

MP Trick-or-Treat victims remembered

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

While hundreds of children dressed in colorful Halloween costumes scurried up and down Morris Park Avenue Monday afternoon, a small group of mostly black-clad mourners stood silent at the corner of Bogart Avenue.

The group had gathered to remember three people killed a year ago in a freak auto accident.

At just before 5 p.m. on October 31, 2015, a driver jumped the curb at 939 Morris Park Avenue and struck and killed 10-year-old Nyanna Aquil and her 65-year-old grandfather Louis Perez, as well as 24-year-old Albanian immigrant Kristjan Leka.

Aquil's three-year-old sister was also injured. Leka was able to push his nine-year-old sister out of the way, and she suffered just minor injuries.

His fiancé was also injured. Another of Aquil's younger sisters was pushed to safety by the grandfather just before the impact.

On Monday, members of the victim's families spoke of the losses they endured a year ago. They also planted three flowers at the scene in the victims' memory.

"This pain that you're going through is one that we share with all of you," said Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj, who hosted the event. The accident occurred right outside of Gjonaj's office.

Natalia Perez, Aquil's mother and Perez's daughter, said she and her family had been through a lot, but urged people not to cry for them.

"My daughter and my dad have helped us get through a lot of our days, and Kristjan as well, and I know they are smiling down on us standing here and remembering them," Perez said.

While Perez called the fatal accident a horrible tragedy that never should have happened, she

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RECKLESS KIDS RIDING BIKES

Residents ask to put brakes on pre-teen brats

BY ROBERT WIRSING

Throggs Neck residents are asking the 45th Precinct to put the brakes on a group of unruly pre-teen bicyclists.

On Thursday, October 13, Linda Perry was driving to Throggs Neck Pharmacy to pick up medicine for her 80-year-old mother when a boy riding a bicycle without a helmet cut in front of her car causing her to jam on the brakes.

When she exited the vehicle at the corner of Lafayette and East Tremont avenues, four

pre-teen boys intimidated her by riding their bikes around her.

"I said to them, 'You could have killed someone. What's the matter with you,'" she recalled.

Perry claimed one of the boys allegedly gave her the middle finger and made sexually explicit remarks following her question.

"These boys have been riding their bicycles in the middle of East Tremont Avenue

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Throggs Neck Halloween

Ghosts and ghouls of all ages had a scary good time celebrating the Halloween season at the 33rd annual Throggs Neck Halloween Parade and Costume Contest on Saturday, October 29. Spirits were high at the neighborhood spooktacular sponsored by Assemblyman Michael Benedetto, Councilman James Vacca, Senator Jeff Klein and Congressman Joseph Crowley which featured a parade, carnival and a costume contest. Assemblyman Benedetto (r) congratulated third place eight to ten-years-old costume contest winner Ashley Santiago on her imaginative costume. See more photos on pages 8 and 9.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

Housing, jobs to replace Spofford Detention Center

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

After years of wondering what would happen to the old Spofford Juvenile Detention Center property, the NYC Economic Development Corporation and the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development announced on Thursday, October 27 the property's fate.

The Peninsula, a campus which will include 740 units of affordable housing, will replace the former detention center.

According to EDC press release,

The Peninsula will also include 52,000 square feet of open recreational space, 21,000 square feet of ground floor retail and commercial space, 48,000 square feet of community facility space and 49,000 square feet of light industrial space.

In addition, the project is expected to create 177 permanent jobs and 1,600 temporary construction jobs.

"With over 700 affordable apartments, space for community organizations and light manufacturing

Continued on Page 1

Borough electeds to Apple: Open a Bronx retail location

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

Bronx elected officials are calling on Apple Incorporated, maker of the devices that many feel they cannot live without, to open a retail location in the borough.

Apple's futuristic retail stores, complete with customer support for on-the-spot-trouble-shooting, have opened in many places, but not in the borough.

Local elected officials here, including Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., recently signed a letter to Tim Cook, Apple's CEO, urging the computing juggernaut that makes smart phones, tablet computers and laptops and desktops to consider the borough for an Apple retail location.

Apple is the largest company in the world in terms of market capitalization, the total amount of a company's outstanding shares, according to published

reports.

Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie penned his own letter to Apple, Inc. on the matter.

"Few brands are as recognized and admired as Apple," stated the letter. "It is time for the Bronx to get its bite of the Apple!"

That letter points out that an Apple Store in the borough would be yet another signal that the Bronx is 'open for business.'

"Tens of thousands of Bronx residents are already Apple customers, so a new Apple store right here in the Bronx would be a perfect fit for this borough," stated Diaz. "I am hopeful that Apple will consider our request, as a Bronx location would be mutually beneficial not only to the company, but to the thousands of Bronxites who would take advantage of its services closer to home."

Heastie stated that the hav-

ing an Apple retail location in the borough would ensure that the borough's growing population has access to Apple's "world renowned products and services."

"Over the past few years, the Bronx has seen billions of dollars in development and offers numerous potential retail locations for continued growth," said Heastie. "A Bronx location would undoubtedly prove to be beneficial for both Apple and one and half million eager consumers here in the Bronx."

Bronx Chamber of Commerce CEO Nunzio del Greco said that he was aware that the elected officials had reached out to Apple and supported the effort.

He said having an Apple store here would confer prestige on the borough.

Del Greco said that he sees many people using its devices, including iPhone and iPads.

"The demand is there; there is no question about it," he said "It would be a good thing for the Bronx and it would be good publicity for Apple too - it wouldn't hurt."

Marlene Cintron, Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation president, said she believes that it would simply make good business sense for Apple to site a retail store in the borough, and believes this has so far been a missed business opportunity for the borough.

"Businesses that come to the Bronx have been rewarded time and time again; we are a borough of 1.4 million people and we are the youngest borough out of the five," said Cintron. "Who uses Apple products more than our demographic?"

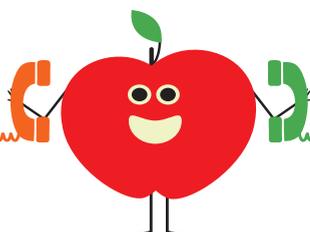
An Apple spokeswoman did not comment, adding that the company does not discuss future plans



"Tens of thousands of Bronx residents are already Apple customers, so a new Apple Store right here in The Bronx would be a perfect fit for this borough." -

Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.

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Reckless bike kids; residents ask to put brakes on pre-teen brats

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for over six months now while popping wheelies and cutting in and out of lanes," she said. "It's an accident waiting to happen. These boys think it's all a joke."

Perry took several photos of the boys, but this did not deter them.

She claimed the boys allegedly photographed her and her car and that one of them threatened to have his mother beat her up.

Perry immediately visited the 45th Precinct and spoke with an officer who explained their hands are tied.

She added the officer knew the boys and has visited their parents several times to speak about their children's misbehavior.

"I'm aware of this situation and this is certainly a police matter as well as a parental matter," expressed Councilman James Vacca. "The neighborhood is requesting better enforcement from the precinct and that these children's par-

ents take responsibility in disciplining them."

"I've seen them two months ago zigzagging between buses on East Tremont and Lafayette avenues," shared Andrew Chirico, Waterbury-La-Salle Community and Homeowners Association vice president. "They come out of nowhere and at some point someone's going to get hurt. We're all concerned and the 45th Precinct needs to act on this."

According to the NYS Department of Transportation, the state's Vehicle and Traffic Law says bicyclists have the same rights and responsibilities motorists have including obeying all traffic laws and regulating signs and pavement markings.

In New York state, all bicyclists under 14-years-old are required to wear safety certified bicycle helmets whether they are operators or passengers.

The law states any parent or guardian whose child violates the helmet law is subject to a fine up to \$50.

Bob Beider, 45th Precinct Community Council president, said the situation was presented at this October's precinct council meeting.

He added the precinct was examining legislation including the NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law to see if they should ticket the parents.

Deputy inspector Danielle Raia, 45th Precinct commanding officer, explained issuing summonses to the 11 and 12-year-olds is ineffective as they are not required to carry identification.

Raia said some of these children live within the 45th Precinct's jurisdiction while a few do not. She did not confirm what precinct the others reside.

She added the precinct is meeting with their parents and will have youth mentors speak with the children.

"I've dealt with these kids myself and most of them are good kids," she said. "I take this situation seriously and we're going to scare them straight."



Friends and families of the victims paid their respects at a memorial service held at 939 Morris Park Avenue on Halloween day.
Photo by Silvio Pacifico

One year later, Morris Park Trick-or-Treat victims remembered

from Page 1

urged those on hand to be grateful for every day they are lucky enough to have.

"We all should embrace what God has given us while we are here, and just enjoy the present moment that we have and each day we are breathing and live our lives to the fullest, because we don't know how long we have here," she said.

Leka had come to the United States from Albania with his family when he was eight.

His father, Martin Leka, said the past year had been the worst of his family's life.

He recalled his son as a perfect young man who loved life in America, worked hard and was always very active.

"He was working five days a week, he was making money, he was going seven days a week to the gym for his health, and he was making time for his friends and his family," his father recalled.

Leka said his son also loved and respected his family, sending a message to his mother every day wishing her a good morning, and always looked after his brother and sister.

Leka had taken his sister trick-or-treating when the accident occurred, he said.

"He wanted his sister to be happy at all times, bringing her to so many places," Leka said. "That day, the accident happened because he wanted to make her happy."

A 2011 Dodge Charger driven by 52-year-old Howard Unger was traveling westbound when it clipped the rear bumper of a Toyota sedan, causing it to veer onto the sidewalk and strike the six pedestrians, then a brick wall, before stopping.

Gjonaj said the tragedy one year ago was still fresh in the minds of many families, and was the inspiration for the Safe Streets, Safe Treats event held after the memorial ceremony.

"That memory will be on the mind of every parent in this community," he said after the memorial as wagon hayrides made their way up the street and a DJ blasted top 40 hits while kids stood in line for large bags of candy.

The Halloween event closed down the street for several blocks to allow children to get treats and take part in games and other festivities. The event was

funded by Gjonaj and Senator Jeff Klein, who was also on hand.

"We typically don't take it to this level, of closing down streets, but after last year's tragedy so many parents shared similar concerns that we felt this was the right way to go," Gjonaj said.

Police said the freak accident occurred when Unger had an epileptic seizure caused by allegedly not taking his required medication.

Unger was indicted earlier this month on three counts of second-degree assault, a class D violent felony, three counts of criminally negligent homicide, a class E felony, one count of second-degree reckless endangerment, a class A misdemeanor, and false statement, an unclassified misdemeanor.

The last charge stems from Unger concealing his medical history when applying for his driver's license application, according to Bronx D.A. spokesperson Patricia O'Shaughnessy.

Unger was released last October 31 after posting \$75,000 bail, according to the city corrections database.

He is expected to appear in court again on Wednesday, November 23.



One of the pre-teen boys popped a wheelie in the street outside of Throggs Neck Pharmacy on Thursday, October 13 while not wearing a helmet.
Photo courtesy of Linda Perry



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SCA in discussion to expand P.S. 97: Vacca

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

P.S. 97 may be seeing a major expansion that would bring students inside from temporary buildings.

Sources confirmed that preliminary details are being worked out on an expansion to P.S. 97 that could include new classrooms, an auditorium, a gym, an expansion of its lunchroom and an elevator.

Councilman James Vacca said on Monday, October 31 that he received word that funds were being allocated in next year's city budget to build an extension to the building, and that its principal has been meeting with the School Construction Authority to discuss tentative proposals for expansion.

Vacca said he had requested that SCA do a feasibility survey studying expansion because the pre-kindergarten through fifth grade school has 16 portable classrooms in temporary structures on the grounds of the school.

"We have gotten good news that it looks like the money will be there in the coming fiscal year," said Vacca, adding "(P.S. 97) has 16 portable units, one of the largest portable unit contingents in the



P.S. 97 on Mace Avenue should see a major expansion to its physical plant.

Community News Group / Patrick Rocchio

Bronx."

Many of these portable units have aged, he said, and having students in them means they have to travel between them and the main school building for lunch and special classes, sometimes in rain and snow, he said.

"This is something that over the years has fallen through the cracks," said the councilman. "I

have been pressing the SCA and it is good news."

The school also lacks an elevator, said Vacca, and an expansion would make it compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Kathleen Bornkamp, the principal, said that oftentimes students who unable to climb a staircase are unable to come to school if they have class above the first

floor because the school doesn't have an elevator.

When students have to move between two sets of temporary buildings outside of the school into the main building, educational time is lost, said the principal.

The oldest of the outdoor buildings are red trailers, which have been in place for about 15 years and are literally falling apart, said

Bornkamp.

"We are very short on space," she said. "This building was built for 332 students and we have 746."

Currently, the school lacks a gymnasium, auditorium and a cafeteria capable of preparing food, she confirmed.

Instead, P.S. 97 relies on a multipurpose room that accommodates about 100 students at a time as a lunchroom that re-heats food that is cooked elsewhere, she said.

The entire proposal has not yet been fully developed, said Bornkamp, but the hope is that construction could begin as early as the fall of 2017.

Building more classroom space has been a capital budget priority for Community Board 11 as well, said Jeremy Warneke, district manager

"In general, we don't want portables at any of our schools," he said. "They were supposed to be temporary, but they became a permanent thing."

The portable classrooms don't create an environment conducive to learning, said John Fratta, CB 11's business coordinator and past district manager.

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Author details Fidel Castro's 1965 visit to the borough

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

If you were to pick up a book entitled 'Knockout' you'd probably expect the protagonist to be a struggling boxer who beat the odds and rose to stardom.

You probably wouldn't prepare for the protagonist to be Fidel Castro.

However, Julio Pabon's story, *Knockout*, details a wild weekend which culminated in Castro's 1995 visit to Jimmy's Bronx Cafe on Fordham Road.

It all started on October 20, 1995 after Pabon had heard that then-mayor Rudy Giuliani had disinvited Castro and former Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat from a dinner for heads of state in New York City.

Pabon said he recalls at the time the disenfranchised Arabic community in the city held a banquet for the disinvited Arafat.

For Pabon, Castro's non-invite was more than a sign he was not welcome as a political leader.

It was also about Castro as a proud Latino gentleman.

"There was no Latinos who spoke up," said Pabon. "There was no Latino elected official who spoke up."

He also pointed out that Giuliani had

invited leaders from Saudi Arabia and China who also had reputations of human rights abuses.

Pabon, who at the time was the vice president of the National Puerto Rican Business Council, responded to Giuliani's decision with a press release.

There was no Latinos who spoke up. There was no Latino elected official who spoke up

Julio Pabon

Although the weekend ended with a dinner for the Cuban dictator, Pabon stresses the press release "wasn't an invitation" to the Communist leader but only a response to Giuliani.

"It was basically something that wasn't supposed to happen" said Pabon, a Puerto Rican native.

According to his recollection, the press release accused Giuliani of disrespecting Cubans and Latin-Americans as a whole by disinviting Castro from a dinner to which the United Nations had invited the Cuban president.

Pabon recalls the last paragraph reading, "If Mr. Castro wants, he doesn't need to go to a dinner with the mayor, he can come to the borough which has the most Latinos in the city and eat with other Latinos."

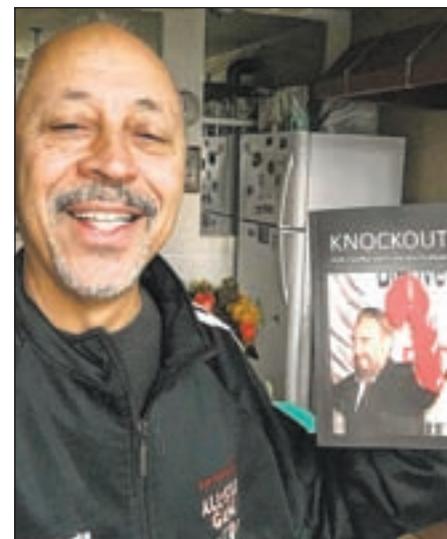
"I never would have dreamed that the press release would get to the hands of Mr. Castro," said Pabon.

But it did.

Pretty soon Pabon found himself hosting a dinner for one of the most controversial world leaders.

Pabon, who moved to the Bronx in 1956, spent that fall weekend trying to coordinate the dinner, navigate the concerns of Castro's security and respond to the more than 300 people requesting a seat at the event.

On October 23, 1995, Pabon's hard work paid off with a dinner at Jimmy's Bronx Cafe, with Castro as the honored guest.



Author Julio Pabon with his new book 'Knockout: Fidel Castro Visits the South Bronx.'

Photo Courtesy of Julio Pabon

Colleagues and friends were always asking him to recount the events surrounding Castro's visit, so he finally decided to pen his story in 2013. The book went on sale Tuesday, October 18.

He decided to call it 'Knockout: Fidel Castro Visits The South Bronx' because one of the gifts Castro received at the dinner was a pair of boxing gloves.

Pabon said he "loved" the picture of Castro holding up the gloves.

Knockout can be purchased by visiting knockoutthebook.com or the Amazon website.

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The Bronx Babe overcomes career-threatening injury

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

A lifelong actress from the Bronx is not letting any obstacles - including uneven pavement - get in the way of achieving her goals.

The Bronx-born actress, Janet Marie Lee, also known as 'Sonny' Marie Lee and widely recognized as 'The Bronx Babe', is making her climb back to the stage after suffering a career-threatening injury.

Sonny's new year got off to a rocky start, when she tripped on a broken sidewalk and split her knee open on Monday, January 4. She had suffered a compound fracture to the patella (or the kneecap).

The gash required 37 staples and surgery to repair the knee.

The incident forced her to postpone the second set of performances of her one-woman show, *The Bronx Babe*, which reflect's on her experiences in her junior high school years.

Instead of performing on stage in March and April as she had originally planned, Sonny was rehabilitating from her knee injury and was required to go to physical therapy for four and a half months.

Now, almost completely recov-



'The Bronx Babe' is anticipating her next performance in the spring of 2017.

Photo courtesy of Janet Marie Lee

ered, Sonny is eager to get back to the level she was at before the injury, and is looking forward to future opportunities to continue pursuing her acting career.

One of those opportunities will take place in the spring of 2017, when she will finally be able to perform the second set of *The Bronx Babe* shows at the Manhattan Movement & Art Center at 248 W. 60th Street in Manhattan, a theater that seats nearly 200 people.

"This was an unfortunate inci-

dent - but everything happens for a reason," said Sonny, who also has experience in the cosmetics/skincare beauty industry as a makeup artist. "In retrospect, the injury gave me more time to plan the show and perfect the scenes."

After this second set of performances, she will begin writing her sequel show to *The Bronx Babe*, which will highlight her high school years.

The daughter of a detective and an accountant, Sonny began acting and modeling in her early 20s, appearing in everything from films, commercials, soap operas, live shows and magazines after being recognized at local theater gigs and performances when she was a teenager. Last year, she released a children's book, titled *The Magical Sewing Machine*.

"I always knew I wanted to be an actress, a writer and a performer - I always had a passion for being creative," said Sonny, who also acted and modeled overseas while living in Germany, Italy, Switzerland, China and France in the 1980s. "However, I will always love the Bronx for the people, the culture and the history - which is why I always end up coming right back here."



Janet Lee did most of her modeling overseas in the 1980s.

Photo courtesy of Janet Marie Lee

"Now, I am fully committed to myself that this will be the comeback of the *Bronx Babe*," she added.

'Sonny' who turns 58 this month, recently launched a Kick-

starter page to raise money for her upcoming show. To donate visit: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1167382531/the-bronx-babe-a-girls-adventure-growing-up-in-the>.

Mailboxes being removed for anti-theft upgrades

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

If you are a Bronx residents who swears there was a mailbox on your street corner until just last month, you can rest easy - you aren't losing your mind.

The United States Postal Service is indeed removing the iconic blue mailboxes from Bronx neighborhoods, starting with Co-op City and other nearby neighborhoods.

The ubiquitous boxes are being modified for safety and security purposes to only allow small flat mail through a slot, replacing the small hinged door at the top of box through which mail is currently placed in the box.

U.S. Postal Inspection Service Office spokesperson Donna Harris confirmed the boxes had been removed from 10475, the Co-op City zip code, but said residents had nothing to worry about since the boxes would be replaced within a month of their removal.

The postal service is being tight-lipped about when boxes in any given neighborhood will be replaced while the process is ongoing, Harris explained.

"For the safety and security of U.S. mail carriers, we are not identifying the boxes," she said.

Harris said that while the mailboxes are

gone, residents can give their mail to letter carriers to deliver, or drop them off at the nearest USPS station.

In addition, any mail weighing more than 13 ounces must now be brought to a USPS post office to be mailed to allow postal workers to ask the mailer security questions such as whether or not the package contains flammable materials.

While postal officials insist the project is only affecting Co-op City for the time being, Bronx resident Alex Patanella said he has seen mailboxes disappear in other parts of the Bronx, most notably the University Heights area and Fordham Road.

He said the postal service officials were incorrect when they downplayed the inconvenience the move has caused.

"Tell that to the senior citizens who can't get to the post office," he said.

One high-ranking Bronx postal service employee who asked not to be named said the efforts are aimed at eliminating mail theft - a growing problem in the age of widespread identity theft.

The mailboxes are being replaced, the employee explained, because they have been targets of a tactic known as 'fishing,' in which



USPS mailboxes across the Bronx are being removed and retrofitted with new mail slots like the one pictured above to prevent mail theft.

Community News Group / Arthur Cusano

a person drops an object covered in a sticky substance attached to a string into a mailbox and then reels it in and grabs whatever mail sticks to it.

Thieves have been known to target checks and money orders, and have been known to erase names off of these checks to cash them, the employee added.

All mailboxes throughout the entire Bronx, as well as the other boroughs, will eventually be replaced, the postal employee said.

He stressed that process may take a while, since there are currently just four mailboxes being converted at a time by just two employees at a southern Bronx post office.

Throggs Neck Halloween Parade



Ben Baratti sported some awesome face paint.
Photo by Silvio Pacifico

Throggs Neck children and their families embraced the Halloween spirit at the 33rd annual Throggs Neck Halloween Parade. The parade began on Harding and East Tremont avenues continuing to the Throggs Neck Expressway Service Road before concluding at Throggs Neck Boulevard where the annual Halloween street fair, carnival and costume contest were held. The neighborhood tradition was sponsored by Assemblyman Michael Benedetto, Councilman James Vacca, Senator Jeff Klein and Congressman Joseph Crowley.



(l-r) Rocco Talarico, Community Board 10 Economic Development chairman; Assembly members Benedetto and Gjonaj with John Marano, Community Board 10 first vice chairman.
Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Cristeli Daily undertook the scary limbo contest.
Photo by Silvio Pacifico



With a grin stretching ear to ear, Janessa Gonzalez enjoyed this year's Halloween Carnival.
Photo by Silvio Pacifico



(front, l-r) Madison Burgos, Skyler Encarnacion, Jada Tacis and Kayla Encarnacion created their own stuffed animals.
Photo by Silvio Pacifico



The annual Throggs Neck Halloween Parade made its way down East Tremont Avenue.
Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Norma Santiago (l) and Annalee Cruz brought positive vibes to this year's Halloween parade.
Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Woody (l) painted rainbows on Laila Turbel (r) to match her head band.
Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Mya Lavalle (c) earned second place in the hula hoop contest.
Photo by Silvio Pacifico

33rd Annual Throggs Neck Halloween Costume Contest



Hostess Twinkie Genaro Della Muro earned first place in the zero to four-year-old contest.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

Following this year's hauntingly successful 33rd annual Throggs Neck Halloween Parade, costumed characters of all ages competed for top prizes in the annual Throggs Neck Halloween Costume Contest on Saturday, October 29. Assemblyman Michael Benedetto and several judges deliberated on the top three Halloween costumes across four categories.



Norma Santiago (l), her daughter, the third place prize winner of the five to seven-year-old contest, Annalee Cruz and Assemblyman Benedetto were feeling groovy.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Edward Scissorhands was 'a cut above' the competition earning him second place in the zero to four-years-old category.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Benedetto (2nd from r) congratulated this year's winners in the eight to ten-year-old category for their creativity. The winners included (l-r) third place honoree Ashley Santiago, second place victor Jose Padilla and first place champion Tylor Denigar.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Assemblyman Benedetto awarded second place to Rubik's Cube Dilan Cazamayou in the five to seven-year-old costume contest.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



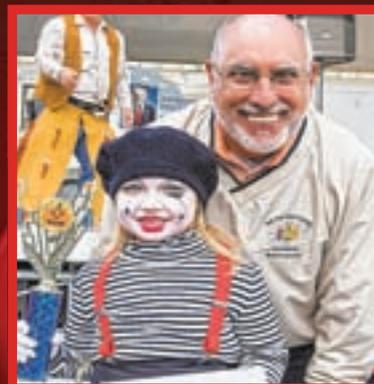
The Zombie Bride took home third place in the zero to four-years-old costume contest.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Benedetto (2nd from l) with 11 to 13-year-old contest winners (l-r) third place honoree Cariluz Munoz, first place champion Dawn Moroch and second prize victor Deanna Ballas.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Five to seven-year-old costume contest first place champion Charlotte Sempre's mime proved silence really is golden.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



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Two public hearings involving the future of Ferry Point Park and its Trump Links golf course will be held Monday, November 14 by Community Board 10.

Community News/Arthur Cusano

Trump Links, Parks Department vie for Ferry Point space

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

Despite what seemed like a strong rejection from the office of Mayor de Blasio last month, The Trump organization will give a presentation at a Bronx Community Board 10 public hearing later this month on their proposal to expand its golf course to the Long Island Sound waterfront at the request of the board.

A Monday, November 14 public hearing at Fort Schuyler House at 7:30 p.m. will include two presentations – one by the Trump Links at Ferry Point management and another from the city parks department, who have plans to use the city-owned space to expand the park into the area near the golf course.

Trump Corporation executive vice president Ron Lieberman said the Trump proposal had been floated to city officials as far back as 2013, and called for expanding two holes to the waterfront and also using the company's money to create passive parkland near the course, as a wildlife sanctuary.

The Trump organization would maintain the property for the city as

well, he added.

"We can't understand why the city rejected it," he said. "From the city's standpoint, this is such a homerun for them. We were willing to use our money, free up taxpayer money, so the city could use that money for other vital needs, perhaps even in the same community this park is being built."

The Trump organization also requested a 20-year extension to its current 20-year contract to counter the improvement's \$15 million price tag.

Deputy Mayor Alicia Glen rejected the plan and told the developer in a letter sent last month the city planned to use the land for public space.

"We have no interest in changing direction in order to allow a cosmetic improvement," Glen wrote.

Lieberman said expanding the final two holes, a move also supported by course co-designer Jack Nicklaus, would increase the likelihood that the facility might be chosen to host a major PGA golf tournament.

"In meeting with various governing bodies of [professional] golf, they

loved the idea of creating dramatic finishing holes," Lieberman said. "So it would have the effect of bringing a major American open to the city, bringing hundreds of millions of dollars in economic impact."

NYC Parks Department plans obtained from CB 10 and presented at a recent meeting plans for a passive waterfront park aimed at restoring ecological diversity to the bay and providing scenic overlooks of the East River.

A footpath would run through the park from east to west and provide access from the neighboring residential community to the east. The estimated total cost of parks project is listed as \$9.6 million.

CB 10 president Martin Prince said the board will give a recommendation to the city after the hearing.

He said the board was most concerned about what plans the city had for the western portion of the park, the more active area. No plans have been announced for that section, he said.

"I'm certain that will be part of our response," Prince said.



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Veterans Parade in Throggs Neck, November 13

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

This year's Bronx Veterans Day Parade in Throggs Neck is coming up on Sunday, November 13.

The 32nd Annual Bronx Veterans Day Parade in Throggs Neck starts at noon at Michael Menna Corner: Lafayette and East Tremont avenues.

It turns left onto Randall Avenue and then marches to Bicentennial Veterans Memorial Park where the ceremony will be held.

The parade committee chairman, Michael Rahilly, urged people to line up along the parade route with American flags to show their appreciation for the sacrifices America's men and woman in uniform make for our country.

"Through their service and sacrifice, our freedoms and rights are protected and America continues to be a shining example of democracy," stated Rahilly. "The parade offers our citizens an opportunity to thank them and honor them; your participation or support on the sidelines means more to our veterans than you will ever know."

Lieutenant Colonel Ronald Watson, a retired U.S. Marine and a Throggs Neck resident will be honored during the parade as its grand marshal.

Watson was selected after nominations were made to the parade volunteers, stated Rahilly.



The Bronx Veterans Day Parade in Throggs Neck is a picture of patriotism.

During his 22 years in the service, Watson had deployments during Operation Desert Storm, and he worked at the headquarters of the North Athletic Treaty Organization.

He is active in the Throggs Neck community as the president of the Manhem Club and with the American Legion.

Watson said he would like to in-

crease community participation in the Bronx Veterans Day Parade and promote awareness of military and veterans' affairs.

Another veteran who lives in Throggs Neck, Nicholas Calabrese, a 99-year-old U.S. Army veteran who served in World War II as a sergeant will be receiving the parade's Lifetime Service Award,

said Judy Lanci, a parade volunteer.

In addition, receiving posthumous honors as honorary grand marshals will be six deceased veterans: Marshall Siciliano; U.S. Army; William Hyland, U.S. Army; Frank Morales, U.S. Army; Irma Gallagher, U.S. Army; Joe Lemm, U.S. Air Force and Joseph Byrne, U.S. Marines.

"We continue to honor our veterans and their service and sacrifice," stated Rahilly, adding that the parade continues to have new groups join it every year and that this year is no different.

The parade is a true community effort, he said, with both veterans and non-veterans volunteering on the planning committee, and community groups assisting them every step of the way.

Senator Jeff Klein, will host a breakfast for the veterans marching in the parade and honored veterans before the procession steps off.

At the event, Klein will present awards to several veterans who have serviced their community.

"Our ninth annual veterans breakfast will honor the great sacrifices our servicemen and women have made for our nation," said Klein, adding that the people of the country owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to people who served in our military.

Savor the Bronx: November 7 to 18

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

A preview to the borough's restaurant week, Savor the Bronx 2016, showcased some of the finest eateries in the county.

Epicureans should be delighted to learn that the sixth annual Savor the Bronx Restaurant Week, which spans 12 days from Monday, November 7 to Friday, November 18, will include 42 restaurants this year.

Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. was center stage at a preview on Tuesday, November 1 at the Marriot Residence Inn in a ceremony that featured eateries and brands including Mott Haven Bar & Grill, Bronx Brewery, Chelsea Craft Brewing, Bronx Hot Sauce, Havana Café, Lloyd's Carrot Cake and Xochimilco Family Restaurant.

The borough president presented citations to the food businesspeople that joined the Bronx Tourism Council and numerous local leaders in previewing the week on Tuesday, November 1.

"Epicureans from around the world are invited to expe-

rience the amazing tastes we have to offer in our borough," said Diaz. "The Bronx has always been home to a tremendous food culture, and 'Savor the Bronx' is a great way to sample the many different styles of food our world-class restaurant community has to offer."

Olga Luz Tirado, Bronx Tourism Council executive director, stated that businesses like restaurants, breweries and food producers play a major role in encouraging tourism growth.

BronxNet television is producing a series of short-form Savor the Bronx vignettes and a 30-minute special that will air shortly, said Michael Max Knobbe, BronxNet executive director.

"You are going to take a look behind the scenes into what makes these restaurants great, and the culinary vibrancy of the Bronx," said Knobbe of the programming.

A number of businesspeople participating in the preview said that Savor the Bronx brings more awareness to the borough's culinary offerings.

Rosa Garcia, owner of Mott Haven Bar & Grill since 2013, and a former manager at Bruckner Bar and Grill at the same 1 Bruckner Boulevard location from 2007 onward, called the borough's restaurant week a great idea.

"It is a great idea for a lot of people who may not know local restaurants in the area and the kind of food we have to offer," she said, adding there will be a pre-fixe menu for Savor the Bronx.

Bronx Brewery's Andrew Steigbigel, the company's marketing coordinator, said that he believes Savor the Bronx helps highlight what is going on with food in the borough.

Many in the city may be familiar with certain culinary locales here, but Savor the Bronx is a good way to highlight many of the new food related businesses that have been opening in recent years, said Steigbigel.

Bronx Brewery, based in Port Morris at 856 E. 136th Street, will be offering a dollar off on pints and takeaways at



The borough president presented proclamations to restaurants and brands participating in the preview of Savor the Bronx. (L-r) Olga Luz Tirado, executive director of the Bronx Tourism Council; Marlyn Sanchez, Havana Cafe, and Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

its tap room, said Steigbigel.

Daniel Fitzgerald of Bronx Hot Sauce said that Savor the Bronx helps promote parts of the borough that may be less

known culinary.

For a complete listing of participating restaurants and brands, visit savorth Bronx.com or ilovethebronx.com.



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Spoto's restaurant closes its doors after almost 30 years

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

A restaurant with nearly a 30-year history, the last of its kind in the neighborhood, closed its doors for good last weekend.

Spoto's, an Italian restaurant which provided Throggs Neck residents with excellent cuisine and top-notch service since 1989, said goodbye on Sunday.

A location which generated years of memories, Spoto's stood out as a go-to restaurant for couples, families, co-workers and local residents who wanted to enjoy northern Italian-style dishes in a warm, intimate environment.

Popular dishes among customers included chicken parmigiana, fried calamari and ossobuco. They also provided their customers with a selection of daily specials, including chilian sea bass, salmon, tuna, cowboy steak and a variety of veal dishes.

Peter Spoto, the restaurant's owner, said that he didn't originally intend for his restaurant to stay in business to be around so long.

"Originally, the plan was to open the restaurant and then sell it within a year," said Spoto, who graduated from Iona College with a degree in finance in 1987 before working at Wall Street firm for a year prior to opening the restaurant in May of 1989.

But three decades later, Spoto is closing his establishment - to spend more time with his family.

"I loved working in the restaurant business, but as time went on the restaurant became more and more time consuming, so I would miss birthdays, anniversaries and holidays with my family," Spoto said. "Now, I look forward to being with my family more, but I will still be there for the community that I love, which has supported me for so many years."

Peter operated as the owner of Spoto's while his father, Pietro, worked as a head chef and his mother, Grace, oversaw operations for the business. His brother, Anthony, worked as a waiter. Pietro had many years of experience as a chef prior to Spoto's, working at various restaurant in the city, including midtown Manhattan's Golden Baby, located near the Americana Hotel, in the late 1960s.

"My father was one of the greatest cooks I've ever seen - I learned most of what I know about culinary arts from him," Spoto said. "He had so much passion when he was in the kitchen."

For Christmas Eve, Spoto's would serve traditional fish dishes and would also host a celebration on New Year's Eve, which included a champagne toast, a sit-down dinner and an open bar. The Italian eatery also hosted fundraising events and Christmas shows during the holiday season.

In 2011, the restaurant hosted the Bronx



Peter Spoto (r) with his father, Pietro, his mother, Grace and his brother, Anthony last weekend, just before closing the eponymous restaurant.

Photo courtesy of Peter Spoto

Chamber of Commerce's annual Veteran's Day Recognition Luncheon, as Spoto's and all in attendance paid tribute to the men and women who had served their country in the line of duty.

Spoto's was a regular participant in Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr.'s and the Bronx Tourism Council's Restaurant Week Celebration, a bi-annual event which featured over 40 of the borough's best restaurants. They also participated in the first annual Throggs Neck Restaurant Week back in January, along with 25 other restaurant based in the east Bronx.

Peter fondly recalled the time the cast of the HBO show *The Sopranos* dropped by the restaurant to dine. Whether celebrity or regular customer, Spoto enjoyed his interaction with everyone who stepped foot in his establishment.

"I ended up meeting so many great people with amazing personalities here," Spoto said. In my opinion, this was the best job in the world."

Spoto, who is the landlord of the property at 4005 E. Tremont Avenue, said that he is going to take some time to be with his family before searching for a tenant for the corner spot.

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P.S. 83 learns about pumpkins, nature with Vacca

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

Students got to learn more about the natural world and take home a pumpkin and a delicious recipe at a recent P.S. 83 event.

Second grade students who are part of the school's garden club got a lesson from the Horticultural Society of New York on pumpkins: how they grow and how they can be made into nutritious food.

The pumpkin programming took place on Thursday, October 27.

Councilman James Vacca funded the programming that encompassed the lesson, which took place inside the school and outdoors at its 'pumpkin patch' and garden.

The funding came through the city council's A Greener NYC initiative and will eventually include the creation of new educational programming and a new outdoor classroom space.

"I had an environmental grant that I got from the NYC Council to help keep New York City green and we want to stress to the students how important the environment is," said Vacca, adding that students learned all about the pumpkins because of the season, and that he had taken part in the educational process by reading to the students.

As part of Vacca's \$39,254 grant to P.S. 83, which the councilman called the 'pilot school' in his district in terms of receiving



Brandon Muccino, M.S./P.S. 83 principal (l) and Councilman James Vacca (2nd from l) stand with a second grade class that is part of a school garden club, as well as teachers and Pamela Ito of the Horticultural Society of New York (c) on Thursday, October 27. Each student took home a pumpkin along with a recipe on how to make a nutritious meal with it. Photo courtesy of Councilman James Vacca's office

A Greener NYC funding, an outdoor classroom will be designed and built with tree stump seating and planting of perennials by the Horticultural Society of New York.

All year long, students in the second grade garden club take care of a garden that grows plants and vegetables, and

learn about healthy eating habits, said Brandon Muccino, P.S. 83 principal.

"To have pumpkins here naturally fits in with the garden theme," said the principal. "All our students get to pick their own pumpkins."

The green initiative for the second

graders is part of a larger health and wellness educational program for the whole school community, he said.

Pamela Ito of the Horticultural Society of New York said that the day of learning at P.S. 83 encompassed not just pumpkins but much of what is visible in nature during the fall, including the seasonal climate changes and falling leaves.

"Students love pumpkins; there is a lot of education that can go around the season," said Ito.

The children learned that pumpkins are a fruit, a great source of vitamin A, and that there are seeds inside.

She wanted students to realize that pumpkins can be used to make many kinds of food and not just pumpkin pie, as some may believe.

"I would like the children to take away that they should eat the pumpkins," she said, "In this case, we brought edible sugar pumpkins and we gave the children a recipe to make pumpkins with white beans as a savory food."

The Horticultural Society of New York has installed about 50 school gardens, said Ito, adding that she encourages students and educators to use the outdoors as a classroom space.

"It is important because the students might be a little disconnected from the natural world living here in New York City," she said.

Self-serve kiosks come to Westchester Ave. McDonald's

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

The McDonald's at 1982 Westchester Avenue is stepping into the future with new self-serve kiosks.

The kiosks, which will begin debuting throughout the country this year, provide a different sort of experience to fast food patrons.

Customers have access to all of McDonald's menu items at the tip of their fingers.

The kiosks feature a three-foot screen with a credit card scanner, a receipt printer and buzzers which let you know when your food is ready.

Consumers begin the experience by choosing to eat in or out. They can then order traditional McDonald's menu items or customize their own sandwich and meal.

Next, customers can choose to pay with their credit card or pay with cash at the register.

Then the customer takes a buzzer and waits to be alerted.

Finally, the customer either takes the food to go, or - in typical restaurant fashion - they are served by a McDonald's as-

sociate who is there to assist them if they need additional help.

Tony Rodriguez, a McDonald's franchisee who owns the Westchester Avenue location, did not see any risk in being one of the first restaurants in the Bronx to feature the Kiosks.

"McDonald's does their homework and their research before they start anything," said Rodriguez, who owns 17 McDonald's restaurants.

He also pointed out that the kiosks are already up and running in Europe.

In addition, according to a spokesperson for McDonald's, the fast food giant has been testing out the new technology in the New York Metro area for approximately one year.

"This is the way of the future," added Rodriguez, "so why not expose it to our customers in the Bronx."

The owner said before presenting the kiosks to customers his staff tried them out.

Also, the restaurant held a family night at the store where family members of the staff also tested them.

While patrons order, there is an as-

sociate who is there to help the customer through the kiosk experience.

Rodriguez acknowledged some customers struggle to use the kiosks because they are not tech savvy.

However, he added that "the customers like [the kiosks]."

"We're getting very positive feedback especially from the table service part of it," said Rodriguez. "They love it."

According to Mwaffak Kanjee, vice president at McDonald's New York Metro Region, McDonald's has already rolled out kiosks at 70 locations this year throughout the New York Metro region - which includes Long Island, parts of New Jersey and Connecticut, Westchester and some counties in upstate New York.

He said they plan to add kiosks in 30 more locations by year's end and 100 in 2017.

Kanjee said the kiosks are not about the technology or the accompanying table service, but more about the customer.

"This is really about how we can engage the customer on a whole new level," he said. "That's what we're trying to do."



The new McDonald's kiosks, which will begin debuting throughout the country this year, provide a different sort of experience to fast food patrons. Photo Courtesy of McDonald's

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Veterans Day Parade in Crotona Park Saturday, November 3

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

An annual parade commemorating the country's war veterans is set to take place this weekend.

On Saturday, November 5, the Bronx Veterans Parade Task Team will host its third annual Bronx Veterans Day Parade to salute war veterans who have served in the line of duty, along with those who continue to serve to protect our country.

The parade, which begins at 11 a.m. on East 178th Street and Southern Boulevard, will recognize and salute veterans from all wars in which this country participated in, including World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, the Iraq War and the War In Afghanistan.

The parade route will begin at East 178th Street and Southern Boulevard (on the southern side of the boulevard). The route will continue north to East 180th Street before temporarily concluding on East 180th Street and Vyse Avenue at Vidalia Park, where a Veterans Day service will be led by Assemblyman Michael Blake.

Following the service, the parade route will continue on East 180th Street to Old West Farms Soldiers Cemetery for a memorial ceremony and a 21-gun salute. In total, the parade route will equate to about 1.5 miles.

"This parade is held annually to spread awareness in the borough about all veterans in need - no exclusions," said TBVPTT president James Wilson, a Vietnam veteran who said that he expects 200 to 300 participants at this year's parade. "We (TBVPTT) started this parade to showcase all these veterans have done for our country and make people mindful that some of these veterans are not receiving necessary needs and services."

The parade will include the P.S. 129 School Band and two Buffalo Soldiers on motorcycles, along with service members, veterans, local elected officials and community leaders.

The grand marshal for this year's parade will be Cheryl Adams, the first female grand marshal in the parade's history, after being voted in by members of the task team. Senator Ruben Diaz, a Vietnam War Army veteran who was appointed as the grand marshal for the previous two parades, will also be in attendance.

"We organize this parade each year to recognize the sacrifices these war heroes have made and continue to make for our country to keep us safe, as well as to highlight and include residents from this area of the Bronx," said TBVPTT vice president Robert Walker, a Vietnam, Army and Navy veteran. "This organization is highly motivated to make sure these veterans receive recognition, especially during this time of the year."

TBVPTT, which organizes the annual parade, is a non-profit organization that was founded in 2014 by a group of veterans from the Bronx who wanted to provide the borough with a west Bronx-based parade to commemorate former and current war veterans. The group started the parade tradition in 2014, after the previous Bronx Veterans Parade Committee, who was responsible for organizing the previous parades, dissolved in the early 2010s.

Veterans Day, which falls on a Friday this year, is annually observed on November 11 and was previously celebrated as Armistice Day until 1954, when the holiday was renamed.

This parade is not to be confused with the Throggs Neck Veterans Day Parade.



Wilson (r) and TBVPTT volunteer James Wilson at last year's parade. Photo courtesy of TBVPTT

Housing, jobs to replace Spofford Detention Center

from Page 19

ing space, The Peninsula will erase the memory of Spofford and replace it with homes and job opportunities that benefit the people of the south Bronx," said EDC president Maria Torres-Springer.

Spofford Detention Center, also known as Bridges Juvenile Center, had become a Hunts Point eyesore.

There were multiple reports of child abuse, broken air conditioners, and rodent infestation within the facility when it was in operation.

Activists, elected officials and community members eventually forced the center to close in 2011. It had been open for more than 50 years.

In June of 2015 the EDC began fielding suggestions for the space, asking interested developers to pitch their ideas by October of that same year.

Gilbane Development Company, Hudson Compa-

nies and Mutual Housing Association of New York - also know as MHANY - put together a joint submission which EDC chose.

Councilman Rafael Salamanca, former district manager for Community Board 2, said he hopes to secure spots for many Hunts Point residents.

Salamanca said that the residents in Hunts Point who had to suffer through having Spofford Juvenile Center "in their backyard" should be the ones gaining the benefit of the new housing.

Officials from Mothers on the Move and The Point Community Development Corporation - two organizations who spearheaded the Spofford closing - expressed pleasure with The Peninsula project.

"Closing the dark chapter of Spofford Detention Center and creating a new future for the residents of Hunts Point is more than a symbolic act

- it is an affirmative step toward a clear and meaningful improvement in the quality of life for our community," said Maria Torres, president of The Point CDC.

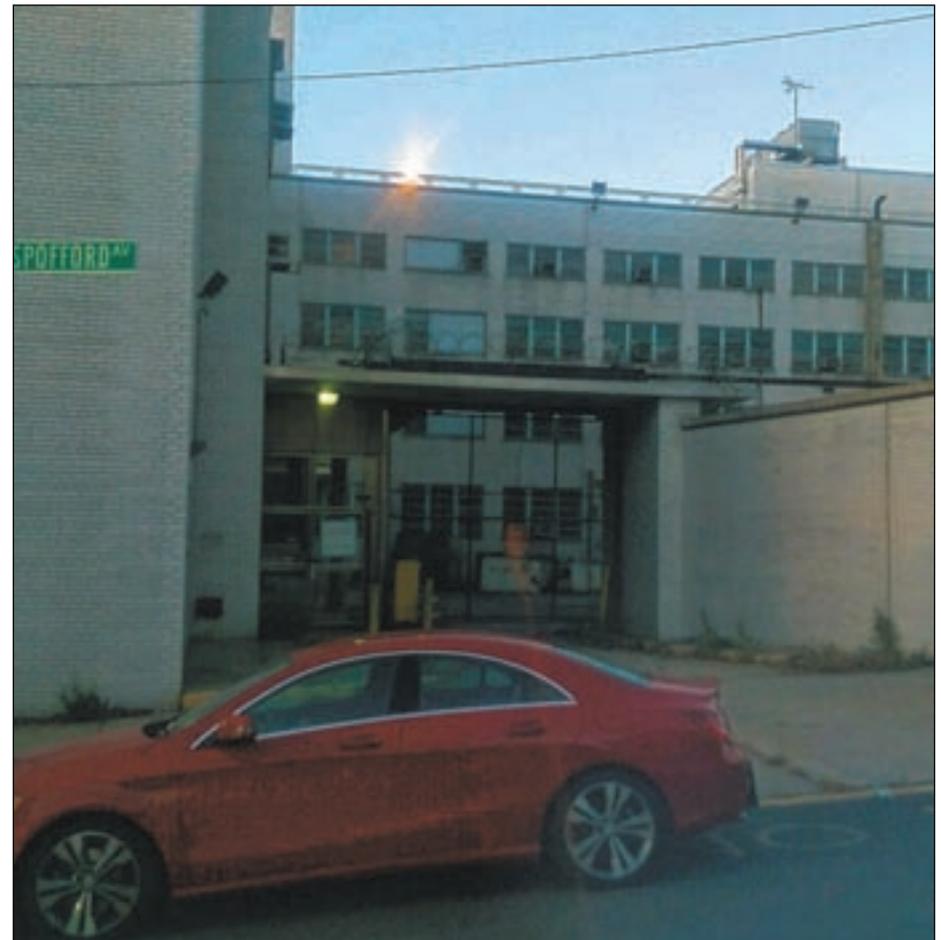
"We salute our allies in that long struggle and remind all those who have worked so hard to make this day possible that we still have much work to do," said Mothers on the Move president Wanda Salaman.

The Peninsula will consist of five buildings and will be built in three phases which are projected to be completed by 2024.

Some of the businesses that plan to open at the Peninsula are Forno Bakery, Soul Snacks, Bascom Catering, Mass Ideation, Hunts Point Brewing Company, and Lightbox NY film studio.

In addition there will be an 18,000 square foot health and wellness center operated by Urban Health Plan and a 15,000 square foot space for a supermarket.

The Peninsula will also include a Head Start facility and a playground.



Outside of former Spofford Juvenile Detention Center.

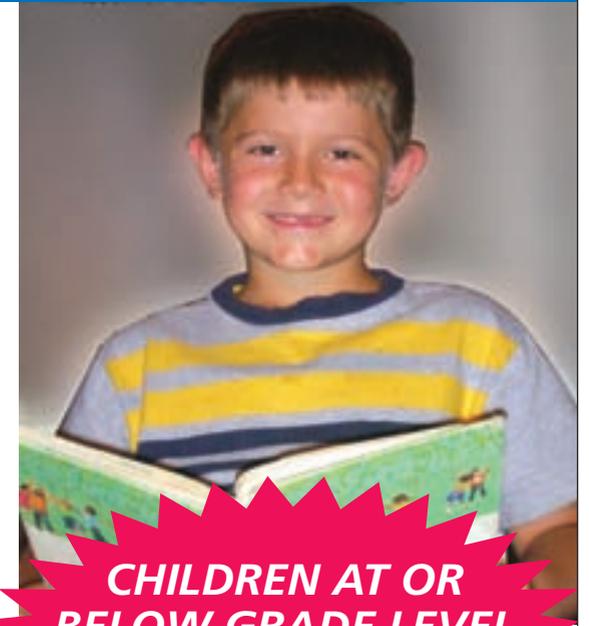
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