

# BRONX NEWS

## Sizzling in the city

### Coping with dangerous heat wave

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AS THE STREETS sizzled yesterday, 65-year-old Ena Petinaud managed to keep her cool along with 200 other Morris Heights folks at the BronxWorks Senior Center.

"This is how I stay healthy," she said with a smile, seated on an exercise bike in the center's icy-cool gym.

With an unreliable air conditioner that blows "nothing but hot air" and an exorbitant electric bill, Mary Carter, 63, said a day of free AC with food and friends is ideal.

"I like the camaraderie," Carter said. "It brings me out of my little shell."

With the mercury inching close to 100 degrees, some Bronxites couldn't escape the smothering heat.

Doing concrete work on a Pelham Parkway house, Frank Romano, 29, said even a cooler of cold water bottles didn't make the job easier.

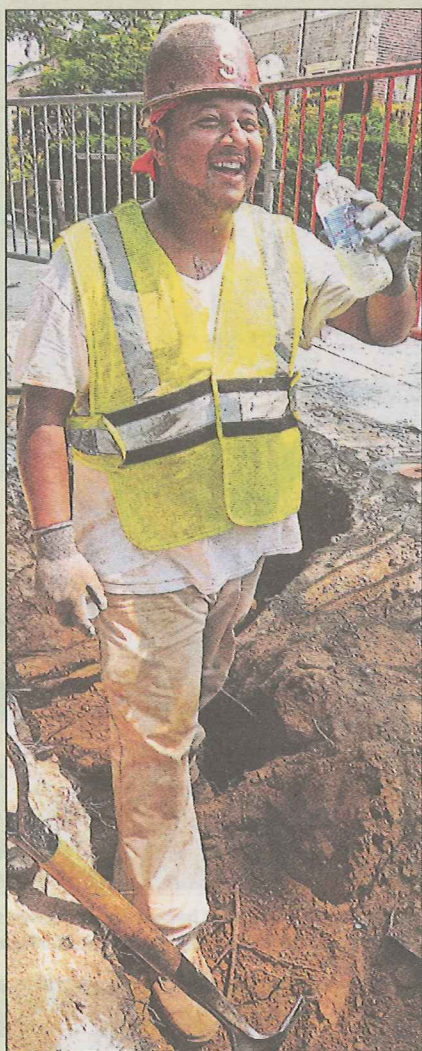
"As soon as you get on the job in the morning and it's hot, the rest of the day is rough," said Romano, who was driving a forklift. "Your day is shot."

Down the Pelham Parkway service road, another construction worker, Cristian Valasquez said he has seen hardhats wilt in such scorching weather.

"I see guys pass out sometimes; guys I work with and also people on the street," he said, wiping his forehead while standing in a gas line trench.

"I get used to it, but you're going to see me sweat. We never stop."

The BronxWorks Center will



Borough seniors escape the city's brutal heat and humidity and enjoy one another's company at the air-conditioned BronxWorks Senior Center in Morris Heights. Cristian Valasquez (l.) swigs water as takes a break from unenviable task of digging gas-line trench along Pelham Parkway yesterday. Photos by Richard Harbus (left) and Viorel Florescu

remain open until 7 p.m. today and tomorrow for seniors.

"Their body temperature goes up; if they're not hydrated from drinking enough water, they can have a stroke," said center director Maria Rivera.

A heat-related stroke on a day like yesterday took the life of Carter's ex-husband in 1999. He was outside doing work as a landscaper.

"His body temperature was 106, he lapsed into a coma and

never came back again," she recalled. "Everybody needs to take this seriously — from young to old, it affects everybody."

When asked what would happen if senior centers weren't providing the cool spots, Carter said, "There would be a lot of people getting sick on days like this. It would be a disaster; it really would."

To find the nearest cooling center, call 311.

While the heat was downright

dangerous to some people and a major inconvenience to most, Enis Zudjelovic, 23, persisted in riding his bicycle.

Zudjelovic, who said he rides nearly 5 miles every other day, peddled shirtless down Pelham Parkway, bragging, "The heat doesn't stop me. . . . It makes you burn more calories."

"You gotta do what you gotta do," he added.