

Seafood City bans to address rowdy behavior

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

The owners of a popular City Island seafood restaurant are working with local leaders to make the establishment safer following a huge brawl caught on video in February.

The ownership of Seafood City, located at 459 City Island Avenue, met with Community Board 10 Friday, March 24, to discuss ways to cut down on potential rowdy behavior in the evening hours.

Approximately 40 patrons were involved in the Thursday, February 23 scum, fighting amongst themselves and hitting each other with chairs as professional wrestlers are known to do.

Video of the incident quickly went viral on social media sites like Facebook and Youtube, and was featured on news programs both locally and nationally.

Seafood City's head of security, Dennis Fitzpatrick, posted a statement on the City Island Civic Association's Facebook page announcing policy changes he would be implementing.

"Our goal is to maintain order and a safe environment for everyone," he stated. "Unfortunately, this is going to come at a cost for loyal customers and islanders as well."

Among actions taken will be limiting alcohol sales to one drink per person with an ID to deter patrons from loading up on multiple alcoholic drinks, the removal of some high-alcohol drinks from the menu and banning the serving of alcoholic shots.

New ID scanning equipment is also being purchased, he added.

CB 10 chairman Martin Prince said the restaurant owners discussed how they were addressing the issues that led to the

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HIT-AND-RUN ARREST MADE

Mayflower Avenue man charged in Gio Nin's death

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

An arrest was recently made in connection to a hit-and-run last year.

On Friday, March 24, the 45th Precinct reported that 44-year old Victor Pelaez had been arrested for his alleged involvement in a hit-and-run incident which resulted in the death of 26-year-old Giovanni 'Gio' Nin on the morning of Saturday, June 11.

Pelaez, a Mayflower Avenue resident, was charged with leaving the scene of an accident resulting in death. It is believed he was the driver of the silver BMW X5 (early 2000's model) which struck and killed Nin.

Police used parts of Pelaez' car that were found at the scene to identify the vehicle which he had reported stolen the evening of the tragic incident.

On Wednesday, March 29, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Nin's family and friends gathered outside of the Bronx County Hall of Justice to protest for the #JUSTICEFOR-GIO, with the family stating that the charges against Pelaez should be harsher.

Protestors wore all black and either carried signs that said 'Justice For Gio' or flowers that were laid out in front of the courthouse.

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Remembering Happy Land

Community Board 6 joined relatives and friends of the 87 victims of the Happy Land Social Club fire on Saturday, March 25 to commemorate the 27th anniversary of the tragedy. Many paid their respects and offered prayers during the annual candlelight vigil and rosary at the Plaza of the Eight-Seven. Lourdes Robles lit a candle for the husband she lost in the arson. See story on page 6.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

45th Precinct gets replacement

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

A new commanding officer has been named to the 45th Precinct to replace Deputy Inspector Danielle Raia who is facing departmental charges relating to alleged time sheet inaccuracies.

Captain Carlos Ghonz, a 12-year veteran of the force with precinct, internal affairs and narcotics enforcement experience, is now in charge.

He comes to the precinct after serving as the executive officer, the second in command at the 46th Precinct, where he said he learned a great deal from that

precinct's leader.

"I had a good mentor before coming here: Inspector (Philip) Rivera," said Ghonz, adding that at the 'four-six' he had discretion in fighting crime and that his commander stressed the importance of considering the impact of decisions.

That on-the-job training will be put to good use at the 45th Precinct, where he plans on focusing making sure that his officers are engaged in their work.

"I want my officers to feel happy about coming to work," said the captain, adding "I want

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Trump Links, Marano get golf carts for VA

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

Veterans with mobility issues who visit Kingsbridge's VA hospital may soon find it easier to make their way around the grounds thanks to a Bronx golf course.

The Theodore Korony American Legion Post #253 and community partner John Marano completed delivery of donated golf carts to the James J. Peters VA.

They will be used to help veterans make their way around the facility's parking lot and building.

Universe Towing helped the veterans transport the carts from where they were being temporarily stored, at Hammond Cove Marina in Throggs Neck, to the VA on Friday, March 10 with a donated truck.

Gene DeFrancis, the vice-commander of post, which had been raising money for the project for a number of years, reached out to Marano to see if the community activist could be of assistance.

Marano turned to Trump Links in Throggs Neck, which agreed to donate two six-seat golf carts, a 2012 and 2016 model, worth roughly \$18,000, according to sources.

"I am the type of guy who sees myself

as a facilitator," said Marano of his lead role in the effort, adding "I work very hard in the community. I love the people and the selfless veterans who always want to help someone else in need."

The carts are necessary, said veterans advocate Pat Devine, because of a steep incline at the Peter's VA parking lot that can make it extremely hazardous for older or disabled veterans to get inside the building.

"Many patients have to park at the far end of the lot and it is very challenging for some," said Devine.

Devine said that it is his understanding that the carts will be roaming the parking lot every 15 minutes or so to transport patients to the main entrance.

A Peters VA spokesman confirmed that the carts will be stored in a garage awaiting the establishment of a driving group and some more favorable weather conditions.

The current target date for the carts to hit the parking lot is on Monday, May 1, he stated.

Peters VA's Dr. Erik Langhoff, medical center director, said that the donation would be a great benefit to patients who have walking difficulties.

"We are grateful to the Korony American



The golf carts arrive at the James J. Peters V.A. in Kingsbridge Heights on a flatbed truck. Universe Towing donated transportation its service.

Photo courtesy of John Marano

Legion Post for the generous donation," said Langhoff.

The post is planning to give an award to Justin Dambinskas, proprietor of Hammond Cove, for his role in temporarily storing the vehicles after they were received from Trump Links, said Devine.

"It was definitely a team effort," said DeFrancis.

Marano, who multiple sources credited

for following through and cutting red tape, said he was pleased to work with Devine, DeFrancis and Peter Del Debbio to fully realize a goal of the post for years.

A spokesman for Trump Organization said that they donate to many charities.

"We donate to many, many groups and it's just a continuation of our support for veterans who do incredible things for our country," he said of the carts.

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Last year's video release by NYPD depicts the silver BMW X5 after striking Nin.

Photo courtesy of the 45th Precinct

Hit-and-run arrest made; Mayflower Ave. man charged in Gio Nin's death

from Page 1

Nin, a Foxhurst resident, was biking to his girlfriend's apartment in Throggs Neck between work shifts at the FedEx Ground on 635 Zerega Avenue.

He was struck on East Tremont and Baisley avenues, while attempting to cross, mid-block, from the westbound to the eastbound side of East Tremont. He was pronounced dead at the scene by emergency medical services responders.

Immediately following the incident, a GoFundMe page was created to help Nin's family raise money for funeral expenses. It only took three days to reach the \$12,000 goal.

Later that month, the Transportation Alternatives Bronx Committee held a ceremony commemorating Nin's life, which featured a ghost bike dedication and installation at the spot where he was struck.

In September 2016, the

NYC Department of Transportation implemented its traffic-slowing road diet plan, which had been pitched since 2015, from Waterbury Avenue to Bruckner Boulevard to narrow a portion of East Tremont Avenue, a stretch which includes the spot where Nin was hit.

No prior arrests had been made in connection to this incident until Pelaez was arraigned last Friday.

Seafood City restaurant bans to address rowdy behavior

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now-infamous brawl.

"They wanted us to know they took the situation quite seriously and that they had already met with residents on City Island and they informed me of what they had informed them," he said.

Prince said recent inspections of the restaurant by city agencies yielded no notable issues.

However, he said he encouraged business owners to meet with the board even under the best circumstances.

"We try to get the bars and restaurants to come speak with us even when things don't happen, it helps us get to know who's in the community and what they are doing," he said.

CICA president Bill Stanton said he was happy to see the restaurant's proprietors, who he said were

lifelong City Island residents, take the incentive in addressing community concerns.

"They are willing to work with law enforcement, the community and other restaurants to mitigate all the issues that City Islanders have, as far as criminality and quality of life," he said.

Stanton also said he was pleased the restaurant had set up an email account for residents to submit concern and complaints, seafoodcityconcerns@gmail.com.

Seafood City, and City Island as a whole, shouldn't be blamed for the actions of some unruly patrons, he argued.

"It's (on) people with a ghetto mentality that think throwing chairs and filming it is acceptable," Stanton said. "It's not in Seafood City's

best interest for them to become known as an alternate location for the WWE."

The restaurant has not faced significant charges from the New York State Liquor Authority.

There is only one SLA case on file dating back to 2012 that included seven charges: failure to properly post required signage and license, unspecified health, fire or safety violations and selling liquor at a shack on the property without permission.

The restaurant was fined \$2,500 for the infractions by the SLA Board in February 2013, according to the agency's spokesman William Crowley.

The restaurant was last granted a liquor license on February 1, 2016. That license expires on January 31, 2018.



The management of City Island's Seafood City has announced changes to its menu and operations aimed at preventing incidents like the infamous brawl that took place in February.

Community News Group/Arthur Cusano



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CB 12 approves Baychester Sq. retail project

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

Members of Community Board 12 threw its support behind a major retail center planned for East Gun Hill Road, just off I-95, across from Home Depot.

Board members voted 29-5, with several abstentions, following a marathon meeting on Thursday, March 23, to approve the project's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure, or ULERP, which had been supported by both the district manager and board chairman.

The proposed outdoor retail shopping center, tentatively known as Baychester Square, would be built on a former golf facility currently owned by the MTA.

The project also includes plans for a senior housing development built by a separate developer.

The developer behind the project, Grid Properties, is working with the NYC Economic Development Corporation to make the plan a reality.

The city will sell the land to the developer if the plan is approved.

District manager George Torres said the project, while conceding that it could lead to increased traffic, urged members to support

the project for the jobs it would create, both during construction and later on, and for the increased shopping and dining choices communities outside the Bronx take for granted.

Putting 5,000 jobs at risk in the Bronx is not good public policy, period.

Hank Sheinkopf

Torres also pointed out the board's recent success in thwarting homeless shelters in the community, and said only by voting for the project would the community get a "place at the table" with the developers to make their voices heard,

"When the powers that be start carving up the pie, you want to have a seat at that table," Torres said. "Voting against this project makes that possibility more difficult."

Board chairman William Hall also threw his support behind the project, telling its members they would maintain some control over the project as it develops.

"You will continue to be involved with this project," Hall said. "You will have influence and you will be watchdogs."

The project has drawn criticism from Councilman Andy King, who told residents at the meeting that the area didn't need more retail stores that paid low wages but instead suggested the development of a corporate park or a school that created better paying jobs.

Grid Properties principal Drew Greenwald said Baychester Square will be an outdoor retail center similar to Cross County Shopping Center and Ridge Hill in Yonkers.

The Westchester shopping centers have siphoned dollars away from the borough for years, he added.

But Hank Sheinkopf, the spokesman for Prestige Properties, which owns the Bay Plaza and the Mall at Bay Plaza, repeated his company's claim that building of another shopping center directly across the high-



A former golf facility on Gun Hill Road is the planned site for Baychester Square, an outdoor retail center currently being considered by borough officials. Community News Group/Arthur Cusano

way was not good for the borough.

"Putting 5,000 jobs at risk in the Bronx is not good public policy, period," he said.

Greenwald counters that the traffic situation on the western side of the highway is significantly better than on the east

side where Co-op City and the Bay Plaza Mall are located.

The project will next be the topic of a public hearing at the office of Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. scheduled for Tuesday, April 4 at 11 a.m. The New York City Council will then vote on the project at a later date.

Bronxites remember devastating 1990 Happy Land Club tragedy

BY ROBERT WIRSING

Relatives and friends joined Community Board 6 on Saturday, March 25 to commemorate the 27th anniversary of the Happy Land Social Club Fire, a devastating inferno which tore through an illegal two-story night club a 1959 Southern Boulevard and claimed the lives of 87 party goers.

The fire was caused by Julio Gonzalez who poured gasoline through the club's only entrance and stairwell before igniting the combustible after getting into an allocation with his ex-girlfriend, Lydia Feliciano, a Happy Land employee.

Feliciano was one of five survivors of the tragedy.

Gonzalez was arrested the next day and in September 1991. He was sentenced to 174 twenty-five year sentences, a total of 4,350 years.

Gonzalez, 61, died of a heart attack last September at Clinton Correctional Facility in Dannemora, New York.

The somber ceremony began with an evening Mass dedicated to the victims at St. Thomas Aquinas



Karen Lam lit candles in memory of the 87 victims and their families.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

Church.

Following the service, a procession traveled to the Plaza of the Eight-Seven, a memorial honoring the 87 victims located just across the street from the former night club for a rosary and candlelight vigil.

Flowers, wreaths and mementos were laid at the base of the obelisk-like monument and the names of the deceased were read aloud.



Former CB 6 district manager Ivine Galarza (c) and Fr. John Obniski (r) from St. Thomas Aquinas Church joined families in remembering the many lives lost 27 years ago.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

FDNY find marijuana 'Grow House' responding to fire

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

The FDNY discovered a 'grow farm' at 2131 Chatterton Avenue on Saturday, March 25 at 11:30 p.m.

After extinguishing a fire at the Castle Hill residence, they found numerous marijuana plants in the basement and on the first floor of the house.

Police had to wear masks while removing 10 pounds of marijuana from the residence.

Police arrested 65-year old Alberto Martinez, the building's superintendent, who was seen by the authorities exiting the back of the house.

Martinez was charged with criminal marijuana possession and the criminal sale of marijuana, but the District Attorney's office, dropped the charges due to insufficient evidence.

The grow house is currently under investigation by the NYC Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor.

According to the FDNY, fire marshals determined the blaze was an electrical fire that started as a result of an illegal connection to the electric meter.



'Firefighters discovered a 'grow farm' at 2131 Chatterton Avenue last Saturday.

Community News Group/Robert Christie

Bronxites may remember another grow farm that resulted in an FDNY captain's death in September 2016.

Captain Michael Fahy was a firefighter who responded to the September 27 fire at 300 W. 234th

Street in Kingsbridge.

The 234th Street house exploded, injuring more than 20 people and lead to a charge of felony assault for 32-year old Garibaldi Castillo and 34-year old Julio Jose Salcedo Contrer.

Fahy died after a portion of the home's roof fell on his head while the building was collapsing.

Castillo and Contrer were eventually charged with first and second-degree assault and

first-degree criminal marijuana possession.

According to a spokesperson for the District Attorney's office, Fahy's death brought attention to the presence of grow houses in the Bronx.

However, she said, grow houses have been in the borough for the last few years.

In addition, she added that the operations are getting bigger.

Previously, the marijuana growers used to operate predominantly in apartment buildings.

However, now they've moved to private houses where they can grow the plants on each floor of the house.

FDNY spokesperson Frank Dwyer described the issues grow houses present.

"Illegal operations like this pose great dangers to firefighters and residents because the work is done without proper permits and safety guidelines and often involves tampering with electrical and water distribution systems, sealing of windows and subdividing rooms which can cut off means of egress," Dwyer said.

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PO Haste resigns before Graham shooting decision

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

NYPD police officer and Throggs Neck native Richard Haste resigned from the force on Friday, March 24 following a department hearing into the fatal shooting of Ramarley Graham.

Haste shot and killed Graham, an 18-year-old African American male, in 2012 in the 47th Precinct after chasing him from a Wakefield bodega to his East 229th Street apartment.

Supporters of Graham's family - including his mother Constance Malcolm - have been asking for Haste's firing and prosecution for the past five years.

Malcolm and those closest to her have been waiting since January for Judge Rosemarie Maldonado to rule on whether or not Haste used the proper police protocol in firing his weapon.

An earlier NYPD internal review had determined that the shooting was justified.

In addition, a state and federal grand jury previously exonerated Haste of any criminal action in regards to the shooting.

Maldonado ruled on March 24 that Haste did not use the correct

tactics in his pursuit and shooting of Graham.

The judge recommended that Haste be dismissed from the force.

"The NYPD disciplinary trial of Richard Haste ended with the right decision: termination," Mayor de Blasio said in a statement released on Sunday, March 26.

However, Haste instead resigned before the decision was announced, possibly protecting his NYPD pension.

During a press conference on Monday, March 27, Malcolm chastised the mayor for allowing Haste to resign instead of firing him.

They believe a resignation will make it easier for Haste to get another job as a police officer in the future.

Both sides have disagreed for years on the events surrounding Graham's shooting.

Haste, along with Sergeant Scott Morris and police officer John McLoughlin, chased Graham from a bodega where there had been reported drug activity.

At the time, they believed Graham to be armed and dangerous, a claim Graham's family has disputed.



Ramarley Graham with his aunt. NYPD Officer and Throggs Neck native Richard Haste resigned from the force on Friday, March 24 following a department decision in the fatal shooting of Ramarley Graham.

Photo Courtesy of Ramarley Graham's Family

After chasing Graham into his apartment, Haste yelled multiple times for Graham to show Haste his hands according to court testimony.

Instead, Graham reportedly be-

gan cursing at Haste. Also, Haste believed Graham had tried to dispose of an item in a hallway bathroom upon entering the apartment.

According to Haste's lawyer, Stuart London, Graham did not comply

with the police officer's request and shot him.

On Tuesday, March 29, Malcolm released a statement asking de Blasio for the full release of Haste's Civilian Complaint Review Board records.

In addition, she asked that Sergeant Morris and police officer McLoughlin be tried for their part in the incident.

"Accountability and transparency shouldn't be based on what's convenient for Mayor de Blasio, it should be based on truth and justice without delays," said Graham.

Malcolm has repeatedly said she and her family cannot feel justice has been served until the mayor's and Commissioner O'Neill's offices release all the details surrounding Graham's shooting and the other police officers on trial.

Morris and McLoughlin are currently facing disciplinary action.

Haste has said through the media that he thinks every day about his actions that day.

In addition, Haste has offered to meet with Graham's family.

However, Malcolm said she has no interest in meeting with Haste.

SECA, CCCA look to calm 2 intersections

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

Two civic groups are coming together to address a pair of problematic intersections in their closely linked communities.

Spencer Estate Civic Association members have started a petition drive calling on the city to install a four-way stop on Spencer Drive and Stadium Avenue, an effort the neighboring Country Club Civic Association is expected to join.

Both groups are also interested in seeing the NYC Department of Transportation conduct another traffic study of Country Club Road for traffic headed towards Macdonough Place, with an eye towards alleviating morning rush-hour backups.

Some community members want the current 'right turn only' lane at the Country Club Road intersection made into a 'straight or right turn' lane, said Michael McNerney, CCCA president.

The group believes it may go a long way to alleviating backups that can stretch as far back as Kennellworth Place some morn-



The intersection at Stadium Avenue and Spencer Drive, with its limited visibility and incline on Spencer Drive, has some leaders in the community petitioning for a four-way stop sign.

Community News Group / Patrick Rocchio

ings, said McNerney.

A spokeswoman from DOT stated the agency will study both intersections again.

The Spencer Drive and Stadium Avenue intersection was last studied in 2015, and the other was surveyed in 2010, she stated.

"Due to continuing community concerns DOT will reopen the turn study at Country Club Road and Macdonough Place this summer, and the all-way stop study at Stadium Avenue and Spencer Drive next spring," she stated.

Councilman James Vacca is especially concerned about Spencer Drive and Stadium Avenue, which is a territorial dividing line between the two civic groups.

He said he first requested a four-way stop at the location in 2007.

"We have asked for the stop signs four times," said Vacca of the intersection, adding "The problem that you have is that Stadium Avenue and Spencer Drive is a very awkward intersection... at an angle."

Vacca said that he would be meeting with Nivardo Lopez, the new borough DOT commissioner, and that the intersection would be his top priority for the area.

"I don't think the city understands the seriousness of the issues here," he said.

Al Carena, SECA president, said that Stadium Avenue and Spencer Drive is an issue because the intersection is not at 90 degrees.

He said it is relatively common when motoring on Stadium Avenue to ease up and begin to travel through the intersection only to find traffic entering the intersection from Spencer Drive.

He said that his organization is committed to working with McNerney and the CCCA to address both intersections in their communities, though he is not aware personally of accidents at the intersection.

McNerney said that the Stadium and Spencer intersection is a jagged, diagonal cross with several different blind spots that cause visibility issues.

The crossroad is so problematic that motorists should just stop when at the intersection, whether they have a stop sign or not, said McNerney.

"It is not a plum cross," he said of Stadium Avenue and Spencer Drive, adding that he sees no reason the CCCA will not support the SECA's petition effort.

Graphic LP artist showcases album jackets

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

A graphic designer who had a long career designing LP album art is being showcased at a local exhibition.

Michael Mendel, 83, spent the 1960s to the late-1980s designing record album art for some of the biggest names in music. This is the first time his work as an album designer has been displayed.

A small sampling of over 900 albums that he designed for performers like Tony Bennett, Gladys Knight, the Stylistics, Donovan, David Cassidy, Mel Torme, and many others is on display through April at Riverdale Senior Services.

The exhibition of LP 'jackets' called 'Just for the Record!' is intended to be a trip down memory lane, according to Maritza Silva, the center's curator.

For Mendel, it is a retrospective of a career he loved.

As album art director, he was tasked with working with photographers and illustrators to market recordings, and with collaborating with record compa-

nies and the artists.

"I loved coming to work every day," said Mendel. "No two albums were the same."

During a recent interview he was filled with stories of working with artists and record company employees to come up with ideas – once even going so far as to create an optical illusion of a piano on fire in the days before digital alteration of photos.

"What was ideal was that a cover depict the theme of the album," said Mendel.

He got his start at Columbia Records, now owned by Sony, designing the backs of Latin American albums.

"I had never heard of these artists," he said. "It turned out that these were million-sellers in Latin America – but it was all Latin to me!"

As his career progressed, he worked for Epic, Paramount and independent labels, he said.

Mendel said that one of his favorite covers was for R&B instrumental band Brass Construction's IV album, which featured an image of a coin with a design of a city under construc-



Artist Michael Mendel, who designed album covers and liner notes for musical artists from the 1960s through the 1980s, stands beside a collection of his designs currently on display at Riverdale Senior Services senior center. Community News Group / Patrick Rocchio

tion, complete with cranes soaring against a skyline.

"I created this coin design and we actually had the coin made into a souvenir that was given out at their concerts," he said.

One of the artists he particularly enjoyed working with was an Israeli performer named Benji.

"What I loved about him is that he had a great personality, and we focused on his face in a real close up. It printed beautifully."

Another standout effort, Mendel recalled, was the cover for indie-artist Rocky's album 'Whadda ya want to be...when you grow up.'

The artist was photographed

in a variety of occupations: as a businessman in a suit, soldier doctor, laborer, baseball player and even a street tough.

"He was so scared that the cops would find us," said Mendel of Rocky during the shoot, which featured a photo of the artist holding an uzi in the city.

Some artists were very at home in his office. Donovan was often there, said Mendel, adding that he was a very spiritual man who made a ton of money.

The difficult part of dealing with artists often arose when he photographed a large musical group and the members could not agree on which photos to use.

Mendel own story was at times harrowing.

He was born in Berlin, Germany in 1934. His family was forced to escape the horrors of the Nazi regime in 1938 and emigrated first to Cuba and then to the United States two years later.

In recent years, he has blossomed into a fine artist, painting over 330 canvasses of street scenes and landscapes.

Bronx still last in health rankings for 8th year

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

For the eighth straight year, the Bronx is once again the least healthiest county in the state according to the 2017 County Health Rankings by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin.

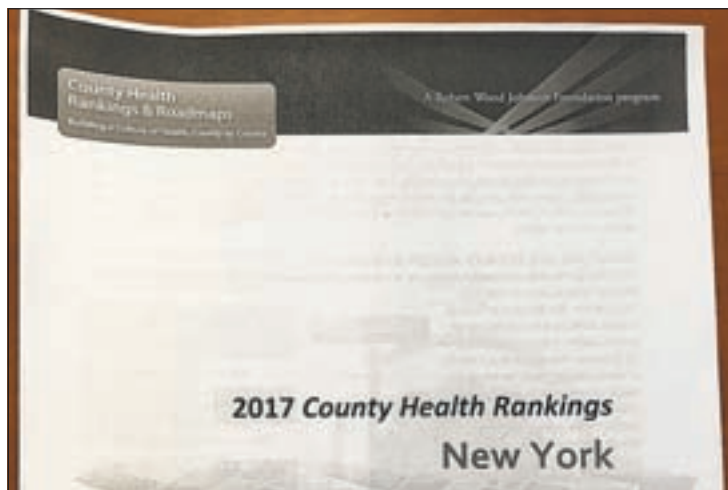
The Bronx finished 62nd out of 62 counties, far behind other NYC counties such as Queens - which finished 14th - and Manhattan which finished 11th.

In the study, the Bronx ranked last in four of the six categories used for grading - Physical Environment, Social & Economic Factors, Clinical Care, and Quality of Life.

As for the remaining categories, Health Behaviors and Premature Death, the borough ranked 58th and 47th respectively.

The foundation looked at data available as late as 2015 to determine the rankings.

"While we remain at number 62, that does not mean we should give up on our efforts to strive for better health," said Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. in a statement to the Bronx Times.



For the eighth year in a row, the Bronx is again the least healthiest county in the state according to the 2017 County Health Rankings by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin.

According to his spokesperson, Diaz also plans to continue his '#not62' campaign, which is a borough wide effort to perpetuate healthier habits and better quality of life in the Bronx.

Despite being last, Jan O'Neill, associate researcher and community coach for the County Health Rankings, was very pleased with the work the

Community News Group/Robert Christie Bronx is doing to raise their rating.

"What the Bronx has been able to do is extraordinary with bringing their premature death rate down," said O'Neill.

The study defined premature death as people dying under the age of 75

From 2012-2014, the Bronx averaged 6,700 premature deaths

per 100,000 residents.

Top performers in the study throughout the United States averaged 5,200 premature deaths in the same time span.

Top performers in New York averaged 5,300 premature deaths.

While, the Bronx averaged 1,000 premature deaths more compared to its U.S. and state competitors, O'Neill said it was important to realize how far the Bronx has come since the study began in 2009.

From 2009 to 2011, the Bronx was averaging 7,313 premature deaths.

O'Neill also pointed out that throughout the country deaths of people ages 15-44 are increasing due to drug overdoses.

However, the Bronx is decreasing the amount of drug overdoses for people 15-44 years old.

For those discouraged by still holding last place, O'Neill pointed out a few factors to keep in mind.

"One of the things is this is really more of a marathon than a sprint," she said of the Bronx's drive to get healthier.

In addition, she said while the Bronx is becoming healthier, other counties may be doing the same which makes it harder to move up the rankings.

Like O'Neill, Diaz also stressed patience in the fight to get healthier.

"We are witnessing real progress towards a healthier Bronx, but this work takes time," said Diaz.

Much like attaining good health, no one said getting out of last place was going to be easy, no one promised quick-fixes and overnight improvement," he added.

According to the study, the Bronx improvements are: violent crime is down, mammography screenings are up and residents are doing more to forego the need to visit hospitals.

"The new data clearly demonstrates that we are making inroads in important areas of disease prevention – critical to decreasing health care disparities and advancing the long-term health of our community," said Steven M. Safyer, M.D., president of Montefiore Medicine.

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'The Bronx Now' spotlights Bronx businesses

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

BronxNet is debuting a new show called 'The Bronx Now' on Monday, April 3 which will bring the Bronx business community into the spotlight.

The Bronx Now will feature host Joe Kelleher, president of Simone Metro Properties, and introduce owners of both small and large business in the Bronx.

"The Bronx is now a symbol of urban renewal in many ways," said Michael Max Knobbe, executive director of BronxNet. "There's so much opportunity and people have come together to build a very liveable and wonderful community that's evolving."

"What we wanted to show was that community," said Knobbe.

Kelleher and his guests will tape their episodes in the BronxNet East studio at Mercy College in the Hutchinson Metro Center.

However, they will also travel to different areas of the Bronx to visit business and learn more about Bronx culture.

"We are extremely happy to present this program highlighting the people, places and businesses that make the Bronx such a special place," said Kelleher.

In addition to informing Bronx residents about the business in their borough, the show will also teach its viewers tips for better business.

"We have a young borough and we have future business leaders now who are hungry for knowledge," said Knobbe. "And we have great [business owners] across vectors that can educate and really present what's here [in the Bronx] and what we have to offer."

Knobbe is hoping this show discourages the unsavory assumptions that some people may have about the Bronx.

"This is just another way that we at BronxNet work together to defy the negative stereotypes, instill community pride and inspire," he said.

Kelleher shared Knobbe's sentiments, hoping the show will attract people who are thinking about doing business and living in the Bronx.

"Hopefully this new series will help shine a spotlight on the New Bronx, shed light on the borough's great institutions, businesses and people, and help promote the Bronx as a wonderful place to live, work and visit," said Kelleher, vice chairman of the Westchester Square Business Improvement District.

The show's first episode will focus on Westchester Square, visiting historic sites such as the Huntington Free Library and St. Peter's Episcopal Church.

In addition, viewers will get the chance to meet local business owners in the area.



'Bronx Now' host Joseph Kelleher (r) interviewed Dr. David Cherkas (l), Elmhurst Hospital medical director for PA Program, for the premiere episode.
Photo by Fernando Justiniano

"Something like this brings out what we've always looked for - recognition and curiosity about what's here and why people are here," said Lisa Sorin, executive director of the Westchester Square BID.

The Bronx Now will not only focus on business. Viewers will also get the chance to visit various Bronx neighborhoods, hear discus-

sions on health care facilities and health care access, and learn about different educational institutions and opportunities.

New episodes will debut on the first Monday of each month at 8 p.m. on Channel 67 on Optimum and Channel 33 on Fios.

From there viewers can catch repeat episodes each Monday at

6:30 p.m. and 1 p.m., Tuesdays at 8 p.m., Wednesdays at 6:30 a.m. and 3 p.m., Saturdays at 9 a.m., 4 p.m. and 11 p.m., and Sundays at 11:30 a.m.

BronxNet will host a launch party for The Bronx Now on Monday, April 3 at 6 p.m. at the Residence Inn by Marriott at the Metro Center Atrium at 1776 Eastchester Road.

45th Precinct gets replacement

from Page 1

them to feel that this is their second home."

Like all incoming commanding officers, the top priority is keeping crime in the precinct as low as possible, he said.

"It is lower than any other precinct in the Bronx, but our goal is to make it lower," said Ghonz.

The new commanding officer has already met with the leaders of civic associations and elected officials, he said.

He plans on letting community members know how they can help fight crime.

"We need them as much as they need us," he said. "The more cooperation that we can get from the public, the better."

He said that he plans to reach out to the media, and use Twitter to dispense information on suspects. He also plans on involving other agencies where ap-

propriate.

If a precinct police officer is asked by a resident a non-police related matter, he does not want his officers to shrug it off by saying "no" but rather say "no problem" and do what they can to direct the individual to the proper resource.

I want my officers to feel happy about coming to work. I want them to feel that this is their second home.

CAPTAIN CARLOS GHONZ

Ghonz is a former college baseball centerfielder, and who born in the Dominican Republic.

He moved to the United States

when he was nine, living first in Mott Haven and then in Washington Heights in Manhattan.

After the academy, he worked in Manhattan's 23rd Precinct as an Operation Impact police officer, part of a program that substantially increased cops' presence in certain areas by bringing in rookies.

After a stint in the 30th Precinct, he went to the NYPD's narcotics in 2007.

He was promoted to sergeant and worked in narcotics control in both the borough and in Queens.

From there, he went to the 46th Precinct and onto IAB, investigating allegations of missing property, use of force and abuse of authority.

As a lieutenant, he worked as the 52nd Precinct's Integrity Control Officer, ensuring things such as proper timekeeping.

He is married and has two children. His spouse is also 'on



Captain Carlos Ghonz was recently appointed commanding officer of the 45th Precinct. Photo courtesy of 45th Precinct community affairs office

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