall would likely dip into his retail business — but he hoped to be the one supplying the party materials for events held by some of the new chains opening up.

"You lose a little on one



The Throggs Neck Target officially opened at Lafayette Avenue and the Hutchinson River Parkway just north of the Bronx-Whitestone bridge. The rest of the mall has yet to open. Photo by Walter Pofeldt

side, you gain on the other side," said Baker.

The owner of a local eatery and bar said she would be okay with some of her

customers checking out the new mall, as long as they came back to her place.

"We have a lot of regulars, who are used to the

good food and service here," said Eileen Tierney of Throggs Neck Clipper. "Hopefully that stands for something."



Orchard Beach during the 2012 Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Bronx Walk.

File photo

Making Strides kickoff breakfast

From Page 1

Road to Recovery, a program where volunteers give patients free rides to their treatments; and the Hope Lodges, 31 sites across the country that provide free lodging for patients being treated away from home.

Last year the Bronx

walk raised about \$560,000, said Dorado, and she's setting the goal higher this year.

"We always strive to raise more," she said.

Participants who sign up as a team get assigned a fundraising coach, said Dorado, who can advise them

about organizing events like bake sales.

"It makes the process very easy," said Dorado.

Bronxites can sign up to walk as an individual as well. The walk has no registration fee and no minimum donations to participate, said Dorado.



Bronxites at the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer 2012 Bronx Walk at Orchard Beach. File photo

"We really depend of the good faith of people to reach out to associates and friends to raise the money," she said.

Participants can learn strategies for fundraising

at the kickoff breakfast, which is also a free event.

Those interested can still attend the breakfast at 7:30 a.m., Wednesday, August 6, at Marina del Rey, One Marina Drive.

RSVP by Tuesday, August 5 to Lizzette Dorado at 718-547-5064 ext. 65238.

Sign up to participate in the walk as an individual or team at www.makingstrideswalk.org/bronx.



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Boogie-down booth grooves under el

BY BEN KOCHMAN

Southern Boulevard has got its groove back.

Locals who use the Free-



An open-air sound booth has jazzed up the space under the Freeman Street and Southern Boulevard subway tracks.

Photos by Alex Belisle

man Street No.2 / No.5 train station or the bus line on the south Bronx strip — where musicians once roamed from one music club to another — can now hang out at an open-air sound booth under the train tracks that plays music from Bronx musicians all day and all night.

The project, called the “Boogie-Down Booth,” was unveiled on Wednesday, July 23 — and its organizers say it combines a practical purpose with an artistic one.

“People are intrigued by the booth, while at the same time seeing it as an opportunity to rest while waiting for the bus,” said Kerry McClean, director of community development at the Woman’s Housing and Economic Development Corpo-

ration, or “Whedco.”

Bronx-based jams

Visitors can enjoy an 18-track playlist — chosen by the nearby Bronx Music Heritage Center — from artists with roots in the Bronx, including Willie Rodriguez, Bobby Sanabria and Circa’ 95. The names of other Bronxite musicians, including DJ Kool Herc, Thelonus Monk and Eddie Palmieri, are etched onto the side of the bright blue booth.

The booth also features solar-powered lights at its top that brighten up what can become a bleak stretch at nighttime.

“This whole project was built in response to community need,” said McClean, of Whedco, the neighborhood housing developer. “We see it as a chance to build on the



Jessica Cruz, Christian Cardona, and JayMarie Silva enjoyed their snacks while listening to the tunes.

work we’ve already done to bring improvement to the strip.”

Groups working in harmony

Whedco teamed up with a slew of agencies and organizations to make the sound booth happen. The community group netted a \$50,000 grant from the city Department of Small Business Services, and partnered with the Department of Transportation.

The booth is also part of the “Under the Elevated” program from the Design Trust for Public Space, a group that relies mostly on donations for funding. The “Under the Elevated” initiative aims to convert underutilized space underneath train lines and highways into vibrant places for locals to enjoy.

More booths music to locals’ ears

Southern Boulevard

and Freeman Street’s booth will close in mid-September, but McClean said that Whedco would be setting up similar booths elsewhere on the main strip afterward.

Yet another version of the “boogie-down booth” is slated for Melrose, she said, where Whedco is building a low and mid-income housing development, and where the Bronx Music Heritage Center will soon relocate.

Traffic measure approved for busy intersection

BY JAIME WILLIAMS

One troublesome Morris Park intersection is finally receiving a stop light thanks to concerns raised by a community leader and Senator Jeff Klein’s office.

The city Department of Transportation recently proposed the installation of a traffic light at the intersection of Bronxdale and Sackett avenues, said a spokeswoman from Klein’s office.

Morris Park Community Association president Tony Signorile brought his concerns about the safety of the intersection to Klein’s office in November 2013. Klein’s office sent a letter detailing the concerns about the intersection in December, and received

word in mid-July that a stop light will be installed before October 31.

The intersection, just north of Tremont Avenue, is consistently troublesome for cars trying to turn from the one-way Sackett Avenue onto Bronxdale, said Signorile. He said the traffic coming from Tremont is particularly heavy.

“You have cars speeding from that side up to Morris Park,” said Signorile.

The trickiness of the curve is compounded by the poor visibility at the intersection, where the train trestle can obscure cars coming from the left, said Signorile. Sackett Avenue is also plagued with double-parked cars, which doesn’t help the

situation either, he said.

“When you try to get across Bronxdale from Sackett, it’s very hard.”

Signorile said he considers speeding to be the number one hazard in the neighborhood, and that Bronxdale is one of the more troublesome streets.

“I personally call it the Daytona 500,” he said.

There have been accidents at the intersection in the past, said Signorile, including a fatal motorcycle accident several years ago.

He said he personally feels its very important to push for protective traffic measures.

“If we can save one life then we, as a community, have done our job,” said Signorile.

Signorile said he’s grateful Senator Klein’s office got involved and that a traffic light will be coming to the intersection.

“At the intersection of Bronxdale and Sackett avenues, traffic safety has long been an issue. That’s why when constituents brought their concerns regarding this high-risk intersection to my attention, I immediately notified DOT,” said Klein.

“With so many double parked cars and both residential and commercial activity nearby, the new traffic signal at these cross streets will go a long way towards increasing the safety for both drivers and pedestrians.”



Tony Signorile, President of the Morris Park Community Association, at the troublesome intersection of Bronxdale and Sackett avenues, where the Department of Transportation will soon install a stop light.

Photo by Walter Pofeldt



All types of costumes were worn by the marchers on the Concourse.

Photo by Patricio Robayo



The parade route was lined with flags.

Photo by Patricio Robayo



Ramon Peltra and Aron Sanchez make their way along the route.

Photo by Patricio Robayo

The Bronx Dominican Parade

The Bronx saluted Santo Domingo on Sunday! The Bronx Dominican Parade was held on the Grand Concourse between E. 167th Street and E. 176th Street on Sunday, July 27. The parade had over 40 floats and 100 marching groups, according to organizers.



Borough President Ruden Diaz greets the parade crowd as its grand marshal.

Photo by Patricio Robayo

St. Theresa Feast

The annual St. Theresa Feast drew crowds to the carnival atmosphere on St. Theresa Avenue in Pelham Bay each night from Wednesday, July 23 through Sunday, July 27. Kids and adults alike enjoyed the food, games, and rides that filled the streets.

In Pelham Bay



St. Theresa student Jessica DiBattista, siblings Julia and Jack DiBattista and Ferdinand Navarra ride the Jumpin' Star.



Kenny Carratinni, Jennifer Romano, Adrianna, Lizzette and John Carbone of Pelham Bay in front of St. Theresa's.

Photo by Laura Stone



Rio Garces of Throggs Neck shows off his bubble gun.

Photo by Laura Stone



Friends Rena Beban and Marisa Garvin get ready to share a funnel cake. Photo by Laura Stone



Sloane and Patricia Jameson play at some of the many game booths.

Photo by Laura Stone

Zaro's cooks up colorful wall mural

BY BEN KOCHMAN

Fresh out of the oven — some of the borough's most exciting street art.

One family-owned bak-

ery famous for its black-and-white cookies now boasts a 200-foot-long mural on Bruckner Boulevard that is anything but.

Zaro's Bread Basket commissioned a Brooklyn street artist in November to paint a colorful mural on its Port Morris headquarters.

That's a lot of cans

The family-owned bread company's brass say the piece was simply a way to thank the borough they've called home since the 1920s.

"We just wanted to put something pretty out there on the street," said Michael Zaro, whose family relocated bakery headquarters from Hunt's Point to Bruckner Boulevard in 1982.

Michael's father Stuart Zaro cooked up the idea, after being fed up with the cracked paint and overall bleak look of the bakery's exterior. The Zaros then recruited artist R. Nick Kuszyk to do his thing.

The muralist used over 200 cans of spray paint to



The artist, R. Nick Kuszyk, painted the entire 200-foot-long mural using just spray paint in under a week last November.
Community News Group / Ben Kochman



Bronx-based bakery Zaro's brought in a Brooklyn street artist to spruce up their Bruckner Boulevard headquarters.

Community News Group / Ben Kochman

do the entire piece — with all its tangled cables and reclining robots — in less than a week.

It was the largest work the Brooklyn-based artist says he has ever completed.

"Because the wall was so damn big, we had the space to essentially do two murals," said Kuszyk.

Spicing up a nabe

The futuristic mural soon had the thousands of motorists who drive by the factory every day turning heads, said Zaro. The bakery is located on a stretch of Bruckner Boulevard between the Willis Avenue Bridge and the well-traveled

Bruckner Expressway.

"A lot of people stopped at the light and rolled down their windows," said Zaro.

The artist said even he is not sure what exactly the mural "means," — but he's happy people seem to like it.

"I always hesitate to specify what my work is about," said Kuszyk. "Words aren't the point. It's about what they think."

Bagels here to stay

But the artist did not hesitate to rank the Bronx mural among his favorites — even though he says it has not received as much attention as some of his other

works.

Kuszyk's oeuvre includes a mural on the side of a prominent condominium tower in Williamsburg — a building on Metropolitan Avenue that crystallizes that neighborhood's transition from industrial factories to a booming, and gentrifying, residential community.

The mural man said the main reason that he agreed to paint the Bronx piece was that Zaro's was a local manufacturing business with no intention of going anywhere.

"We're staying a bakery," said Zaro. "I can promise you that."

Bus route extended into Hutch Metro

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

The Bx 24 bus will soon service the Hutchinson Metro Center directly.

A transit committee at the Metropolitan Transportation Authority approved expanded Bx 24 bus service on Monday, July 28.

The plan will see the bus line continue on from Westchester Square, where it currently ends, and going directly to service the Hutchinson Metro Center, the soon-to-be-completed 911 Call Center, and the location of the Marriott hotel and LA Fitness. These are all along Marconi Street, off Waters Place.

The bus' extension to the Hutch Metro Center is scheduled to go into effect on Sunday, August 31, said a spokesman for Councilman Jimmy Vacca. Vacca has long advocated for the change.

"For some time now, due to the growth that the Hutch Metro Center has experienced, I've asked the MTA to provide access to mass-transit users," said Vacca. "Right now there is no way to reach the center

by public transportation, and residents are forced to take a cab or drive their own cars."

He added: "This facility not only houses many city and medical offices, but Mercy College and soon a Marriott hotel as well. Making this location accessible is no longer a luxury, but a necessity, and I am happy that the MTA has acted on my request."

The new bus service will certainly complement the Metro Center's existing private shuttle service to and from Westchester Square, which runs every 20 minutes, and has been in operation since January 2004, said Joseph Kelleher, president of Simone Metro Properties, which runs the Metro Center.

The development has been self-sufficient with its shuttle service, but Simone has been advocating probably just as long as to get MTA bus service to the Metro Center, he said.

Kelleher thanked Vacca, the past chair of the City Council Transportation Committee, saying that the councilman had worked "tirelessly" to get

bus service for the complex.

"Having that bus now coming in here is a really big benefit for the visitors, as well as our employees who work here at the Hutchinson Metro Center," said Kelleher. "The bus will operate on a 30-minute schedule and have extended hours, and I believe the hours of operation extend way into the evening, if not all night."

By contrast, the Metro Center shuttle operates between 7 am to 7 pm, he said.

"Having the city bus will give people coming and going other options," said Kelleher of the Bx 24, which services Country Club, Pelham Bay, and Westchester Square.

The bus has the advantage of stopping at two major train stations: Pelham Bay Park station and Westchester Square station along the IRT #6.

Having the Bx 24 come directly into the center also will benefit senior citizens who come there for doctor's visits, said Kelleher. It will also benefit Mercy College's students, many of whom are often at



This is the new Bx24 route, effective Sunday, August 31.

Photo courtesy of Councilman Vacca's office

the center late at night.

"Opening up the infrastructure and having improved transportation in the area is a plus for everyone," he added. "It is a plus for the

visitors coming to the site, it is a big plus for the employees who work here, and it is a big plus to connect us with the other businesses in the corridor that bus travels."

Unionport Bridge plan calls for 6 lanes

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

A heavily traveled drawbridge below the Bruckner Interchange, the Unionport Bridge, has been scheduled for a complete replacement.

The bridge, which crosses over Westchester Creek, links the communities of Throggs Neck and Castle Hill. It is part of the Bruckner Expressway service road, and is also heavily used by commuters exiting and entering the Hutchinson River Parkway.

The city Department of Transportation has confirmed that it will begin a complete replacement of the bridge in 2016.

The new bridge would have six lanes instead of the current four, according to a Draft Preliminary Plan dated June 2014 that was obtained by the Bronx Times. All of the approaches will be completely rebuilt, and construction is expected to last four years.

According to the current plan, traffic flow across the bridge would continue uninterrupted through a series of phases of construction on the new bridge lasting four years.

Agency will seek input

A DOT spokesman said that so far the agency has “only a preliminary model” that does not represent the actual final design details of the bridge.

He said that the agency intends to keep in touch with the community during the next year.

“We will provide updates as the design process con-

We are especially grateful that the plan allows for traffic flow during the construction phase.

Martin Prince

tinues and will continue to work closely with community stakeholders,” he said.

A community wishlist Martin Prince, Community Board 10’s chairman, said that the replacement project is “demonstrative of New York City’s solid commitment to maintaining and improving its infrastructure.”

“We at Community Board 10, are gratified to note that the New York City Department of Transportation has announced a contract for, and presented the preliminary plans for the complete replacement of the bascule bridge, flanking

spans and all approaches for the Unionport Bridge,” said Prince.

He added: “We are especially grateful that the plan allows for traffic flow, during the construction phase.”

With so much new development, including two new shopping malls already being built or planned for construction very close to the bridge, many community leaders have developed their own wishlists of new infrastructure they would like to see along the stretch of the Bruckner Expressway and Hutchinson River Parkway that includes the Unionport Bridge.

Ferry Point community activist Dotti Poggi said that she would be interested in seeing a right turn lane for tractor trailer trucks to turn onto Brush Avenue after crossing the Unionport Bridge.

Currently very large trucks sometimes have to swing into an oncoming traffic lane on Brush Avenue, she said, and hopes that the new bridge could be designed in a way that could address this concern.

Bob Bieder, a Zerega community activist, said he would like to see the approaches between the Unionport Bridge and Zerega Avenue improved to ease traffic flow. There are often back-ups of traffic at Zerega Avenue, he said.



Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr, pictured here at an event earlier this summer, allocated over \$9 million in capital funds to Bronx projects in the city’s latest budget. Photo by Walter Pofeldt

BP Diaz allocates \$\$ for safer housing

BY BEN KOCHMAN

An east Bronx library branch and Throggs Neck housing project ballfield are among the recipients of the borough president’s round of budget allocations this year.

Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. used his annual share of the city budget to dole out \$175,000 for a “technology room” at a yet-to-be-named library branch somewhere in the east Bronx, and steered \$100,000 toward installing and furnishing light poles at the NYCHA Throggs Neck Houses ballfield.

Together, the Beep distributed over \$9 million in capital funds to 25 projects around the borough. That’s less than half of the over \$22 million the borough president was allowed to allot last year — but Diaz did not let that dampen his excitement for the projects he did get to fund this time around.

“This critical funding helps keep our cultural institutions vibrant, our schools strong, our parks clean and our neighborhoods safe,” crowed Diaz. “Funding like this is critical to our ‘New Bronx’ agenda, and I am proud to have funded so many important projects in every

This critical funding helps keep our cultural institutions vibrant, our schools strong, our parks clean and our neighborhoods safe.

Ruben Diaz, Jr.
Borough President

corner of our borough.”

The city’s five borough presidents collectively are allowed five percent of the city’s budget each year to use as they please. The Mayor’s Office then decides how to divy that pot up between the boroughs, based on a formula involving borough population and total geographic area, according to the city Independent Budget Office.

The biggest chunk of the Bronx borough president’s allocation this year was in the housing sector, where he doled out

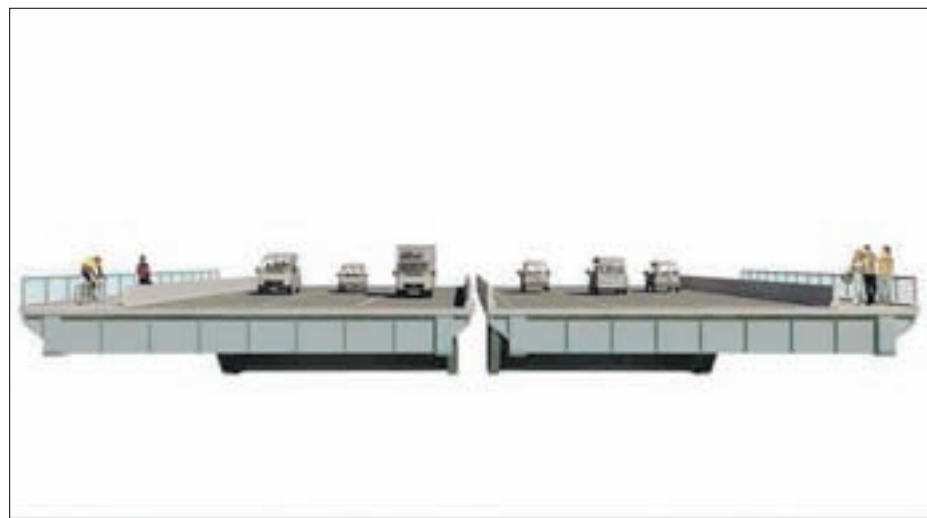
\$2.75 million across five projects, creating what he says will be 600 units of “affordable housing.”

Diaz’s largest allocation went to JCAL Development Group LLC, who received \$750,000 toward building a housing complex on Summit Avenue by the Major Deegan Expressway near Yankee Stadium. Diaz’s office also steered budget money toward west Bronx housing developments on Webster Avenue and another on Creston Avenue.

Last year, the Beep’s main focus was on parks, as Diaz funded over \$7 million in Bronx green space. This year’s parks funding includes a new mini pool at the Edenwald Playground and new playground at the Ogden Plimpton playground in Highbridge.

But the borough president says that housing was his priority this budget season — both building new units and making public NYCHA housing safer.

Along with the \$100,000 earmarked for the NYCHA Throggs Neck Houses is another \$440,000 toward security cameras at Morrisania’s NYCHA Forest Houses.



This early rendering is meant to give the public a rough idea of what the new Unionport Bridge would look like once complete. Photo courtesy of DOT

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Gold medalist overcomes hurdles for succeed

BY JAIME WILLIAMS

One successful athlete is spreading the message that hard work pays off.

Olympic gold medalist Derrick Adkins visited BronxWorks Classic Community Center to speak to kids from two BronxWorks summer programs about perseverance on Monday, July 28.

Adkins, who won gold in the 400-meter hurdle event in 1996 at the Atlanta Olympic Games, travels to schools and summer programs all across the city with the New York Road Runners Youth and Community Services.

Since his athletic career ended, he has concentrated on giving back, recognizing the importance positive role models and community organizations played in his own success.

"I look to be the person to inspire the next generation of young people," said Adkins.

Adkins told his audience of 5 to 12-year-olds about his long road to the Olympics, starting with a community track team at age 7. He said he was an average kid until a growth spurt at the end of high school, and

I learned that to succeed in life, it takes a lot of hard work.

Derrick Adkins

that his years of practice combined with his new physicality meant he finally started to win a lot of races, earning a track scholarship to Georgia Tech.

After setting his sights on the Olympics, he initially failed to make the 1992 team. He made the team four years later and

won gold, adding the ultimate award to two national championships and a world championship.

"I learned that to succeed in life, it takes a lot of hard work," he said about his journey to the podium.

But Adkins emphasized that while it's great to work hard in sports, it's more important for the kids to work hard in school. Sports are not the only road to scholarships, he said, and athletes still need to keep their grades up to stay on the team.

It was only after he had his mechanical engineering degree in hand did he concentrate exclusively on running, he said.

"School comes first," he said.

Teamwork is also important to being successful, Adkins told the kids. He characterized teamwork as being nice, helpful, and not selfish.

"I'm not just talking



Gold medalist Derrick Adkins visited BronxWorks' Classic Community Center in Melrose to speak to the children about motivation on Monday, July 28.
Community News Group / Jaime Williams

about sports, I'm talking about teamwork in life," he said. "It will help you grow."

He knows the messages he's trying to get across to the kids are the same things their teachers or counselors are telling them, said Adkins.

"But sometimes it's good for someone from the outside world to come in and reinforce that message," he said.

BronxWorks director Eileen Torres said that she felt Adkins would be an inspiration to the kids at the center, showing

them how it's possible to achieve your dreams through hard work.

"To see someone who looks like them achieve something as fantastic as an Olympic gold medal encourages them to reach for the stars," said Torres.

Rent hikes for shops near Armory frozen - for now

From Page 1

said numerous people who were at Tuesday's meeting.

The property owner had also changed its listing for the building on the website loopnet.com to "off-market" as of Wednesday, July 30. The owner had previously been asking \$100 per square foot on the site — some of the highest retail prices in the borough.

Ramos said that some shops would try to negotiate a smaller increase in monthly rent, as well as a lease lasting three-to-five years. Such a lease would

expire around the time when the Kingsbridge National Ice Center is set to open across the street.

Merchants first learned of the temporary rent hike freeze when a go-between, realtor Steve Lorenzo, announced it Thursday, July 24 at a public forum hosted by the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition at St. Tolentine Church on Fordham.

Lorenzo, a realtor of NAI Friedland, said that the owners are willing to keep existing tenants, if negotiations go well.

"The landlord is sensitive to doing the right thing by the merchants and the community," he said.

Local leaders praised the owners for at least reaching out to the community to talk — but remained cautious.

"This is another baby step," said Community Board 7 chairperson Adaline Walker Santiago. "And I hope that this move by ownership is indicative of a willingness to compromise and work together towards a long-term solution."

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