

Norovirus illness ongoing at 83 Annex

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene returned to the P.S. 83 Annex during the holiday break after a highly contagious stomach flu continued to sicken students and staff.

The school announced Friday, December 9, that students had been sickened by the norovirus, more commonly known as the stomach flu, a common and highly contagious sickness.

As many as 200 students and staff members were sickened in the week leading up to the announcement and the building was disinfected, and then disinfected again over the following weekend.

But the cleanings was apparently not enough, as the DHMH was scheduled to return to the school on Bogart Avenue for further cleaning while the school was closed for the holidays, according to the NYC Department of Education spokesman Toya Holness.

"The building is being continuously cleaned and will be thoroughly disinfected again over the winter break," Holness said Friday.

The DOE is working in close partnership with the DHMH to monitor the situation and are providing the school with ongoing support, she added.

The DHMH provided guidance for hand hygiene and disinfection of the school, and is monitoring daily illness and absence reports through daily communication with school staff, according to Stephanie Buhle, the department's assistant press secretary.

"As is normally the case this time of year, we are seeing an increase in gastrointestinal illness reports in communities across the city," Buhle said. "P.S. 83 in the Bronx continues to do ongoing disinfection, and it is planning to do additional disinfection over the break."

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SHOPPING MALL ULURP READIED

Baychester Square traffic concerns voiced

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

Community leaders and business owners hold a variety of different opinions about a proposed shopping center.

Preliminary plans for Baychester Square, slated for East Gun Hill Road along I-95 and across from Home Depot, Bay Plaza and The Mall at Bay Plaza, call for an outdoor mall with the equivalent of five blocks of shopping and a senior housing building with 170 units, according to one of the developers.

The project, which greatly exceeds the parcel's current zoning, will need to go through a Uniform Land Use Review Procedure, which is expected to begin in 2017 and then go before Community Board 12 some time this year.

The operator of the Mall at Bay Plaza, Prestige Properties, opposes the development, stated company spokesman Hank Sheinkopf in an email.

The spokesman wrote that the proposed 400,000-plus square foot

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Hutchison Commemoration

Senator Jeff Klein presented a proclamation in commemoration of The Anne Hutchinson Year 2016 at an East Bronx History Forum meeting on Wednesday, December 21. The meeting marked the ceremonial end of the AHY program and was a tribute to the late Bronx Times history columnist Bill Twomey. Senator Klein is standing with Eleanor Rae, who is dressed as Anne Hutchinson, a 17th century heroine.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

Kingsbridge Armory rink still stalled in litigation

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

Plans to build the largest indoor ice hockey facility in the country at the former Kingsbridge Armory remain on hold after a lawsuit filed against the city was thrown out by a judge last week.

On Tuesday, December 20, New York Supreme Court Judge Ruben Franco dismissed a lawsuit by Kingsbridge National Ice Center, a development company spearheaded by New York Rangers legend Mark Messier, alleging breach of contract against the NYC Economic Devel-

opment Corporation for failing to turn over the lease to the property to the developers so they could acquire financing.

Without the lease, the group alleges, obtaining funding for the project has been severely hampered.

Franco noted in his decision that his verdict would likely be appealed, dragging the fight on even longer.

Councilman Fernando Cabrera, who represents the Kingsbridge

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Gifford Ave. home being repaired after collapse

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

A frame structure that has been in dire straights for almost a half dozen years is finally getting the attention it needs.

The two-story, multi-family home located at 2717 Gifford Avenue, which was damaged by a massive fire in 2010 which resulted in a recent partial collapse, is currently in the process of being renovated.

The house, which has been vacant since the fire occurred back in November 2010, experienced the collapse on Wednesday, December 7.

The damage was inflicted on the western side of the house, which left gaping holes in its walls and roof, further compromising the property's integrity and potentially put neighboring residents at risk.

Following the collapse, the FDNY requested an inspection of the property.

A permit was also issued for the property on Monday, December 12, which will result in structural repairs to the house's floors, ceilings and some of its walls, which

were destroyed in the fire. Other walls, along with doors, windows, stairs and plumbing fixtures, will be replaced, according to the NYC Building Information System.

The house is currently being repaired by Queens-based JRS Construction & Expediting Services, Inc. On-site construction workers did not wish to comment, but did say that the repairs would be completed within the next month or so.

The estimated total cost of these repairs will run just over \$70,000.

The 3,000-plus square foot building, which was built in 1910 and last sold for \$342,000 in July 2003, was recently purchased in early December by Matthew Ahdoot, according to the BIS.

"That home has been in disrepair for years," said Mary Jane Musano of the Waterbury Lasalle Community Association, who passes by the it often. "Sometimes it's boarded up - sometimes it's open - but it has certainly been abandoned for a while."

"It's definitely a giant eyesore for this block," said Kevin Heckman, a local resident who filed the

home as a zombie property with the NYS Department of Financial Services. "When you're passing through (Gifford Avenue), it's hard to miss it."

"The noise of the construction isn't the most pleasant, but hopefully the process of fixing up this home is moving forward," said another nearby resident, who wished to remain anonymous. "Now we (the residents) won't have to worry about the safety hazard."

The fire in 2010 claimed the life of 60-year old Johanna Parliament, who was trapped in her basement apartment during the morning blaze. The inferno also injured two firefighters and three civilians.

The house, which was in the process of foreclosure at the time, was left open for a few weeks following the fire. Its windows and doors were eventually boarded up by financial service company GMAC ResCap, the mortgage holder, to prevent unlawful intruders.

As of press time, JRS Construction & Expediting Services, Inc. did not return a request for comment.



Construction workers from JRS Construction & Expediting Services, Inc. repair the west side of the house. Community News Group / Steven Goodstein



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Shopping mall ULURP likely; Baychester Square traffic concerns

from Page 1

retail destination “would severely impact the community’s already difficult local area traffic, increase air and noise pollution and threaten the businesses and jobs at The Mall at Bay Plaza and Bay Plaza.”

The Mall at Bay Plaza is supporting Speak Up for a Better Bronx, an effort focused on raising awareness and activism in opposition to the current scope of Baychester Square, stated Sheinkopf.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority is selling the property to Gotham Properties Group and Grid Development Partners because of its potential for substantial retail development, said Drew Greenwald of Grid.

“This was identified as one of those assets where you could have significant commercial development that could bring a lot of revenue to the MTA, not withstanding all of the revenue

which would come to the city through sales taxes,” said Greenwald.

The new development would complement Bay Plaza because Baychester Square is not targeting the same tenants and would offer a different kind of shopping experience, he added.

He believes that sales will go up in the entire area around Baychester Square with the creation of the new retail destination which includes almost two acres of outdoor space and two levels of stores, he said.

All indications are that CB 12 could support the project, based on statements from its district manager George Torres and Karl Stricker, Land Use Committee chairman.

Torres said the board is waiting to see the full scope of what is proposed and its effects on traffic, and that it plans to listen to concerns of neighboring community boards 10 and 11, both of which border the site.

But he added that based on his experiences, retail options in the borough need to be expanded.

“We want to see stores in there that are not anywhere else...in the area,” said Stricker, adding more shopping options are needed and that “the Bronx is the most under-stored borough.”

Both Joe McManus, Land Use Committee chairman of CB 11 and Martin Prince, chairman of CB 10, expressed concerns about the traffic.

“The ULURP should be out in January,” said Prince, adding that CB 10 has written to NYC Department of City Planning asking that the neighboring boards have input in the ULURP process.

“The Bay Plaza Mall has brought in a significant amount of traffic and putting a new mall across the highway would increase it exponentially,” he said.



A site plan for the new Baychester Square along East Gun Hill Road next to an MTA bus depot.

Photo courtesy of Urban Strategic Partners



Stomach flu continues to sicken students and staff at P.S. 83 Annex on Bogart Avenue, even through education department officials insist it was thoroughly cleaned.

Arthur Cusano

Norovirus illness still a problem at P.S. 83 Annex despite cleanings

from Page 1

Principal Brandon Muccino confirmed the outbreak in a letter to parents on the Monday, December 12, and said the outbreak was the first of its kind at the school in his time there as principal.

Muccino did not immediately respond to a call for comment made to the school Friday, December 24.

However a front office employee at the school, Liz Mazzella, confirmed the virus was still an ongoing issue.

“It’s not just students getting sick - it’s the staff too,” she said.

The parent of a student

at the school told the Bronx Times the issue may have been exacerbated when the district held a holiday breakfast party at the nearby middle school, causing the virus to spread to the older students and their families.

Students who recover from the illness end up getting sick again once they return to school, said the parent, who asked not to be named.

“We don’t believe the school was cleaned properly,” the parent said.

The parent also voiced concern that soap had not regularly been provided in the school bathrooms until

the outbreak occurred, and that students were responsible for bringing their own with them to school.

Holness insisted that the claim was not true, and that soap and paper towels were, in fact, being provided.

To help prevent the spread of the norovirus, 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 are more effective than alcohol-based hand sanitizer lotions, according to the organization.



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TN, Whitestone toll lanes gone by fall 2017



Governor Cuomo announced on Wednesday, December 21, toll lanes will be removed in 2017 from all MTA bridges throughout the state. Photo Courtesy of Robert Christie

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

If you're tired of waiting in line to pay a bridge toll, your life may get a little easier by this time next year.

Governor Cuomo announced on Wednesday, December 21 that toll plaza lanes will be removed in 2017 from all Metropolitan Transit Authority bridges and tunnels.

The plan includes the toll plaza lanes for the Throgs Neck Bridge and the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge.

According to a release from the MTA, cash lanes at the aforementioned bridges will be removed by fall 2017.

The removals are apart of the governor's plan to implement Open Road Tolling.

"Open road tolling streamlines commutes, reduces inconvenience, and, along with bolstered security measures and new LED lighting and art, reimagines New York's crossings as part of our infrastructure overhaul to meet the needs of current and future generations of New Yorkers," Cuomo said. "This project is a transformative investment in our future that revolutionizes statewide transportation and helps us build a new New York."

Instead of toll booths drivers will now drive under structures called gantries.

These gantries will be fitted with state-of-the-art sensors and cameras which will take a photo of a vehicle's license plate.

If that driver has an EZPass tag, it will be charged the toll automatically. If not, a bill for the toll will be sent to the vehicle owner's residence within 30 days.

The MTA and state estimate the open road tolling model will save drivers 21 hours of drive time per year.

In addition, they expect it to reduce emissions and decrease the fuel that is commonly burned by the 'stop and go' at a toll plaza.

"These improvements will enhance traffic flow, reduce congestion, and decrease commute times making it safer for New Yorkers to get where they need to go," said Thomas F. Prendergast, chairman of the MTA. "The accelerated schedule we are undertaking to modernize all of our facilities in 2017 underscores the Governor's commitment to investing in New York's transportation network to meet the needs of a growing city."

The state also plans to be much stricter with enforcement at MTA toll bridges in the coming year.

In 2017, they will add 150 state troopers to key checkpoints in an effort to stop chronic toll evaders and bolster public safety.

In addition, if a driver does not pay the toll, penalties will include a \$50 violation fee, car registration suspension and a late fee if the first toll bill goes unpaid.

The late fee could increase to as much as \$100.

Commercial vehicle registrations will be suspended if unpaid tolls climb above \$200.

If a driver with a suspended registration attempts to drive through a toll gantry a state trooper standing at that location will immediately pursue the driver.

In addition to the Throgs Neck and Bronx-Whitestone bridges, toll lanes will be removed from the Hugh L. Carey Tunnel (January 2017), the Queen Midtown Tunnel (January 2017), Rockaway Bridges (spring 2017), the RFK Bridge (summer 2017) and the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge (summer 2017).

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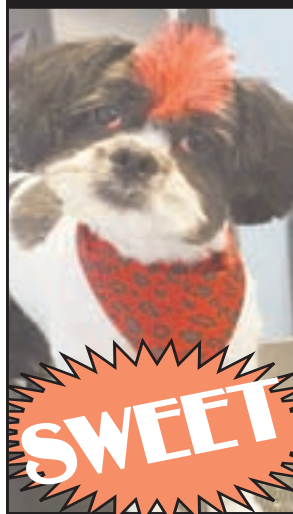
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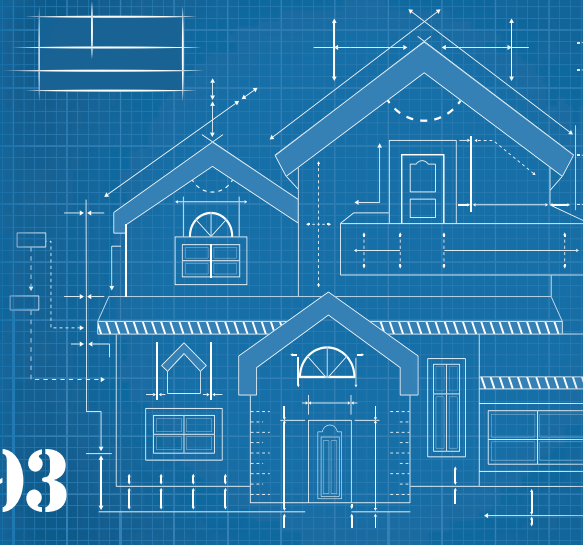


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Tenants rally against infamous landlord

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

A year after being named the worst landlord in New York City, Ved Parkash is still drawing the ire of his Bronx tenants over conditions in his buildings.

Members of the Parkash Tenant Coalition, a group of tenants from 11 of Parkash's properties organized to fight the conditions at his apartments, gathered Monday, December 12, in front of the Bronx Housing Court on Grand Concourse to demand better maintenance at his sites.

Parkash was ranked at the top of the list of the worst landlords in the city by the NYC Public Advocate's office in 2015.

The 2016 list, released in October, saw Parkash drop to number five, with 257 units in four buildings accumulating 992 NYC Housing and Preservation Development violations and 28 NYC Department of Building violations.

Altogether, his properties have accumulated over 2,300 violations in 11 of his 42 buildings in the Bronx, according to Hal Bergold of Community Action for Safe Apartments, a project of New Settlement Apartments.



Tenants of buildings owned by Bronx landlord Ved Parkash protest before a meeting with the landlord on July 12. They held a second rally December 12 in front of the Bronx Housing Court over living conditions in his properties. Silvio Pacifico

CASA helped organize the rally in coordination with Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition.

Among those tenants was Marta Melendez of 825 Gerard Avenue, who said that while repairs had recently been done at her place, the apartment of her elderly next door neighbor was in much worse condition.

"That apartment is disgusting – there is mold in the bathroom shower

tiles. I feel sorry for that lady."

Melendez also complained the hot water in the building was sporadic and that the intercom system is broken, making it impossible to let people into the building safely.

Other properties owned by Parkash that have drawn complaints from tenants include 2675 Creston Avenue, 2125 Cruger Avenue, 2487 Davidson Avenue, 180 E. 163rd Street, 58

E. 190th Street, 750 Grand Concourse, 2820 Sedgwick Avenue, 1530 Sheridan Avenue, 2454 Tiebout Avenue and 835 Walton Avenue.

Parkash met with residents of those buildings on July 12 and agreed to several accommodations, such as cleaning and properly maintaining elevators in the buildings and to not initiate holdover evictions without first notifying tenants by certified

mail.

He also agreed to waive late fees when the rent is paid anytime within the month it is due.

"Since that meeting, tenants have seen some cosmetic improvements, but many systemic issues, such as major water leaks and structural damage in ceilings remain," said Bergold.

The conduct of superintendents is still eliciting complaints from tenants, he added.

Superintendents curse at and harass tenants and threaten to call immigration services on them when they try to invoke their tenant rights, he said.

Parkash could not be reached for comment for this story.

Ongoing complaints have not deterred Parkash from acquiring new properties.

He purchased two six-story, elevated buildings at 2899 and 2905-2907 Kingsbridge Terrace for \$2.5 million from Isidoros Sfikas according to Real Deal magazine.

The two apartment buildings are located near the Jerome Park Reservoir and house a total of 162 rent-stabilized apartments.

2016 Chamber of Commerce highlights

BY NUNZIO DEL GRECO

Professional Achievement

Completing my first year as the new president and of the Bronx Chamber of Commerce has been exciting, challenging and rewarding. I enthusiastically lead this prominent organization to reach historic success for the direct benefit of the current and future membership. I developed and expanded membership to the chamber and enhanced strategic partnerships with other organizations and companies for our mutual benefit.

Planning, coordinating and implementing successful programs and events is one of my many strengths. The Bronx Chamber of Commerce has sponsored, hosted or co-sponsored over 65 workshops, seminars and networking events for members, non-members and businesses in the Bronx since January 2016.

Each event was well attended and feedback from attendees and participants was very positive. I promote and encourage networking and business card exchanges at every setting. I firmly believe: "You never know where your next big deal is going to come from".

The positive messages and promotion of the events resonated in

the business community. Over 100 new companies joined the Bronx Chamber of Commerce in the past 12 months.

Project With The Most Impact

Based on my experience and understanding of how to manage and strategically grow an organization, I strongly believe it requires a current and up to date database and Membership Directory. While many organizations have replaced a printed or hard copy directory with an electronic or on-line version, I am an advocate of both the printed hard copy and the electronic version of the directory.

Without the luxury of time, I prefer to utilize the experience of other professionals in similar positions rather than attempting to "reinvent the wheel". I visited with neighboring presidents and CEOs of Chambers of Commerce to examine how they operate regarding programs, services and membership directory. I requested and received a number of proposals from publishers to produce the first annual membership directory for the Bronx Chamber of Commerce.

My personal preference was

to work with Rich Martinelli of Today Media. The board of directors of the Bronx Chamber of Commerce unanimously approved the Today Media proposal at their March 2016 meeting. I was delighted to announce and promote that we have entered into a partnership with Today Media (publishers of the Brooklyn, Yonkers Chamber of Commerce and Westchester Business Council Directory) to produce the 2017 Bronx Business Directory & Resource Guide for the Bronx Chamber of Commerce.

I clearly see an important need and service being fulfilled by producing the 2017 Bronx Business Directory & Resource Guide. There is a lot of excitement and very positive comments from current and new members that have recently joined. They see and understand the value and benefit of the printed directory. The 2017 Bronx Business Directory & Resource Guide will list all members alphabetically and by category for referrals and new business contacts. The directory will also feature important resource information.

Supercharging Productivity 2017

Membership in 2017 will significantly increase with the printing of the 2017 Bronx Business Directory & Resource Guide delivery date of the end of January 2017. The directory will be distributed to more than 2,000 member businesses, new businesses, and select governmental offices. It will also be distributed at Bronx Chamber of Commerce events throughout the year.

Companies and businesses that were not included will join the Bronx Chamber of Commerce and will make sure that they do not miss out on future editions. Advertising in the 2018 Bronx Business Directory & Resource Guide will also significantly increase due to the exposure and benefit it brings to the Bronx businesses and institutions and the referral business for small and mid-sized companies. I can easily predict that company advertising will more than double for the 2018 edition.

Emerging Trends In 2017

My staff and I recently participated at the New York Business Expo (NYXPO) at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in Manhattan. Thousands of business owners, entrepreneurs, and professionals from throughout the greater New York metropolitan region attended the full day event of excellent sem-



inars, workshops and trade show exhibitors. I love trade shows and networking. I spoke to hundreds of people. What I found most remarkable was that no one had anything negative to say about the Bronx! I only heard positive comments and questions about investment and development opportunities.

I am very excited to be a leader in the continuing renaissance in our great borough and the Bronx Chamber of Commerce. I look forward to your active membership and meeting you at some of our upcoming networking events. My vision is for our Bronx Chamber of Commerce to be one of the most influential and successful organizations in Bronx County.

Bronx firm moves to Indiana, jobs lost

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

Fifty-eight employees could be without jobs heading into the new year following a relocation of the long-standing Bronx-based business Zero International.

Allegion, the new owner, is moving the business to Indiana after it was based in the Bronx for 89 years.

Zero International, created in 1927 by Hungarian immigrants, specialized in fireproof, soundproof and smokeproof doors.

Elias Wexler, the former Zero International owner, sold the company to Allegion on April 1, 2015 and is upset how events have unfolded.

"I am sorry that this happened and it should not have happened," said Wexler, a Romanian native who bought the company in the 1980s.

When Wexler sold the company to Allegion for \$20 million in 2015, he seemed hopeful about the company's prospects moving forward.

He even wrote a personal note on his LinkedIn account explaining the move.

"Allegion's acquisition of Zero, finalized on April 1, provides the resources for Zero to grow and prosper in an increasingly competitive marketplace, while continuing to build on our core values of quality and

service to our customers," Wexler wrote.

According to Wexler, before selling the company, which was located in two adjacent buildings in the Bronx, as well as sites in Ohio and North Carolina, operations were so busy many of his employees were working second shifts.

The note also said Wexler was supposed to remain on staff as president emeritus and in a primarily advisory role for incoming Allegion personnel.

However, things didn't go according to plan, said Wexler.

The former CEO was removed from his position in the fall 2015.

Wexler said one day an Allegion representative came into his office and said he had 30 minutes to leave.

"It was bizarre," said Wexler who to this day does not know why he was asked to leave.

Allegion filed a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification with the NYS Department of Labor on September 1.

The document stated layoffs would begin on Tuesday, December 13. They will finish on Friday, February 10, 2017.

According to Wexler, now the CEO at DeltrexUSA, he heard about the layoffs from his former employees.

"I've talked to about 30 to 40 percent of the people [that worked there]," he said.

The former owner said Allegion promised to keep Zero International in the Bronx four at least four more years.

In addition, said Wexler, he leased the buildings to Allegion for half the market rate so they'd have no reason to leave the Bronx.

The Bronx Times asked Allegion for a statement addressing its decision to relocate the business and the amount of consideration Allegion gave to the employees who were losing their jobs.

"After reviewing the Zero business and its operations the company concluded that consolidating to our Indianapolis operations was in the best interest of the business," said a spokesperson for Allegion. "The main drivers in reaching the decision were: efficiency, managing and growing the Zero business, and improving the customer experience."

They added, "We appreciate and thank the people in the Bronx who are affected by this transition for their hard work and dedication."

Allegion is a security solutions company that specializes in both mechanical and electronic security measures.



Diaz, Jr. and Fat Joe gather with faculty and students after the announcement.

Photo courtesy of Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr.'s office

BP Diaz, Fat Joe donate computers to P.S. 146

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

The borough president collaborated with a hometown rap star - not in a song, but to give back to a local elementary school during the holidays.

On Tuesday, December 20, Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr. teamed up with rapper Fat Joe to announce the donation of 20 new desktop computers to P.S. 146 Edward Collins, the rap artist's alma mater.

The announcement of the computer donation was made in the school auditorium, where P.S. 146 elementary students anxious awaited for the Bronx-born and Bronx-bred rapper to make his appearance.

Fat Joe joined the BP Diaz and P.S. 146 principal Ronald Laurent when he made the announcement to the students about the new computers.

"This holiday season, Fat Joe wanted to give back

to the youth of this borough, and I am very proud that he chose his alma mater, P.S. 176, to receive these new computers," said Diaz, Jr. "We want to make sure that students are getting the resources they need to advance and grow their technical skills and prepare them the best we can while at school."

"The borough president (Diaz, Jr.) has been working very hard to uplift the school system, but many of the schools are a step behind when it comes to updated resources," said Joseph Cartagena (Fat Joe's real name), who graduated from the elementary school in the early 1980s.

"There is no better present than giving the youth the gift of learning - and that what we hoped to accomplish by providing these new computers to them," he added.

The donation of the 20

Microsoft desktop computers, which will arrive at the school in the new year, was made in memory of Fat Joe's younger sister, Lisa Cartagena.

Lisa, who was also a graduate of the elementary school, passed away as a result of an unsuccessful childbirth at Bronx Lebanon Hospital in the early 2000s.

Under the rap name 'Fat Joe', Cartagena, who began his rap career in the early 1990s, has released 10 studio albums and has reached the number one spot on the Billboard's Hot Rap Songs chart twice in his career as a solo artist. His 2004 song, 'Lean Back', with Remy Ma was ranked the number one song of the year on the Billboard's US Rap Songs chart.

Fat Joe also worked on many projects with late Bronx rapper Big Pun, who passed away in 2000.



Shop In Our Classified Pages and Save Money



415 Concord Avenue will no longer house Zero International - a company specializing in making fireproof, soundproof and smokeproof doors - following a relocation of the company to Indiana. Photo Courtesy of Robert Christie



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49th Pct. police officer hosts middle school essay contest

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

Three students at J.H.S. 125 got early Christmas gifts thanks to a local police officer who returned to give back to her former middle school.

Police officer Kaminie Jeeuth, of the 46th Precinct, held an essay contest this fall for students at Henry Hudson Middle School.

Each student who participated had to write an essay on their goals for when they are older and how they planned to accomplish those goals.

Jeeuth would read each of the essays submitted and choose one winner from each grade.

The winners - Angelica Chandradat from the sixth grade, Nishat Lina from the seventh grade, and Fadoutmata Drammeh from the eighth grade - were each awarded a brand new Amazon Kindle Fire.

Jeeuth also provided other participants with various types of books as a prize for participating.

She said it was hard to pick just three winners from the many essays she received.

"Ideally it was set up: three winners, three tablets," said Jeeuth. "However, as I kept reading through each one, I was like, 'O my God, this is really good and this is really good.'"

Neelawattie Arjoon, assistant principal at J.H.S. 125, also read the essays and shared Jeeuth's feelings.



Police officer Kaminie Jeeuth (right) and Police officer Felicia Diaz (left) stand with Nishat Lina (center), the seventh grade contest winner.

Photo Courtesy of Robert Christie

"When you read these essays some of them brought tears to my eyes," said Arjoon. "'Which one, which one?' they all had something."

Jeeuth, who attended the school from 1997 to 2001, was also impressed

by the way in which the students were able to express themselves.

"To think kids this age - a lot of how they write is related to their personal situations," said Jeeuth.

"When I was growing up, it wasn't

as common for kids to voice their opinions, especially on paper," she added.

Jeeuth grew up two blocks away from the school and attended P.S. 119 which is right across the street.

She later went on to attend Lehman High School.

When asked why she wants to help give back to the youth, Jeeuth said, "They are our future."

The Bronx Times received copies of each of the essays written by the contest winners.

Drammeh, the eighth grade winner, said she hopes to be an international spokesperson or a social justice lawyer when she gets older.

"To become an international spokesperson you have to sign up for a lot of programs and have a lot of experience," said Drammeh. "So hopefully with the tablet I can organize my ideas and look up places where I can go."

Chandradat, the sixth grade winner, hopes to be a teacher when she grows up.

"I enjoy learning lots of new things to become smarter," she wrote in her essay. "If I become a teacher, I would be able to teach knowledge to children that are just as passionate as me."

Lina, the seventh-grade winner, has her sights on becoming an activist, a doctor, and/or the first female president.

Kingsbridge Armory rink still stalled in litigation

from Page 1

Heights neighborhood, said in a statement he was cautiously optimistic about the project's future following the decision.

"I am hopeful that Judge Franco's recent decision will finally end the stalemate that has delayed the redevelopment of the Kingsbridge Armory and allow the project to move forward," Cabrera stated in a release after the decision.

But other Bronx elected officials have grown frustrated with the delays, including Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., who has been a champion of the project from the beginning after plans for a shopping center at the location was scrapped under the Bloomberg administration.

"Both sides need to come together and make this project happen. The community has waited too long and worked too hard to accept anything less," said John DeSio, Diaz's communications director.

But EDC spokesman Anthony Hogrebe put the blame squarely on the developer for not living up to its

end of the deal.

"We hope KNIC will now stop wasting time on lawsuits, and start securing the financing to get this project moving," he said.

KNIC LLC could not be reached for comment on the decision for this story.

Among those frustrated with the lack of progress and numerous delays is Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, who sided with the developer on the opinion that the EDC was to blame for delays.

"Why are we still talking about this? I suggest the EDC get off its butt and get this done," Dinowitz said.

The assemblyman said it would have a positive recreational and economic impact on both the Kingsbridge community and the Bronx as a whole.

The armory once held various recreational events, but now, even though the city spent millions fixing the roof, Dinowitz said it now sits vacant.

"We want a return on that investment," he said.



Plans to build an ice hockey at the vacant Kingsbridge Armory are on hold as legal battle continues between the developer and the city.

Courtesy of NYC EDC

The former Eighth Regiment Armory, located in Kingsbridge Heights at the corner of West Kingsbridge Road and Jerome Avenue, was the largest military armory in

the world.

The massive structure was completed in 1917 after five years of construction. It takes up almost an entire city block and dwarfs every-

thing around it.

The structure can be seen for miles around from both the Bronx and from across the Harlem River in northern Manhattan.

TOP DRIVER DISTRACTIONS

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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