

Westchester Sq. welcomes security cameras

BY JAIME WILLIAMS

Criminals, beware.

The Westchester Square Business Improvement District has stepped up security throughout the shopping area.

Security cameras were recently installed at four locations in the BID area as part of a long-planned effort to deter crime in the neighborhood.

The surveillance system was possible thanks to a grant from Assemblyman Michael Benedetto, although the BID installed the cameras with more than \$55,000 of its own funds, which will be refunded by the state.

The four cameras and the technology system from Si-Soft Communications is just the first phase of the plan, said Westchester Square BID director Lisa Sorin, which will ultimately bring 14 cameras to the district.

The cameras have been in the works for years, said Sorin. The grant was originally awarded to the Bronx Business Alliance in partnership with the Westchester Square Merchants Association in 2009, but was stalled when the BBA went bankrupt, and was later reissued to the Westchester Square BID.

"We're really excited about it," said Sorin. "It's been a long time coming."

The cameras are hi-definition, with capabilities of rotating 360 degrees and zooming in on images from hundreds of feet away. The camera's feeds will be streamed to the BID's office and will also be accessible by the 45th Precinct, said Sorin.

The first four cameras cover the Lane Avenue and Tremont Avenue intersection, the intersection at Silver Street and Tremont, and along Westchester Avenue from the Huntington Library through the stretch of

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2 ARRESTED IN 2013 EXECUTION

BY ROBERT WIRSING

Two men have been arrested and charged in connection to a brazen 2013 mob hit that rocked a quiet, tight-knit Country Club street.

On Tuesday, May 5, police arrested Terrence Caldwell, 57, of 129 W. 147th Street for the execution-style shooting of Michael Meldish, 62, an infamous Bronx hit man allegedly responsible for more than a dozen contract killings.

Caldwell was arrested on murder, manslaughter, and criminal possession of a weapon charges and has over 20 prior arrests dating back to 1973.

According to a NYPD spokesperson, Christopher Londonio, 41, of 753 Revere Avenue was also arrested in connection with the hit

on Monday, May 11 and is charged with murder and manslaughter.

The NYPD added Londonio and Caldwell have had a long standing relationship.

On Friday, November 15, 2013 at 10:30 p.m., police discovered Meldish shot execution style inside his Lincoln LS sedan parked in an Ellsworth Avenue crosswalk.

Meldish, who had 18 prior arrests dating back to 1971, appeared to have pulled up to the crosswalk and was exiting his vehicle when the hit occurred.

It was believed the assassin had either ambushed Meldish at this location or perhaps was his passenger.

Further investigation determined Meldish was shot in the

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St. Raymond Petting Zoo Fun

Chelsea Cassals brushes a goat at St. Raymond Elementary School's petting zoo on Friday, May 8.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

Event set to aid fire-dislodged families

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

It is never easy for a family to deal with the aftermath of a house fire. As a result, a local organization and a nearby church are holding a fundraiser to help the families.

Tasty Ladies of NY will host the fire relief event for the three families that were displaced after a fire destroyed a three-story home at 3550 E. Tremont Avenue on Sunday, May 1.

According to residents, the house fire began after one of the walls caught fire from a lit candle, although this has not been confirmed as no investigation has yet to be conducted.

The fire eventually spread through the three apartments as well as Taqueria Lupita, a Mexican restaurant located on the first floor.

The families, each with at

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‘Call for Caddies’ for TN Houses’ teens

BY ROBERT WIRSING

Job seeking Throggs Neck Houses teens hope they will score ‘a hole in one’ with Trump Golf Links’ newly established caddy certification program.

The Bronx H.I.R.E. Program has formed an initiative to connect Throggs Neck Houses teens with caddy positions at Ferry Point Park’s Trump Golf Links.

Working with the program, Trump Golf Links has created a caddy certification course and agreed to hire 15 teens from the complex who complete the course.

Trump Golf Links have expressed their interest in filling these caddy positions not just for this approaching summer, but investing in teens who will work and mature with the golf course for many more summers to come.

These teens will not only learn to caddy, but ultimately will become an integral member of the Trump Golf Links team.

Senator Jeff Klein officially announced this new program at Thursday, April 30’s Throggs Neck Houses Residents Council meeting.

“As the warmer months approach and schools let out, many Bronx teens are looking for a summer employment to put a little extra money in their pockets and gain real world experience,” Senator Klein said.

“That’s why this month, the Bronx H.I.R.E. program launched the ‘Call for Caddies’ program, which works to connect teens



(l-r) Assemblyman Michael Benedetto; Monique Johnson, Throggs Neck Residents Council president; Senator Jeff Klein; and Joe Roediger, Trump Golf Links general manager at Thursday, April 30’s meeting.
Photo courtesy of Senator Jeff Klein’s Office

at the Throggs Neck Houses with summer job opportunities at the Trump Golf Links. Through the ‘Call for Caddies’ program, teens at the Throggs Neck Houses will learn the inner workings of a golf course, build new skills and receive trainings in course maintenance and terminology. Put simply, the ‘Call for Caddies’ program is a hole in one, connecting local teens with invaluable summer job opportunities and putting them on a path to college and career readiness,” he added.

Bronx H.I.R.E. will host a ‘Call for Cad-

dies’ on Friday, May 15 at 4:30 p.m. and any interested 15 to 18-years old residents are invited to be interviewed this evening.

Attendees are required to bring working papers, a report card, a reference letter, and a paragraph stating why he or she wants to work for Trump Golf Links.

In addition, attendees are asked to bring a parent or guardian with them to the interview to provide consent.

If a parent or guardian is unable to attend, it is asked the parent or guardian sign a

consent form ensuring they comply with this training and position.

Interviews will be conducted by Klein; the Bronx H.I.R.E. Program; Monique Johnson, Throggs Neck Residents Council president; Sinclair Hollingsworth, Kips Bay Boys and Girls Club director; and a 45th Precinct representative.

Once all interviews are completed, the candidates will be selected to attend caddy certification classes on Thursday, May 28, spanning the course of three evenings.

This 16 to 20 hour course not only educates candidates on the basics of caddying, but will also teach them golf terminology and golf course etiquette.

Upon completion, candidates will be ready to start their employment with Trump Golf Links.

“We’re very excited to be able to offer a caddy education program for the youth here in the community and hope it will continue for many years to come,” Joe Roediger, Trump Golf Links general manager expressed.

“This program not only introduces them to the game of golf and its proper etiquette, but also teaches important life lessons and the necessary skills for success in both life and business. As ambassadors for the course, caddies are a vital part of any golf operation and there are many success stories of very young individuals who began as caddies and are now CEOs and managers of their own companies.”

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Westchester Sq. welcomes security cameras



Assemblyman Michael Benedetto (c) points out new hi-definition camera installed in Westchester Square to the Business Improvement District chairman John Bonizio (l) and Dom Siano of SiSoft Communications. Photo courtesy of the Westchester Square BID

from Page 1

Tremont that leads to Lehman High.

The additional cameras will provide full coverage of the district from the front of Lehman High School, through the 'safe corridor' students take to the buses and trains, and up Tremont Avenue and Williamsbridge Road to beyond the BID's northern border at Silver Street and Eastchester Road.

Enhancing security for students in the neighborhood was a factor in the placement of the cameras, said Sorin.

"You have thousands

of kids who come through here on a daily basis," she said.

And in addition to providing students, local residents and shoppers with a sense of safety, the cameras will be a boon for the BID trying to attract new businesses to the neighborhood, said Sorin.

"We can promote the area on another level for retail establishments coming in, knowing there is an established security system in place," she said.

Sorin said the surveillance will be a stabilizing factor as the neighborhood grows in the next few

years, with the arrival of a brand-new library and the Bronx Council on the Arts headquarters.

"It's a great thing for the area," said Sorin.

The BID director thanked the assemblyman for his support of the BID's mission through the \$200,000 grant.

"I am extremely happy to be able to allocate the funds for cameras in the Westchester Square BID," said Benedetto. "The protection of our citizens and people who patronize Westchester Square shops are paramount in my mind."

Two arrested in 2013 execution

from Page 1

right side of his head from a short distance due to the lack of gun powder residue.

It was previously reported that neither a bullet nor shell casing were recovered at the scene.

"I'm thrilled to hear law enforcement is helping to finally close this case and it just goes to show that they won't stop until they catch those responsible for committing such heinous crimes," Bob Beider, 45th Precinct Community Council president expressed.

Both Meldish and his younger brother, Joseph were leaders of the notorious 'Purple Gang' which conducted their heroin drug trade in the Bronx and Harlem during the 1970s and 1980s in addition to performing contract killings for the Bonanno, Lucchese, and Genovese crime families.

The gang's namesake was an alleged homage to a Prohibition-era Detroit gang with the same name and this more recent incarnation became well-known for often dismembering their rivals.



Michael Meldish, 62, was shot execution-style inside his parked car at a Ellsworth Avenue crosswalk on Friday, November 15, 2013.

Photo courtesy of the NYS Department of Corrections

It was believed the Purple Gang had alleged ties to Latin American terrorists who they traded firearms to in exchange for narcotics.

By the late 1980s, the gang faded into obscurity when its members were apprehended in drug busts and the few remaining remnants joined the 116th Street Crew.

Joseph Meldish, 60, is currently serving a 25-year to life sentence at Shawangunk Correctional Facility

after being arrested and charged with murder in the 2nd degree for the 1999 mistaken identity execution of Joe Brown inside Frenchy's Bar, formerly located in Throggs Neck.

Meldish's girlfriend, Kimberly Hanzlik, 50, is serving 20-years to life at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women and charged with murder in the 2nd degree for her involvement in the 1999 Brown execution.

Back then, Hanzlik entered Frenchy's searching for Brown's brother Thomas who owed Meldish money, but mistook Brown for him.

Concealing his identity behind a ski mask, Meldish approached a back table where Brown was sitting and executed him.

The couple was arrested in 2007 and convicted of this crime in 2011.

According to the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, Meldish will be eligible for parole on September 22, 2032 and Hanzlik will become eligible on February 14, 2031.



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Councilman Torres unveils budget results

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

The community was given an opportunity to direct city budget funds to projects they felt were important - and the results are in!

On Thursday, May 7, Councilman Ritchie Torres' 15th Councilmanic District office hosted an event to announce the results of the 2015 Participatory Budgeting Cycle for the district at the office's location on 573 E. Fordham Road.

This year's participatory budgeting cycle, which marked the first to take place in the central Bronx, gave local residents an opportunity to vote on how they believe a portion of the city's FY2016 Executive Budget, totaling more than \$78 billion, should be spent in their communities and neighborhoods.

Over the course of the year, residents in the district worked with Torres and his office to devise project ideas and proposals while engaging in voter outreach.

The first week of the participatory budgeting cycle, which took place in mid-April, was a raging success, as 2,339 ballots were casted by residents.

Voters, ages 14 and up, were allowed to vote for up to five proposals out of the 13 choices on the ballot.

The final ballot choices included Belmont Library public bathrooms, a Grand

Concourse Library roof, HVA units at Tremont Library, air conditioning for public schools, security cameras for public schools, NYPD security cameras, Bronx Park East improvements, a dog park in Echo Park, Slattery Playground basketball courts and bathrooms, tree guards, a Van Nest flag pole to fly Old Glory, a mobile animal emergency unit and bus countdown clocks.

After much anticipation, the 2015 Participatory Budgeting Cycle results are as follows:

- 1st Place: security cameras for public school (\$80,000 - 1,352 votes)

Security camera systems will be installed on the exteriors of Knowledge and Power Preparatory Academy, 2055 Mapes Avenue as well as M.S. 391/TAPCO, 2225 Webster Avenue, allowing staff to monitor the exteriors of the schools.

- 2nd Place: Bronx Park East improvements (\$450,000 - 1,323 votes)

Renovations and enhancements will be made throughout Bronx Park north of Pelham Parkway (Bronx Park East).

- 3rd Place: NYPD security cameras (\$315,000 - 1,288 votes)

Nine NYPD security cameras will be installed throughout District 15, providing video feeds directly to local police precincts.



Councilman Ritchie Torres unveils the results of the 2015 Participatory Budgeting Cycle. Photo courtesy of Councilman Ritchie Torres' office

- 4th Place: air conditioning for public schools (\$145,000 - 1,236 votes)

Air conditioning units will be installed at P.S. 28 Mount Hope, 1861 Anthony Avenue, P.S. 32, 690 East 183rd

Street, and P.S. 9, 230 East 183rd Street, which will keep classrooms cool in warmer months.

- 5th Place: bus countdown clocks (\$80,000 - 935 votes)

Digital displays will be installed at four major bus stops, showing what times the buses will arrive.

Torres was the first to state, after announcing the results, that funding going towards security was most popular among the district's voters. He then proceeded to honor and thank the many individuals who were involved in the process for their planning, proposing and voting.

"I would like to thank the dozens of volunteers who made this process a success in its first year. Through participatory budgeting, we were able to involve Bronx residents in how city funds are spent in their neighborhoods while connecting with communities marked by years of civic disengagement," said Torres, the youngest member of the City Council. "The five projects receiving capital funds were created and selected by local residents through a truly democratic process and I look forward to continuing PB next year in District 15."

Funding will be allocated to city agencies to implement these projects when the city budget is approved in July.



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Harlem River Park Towers turn 40

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

It is a milestone year for the tallest buildings in the Bronx.

It was 40 years ago this year that construction on the Harlem River Park Towers, located at 10, 20, 30 and 40 Richman Plaza, was completed.

Four decades later, the two Bronx skyscrapers are still standing tall.

The Harlem River Park Towers complex, which consists of two 44-story buildings, was completed in 1975.

They were designed by architectural firm Davis, Brody & Associates in an effort to provide affordable housing for lower income working families near public transportation.

The towers were built in conjunction with Roberto Clemente State Park, known then as Harlem River Bronx State Park. The park, located just north of the towers, is the first New York City state park.

The residential hi-risers, which contain 1654 units, including 464 Section 8 assisted living units, is 404 feet high, making them the tallest buildings in the Bronx.

The towers' completion topped the Tracey Towers, two 41-story subsidized apartment buildings located at 20 and 40 West Mosholu Parkway which were completed in 1972 as well as Co-op City, which

consists of 35 high-rise apartment buildings that range from 24 to 33 floors.

When the towers' doors opened in 1975, city officials and planners saw the development as a great opportunity for working families

However, when the building management company changed in the early to mid 1980s, the towers began to experience deficiencies, including broken elevators and request for repairs were not responded to. It is reported that one elevator in the complex did not work for over five years.

Around the same time period, Morris Heights was experiencing high levels of crime, similar to other neighborhoods in the south and west Bronx.

When the trend continued into the early 2000s, the NYPD adopted the Clean Halls Program - a stop and frisk initiative - to keep the towers clean and safe.

The program backfired, however, as the towers' residents and even maintenance staff claimed that their rights were being violated by the NYPD. Lately, the nature of the stop and frisk program has been less severe after it was fought by lawyers and elected officials.

Despite somewhat of a checkered history, these buildings still serve their intended purpose - providing homes for the lower income families in a vibrant, active

setting.

"The Harlem River Park Towers, along with the creation of Roberto Clemente State Park, were intended to provide decent modern housing and recreation to its residents," said Lloyd Ultan, Bronx borough historian who recalled being present at the towers' groundbreaking.

"Certainly, these towers provided a distinct form of architecture with a beautiful view of the Harlem River - giving residents almost all of the benefits of living in a high priced building in Manhattan"

Four decades later, the towers' architectural firm, now known as Davis Brody Bond, are still very proud of the project and the vision that came along with it.

"Lew Davis and Sam Brody believed that the design of large residential buildings was an important typology and deserved to be elevated above the commodity approach that was typical of publicly-financed housing of the 1960s and 70s," said Steven M. Davis, FAIA Partner, Davis Brody Bond.

"Davis, Brody & Associates' work in moderate and low-income housing projects, which included the Harlem River Park Towers' completion 40 years ago, set a standard of excellence, as it overcame economic, social and political constraints."



The two Harlem River Park Towers, each 44 stories, have stood as the tallest buildings in the Bronx since construction was completed in 1975.

Community News Group / Steven Goodstein

CB 9 DM search narrowed to 2

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

The search for a new district manager for the borough's most populous community board is down to two candidates.

The Community Board 9 Search Committee's chairman, Mohammed Mujumder, said that after interviews and a review of about 20 possible candidates, two finalists for the position have been selected: William Rivera, the board's current chairman, and Socrates Solano, an aide to Congressman Charles Rangel.

"I strongly feel that both are very good candidates," said Mujumder, who serves as CB 9's vice-chairman.

The search committee chairman said that Rivera appears to have a lot of interest and it seems like he is almost always in the CB 9 office. Rivera has served as both a committee chairman, and as the chair of the entire community board, Mujumder added.

Solano appears to know many elected officials and much about how government functions, Mujumder said, adding that it almost seems as if Solano has spent a lifetime working in government.

Rivera, when called for an interview, said he could not yet speak about the selection process, citing rules spelled out in the New York City Charter.

"As per the New York City Charter, a board member can be a candidate for the district manager position, but must exclude

themselves from any manner in the selection process," he said. "Unfortunately, I cannot comment on this matter yet, until the position is filled, hopefully on May 21."

Solano said he has been in government for at least 15 years, working for Hillary Clinton's 2000 U.S. Senate campaign, for City Council Speaker Peter Vallone and as the deputy director of the congressman's district office.

He also worked at The DOE Fund's Ready, Willing and Able program, helping to select soon-to-be former prisoners for entry into a street-cleaning program that provides jobs and other assistance.

Solano said that he sees the biggest challenges facing CB 9 communities is a recent surge in crime, especially shootings, in the Soundview community, and in helping New York City Housing Authority tenants in the district's projects get the repairs their units need.

He believes he would bring experience and connections to the district manager position.

"I bring a vast Rolodex of people that I have known for many years that I can call," said Solano, who added that he "has an in" with city commissioners, and even Mayor de Blasio, who was his chief on the 2000 Clinton campaign.

After the submitted applications had been reviewed, the five-person search com-



Socrates Solano

Photo courtesy of Socrates Solano

mittee at CB 9 each asked three different questions of the two finalists in interviews.

Among the questions' topics that the board members posed to the candidates was how they plan to work with diverse communities comprising the board's service area, if they are familiar with the Board of Standards and Appeals procedure and the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure, and would they feel comfortable working together with the board and its members in a collective setting.

The full board is expected to vote for the new district manager as soon as the next full board meeting, said Mujumder. That meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 21



William Rivera, the chairman of Community Board 9

hoto courtesy of William Rivera

at 7 p.m. at the CB 9 district office at 1967 Turnball Avenue.

The position of CB 9 district manager has been vacant since the board voted to removed long-time former district manger Francisco Gonzalez in January.

CB 9 comprises a broad swath of the south east Bronx, including the Castle Hill, Soundview, Parkchester and Clason Point communities.



Students from the Bronx Charter School of Excellence joined local elected officials, community leaders, and members of the Parks Department to cut the ribbon on the new Van Nest Park.

Community News Group / Jaime Williams

Train theme for new Van Nest Park

BY JAIME WILLIAMS

All aboard!

Local leaders and elected officials celebrated the opening of a new train-themed playground at the renovated Van Nest Park at the Parks Department's ribbon cutting ceremony on Friday, May 8.

The renovation includes new play equipment, a spray shower, swings, drinking fountain, benches, painted game lines and landscaping.

The \$1.35 million project was funded by Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., Councilman James Vacca and Councilman Ritchie Torres.

The park's railroad-themed design pays homage to the history of the neighborhood, where a 19th century railroad serviced Van Nest and the nearby Morris Park Racecourse.

The neighborhood's namesake is the father of Abraham Ryneir van Nest, who was a director of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad.

The Van Nest Neighborhood Alliance pushed for the new park for years as part of an effort to revitalize the area, which over the years has lost community institutions including a parochial school, said VNNA counsel Bob Nolan.

In September, a much-welcomed public elementary school will open directly across from the park, serving kids in the area.

"We've been fighting very hard to rejuvenate the neighborhood," said Nolan.

With the help of Community Board 11, who prioritized the project on its list of capital budget requests, the neighborhood alliance brought the playground idea to elected officials and the parks department, who broke ground on the park last May. The project was on-time and on-budget, parks officials announced at the

It's so important as we move forward that we create these incredible spaces for present and future generations.

Michael Silver

NYC Parks Commissioner

ribbon cutting.

The triangle-shaped park at the intersection of White Plains and Unionport roads was in desperate need of an upgrade, said CB 11 chairman Tony Vitaliano.

"What I saw here 2 1/2 years ago was a waste of land, it was terrible," he said, noting that the new park is a huge improvement.

"I'm awed, it's really beautiful."

The project is part of the rebuilding of not just the neighborhood, but of the borough, said Diaz, where the improvements of parks is essential.

"Shame on us if we don't use our resources...to make sure we have the amenities the community wants and the community deserves," he said.

At the ceremony, the elected officials and Parks Commissioner Michael Silver addressed students from the nearby Bronx Charter School of Excellence, urging them to make good use of the park.

"It's so important as we move forward that we create these incredible spaces for present and future generations," said Silver.



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Northeast Bronx traffic study pitched

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

Coming on the heels of the announcement of a \$1 million traffic study on road access to the Hutchinson Metro Center, a coalition of concerned individuals is making its own pitch for a broader study of major east Bronx arterial roads.

The East Bronx Traffic Coalition, a consortium of civic associations concerned about increasing congestion, has written to the city Department of Transportation and the New York State Thruway Authority asking that the agencies look at ways to construct exits and onramps into Co-op City to relieve traffic in the region.

The increasing traffic clogging the Hutch and I-95 from the Bruckner Interchange to Co-op City led to the letter.

Sent on Monday, May 11, the letter cites a 2000 study submitted to the state Department of Transportation that indicates that the construction of off-ramps and on-ramps onto the Hutchinson River Parkway was feasible.

It also states a second 2010 study identifies a lack of a direct exit and entry point for Co-op City to the Hutch as a major reason for congestion on I-95.

"Therefore, we are respectfully asking your organizations to work together to formulate a feasibility plan that could make these ramps a reality," stated the coalition in their letter.

The coalition stated that the idea of ramps



Making the Wilkinson Avenue overpass two way is one of the grassroots ideas for easing traffic affecting Pelham Bay and surrounding communities. At peak times, the Bruckner Expressway and the service road heading north are jammed in the northbound direction, as is Amendola Plaza

Community News Group / Photo by Patrick Rocchio

connecting the Hutchinson Metro Center to the Hutchinson River Parkway was also long considered unfeasible, but that now \$1 million in taxpayer dollars will be spent to study the possibility.

EBTC has already met with Assemblyman Michael Benedetto and Councilman James Vacca, and has been working with Senator Jeff Klein's office and will meet with him soon, said John Doyle, a coalition repre-

sentative.

Doyle said that the traffic that afflicts places like Pelham Bay and the congestion in Co-op City and elsewhere are all interconnected.

He points to calls from the Pelham Bay Taxpayers and Community Association for two-way traffic on a Wilkinson Avenue overpass that connects the two service roads of the Bruckner Expressway as proof that traf-

fic headed north is affecting local communities.

"Obviously, at all ends, the community is calling out that more needs to be done," he said, adding that the community was appreciative of what had already been done, such as the widening of an I-95 off-ramp near the entrance to the Bay Plaza Mall.

"The traffic coalition is taking a holistic approach to the entire region," he said.

Assemblyman Benedetto said that he discussed with EBTC his efforts to convince the legislature leadership to provide funding for a new traffic study for the area.

One of the issues, the assemblyman said, was 'as of right' zoning does not require developers of shopping malls or other establishments to conduct traffic studies.

Meanwhile, in Pelham Bay, PBTC president and EBTC member Michelle Torriani said that the ongoing traffic tie-ups along the Bruckner Expressway service road, and at Amendola Plaza, is impacting local travel.

The organization continues to call for its own smaller traffic change, first envisioned by the PBTC's late president Joseph Oddo.

"Making the Wilkinson Avenue (cross-over) two-ways would be helpful," said Torriani, adding that locals would make good use of the new road and that all agencies need to be involved to improve road conditions.

The letter was sent to the agencies around press time for this story.

Fordham grade school receives Ito sculpture

BY JAIME WILLIAMS

A Fordham middle school has welcomed 'A Child' - a sculpture by Japanese artist Akihiro Ito.

The Fordham Road Business Improvement District set up the donation for the sculpture's installation.

Ito also created 'Tomorrow' which has sat on Fordham Road for the past year as part of a partnership with the BID and the Department of Transportation.

I.S. 254, near the redevelopment at Fordham Plaza, is the perfect home for Ito's second sculpture, said principal Alexis Marrero. He was convinced as soon as he saw a picture and learned the title.

"Of course I wanted it," he said.

The seven-foot tall, cherry wood sculpture sits in a window above the main entrance of the school on Washington Avenue, where it is visible from the street.

Ito said he was glad to donate the piece to the school, since the sculpture has a message for the younger generation about the importance of nature and preserving it for the future.

This represents the change that's happening in the community, the revitalization. It's really uplifting and inspiring to me and to the school.

Alexis Marrero

Principal, I.S. 254

"I want them to appreciate nature," Ito said. "I think nature is the most important thing."

Marrero said he likes that the abstract piece is open to interpretation by students and the community, and that it has already drawn eyes and questions.

"It's an opportunity for a talking piece," he said.

The principal wants to install spotlights to illuminate the piece at night, better showcasing it to the community.

Marrero is a product of the Fordham neighborhood, and he's glad to see positive developments in the area, including the addition of art.

"This represents the change that's happening in the community, the revitalization," he said. "It's really uplifting and inspiring to me and to the school."

The Fordham Road BID, now in its 10th year, is making a big effort to bring more art and culture into the shopping district, said executive director Wilma Alonso, to invigorate the neighborhood.

"I think that adding other layers will attract people," she said.

The efforts include events, such as an upcoming food truck extravaganza, and art such as the 'tomorrow' sculpture, which will soon have to be relocated.

But the BID doesn't want to bring just any art to the neighborhood, said Alonso.

"It has to have a message connected to Fordham Road."



Akihiro Ito's sculpture 'A Child' in the entry way of I.S. 254, is visible from both the street and the school. The Fordham Business Improvement District arranged for the art donation.

Community News Group / Jaime Williams

TN Merchants Street Fair, May 30

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

The family-oriented annual Throggs Neck Sidewalk Fair will return this year.

The fair will take place at various locations along East Tremont Avenue from roughly LaSalle to Randall avenues from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, May 30.

The Throggs Neck Merchants Association hosts the annual event, which will feature live bands, teddy bear building stations, pony rides, a rock-climbing wall, face-painting, child IDing station and merchants who will provide samples and giveaways, event coordinators said.

Steve Kaufman, TNMA president, said that the event is a good one for merchants and consumer alike. It gives the businesspeople a chance to meet and interact with their customers, and provides community members with entertainment that does not cost them anything, he said.

"This event is about people coming out in the sunshine and

having a great time," said Kaufman. "They can walk on the street, interact with the different merchants and groups, and enjoy the day while being in their own neighborhood."

A well-attended event should showcase the vibrancy of the Throggs Neck community, said Kaufman.

Geri Colon, a TNMA board member who is co-coordinator of the event, said that volunteers from the organization plan the event for five to six months.

She said that the sidewalk fair is a day of appreciation from local businesses to the community.

"If it wasn't for the people on the street, the merchants would not be in business," said Colon. "So it is a way to give back to the community, a day to say 'thank you,' and a day of appreciation."

"It is a good promotional day too," she added.

According to Colon, as of press time, some of the locations of the fair's highlights are:

•Rite Aid, 3529 E. Tremont

Avenue: rock climbing wall and bandstand in its parking lot

•Bronx Tax Man, 3707 E. Tremont Avenue and Got Hair?, 3611 E. Tremont Avenue: teddy-bear building stations

•Sapito's Sports Bar & Grill, 3168 E. Tremont Avenue: Child I.D.s being created

•Anthony's Flower Farm, 3240 E. Tremont Avenue: inflatable football tossing game

•T.D. Bank, 3755 E. Tremont Avenue: an antique Metropolitan Transportation Authority bus

•Zeros Cabs at 3553 E. Tremont Avenue: pony rides

•Various locations: face painting, ice cream, and craftspeople from Bronx Council on the Arts with t-shirts, paintings and jewelry for sale

Colon said that numerous businesses will be on the street up and down the avenue.

Anyone taking part in the fair can take a ride on the Bronx Culture Trolley bus, she added. The trolley bus will drop fairgoers off wherever they want along the route.



A scene from a previous year's Throggs Neck Merchants Street Fair of the rock-climbing wall which will be located in the Rite Aid parking lot at East Tremont and Lafayette avenues. File Photo

Deegan crossing for VCP to be built

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

Construction on a long-awaited pedestrian bridge connecting the east and west sides of Van Cortlandt Park should be underway soon.

Coming on the same day as a notice of activation of the Croton Water Filtration Plant in the park, a group of elected officials, city agency commissioners and advocates took part in a Friday, May 15 announcement that a new pedestrian bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway will link the whole park together when completed.

The pedestrian bridge will span the expressway near the Shandler Recreation Area and the Croton Woods, and comes as a result of a study requested by the community after the 1999 decision to site the massive underground water filtration plant in the park.

"Van Cortlandt Park is a treasure of the Bronx," said Assembly

Speaker Carl Heastie at the announcement, with the assembly allocating \$3 million for the \$12 million project. "This pedestrian bridge will increase access and use of the vast park space to all Bronx residents."

Senator Jeff Klein was able to secure a \$1 million allocation from the upper chamber of the legislature.

"By investing in our parks, we are not only ensuring children and families have a top quality space to play and spend time, but significantly improving our city's infrastructure for future generations," said Senator Klein, who added "By opening up the park and better connecting previously isolated sections, the new footbridge will increase access to a vital community asset for countless residents, visitors and tourists."

DEP and Parks have allocated \$4 million each for the project.

Christina Taylor, executive di-



Elected officials (l-r) Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, Councilman Andrew Cohen, Senator Jeff Dinowitz, Senator Jeff Klein, Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr. and Congressman Eliot Engel at the announcement about work beginning on the long awaited pedestrian bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway in Van Cortlandt Park. The official announcement was held on Friday, May 8.

Community News Group / Photo by Patrick Rocchio

rector Friends of Van Cortlandt Park executive director, said that unfortunately it took a decade for a feasibility study to be completed on the bridge, and many additional years to secure funding.

Nevertheless, the east and west link will allow communities in on the park's east side like Norwood and Woodlawn access to parts of the park with great amenities.

"This will allow the Norwood community to walk to the Kings-

bridge section of the park where the pool is, where the lake is – where there are more amenities," she said, adding that people going hiking on 20 miles of trails in the park will also have more options.

This is the first part of a 2014 master plan for the park to be undertaken, and the group is hopeful that if this project gets rolling, other parts of that plan will follow.

Also taking part in the an-

nouncement were Congressman Eliot Engel, Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz, Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., and Councilman Andrew Cohen.

Representing city agencies were Feniosky Peña-Mora, Department of Design and Construction commissioner; Mitchell Silver, Parks Department commissioner; and Emily Lloyd, Department of Environmental Protection commissioner.

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Hunts Point warehouse stored drugs: Feds

BY ROBERT WIRSING

A Queens family charged in a recent international drug bust allegedly used a Hunts Point produce warehouse for their operation's narcotics-trafficking.

On Thursday, May 7, Brooklyn federal court charged husband and wife defendants Gregorio, 59, and Eleonora Gigliotti, 54, their son Angelo, 34, and Franco Fazio, 56, a relative and Italian citizen with conspiracy to import cocaine, conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine, importation of cocaine, and attempted possession of cocaine.

The Gigliotti defendants are also facing an unlawful use and possession of firearms charge after law enforcement uncovered their extensive weapons cache.

These charges are reflective of their participation in an international drug trafficking operation between July 1, 2014 and this past March 11 and corresponds with the arrest of 13 Italian defendants on related drug-trafficking charges between the United States and Italian law enforcement agencies.

Fazio was one of 13 arrested and he will face charges in Italy before being extradited to the U.S. to face the superseding charges raised against him.

The Gigliotti defendants remain in stateside custody while being additionally charged with alleged narcotics-trafficking

offenses by the Italian authorities.

The family owned and operated several businesses including Cucino Amodo Mio Italian restaurant and pizzeria in Corona and a Fresh Farms Produce Export Corporation warehouse located at 330B Casanova Street in Hunts Point which were allegedly utilized for their drug trafficking operations.

These charges resulted from a lengthy probe conducted by HIS and the FBI using court-authorized wiretaps and physical surveillance uncovering between last October and December, the defendants had allegedly imported over 55 kilograms of cocaine into the states from Costa Rica which law enforcement recovered.

Last October, law enforcement intercepted a cassava shipment from Costa Rica bound for Fresh Farms which contained approximately 40 kilograms of cocaine concealed inside cardboard boxes of cassava.

Prior to its arrival, Gigliotti allegedly visited Costa Rica with approximately \$400,000 in cash which she delivered to the sources of supply.

In September, Fazio allegedly traveled from Italy to New York then Costa Rica to deliver another \$170,000 in cash to the suppliers.

The following December, a second Costa Rican cassava shipment bound for Fresh Farms was blocked and approximately 15



Fresh Farms Export Corp. warehouse located at 330B Cassanova Street in Hunts Point was allegedly used to facilitate an international drug trafficking operation.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

kilograms hidden within cardboard boxes of produce were seized.

Before this shipment arrived, Fazio allegedly made two additional trips to Costa Rica to meet with sources there.

On March 11, the Gigliottis were arrested while law enforcement searched both Cucino Amodo Mio and the couple's home.

In the restaurant, police seized a 12 gauge shotgun, a loaded .357 magnum Trooper revolver, a loaded .22 caliber Colt pistol, a loaded .38 caliber Charter Arms revolver, a 9 mm Keltec pistol, a .762 Czech pistol, a .38

caliber Derringer with a defaced serial number, ammunition magazines, loose ammunition, two handgun holsters, brass knuckles, and more than \$100,000 in cash.

Inside the couple's residence, agents recovered a loaded .45 caliber Llama handgun and more than \$18,000 in cash.

If the Gigliottis are convicted, they face a potential mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years imprisonment.

The Brooklyn defendants will be arraigned at a later date before United States District Judge Raymond J. Dearie.

Event set to aid fire-dislodged families

from Page 1

least two children, are temporarily staying with relatives as they wait for repairs to take place.

As a result, Bailey Provetto, founder and owner of the Tasty Ladies of NY, is holding a fire relief event to help the families get back on their feet.

"As one of the organizers of the fundraiser, I am trying my best to collect as much money as possible to support these families," said Provetto, who is working with St. Benedict's Church to raise funds. "I really hope that many donations are made even if those who donated don't personally know the family or don't have much to give - because every little bit helps."

St. Benedict Church, located at 2969 Otis Avenue, along with the Tasty Ladies of NY, held an initial fundraiser for one of the three families' units that were damaged.

Shortly after, however, Charity Cintron, mother of two sons, suggested that there should be a bigger fundraiser including all three families who were af-

fected. Cintron, who lived on the first floor, modestly claimed that her apartment was the least damaged, affected only by water.

The situation in the homes of Loren DiVico and Rebecca Borrero was more severe, as a majority of the fire was centered on the second and third floors.

"I tried to put the fire out right away when I saw it, but by that time, it was too large and out of control," said DiVico, who burned her hand when she tried to pull her pocketbook out of the inferno unsuccessfully.

"It doesn't really matter (referring to the pocketbook) because material items mean nothing compared to loved ones - and in my case it was my children and my dog."

DiVico, a single mom raising four kids, claims that she felt uncomfortable weeks before the incident when the building's landlord received a summons from the Fire Department for an empty fire extinguisher and an inaccessible fire escape after she informed him of the deficiencies multiple times.



The FDNY responds to the house fire at 3550 E. Tremont Avenue.

Photo courtesy of Bailey Provetto

When he continued to ignore the safety issues, she confronted him - still to no avail.

A few weeks later, three families are piecing their lives back together the best way they can. This fundraiser should help make this extremely difficult process just a little easier.

The event will start at 2 p.m. on Sunday, June 28 at the Locust Point Civic

Center, 3300 Tierney Place. Donations are \$20 per person and children under 10 can attend for free.

A buffet will be donated by local restaurants and music entertainment will be provided by Elvis impersonator. All proceeds will be donated to the victims.

To donate to the effort, call Provetto at (917) 693-1133.

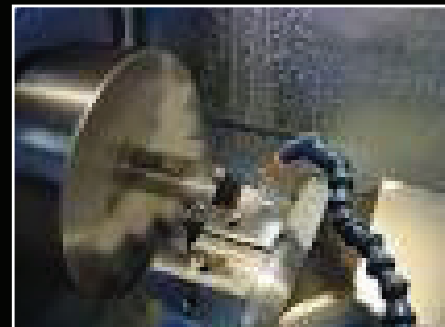


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