

2 BIDS move closer to being established

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

One east Bronx community's effort to create a business improvement district is all but done, while another is moving forward after receiving a green light from local property owners and merchants.

The steering committee creating a business improvement district in Throggs Neck reports that it has received "overwhelming support" from local property owners and merchants, and is now moving onto the legislative phase of the BID creation process, according to two key committee members.

A similar effort in Morris Park is all but complete after it was approved by the NYC Council in December.

A review of the BID's preliminary finances by the New York City comptroller's office and Mayor de Blasio's signature are the only remaining punchlist items, said Joe Regina, a former consultant for the Throggs Neck and Morris Park BID efforts.

There are 75 BIDs already operating in New York City, according to the NYC Department of Small Business Services.

The Throggs Neck BID steering committee is now sending its paperwork to the SBS, and has selected steering committee members Bob Jaen and Steve Kaufman, current and former Throggs Neck Merchants Association presidents respectively, to be their representatives during the legislative approval process.

Jaen and Kaufman will be providing testimony to SBS, NYC Council and the mayor's office on the would-be BID, that will include businesses along East Trem-

Continued on Page 4

FINAL RULING: STATUE STAYS

Columbus monument to receive tell-all markers

BY SARAH VALENZUELA

The stone sculpture of Christopher Columbus in Columbus Circle will stay, but is expected to have some company.

On Friday, January 12, Mayor de Blasio released the Monuments Commission's final report on public monuments and property in the city.

While the statue will be staying, new historical markers are expected to be placed at Columbus Circle detailing the life of Christo-

pher Columbus and history of the statue itself, according to a press release on the report.

"I believe the commission used common sense. On one hand you're talking about Confederate generals who led a war to separate from our country," said Assemblyman Michael Benedetto, who testified in the Bronx at the public hearing about public monuments. "I don't know if you erect statues to people like that, but it's another

Continued on Page 4



Sharing The Warmth

As winter temperatures continue to plummet, Clothes4Soul and Macy's supplied brand new winter coats to teens in need from Girls Inc. of New York City at Young Women's Leadership School of the Bronx on Friday, January 12. Teacher Tiffany Martinez (l) helped Kristalene Marciano try on a winter coat she likes.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

49th Precinct launches neighborhood policing program

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

An effort in community policing that brings the 'cop on the beat' into the 21st century has come to another borough precinct.

The 49th Precinct held the rollout of its Neighborhood Coordination Officers program - a community policing initiative being utilized in precincts around the city - with an event with community partners at Albert Einstein College of Medicine on Wednesday, January 10.

The launch of the precinct's NCO, the tenth in a Bronx precinct, will take place at midnight on Monday, January 22, said Captain Thomas Alps, 49th Precinct commanding of-

ficer.

Ten NCO cops, whose duties will include working with community members to better understand policing issues, holding quarterly meetings and working the same communities during the same shifts in order to identify trends, were introduced to the community during the rollout, said Alps.

NYPD Chief of Patrol Rodney Harrison and NYPD Deputy Chief for Bronx Patrol Jesus Pintos spoke during the rollout event, said the 49th Precinct's commanding officer.

"It is a crime-fighting strategy,

Continued on Page 15

Documentary center plans Claremont Village art showcase

BY SARAH VALENZUELA

A new art installation will be coming to the south Bronx.

The Bronx Documentary Center, along with the six other organizations in the city, was selected as the new recipient of the Mayor's Grant for Cultural Impact.

"The organization will receive \$50,000 in cash from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs and an additional \$25,000 match award from the partnering agency," according to a statement released by DCA.

Partnering with the BDC will be the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, but the project in mind? A series of nighttime-focused art works to light up the night in Claremont Village.

"There's a lot of outdoor space in Claremont and most of it doesn't get used and there's a need to use art to make these places friendly and more welcoming," said Michael Kamber, founder of the BDC.

"We're hoping that by making these installations we'll make Claremont Village a more welcoming space and help to bring people out basically to help create community to share experiences."

The BDC's 18 homegrown, Bronx native photographers have been working on

projects within the south Bronx similar to the one planned, according to Kamber.

In fact, the successful art installation BDC launched at the Mitchel Houses, which was a photography project worked on by the BDC and seniors living in the housing complex, proved the plausibility of having a larger scale project like the one planned for Claremont Village.

"We printed out the photos [taken by the seniors] on big vinyl banners and put them in the courtyard," recalled Kamber. "People loved [the photos] so much, that when they were damaged in a storm the community actually came out, rebuilt them and put them back up."

The project planned for Claremont Village will serve about 10,000 residents, one of the largest public housing communities in the country, with artwork reflecting the everyday lives and struggles of the south Bronx community.

"It makes me really feel hopeful that the city wants to invest in telling this story," said Soundview native, Rhynna M. Santos, one of the photographers working on the project with BDC.

"It really makes residents in this area, anybody in the Bronx, any low-income people, anybody in the United States, that feel ignored or unimportant, makes them



July 2017 Claremont Housing Projects. Bronx, NY. Images of Bronx Photo League members photographing at the Claremont Houses.
Photo by Adi Talwar/Bronx Photo League

feel important."

As the projects are being planned with the purpose of being shown during the evening, organizers said the installations will incorporate light and sound, as well as visual aspects.

"Things like this don't happen to people like us in the Bronx and it's literally a dream come true," Santos continued.

"I would love for this project to encourage other people to look at areas and populations that are not really being talked about, especially low-income communi-

ties of color, and that this project will inspire other artists to do something similar."

The projects are expected to be installed in June 2018, according to Kamber.

The BDC will also work with other members of Claremont Village and the south Bronx community for the project.

The project is also part of the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety to help reduce crime and strengthen neighborhoods.



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Final ruling: statue stays; Columbus monument to receive tell-all markers

from Page 1

thing to remove a statue of Columbus.”

“You’re not celebrating the terrible things he did to Native Americans, but the accomplishments of sailing out to a world unknown to Europe.”

In addition to the markers, the city has planned to commission a new monument recognizing indigenous people.

“I expected this compromise, it’s politics,” said Bobby Gonzalez, a multicultural motivational speaker and storyteller from the south Bronx. “Columbus, he was a murderer and a slave trader. There’s documentation.”

“It’s overdue [the commission of a monument to indigenous people],” continued Gonzalez, who not only identifies as Latino, but also as native Taino, one of the indigenous populations historians say were nearly wiped out due to the Columbus exploration.

“I think there should be

more dialogue between native people and non-natives about this particular issue and having it conducted in a civilized tone,” he added.

The Forum of Italian American Educators, along with other Italian-American organizations, have been conflicted by the recent decision regarding the monument.

“FIAME applauds the Mayoral Commission for deciding to keep the statue of Christopher Columbus at Columbus Circle, but as a part of the Columbus Heritage Coalition, we are against the placing of a plaque at the site,” said FIAME in a statement released to the Bronx Times Reporter.

“We feel that such an action will depict Columbus in a negative light. We support the efforts of the Coalition to preserve our Columbus statue as is, as a symbol of pride for the Italian American community.”

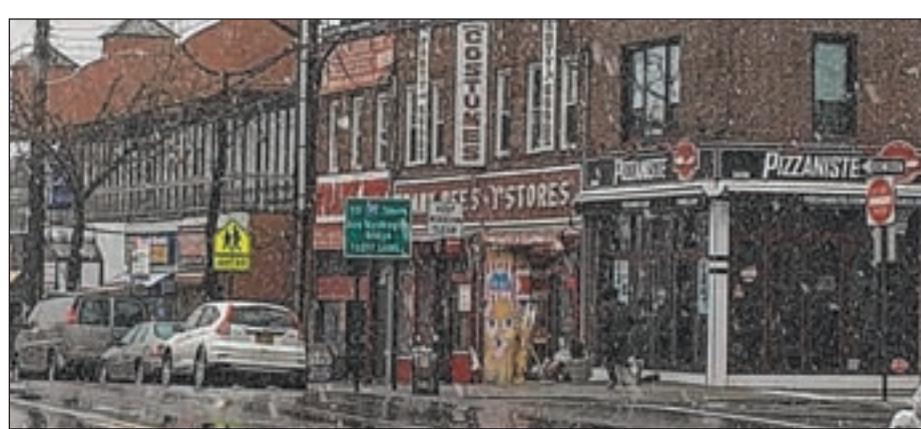
Members of the Native American community have

also been concerned about the indigenous people monument’s message.

“[The indigenous people monument] has to be based on resilience and survival,” said Hugh Burnam of the Native American Mohawk nation, Wolf Clan in Onondaga, New York. “If there’s a statue of us there to represent who we are, the other side of my thinking is many seeing us, as a people, are extinct and this [statue] is who we used to be and that’s sad because it’s kind of a legacy of colonization.”

The Mayor’s Commission plans to work with the indigenous community living in New York for the coming monument, according to a representative from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs.

The Columbus Heritage Coalition has planned to speak to city representatives to overturn the decision to add the historical markers near the Columbus statue, according to supporters of the coalition.



An effort to create a business improvement district in Throggs Neck along East Tremont Avenue that supporters believe will uplift local business and create a more vibrant retail mix is moving forward. Its next stop is the NYC Department of Small Business Services. Community News Group / Patrick Rocchio

Two BIDs move closer to being established

from Page 1

ont Avenue from Bruckner Boulevard to Miles Avenue, said Jaen.

“We pushed and pushed and we came through,” said Kaufman about getting support among commercial property and business owners.

The drift of the Throggs Neck BID’s steering committee’s argument will be that there is overwhelming support for the BID’s ratification, the Throggs Neck shopping strip is surrounded by other BIDs, and there is a desire to upgrade the retail mix of shops to better serve the shoppers, said Kaufman.

Kaufman said that without a BID, certain types of businesses would not locate in the community, affecting the retail mix.

He also said that community businesses need a BID executive director to help them navigate the city’s bureaucracy.

“The neighborhood needs its own director because dealing with City Hall and other government agencies can be like going through a hornet’s nest,” said Kaufman, adding that with a BID there would be a paid employee to help mer-

chants in a variety of ways, including everything from marketing to governmental relations.

Jaen said that with the paperwork sent to SBS, it is up to the city to schedule hearings on the Throggs Neck BID, adding it is going to “go through and we are going to get it done.”

“The people representing the Morris Park BID worked very hard to get to where they are, and we are hoping to follow them and also have good news for the Throggs Neck community sometime in the next six to eight months hopefully,” said Jaen.

Al D’Angelo, a steering committee member for the Morris Park BID and Morris Park Community Association’s president, said that he believes the BID will create a better retail selection, curbing the number of repetitive stores such as nail salons, which are prevalent because of their high profit margins.

The BID, which encompasses Morris Park Avenue between Unionport and Williamsbridge roads, will include 188 exiting businesses, according to a previous Bronx Times article.

“It is a done deal,” said

D’Angelo, adding that the BID will have a say as to what kinds of businesses site in the community and will market existing businesses.

Small businesses need all the help they can get, indicated D’Angelo.

“It is very difficult for a small business to compete with mega stores and malls, parking being one of the biggest drawbacks,” said D’Angelo.

He would like to see a trolley operate along the BID’s corridor to transport shoppers and bring a hometown feeling to the strip.

The BID will eliminate the need to have volunteers from the MPCA go door to door to collect money for the annual holiday lights along Morris Park Avenue, said D’Angelo.

In the future, the BID’s director will handle Christmas lights and promotions, much the same way nearby Westchester Square and White Plains Road BIDs operate, he said.

According to SBS’s website, BID programs are funded by an assessment billed to property owners that are unique to each BID and decided upon by each BID’s board of directors.



Members of Mayoral Commission of City Art, Monuments and Markers, (l-r) Harriet F. Senie, John Calvelli and Tom Finkelppearl, at the public hearing about the monuments in the Bronx on November 27. Community News Group/Sarah Valenzuela



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The aftermath of the fire which claimed two lives at Throggs Neck House this past Sunday.

Photo by Aracelis Batista

Hot plate-ignited fire in TN Houses claims 2

BY SARAH VALENZUELA

The latest residential fire in the Bronx, a blaze in Throggs Neck, has left yet another community in mourning.

On Sunday, January 14, shortly after noon, residents of the Throggs Neck Houses on 2821 Dewey Avenue, noticed thick smoke billowing out of the windows of an apartment on the fourth floor.

When the FDNY arrived to apartment #4B, they found two unconscious and unresponsive occupants.

Both 13-year-old Yolanda Rojas and her father 62-year-old Nelson Rojas were transported by the EMS to Jacobi Hospital where they were pronounced dead.

Fire marshals determined a hot plate that sat too close to some bedding ignited the blaze.

Some residents suspected the hot plate was being used as a heater because the apartment lacked adequate heat, an ongoing problem in NYCHA housing during the winter months.

But a tenant leader at the complex countered that claim.

"There is no record of there being no heat," said Monique Johnson, the pres-

ident of the Throggs Neck Houses Resident Council.

"A lot of people are saying there was no heat but that's not true," Johnson continued.

Community leaders, however, are still looking for answers to why the Rojas' needed a hot plate in the first place.

"I don't recall there being a fire recently in Throggs Neck Houses, but in any event this was a tragic situation and NYCHA does have a lot of explaining to do," said Matthew Cruz, the district manager of Community Board 10.

Some believe the family may have secured the hot plate when the complex suffered through gas outages this past summer.

While more than one third of home fires happen December through February, most of these fires are one hundred percent preventable, according to the FDNY website.

"If an appliance develops a different smell, makes unusual sounds or the cord feels warm, pull the plug and discontinue use," said FDNY in a Twitter post.

The American Red Cross, which helps victims of local disasters like fires, said this has been one of their busiest seasons yet.

Since January 1, the Red Cross has responded to 25 incidents in the Bronx, most of them being home fires, and helped nearly 600 people in the borough with emergency housing or funds.

Boroughwide, clothing and supply drives continue.

The FDNY, community boards, churches and other community organizations, the Red Cross, and local elected officials are trying to help Bronxites learn more about how to prevent fires and how to be prepared in case of an emergency, since the deadly fire on Prospect Avenue in December.

In fact, the day of the Throggs Neck Houses fire, the Red Cross and the office of the Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. held a workshop in Soundview and installed 400 free smoke alarms.

"It is imperative that we reach out to our neighbors and that we check on each other," said Johnson.

The Throggs Neck Residence Council is planning a memorial for the Rojas family.

CB 10 set up a 6 p.m. fire safety presentation for the Throggs Neck Houses on Friday, January 19, at 550 Balcom Avenue.

BRONX COUNCIL ON THE ARTS HOSTS *'The Black & White Of It'*

Bronx Council on the Arts and Visual art master Aleathia Brown co-hosted 'The Black and White of It,' an exciting art workshop on Saturday, January 13 at the Westchester Library. Through a special partnership with the Bronx Council on the Arts, students learned how to use black and white acrylic paint, black watercolor paper and pencil to create a work of art. The next program will be held on Saturday, March 10 from 1 to 3 p.m. at Westchester Square Library on 2521 Glebe Avenue.



Proud six-year-old artist Padma Kesraj added her practice piece to dry with the others.
Photo by Laura Stone



April Collazo Rodriguez concentrated on her black and white painting.
Photo by Laura Stone



Workshop teacher Aleathia Brown (l) with participating artist Gloria Sanders, discussing her use of lines.
Photo by Laura Stone



Visual art master instructor Aleathia Brown demonstrated the proper technique to hold a paint brush.
Photo by Laura Stone



Mother and daughter Nandini Persaud (l) and Padma Keraj participated in the family art workshop.
Photo by Laura Stone



Aleathia Brown (c) began the workshop by showing the artists the project they would be working on while giving them an explanation of the task at hand.
Photo by Laura Stone



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Street renamed for pastor, Rev. Dr. Fletcher Crawford



Councilman Salamanca (c) presented (l-r) Rev. Frederick Crawford, Rev. Lerone Crawford, Mother Arnetta Crawford, deacon Patrick Crawford and minister Celine Crawford the ceremonial street sign named in memory of the late Rev. Dr. Fletcher Crawford.

Photo by Aracelis Batista

BY ROBERT WIRSING

Relatives and residents served by a beloved pastor received an incredible gift on his birthday.

On Sunday, January 7, Councilman Rafael Salamanca, Rev. Frederick Crawford, First Lady Antionette Crawford, Mother Arnetta Crawford and Union Grove Missionary Baptist Church's faithful dedicated a section of Hoe Avenue as 'Rev. Dr. Fletcher C. Crawford Way.'

The heartwarming ceremony held in front of UGMBC honored the late Rev. Dr. Fletcher Crawford who passed away on Tuesday, August 8, 2017 at 92-years-old.

In a fitting tribute, the celebration occurred on what would have been his 93rd birthday.

Fletcher was one of 14 children born to the late Rev. Jeremiah and Dovetta Crawford in Waverly, AL who answered the call to serve God under his father's leadership.

His father Jeremiah founded UGMBC on October 23, 1946 at 221 E. 98th Street in Harlem where he presided as pastor.

Fletcher served in the Army during World War II and received his Ministerial License on May 16, 1947.

He started his ministry as a Sunday school teacher and was later ordained a deacon.

Fletcher received his religious education from the Baptist Education Center for Religious Education and Southern Baptist College and his Bachelor of Theology Degree at Notasulga, AL Bible College, now called Alabama Bible University.

As parish membership expanded in 1948, UGMBC relocated to a storefront building at 876 Home Street for 13 years.

After his father's death in 1956, Fletcher took over and led a congregation of over 500 members for five decades.

In 1961, the church briefly resided at 3329 Third Avenue until moving to its current location at 1488 Hoe Avenue a year later.

During his visit to the Holy Land in February 1979, Fletcher became inspired by God to construct a new church.

Upon his homecoming, Fletcher met with his staff and parishioners to discuss his plan which earned their support.

During reconstruction, Fletcher and his flock celebrated Sunday service at the Bronx Boy's Club and Assembly of God Church.

UGMBC's new building was officially dedicated on April 28, 1984.

"He saw the need for a pillar, a pillar built with the help of the Lord and His son, Jesus Christ and that's why

it's not surprising that this pillar, right here on a rocky lot in the middle of Hoe Avenue is still standing here today," expressed Salamanca.

Fletcher and his wife Mother Arnetta married in 1962 and raised four children that gave them eight grandchildren.

His impressive resume included time as a member of the Baptist Ministers Conference of Greater New York Vicinity; serving twice as president of the Baptist Ministers Evening Conference; a member of the United Missionary Baptist Association, the Empire Missionary Baptist Convention and the National Baptist Convention.

Fletcher was also instrumental in establishing the Back to School Youth Block Party, the Senior Citizens Holiday Fellowship Dinner, the Summer Community Health Fair and Divine Union Summer Day Camp.

"I'm only standing here today because of Dr. Fletcher Crawford. He was up on top of the mountain to see what I couldn't see. He planted a seed within me and all that's taken place is a result of Dr. Crawford's firmness not to move. The Bronx has changed because of men like Dr. Crawford who stood their ground," shared Rev. Frederick Crawford, UGMBC senior pastor and Fletcher's eldest son.

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Kingsbridge Heights Octavitas Parranda Returns

Despite the frigid weather, the second annual Kingsbridge Octavitas Parranda on Saturday, January 13 helped warm residents' holiday spirits through its unique Caribbean holiday caroling tradition. The event was made possible to the collective efforts of community activist Samelys Lopez, Jose 'Dr. Drum' Ortiz, BombaYo!, Miriam Quin Photography, BronxNet, Eduardo Christian Ramos, News 12 the Bronx, the Kingsbridge Merchants Association, Assemblyman Jose Rivera, Rexhep Myftari, La Cocina Nueva, St. James Park, Lynette Arroyo and Community Board 7's Gloria Bent among many others. Jose 'Dr. Drum' Ortiz (c) led the eager group in rehearsal prior to the parranda.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Jose 'Dr. Drum' Ortiz (l) and Vanessa Pastrano discussed Aztlán, the legendary ancestral home of the Aztecs, during the workshop portion of the event.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Kingsbridge Octavitas Parranda marched through St. James Park to the beat of their drums and with a song in their hearts.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



(l-r) Samelys Lopez, Jose 'Dr. Drum' Ortiz, Miriam Quinones and Lynette Arroyo helped organized the annual cultural celebration. Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Gloria Bent (l) and Samelys Lopez rehearsed before their neighborhood trek.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico



Jose 'Dr. Drum' Ortiz practiced an Octavitas carol with the group.

Photo by Silvio Pacifico

Yahay Obeid, CB 11 committee chair, opens new dialogue

BY ROBERT WIRSING

A Community Board 11 committee chairman is hoping to bring a shy community into the fold.

Since 2016, Morris Park native Yahay Obeid has served as the board's Public Safety Committee chairman after being appointed by Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr.

According to Jeremy Warneke, CB 11 district manager, Obeid is the first board member from the district's burgeoning Muslim community appointed to the board in recent memory.

As the Public Safety Committee chairman, Obeid communicates with the 49th Precinct on all matters regarding crime and crime prevention, the FDNY and the criminal justice system.

"He's been a positive influence in our community. If there's ever any local issues,

he always gets involved and works to have them properly addressed," stated Anthony Vitaliano, the board's chairman.

Vitaliano added that Obeid also acts as a liaison to the Bronx Muslim Center which helps better connect CB 11 with its many Muslim residents.

Obeid graduated from the NYPD Citizens Police Academy on Wednesday, December 27 which was the first graduation ceremony he has ever attended.

"We have a safe community already, but the goal is to make it safer," he said. "Taking the Citizens Police Academy class has made me understand what the NYPD goes through on a daily basis and will allow me to better address some misconceptions our communities may have with the police."

Obeid is also a member of

the Morris Park Community Association and the Van Nest Neighborhood Alliance and the Bronx Muslim Center's director of outreach.

Located at 702 Rhineland Avenue, the Bronx Muslim Center serves approximately 500 worshippers every Friday and nearly 5,000 during holy days such as Eid.

As director of outreach, Obeid's goal is to integrate the Muslim community into the larger community.

"Our Muslim community doesn't tend to get involved in the surrounding community and usually isolates itself due to its own comfort," he explained. "There is a gradual change to have the Muslim community open up more with our neighbors."

Obeid has taught beginner English once a week to adults at the Bronx Muslim Center's program 'Revolution for Culture and Education: Journey to Knowledge' which is free and open to the public.

He has expressed interest in continuing the class following his Citizens Police Academy graduation.

Obeid's family emigrated from their native Yemen to the United States in 1991 when he was 8-years-old.

A flyboy at heart, he pursued his passion for aviation by earning his private pilot license in 2003.

In 2005, Obeid earned his Bachelor of Science degree in airline management from Vaughn College of Aeronautics.

His Federal Aviation Administration career took off in 2008 when he started as an air traffic controller at JFK Airport.

As the FAA's New York Terminal assistant district manager, his office supports air traffic operations for 7,000 to 8,000 flights daily.

From 2009 to 2012, Obeid was an adjunct professor teaching Aviation Weather and Air Traffic classes at his alma mater.

He was previously employed with Transportation Security Administration at LaGuardia Airport and Orlando International Airport from 2005 to 2008 and for Swissport International Ltd. at JFK from 2004 to 2006.



CB 11 Public Safety Committee chairman Yahay Obeid (l) received congratulations from captain Thomas Alps, 49th Precinct commanding officer, at his NYPD Citizens Police Academy graduation.

Photo courtesy of Yahay Obeid

Message from Councilman Mark Gjonaj



COUNCILMAN MARK GJONAJ

I have called the Bronx home my entire life. More than a borough, it's a collection of communities - neighborhoods of people that truly understand that you can only get out of a community that which you put into it.

It is this strong sense of community that has always made me and so many Bronxites proud of our borough. It's that same pride that drives us to make sure that we get our fair share from City Hall.

As your councilman, I am dedicated to advance legislation and be a voice to make sure that the Bronx is not the Tale of Two Boroughs with an imbalance in mass transit, disproportionate share of supportive housing, a starved library system and more.

As the new chair of the Small Business Committee, I will fight for small business owners, protect and help mom and pop shops prosper, create more jobs and continue to make our commercial corridors a viable part of our neighborhoods.

As a member of the Housing and Buildings; Immigration; General Welfare; Juvenile Justice; Parks and Recreation; Public Housing; and Small Business Committees, I will be in a position to make sure that we have a city government that is responsive to the needs of the very people it's meant to serve.

To make our community stronger and so that I can better serve you, please feel free to contact me. Mobile: (917) 731-6850, fax: (718) 931-1605, office telephone: (718) 931-1721, office address: 3040 E. Tremont Avenue, Room 104, Bronx, NY 10461.

In meantime, I invite you to join us for my inaugural ceremony on Sunday, January 21 at 1 p.m. at the Herbert H. Lehman Educational Campus, 3000 E. Tremont Avenue.

Wishing you and your family a healthy, happy and peaceful New Year.

I look forward to hearing from you and serving your needs in the years to come.

Respectfully,

Councilman Mark Gjonaj

(Council Member Mark Gjonaj represents the 13th Council District in the Bronx, which includes Allerton, City Island, Country Club, Edgewater Park, Ferry Point, Locust Point, Morris Park, Pelham Bay, Pelham Gardens, Pelham Parkway, Silver Beach, Spencer Estate, Throggs Neck, Van Nest and Waterbury)

Hayes wins national marketing award

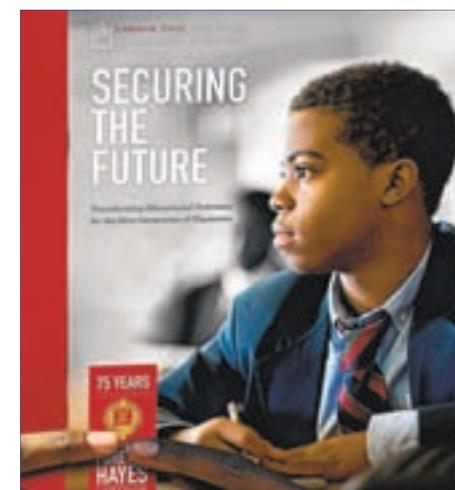
Cardinal Hayes High School won the 2017 Gold and Silver InspirED School Marketers Brilliance Award for the Forever Hayes campaign video and the printed campaign materials in the national competition that recognizes excellence in private and independent school marketing and communications.

The event is sponsored by InspirED School Marketers, a website that provides "brilliant ideas and brain food" for private school administrators around the globe.

The entries were judged by a panel of 66 experts who are professionals in peer schools or businesses that specialize in school marketing and were scored on creativity, impact, design, copy, photography and overall appearance. The judges were incredibly impressed with the school's submissions.

"Cover-to-cover, this piece makes a very compelling case. I loved that there were only limited photos in the piece, but the ones that were used were of incredibly high quality. No three-under-the-tree makes any school piece stand out. The copy was direct and the use of infographics was very well done — they added to the message instead of distracting from it."

To view the 2017 InspirED Brilliance



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Vanessa Carey (l) with Dennis Dipres.

Community News Group/Sarah Valenzuela

Loving couple with cerebral palsy reunite at Beth Abraham

BY SARAH VALENZUELA

Love knows no bounds. Not even a severe disability can stop the inevitable.

And two residents at Beth Abraham Rehab Center, after a decade and a half, are the proof.

Vanessa Carey, 29, and 31-year-old Heriberto 'Dennis' Dipres have known each other for more than 15 years and both have cerebral palsy.

The two met as young teenagers at the Westchester School For Special Children and at 13-years-old and 15-years-old, it was love at first sight.

"When they got me on the school bus [on the first day] I was sitting behind him," said Carey, smiling at Dennis. "I was touching his chair, holding it and then when we got to school, when they turned him around, I was like, oh he's cute!"

"But I could never speak to her," added Dipres.

"Because he was shy it was up to me to bring him out of his shell," finished Carey.

They both grew up near Yankee Stadium and were even born at Lincoln Hospital in Mott Haven.

However, their relationship is more than just your average childhood love story.

While their disabilities threw up roadblocks and complicated their love and affection for one another, over time it has persevered.

"When I went to school, I would cry a lot and he knew why," Carey said. "I was abused for 17 years in my own apartment [by the woman who was supposed to be taking care of me]."

"It was always hard for me because I felt like there was nothing I could really do for her [because of my condition]," Dipres said.

The two recalled an incident when Dennis tried to visit Vanessa at her home to make sure she was doing okay and her caretaker was not doing anything malicious.

"When I got there, [Carey's caretaker] asked me what I was doing there," said Dennis.

"It's a good thing my uncle was there. He said to the lady, 'Chill that's her boyfriend,'" Carey added.

"When I was leaving, the lady told me if I ever came back something might happen to Vanessa. So I said to myself, even though it'll be hard, I will stay away from Vanessa for her own safety," said Dipres.

For several years, the two were apart as Dennis heeded the caretaker's threat.

Dennis arrived at the Beth Abraham six years ago, and Vanessa entered the facility in 2015.

"I was in the library [at the center] doing an activity with a group when he saw me again," said Carey as she smiled.

"I said Vanessa is that you," recalled Dipres.

"I said D is that you," added Carey excitedly.

It was the first time the two had seen each other since Dennis' fateful visit to her apartment.

"I told him about everything that happened since he left," said Vanessa as Dennis reached out to hold her hand.

She told him how her caretaker locked her in her room and used a cable to hold the door closed.

"I never should have left," said Dipres with a pained look on his face. "I should have stayed."

As the two now look towards a life together, they've discussed moving to their own place and getting married.

"We'll just make the best of it with each other, try to make [life] as happy as it can be as we both care for each other," remarked Dipres. "I want to spend the rest of my life with her, I want to make her as happy as she makes me."

49th Precinct launches neighborhood policing program

from Page 1

first and foremost, and beyond that it forges lasting relationships with the community," said Alps.

For the program, three new sectors roughly corresponding with Van Nest and Morris Park, Bronx Park East and Pelham Parkway South, and Eastchester/Pelham Gardens/Allerton, as well as a housing sector, will see continuous patrolling and interaction with regular NCO cops, a new iteration of 'cops on the beat.'

The ten NCO cops will work the same 8-hour shifts on the same days of the week, overlapping in crime fighting coverage with another dozen police officers that are assigned to each of the sectors.

They should be able to identify trends in crime and interact with community members to gather informa-

tion while learning about any crime-related issues in their sectors.

"It is strategic in that it allows the community to get to know their officers...and in turn it will be helpful to the officers who will gain stronger relationships," said Alps.

NCOs will hold quarterly meetings in their sectors to liaison with the community and provide their own analysis of trends, said Alps, who added that these meetings would not include police personnel outside of the NCO program.

The sector NCO cops will maintain a social media presence on Facebook, said Alps.

Edith Blitzer, Pelham Parkway Neighborhood Association president, said she sees NCO as an addition to existing police resources.

The 49th Precinct was one of the last precincts in the borough to implement the NCO program, which is a NYPD citywide initiative, with only the 45th Precinct and 50th Precinct remaining, according to Alps.

The 45th Precinct is scheduled to implement NCO in June, said Bob Bieder, 45th Precinct Community Council president.

"It is going back to the 'beat cop,'" said Bieder. "We have wanted that for many years."

The 45th Precinct and its community council are also hosting an event called Coffee with a Cop at the Miles Coffee Bar on Wednesday, January 24 from 6 to 8 p.m. with a goal of breaking down any barriers between the NYPD and the community.



The 49th Precinct's 10 NCO officers and their sergeant were introduced to community members in a kick-off event at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine on Wednesday, January 10. Photo courtesy of the 49th Precinct



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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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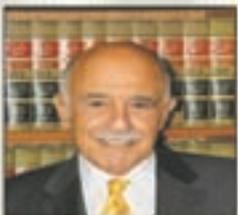
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