

TIP-OFF

Some of the city's best basketball this winter will not feature the NBA's Knicks and Nets, but Queens' own St. John's, with a team ready to make noise
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FREE AT A COST

The state's free college tuition program has been a success for some, while others have had to compromise their values to qualify
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EAT THE WORLD

A game of snooker can help pass the time as you wait for authentic (and spicy) Bhutanese and Tibetan food at Woodside's Weekender Billiard
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ANGEL OF HOPE

By ARIEL HERNANDEZ



Allison Alexis (left) reflects on her breast cancer journey, which she took with the help of Anna Kril (center) and Anna Zabniak (right) of SHAREing & CAREing.

After defeating breast cancer, South Jamaica's Allison Alexis is using her experience to inspire others, providing hope and comfort to those battling breast cancer through her organization Angels of Hope, and in collaboration with Queens-based SHAREing & CAREing.

Read our #Pinktober section on page 17

education

NYC COUNCIL PASSES SCHOOL BUS SAFETY BILLS

By MICHAEL GARETH JOHNSON

At the start of school in September, hundreds of kids across Queens were left stranded when buses did not pick them up and take them to school. Elected officials cracked down quickly on the companies leaving kids stranded. This week they went a step further, passing a host of bills to better monitor bus companies in order to ensure they are taking care of our kids.

The comprehensive STOP legislation, standing for Student Transportation Oversight Package, was born out of data collected by the City Council that found that bus delays averaged more than 28 minutes, often caused by traffic and mechanical problems. Some buses were delayed considerably longer. The Package includes the requirement that GPS technology be put on all buses going forward and that all bus drivers have two-way radios. Lawmakers are also requiring the Department of Education (DOE) to better track complaints from students and parents about bus drivers, and to follow through with investigations where warranted.

Queens Council Member Daniel Dromm (D-Jackson Heights) included a bill requiring the DOE to share a School Bus Bill of Rights.

"This package of school bus safety legislation will help ensure that all students have safe and timely transportation to and from school. No-show buses, massive delays in service and unsuitable drivers negatively impact parents, children and educators alike," Dromm said. "These bills will help restore parents' confidence in yellow school buses by implementing new safety measures, improving bus procedures and ensuring that families using DOE transportation are aware of their rights."

The City Council also put forth a series of recommendations to the DOE on how to improve bus transportation for disabled students.

NIGHTLIFE AGENCY RECEIVES HEAT FROM COMMUNITY BOARDS

By ARIEL HERNANDEZ

The city's new Office of Nightlife paid a visit to the Queens Borough Cabinet meeting on Tuesday to explain its functions and responsibilities, in addition to receiving feedback from the Cabinet, which did not hold back.

In an effort to promote a safe and vibrant nightlife scene, the Office of Nightlife was enacted in September 2017, serving as a central point of contact among city agencies, nightlife business owners, residents, employees, patrons and artists.

"A lot of the frustration and miscommunications that have transpired up to now between the industry, the city and the residents is in large part because there was no central point of contact within the mayor's office to help to streamline and coordinate the city agencies to support the industry as well as the community," said Ariel Palitz, senior executive director at the Office of Nightlife.

Palitz said that the Office of Nightlife will be creating a multi-agency working group to look at the big picture and try to come up with system-

ic citywide solutions.

She added that the Office is still conducting its listening tour, hearing concerns from the residents in each borough. Therefore she can't give specifics about what the Office plans to do until it has a better idea of what individual neighborhoods need.

"[Nightlife] is the other 9-to-5," said Palitz. "New York is a 24-7 city, and I feel that for the most part that when the city has clocked out at 5, it should support life at night so that it works as efficiently as possible. I think nightlife goes beyond just the liquor license and the venue operator; it goes into coordinating the city's services that go into making sure that life at night is livable for everyone and works for everyone so people can coexist in a peaceful way."

Florence Koulouris, district manager for Community Board 1, who was on the edge of her seat waiting for the floor to be opened, said that although Long Island City is only five minutes from Manhattan, it is "not like Manhattan."

"What's been happening is we have

been waddled away with tools in our toolbox to use when there are issues," said Koulouris. "We have been dumping things on the police department expecting for the police to act and react, and my board is very proactive. We send out stipulations with the laws of the city of New York, the laws of DCA [Department of Consumer Affairs], the laws of the health department, the laws of the SLA [State Liquor Authority]; they're on there. Restaurants get pushbacks all the time. They don't want to sign; we get them to sign.

Then they come up with things like signing affidavits swearing they're not going to be a gentlemen's club and they're not going to be a bikini bar, but what they'll do is give girls a one-piece bodysuit that's a thong and think, 'OK, we're not a gentlemen's club.' And there are no tools, no place we can go."

Koulouris said her district is mostly residential, but the urban aspect of it often raises quality-of-life issues. "We have the most unenclosed cafes outside of Manhattan," said Koulouris. "When those French doors

open, 30th Avenue rocks; 2 in the morning you hear the guitar player five blocks away. I mean I know you quote unquote want to be proactive, but with the grandma around the corner, what are you going to do to help us? We don't need proactive to make the businesses better; we need the business to understand. You're a neighbor, you live in this neighborhood by all means of business, and you have to behave like a neighbor. What's going to be done to make them behave neighborly?"

Palitz said she understands the frustration. But she reiterated that the Office of Nightlife is not an enforcement agency, and that it's working to ensure that all parties are happy in the long run.

Tuesday evening, the Office of Nightlife held a listening tour at LaGuardia Community College with over 10 city and state agencies to hear comments, concerns and ideas for improving nightlife in the borough.

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