

Three deadly 'H' overdoses in Loreto Park

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

A rash of heroin overdoses have become a common occurrence in a local park recently.

According to sources, there have been at least three reported incidents of heroin overdose inside Loreto Park, which is generating great concern among the Morris Park community.

The apparent overdoses, which are believed to have all taken place inside the park over the last two weeks, claimed the lives of 21-year old Chris 'Hood' Morello and Michael Coscia, the former of whom was a Morris Park resident. The third overdose victim has not yet been identified, as of press time.

Morello, who passed away on Saturday, July 2 and attended nearby P.S. 83, was described as friendly and harmless but didn't receive parental guidance from an early age, according to a former classmate.

"He wasn't a bad kid by any means - he just went down the wrong path," said Andrew Melillo, Morello's classmate nearly a decade ago. "I hadn't been in touch with him in recent years, but in the past I remember him being on the streets frequently at an early age, with his parents barely in the picture."

Melillo, who said he was unsure of what drug Morello took to overdose, added that another former P.S. 83 classmate of his, Muhammad Ahmin, also overdosed on drugs two months ago after ingesting Xanax followed by alcohol, which led to seizures and ultimately led to his death.

"It's a tough situation to be in - to be young and have a tough home life where the parents

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GROUP HOME APPEALS VOTE

Service provider challenges CB 10's 'no'

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

The operator of a controversial proposed group home in Throggs Neck is appealing a community board decision to oppose the home's siting.

Martin Prince, Community Board 10 chairman, said that CB 10 received notice that operator Services for the Underserved will appeal to the NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities regarding the proposed site at 276 Graff Avenue.

An OPWDD commissioner's

hearing will be held on the matter, SUS confirmed.

A hearing date has not been set yet, said Prince, who also said that the board is committed to representing the community.

Under the 28-year-old Padvan Law, which provides means for communities to oppose group homes for the developmentally disabled, the community could oppose the siting if there is over-saturation, meaning a concentration of similar facilities, in the area,

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49TH PCT.'S BMX TOURNAMENT

Members of the Morris Park community and the 49th Precinct met for the precinct's first-ever BMX Tournament on Thursday, July 7 at Loreto Park. Bicyclists of all ages and skill sets performed wheelies and other totally awesome stunts at the fun-filled event. More photos and story on page 8.

Photo by Aracelis Batista

Grand opening of Triangle Plaza Hub held

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

The grand opening of a new shopping plaza signifies a turn in the right direction for development in the Bronx.

On Wednesday, July 13, Triangle Equities, along with elected officials, business partners and local merchants, gathered for the grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony of the Triangle Plaza Hub, a \$35 million multi-use complex located

at 459 E. 149th Street, right in the center of 'The Hub'.

The Triangle Plaza Hub, an 88,000 square-foot community-centric development, will house Fine Fare Supermarket, Brightpoint Health, DaVita Dialysis Center, Vistasite Eye Care, Boston Market and Dunkin Donuts, along with a 6,000 square foot plaza for the public's enjoyment.

Last, but certainly not least,

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CB 11 objects to removal of tree, street

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

Community support for the reconstruction of the northside of Pelham Parkway is slipping over items that have been around 100 years.

The objections arose when the city proposed closing an access street and removing a majestic tree as part of the project.

The city's plan to remove the small roadway and return it to green parkland is scheduled for Phase 2 of Pelham Parkway's reconstruction.

The NYC Department of Design and Construction is heading the project that will run from 2017 to 2019.

Also, the Pelham Parkway Preservation Alliance has raised concerns about the planned removal of a Civil War-era elm tree next to a bus stop just west of Williamsbridge Road, according to John Fratta, CB 11 administrative manager, who handles community concerns regarding this project.

"Both issues are basically non-starters for us," said Fratta, adding the community by and large agrees with the rest of the project.

CB 11 voted unanimously to name the 200-foot section of roadway near the New York Institute for Special Education that links a Pelham Parkway service road with westbound Pelham Parkway as Paulding Avenue, in support of the community.

The vote took place at a full board meeting on Thursday, June 23. In order for the CB 11 street naming plan to move forward, the NYC City Council would have to approve it, and the street portion would then have to be alienated by the state legislature to remove it from NYC Department of Parks and Recreation jurisdiction.

"That's been a street for over a 100 years, before the Parks Department even existed," said Fratta about the road. "People use that street, the NYC Department of Transportation put a stop sign there and it is paved, so for anyone to say it is not a street is nonsense."

Councilman James Vacca said he supports the CB 11 proposal, adding that in order for it to work, approval will be needed in two consecutive state legislative sessions.

Senator Jeff Klein said in a state-

ment that he looks forward to working with the city and state legislatures to make sure the community needs are met on both issues.

PPPA has information indicating the elm tree will be felled because the city plans to move the bus stop within feet of the tree, further west, said Joe Menta.

"We are very adamant that the tree stays," said Menta, adding "That tree has stood the test of time, and escaped Dutch Elm disease, and I think we owe it to the tree to have it remain."

As an alternative, he believes that instead of moving the bus stop further west, the city could move it a block away.

According to a source familiar with the Pelham Parkway reconstruction plan, the elm tree in question is within the area of the exiting bus stop, and that trees are usually grandfathered in, but an engineer's report recommended the tree's removal for road safety reasons. The tree's girth prevents a guardrail installation at the location.

A DDC spokeswoman stated that the city agencies involved in



The plan is to remove this elm tree on Pelham Parkway West near Williamsbridge Road during the north side reconstruction. The Pelham Parkway Preservation Alliance is fighting to keep it.

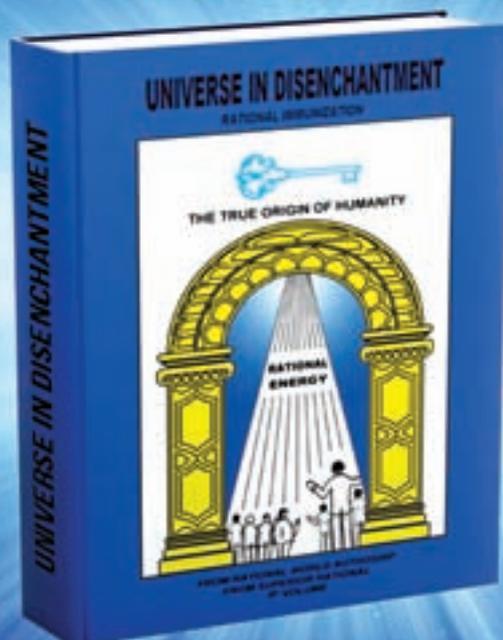
Community News Group / Patrick Rocchio

Pelham Parkway's Phase 2 reconstruction would review the plan.

According to DDC, Pelham Parkway's Phase 2 reconstruction

includes a new trunk water main, a select bus service lane, dedicated left turn lanes and wheelchair accessible sidewalks and ramps.

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(l-r) Andrew Penzi, Capital Team leader; Assemblyman Victor Pichardo; Jussara Edwards, Landscape Designer; NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver; Councilman Fernando Cabrera; Bronx Parks Commissioner Iris Rodriguez-Rosa and Kavan Brandon.

Photo by Aracelis Batista

Cabrera finances renovation to Grand Playground

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

Construction has started on the new Grand Playground on the corner of West 181st Street and Grand Avenue.

Councilman Fernando Cabrera - who financed the \$2,690,000 project - and other borough officials gathered on July 7 to share a few words on the project and break ground on the site.

"As you can imagine I'm excited today because it is going to happen," Cabrera told the community members in attendance.

Discussions to revitalize the park began in 2010 and in 2011 and Cabrera began allocating funding to renovate the park.

However, he said as he was allocating funding, nothing was moving forward under the previous parks administration.

The councilman said under the new administration and NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, this park and others are progressing.

The new park will feature a basketball court, a play area designed for children of various ages,

and two entrances.

It will also have sprinklers and a seated area for seniors.

"We want to make sure when we have playspaces - we have an aging population in New York City - we want to make sure they have a wonderful green space where they can age beautifully and watch the children play but also just get outdoors and enjoy the green space," said Silver.

Cabrera said the issues in connection to the park surrounded more than just the playground. Water from the park was running into residents' homes.

"Now everyone is going to benefit including the neighbors whose property is adjacent to the playground," said the council member.

Cabrera, like Silver, also touted how the park will be able to appeal to all ages.

"We have something for the seniors, we're going to have something for the children, we're going to have basketball for the teenagers," he said.

Eduardo Hernandez, a park manager, grew up in the neighborhood.

Hernandez said, as he stood on Grand Avenue parallel to West 181st Street, the right side of the park was sunken in six or seven feet.

He added the park used to be all blacktop, with insufficient benches and one basketball hoop.

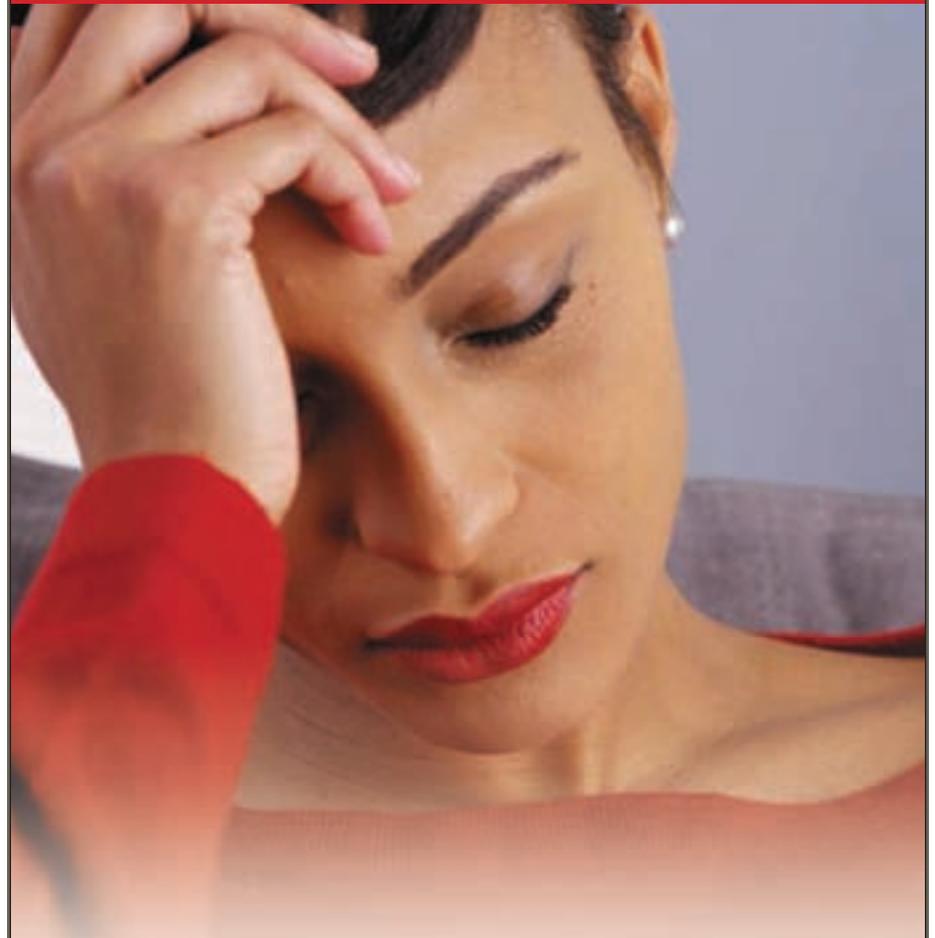
"I lived in this neighborhood for 21 years," said Hernandez. "I'm really excited about this park."

Kavan Brandon, parks and recreation committee chair for Community Board 5, was also happy to see a new park coming to the area.

"We don't have as many playgrounds and park as some of the other districts," said Brandon. "So it's a great day when something like this happens because we have very limited space."

He added, "I think we need more of this and the current parks administration and the councilman are doing a great job in making sure these parks are pursued."

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Three deadly heroin overdoses inside Loreto Park

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are barely involved. As we have seen, the consequences can be drastic," he said.

Due to the increasing concern in the area, these incidents have caused residents to get proactive in searching for the drug dealers in the neighborhood who were responsible for these deaths.

"These incidents are very concerning to our community - and something needs to be done about it," said AID'Angelo, first vice-president of the Morris Park Community Association, who said that Loreto Park has been a drug scene for years, including minors smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol in the park.

"Our main task here and now is catching the 'small fish' who will lead us to the 'big fish' - and we know who these dealers are. It's important that we continue to work closely with the 49th Precinct so we catch them and save our community," D'angelo said.

Posters and flyers were displayed throughout the neighborhood in the aftermath of the deaths, which gave information on several drug dealers believed to be responsible for the distribution of heroin and other drugs in the community.

One flyer read that a potential suspect lives on Van Nest Avenue and that "he is to blame - and needs to be wiped out of the community forever." The flyers were later removed by the 49th Precinct.

"I am very disturbed by these incidents that have occurred - it's bring-

ing down the community with every incident," said Tony Signorile, president of the Morris Park Community Association, who added that he believes that a local resident across the street from P.S. 83 has been selling drugs from their first floor window.

"I encourage anybody with information to reach out to us so we can work with the 49th Precinct in catching those who have triggered these incidents."

"It's devastating that lives were taken from us because of heroin addiction," said Senator Jeff Klein. "Tragically, in every corner of our state, heroin and opioid addictions are destroying lives," Klein added.

A spokesperson for the 49th Precinct said, "the precinct is looking to ascertain some leads to identify the individuals distributing these drugs."

On Saturday, July 9, a prayer vigil and impromptu memorial ceremony was held for Morrello inside Loreto Park, where family members, friends and community members gathered to pay their respects.

A poster board with pictures, messages, flowers and balloons were placed on one of the park's fences, as well as over 100 candles, which were arranged under the poster board.

According to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Bronx had the second-highest rate of unintentional drug overdoses in 2013 behind Staten Island, with about 15 deaths per 100,000 resi-

dents.

The rate of unintentional overdoses in the Bronx decreased by 39%, from 20 deaths per 100,000 residents in 2006 to 12.3 deaths in 2010.

Since 2010, rates of unintentional drug overdoses in the Bronx increased to 15 deaths in 2013, according to DOH.

In 2012-2013, the neighborhoods of Hunts Point and Mott Haven had the highest rate of overdoses in the five boroughs, with 28.2 deaths per 100,000 residents, according to DOH.

In 2013, heroin was the most common drug involved in overdose deaths and contributed to 58% percent of overdose deaths among Bronx residents, according to DOH.

If you or anybody you know suffers from heroin or substance addiction, the Bronx provides multiple drug addiction treatment centers for patients, including Daytop Village Inc., located at 2614 Halperin Avenue, Pac Program of the Bronx, located at 1215 Stratford Avenue, Hunts Point Multi-Services Center, located at 785 Westchester Avenue, MARS Statewide Network, located at 804 E. 138th Street, Bronx TASC, located at 1020 Grand Concourse, Success Counseling Services, Inc., located at 1015 Ogden Avenue, Promesa, Inc., located at 1776 Clay Avenue, and Tri Center, Inc., located at 2488 Grand Concourse #401, among other Bronx locations.

Additional reporting contributed by Patrick Rocchio.



A proposed group home for 276 Graff Avenue will proceed to a hearing at OMRDD. CB 10 already expressed its opposition to the siting of a group home at this location.

Community News Group / Patrick Rocchio

Group home appeals vote; service provider challenges CB10's 'no'

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said Prince.

"You can go with oversaturation: that is the primary reason a community could oppose one of these facilities," said Prince of the options. "Finance can also come into play."

However, Prince added that the outcry over the Graff Avenue location has made it clear that CB 10 needs to be more proactive when a group home is sited in the board.

He wants to bring together the communities affected, service providers and group home clients and their families to foster greater understanding when OPWDD facilities plan on locating in CB 10.

"In OPWDD type cases, what I would like to see in that 40-day period is that the providers working with us and the community to explain themselves and get to know (us), and to interact with people who will be in close proximity," said the chairman, adding that just scheduling a public hearing is not doing enough.

Stronger dialogue would be helpful in preventing

tension in a community that feels as if something is being forced on them.

Speaking for the board, Prince said that the developmentally disabled are citizens of the community.

He added that while there may be objections that the group home clients do not come specifically from CB 10, he believes there is need for developmentally disabled services in the board and borough.

Opposition to all group homes will make it harder for the community to request services when they are needed or to attract top-notch operators, he said.

Nevertheless, opposition to the Graff Avenue site remains among neighbors, a group of which attended CB 10's Thursday, June 16 meeting and voiced their opposition.

Graff Avenue neighbor Sonia Capifali believes that the purchase price for the property, \$600,000 according to SUS, is way above fair market value for the home.

"From a taxpayer standpoint, [the house] is just not worth the money," she said. "It is not a good use of tax-

payer money."

Neighbor Foti Bouklis believes the operator should seek a more commercial area for its facility.

He is also concerned about traffic congestion and safety in the residential area, and said that he believes the purchase price is very high.

SUS is determined to exercise its right to a commissioner's hearing under the Padavan Law, said Louis Cavaliere, SUS executive vice president for developmental disability services, in a statement in response to several questions from the Bronx Times.

The service provider doesn't plan on further dialogue with the community on the matter, the statement said, adding that the community was entitled to voice its opinions.

SUS has already attended two public hearings and answered all questions posed to them, Cavaliere said.

"It is now up to the OPWDD commissioner to decide what happens next," he stated.



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CB 6 district manager Ivine Galarza retires

BY ROBERT WIRSING

Community Board 6 district manager Ivine Galarza is set to retire from the board after nearly 21 years of service.

According to CB 6, Friday, July 29 marks her official last day as the board's district manager.

Originally from Puerto Rico, Galarza and her family emigrated to America in the early 1950s and settled down on Boston Road in the Bronx.

Galarza graduated from Lehman College earning a bachelor's degree in business administration in 1972.

Following college, Galarza embarked on her governmental career serving as liaison to community boards 4, 5, 7 and 8 during former borough president Stanley Simon's administration.

After working for the borough president, she founded and served as executive director for the now defunct non-profit housing organization, the Housing Workshop

from 1985 to 1995 where she implemented a program providing legal representation to low-income tenants in housing court and formed a housing education program added to all public school's across community school districts 10 and 12's curriculum.

Appointed CB 6's district manager in 1995, Galarza has since demonstrated excellent leadership and commitment toward improving the community and residents' lives throughout her career.

As district manager, her responsibility was to observe and make recommendations ensuring city services and programs were delivered in a timely and sufficient manner to the community.

She also served as an arbitrator to NYC municipal agencies and elected officials while advising the community board on the city's capital and expense budget.

Since the late 1990s, Galarza has worked closely with the families of the vic-



U.S. Congressman-elect Senator Adriano Espaillat appears to have outrun his closest challenger, Assemblyman Keith Wright.

Photo courtesy of Espaillat for Congress

tims of the Happy Land Social Club Fire by organizing an annual Mass at St. Thomas Aquinas Church and a vigil at the Plaza of the Eighty-Seven to remember the 87 victims who perished in one of New York's worst

tragedies.

"A lot of the families didn't know each other, but they became bonded through this terrible tragedy," said Galarza.

To ensure this tragedy is never repeated, Galarza led the effort to have domestic violence and fire prevention forums for the community and to have the FDNY properly inspect local bars. She noted the district does not house any nightclubs following the Happy Land incident.

"She's an excellent worker and professional," said Wendy Rodriguez, CB 6 chairwoman, adding, "Whenever there's an issue in the community, she will not stop until it is resolved."

A retirement Mass and reception event were held for Galarza on Wednesday, June 29 at St. Thomas Aquinas Church and St. Thomas Aquinas School.

In recognition of her many years of service to the borough, Galarza received proclamations from Bor-

ough President Ruben Diaz, Jr.; Councilman Ritchie Torres and 78th Assembly District State Committeeman Kenny Agosto representing outgoing Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson.

The Throggs Neck resident was also awarded a citation from the NYS Assembly by Assemblyman Luis Sepulveda and a commendation from Ashley Torres representing NYC Comptroller Stringer.

Galarza has received many accolades over these two decades most notably being named as the 2012 Woman of Distinction by Senator Hassell-Thompson.

Upon her retirement, Galarza said she intends to continue working with her parish, St. Thomas Aquinas Church by teaching English as a second language classes and introducing workshops to explain to recently arrived immigrants how the government operates and the services available.

Galarza's successor has not yet been named.

Hoops tournament for mom lost to gang violence

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

Rev. Anthony Hendrickson is using basketball to promote safer communities against gang violence.

Hendrickson, head of the Lead By Example Reverse The Trend non-profit group, will hold the Jessica White Safer Community tournament on Friday, July 15 from noon to 4 p.m.

White, a 29-year old mother of three, was fatally shot in March during a shooting exchange linked to gang violence.

White was shielding her children as bullets flew across a park at 700 Westchester Avenue.

According to Hendrickson, the tournament was created to promote public safety and youth development.

"The reason we did it is because we don't want to lose another parent," he said.

"Jessica White should not have lost her life protecting her children inside a park and playground," he added.

Hendrickson said he wants to send a message to gang members that this is not a place for gang activity.

As part of the tournament, which



James Santos, representing the Bronx DA, Antonio Hendrickson, Lead by Example, and Richard Price, famous author and screen writer, and local youth that participated in a scrimmage for the Jessica White Memorial Basketball Tournament on Friday, July 15

Photo Courtesy of Silvio Pacifico

will take place at 721 Tinton Avenue, police officers in the 40th Precinct will play against kids from the community.

Originally, the tournament was supposed to happen on July 9.

However, due to the string of violence that occurred in Louisiana, Minnesota and Dallas, officers were

stationed at other locations around the city during protests.

Instead of having the tournament, the kids held a scrimmage on July 9 to get ready for the real thing.

Hendrickson also took the time to provide a short word to the kids about the recent string of violence.

He explained that not all officers

are bad despite a few rogue officers and what happened over the weekend were tragedies.

He added that the children should not act out in violence in response to the recent tragedies.

Hendrickson wants to make sure there is a very strong focus on what happened to Jessica White and the

steps the community is taking to move forward.

The pastor explained he wants everyone in the community to spread the message of public safety.

"I think when the youth get involved, parents get involved and the community comes together, it sends a strong message," said Hendrickson.

He hopes that message will cause others to "be more vigilant" and said "together we can put the 'neighbor' back in neighborhood."

Lead by Example, founded by Hendrickson and other group of mentors in 2014, was created to "to reverse the spiraling growth rates of incarceration of young people in disadvantaged communities," according to the organization's website.

Hendrickson, now an ordained evangelist at True Vine Pentecostal Faith Church, and some of the other mentors at Lead by Example are former convicts who are now looking to affect positive change for young people in their communities.

For more on Lead by Example visit leadbyexampleversethetrend.org.

Brothers create change through performing arts

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

Bronx residents Max and Kenny Cabral enjoy singing, dancing and acting. However, the two brothers don't perform their talents simply to entertain an on-looking crowd.

Kenny and Max "want to change the world."

The Cabral brothers, residents of Wakefield, got into performing at a very young age as their older brother, Daniel Estrella, was acting and learning the art at the Rosie's Theater Kids performing arts school.

"When I was younger I would listen to a lot of music and my older brother was in Rosie's so I was influenced by him to become an actor, dancer and singer" said Kenny, 12.

"I danced a lot at all the parties and family gatherings," said Max, 14. "They'd be like, 'Hey where's Maxwell,' because I would always dance because I just liked

doing it."

Max said that since he was happy he "always liked making people happy and putting smiles on people's faces."

He also said with his older brother in RT Kids, it "really helped influence" him to say "this is what I want to do."

Estrella, 23, is now a part of the musical theatre department at the University of Michigan.

Lori Klinger, co founder of Rosie's Theater Kids with Rosie O'Donnell, was very proud of the boys.

Like their big brother both boys now attend the school.

"There can't be talent without nurturing," said Klinger. "They bring the talent and we nurture and that's our job."

Although both brothers love performing, being on stage is about much more.

"I want to change the world which is what our



Max (left) and Kenny (right) with their brother Daniel Estrella (center)
Photo Courtesy of Maria Matos

generation is supposed to do" said Max, who will be attending the Professional Performing Arts

School in the fall.

Kenny said he hopes to change people's thinking on subjects that aren't

commonly discussed.

He pointed to the play 'Runaways,' which the two performed in at the New York City Center from July 6 to July 9.

Elizabeth Swados created the play in 1977 after studying the lives of young children who had run away from home and dealt with various difficult experiences.

Max played the role of Shabach - a New York City teen who runs away from home because his parents won't get along. Kenny played the role of Jeremiah - a young teen who has a terrible relationship with his mother and turns to the basketball court to find comfort.

Both boys acknowledged that, although the play's cast consisted totally of children, there were mature aspects to the play as many runaways deal with abuse, prostitution and drug abuse.

Max and Kenny said they appreciated the opportunity to show an aspect of the real world and the issues with which many runaways are battling.

"Many people don't know that kids are out in the street and I think we're helping inform people about what's going on," said Kenny.

Max said he wanted to be in the play because "it was so real."

"There aren't a lot of musicals with kids in it," he said, adding usually "the one's that are on Broadway are about fairytales."

Kenny and Max also provided advice to kids who may be considering participation in performing arts.

"Have fun," said Max, "because if you're not having fun it's not for you."

"If it looks interesting to you then go ahead," said Kenny. "No one's going to stop you."

Catholic Charities opens food hub for soup kitchens

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

Catholic Charities is now making it easier to serve hungry Bronxites.

The organization opened on June 23 a new food hub at its South Bronx Community Center, located at 402 E. 152nd Street.

The hub will serve as a warehouse type-location at which fresh produce and other food will be delivered.

From there Catholic Charities will distribute the produce to soup kitchens and other smaller operations in their organization that help feed residents who need food.

"For nearly 100 years, Catholic Charities of New York has been feeding the hungry," said Monsignor Kevin Sullivan, executive director of Catholic Charities. "We are establishing this new food hub in the Bronx to continue to help hungry individu-

als and families of all religions throughout New York City. Critically important is the hope that these families achieve greater independence in their lives. Through the professional support Catholic Charities will provide."

Planning for the food hub began in 2015, according to Dianne Johnson, division director of community outreach service for Catholic Charities.

Johnson said members of the organization noticed a lack of fresh produce available at the smaller operations and wondered how they could provide that produce.

She said the group had to come up with a way to use space Catholic Charities already owned - but was under utilized - to provide the necessary service to the community.

According to Johnson, for many of the smaller



Cardinal Timothy Dolan blesses the new Catholic Charities Food Distribution Center, on 152nd Street. Photo Courtesy of Silvio J. Pacifico

operations produce shipments are too large.

She said if the shipment is too big - and the soup kitchen can't take the food - then that food is

taken back.

Johnson said the new food hub will act like a warehouse.

The hub will be able to hold large shipments of

food from which Catholic Charities can distribute the right amount to the various operations.

Johnson said Catholic Charities currently has a Ford Transit and is working on getting a box truck to make distribution easier.

Catholic Charities is also providing food to non-Catholic operations including a few Protestant locations and a mosque.

In addition to the food hub, Catholic Charities also opened a new Client Choice food pantry.

The pantry allows families in need to hand pick their groceries like they are at a supermarket.

Johnson said this is "more empowering and liberating" for those who visit the pantry.

The Client Choice pantry opens on Thursdays at 10 a.m., Thursdays at 5

p.m. for working families and Fridays at 10 a.m.

Catholic Charities has partnered with Goya Foods to bring approximately 30,000 pounds of food to the hub each month. Goya has committed to providing a total of 300,000 pounds of food for the year.

"Goya is proud to partner with Catholic Charities of New York and support the mission of its new Food Distribution Center," said Bob Unanue, president of Goya Foods. "We are eager to work closely together in an effort to feed those who go without nutritious meals and to reassure that the center is fully equipped with enough healthy food each month."

Catholic Charities is also working with City Harvest from which they expect to get another 30,000 pounds of food per month.

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Salamanca obtains \$2 million to fund Pier Park

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

Councilman Rafael Salamanca has secured \$2 million through NYC Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito's office for the revitalization of East 132 Street Pier Park.

Salamanca, since he stepped into office in March, has been working to get funding for this project, according to his office.

"What an exciting investment we are making today for the Port Morris neighborhood and for families across the south Bronx," said Salamanca. "Without a doubt, providing waterfront access to our community through places like Barretto Point Park in Hunts Point and now the Haven Project in Port Morris make a huge positive impact for south Bronx residents. That's why I was so proud to work with our speaker, Melissa Mark-Viverito, to secure this funding."

Ryan Monello, Salamanca's communications director, said the councilman has also been looking to improve

parks such as Boretto Park in Hunts Point and Starlight Park in Longwood.

"He sees the value of having these types of parks in areas that for far too long didn't have any access to waterfront [spaces]," said Monello.

The work that will be done at East 132nd Street is the first step in a larger New York Restoration Project open space plan.

According to a press release, the NYRP is looking "to harness the expertise of local community leaders, researchers, designers and health partners to deliver a network of open spaces that will improve community health, support safe pedestrian and bike movement, foster social capital and support shoreline resilience."

NYPR is also working with various partners such as HealthxDesign, Healthfirst, Montefiore Medical Center, South Bronx Unite and BronxWorks to complete the open space plan.

"Through this collabo-

ration, the south Bronx will in the long-term see a new Pier Park and waterfront esplanade that will provide shoreline resilience and brand new waterfront recreational use, improved access to the Randall's Island Connector, a network of green spaces with significant improvements to the urban tree canopy, and revitalization of industrial heritage sites," said NYRP.

In addition to aiding the aforementioned open space plan, Salamanca has also provided aid to other parks in the Bronx.

According to Monell, the councilman's office contributed \$82,000 towards PEPS vehicles for Crotona Park, \$70,000 for ARGUS security cameras at Crotona Park and \$100,000 for improvements at Drake Park.

Salamanca also provided funds, along with Mark-Viverito and Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., to the \$1.5 million expected to help improve the new Garrison Playground.



The 49th Precinct, with the tournament's winners and participants.

Photo by Aracelis Batista

49th Precinct conducts BMX bike tournament

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

Amidst the current civil unrest between civilians and police officers, one precinct conducted a bike tournament to extend closer ties to the community.

On Thursday, July 7, the 49th Precinct held their first Bike 'BMX' Tournament at Loreto Park, where youth of all ages were provided the opportunity to participate in an outdoor, community-wide summer event and compete against their fellow BMX peers.

The Bike 'BMX' Tournament, more specifically, was initiated by Captain Keith Walton, commanding officer of the 49th Precinct, who was previously involved in the precinct's Bike Patrol Unit.

"This event was part of many events that the 49th Precinct is hosting to create a safe haven for the youth of our community by taking back our parks throughout the summer," said Walton. "These events are extremely important to our mission of

continuing to improve the relationship between the police department and our community."

The atmosphere in Loreto Park was electric even before the event began, as all of the contest's participants practiced their bike moves and tricks, similar to athletes practicing in the arena before a big game.

The participants performed in three age categories: 10-12 year-olds, 13-16 year-olds and 17 and up, with about 10 contestants from each age group.

Skateboarders were also welcome to participate.

A steady rain didn't deter the event's 30 contestants who 'weathered the storm' and waited for the rain to subside.

The spectators, which included friends, family members and local residents, were treated to food, snacks and drinks.

Food was donated by Sabrett Hot Dogs, F&J Pine Restaurant, La Masa Restaurant, Morris Park Meat Market, Fresh and Tasty Baked Products, Emilio's of Morris Park, Captains Pizzeria & Restaurant, GoodFellas Beverage, Big Deal Supermarket and Nutrishop, among others.

Sponsors for the Bike 'BMX' Tournament, many of whom were present at the event, included the Morris Park Community Association, Jacobi Medical Center, American Red Cross, New York Sports Club, Planet Fitness and Lair, among others.

RAIR, a new Morris Park clothing retailer, donated hats for the event. There was also a raffle for a free bike.

"This kind of event lets the community know that we are here for them - even on a friendly level," said 49th Precinct community affairs officer David Lepore. "We are very grateful to have such a strong community in support of us."

"This event was a brain child of the 49th Precinct - one that brings youth and adolescents out of their homes during the summertime," said Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj, who attended the event. "I commend Captain (Keith) Walton and the 49th Precinct for the great job they have done - and this event shows that they are friends of the community."



Rendering of the completed East 132nd Street Pier Park

Photo Courtest of Civitas Inc.

This event was a brain child of the 49th Precinct - one that brings youth and adolescents out of their homes during the summertime. I commend Captain (Keith) Walton and the 49th Precinct for the great job they have done - and this event shows that they are friends of the community.

Mark Gjonaj
Assemblyman

City Island discusses ‘paid detail’ for restaurants

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

A plan is in the works that could lead to a greater police presence on City Island during the peak tourism periods.

The City Island Chamber of Commerce and City Island Civic Association met recently with NYPD officials regarding the possible creation of a ‘paid detail’ of off-duty police officers to work in cafeteria-style restaurants during busy times.

The officers would be paid by the local eateries to complement existing security when they are not on the clock at the NYPD.

The plan’s details, including who would be liable for any confrontations, are still being worked out, said Gerard “Skip” Giacco, CICC president.

“There is no objection to it, but its needs to be done in a way that protects the merchants from liability,” said Giacco, adding that the plan could come to fruition if the restaurant owners would not bear any or would carry minimized liability from any confrontations arising between these off-duty cops employed by the restaurants and anyone else.

“If the positives outweigh the negatives, we will talk about it further,” added

Giacco.

The meeting comes after renewed openness to the idea from the NYPD, said John Doyle, CICA corresponding secretary, who added that his group was very grateful to the police department for looking at the idea from a fresh perspective. It has been a non-starter for years, he added.

Meeting attendees included representatives from NYPD community affairs and 45th Precinct commanding officer Deputy Inspector Danielle Raia, as well as representatives from Seafood City, Don Coqui and Johnny’s Reef, said Doyle.

“We are hopeful that the major stakeholders can come together,” he said. “Whether you own a business or live on City Island, we all share the same general goal: we want to be people to be able to travel on City Island safely and we want the area to be secure.”

A paid detail can go a long way to accomplishing goals of both the businesses and the community, said Doyle, adding that while the idea is still being developed, everything has to start somewhere.

After discussion with the security personnel from some of the restaurants, it

was apparent that a contingent of four or five officers would be necessary, said Giacco.

This is important because if a police officer removes someone from a restaurant, additional officers could be needed to make sure the ejected people do not continue problematic behavior out on the street, he said.

The chamber president added that a NYPD paid detail would be tasked with maintaining order, and that the discussions are recognition that when you have many people in a small space, as is the case with many of the island’s eateries, there is the potential for issues.

John Marano, Community Board 10 vice-chairman, community activist and a former police officer, said that he believes that the police department and the businesses on City Island working together regarding a paid detail is mutually beneficial.

“When that happens, it benefits everyone,” said Marano. “It shows that that the restaurants are taking a proactive approach and are working out the concerns of residents of City Island.”



The high volume of visitors to City Island’s eateries during the summer has restaurant owners and the community raising the possibility of a paid detail of off-duty NYPD officers offering extra police presence.
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45th Precinct commander gets NYPD promotion

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

The commanding officer of the 45th Precinct recently was promoted.

Deputy Inspector Danielle Raia was promoted from captain to deputy inspector on Friday, June 24 as part of a group of NYPD promotions.

Members of the 45th Precinct Community Council and community leaders say that the promo-

tion is well deserved, affirming confidence in her leadership of the east Bronx precinct.

Inspector Raia stated that she was humbled by the step up, and that she was glad to be at the command.

"(I) couldn't have done it without the community's support," stated Raia. "Let's continue the great work we have been doing and make the 45th that much better."

Raia was especially helpful on a variety of issues, said Bob Bieder, 45th Community Council president, adding that she knows how to get things done.

"When there is a problem, she hits it head on," said Bieder, adding "She is a real go getter and gets things done."

Bieder said that Raia was especially helpful in helping to gather together all interested parties when some students at Lehman High School were pulling fire alarms to get outside the school building to have fights.

She helped arrange a sting where blue dye packs were placed on the fire alarms in the school and sprayed dye when someone pulled it, alerting cops as to the identity of the students, said Bieder.

Raia also makes herself available at odd hours, once saying at a precinct council meeting that she would respond to an inquiry in the early morning hours, with Bieder added that he personally had called her at 3 a.m. and that it was true.

45th Precinct Community Council board member, John Doyle, said that Raia was especially helpful on City Island, which is often busy during the spring and summer with visitors, creating traffic and security concerns.

Raia has thought outside of the box when it comes to the island's traffic concerns, he said.

"She is someone who has really dedicated herself to her job," said Doyle, adding that she has done all she can to ingratiate herself

into the community, is committed to keeping precinct neighborhoods in good condition, and likes to see progress.

Raia has shown a willingness to hear people out, and it is good that the way people see her in the community is reflective of how they see her downtown at police headquarters, said Doyle.

"She doesn't tolerate any nonsense, and she has the community's best interests in mind," said community activist John Marano, adding that he hopes she does not leave the precinct anytime in the near future, a sentiment echoed by Bieder and Doyle as well.

Marano said that promotions in the department are often bittersweet because they usually indicate that a move is likely.

For her part, Raia stated she is not going anywhere else (in the department) anytime soon.



Deputy Inspector Danielle Raia, the commanding officer of the 45th Precinct, was promoted recently.

Community News Group / Patrick Rocchio

When there is a problem, she hits it head on. She is a real go getter and gets things done.

Bob Bieder

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Grand opening of Triangle Plaza Hub held

from Page 1

the plaza will be home to the Metropolitan College of New York's Bronx campus, where classes will begin in September.

The campus, located at 463 E. 149th Street, will serve over 500 students and will feature 17 classrooms, three computer labs and a multipurpose conference space, allowing the college to host large events.

"The opening of MCNY Bronx demonstrates our long-term commitment to the south Bronx community and its renaissance," said MCNY president Dr. Vinton Thompson.

The 2-story building has 83 rooftop parking spaces.

Currently, one ground floor of retail space totaling 3,900 square feet and one 3,000 square-foot pad site adjacent to the public plaza are available and present prime opportunities for potential tenants.

In total, this project

generated 151 construction-related jobs and 191 permanent jobs.

In addition, Triangle Equities has worked with the HireNYC program to develop a targeted local hiring and workforce development plan to fill these newly created employment opportunities.

"I am very proud of this beautiful facility - for the fact that it has created economic opportunities, educational and social services and provided this area with a much needed supermarket - an area that has been a food desert for years," said Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr.

"This is a very exciting project - one that will provide countless opportunities for the area," said Marlene Cintron, president of the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation.

"Development like this one continues to re-

vitalize this area," said Councilman Rafael Salamanca, who remembers the property back when it was a vacant lot.

"The completion and grand opening of Trian-

gle Plaza Hub is a great source of pride for us," said Lester Petracca, president of Triangle Equities, the lead developer on the project.

"We're delighted with the mix of tenants we

have at Triangle Plaza Hub and even more so now that their services and amenities are available to this south Bronx community, and while this was an exceptionally challenging project to build, as is the case with the majority of our developments, reaching

this milestone and providing tangible value to a community is what truly matters to us," Petracca added.

Partners of the new project include the NYC Economic Development Corporation, Goldman Sachs Urban Investment and Low Income Investment Fund.



Petracca and Diaz (center) gather with elected officials, business partners and local merchants during the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

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