

er's girlfriend cops a plea deal

with four others, apartment inside 3080

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Nearly 40 other charges against Ms. Aguilar were dropped in exchange for testimony that implicated co-defendants in a battery of charges.

According to the complaints, undercover agents from the Bronx narcotics bureau's Major Case Unit bought or observed the sales of more than \$75,000 worth of heroin and cocaine between April and the end of October.

The dealers used commercial establishments in Marble Hill and Kingsbridge, including several stores in Marble Hill's River Plaza shopping center, to meet customers and sell their goods.

Ms. Aguilar testified that she was aware there was a substantial amount

of heroin in the apartment where a police raid netted her and the co-defendants' arrests, as well as packaging that would be used for distributing the drug. She admitting to acting in concert with the other defendants.

Standing in the courtroom at Bronx Criminal Court, the handcuffed Ms. Aguilar could be seen smiling and laughing with her attorney.

"She's dumb," muttered a family member of one of the co-defendants, glaring in Ms. Aguilar's direction.

In addition to Ms. Aguilar's testimony, the district attorney's office alleges that Mr. Grijalva, Pedro and brother Pablo Gonzalez, took calls from customers, including un-

dercover detectives and agreed to meet them at various stores inside River Plaza, along Broadway in Kingsbridge, the residential area around West 238th Street and Orloff Avenue, Van Cortlandt Park South and other locations within the 50th, 52nd and 49th precincts.

The major drug trafficking statute under which Pedro Gonzalez is being charged is part of a two-year-old update to the Rockefeller drug laws that calls for harsher penalties for those whose drug sales top \$75,000 in a single year. The new law, which was tried for the first time in 2010, is the only narcotics charge in New York that carries a possible life sentence.

Another charter school on the way?

By Nikki Dowling

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Riverdale/Kingsbridge may have another new charter school by 2013.

Alec Diacou, who runs the non-profit Yes the Bronx, is planning to file an application and proposal with the Board of Regents to open an elementary charter school in Community Education Council District 10, which includes Riverdale and Kingsbridge.

"I'm very familiar with District 10 ... the results from the state tests are abysmal ... you can't run a society with that failure rate," he said in a phone interview.

"What we're trying to do is establish a model that others might emulate," he added.

Mr. Diacou has already begun the drawn-out process required by the state to open a charter school. He submitted a letter of intent, which was accepted, allowing him to file an application.

The school would be named the Rosalyn Yalow Academy, after the Nobel Prize-winning physicist who lived in Kingsbridge for more than 60 years.

The parent of three students who attended New York City public schools and a Riverdale Senior Services board member, Mr. Diacou said he hopes to create a school that will offer private school luxuries in a public school setting.

He said the school will offer fencing, a variety of arts programming through the Bronx Arts Ensemble and chess via a partnership with the Kasparov Chess Foundation. The school

day will run from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and, in the second year, students will be expected to attend on Saturday.

"The Yalow Academy can't address what happens before kindergarten, but we can begin an intensive process of immersion from that point on in intensive academics augmented by complementary mental disciplines in the arts, chess, and fencing," Mr. Diacou wrote in an e-mail.

The Rosalyn Yalow Academy would be the fifth charter to open locally in recent years. The New Visions Charter High School for Advanced Math and Science and the New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities opened on the Kennedy campus in September and are replacing John F. Kennedy High School as it phases out. The Kingsbridge Innovative Design Charter School opened in September 2010 but was shut down by the state Education Department for fiscal mismanagement.

If everything goes according to plan, the Tech International Charter School will open at 3120 Corlear Ave. to 132 sixth graders in fall 2012. It will take over the third and part of the first floor of the mixed-use, 10-story Corlear Avenue building and will grow by one grade each year, eventually expanding to fill the first four floors. Officials said they will then seek approval to add grades nine through 12.

Mr. Diacou hopes to open to three, 28-student classes in three grades — kindergarten, first and second — next year and to grow by one grade each year. In its fifth year, the school would run through sixth

grade. Then, he said, he will try to expand the charter to include seventh and eighth grade. The state only grants charters in five-year intervals so a new application is required for middle school.

Both Councilman Oliver Koppell and Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz have long expressed concern about the growing number of charters in the area. They worry that charters are taking students away from other local schools, including the David A. Stein Riverdale/Kingsbridge Academy, MS/HS 141 and IN-Tech Academy, MS/HS 368.

They also say additional schools are unnecessary, as there is little overcrowding in the area.

"I think we've got very fine public schools in Riverdale and Kingsbridge and I just don't think we need another school. While the schools are full they're not overcrowded," Mr. Koppell said.

Mr. Dinowitz has also expressed concern but said charters are a reality due to recent legislation that expanded the number of charter schools allowed in New York State. He said it is important that those that do open are strong.

"I've never been a supporter of charter schools and I'm still not a supporter of charter schools," he said.

However, he added that the Rosalyn Yalow Academy has, "the type of curriculum which I believe has been lacking all too often in our schools ... I do believe the math curriculum in New York City schools is woefully inadequate."



Photo by Marisol Diaz

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