

## QUEENS TODAY

APRIL 5, 2022

**QUEENS PUBLIC LIBRARY IS HOSTING** a hotspot lending event at the South Jamaica branch today from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Local residents without internet access at home can check out devices for up to two months, with up to five renewals.

**AROUND 500 STRAPHANGERS WERE** stranded for hours in Long Island City Sunday when the 7 train they were riding hit an object near the Vernon Blvd.-Jackson Ave. stop, the Queens Post reported. The mess began around 5:30 p.m., when the train, which was leaving the station, hit the unknown object and stalled. The collision caused a fire and sent smoke into some of the cars. At one point, the MTA cut power to the train after there were false reports of riders walking out onto the tracks to escape. After being marooned for two hours, a rescue train arrived and took all passengers back to the station. The evacuation was completed by 8 p.m., and no injuries were reported.

**POLICE ARE LOOKING FOR A MAN** who nabbed a car from a paid parking lot in Long Island City last week, NBC New York reported. The man hopped into the white 2017 Kia sedan, which had the keys inside, around 5:30 p.m., and drove off. An employee at the lot jumped onto the roof of the car in an attempt to stop the man, but fell off a short distance later. He suffered minor injuries to one of his legs.

**QUEENS-BORN SINGER TONY BENNET** became the second oldest Grammy winner, and the oldest artist ever nominated in a “general field” category, at 95 years old on Sunday for his collaboration with fellow New Yorker Lady Gaga. The duo earned best traditional pop vocal album award for “Love for Sale.”

**JOHN F. KENNEDY INTERNATIONAL** Airport has partnered with Project 96, Bag Shop NYC, and Against Medical Advice for the installation of a selfie station at gate B27, Travel Daily Dews reported. Travelers will have a chance to distract themselves with photos against the backdrops until April 29. “As part of our commitment to engaging local communities, we are thrilled to launch a new installation that not only offers our customers an exciting activity to experience during their travels, but also raises awareness of several fantastic businesses in New York City,” said Ed Midgley, the VP of customer experience and commercial at JFKIAT. “We hope all of our customers traveling through the terminal will stop by, snap selfies, and check out our partnering businesses.”

## Queens not spared from prosecutor resignations



The Queens District Attorney's office has lost 17 assistant district attorneys in 2022 and is on pace to double its attrition rate from the previous year. Eagle file photo by David Brand

*By Jacob Kaye*  
Queens Daily Eagle

A confluence of factors has led prosecutors in New York City to leave their jobs, a trend that has not spared the office of the Queens district attorney.

Assistant district attorneys have left their jobs in DA's offices throughout the city in the past year amid the pandemic and shifting job requirements as mandated by recent criminal justice reform laws, the New York Times reported

this weekend.

While the Brooklyn, Bronx and Manhattan district attorney's offices have seen some of the most dramatic changes in staffing, losing 36, 28 and 44 prosecutors respectively in 2022 alone, Queens has also seen a handful of long-time prosecutors resign from their positions.

Last month, while testifying before the City Council's Committee on Public Safety during a budget hearing, Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz told lawmakers that her office was

experiencing a record year for attrition.

“We are on track this year for more than double last year's attrition numbers,” Katz said. “Our day-to-day operations have been impacted, making it exceedingly more difficult to maintain adequate staffing levels and continue our course toward fairness and safety.”

A spokesperson for the DA's office told the Eagle that the office has lost 17 assistant district attorneys in the first three months of 2022 and

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## Aiding survivors at the Queens Family Justice Center

*By Rachel Vick*  
Queens Daily Eagle

*The names of domestic violence survivors in this story have been changed to protect their identities.*

Several years ago, after learning of the abuse his daughter faced at the hands of her stepbrother, Chris faced a difficult decision head-on and urged his teenage daughter to call the police. The two packed what they could and turned to the Queens Family Justice for support at a time where they “didn't really know what to do.”

They were able to find a place to live with help from New Destiny Housing and connect with mental health resources and financial planning services to ease the transition from trauma to reclaiming their independence.

“We didn't really know what to do and they were able to make arrangements,” Chris told the Eagle. “I didn't know [the Family Justice Center] was in existence but it was reassuring — I was 40 years old, I never went through anything like that. They made me feel comfortable... and made sure she was alright, which was my priority as well.”

“Asking for help is difficult on its own but... there are men going through abuse and suffering and they're just trying to hold their family together but... they're not stuck, there are better alternatives,” he added, emphasizing the importance of destigmatizing domestic violence that affects men.

Nestled next to the Queens Criminal Court in Kew Gardens, the center is stocked with pantry items, and safe spaces for survivors of domestic violence to wait during court proceedings or for housing placement, in addition to sup-

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The Queens Family Justice Center offers survivors of domestic violence an array of resources and support. Photo via NYC.gov

# Queens Family Justice Center highlights work with domestic violence survivors

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port services.

There, staff, service providers and community organizations help people like Chris and his daughter get back on their feet and get the resources they need without compromising dignity or agency. Specialists are available to help with safety planning, applying for public benefits, mental health services and legal help for orders of protection, divorce and immigration proceedings.

The wraparound services keep even the youngest individuals affected in mind, and Sanctuary for Families offers a day-care-like space with games, toys and books for children while their caregivers meet with providers.

Each case presents different challenges and needs, QFJC leadership told the Eagle. CBOs from across the borough, each with their own networks and resources, are located within the center.

Jessica, another client, worked with Shanikka White, a senior case manager with the Women's Prison Association, in the search for housing and getting new copies of documents like her birth certificate and identification.

She found out that she received her Section 8 voucher just before sitting down to speak with the Eagle — the excitement and relief from both Jessica and the members of her support system from the center who were in the room was palpable. She may be leaving behind her beloved neighborhood in Queens but said she's excited to embrace a fresh start and a space all her own.

"I'm so grateful for the organizations," Jessica said, "I'm tongue tied. A lot of people just talk and want a paycheck but I really feel the care, concern and love from the people I work with and that's unusual; it's wonderful."

"I was so lost, used and abused; I was helpless but upon coming here [there was help]," she added, letting other survivors know that they're not alone. "I feel like I'm on top of the world. There's hope [now.] I'm alive and it feels great."

The Mayor's Office to End Domestic Gender Based Violence



QFJC Executive Director Susan Jacob (left) with Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz (second from left).

Eagle Photo by Rachel Vick

QFJC Executive Director Susan Jacob has spent more than a decade with the center.

Safe Horizon, Korean American Family Service Center and Arab-American Family Support Center are among the organizations working to break through language barriers for a portion of the QFJC's 74.8 percent of clients born outside of the country.

"We support survivors where they are," Jacob said. "Regardless of genders, sexual orientation, we serve everyone. Anyone can come."

Though services have expanded over the years with the

changing environment — like expanded telephone services during lockdown — the commitment to service remains.

"I have amazing colleagues and partners — rock stars — who are so devoted to working with survivors," she said. "I'm very lucky."

The Queens Family Justice Center can be reached at 718-575-4545. The 24-Hour NYC Domestic Violence hotline at 1-800-621-HOPE, NYC's Crime Victims Hotline at 1-866-689-HELP, or the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888.

# Richards appoints diverse class to Queens community boards

By Jacob Kaye  
Queens Daily Eagle

The Queens borough president appointed nearly 350 Queens residents to their local community boards last week, marking what is likely the most diverse class of community board members in the borough's history.

The 345 appointees named to the borough's 14 community boards were selected from a pool of 884 applicants, the second most applications received in the office's history — the record was set the year prior. Ninety-four of this year's appointees are first-time members.

The new appointees' term, which will last for two years, began on April 1.

"I could not be prouder to appoint such a dynamic, diverse class of public servants to our network of Queens community boards, as we continue steadfast in our effort to build a government that is truly reflective of the borough it serves," Queens Borough President Donovan Richards said.

"Queens is leading the way out of the COVID-19 pandemic and toward a stronger, fairer future for all our families, and I'm both deeply grateful and excited for the work these 345 qualified community leaders will do on behalf of The World's Borough and all who call it home," he added.

It was the second round of appointments for Richards, who vowed to diversify the historically undiverse government bodies on the campaign trail. This year's appointees are generally younger and more ethnically and racially representative of the communities they now represent when compared to years past.

Of the first-time appointees, nearly 48 percent are under the age 40 — three appointees are in their teens. In December 2020, prior to Richards taking office, less than 12 percent of sitting community board members were under the age of 35 and nearly three-quarters were over the age of 45.

In 2020, no community board in Queens had immigrant membership that exceeded 14 percent. Some community boards, including CB4, didn't have a single person on the board that identified as an immigrant, according to a 2021 report from the



Queens Community Board 1 meets via Zoom during their February full board meeting.

Screenshot via livestream

"There was no directive or mandate to councilmembers about the demographic backgrounds of their nominees for appointment, but rather the Queens borough president's office identified demographic disparities on community boards in relation to the neighborhoods they serve, which every single Queens member of the City Council was made aware of in the nomination process," a spokesperson for the borough president's office told the Eagle.

"Every Councilmember also received every single community board application our office received for boards to which they can make nominations for, and the councilmembers can submit nominations for whomever they want," the spokesperson added. "The BP has not and did not remove anyone from a board for demographic reasons, but instead focused on filling vacancies with people from diverse backgrounds to continue the process of correcting historic demographic disparities across the boards."

Each community board, made up of 50 unpaid members who live or work within the community district lines, makes advisory recommendations on land use issues and holds educational sessions to keep their neighborhoods informed about community issues.

borough president's office.

Of the new members appointed by Richards last week, around 19 percent identify as immigrants, up around two percentage points from last year, when Richards raised the percent of immigrant members by more than double.

Immigrants make up roughly half of Queens' overall population.

The new class also sees a bump in what was one of the least represented populations on the boards: Hispanic members.

Around 27 percent of 2020 Census respondents in Queens said they were Hispanic, though, in 2020, Hispanic members accounted only for 8.6 percent of community board members.

This year, 17 percent of the new appointees identify as Hispanic, according to Richards.

Also seeing an increase this year were Black members and people who identify as LGBTQ+.

The number of Asian members was largely unchanged — around 11 percent of this year's appointees identify as East Asian or Pacific Island and nearly 12 percent identify as South Asian. In the past 10 years, the growth of the Asian population in Queens has outpaced the growth of the overall borough population.

This year's class of appointees also marked a shift in community board members' housing and transportation habits. The majority of this year's appointees are renters and over 50 percent regularly use public transportation, according to the borough president.

The shift in diversity wasn't a coincidence. In the leadup to the appointments, Richards sent out a communication to city councilmembers, who together recommend half of the borough's community board members, in which he laid out the demographic disparities among some of the boards. The recommendations included specific age ranges, races and ethnicities.



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69-09 Myrtle Avenue, Glendale, NY 11385  
718-418-5000  
www.frankbrunolaw.com

PUBLISHERS:

**Michael Nussbaum**      **J.D. Hasty**  
Michael@queenspublicmedia.com      JDH@queenspublicmedia.com

MANAGING EDITOR  
**Jacob Kaye**  
jacobk@queenspublicmedia.com

REPORTER  
**Rachel Vick**  
Rachel@queenspublicmedia.com

ADVERTISING MANAGER  
**Kat Ramus**  
Kat@queenspublicmedia.com

LEGAL ADVERTISING MANAGER  
**Gina Ong**  
Legals@queenspublicmedia.com

## QUEENS Daily Eagle

Is published daily except Saturdays, Sundays and Federal Holidays by Eagle Urban Media. Queens office is located at 8900 Sutphin Boulevard, Lower Suite, LL11, Jamaica, Queens, NY 11435. Subscription price is \$130 per year, \$65 for six months. Periodicals Postage paid at Brooklyn, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Daily Eagle, Circulation Office, 16 Court Street, Suite 2901, Brooklyn, NY 11241. Tele.: 718-422-7402 LEGAL ADVERTISING/ 718-422-7409 EDITORIAL.