

DAILY NEWS

BRONX

Gunshots on her Bronx block led Cynthia Thompkins to start anti-violence groups; Citizens Committee to honor her

Citizens Committee of NYC to honor Bronx crimefighter Cynthia Thompkins at gala on Monday

BY [KERRY WILLS](#) / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2013, 6:00 AM



VIOREL FLORESCU/VIOREL FLORESCU FOR NEWS

Cynthia Thompkins (front, in black) and other residents fed up with crime formed the Marion Ave. Neighborhood Association. Front: Carmen Rivera, Thompkins, Zulaimy Fenty. Rear: Zalda Mitchell, Jonathan Goins and Ira Boyce.

Cynthia Thompkins might have been content to lounge in her Fordham Heights apartment if a 15-minute gunfight on her street hadn't jolted her awake on October 9, 2011.

"I sat in my apartment the next morning, and had to make a decision whether I was going to move or stay," Thompkins said. "If I was going to stay, I had to do something about what was happening outside."

She did quite a lot.

Thompkins, 56, gathered about 40 residents to form a neighborhood association, organized walks for peace through dangerous streets, launched a women's anti-violence group and in June, was elected president of the 46th Precinct Community Council.

This Monday, Thompkins' efforts to improve her community will be honored by the Citizens Committee of New York City.

And last Tuesday, she filed with the state Board of Elections to run for the 15th City Council district seat Joel Rivera will vacate due to term limits.

Thompkins, a retired cop and a Legal Aid lawyer, used her courthouse connections to get lawyers, cops and judges to address neighbors and also listen to their anguish at meetings of the Marion Ave. Neighborhood Association (MANA).

Some residents initially balked at Thompkins' enthusiastic, visionary speeches. She got heckled at one block party she organized last summer. "Give it a rest," someone said.

"Did it take some time to get folks to stand up and agree what needed to be done? Yes," Thompkins said. "What was important was that we didn't give up."

MANA teens and adults take StreetPeace walks, talking one-on-one with youth on the street corners where shootings have occurred, handing out StreetPeace buttons and stickers and information on job and GED programs, as well as MANA workshops.

At precinct council meetings, Thompkins lets her neighbors ask the tough questions. She is by turns blunt and effusive.



MARCUS SANTOS/ FOR THE NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Cynthia Thompkins last week outside the Bronx Hall of Justice, where she works as a Legal Aid lawyer.

At the recent meeting last Wednesday, Captain Albert Lindquist told the 50 residents that there have been no shootings in the precinct so far this year, drawing applause.

"The gangbangers are gone," Thompkins said. "It doesn't mean gangs are gone from the whole area, but they're not in our community any longer. They're not hanging on the corners, intimidating people walking into their buildings."

Citizens Committee, which supported MANA with a \$500 microgrant, will name Thompkins their Community

Honoree at their New Yorker for New York Gala at Gotham Hall.

Spokesman Saleen Shah said Thompkins has made a big difference with little support.

"She's special because she wears several hats as a community organizer," Shah said. "She's part of these different local spheres that all have a positive impact."

While she's getting results now, Thompkins labored long to achieve her dreams of becoming a lawyer.

She got pregnant and wed as a teen, but the marriage quickly failed. She raised her son alone, working days and taking college classes at night for decades.

She was a cop in Pittsburgh and a small business owner in Hawaii. She finished college in her 40s and passed the bar exam in her 50s.

A grandmother of three, she also helps raise her former partner's 10-year-old son.

On City Council, she said, she would support green efforts to improve existing housing, plant trees, and support small business in bringing healthy food to the borough.

"The more I do, the more I see that it needs to go beyond where I am," Thompkins said. "I see what's not being done, and I believe I can do better."

kwills@nydailynews.com

OTHERSTORIES



[Deli Worker Who Frisked Forest Whitaker Fired \(DNAinfo\)](#)



[Stepfather of '9-Year-Old' Girl Who Gave Birth Admits to Fathering Baby \(CafeMom\)](#)



[Brute who allegedly beat and maced a father and his 6-year-old daughter in Bronx laundromat surrenders to cops](#)



[Sharon Lopatka dies when kinky online torture sex goes wrong](#)

[?]