

Matthew Cruz new CB 10 District Mgr.

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

Beginning in June, Community Board 10 will have a new district manager on the job.

A CB 10 search committee selected Matthew Cruz from among three finalists on Friday, March 31.

Cruz was unanimously voted in on Thursday, April 20 by the full board.

He replaces Kenneth Kearns, who resigned and stopped working at the board in September, but remained on the payroll for some time because of accrued vacation.

Cruz comes to CB 10 from the NYC Department of Buildings, where he worked in intergovernmental relations.

He said requests for zoning enforcement from CB 10 are a frequent part of his work at DOB, and knows that it is a top board concern.

Cruz, a 'millennial' who is 25-years-old, said he believes that the board chose him for his energy and work ethic.

"I think they wanted someone who knew the district well and who had great relationships with the stakeholders of the community," he said, adding that he cannot wait to get started.

His first day will be on Monday, June 5.

Prior to being at the DOB, he worked for Councilman James Vacca for over two years as a constituent liaison.

He lives in Morris Park, a community he's called home since he was 16-years-old.

Prior to that, he grew up in the George Washington Carver Houses in Harlem.

The new DM sees traffic issues like speeding and mitigating congestion, as well as working with the 45th Precinct on crime related matters as some more of the board's key concerns.

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POLICE RAID POT GROW HOUSE

Morris Park weed grower smoked out

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

A Bronx man was nabbed for allegedly operating a large indoor weed farm two days before International Pot Smoking Day.

Ernest Guttilla, 48, was arrested at around 2 p.m. on Tuesday, April 18 at his 1723 Fowler Avenue home after police officers from the 49th Precinct responded to the house on a tip that it was being used as a 'grow house', said precinct commander Captain Thomas Alps.

"There was crack cocaine in plain view," Alps said. "And he was on a parole warrant for burglary and had been missing for the past four years, so it was a big win that we found him."

Police officers returned with a search warrant the next day and found approximately 50 pounds of marijuana plants growing inside four rooms on the second floor of the private home.

Charts on chalkboards detailed when to harvest each plant.

"It was very elaborate - it was sealed off and insulated," Alps said. "There were electrical wires running to the upper floors. The water line was tapped into and there was a water irrigation system on the top floor to feed the plants."

Also found were 30 heat lamps and four large HEPA (high-efficiency particulate absorber) fil-

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Artistic Expression

Bronx Park East Community Association and other Bronxites rallied outside of Artist and Craftsman Supplies on Friday, April 21 to protest its closing which would leave the Bronx without any art supply stores. Sal Russo's sign exemplified everyone's frustration over closing the borough's only art supply store. See full story on page 2.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

Woodlawn Senior Living returns to drawing board

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

Woodlawn Affiliates LLC, on Friday, April 21 asked Community Board 12 not to vote on the company's request for a Letter of Support for its Woodlawn Senior Living in its current design.

CB 12 was scheduled to possibly vote on the senior project at its monthly full board meeting.

According to Erica Keller of Woodlawn Affiliates LLC, the company plans to make changes to the proposal based on the community feedback it received.

The project, which is being sponsored by United Church of Jesus Christ, was likely looking at a rejection from the community board, according to CB 12's Housing Committee chairperson Robert Hall.

For weeks, the Woodlawn community has voiced their displeasure with the senior housing plan.

Residents took issue with the project's lack of parking, its siting on the busy E 233rd Street parcel,

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Bronx loses short-lived art supply store

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

Just months after it lost its only bookstore last year, the Bronx has now lost its sole dedicated art supply store.

Borough residents gathered in front of the Artist & Craftsman Supply store at 3961 White Plains Road on Friday, April 21, as the store closed its doors for the final time at 5 p.m.

Many, like Raphael Schweizer, were local artists saddened to lose the only convenient store just two-and-a-half years after it opened.

Schweizer said that while there are Michael's stores in the area, the large arts and crafts box store does not carry the extensive stock of high-end products serious artists use.

He likened the loss to that of the Barnes & Noble bookstore in Bay Plaza, which shut down at the end of last year.

"Just like it was important to have a dedicated bookstore in the Bronx, it's important to have a dedicated art supply store for canvases, brushes and paints," he said. "The Bronx is the most affordable borough in New York City, and artists take refuge in that and live



Rob Digman, Artist & Craftsman Supply senior regional manager, thanked the demonstrators for their support. Photo by Silvio Pacifico

here."

Schweizer, who is also active in the Bronx Park East Community Association, said the store's Wakefield location was not ideal.

He said he would love to see an art store open someplace closer to

the center of the Bronx, maybe in the Pelham Parkway or Fordham Road area where there is extensive mass transit options.

Artist & Craftsman Supply maintains 35 employee-owned stores nationwide, mostly along the east and west coasts.

However just six now remain in New York state: one in Harlem, four in Brooklyn and another in Franklin Square, Long Island.

Robert Dingman, the senior regional manager for Artist & Craftsman Supply, said it was not a sudden rent hike that led to the closing, but ongoing concerns about financial viability.

"We're sad to have to close this store down," Dingman said Friday afternoon after closing shop. "We've given it a pretty good effort but currently we're not financially positioned to continue. But hopefully in the next ten to twelve months, we can start looking at a new location and the Bronx is high up on our list."

Rally participant Francine Alheid of City Island teaches watercolor paint classes in the north Bronx. She said she worried about where she and her students would



Community members of all ages rallied outside of Artist & Craftsman Supply last Friday. Photo by Silvio Pacifico

get their supplies.

"It's difficult to go all the way into Manhattan, and it's hard to find exactly what you need online," Alheid said. "To not have this facility here, it's very upsetting to me. It's just another thing not available in the Bronx."

Also attending the rally was

13-year-old Alisha Ayala, who said she had planned to take classes at the store and said she was devastated to hear it was closing.

"I bought my first sketchbook here because I had a passion to draw," she said. "Now that it's closing down, that's a lost opportunity."

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Police raid grow house; MP marijuana operation smoked out

from Page 1

ters running to clean the air out and reduce the odor, which was so overwhelming police had to wear air masks.

There was also surveillance equipment operating inside the house.

It is alleged that Guttilla stole over \$40,000 worth of electricity before being caught. Con Edison has since cut power to the home.

Guttilla was charged with first, second and third, fourth and fifth-degree Criminal Possession of Marijuana and seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, according to district attorney's Office spokeswoman Patrice O'Shaughnessy.

Guttilla had been residing there for approximately six months, but it was unclear if he was paying rent. He was receiving mail at the location, Alps added.

It is unclear if the property is in foreclosure. The last recorded owner is Ismael Frade.

O'Shaughnessy said that in some cases the owner of the home can be charged in connection with such crimes, but prosecutors would have to collect enough evidence to show they were aware of the criminal activity.



An arrest on Tuesday, April 18 led to the discovery of 50 pot plants growing in an elaborate grow house on the second floor of a Fowler Avenue home. Arthur Cusano

The investigation is ongoing, she said.

Con Edison spokesman Bob McGee confirmed that the electrical meter had been tampered with, but said he was unsure of how much power was actually taken.

Reported estimates as high as \$90,000 seemed high, he said.

The practice is also extremely dangerous, he cautioned.

A similar incident last October in which an FDNY captain was killed in Kingsbridge when an illegal gas

line in a marijuana grow house being investigated by firefighters exploded.

Several firefighters and a few Con Edison workers, were injured in that incident.

On March 26, a building superintendent of a multifamily home in Castle Hill was arrested after firefighters responding to a fire found 10 pounds of marijuana and growing equipment.

Neighbors said they were surprised to hear about the bust in their usually quiet block.

Neighborhood resident Gamil Hassan said he felt relief when he saw cops show up at the house to make the arrest.

"I was happy because I have six kids, I have a wife," Hassan said. "I'm happy for the cops who come when you have a problem. Thank God, God bless America."

Andrew Gregory, 23, who lives just across the street from the Fowler residence, said he had never seen anyone enter or leave the house.

He said he was not totally shocked by the bust, and said such activity could happen in any neighborhood.

"I think people will do what they do anywhere," he said.

Matthew Cruz new Community Board 10 district manager

from Page 1

One of the best parts of a community board is the differing viewpoints of board members on issues, and he hopes to facilitate debate in which everyone trusts each other, he said.

"One thing that we all have in common is that we are stakeholders," he said, adding "I want my board members to go home and feel that they got their voice in and that we made an informed decision as a board."

Cruz attended All Hallows High School before moving onto Pace University for an undergraduate degree.

He is currently wrapping up work on an Urban Planning Graduate Degree at Hunter College.

Cruz believes that this planning background is another one of the reasons the board selected him.

"A community board has a pretty important role because they are planning institutions," said Cruz, adding "I think I can help articulate (the board's) voice and message."

He describes himself as someone from humble beginnings, pointing to his experiences growing up in public housing.



Matthew Cruz will soon start his new position as Community Board 10's next district manager. Photo courtesy of Matthew Cruz

He has had success, and now wants to give back and share what he has learned, he said.

Cruz said he believes he will be a resource in his new position.

"The district manager can be a resource, not just for the board members, but for the residents at large,"

said Cruz.

Vacca, who first hired Cruz as an intern and then as a staffer, said he appreciated his tenacity in terms of working on behalf of constituents.

"I realized right away that he was extremely committed to our mission," said Vacca of Cruz.



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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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University Ave. tenants fight for better housing

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

Residents of a University Avenue apartment building are fighting for better living conditions and less landlord harassment.

On Monday, April 17, tenants of 1841-1847 University Avenue, along with members of the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition, Councilman Fernando Cabrera and other elected officials, held a press conference to focus on the their living conditions.

Following the conference, many of the tenants opened the doors to their apartments to show examples of their poor living conditions.

The list of the building's deficiencies seemed endless.

For more than six months, tenants of the 6-story, pre-war building have been faced with a lack of heat and hot water, water leaks, mold, broken appliances, collapsing ceilings, a non-working intercom, poor hallway lighting, broken mailboxes and rodent and roach infestations.

Tenants have also been faced with a lack of essential repairs, such as broken plumbing and holes in the floors and walls.

The residents claim they have also been persistently harassed by



A group of Morris Heights renters rallied on University Avenue Monday to demand their landlord improve living conditions in the building.
Photo by Edwin Soto

the building management company, Universal Heights 18 LLC, as well as landlord Robert Khomari, while their rent has either increased or been overcharged without merit.

Many of the residents have received threatening letters from the landlord and management company demanding that they pay money which they do not owe, while others have been told that they have days to move out, even though they are up to date on their rent payments, according to the complaints.

"My rent has skyrocketed, and

for an apartment with roaches, mice and no repairs - that's not right," said tenant Chastity Pagan, whose rent increased to \$1,600 in a month, which is \$200 more than she used to pay. "I'm worried that I am going to be homeless if this continues."

"The landlord is trying to bully us - especially the elderly residents," said another resident who has lived in the building for the last 47 years but wished to remain anonymous, and who has also experienced what she believes are illegal rent increases. "I know I'm paying my

rent because I certify everything and get a notice every month, but he (the landlord) still sends me letters saying I owe him money."

"These tenants are standing up for their right to live in decent conditions and not be harassed by landlords when they have paid their rent and met all of their responsibilities," said Councilman Fernando Cabrera, who also said that more than 70% of the cases handled by his office are related to housing issues.

Cabrera recently called for leg-

islation requiring NYC Housing Preservation and Development to implement a zero tolerance policy against landlord harassment and poor building conditions.

"I am a strong advocate for tenants - and I stand with these residents to call for an immediate end to deplorable conditions of their homes as well as landlord harassment," he added.

Last month, the tenants sent a letter to the management company asking them for a meeting to address the housing deficiencies, but they did not get a reply.

However, with the assistance of the NWCCC and the Support of Legal Service, the tenants recently filed a case in the NYC Housing Court. NWBCCC has also assisted the tenants in strategizing a response to the extensive incidents of harassment.

The building currently has ten open violations with the NYC Department of Buildings, according to the Building Information System.

Khomari, as well as Universal Heights 18 LLC, did not return requests for comment.

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43rd Precinct Community Council's Fellowship Breakfast

The 43rd Precinct Community Council and 43rd Precinct Community Affairs saluted several distinguished members of the community and law enforcement at its annual Fellowship Breakfast on Tuesday, April 18 at the Sonia Sotomayor Community Center. This year's honorees were inspector Fausto Pichardo, 43rd Precinct commanding officer; Borough Commander assistant chief Larry Nikunen; Stand Up to Violence; Michael Fischer, Stevenson Commons owner; John Ross, Bronx Honda manager; school crossing guard Marisol Sierra; Parkchester Public Safety and Security sergeant Nelson Graulau; Auxiliary officer Jomar Gonzalez; NYPD Explorer Kedwin Contreras and officers Louis Encarnacion, Robert Troiani, Satinderpal Singh, Patrick Wallace, Christian Guitierrez, Christopher Taranto and Kiel Sui.



Hispanic Day Parade 2016 queen Stafania Salinas celebrated with singer-songwriter EC Salsero.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



(l-r) Honoree inspector Fausto Pichardo, 43rd Precinct commanding officer; Aurora Carrion, 43rd Precinct Community Council president; honoree Borough Commander assistant chief Larry Nikunen and Gwen Gabriel, 43rd Precinct Community Council vice president.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



(l-r) SUV's Pastor Jay Gooding, director of community outreach; Erika Mendelsohn, program director and Minister Kwame Thompson, outreach director, were honored at the gala.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Michael Fischer, Stevenson Commons owner, proudly accepted his award and citation.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



John Ross (c), Bronx Honda manager, was honored with an award and citation.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Marisol Sierra was formally recognized as 'School Crossing Guard of the Year'.



Parkchester Public Safety and Security sergeant Nelson Graulau (r) was honored for his service.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Officer Jomar Gonzalez (r) was declared 'Auxiliary Officer of the Year'.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



NYPD Explorer Kedwin Contreras (l) received accolades for his service to the community.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Honoree officer Louis Encarnacion (r) was all smiles at the annual breakfast gala.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Officer Robert Troiani was honored by the precinct's community council.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Officer Satinderpal Singh was conferred a prestigious recognition at the ceremony.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Officer Christopher Taranto was honored for his dedicated service to the community.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Police officer Patrick Wallace (r) was one of many exemplary officers honored at the event.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Officer Christian Guitierrez (r) proudly accepted his awards.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Honoree officer Kiel Sui (c) happily accepted his awards.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

'Daylighting' artwork sets sail for Virginia Park

BY ROBERT WIRSING

An underutilized park will serve as the canvas for the Bronx's natural beauty.

The Art in the Parks: Uniqlo Park Expressions Grant is supporting the creation of artworks by NYC-based emerging artists for ten designated parks this June including the Bronx's Joyce Kilmer Park and Virginia Park.

These creative projects are made possible through Uniqlo's generous \$200,000 donation.

The Uniqlo grant program will transform the parks into art destinations through a series of rotating exhibitions.

Each grantee receives an award of \$10,000 to create their proposed artwork which will be displayed for up to one year.

Artist Lovie Pignata, a Pelham Parkway resident and Morris Perk pop-up coffee shop owner, will exhibit her unique installation at Virginia Park.

Pignata, a Pratt Institute alum, draws inspiration from local natural, architectural and historical elements to create two and three-dimensional works incorporating shadows and reflections.

Her work, 'Daylighting', will transform a drab blacktop into a vibrant, painted replica of the Bronx River highlighting the waterway's importance.

Pignata, an avid canoer, also plans to install decommissioned canoes, retrofitted with seating, donated by the Bronx River Alliance, chessboards, planters and wayfinding signage.

The imaginative installation at Westchester Avenue and White Plains Road will feature a painted replica of the nearby Bronx River and East 174th Street Bridge on the blacktop plaza.

"'Daylighting' means to bring life to the Bronx River which is close by, but not many people are aware of," she explained.

As the seasons change, so too will 'Daylighting' to incorporate such elements as autumn leaves and snow complete with raccoon and possum tracks.

"The river is always moving and changing which is something I wanted to convey in this work," explained Pignata.

'Daylighting' is the culmination of Pignata, Loving the Bronx, Partnerships for Parks, Bronx



A rendering of Lovie Pignata's imaginative 'Daylighting' art installation for Virginia Park.
Photo courtesy of NYC Parks

the Bronx River and the many recreational activities it offers," expressed NYC Parks deputy director of Public Art Jennifer Lantzas.

Pignata said work on the 'Daylighting' mural will start in mid-May.

Lantzas confirmed 'Daylighting' will be displayed until next June.

Martell noted Virginia Park was named one of last year's Parks Without Border winners.

Parks Without Borders gathers community ideas on how to make parks more inviting through easier access and discovery and by transforming underused areas into vibrant public spaces.

The borough's Joyce Kilmer Park will also house the 'Flying High for Equality' installation inspired by American novelist Richard Bach's best-seller 'Jonathan Livingston Seagull'.

Venezulean-Americans Patricia Cazorla and her niece Nancy Saleme will install oversized, colorful sculptures of the city's sparrows as a metaphor for the search for equality.

River Alliance and community volunteers' collaborative efforts.

Nilka Martell, Loving the Bronx founder, has been major advocate for 'Daylighting'.

"I've lived across from Virginia Park for 42 years and haven't seen it get as much atten-

tion as other parks," she said.

She added 'Daylighting' will transform the park from a transit hub into an inspirational experience for Bronxites to utilize their local waterways.

"This art project will help people draw the connection between

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Belmont BID debuts Bronx Tale mural

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

The Belmont Business Improvement District and its partners brought a new mural to the borough's 'Little Italy' community.

The mural, recently painted on the side of a building at Hughes Avenue and Fordham Road, features 'A Bronx Tale' actor, writer and creator Chazz Palminteri, and a number of characteristics that make the popular neighborhood unique.

Acclaimed street artist 'Mike.A.' painted the mural at a very visible Arthur Avenue location.

The brick 'canvas' extends 21 feet high and 103 feet long, and it took 22 gallons of white paint, four gallons of black, and 115 cans of spray paint to complete, said Mike.A.

"It is amazing how many people pull over just to take a picture with it," said Frank Franz, Belmont BID executive director, adding the BID was looking to put something on the wall that brought joy to visitors.

The mural improved a particular wall which was frequently the target of graffiti vandals, said Franz.

It took several hurdles, including obtaining the property owner's approval, to get it done, he explained.

"We wanted something light and



Chazz Palminteri with community, merchants, businesspeople, BronxNet staff and crew and artists in front of the mural.

Photo by Miriam Quin

positive," said Franz of the mural, adding that the BID soon seized on the idea of including A Bronx Tale as one of the themes, as the movie is arguably the best known depiction of Belmont.

After receiving Palminteri's blessing, he was depicted on the mural against the backdrop of a cityscape with a line from the movie script that reads: "The saddest thing in life is wasted talent."

Palminteri stopped by the mural on Easter, Sunday, April 16 to give his

seal of approval to the painting, said Mike.A.

Mike.A. was selected to work on the commission after he was recommended by Gail Nathan, Bronx River Arts Center's executive director.

Mike.A., who was assisted by fellow artist Ron Rundo, grew up near White Plains Road and East 233rd Street and is Italian-American.

Aside from a thriving street art business, the artist said he worked in the corporate world as a creative

director and art director for about 17 years.

The mural also includes a depiction of a pepper and tomato, a nod to the Italian heritage of the community where many people worked in the produce industry, as well as directions to Arthur Avenue and a mention of Arthur Avenue's recent recognition as one of America's greatest streets by the American Planning Association.

The mural took more 13 days to complete, and so far has received rave

reviews, with an official dedication ceremony planned for a date likely in May, he said.

"It makes you smile," he added.

Franz concurred, saying that the BID was not looking for anything 'too deep' but rather an uplifting visual that can bring a smile to the face of passing schoolchildren or people on their way to Arthur Avenue.

The artist, who creates window art for businesses and murals, recently completed another mural in the borough at a gas station on City Island.

You can see more of his work on Instagram.com at mikeanewyorkcity.



Chazz Palminteri with his wife Gianna in front of the mural.

Photo by Miriam Quin



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Vols remove debris from Pelham Cemetery

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

Some much-needed spring cleaning came to City Island through the efforts of a group of volunteers.

They removed debris left by storms from the waterfront at Pelham Cemetery, including pieces of sunken boats, in a community-driven cleanup on Saturday, April 15.

The group gathered to spruce up the cemetery just in time for Easter and during the Passover holidays, said event organizers.

One of the organizers, Izzi DeRosa, who helped coordinate the grassroots effort along with her husband Michael, said that she noticed clutter at the cemetery's waterfront along Long Island Sound.

"I just thought it needed to be cleaned up," she said, adding that while the grounds of the cemetery are kept immaculate, debris from severe weather events was deposited along the whole shoreline.

She and her husband posted their cleanup plans on the City Island Civic Association's Facebook page, calling for volunteers.

Greg Clancy, Pelham Cemetery Association's president, said that a group of about 25 volunteers took part, including a contingent from the Leonard Hawkins American Legion Post #156's Sons of the American Legion and Ladies Auxiliary.

"It only took a little bit of organizing to get City Islanders going," said DeRosa, adding that volunteers from off the island helped as well.

Some good Samaritans who could not attend but who were aware of the event donated garbage bags, and City Island's IGA supermarket donated water, said DeRosa.

The NYC Department of Sanitation sent over a truck to pick up the refuse, so it didn't remain in front of the cemetery's fence, she said.

The cleanup was important for the maintenance of the relatively small cemetery, which is prone to fall and winter storms.

"We have a seawall down at the edge of property where it meets the beach, and all kinds of stuff washes ashore," said Clancy.



A 'before' picture of the waterfront of Pelham Cemetery reveals debris.

Photo courtesy of Izzi DeRosa

Parts of sunken boats, marine engines, large pieces of timber that had been dislodged from waterfront docks, and other debris was among what was removed, he said.

DeRosa said that there was also a lot of plastic hauled out, both maritime and non-maritime related.

"You think of local cleanup and you think of beer cans...but there were big pieces of boats," said

Clancy, who added what was removed was not typical household trash.

It is difficult for people who are not familiar with the waterfront storms to picture it, but the amount of debris that sometimes washes up can be incredible, said Clancy.

For Clancy, whose parents and grandparents are buried in Pelham Cemetery, the cleanup was an indication of the kind of respect

he believes it is important to show cemeteries.

It also was extremely helpful for the cemetery, which is governed by a volunteer board of directors, because some of what was hauled away was visible from the gravesites, he said.

Clancy, who is active with several local civic groups, including the Hawkins Post, said volunteerism makes communities and our nation a better place.

Gouverneur Place Apts. open in Morrisania

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

Bronx residents and elected officials gathered on Thursday, April 20 for a ribbon cutting to celebrate the new Gouverneur Place Apartments.

The 68-unit building, at 450 Gouverneur Place, has set aside 50 units for formerly homeless individuals who are dealing with mental health issues.

The remaining 18 units are reserved as affordable housing. According to Westhab, Inc. - a non-profit organization and owner of the Gouverneur Place Apartments - all the units are filled.

The building offers a variety of housing options starting with studios, along with 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom apartments.

In addition, there are amenities on site which include a computer lounge, community room, laundry room, bike storage, an outdoor courtyard, recreation area, and on-site support staff.

Richard Nightingale, president of Westhab, said supportive housing helps take away some of the stigma attached to homeless people dealing with mental health issues.

"Supportive housing recognizes that a lot of people [dealing with



Elected officials, Westhab executives and their partners cut the ribbon for the grand opening of the Gouverneur Place Apartments.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

mental health issues] can do well independently and can function in a community setting - they just need some support," said Nightingale.

He added that he was pleased to hear stories from the some of the tenants now living in the apartments.

For example, tenant Dawn Miller lived at the Olivieri Drop-In Center in Manhattan for two years prior to moving into the Gouverneur Place Apartments.

"I was really feeling hopeless

and depressed - not feeling like I could get back on my feet as far as work or housing or anything," said Miller. "So when I got the call at the end of November it really lifted my spirit."

Jeffrey Dantzler, who grew up in New York, was also staying at a drop-in center prior to getting his own apartment.

Dantzler said it was sometimes hard at the shelter because some of the homeless individuals would not shower and - due to state law - cen-

ter employees could not force them to shower.

Prior to the drop in center, Dantzler stayed with friends and families.

He took issue with the stereotypes associated with homeless people.

"Every homeless person didn't become homeless the same way," he said.

Dantzler said he didn't walk around dirty or beg people for money.

"I just didn't have a home," he said.

He said it's been a "great transition" going from two chairs in the shelter to his own apartment.

"I can deal with my depression better, I'm eating better and I'm not as stressed as much," he said.

Kristina Reed was staying at Susan's Place - a shelter for women dealing with mental illness - before coming to the Gouverneur Place Apartments.

While there she attended the Nontraditional Employment for Women's school and got a job in the real estate industry.

"Working in real estate made my mental illness exasperate," said Reed. "After I graduated I just didn't want to work anymore."

Reed said staying at the shelter added to her problems.

"I'm just really thankful I have a place of my own," she said.

Gouverneur Place Apartments now has a waiting list, according to Westhab.

The \$20.7 million project was funded largely through a public and private partnership between various state agencies and United Healthcare.

Pizzaniste officially opens on E. Tremont Ave.

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

Have you ever wanted to create your own pizza in a restaurant setting? Well, now you can - at Pizzaniste!

On Monday, April 17, newly opened Pizzaniste, located at 3439 E. Tremont Avenue, held its grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony, although the establishment officially opened earlier this month.

Amidst the hundreds of Italian restaurants and pizza parlors in the Bronx, Pizzaniste has a unique concept when it comes to making a pie.

At Pizzaniste, customers are encouraged to create their own pizza by choosing their favorite doughs, sauces and toppings for their personalized pie.

The combinations and possibilities are endless, as Pizzaniste offers a whopping selection of 46 different toppings.

The restaurant also allows its customers to create their own salads and calzones with up to three different toppings.

So far, one of the most popular items on the menu is the Nutella calzone, which can be jazzed up with bananas and strawberries.

The restaurant is co-owned by brothers Antonio and Salvatore Fa-

solino, both of whom were born and raised in Throggs Neck and graduated from St. Frances de Chantel. With the opening of this establishment, they have come full circle.

"With this restaurant, our goal is for our product to always be of the highest quality and to stand out from all other Italian restaurants in the borough," said Antonio. "We want our customers to say that our place has the best pizza in the Bronx."

Antonio added that, eventually Pizzaniste would like to open other locations.

"The feedback from the community has been excellent so far," said Salvatore, who added that the day of the grand opening saw over 500 customers in total. "This area (East Tremont Avenue) is a prime location for this business and we look forward to the new experience while being back in our old neighborhood."

The restaurant business is nothing new to the Salvatores.

Before opening Pizzaniste, they each worked at Southern Italian family-run restaurant Yolanda's, located at 292 E. 149th Street, for 15 years as the restaurant's third generation.

Yolanda's, which has been in



TNMA's John Marano (front, l) and Bobby Jean, president (front, 2nd from l) celebrated Pizzaniste's grand opening with (front, l-r) Sal Fasolino, brother Anthony, father Matteo, mother Susan; family and friends last Monday. Photo by Aracelis Batista

business for 64 years, was previously owned by their grandmother and father.

The name Pizzaniste according to the co-owners, originates from the term 'barista', which describes a person who prepares and serves coffee. At Pizzaniste, every customer is the creator of their own pizza.

Too hungry to make a decision? Not to worry, the eatery also offers

a selection of eight signature pizzas to choose from. And the pizza never sits out on the counter.

Earlier this week, the restaurant, which seats upwards of 30 to 35 people, started home delivery and will soon set up an app so that customers can place their orders online.

Pizzaniste is the only establishment in the Bronx to offer Puck's, a natural soda fountain service with

no artificial ingredients. Similar to the Fasolinos, Puck's was also started by two brothers. And yes, refills are free.

Beer and wine will be available in the coming months.

The restaurant has filed for sidewalk table service.

Follow Pizzaniste on Facebook by visiting www.facebook.com/pizzaniste.

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UCHC launches healthy beverage choice project

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

A community-based medical provider is teaming up with partners to encourage healthier beverage consumption in the borough.

The Healthy Beverage Zone project launched on Tuesday, April 18 at a Hostos Community College event.

HBZ seeks to encourage individuals and institutions to limit consumption of sugary drinks like sodas and sports drinks in the inter-

est of public health.

The borough-wide initiative grew from a Union Community Health Center project that pediatrician Dr. Vanessa Salcedo, who is HBZ co-chair, help begin over a year ago to combat childhood obesity, liver disease and diabetes at UCHC.

The doctor said that in the many cases she sees, as soon as families and children cut back on sugary drinks and beverages, health outcomes improve.

The initiative that started at UCHC is now backed by a \$10,000 grant from Aetna Foundation, American Public Health Association, and National Association of Counties and went borough-wide on Tuesday, April 18.

HBZ is also in the running with 50 other municipalities for a \$500,000 grant with the outcome of that contest based on the quantifiable success of the program.

"The evidence shows that sugary beverages are causing a lot of these diseases," said Salcedo, adding "We are asking a cross section of organizations to improve beverage standards within their organizations and serve as community role models."

UCHC is teaming up with principal partners Bronx Health REACH, NYC Department of Health and Bronx Neighborhood Action Center, said Salcedo.

Organizations participating in the program include hospitals, clinics, community associations, houses of worship and private sector employers who voluntarily agree to implement healthy beverage standards, she said.

"We want to get more Bronxites drinking water as an alternative to sugar sweetened beverages," said Kelly Moltzen, initiative co-chair and a program manager for Creating Healthy Schools and Communities at Bronx Health REACH.

The campaign will include an informative website, 'toolkits,' fact-sheets, posters, as well as a social media campaign on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter, said Moltzen.

There are four levels of participation an organization can obtain, each one progressively showing a higher level of commitment, said Moltzen.

One typical action that organizations will take as part of the program is to remove vending machines with



(l-r) Fabian Wander, Hostos Community College Health and Wellness Center director; Senator Gustavo Rivera; Dr. Douglas York, Union Community Health Center CEO; Dr. David Gomez, HCC president; Dr. Vanessa Salcedo, UCHC director of community health and promotions; Kelly Moltzen, Creating Healthy Schools and Communities at Bronx Health REACH program manager; Assemblyman Victor Pichardo and Fernando Tirado.

soda and sugar-sweetened juices and teas and replace them with those selling water or unsweetened juices, she said.

Another action is instituting a healthy beverage policy at organizational meetings in which only drinks like coffee and other healthier beverages are served, she said.

"We wanted to leverage what Union Community Health Center has done and share it as a best prac-

tice to encourage other organizations to do the same," said Moltzen.

Among the many dignitaries who attended the program launch event was Senator Gustavo Rivera, who said HBZ was a very good idea and that he was proud to partner with UCHC on it.

"I think it is a solid policy idea and a good way to get people to make better choices about what they put into their bodies," said Rivera.



HBZ will include a marketing campaign to encourage healthy beverage consumption. Photos by UCHC

NYBG's president sets exit after 3 decades

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE

New York Botanical Garden president and CEO Gregory Long announced on Thursday, April 20 that he will be stepping down from his position effective June 30, 2018.

"I believe after 29 years, this is the right time for me to step aside because The New York Botanical Garden is stronger than ever," Long said. "It has tremendous momentum, magnificent assets and I feel very optimistic about the Garden's future."

Long has been praised for many accomplishments during his almost three decades at the Garden.

He oversaw three 7-year plans to restore the gardens.

Those plans included garnering more than \$333 million in funding for 43 major capital projects which included 15 new gardens and landscape renovations.

Long was at the head of restoration projects for the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, the LuEsther T. Mertz Library, and the Lillian and Amy Goldman Stone Mill.

He also oversaw the construction of buildings such as the Pfizer Plant Research Laboratory, the William and Lynda Steere Herbarium and the Leon Levy Visitor Center.

According to a Botanical Garden's spokesperson, attendance and membership at the Garden has quadrupled during Long's tenure and endowment rose twentyfold.

Despite all he has accomplished, Long recalls the feeling he first had in 1989 when he learned he was going to be at the head of what would become one of the city's largest cultural attractions.

"Oh, I was very excited," he said. "I thought it was the biggest responsibility I would ever encounter in my entire life."

Long worked as the vice president for Public Affairs for The New York Public Library throughout most of the 1980s prior to his NYBG position.

While Long has contributed many things to the Garden he also explained what the Garden has contributed to him as a person.

"Oh my goodness," he said, "It's made a wonderful life for me."

He continued, "What I love about it is working with all the really fine people associated with the garden. The staff, the scientists, the educators, the teachers, the people who make the Garden beautiful and all the people on the outside who helped us."

Long recalled some of the struggles throughout his 30-year career - especially

in the area of funding.

He said the city used to provide much more funding for the Garden's daily operations.

However, that funding has decreased yearly for the past several years.

Long also worried about funding for specific projects.

For example, Botanical Garden officials were worried they wouldn't have enough money for the new Edible Academy which provides hands-on gardening experiences for families.

"It took eight years to assemble the funding for that," said Long.

"But everything worked out," he said with a chuckle.

The Edible Academy is set to open in 2018.

Long doesn't know who will take his place when he leaves 14 months from now, but he did offer some words of advice to whomever will fill his seat.

"Keep it beautiful," Long continued. "Keep it central, maintain its international stature."

He added, "Pay attention to your audience, the city has a very wonderful audience."

Long also stressed that he is not going into retirement, but isn't sure what he will do next.



New York Botanical Garden president and CEO Gregory Long

Photo Courtesy of New York Botanical Garden and Alex Kaplan

PARKS FILLS BRONX. RIVER WITH 400 HERRING

NYC Parks, the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Bronx River Alliance and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection stocked the Bronx River with 400 alewife herring on Thursday, April 20 in efforts to restore a native migratory fish run in the city's largest freshwater river. The fish stocking builds upon an ongoing effort to re-establish a self-sustaining population of these native fish serving as an important food source for larger fish, birds and other wildlife in our ocean, estuaries and rivers.



(l-r) Steve Gephard, CT Fisheries; Marit Larson, NYC Parks chief of Forestry, Horticulture and Natural Resources; Jennifer Greenfield, NYC Parks assistant commissioner of Forestry, Horticulture and Natural Resources and Liam Kavanagh, NYC parks first deputy commissioner.

Photo by Malcolm Pinckney, NYC Parks



Several alewife herring were ready to make the Bronx River their new home.

Photo by Malcolm Pinckney, NYC Parks

CB 7'S WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT SUMMIT

Community Board 7 hosted its inaugural Women's Empowerment Summit on Saturday, April 8 at Lehman College to rave reviews! The one-of-a-kind summit featured an inspirational panel composed of Public Advocate Letitia James; Adaline Walker Santiago, CB 7 chairwoman; Borough Deputy President Aurelia Green; District Attorney Darcel Clark; registered nurse Roberta Gjonaj; Cristina Contreras, North Central Bronx Hospital CEO; anthropologist Dr. Rima Brusi; Maria Teresa Montilla, Institute for Latino Research president; Neva Shillingford-King, 1199SEIU executive vice president; Gwen Thomas-Steed, CB 7 Web Site, Media & Acknowledgement Committee chairwoman; lieutenant colonel Merryl David Tengesdal; Bronx Parks Commissioner Iris Rodriguez-Rosa; Maribel Torres, NYC Department of Education District 10 interim superintendent; Rochelle Bent, senior specialist advisory neighborhood commissioner; Barbara Selesky, Woodlawn Cemetery director; Jean Hill, CB 7 Housing and Land Use Committee chairwoman; Gloria Bent, CB 7 Education and Youth Committee chairwoman and Robyn Saunders, CB 7 Veterans Committee chairwoman and CB 7 second vice chairwoman.



Astronaut lieutenant colonel Merryl Tengesdal (l) and Adaline Walker Santiago, CB 7 chairwoman, gave riveting addresses at this year's Women's Empowerment Summit.

Photo courtesy of MAS Productions



HARMONY COURT CELEBRATE EARTH DAY

Harmony Court hosted an inaugural Earth Day celebration on Friday, April 21 to encourage people to take care of themselves and the environment.

Lisa Hall (l),Harmony Court program director, received some educational literature from Alpha Care's Danny S. Rivera.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

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49th Pct. makes effort to curb domestic violence

BY ARTHUR CUSANO

Bronx resident Kay Cardona said she had no idea what domestic violence was when she remarried at 31.

But she would soon learn firsthand.

"Almost immediately my husband started doing things like yelling at me or cornering me if he didn't like something I said or if I wasn't doing something the right way. I had no idea what was going on."

Cardona was among several women who spoke at a domestic violence workshop at the 49th Precinct headquarters in Pelham Parkway on Tuesday, April 25.

The forum was attended by several dozen members of the NYPD Explorers youth program.

Like other victims, she said she felt obligated to stay with her husband for the sake of their child, but ultimately realized she had to escape.

"When he choked me and I blacked out for the second time while my son was standing near me with his stuffed animal, that's when I realized it was no joke. It wasn't until the point that death was going to be the outcome for me that I finally got out of (the situation)"

Like many victims, Cardona struggled to pay the bills and ful-

fill all the duties of a parent without her ex-spouse's salary, but said help was available from organizations including Safe Horizon and the Bronx D.A.'s office.

"It's a very long and hard road, but if you or someone you know is in this situation, you can do it," she said.

NYPD 49th Precinct Commander Captain Thomas Alps told the capacity teen crowd the issue of domestic violence was a major concern for him since taking control of the precinct last November.

"This year, it's accounted for 18 percent of our (overall) crime, and when you talk about felony assaults, it accounts for 51 percent." That's a lot of crime, and a lot of people are affected by it, and children are affected the most."

The Tuesday, April 25 presentation also featured a skit in which teens played a couple with children.

The father becomes angered when the mother of his children calls him repeatedly to bring home milk, and the incident soon escalates to physical violence.

Police officer David Lepore, a former domestic violence officer, compared the physical abuse to a progressive disease that often gets worse if it isn't treated.

"The offender may push someone to the ground one day and



(l-r) Police officer Lepore, Captain Alps, Rabbi Keith Elijah Thompson and Kay Cardona organized a very informative domestic violence workshop.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

realize the victim didn't do anything about it," Lepore said. "So next time they slap them, and if they don't do anything about it they punch them, and it gets worse and worse."

Domestic violence unit police officer Melvin Rodriguez said domestic violence arrests can go through either criminal or fam-

ily court, depending on circumstances.

When the unit investigates a reported incident, they make a home visit and make referrals to help get victims assistance.

Unfortunately, many incidents go unreported, Rodriguez said.

"We can control the reported violence, but a lot of incidents we

don't know about because the victim might be afraid or may not know (they are being abused)," he said.

Rodriguez strongly urged residents to report anything they believed could be domestic abuse.

The 49th precinct domestic violence unit can be reached directly at (718) 918-2030.

Woodlawn Senior Living returns to drawing board

from Page 1

the income limits for potential tenants and the building's number of units.

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, Councilman Andrew Cohen, and Senator Jeff Klein - all of whom have been very vocal on their concerns with the project - released a joint statement following Woodlawn Affiliate's announcement.

"The proposed development had many flaws including the size of units in the building and traffic concerns on East 233rd Street, all of which have been raised by local residents at many community meetings," the statement read. "The community was vociferously opposed to

this proposal, and this is the logical step to take."

The statement continued, "Although Woodlawn Affiliates LLC plans to retain this property and go back to the drawing board, this is a major win for the community."

Keller said Woodlawn Affiliates is looking into changing the income limits to make it easier for Woodlawn seniors to live in the apartments.

According to the current proposal, the housing will serve residents making 60 percent of the NYC area median income (AMI).

This translates to \$38,100 per year for one person and \$43,500 annually for a family of two.

Dinowitz and Klein felt these financial require-

ments excluded Woodlawn residents since many earn too much money to qualify for the apartments.

"There are only studio apartments and the income limits are so low no one in Woodlawn would be eligible," Dinowitz said.

"It's very difficult to ask people to support a housing development for seniors when not one of the seniors in the Woodlawn community could live there," said Klein.

Keller said the company will also look at adjusting how big the project is since some community residents took issue with the development's 92-unit size.

Woodlawn is largely a community with single family homes.



Woodlawn Affiliates LLC told Community Board 12 on Friday, April 21 that it is revising its plan for Woodlawn Senior Living.

Photo Courtesy of Robert Christie

Keller said Woodlawn Affiliates LLC plans to return to the community board with a revised proposal before the summer begins.

She added the group does not plan to meet with any more stakeholders before

they return to the community board.

"We've gotten a plethora of feedback that we need to incorporate before continuing the conversation," Keller said. "They're not going to say anything different

than they have already said and we need to have time to react to that."

Keller said the company has also informed city agencies they will not be moving forward with the project in its current form.

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