

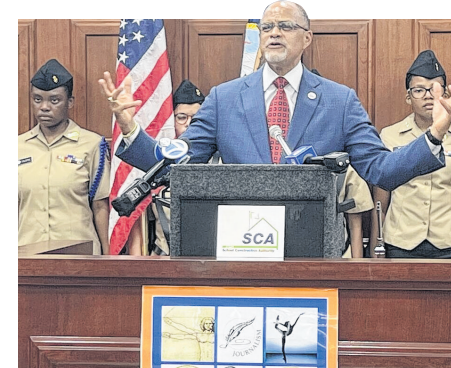
BAYSIDE *Times*

Sept. 15 - Sept. 21, 2023

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD – YOUR NEWS®

Volume 89, Issue 37

ALSO COVERING AUBURNDALE, COLLEGE POINT, DOUGLSTON, GLEN OAKS, FLORAL PARK, LITTLE NECK AND WHITESTONE



Cardozo High School celebrates opening of new \$47.8 million annex Page 5

Masked men sought in robbery of Bayside smoke shop

BY BILL PARRY

Police from the 111th Precinct in Bayside are on the lookout for as many as two armed men and their accomplices who robbed a Bell Boulevard smoke shop at gunpoint on Monday night.

The heist went down just before 11 p.m. on Sept. 4, when the crew entered the Zara Smoke Shop, located at 43-23 Bell Blvd., and pulled out at least two handguns, aiming them toward a 20-year-old store employee as he stood behind the counter, according to authorities.

The suspects then snatched an estimated \$9,000 worth of store merchandise and marijuana products before leaving the smoke shop and jumping into a black BMW with a defective headlight and driving off in an unknown direction.

The store employee was not injured, police said.

LEARN ABOUT OUR NEW DESIGN
PAGE 2

‘Coming here is like therapy’

Bayside dog cafe Annie’s Social fosters connections in the community

BY IRYNA SHKURHAN

Tom Hom wanted a job where he could bring his dog to work everyday, so he opened Annie’s Social, a dog cafe in Bayside.

Following two decades in the corporate world, he decided to take the leap and start a small business. The solo endeavor was inspired by Annie, a medium sized goldendoodle that he brought home two years ago at the height of the pandemic.

It took Hom months to find a space that could accommodate his vision – having a separate space and entrance for dogs, while also accommodating the dog-less customers who just want to sit with a latte or craft beer. A pickup window to allow dog owners to grab food and drinks without entering the human only section was also a must.

After deciding on a corner space on Francis Lewis Boulevard and 34th Avenue, he opened the doors to the community in February. And since then, the dog community in Queens has grown closer.

“I had this idea that I wanted to bring something different to the Bayside community,” said Hom, who has lived in the area for most of his life. “I knew a lot of dog lovers already and I’ve met so many more since I opened this place.”

Dogs are the most widely owned pets in the United States. And especially in the past several years, dog ownership has spiked. But Queens only has one other dog cafe, and it’s located on the opposite side of the borough in Astoria. There



Annie’s Social opened in Bayside in February and has become a go-to destination for Queens dog owners and their pups.

Photo by Iryna Shkurhan

are several others in Brooklyn and Manhattan.

A couple of months ago, Hom began hosting morning meetups between 9 to 11 a.m. every Saturday. While all dog breeds are welcome to come and mingle, each meetup is catered to a specific breed.

One recent goal of Hom’s to connect yorkies and two weeks prior, golden retrievers. The idea was born after two dog owners with the same breed just kept missing each other at the cafe.

“I had to keep saying, ‘oh they just left,’ and it just happened so many times. So I asked them both to come at a specific time on Saturday,” recalled Hom.

“People with the same breed like to talk to each other to compare personalities, and they kind of go through the same thing,” he added. “Once they meet them here, a lot of people have Instagram accounts for their own dogs and follow each other. They find time to meet up as well. That’s kind of the goal in

this community.”

The space also creates an alternative to the dog park, which isn’t accessible in certain weather, and deters others due to safety risks.

“I meet new people every day here,” said Susan Kim, who calls herself one of the regulars. “It’s a very social environment and the people who come here are very friendly.”

Kim is a longtime Bayside resident, but is currently

Continued on page 16

Annie's Social

continued from p. 1

studying to become a veterinarian in the Caribbean. Less than a year ago she took in a stray "island dog" and named him Fig, who is now also a regular at Annie's.

Whenever she has come home for a visit in recent months, she says most of her time was spent in the cafe, which allows her to study while Fig is close by and busy getting to know the other dogs. She prefers the cafe to the dog park because the intimate space forces owners to be more in control of their dogs. Kim recalled times when dog owners at the park would get sidelined by a conversation, and chaos would ensue.

"We definitely have a great community of people who come here and enjoy the space and are spreading the word," said Hom. "You don't have to choose between sitting down with a cup of coffee and socializing with your dog."

Hom's attention to detail is evident from selecting the popular La Columbe coffee as his roaster, to craft beers that you won't find at just any bar. There is also a fridge stocked with pressed juices for the health conscious, and a case of pastries for those with a sweet tooth.

"Coming here is like therapy," said one visitor who brought her elderly mother along in an effort to curb her loneliness.

It proved Hom's point that you don't even need a dog to socialize and connect



Photo by Iryna Shkurhan

at the dog cafe.

Annie's Social is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

For more information, visit anniessocial.com.