

5 candidates announce for 13th Council seat

BY ROBERT WIRSING

As 2016 nears a close, five candidates have already announced their candidacy for next year's 13th Council District primary race.

Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj, John Marano, Alex Gomez, John Doyle and Marjorie Velazquez-Lynch have announced their intentions to vie for the Democratic party nod to replace Councilman James Vacca, who will be term-limited at the end of 2017.

Vacca has served in the Council since 2005.

On Monday, December 12, Gjonaj announced his candidacy at the Chippewa Democratic Club to over 150 community leaders in attendance.

"I have decided to run for NYC Council, without matching funds, to better address the quality of life issues residents of City Island, Pelham Bay, Throggs Neck and Morris Park struggle with everyday," stated Gjonaj. "From City Hall I will be in a better position to create more jobs, enhance our neighborhoods, increase our police force and combat homelessness. I look forward to displaying the type of leadership my neighbors have come to know and expect from me."

The Morris Park native would work to have Mayor de Blasio honor his promise of closing Rodman's Neck, allocate resources to confront the increasing homeless population and supply local precincts with additional officers to combat the increasing drug epidemic.

Assemblyman Gjonaj starts his third term in Albany in January.

John Marano, a lifelong Throggs Neck resident and community activist, is a well-

Continued on Page 4

3 NABBED IN BUS ASSAULT

Pols call for Bx8 'special' arrangement

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

NYPD officers arrested on Monday, December 5, three girls in a connection to a potentially race-related attack on a city bus.

According to police, on Tuesday, November 22, four white female St. Catharine Academy students were on board a Bx8 bus near Middletown Road and Westchester Avenue.

During their ride home from school, two black male passengers began to take their picture.

Later on, three black females boarded the same bus at the Westchester Avenue stop. They were friends of the males that were harassing the white students. The teenage girls immedi-

ately started fighting with the St. Catharine foursome.

According to a NY Post article, the boys yelled things such as, "Oh, white girl got money!" and "Oh you go to St. Catharine's? What, do you have money? Go drink your coffee, white girl and go shopping."

In addition, the boys allegedly threatened to urinate on the victims.

The St. Catharine girls' attorney, Scott Seskin, confirmed the comments.

They suffered minor cuts and bruises from the attack and were taken to Jacobi Hospital.

NYPD has identified two of the

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Santa Visits TN Shopping Center

Throggs Neck children and their families had a holly, jolly time meeting Santa Claus and his elves at the Throggs Neck Shopping Center on Sunday, December 11. Sisters Leia (l) and Natalija Ortiz enjoyed some tasty candy canes given to them by Father Christmas.

Photo by Laura Stone

Renovations begin on new BCA headquarters

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

Construction on the Bronx Council on the Arts' long awaited new home at a former bank building in Westchester Square is underway.

After a long delay, the former Washington Mutual branch at 2700 East Tremont Avenue that was donated by J.P. Morgan Chase Bank some five years ago is now being renovated to house BCA headquarters.

The \$5.6 million renovation

project, funded by the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs with money allocated by local elected officials, will convert the 7,300 former bank into a first-class art hub by the fall of 2017.

A kick-off celebration for the 'BCA@2700' with elected officials, business and civic leaders, artists and community members was held on Friday, December 9.

Congressman Joseph Crowley, who helped broker the donation

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Two toddlers die due to radiator malfunction

BY MARK HALLUM
AND PATRICK ROCCHIO

Two toddlers were killed by a radiator malfunction in a Hunts Point building on Wednesday, December 7.

The two girls were in a first floor apartment at 720 Hunts Point Avenue when a malfunctioning pressure valve let off steam, causing the children to go into cardiac arrest, with major burns, according to published reports.

The incident occurred at approximately 12:20 p.m., with the two girls transported to Lincoln Hospital, according to police.

They have been identified as Scylee Vayoh Ambrose, who was one-year-old and Ibanez Ambrose, a two-year-old, according to the NYPD.

The apartment where the incident occurred is part of the city's cluster-site program for temporary homeless housing in privately owned buildings.

Local elected officials responded to the tragedy shortly after the incident by calling for a full investigation.

"We are in the preliminary stages of what is a highly ac-

tive, multi-agency investigation into what happened in this home and whether there's anything that can be done to help prevent such an unspeakable event in the future," said Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. shortly after the incident. "Our law enforcement, buildings, fire and social services personnel will not rest until we can answer what has given rise to this heartbreaking incident."

Councilman Rafael Salamanca, in response to the deaths, said that the New York City Council would hold oversight hearings into the Hunts Point tragedy.

"While this may have been a 'freak accident', I believe that city leaders still have the ability and the authority to make changes that could help to prevent this from happening in the future," stated Salamanca.

"This was a cluster site, but obviously it could happen anywhere."

He will also introduce legislation aimed at preventing similar mishaps, he stated.

"I'm proposing some pragmatic solutions that I hope we



Senator Ruben Diaz Sr (c.) visited the building where the tragedy occurred on Wednesday, December 7.
Photo by Aracelis Batista

stop work orders from receiving contracts from the NYC Department of Homeless Services to house families.

Mayor de Blasio addressed the situation shortly after the incident on Thursday, December 8 at an event in Bayside, Queens.

According to de Blasio, the last semi-annual DHS shelter inspection of the building took place a month ago.

The NYC Department of Buildings, however, lists a variety of violations since the 1980s, but none involving the heating system.

"We do not see any precedent in anything that has happened before, said the mayor. "This was a freak accident, a series of painful coincidences that led to the loss of these children."

The mayor said it is very natural that New Yorkers be concerned about radiators but he has no evidence of something like this specific incident happening in the past.

The mayor called for a full investigation.

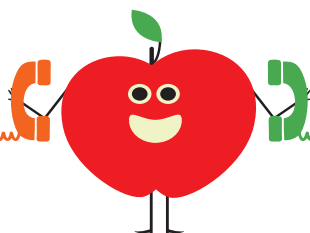
Part of this story was published in the Bronx Times's sister paper, the Queens Times Ledger.

can work on in the coming weeks to help prevent something like this from happening again," stated the councilman.

The councilman's legislation

will deal with requiring inspection of radiators, regulations covering radiator covers or barriers and a plan to require any landlord with 'C' violations or

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Five candidates announce for 13th Council seat



JOHN DOYLE



MARK GJONAJ



ALEX GOMEZ



JOHN MARANO



MARJORIE VELAZQUEZ-LYNCH

from Page 1

rounded candidate and dedicated public servant.

"Working almost 20 years of my life as a NYPD officer and NYC fireman is what started my desire to become a public servant," said Marano. "After retiring from the FDNY, I continued my public service with CB 10 for the last ten years where I worked very closely with the local merchants and residents to better address their needs."

Marano currently serves as CB 10's first vice chairman and was the board's chairman for four years.

As councilman, Marano would insist on a narcotics module for the 45th and 49th precincts to stop illegal drug activity, bring more alternative energy resources and programs to owners of both private and multiple dwellings and address the lack of parking while working closely with property owners throughout the district's commercial strips to continue attracting businesses needed in the communities.

Colombian born Alex Gomez was raised in the Mount Hope section of the Bronx before moving to Throggs Neck a decade ago.

For the last 18 years, he has been employed in the social services field and currently serves as a Phipps Neighborhoods director.

"Out of all the candidates, I'm the lesser known, but I am the one furthest away from the political machine who can bring fresh ideas to our communities and the city," said Gomez.

If elected, Gomez would support tax breaks to small business owners and homeowners, bring more social services to the district and the city and create programs for people to become better educated on environmental issues.

City Island resident John Doyle, has listed seven policy platforms including ethics in government, transportation, education and the environment.

His resume includes serving on 45th Precinct Community Council, City Island Civic As-

sociation, Councilman Ritchie Torres' treasurer and Senator Jeff Klein's community affairs director.

If elected, Doyle would work to renovate the Pelham Bay IRT train station and improve traffic in the surrounding area, institute participatory budgeting allowing residents a direct say in how their tax dollars are spent in their community and hold annual town hall meeting in every community for residents to express their concerns directly to their local representative.

Vacca has endorsed CB 10 member and 82nd Assembly Female District Leader Marjorie Velazquez-Lynch in the race to succeed him.

"Marjorie will be a forward-looking, effective advocate for our children and seniors in the City Council," Vacca said.

The Throggs Neck resident will focus on improving education at local schools, protecting healthcare access and expanding public transportation in the 'transit desert' community.

Council District 13 encompasses Pelham Bay, Throggs Neck, Waterbury-LaSalle, Country Club, Spencer Estate, Westchester Square, Edgewater Park, Silver Beach, Locust Point, Pelham Gardens, City Island, Allerton, Pelham Parkway North and South and Morris Park.

Next year's City Council primary, as well as races for citywide office, are set for Tuesday, September 12.

3 nabbed in bus assault; pols call for Bx8 'special' arrangement

from Page 1

girls arrested as 17-year old Miracle Rattray and 16-year old Molly-chi Rattray.

Both girls were charged with 2nd degree gang assault.

The third girl arrested, age 15, was not identified but charged with 3rd degree assault.

The victims' mothers chose not to speak with the Bronx Times, however Seskin said his clients are very upset.

Seskin said he has filed a notice of claim - a precursor to a lawsuit - against the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

In addition, they are planning a lawsuit against the bus driver who allegedly did nothing while the attacks continued.

The notice of claim gives the MTA at least a month to review the situation before a lawsuit is filed.

According to Seskin, the bus driver did not stop the bus to let the victims off.

However, he said, the driver did stop between bus stops to let the alleged attackers off the bus.

At one point the alleged attackers tried to drag one of the girls off the bus and then stole her backpack containing a laptop, accord-

ing to sources.

Seskin said at this point there is no way to change what happened to the girls.

"We can't undo what's been done," said Seskin. "The civil legal system provides us a monetary remedy."

Following the alleged attacks, elected officials - including Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr, assemblymembers Mark Gjonaj and Michael Bendetto, Senator Jeff Klein and Councilman James Vacca - are sending a letter to the MTA asking for safer conditions for students on the bus route.

The letter points to an arrangement other schools have in which students are transported home by a dedicated bus which permits drop offs only.

The group is calling for a similar procedure.

The officials identified the Bx12 and Bx8 bus routes as the main routes St. Catharine Academy students use following dismissal.

The officials are asking that the special bus make all stops, foregoing Westchester Square.

Elected officials plan to package the letter with two other letters calling for changes in response to the attacks.



According to police, on Tuesday, November 22, four white female St. Catharine Academy students were on board a BX8 bus near Middletown Road and Westchester Avenue where they were allegedly attacked by three black teenage girls.

Photo Courtesy of Robert Christie



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Holiday scrooge robs youth softball league

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

The holiday season often brings out the best in people, inspiring acts of charity and good will towards men.

But that wasn't the case in Throggs Neck last month when an unknown person or persons broke into a storage shed at Veteran's Bicentennial Park, vandalizing and stealing thousands of dollars in equipment from a girls youth softball League.

The Throggs Neck Girls Softball League is the only all-girls softball league in the entire borough, and is entirely funded by donations.

New league president Linda Del Toro said members take pride in that status and have worked hard to keep the league afloat since 1975 without the national support that little leagues often have.

"We maintain the field, and we even buy the clay for it," Del Toro said.

Trouble started on Thursday, November 22 when an employee of the NYC Parks and Recreation De-

partment contacted her to say they had found a homeless person sleeping in the storage shed.

The man had slept in a pile of uniforms that are likely ruined, and used a bucket to relieve himself, she said.

The same man was nabbed by police in the shed again after it was re-locked, she added.

The shed has since been secured with a better lock.

On Wednesday, November 28, the shed was broken into once more, this time however the league's bats and other equipment were stolen or tossed onto the softball field.

Also missing was the P.A. system for announcing games and a \$2,000 defibrillator, which the league is required to have on hand for games under state law.

"It's upsetting, and I just feel creeped out about it," she said.

Del Toro said police did not know whether the homeless man who was sleeping in the shed was also responsible for the theft, or

was just taking advantage of the open shed.

A police report was filed and an investigation is ongoing but no arrests have been made, according to an NYPD spokesman.

Luckily, the league was able to get a new defibrillator through a state safety program.

The life-saving unit is no longer being stored in the shed, Del Toro said.

Other equipment such as team uniforms must still be replaced.

This isn't the first time vandals had damaged the girls' fields.

In recent years delinquents, likely neighborhood teens, have lit the team's portable toilet on fire, Del Toro said.

Litter and graffiti have also been an issue in years past, but the installation of security cameras has helped deter most of the vandalism.

Anyone looking to help the team through donation of equipment or funding can contact Del Toro at (347) 541-1644.



The storage shed owned used by the Throggs Neck Girls Softball League was broken into multiple times last month, and thousands of dollars worth of equipment was stolen. An investigation is ongoing.
Linda Del Toro



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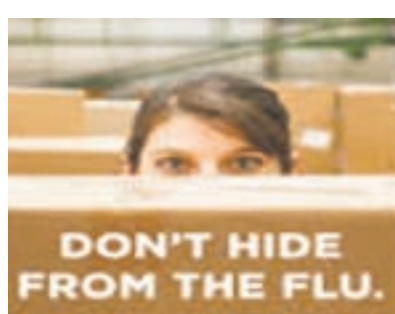
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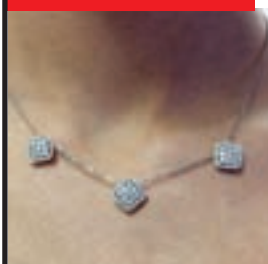
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Mark Colon, deputy commissioner of the Housing Preservation Department, responded to residents complaints about an increase in carrying charges at Jamie Towers, a Mitchell-Lama property.

Photo Courtesy of Robert Christie

HPD responds to Jamie Towers \$\$ complaints

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

The state has responded to numerous monthly increase complaints at a Soundview complex.

In early November, Senator Ruben Diaz Sr. sent an open letter to Governor Cuomo requesting the reasons behind an increase in carrying charges and other fees at Jamie Towers.

Diaz and Assemblyman Luis Sepulveda met with Jamie Towers residents in early November to discuss their concerns about the charges.

Mark Colon, deputy commissioner of the NYS Office of Housing Preservation, recently responded to Diaz' letter and the Jamie Towers shareholders, addressing the recent increases.

Colon stated the development's recent carrying charge increase would be lowered \$12.71 per room starting in January 2017 due to objections.

He said 2016 was the first time since 2011 carrying charges were increased at Jamie Towers.

He acknowledged the hardship this change would be on co-ops on fixed incomes or with disabilities.

Colon said residents who qualify can use the Senior

Citizen Rent Increase Exemption and the Disability Rent Increase Exemption.

He said HPD has instructed the Jamie Towers management company, First Services Inc., to continue providing SCRIE and DRIE applications to residents.

Colon also said the increase in carrying charges allows the Jamie Towers to "realize several crucial outcomes that will save money in the long term, while providing some much-needed services, fairly soon, for Jamie Towers' shareholders."

For example, said Colon, it allows Jamie Towers to have a full complement of security staffing while insuring the guards receive the state's new minimum wage.

In addition, Colon said it allows Jamie Towers to pay down loans and finance capital improvements that are needed.

Residents also complained about an increase in parking fees from \$50 per month to \$75 per month and an increase in air conditioner fees from \$25 to \$35 per month. Colon said the air conditioner fees are due to an increase in the electrical costs associated with their use.

The parking fee in-

creases, Colon said, went to repaving the three Jamie Towers parking lots which cost nearly \$400,000.

Jamie Towers is a four building, 624-unit, 12-acre Mitchell-Lama cooperative

According to Barbara Jones, a 21-year resident of Jamie Towers, the co-op's security staff has been reduced.

In addition, she said there are issues with inconsistent heat.

"If it is 60 degrees outside they're giving us heat," Jones told the Bronx Times in early December. "When it's six degrees outside you don't get any heat and that's really a problem, it's really a problem."

Jones, who serves as chair for Jamie Towers' Gems and Gents Senior Group, said there is insufficient outside lighting, leaving the property in darkness at times.

According to Jones, 60 percent of the residents in Jamie Towers are senior citizens and some are 80 and 90 years old.

The Bronx Times reached out to First Services Residential multiple times to ask about the conditions Jones described but received no response.



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Using mobile phones

Leading the list of the top distractions behind the wheel are mobile phones. Phones now do more than just place calls, and drivers often cannot pull away from their phones, even when driving. According to the California Department of Motor Vehicles, studies have shown that driving performance is lowered and the level of distraction is higher for drivers who are heavily engaged in cell

phone conversations. The use of a hands-free device does not lower distraction levels. The percentage of vehicle crashes and near-crashes attributed to dialing is nearly identical to the number associated with talking or listening.

Daydreaming

Many people will admit to daydreaming behind the wheel or looking at a person or object outside of the car for too long. Per-

haps they're checking out a house in a new neighborhood or thought they saw someone they knew on the street corner. It can be easy to veer into the direction your eyes are focused, causing an accident. In addition to trying to stay focused on the road, some drivers prefer the help of lane departure warning systems.

Eating

Those who haven't quite mastered walking and

chewing gum at the same time may want to avoid eating while driving. The majority of foods require a person's hands to be taken off of the wheel and their eyes to be diverted from the road. Reaching in the back seat to share some French fries with the kids is also distracting.

Try to eat meals before getting in the car. For those who must snack while en route, take a moment to pull over at

a rest area and spend 10 minutes snacking there before resuming the trip.

Reading

Glancing at an advertisement, updating a Facebook status or reading a book are all activities that should be avoided when driving. Even pouring over a traffic map or consulting the digital display of a GPS system can be distracting.

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Allerton Merchants Hosts Christmas Tree Lighting

The Allerton International Merchants Association's fourth annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony made everyone's holiday spirit shine bright this season. Many residents, young and old alike, participated in the traditional lighting of the Bronxwood Tree on Tuesday, December 6 at Allerton Avenue and Boston Road. The Yuletide festivities continued with a holiday afterparty at The Sanz Banquet Hall featuring delicious food, a visit from Santa Claus, carolers, cookies and cocoa and presents for local youth.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



(Above) Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj (back, c), Gene DeFrancis, Allerton International Merchants Association president (r), local youth and Santa Claus helped spread some holiday cheer.



(Above) (l-r) Nathalia Fernandez, Gjonaj's chief of staff; Gene DeFrancis; John Marano, Community Board 10 first vice chairman; Mike Connolly as Santa Claus; Assemblyman Gjonaj and Joe McManus, 80th Assembly District and Community Board 11 Land Use Committee chairman; celebrated the season of giving together.



A little rain didn't spoil any of the crowd's merriment as they watched this year's Christmas tree lighting ceremony from across the street in front of The Sanz Banquet Hall.



The festive Christmas tree by Allerton Avenue and Boston Road shone brightly into the night.



Inspirational Award recipient Carmen Cruz Lee (c) graciously accepted her award from (l-r) Nathalia Fernandez, Assemblyman Gjonaj, Mike Connolly and Gene DeFrancis.



Elected officials, Allerton International Merchants Association members, community leaders and some of the children who attended the festivities.

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49TH PRECINCT HOSTS CHRISTMAS PARTY

The 49th Precinct hosted a holly, jolly Christmas party on Saturday, December 10 at its 2121 Eastchester Road precinct house. The holiday festivities included Christmas tree decorating and a special meet and greet with Father Christmas.



Delilah (l), Harper (2nd from r) and Mackenzie Masi had fun meeting Santa this season.
Photo by Laura Stone



(l-r) Police officer Jackie O'Connor; captain Thomas Alps, 49th Precinct commanding officer; Santa Claus and police officer Lepore helped spread holiday cheer to the community they protect and serve. Photo by Laura Stone

CHLL HOSTS CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING

The Castle Hill Little League celebrated the holiday season in festive style with its second annual Christmas Tree Lighting on Saturday, December 10 at Zerega and Gleason avenues. Santa Claus traveled all the way from the North Pole to meet with all of the good boys and girls and distribute presents prior to the holiday.



Jordan (l) and Jace Vega (r) received holiday presents from jolly old St. Nick.
Photo by Laura Stone



Castle Hill Little League board members and Santa Claus celebrated the holiday season in front of the lit Christmas tree.
Photo by Laura Stone



BP DIAZ ATTENDS WBLS MEETING

Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr. was a guest speaker at the Waterbury LaSalle Community and Homeowners Association's monthly meeting on Wednesday, November 30 at First Lutheran Church of Throggs Neck.

Borough President Diaz (4th from l) met with WLCHA board members (l-r) Annie Boller, Michele Torrioni, Fannie Scaffani, Mary Jane Musano, Andrew Chirico and Scott Barnard.

Photo courtesy of Waterbury LaSalle Community Association



State officials are looking for a developer to build a mixed-use complex above a waterfront south Bronx rail yard. The state-owned site is also the site of the new FreshDirect headquarters.

Photo courtesy of Empire State Development

State eyes developers for Harlem River railyard

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

Big changes may be afoot on the shores of the south Bronx waterfront, as a long-time rail yard could see a massive redevelopment project.

The Empire State Development has issued a Request for Expression of Interest from developers to gauge interest in the 13-acre south Bronx rail yard located on the NYS Department of Transportation-owned 96-acre Harlem River Yard, for covering the existing rail station with a deck and building residential and/or mixed-use buildings above it.

"It's exciting, and very rare to offer the opportunity to develop more than a dozen acres of prime waterfront land in New York City," said Empire State Development Commissioner Howard Zemsky in a statement announcing the proposal.

The Port Morris location offers easy access to the waterfront, multiple mass transit options and a major highway, he added.

A state-conducted on-site tour of the location was scheduled for Wednesday, December 14, and proposals must be submitted by February 2.

Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation president Marlene Cintron stressed the state was simply looking to get a feel from developers of how interested they would be in taking on the project, and its not a formal request for proposals.

She said she had fielded calls by developers intrigued by the possibilities the site offers.

"The site has a view to kill for," she said.

However while the cost of decking such a project may have gone down, she said the challenges of building on the waterfront would make it an equally massive undertaking.

"It will be a very expensive venture that can provide rewards - depending on what kind of tenants they hope to put on top," she said.

Affordable housing at the site did not seem feasible, she said.

A similar project known as Hudson Yards is already underway on the west side of Manhattan.

That project will see business office space and market-rate housing built above it.

The Bronx rail station sold to the state DOT in 1982 and is primarily used for industrial and manufacturing

purposes.

The property managed through a joint venture with the Schenectady-based Galesi Group called Harlem River Yards Inc.

Galesi signed a 99-year lease with the city to operate the site in 1991, and Cintron said that lease was unlikely to be altered.

Calls to Galesi site manager Anthony Riccio following the site tour were not returned by press time.

Because it is a state owned property, the state can change the zoning at the site without city approval.

It is currently part of the Special Harlem River Waterfront District.

Harlem River Yard tenants include a FedEx distribution center, the New York Post printing and distribution facility, and a solid waste transfer station.

Further west from the rail yard on the property is the future site for the headquarters of FreshDirect.

The upstart online grocery chain was lured to the Bronx from Queens after receiving an \$87 million subsidy from the city.

Phase I of that project is slated for completion in December of 2017, when staffing will begin.

Pols to USPS: Put back the blue mailboxes

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

Elected officials are calling for the United States Postal Service to replace mailboxes that the organization removed earlier this year without prior notification.

As part of a security effort to stop thieves from stealing mail from mailboxes, known as fishing, USPS began removing its blue mailboxes from various Bronx locations to customize them against tampering.

The old mailboxes are being modified with a small slot through which mail can be placed instead of the small, hinged door.

According to USPS, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service has made 150 arrests in the Bronx since January in connection to fishing.

Donna Harris, a spokesperson U.S. Postal Inspection Service Office, told the Bronx Times in November that the postal service would not release information on when the mailboxes would be returned to their locations.

Six weeks later elected officials are still wondering when the mailboxes are being returned.

USPS suggested flippantly that residents without boxes can hand their mail to their local mail carriers or go to the nearest USPS stations.

According to another USPS spokesperson the agency removed 124 boxes in the Bronx but replaced 65 mailboxes - outfitted with the new security measure - the same day they were removed.

In a letter to Bronx Postmaster Lilliam Rodriguez, elected officials said on Thursday, December 8, the missing mailboxes have become an inconvenience to many residents.

Seniors and individuals with disabilities, in particular, find it difficult to get to a post office.

Andrew Cohen
Councilman

Their statement also calls the postal service's decision to take away the mailboxes without prior notice "an egregious move."

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz said his office has received many complaints from residents concerning the non-existent mailboxes.

Councilman Andrew Cohen acknowledged the postal service's security concerns but was worried about the lack of transparency from USPS.

"While USPS has a new mailbox design that prevents theft, my biggest concern is



Elected officials are calling for the United States Postal Service to replace mailboxes that the organization removed earlier this year. USPS removed mailboxes (like the one pictured above) to replace them with more secure boxes which will have a smaller slot through which mail can be placed instead of the small, hinged door.

Photo Courtesy of Robert Christie

that they knew that a year-end rush would be coming, but they largely kept the community in the dark about how removal and reinstallation would affect residents' ability to mail important holiday packages," said Cohen.

Cohen also said dropping packages off at a local post office might not be an easy alternative for all residents.

"Seniors and individuals with disabilities, in particular, find it difficult to get to a post office," Cohen said.

Both Senator Jeff Klein, Assemblyman Michael Benedetto and Congressman Eliot Engel are demanding the USPS rectify the situation as soon as possible.

"The USPS should immediately replace these mailboxes and provide an alternative to residents during their absence," said Senator Klein.

Engel suggested a solution: "Postal officials need to rectify this problem immediately by establishing mobile collection stations throughout the borough."

USPS released a statement in connection to resident's concerns.

"Our goal is to protect the US Mail from criminals who seek to violate the safety and security that our customers expect. This will be an ongoing program until we have completed collection box enhancements throughout the Bronx."



TNChristmasTreeLightingBrightensSpirits

The Throggs Neck community had a merry time celebrating the holiday season with a Christmas tree lighting sponsored by Assemblyman Michael Benedetto on Sunday, December 4 at DeRosa and O'Boyle Triangle. Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus traveled all the way from the North Pole to meet local children and help distribute gifts supplied by the Throggs Neck Merchants Association. All photos by Silvio Pacifico

(Top) Santa, Mrs. Claus and the St. Benedict Children's Choir wished everyone the most happiest and healthiest of holidays this season.

(Top right) North Pole natives Mrs. Claus and her husband, Santa, delivered holiday cheer to local children and their families.

(right) Laiba Mahmood helped Santa distribute presents to all of the good boys and girls.

(middle right) Budding artist Melina Aponte received a new drawing board from jolly old St. Nick.

(bottom right) (l-r) Santa's helpers from Lehman High School: Miguel Martinez, Kalitri Grant, Ashley Resto, Carl Acevedo, Miguel Martinez and Jackie Han celebrated the Yuletide in style.

Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj emceed this year's Christmas tree lighting celebration.

((below) back, l-r) John Cerini, TNMA treasurer; Stephen Kaufman, TNMA president; John Marano, Community Board 10 first vice chairman and Anne Myers, director of music and St. Benedict's Church Youth Choir with Santa, Mrs. Claus and St. Benedict's Children's Choir members.



Norovirus outbreak sickens P.S. 83 students

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

Administrators and staff scrambled to wipe a local school clean last week after a norovirus outbreak left a large number of students and staff members sick at the P.S. 83 Annex in Morris Park.

Norovirus, more commonly referred to as stomach flu or food poisoning, is extremely common and highly contagious, especially in enclosed, highly populated spaces.

The actual number of people sickened at the school is still being determined, but more than 100 may have been affected.

NYC Department of Education spokeswoman Toya Holness said the school, located on Bogart Avenue, was thoroughly disinfected Friday and again over the weekend before school opened again as usual Monday morning.

"Families were notified and the school was thoroughly disinfected on Friday and again over the weekend out of an abundance of caution," Holness said Monday afternoon.

Principal Brandon Muccino said parents were notified of the outbreak by multiple methods, including automated phone messages and a letter that was sent home with children Friday.

He said the school had not previously experienced any sort of widespread outbreak like the one that occurred last week.

"This was the first time in my 16 years



Stomach flu sickened students and staff at P.S. 83 Annex on Bogart Avenue last week, forcing the staff to thoroughly clean the building.

Arthur Cusano

here," Muccino said.

Stomach flu outbreaks in schools are hardly uncommon: Earlier this month, EMS crews responded to P.S. 160 in Brooklyn

where approximately 30 students were sickened by the virus, according to published reports.

Noroviruses are a group of related vi-

ruses that can cause gastroenteritis, or inflammation of the stomach and intestines that leads to cramping, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

While known as the stomach flu, it is not an actual type of influenza.

A norovirus can spread very quickly.

It can be contracted by eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus, touching surfaces or objects with the virus on them and then putting your hand or fingers in your mouth or by having direct contact with a person who is infected with the illness.

To help prevent the spread of noroviruses, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advise washing hands with hot water and soap after using the bathroom, changing a diaper or before preparing food.

Soap and hot water and more effective than alcohol-based hand sanitizer lotions.

Carefully rinse fruits and vegetables, and cook oysters and other shellfish thoroughly before eating them.

Those infected should avoid preparing food for two days afterwards, and clean possible contaminated surfaces such as bathroom sinks and kitchen counters with a bleach-based cleaning product.

Those infected or living with an infected individual should wash potentially contaminated laundry and linens thoroughly with detergent and place them in a dryer.

Korony Post 253 wraps up annual toy drive

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

A local holiday toy drive delivered once again for needy borough children this year.

It is the Bronx helping the Bronx. For these kids to get something at Christmastime - they really appreciate it.

Joe McManus

Approximately 800 toys were purchased and donated to non-profit organizations that service needy children as part of the Theodore Korony American Legion Post #253's Joseph Mazzariello Memorial Toy Drive, said drive co-coordinators.

Charitable organizations including Claremont Neighborhood Centers, Acacia Network, Concourse House Home for Women and Chil-

dren and several others received donations.

Groups came to Throggs Neck to pick up bags of toys on Tuesday, December 13.

Additionally, Joe McManus, Bronx Ancient Order of Hibernians Division #3 president, dropped by the post's toy distribution to present a \$300 donation from his group to go towards next year's effort.

Drive co-coordinator Anthony Ferrara said that the charitable enterprise has benefited this year and previously from the generosity of Youngland Stores on Third Avenue.

"Youngland gives us a break on the price of the toys and a substantial amount of toys on the cuff," said Ferrara.

Ferrara said he was with the drive when its founder, U.S. Marine and Vietnam veteran Mazzariello, would place collection boxes in bank lobbies and raise money from jars put in Throggs Neck businesses.

After Mazzariello's passing in 2009, a group of coordinators including Ferrara, Judy Lanci and Colleen McCarthy continued the drive in his honor, in part through donations from Korony members and from other borough American Le-



Joe McManus, president of the Bronx Ancient Order of Hibernians Division 3, presents Theodore Korony Post #253 with a \$300 check on Tuesday, December 13 for the toy drive. (l-r) Guy Richardson, Lorraine Johnson, Joe McManus, Anthony Ferrara, Judy Lanci, Dolores Stolze, Gerry Ferrara and Cathy Priano.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

gion posts.

Danielle Mazzariello-Fava, the daughter of the drive's founder, now also volunteers.

"(The drive) will be going on probably forever," said Ferrara, adding "You got to figure that a lot of these children are going to get either nothing or something small."

Abraham Jones, Claremont Neighborhood Centers' executive director, dropped by to pick up toys

on December 13th.

"Each year the American Legion has been wonderful in terms of helping us make this time of year enjoyable for so many needy children," said Jones,

Claremont is located in one of the poorest Congressional districts in the nation and many families there are struggling financially, he said.

"This is going to be a huge

help," he said. "Our kids look forward for this time of year, and Claremont being able, with the support of the American Legion, to give them gifts and toys."

McManus said that Hibernians typically help youth in Catholic schools with scholarships and prizes, and he indicated that the toy drive is a natural extension of the work the organization does on behalf of young people.

The organization has a special connection to the drive because a family member of AOH borough leader Bob Nolan is a member of the Korony Post family.

The money donated from the Hibernians is raised through its annual golf outing, he said.

"It is the Bronx helping the Bronx," said McManus, adding that he remembers growing up poor with six people in his household as a youngster sharing a one-bedroom apartment.

The Hibernians especially help poor and indigent youth and their families, he said.

"For these kids to get something at Christmastime -they really appreciate it," said McManus.



Robles-Alvarado and Arroyo at "The Abuela Stories" book launching.

Photo by Laura Stone

Artists collaborate on book celebrating their 'abuelas'

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

A local author and photographer have combined their respective talents to create a new collaborative project.

On Thursday, December 8, Bronxites Peggy Robles-Alvarado and Daisy Arroyo hosted the launching of "The Abuela Stores Project" at the Bronx Museum of the Arts to promote the release of the new book.

"The Abuela Stories Project" is an anthology of 14 women writers, all Bronx-born and some of whom are grandmothers themselves, expressed through photography, poetry and writing.

The book covers all aspects and experiences in the everyday life of being a grandmother in the Bronx. Many of these heart wrenching stories describe an anything-but-average abuela's involvement in art, dance and music, contrary to the typical cooking, knitting and rocking chair stories we are all used to hearing about.

Many cultures are covered in the compilation, including grandmothers who come from Afro-Latina, Jewish-Latina and Portuguese decent, among other origins.

The book launch also including an art installation piece, where the writers contributed items that related to either being a grandmother

or having a grandmother in their lives, along with poetry readings and performances by the writers.

The book is 124 pages and contains 50 pictures - and makes for a great coffee table book, according to Peggy.

"I always wanted to put these stories out there - to show readers just how multifaceted grandmothers are and the roles they've played and continue to play in our lives," said Robles-Alvarado, who became a grandmother five years ago. "Putting this project together was both an amazing journey and a great challenge - and I would like to thank Daisy (Arroyo), Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx Council on the Arts and everybody else who played a part in releasing this book."

Having her first kid when she was only a teen, Robles-Alvarado has faced multiple challenges and obstacles in her life - but that has not deterred her from the path of success.

"My parents taught me that education is what gets you paid - and they always drove that point home," she said. "I've always loved challenges - and no matter how difficult the situation, I've always told myself that I would get through it and figure it out."

Robles-Alvarado, who applied for a grant through

Bronx Council of the Arts for this project, met local photographer Daisy Arroyo at the Bronx Museum of the Arts in 2013. After initially hitting it off, the two decided to collaborate on a project combining writing and photography.

Three years later, the project has come to fruition.

"Peggy is a firecracker - she continues to amaze me with all the work that she's done. She is someone who has so much to offer, someone who is not afraid to share the spotlight and it's an honor to have worked on this project with her," said Arroyo, a lifelong Soundview resident who focuses primarily in fine arts photography, along with fashion, portrait and street photography for her many works.

"The Bronx has so many beautiful and talented artists - and it's important for people to know that there is a lot of creativity taking place here here," she added. "I'm very proud to be an artist from the Bronx."

Books were available for purchase at the book launch. For those who would like to purchase a copy, the book is available on Create Space and Amazon.

In June, Peggy was named one of the Bronx Times' 25 Influential Women for her success as an author, poet and teacher.

49th Precinct Food Drive through Dec. 21

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

The annual 49th Precinct Holiday Food Drive kicked off after Thanksgiving.

The drive, now in its 11th year, works with local schools in Morris Park, Van Nest and Pelham Parkway to collect food for two nearby pantries around the Christmas and holiday season, said Joe Thompson, 49th Precinct Community Council president.

It also collects non-perishable foods - pasta, canned food, dry goods - from the general public as well, he said.

The drive organizers plan to wrap up their efforts and deliver all their food to the Bronx Jewish Community Council and St. Lucy's Church pantries by Wednesday, December 21, said Thompson.

"Whatever you feed your family that is not perishable is what we are looking for," said Thompson, adding this includes rice, pasta, beans and canned goods. The drive doesn't accept bread and cakes.

Individuals may now drop off any non-expired food at the precinct's station house located at 2121 Eastchester Road, confirmed David Lepore, 49th

Precinct Community Affairs Officer.

Anyone wishing to make a donation can simply stop by the precinct and tell the desk officer that they are there to drop off food, said Lepore, adding they'll be directed to the collection site.

"There are a lot of people out there hungry," said Lepore, adding "You are doing something for someone else that they cannot do for themselves."

Thompson said that this year, he is trying to encourage more people to stop by the precinct and make food donation before December 21st.

The drive typically collects about 15,000 pounds of food per year.

Thompson stressed that whatever is collected is distributed within the precinct.

He said that because these communities are not generally considered to be those in the highest need, they are sometimes overlooked by larger hunger initiatives.

Participating schools in the drive include P.S. 83, P.S. 105, P.S. 108, Van Nest Academy and P.S. 481.

Additional youth participating are members of

the 49th Precinct Youth Explorers, as well as Cub Scout Pack #162, which joined Thompson in front of Big Deal Supermarket on Saturday, December 10 for four hours collecting donations of food and money.

"The kids get a huge kick out of giving and knowing that they are feeding their neighbors," said Thompson, adding "It is pretty delightful to watch these scouts in action; some of these eight-year-olds are really good salesmen!"

As Thompson tells it, the drive was created years ago to fill a void because the same people who are hungry at Thanksgiving are also hungry during Christmas and New Years.

Despite this, the focus of many of the charity drives after Thanksgiving shift from food to toys, he said.

"It is great to have toys when you wake up, but it is equally great to have dinner - to have food on the table," said Thompson.

Additional donations of turkeys, if any are available, would be made to senior programs at Eastchester Gardens, Pelham Parkway Houses, Parkside Houses and Beth Abraham.



Troop leaders Sean Cahill (l) and Robert Rico, 49th Pct Community Council President Joe Thompson with members and family members of Cub Scout Pack 162 in front of Big Deal Supermarket on Saturday, December 10.

Photo by Laura Stone

CO-OP CITY CELEBRATES TREE LIGHTING

The Riverbay Corporation celebrated its annual Co-op City Christmas Tree Lighting on Wednesday, December 7 at Dreiser Auditorium B. Children and their familie met with the always jolly Santa Claus prior to the holiday.



Safire Brian (l) and Justin Cruz (r) told Santa what they want for Christmas this year.
Photo by Walter Pofeldt

MORRIS PARK ASSOC. HOSTS 'BOOKS WITH BHARATI'

The Bharati Foundation and Morris Park Community Association celebrated the holiday season by hosting a fun-filled 'Books with Bharati' book reading celebration on Friday, December 9 at the MPCA's 1824 Bronxdale Avenue clubhouse. Santa Claus paid a surprise visit to meet with children and their families at the event proving reading is more than just fundamental.

Andrea Seigel (back, l), Pelham Parkway Neighborhood Association president; Tony Signorile (back, c), MPCA president; Bharati Kemraj (r), Bharati Foundation founder and local children enjoyed some fine reading with jolly old St. Nick.

Photo by Laura Stone



AMERICAN LEGION DISTRIBUTES GIFTS

Members of various Bronx-based American Legion posts distributed holiday gifts to veterans undergoing hospitalization at the James J. Peters VA Hospital on Saturday, December 3.

American Legion members provided hospitalized veterans some much needed holiday cheer.

Photo courtesy of John Fraser Bryan American Legion Post 19

DIAZ HOSTS BRONX DIVA SPA EVENT

Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr.; Charito Cisneros, Hispanic Cosmetology and Beauty Chamber of Commerce founder; MetroPlus and other volunteers partnered up to offer complimentary spa treatments to domestic violence survivors on Tuesday, December 6 for the borough president's 14th annual Bronx DiVA Spa at Hostos Community College.



Borough President Diaz joined others for a fun-filled and relaxing spa day.
Photo courtesy of Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr.'s Office

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This Notice is to inform all persons who purchased either admission to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (the "Museum") or a membership in the Museum on or after March 5, 2007 of a proposed Settlement of a class action brought against the Museum on your behalf in the Supreme Court of the State of New York.

The lawsuit alleges that the Museum's disclosures of its current admission fee policy violate consumer protection laws by not adequately disclosing to visitors that they may enter the Museum upon payment of an amount of their choice ("pay what you wish"). The Museum denies those allegations.

The parties have agreed to a proposed settlement under which the Museum, without any concession, finding of wrongdoing, or agreement regarding the adequacy or inadequacy of the current disclosures, will revise its signs, website, and other disclosures of its "pay what you wish" admission fee policy. No money will be paid to class members, and no adjudication of any claims for money damages they may have will occur.

The Court will hold a hearing on approval of the Settlement at 10:00 a.m. on March 14, 2017, in Courtroom 228, 60 Centre Street, New York, NY 10007. Any class member may present objections he or she has to the Settlement.

You may learn more about the Settlement and procedures for objecting to it at www.metfees.com, or by calling Class Counsel at (212) 763-5068. PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT THE COURT.

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Pol's \$\$ adds technology to pre-k classrooms

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

Pre-k classes at P.S. 392, also known as the Bronx Delta School, are grateful for new technology provided through Councilman James Vacca.

On Friday, December 2 he visited the school's two pre-k classes which include technology in their everyday activities.

"We have to realize many children do not have access to technology," said Vacca, whose office contributed a total of \$96,000 for technology in the school's pre-k and kindergarten classes. "We take it for granted that they do but they do not."

"I also think that if we're talking about learning outcomes in future years - technology is the key," Vacca continued. "We have to get this equipment out here for our kids as soon as possible."

Each pre-k classroom has four I-pad's, two MacBook laptops and a desktop.

Principal Marie Rogalle



Councilman James Vacca and Marie Rogalle, principal of the Bronx Delta School, look on as pre-k students use their iPad's in the classroom.

Photo Courtesy of Frank Fraioli

spoke of the importance of having students begin using technology at a young age.

"It's the present and it's the future," Rogalle said. "So we need to make sure that they have that opportunity and that experience at a very young age - begin-

ning with pre-k and all the way up to second grade."

Each of the two pre-k classrooms are set up into stations. The stations are divided by I-pads, macs/desktop, and non-technology activities.

The students have an allotted time at each activ-

ity and also get to choose their station based on the activity in which they are interested.

With this method, students aren't forced into an activity they don't want to do.

Michelle Kunzman, one of the pre-k teachers at the Bronx Delta School, said the kids are enjoying using the new technology in the classroom.

"They get really excited about it and it really helps with their learning," said Kunzman. "For example, some of the kids need that visual for learning their letters and numbers."

"It's just really interactive," she continued, "and it's just an exciting addition to the other things their doing in the classroom."

Rogalle also said the technology helps identify what level each student is at in their learning.

"So if the children are at beginning stages of reading they'll be working on a different program than a child that is still identifying letters," she said.

According to Rogalle, Vacca's grants helped to buy I-pad's during the 2014-2015 school year and then laptops, printers, and smart boards during the 2015-2016 school year.

The Bronx Delta School is a fairly new school, opening its doors in the fall of 2014, and currently teaches pre- through second grade.

The school is adding third grade in the 2017-2018 school year and Rogalle hopes to use funding from

Vacca to buy smartboards for each of the third grade classrooms.

In addition, Rogalle said she hopes to add a technology teacher in the coming year.

The principal said technology plays an important role in the school's plan for its students.

"What we do here at Delta is we create a nice balance," said Rogalle. "So we have a very strong curriculum, we have technology infused into our curriculum, and then we also have a very large arts program."

"So that's our goal - to create a well rounded child that has opportunities and practices many different things that could one day be a specialty for them," she added.



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Renovations begin on new BCA headquarters

from Page 1

from J.P. Morgan Chase, called the bank a good corporate citizen and lauded the roughly \$900,000 gifting of the building in 2011.

"The construction for the Bronx Council on the Arts' new headquarters is not just an exciting development for the Westchester Square community, but for the entire borough of the Bronx as a cradle for the arts," Crowley.

Councilman James Vacca was praised at the kick off by Crowley and by John Bonizio, Westchester Square Business Improvement District president, for his advocacy of Westchester Square.

The councilman said that the city bureaucracy does not always move at the pace that many would like, but expressed his happiness to see the project underway.

"This is a prime example

of a public-private partnership," said Vacca, who provided funding for the renovations along with Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr, added that the borough is 'coming back more every day.'

"This is important because the borough of the Bronx is the borough of culture," said Diaz in his remarks, adding "We certainly need to push forward in the conversation of having cultural institutions where our creative class can continue to grow...that is what is going to happen in this building."

The project will include an extensive reworking of the building's interior to accommodate professional development workshops, grant writing, administrative offices, artistic programs, and artist development workshops.

"The new BCA@2700



(l-r) John Bonizio, president, Westchester Square BID; Joseph Kelleher; Councilman James Vacca; Deirdre Scott, BCA project director; Congressman Joseph Crowley; Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., Tom Finkelpearl, commissioner of NYC Dept of Cultural Affairs; Charles Rice-Gonzalez, BCA board chairman; Eileen Newman; BCA board member; Gayla Jennings O'Byrne, formerly with JP Morgan Chase, and Feniosky Peña-Mora, Department of Design and Construction commissioner.

Photo by Aracelis Batista

headquarters will house all of BCA's staff and operations including: cultural grant-making, the Bronx Writers

Center, multidisciplinary arts, exhibits, community programs, and advocacy activities," said Deirdre Scott,

BCA project coordinator and former executive director.

Feniosky Peña-Mora, NYC Department of Design

and Construction commissioner, said the building would include flexible space that will allow BCA to use the area in multiple arrangements.

DDC is managing the project on behalf of the DCA.

The features of the newly remodeled building will include LEED Silver standards for environmental responsibility, ample natural lighting and modern lighting and climate control systems.

Tom Finkelpearl, DCA commissioner, said that artists in the borough had a strong advocate and supporter in BCA.

"We are proud to support this renovation project, helping to establish a new cultural hub and provide BCA the space it needs to serve the borough's vibrant cultural community," he said.

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