

Montefiore Medical eyes former Mandee site

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

One of the borough's major hospitals is about to expand its services in the east Bronx.

Montefiore Medical Center is currently in the process of inking a lease for 3860 E. Tremont Avenue, which is currently occupied by a Rainbow apparel retail store.

The property is located on the northwest corner of East Tremont Avenue at the Cross Bronx Expressway Service Road.

The triangular site contains limited on-site parking and 15,000 square feet of retail space, plus a basement.

"In order to serve a growing population in a community that is currently underserved in terms of primary care providers, we (Montefiore) are planning to lease this (Throggs Neck) location," said a Montefiore Medical Center spokesperson.

Montefiore confirmed that they intend to use the property as a Montefiore Medical Group primary care practice facility.

Montefiore does not purchase its sites.

This particular Rainbow store was occupying the location while the owner found a long-term tenant. Rainbow operated the store under the physical layout of the former tenant knowing its stay was only temporary.

Montefiore added that if lease plans are approved, the building would be renovated over the next six to eight months.

A closing date for Rainbow or an opening date for the primary care practice facility have not yet been announced.

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NOTE CAUSES HS LOCKDOWN

Threatening letter puts Columbus on alert

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

The Columbus High School Campus was put on alert last week when a threatening letter was found in one of the campus high schools.

The letter was found by a janitor cleaning desks at around 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, March 9.

The Hallmark greeting card on a student's desk stated "ima shoot up the school," according to the NYPD.

The staff member who reported the letter was unable to identify which student, if any, wrote it.

The NYPD immediately responded and conducted a thorough

search and cleared the building, according to a NYC Department of Education spokesperson.

The school, located on Astor Avenue, was put on lockdown while police swept the building for threats.

However, a search of the building and lockers yielded nothing.

"Students and staff are safe, and an evacuation was not necessary," the spokesperson said.

The Columbus High School Campus consists of six separate schools: Astor Collegiate Academy, High School for Language and Innovation, Global Enterprise

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Good News Bears

Bear Givers, Inc. donated 200 teddy bears to patients of the NYC Health + Hospitals/North Central Bronx Pediatric Emergency Department on Tuesday, March 7. Anyla (l) and her new teddy bear shared cuddles with Daran Kaufman, MD, NCB Pediatric ER director and Medical Staff president.

Photo courtesy of NYC Health + Hospitals/North Central Bronx

Uber hub welcomes new, present drivers

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

Asteridesharing company Uber continues to introduce its service into the outer boroughs, the company is making it easier for new drivers to join their ranks.

On Wednesday March 8 at 11 a.m., Uber and the NYC Hispanic Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting at the company's newest Greenlight Hub at the New Horizons Shopping Mall at 961 E. 174th Street.

The 3,000-square-foot office is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week and is staffed by company employees trained to assist current and prospective drivers, said New York City area Greenlight Hub manager Jeanine Mendez.

Approximately 1,700 future and current drivers visit the center each week, according to the company.

"Our goal is to make sure that people who want to get

Continued on Page 15

Soundview ferry model at Soundview Library

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

Residents of the Bronx will soon have a chance to view the new Soundview Ferry up close and personal - sort of.

NYC Economic Development Corporation and Borough President Ruben Diaz announced on Monday, March 13 that a scale model of the new citywide ferry service vessels is now available for viewing at Soundview Library.

The model will stay at the the library through Wednesday, March 22 before moving to the Bronx Museum for the rest of the month.

The new vessel will be a part of the East River ferry's new Soundview route, set to launch in 2018, which will travel from Soundview to Wall Street/Pier 11.

Along the way it will make stops at East 90th Street and East 62nd Street.

NYCEDC president James Patchett said the model will "give Bronxites a firsthand look of the state-of-the-art vessels that will transform the way they commute across the city."

The price for using the ferry service will drop from \$4 to \$2.75 - the same cost as taking the subway.



Model of new Citywide Ferry Service Vessel which is now available for viewing at the Soundview Library through March 22 before it moves to The Bronx Museum through March 31

Photo Courtesy of New York City Economic Development Corporation

The Soundview route is a part of a larger \$55 million expansion of the East River ferry service.

Other ferries, according to the plan, will service the Rockaways, south Brooklyn, and Astoria - all of which are scheduled to launch later this year.

In addition there will be a lower east side route added in 2018.

The EDC is also touting the

technological and environmental upgrades on the new vessels.

To accommodate the new routes, the city is adding 19 new vessels to the ferry service, each of which will be of aluminum construction, using the equivalent of 77 million 12-ounce beverage cans.

According to the corporation, aluminum is safer and a lighter weight, therefore increasing fuel

efficiency.

Also, the ferries will use low-carbon emission engines.

As for the technology, each vessel will be equipped with wifi, charging stations, and heated decks.

The ferries will seat 150 passengers while also allowing space for bicycle racks, strollers and wheelchairs.

A \$1 fee is charged for bring a bike on board.

The city will kick in \$30 million in operating support per year over a period of six years.

According to the EDC - based on a projection of 4.6 million annual trips - the per-trip subsidy for the ferry service will be \$6.80.

The East River Ferry Service began as a pilot program back in 2011, solely servicing Manhattan.

Since then the EDC began looking for ways to add additional routes to service.

In 2013, they proposed a citywide service which included the East 90th and East 62nd street stops.

EDC thought these spots valuable for the expanded service due to their population density, limited transit options and travel habits.

During his State of the Borough address on March 5, Diaz pointed to the new Soundview route as one of the borough's success stories.

Diaz said bringing the ferry to the Bronx "has long been a priority of my administration" and having the model at the library will "provide Bronxites a closer look at the future of ferry service in Soundview."

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Note causes HS lockdown; threatening letter puts Columbus on alert

from Page 1

Academy, Collegiate Institute for Math and Science, Bronxdale High School and Pelham Parkway Academy.

Inquiries as to which of the schools the incident took place in were not returned by the DOE.

President of 49th Precinct Community Council Joe Thompson said he had not been made aware of the incident, or any other recent public safety incidents at the school.

Since the early 2000s, the school has seen a large influx of Albanian students into the mostly black and Hispanic school, he said.

Racial tensions in the school have calmed down considerably over the past few years, Thompson said.

"It's actually been a lot

better in recent years," he said.

Columbus High School itself closed in 2014 after 75 years due to academic troubles, including plummeting graduation rates.

That school has boasted several famous alumni, including actress Anne Bancroft, former Giants and Mets catcher Johnny Monell, state senators Guy Valella and his successor, Jeff Klein.

David Berkowitz also attended the school before his 1977 killing spree as the Son of Sam killer.

Councilman James Vacca said he had nothing but fond memories of the school, which had over 4,000 students until the late '90s when it was downsized.

"We had 4,700 students - it was an overcrowded school

on double sessions," Vacca said. At that point Columbus was a destination point. If you didn't make Bronx High School of Science, Columbus was second best in the borough."

Vacca said the schools on the Columbus campus had gotten several upgrades during recent years through his office, including a new cafeteria and library tech center.

The smaller schools are aimed at providing students more individual attention, he said.

But on the other hand he confirmed the campus has had metal detectors for many years.

"Each school has challenges, and I think they are trying to address them, but I think work still has to be done," Vacca said.



The Columbus High School Campus was put on lockdown last week after a threatening letter was found on a desk by a janitor.

Community News Group/Arthur Cusano



Rainbow, a national apparel chain primarily for teens and young women, is temporarily occupying 3860 E. Tremont Avenue.

Community News Group/Patrick Rocchio

Montefiore Medical Center eyes former Mande site

from Page 1

Prior to Rainbow, the location was occupied by a Mande clothing store for nearly 30 years before shutting down in February 2015. Rainbow moved into the store in November 2015. The property was

originally a Finast Supermarket.

After the closing of Mande, Community Board 10 wrote a letter to Mayor De Blasio suggesting that the property serve as a new location of

the 45th Precinct and Police Service Area #8, but those plans never came to fruition.

Because the deal has not been finalized, AAC Realty, the property's owner, declined to comment for the story.



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Bronx Chamber Hosts *Business Awards Gala*

The Bronx Chamber of Commerce celebrated its prestigious Bronx Business Awards Gala on Thursday, March 9 at Marina del Rey Caterers. This year, the Chamber honored local such local businesses as Developer of the Year recipient Red Apple Group, Inc.; Minority Woman and Small Business Enterprise Company of the Year honoree Ensign Engineering, P.C.; Non-Profit of the Year awardee Woodlawn Cemetery; Health Provider of the Year recipient Montefiore Medical Center's University Behavioral Associates Multi-Systemic Therapy Program; Institutional Member of the Year honoree Ridgewood Savings Bank and Made in the Bronx Award recipient Metro Optics Eyewear.



(l-r) Carl Cannizzaro; Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj; Nunzio del Greco; Regina Marengo; Mitch Rose, Woodlawn Cemetery president; Joseph Kelleher; Bill Evans; Dr. Eva Yan, Metro Optics optometrist; Domenico Ciaccio, Ridgewood Savings Bank assistant vice president; Anita Jose; Scott Wetzler and John Bonizio, Metro Optics owner and general manager.

Photo by Laura Stone



This year's Chamber Board of Directors and Board of Directors Executive Committee are (back, l-r) Michael Max Knobbe, treasurer; Anthony Mormile, vice president and treasurer; Master of Ceremonies ABC meteorologist Bill Evans; Joseph Kelleher; Carl Cannizzaro, board member; John Collazzi, vice president; Anthony Ross, secretary; (front, l-r) Lisa Sorin, vice president; Geri Sciortino, vice president; Kathy Zamechansky, board member; Nunzio Del Greco; Sandra Erickson, vice president and June Eislind, vice president.

Photo by Laura Stone



John Catsimatidis (c), Red Apple, Inc. owner, received congratulations and well wishes from Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj (l) and Nunzio del Greco for his business' success.

Photo by Laura Stone



Bronx Community College students Nicholas Asamoah (l), Grace Agamah (2nd from l) and Dion Quamina (r), with (l-r) Dr. Thomas Isekenegbe, Bronx Community College president; former Borough president Fernando Ferrer and Aramina Vega-Ferrer, Woodlawn Cemetery Board member.

Photo by Laura Stone



Master of Ceremonies ABC meteorologist Bill Evans with (l-r) Rosemary De Luca, Wildlife Conservation Society director; Laura Guerriero, Bronx Times Reporter publisher; Geri Sciortino, Bronx Design Group owner and Lisa Sorin, Westchester Square Business Improvement District executive director.

Photo by Laura Stone



The Chamber presented Make-a-Wish Foundation a hefty ceremonial ceremony. Accepting the generous donation are Barbara Rodriguez and her daughter Mia, a participant in Make-a-Wish program.

Photo by Laura Stone



Wendy Garcia, Comptroller Stringer's chief diversity officer, presented a commendation to Nunzio del Greco (l), Bronx Chamber president and Joseph Kelleher, Bronx Chamber chairman.

Photo by Laura Stone

Sewer upgrades readied in southwest Bronx

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

Neighborhoods in the southwest portion of the Bronx are scheduled for sewer and water main upgrade as part of a \$46 million infrastructure project.

The NYC Department of Design and Construction, the NYC Department of Transportation and the NYC Department of Environmental Protection are partnering to install 39,300 linear feet of much needed upgrades.

According to Franco Mesiti, deputy director at the DDC, many of the cast iron pipes within the southwest Bronx's water system were installed in the 1900s and some even date back to the 1890s.

"Cast iron mains are very brittle," said Mesiti. "In time, they break."

He continued, "If you have ever experienced a water main break on a 36-inch or 48-inch size water main it is an enormous burden."

Construction workers will replace the iron with steel pipes.

The areas that are currently receiving the upgrades are:

- Southern Boulevard between Crotona Park East and Westchester Avenue

- Boston Road between East 179th Street and East Tremont Avenue
- East 179th Street from Boston Road to the dead end
- East Tremont Avenue between Boston Road and Bronx Street
- Bronx Street between East Tremont Avenue and East 179th Street.

In addition to water mains and sewers upgrades, the plan also calls for 29 new catch basins and 26 new sewer manholes.

Apart from sewer system fixes, the city will install new streetlamps and plant 160 new trees around the project sites.

In addition, there will be 1,500 square feet of new asphalt and concrete replacement at bus stops in the area and 50,000 square feet of new sidewalk and curb realignment.

Elected officials often complain about infrastructure issues within their district but have to wait for the city to address those issues.

When asked why it takes longer for these problems to get attention, Mesiti pointed to financing.

"This is a \$45 million dollar project," said Mesiti. "Financing these projects can be lengthy."

Despite the costly nature of the

project, Mesiti said waiting any longer to complete the project could also be extremely expensive.

According to Mesiti, if a water main were to burst it could take down the elevated train tracks that sit above streets like Southern Boulevard.

"Where there are elevated structures [damages are] probably in the millions," he said.

Mesiti also said all of the new water main pipes on Southern Boulevard will be moved closer to the curbs on either side of the street putting them further away from the train el.

While the construction workers are installing the sewer upgrades, it could have an effect on local businesses and residents.

Workers have already reduced the walking space on certain sidewalks along the construction site.

In addition, work on major streets such as Southern Boulevard will force adjustments to traffic flow.

Mesiti said DDC will maintain two-way traffic running on Southern Boulevard.

"We give 72-hour notices and 24-



Construction workers installing sewer upgrades along Southern Boulevard. Photo Courtesy of the New York City Department of Design and Construction

hour notices every time a construction activity starts that would affect the community," he said.

Those with concerns can speak directly to community liaison So-

nia Quinones, who can be reached at southernblvdcl@gmail.com or (718) 822-0673.

DDC expects to complete the project by the summer of 2019.

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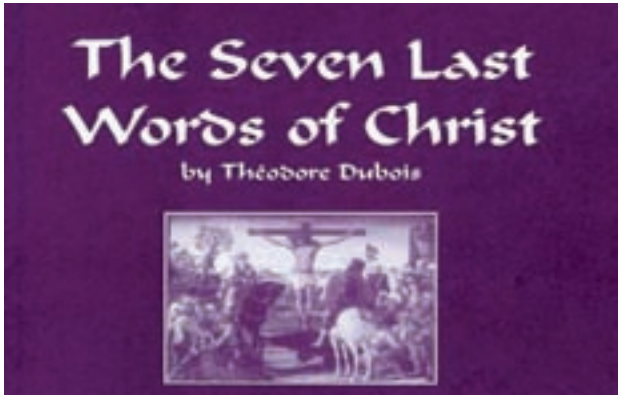


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Primavera Italian Language Graduation



Congratulations are in order for this year's Primavera Italian Language Program graduates! Senator Jeff Klein celebrated the Class of 2017 students' success by conferring them with certificates of achievement on Saturday, March 11 at St. Benedict's School. Assemblyman Michael Benedetto presented a check to Loretta Zaino, Primavera Italian Language director, to defer the graduation expenses. Returning the favor, Zaino presented certificates to Senator Klein, Assemblyman Benedetto and Councilman James Vacca and a plaque to Congressman Joseph Crowley for their continued support of the educational program. The graduates proudly displayed their certificates alongside Primavera members and sponsors.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Zaino (l) honored Senator Klein with a certificate recognizing his many years of sponsorship.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Joel Gradanski (r) gave Zaino roses in recognition of all her work for the Primavera Program throughout the years and to honor Women's History Month.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Vincent Buccieri, Today Realty broker and former Sons of Italy, Uguaglianza Lodge #83 vice president, honored Loretta Zaino with a \$250 check.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Thomas Messina accepted an award for Congressman Crowley from Angelina Zervos (l) and Loretta Zaino.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Patrick Caruso presented Community Board 10 awards to Tiffany MacKnight (l) and her mother, Loretta Zaino, Primavera Italian Language director.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Budding artist Suzanna Malsbyti displayed her painting of a typical Italian scene.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

MPCA honors 2 at 43rd dinner dance

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

A local community organization will hold its annual fund-raising dinner-dance in April, honoring two people who have been an important part of the community.

The award recognizes the work Dr. Edward Casey did at Calvary Hospital in palliative care, where the goal was not to rehabilitate so much as to maintain the spirits of the families and patients.

The Morris Park Community Association's 43rd Annual Dinner Dance will take place the

evening of Saturday, April 8 at the Marina del Rey.

This year, the MPCA selected honorees that have had lengthy impact to the community, said the organization's president, Tony Signorile.

They are Benjamin Soccodato, a past principal of P.S. 83 for roughly 13 years and currently an educational consultant to several local community schools and Dr. Edward Casey, a longtime staff member at Calvary Hospital who is a general practitioner and palliative care physician.

The MPCA visited Soccodato when he was first appointed acting principal of the community's largest school which had about 1700 students at the time, he said in an interview, offering their assistance through their community patrol and by supporting school events and activities.

"As a principal, they made my job easier," said Soccodato of the MPCA, adding "We worked



Benjamin Soccodato is being honored for his work in the field of education at the Morris Park Community Association's annual dinner dance on Saturday, April 8.

Photo courtesy of Benjamin Soccodato

together on many projects."

The former principal, who left his post in August 2011, said the



Dr. Edward Casey, who has worked at Calvary Hospital from the 1970s through 2006, is being recognized for the work he did at Calvary Hospital in palliative care.

Photo courtesy of MPCA

association served as a bridge to local elected officials in terms of helping him promote the pro-

gramming the school offered.

"I was very pleased and quite surprised when I got the initial phone call," said Soccodato.

Dr. Edward Casey has lived in the Morris Park community for 51 years, since his days at NYU Langone Rusk, working in rehabilitative care after being a general practitioner in Connecticut.

In a phone interview, he said that he worked at Calvary Hospital from the 1970s through 2006, starting on Featherbed Lane. The hospital later moved to Eastchester Road.

"I am excited to receive this award," said Casey, because it recognizes the work he did at Calvary Hospital in palliative care, where the goal was not to rehabilitate so much as to maintain the spirits of the families and patients.

Tickets for the dinner dance are available and cost \$100 each. For more information, call the MPCA at (718) 823-0596.

FDNY drone makes history in the Bronx

BY ROBERT WIRSING

The future of firefighting made its historic debut last week in our borough.

On Monday, March 6 at 6:20 p.m., FDNY's first ever tethered drone made its maiden flight in response to a four-alarm fire raging inside a six-story apartment building at 653-657 Crotona Park North.

One hundred and sixty-eight firefighters responded to the incident and gained control over the blaze by 8 p.m.

Two firefighters were taken to Jacobi Hospital after sustaining minor injuries.

The fire's cause remains under investigation.

The \$85,000 eight pound drone incorporates high-definition and infrared cameras allowing transmission of live images of a fire operation to the chief overseeing the incident.

Its cameras allow chiefs at the command post to view where firefighters are operating on a building's roof and to make decisions regarding fire suppression and ensuring members' safety.

"We were able to get a good view of the roof which allowed the incident commander on the ground to view the firefighters



The drone's high-definition camera transmitted live images of the fire operation to the chiefs in charge.

Photo courtesy of FDNY

as they were conducting roof operations, venting the roof and putting water on the fire," explained Timothy Herlocker, FDNY Operations Center director.

Incident commander FDNY deputy assistant chief Dan Donoghue noted crews knew to move when the drone's visual feed captured the building's roof starting to fail.

The aerial image is fed directly to the incident commander and shared with senior decision makers through the



The FDNY used this state-of-the-art tethered drone equipped with high definition and infrared cameras to determine the condition of Crotona Park North's roof as they contained the blaze.

Photo courtesy of FDNY

FDNY Operations Center.

The quadcopter is connected by a small cable carrying electricity to the device granting it unlimited flight time.

All controls, data and power transmit back and forth via the tether, preventing interference with radio frequency signals.

The remote-controlled drone is piloted by the FDNY Command Tactical Unit's specially trained firefighters.

The department's fleet is comprised of three drones to deploy as needed.

The FDNY works closely with the Federal Aviation Administration to ensure the drone operates safely and adheres to all NYC air space rules and policies.

FDNY's Operation Center contacts the FAA before flying the drone for permission to deploy at night or into restricted

Class B Air Space.

Approval takes ten minutes and occurs while the drone and its operators are responding to a fire.

"This new technology is going to make a positive impact in our fire operations," expressed FDNY commissioner Daniel Nigro.

A NYC Department of Buildings spokesman said a full vacate order was issued for the building due to significant fire and water damage.

DOB confirmed no additional properties were affected by the blaze.

Michael de Vulpieres, American Red Cross New York Greater Region communications officer, said the Red Cross met with approximately 81 displaced people at the scene consisting of 61 adults and 20 children.

The Red Cross registered six families consisting of 25 adults and two children for emergency housing and emergency funds to help them get through the next few days.

To view footage of the FDNY drone responding to last Monday's fire, visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXE365WENhQ.

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SA Bronx 1 Middle School players pose with coach Alejandro Montalvo after finishing in fourth place in the Middle School championship section - a division with 16 teams where only the top players compete.

Photo credit Tom Perna.

Success Academy Bronx scholars dominate NY State Chess Championship

This weekend, 151 scholars representing 15 Success Academy schools traveled to Saratoga Springs, New York, to compete in the 50th Annual New York State Scholastic Chess Championships. Out of 1,200 students who competed from across the state of New York, Success scholars made up 13% of the entire two-day tournament and brought home big wins with four teams finishing in the top five of both the ES and MS Championship sections.

From Friday afternoon through Monday morning, scholars ate, slept, and breathed chess. They each played six rounds, three per day (each lasting up to two hours), in divisions determined by their United States Chess Federation ratings. Scholars spent much of their downtime playing fast-paced blitz chess games, studying chess tactics, and competing in after-dinner matches against their coaches.

In every division, Success scholars had a stellar performance. The highlights include:

SA Union Square and SA Bronx 1 dominated in the Middle School Reserve section, finishing in first and second place, respectively.

In the Elementary Reserve section, SA Union Square finished in second and SA Bronx 3 finished in third place. SA Bed Stuy ES and MS (combined team) finished in fifth place.

The SA High School of the Liberal Arts finished in second place in the High School Reserve section, which featured 17 teams. Leading the team's strong performance was tenth grader Reanna Phillips, who won five of six games.

In the Middle School Championship section — a division with 16 teams where only top players compete — SA Bronx 1 finished in fourth place and SA Harlem East finished fifth.

SA Midtown West and SA Cobble Hill tied for third place in the Elementary School Championship section (the most competitive elementary school division).

In the Elementary School Intermediate section, SA Union Square and SA Williamsburg finished fourth and sixth place, respectively, out of 26 teams.

Chess is a critical part of Success Academy's school design. All scholars from kindergarten through fourth grade take chess as part of the required curriculum. In middle school, chess is offered as an elective for scholars who are interested. Sean O'Hanlon, senior manager of SA's Chess Program, and his team of top chess coaches, have done incredible work to create a world-class chess program that develops players' skills and strategic thinking, while also teaching good sportsmanship and team spirit.

Acclaimed Latin flautist, Dave Valentin, passes

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

A Bronx musician who served as an ambassador for Latin jazz, the borough and his Puerto Rican heritage has died.

The music world and the borough mourned the loss of David Valentin, who passed away on Wednesday, March 8 after suffering two strokes, family and friends said. He was 64.

Valentin was Latin jazz's premiere flute player, and according to sources interviewed for this article, he was arguably the best overall U.S. flautist at the peak of his career, from the late-1960s through early 2000s.

The flautist would always talk to audiences about being from the south Bronx and his cultural heritage, friends said.

He would mentor youth in schools and community organizations, nourishing musicianship, they said.

Valentin won a Grammy award in 2003.

He was a Bronx Walk of Fame inductee in 2000.

His cousin Lourdes Torres said that Valentin grew up on Fox Street near Southern Boulevard and lived in Harding Park for many years.

He was a schoolteacher for a time and he loved to give back to the youth and community even after he became famous, she said.

"He did a lot of volunteer work with organizations," said Torres, adding "He would never say no to a teacher who asked him to visit their classroom."

He was an active volunteer at Castia Maria Center for Arts & Education, only asking for a Yoo-hoo chocolate drink as compensation for his work there, she said.

"I am going to remember most his love of his community and his wanting to share his music with the world," said Torres, who she received messages of condolences for Valentin from all over the globe.

His manager for roughly 14 years, Richie Bonilla of Throggs Neck, said that Valentin performed on six continents and that he would often open his shows with a shout-out to the borough and to his Puerto Rican heritage.

"He was very proud that he was from the Bronx," said Bonilla.

Valentin had a unique way of playing the flute, combining the melody with verbal percussion at the same time, said his manager, explaining he knew how to manipulate his mouth to create percussion sounds.

"He had a pure tone," he said of the flautist's music, which according to another friend and a musicologist, Felipe Luciano, was heavily im-

bued with Cuban Charanga (dance music) and Conjunto (trumpets and brass).

Valentin was an important part of the band Conjunto Libre that made "phenomenal" recordings in the 1970s when Valentin was a band member, according to Luciano.

Valentin began to emerge to a wider audience and became a leading performer in his own right in the 1980s, said the musicologist.

He formed his own ensemble of musicians to perform fusion and Latin jazz music, making albums under his own name with himself as the leader.

"He began to develop a fan following because of his way of handling the flute; his triple-tonguing, his dexterity, his ability to fly over the scales were legendary," said Luciano.

Later, Valentin was a contractor for Tito Puente and his Latin Jazz Ensemble, said Luciano.

A Valentin contemporary, Grammy-nominated Latin jazz drummer Bobby Sanabria, said that the loss is one not just for music fans but for the borough because Valentin was a Bronx ambassador through his musicianship.

Bonilla said that Valentin's brother George Valentin, his cousin and nieces survive him.



Dave Valentin (r) performing with timbales player Nick Marrero (back,l), (front, l-r) bongo player Jimmy Delgado, trombonist Steve Turre and trumpeter Peter Nater in 2010.

Photo by Allen Spatz Photography

Kingsbridge development brings traffic concerns

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

It's not hard to see why Kingsbridge was recently projected to be the hottest neighborhood in the city for 2017 by real estate company StreetEasy.

Various new retail and mixed-use development projects in various states of completion dot the landscape.

Add in easy access to Manhattan via the IRT 1 train and Van Cortlandt Park and it's no wonder people are flocking there.

But increased development and road congestion have left area leaders concerned about traffic safety, especially at one particular intersection.

Earlier this month, Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz called on the NYC Department of Transportation to study a stretch of West 230th Street that runs from Broadway to Tibbett Avenue which he refers to as a "half mile of danger."

There have been 131 accidents involving more than 250 vehicles on that stretch of road alone, according to statistics obtained by the assemblyman's office from the NYPD Vehicle Collision data reports.

Nearly half of the accidents



The intersection of West 230th Street and Broadway is a point of increased concern in Kingsbridge due to traffic from new development.

Arthur Cusano

took place at the intimidating intersection of West 230th Street and Broadway, where a multi-level shopping center was recently constructed and where an access ramp to the Major Deegan Expressway is located nearby.

"Residents from all over the Bronx use West 230th Street to gain access to the Major Deegan, and many of them deal with this hazardous situation daily," Dinowitz stated. "With so many accidents happening along this corridor, the

city needs to take steps to ensure the safety of drivers and pedestrians."

Dinowitz also recently called for the placement of a traffic signal at the intersection of West 230th Street and Tibbett Avenue to allow left hand turns onto Tibbett from westbound West 230th Street.

Tibbett gets heavy traffic on weekdays due to the nine schools that are located near it, as well as various businesses such as a large

U-Haul rental center.

The DOT has two ongoing open left turn studies – one on Broadway and West 230th Street and another at West 230th Street and Tibbett Avenue - which it anticipates completing in the coming week, according to a DOT spokesperson.

Kingsbridge Riverdale Van Cortlandt Development Corporation executive director Tracy Shelton said she supported ongoing traffic studies for the area,

since there has been so much development in recent years.

She said the proposed traffic signal at Tibbett would be a huge help.

"That entire corridor needs as much TLC as it can get in terms of traffic safety," Shelton said. "Because it's just so up and coming with development, and that adds trucks and everything else into the mix. It's just a perfect storm in terms of traffic issues."

Community Board 8 chairman Dan Padernacht said the intersection of Broadway and West 230th Street was by far the area's biggest traffic concern, and that the board would likely support additional traffic studies.

The DOT had already altered the intersection to prevent illegal left turns and made the crossing light times longer, he said, but the new shopping center had further exacerbated the problem.

Padernacht said another area of concern that may be revisited is West 238th Street at Broadway and Bailey Avenue, due to another new retail center on Broadway, that features several retailers including a BJ's, a Petco and a Buffalo Wild Wings eatery.

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Online media platform casts Bronx in new light

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

An online media platform is determined to give the borough a new voice.

Describing themselves as “a community of local media professionals amplifying Bronx-centric, entertaining content that celebrates culture and diversity”, theBLOX TV is a collaborative effort involving Bronxites who are all dedicated to delivering locally-produced, original content to their audience - the Bronx!

The project ‘theBLOX TV’ was originally started last fall by Marco Shalma and Gillian Todd after they both saw that the portrayal of the Bronx was very negative in the media.

As a result, they wanted to use their knowledge in contact and marketing to highlight the culture, diversity and everything positive that the borough has to offer.

The online media platform has produced over 100 videos in six weeks.

Video topics range from art, entrepreneurship, politics, education, lifestyle, sports and current events.

Also featured are theBLOX TV’s own Bloxpedia series as well



Members of theBLOX TV team (l-r) Richard ‘HQ’ Washington, Gillian Todd, Marco Shalma, Christen Quinones, Brigid Owino, Isaac Rouse, Tyler ‘PSwitch’ Dow. Photo courtesy of theBLOX TV

as their live shows, which are aired daily on weekdays.

Gary Axelbank of BronxNet as well as Rosa Garcia, owner of the Mott Haven Bar and Grill are just a few of the big names featured in theBLOX TV’s latest live shows.

Marco and Gillian were also the co-founders of Round Seven, a local, independent film, TV and production company which launched last February.

“Our goal is to create a unique

diverse voice for the people in the Bronx - while making a positive impact,” said Gillian, who is originally from Montana but has lived in the Bronx for the past five years.

“There is a particular vibe here (in the Bronx) that is unmatched anywhere else,” said Marco, who was originally born in South Africa and lived in Israel before moving to the United States, and eventually, the Bronx. He has

been a resident for 10 years. “We want to represent the voice of the borough - and with this platform we will be able to do so while also reaching other Bronxites who will understand the stories told from a Bronx perspective.”

theBLOX TV recently launched a 30-day Kickstarter Campaign with the aim of raising \$20,000 in attempts to complete an aggressive marketing plan aimed at increased viewership, which will be

essential if the platform hopes to continue.

So far, the platform has raised \$3,000 with only nine days to go.

theBLOX TV is currently located in Mott Haven, right near the 3rd Avenue Bridge - a neighborhood that has become vibrant with arts and culture.

theBLOX TV has many Bronx connections. Christen Quinones, the platform’s 22-year old art director, attended High School of American Studies at Lehman College.

Other team members have attended St. Raymond Academy for Girls, Lehman College and Mercy College. theBLOX TV is also currently interning a student from New York Institute for the Blind.

All of the platform’s team members were either born and raised in, and/or currently live in the Bronx - ranging from Co-op City to High Bridge to Pelham Bay and West Farms.

For more information, follow theBLOX TV on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @thebloxtv.

To view their videos online, search: theBLOX TV on Youtube or visit www.roundseven.com/thebloxtv.

Discussion set for Colucci Playground upgrades

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

Colucci Playground in Pelham Bay, located just off of the Hutchinson River Parkway, is getting additional upgrades aimed at active adults.

A public discussion on a planned new adult fitness area is scheduled for Monday, March 20 at 6 p.m. in the community room of the Hutchinson Parkway Apartments, located at 1950 Hutchinson River Parkway east.

The scoping meeting will discuss that addition and other possible improvements, including adding protective flooring to the play area, said Community Board 10 president Martin Prince.

“It’s going to be more than exercise equipment, they are also planning to modernize the play area, too, he said.

The park also contains a baseball field and basketball, tennis, bocce and handball courts.

The Hutch Greenway, a popular paved bicycle path, is located nearby.

The playground is currently



Councilman James Vacca and NYC Parks and Recreation Officials break ground on renovations at Colucci Park in 2016. The newest renovations planned include an adult fitness trail to be discussed at a meeting March 20.

Silvio Pacifico

undergoing a \$800,000 facelift that included a new spray shower for children, fences, benches, chess and game tables, bicycle racks and a new handicap-accessible drinking fountain.

That project is scheduled to be completed in August, according to the parks department.

Councilman James Vacca funded the project though his city-allocated budget.

“They have to be upgraded every few years because playground equipment becomes worn, and you want the most modern equipment,” he said.

Vacca’s office is funding the

new fitness apparatus, the third of its type in his district.

“They are there to encourage people to work out and to move,” Vacca said. “I think exercise is important today to people of any age and outdoor activity should be encouraged” It’s a great addition because it’s totally new.”

The playground is named for Vacca’s aunt, Florence Colucci, who was an active community member until her passing in 1982.

Colucci founded the Pelham Bay Taxpayers and Civic Association and ran a local newspaper, the News Sentinel in the ‘70s.

There has been some minor crime at the park in recent years, including a cellphone robbery in 2011 and a stabbing of a 21-year-old man in 2015, but Prince said there had been no recent incidents he could think of.

“The most the park has had is a homeless person camping out, but we’ve been pretty pro-active with the BronxWorks counselors to get them moved elsewhere, as we do with Pelham Bay Park,” Prince said.

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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45th Pct. Council honors six in May

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

The 45th Precinct Community Council will honor six community leaders they consider exemplary at their upcoming community breakfast.

The celebration of police and community unity is scheduled for Wednesday, May 10 at Villa Barone Manor from 8:30 to 11 a.m.

Honors will go to Sal Grasia, Pat Devine, John Bonizio, Michelle Sajous, Karen Nani and posthumously to Joseph Oddo.

Reservations are currently being taken for seats at \$15 each, said Bob Bieder, council president.

The cost of admission is less than the actual cost of the breakfast, which is subsidized by generous sponsor support, he said.

The fifth annual event, which will also highlight standout police work, brings together diverse communities from Co-op City to Castle Hill, said Bieder.

"It is coming together and breaking bread together with



Joe Oddo, former Pelham Bay Taxpayers president, will be posthumously honored at the 45th Precinct Community Council's annual breakfast in May.

people from all walks of life," said Bieder, adding the event is a tribute to the precinct's diverse population of people from every continent except Antarctica.

The council president said that in selecting the breakfast honorees the board looks for volunteers who make communities a better place to live.

Bieder said he nominated John Bonizio, Westchester Square Business Improvement District chairman, to receive an award in recognition of work that made the community safer and improved quality-of-life.

"I was raised to believe that you learn, you earn and you return," Bonizio said of his service.

Annie Boller and John Doyle, precinct council board members, said that they advocated honoring Joe Oddo, an activist who was president of the Pelham Bay Taxpayers Association president when he passed in 2015.

Oddo had a career in public service and politics, said Doyle.

"Joe Oddo left us very suddenly, and I think this is a very meaningful way to pay tribute to someone who has blessed us with his kindness," said Doyle, adding that Oddo was concerned about local traffic congestion in part because he had asthma and didn't want to see others suffer.

Nani, the editor of the non-



John Bonizio

profit Island Current newspaper since 1997, has worked with the police department as a community activist,

"I was very flattered when John Doyle contacted me," said Nani, who has extensive experience in working with the police department as a community member.

Shortly before Bill Bratton, former NYPD commissioner,

left his position, Nani interviewed him on the future of the Rodman's Neck range, she said.

She worked with the NYPD Harbor Unit analyzing manpower for a summer as part of Mayor Lindsay's Urban Corps, an effort to draw college students to public service careers.

Later, on City Island, she worked with police to make sure vandalism did not occur during the construction of a playground outside of P.S. 175, and later worked with cops to start a basketball program for youth as a PTA member.

Honoree Pat Devine said the award was a "great honor" and he heaped praise on the council.

"The 45th Precinct Council is a sounding board and place the community can go to if they have a police issue," said Devine.

To make reservations, call Bieder at (718) 828-4400 or email Boller at boogiedownbxgirl@aol.com.

Tickets should be ready to distribute by early April, said Bieder.

Uber hub welcomes new, present drivers

from Page 1

on the road and want to be affiliated with Uber are able to come into one of our locations and get assistance navigating the TLC process," Mendez said. "That process is expensive and it can take quite a few months to get through it, so we try to minimize the cost and make it as easy as possible."

Uber differs from traditional car-for-hire services in that drivers operate using a software application that can be downloaded on smartphones and other electronic devices.

The app is used by customers to request a driver to pick them up at a given location and drive them to where they want to go.

Payment transactions are also done electronically.

Uber drivers also differ from traditional taxi drivers in that they use their own vehicles and set their own work schedule.

In addition to competing with city car service companies, Uber also faces competition from Lyft, a similar



(l-r) Sulma Arzu-Brown, NYC Hispanic Chamber of Commerce director of operations; Jeanine Mendez, Green Light manager; Jose Tejada; Carla Rosado; driver Godolfredo Rosado and NYC Taxi and Limousine commissioner Bill Aguado cut the ribbon for the new Uber Driver Center.

Photo by Aracelis Batista

platform that is also gaining customers in the New York City area.

Company representatives at the hub provide assistance for new drivers looking to

navigate the city's onerous Taxi & Limousine Commission (TLC) licensing process.

Prospective drivers can also sign up for free classes required by the TLC offered daily at the company's other Greenlight Hub in Long Island City, Queens.

The Bronx hub quietly opened its doors earlier this month, according to the company, and has been ramping up to serve the over 40,000 TLC-licensed drivers who complete a trip for Uber each week.

The new facility also aims at being a place for drivers to interact with Uber representatives to answer questions and learn more about the service.

In addition to the resources provided by Uber, the hub also includes space for vendors that sell car insurance.

Mendez said the Bronx was among the fastest growing New York City markets for Uber, and new drivers were wanted.

"We have more riders and more drivers in the community every week, so the Bronx is very important to Uber and our partners," Mendez said.

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