

HERE'S WHERE YOU CAN GET VACCINATED



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FORMER PRESIDENT TRUMP ACQUITTED ... AGAIN



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EAST ORANGE HONORS THE FUGEES



Wyclef Jean was spotted recently picking up food from local family-owned restaurant Burnet BBQ located on Hoffman Boulevard in East Orange. Photos Courtesy City of East Orange

EAST ORANGE - Mayor Ted R. Green and the East Orange City Council are proud to commemorate Fugees' members Wyclef Jean, Lauryn Hill, and Prakazrel 'Pras' Michel on the 25th Anniversary of their award-winning album, "The Score," which was recorded at the Booga Basement, located at 232 South Clinton Street in East Orange, New Jersey, and released on February 13, 1996.

Mayor Green issued a proclamation to commemorate the milestone anniversary, congratulating the Fugees on their legendary musical success, which in-

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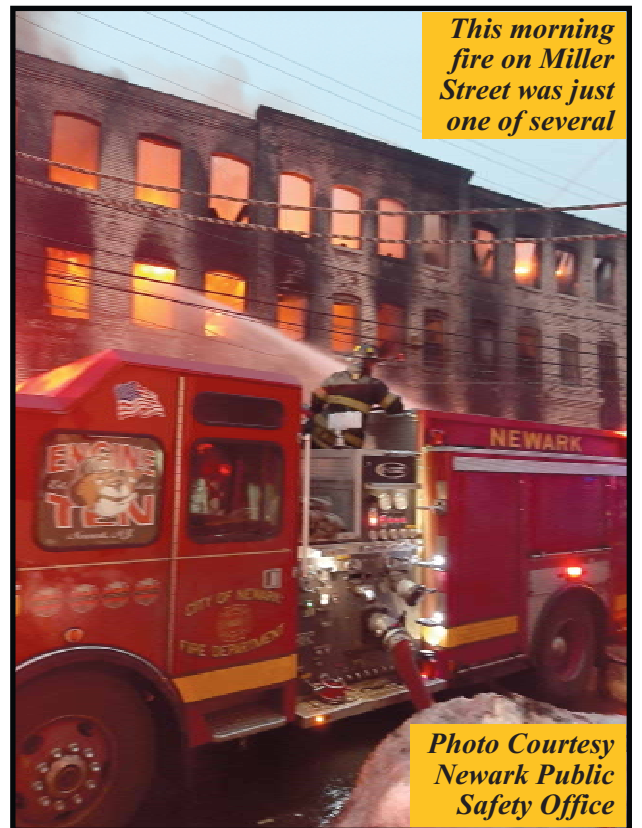
MULTIPLE FIRES IGNITE IN NEWARK

NEWARK - In the past week, Newark's Bravest have been very busy putting out blazes throughout the Brick City.

On Feb. 12, Public Safety Director Anthony F. Ambrose reported that Newark Firefighters extinguished a 2-alarm fire at 382 Leslie Street.

Just after 6 a.m., firefighters responded to the 3-story wood frame residential building on a call of a fire. Firefighters located a kitchen fire that extended to the second and third floors. A second alarm was sounded about 30 minutes later, with some 90 firefighters in total working to extinguish the fire, which was considered under control at 7:51 a.m.

One firefighter was injured after falling through the floor and suffering a knee injury. He was treated at the scene by EMS.



This morning fire on Miller Street was just one of several

Photo Courtesy Newark Public Safety Office

Two families, comprising 9 adults and 2 children, have been relocated.

Then, on Feb. 16, firefighters had to deal with two fires. First, members of the Newark

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Turn to
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Editorial
 Dhiren Shah
 Editor-In-Chief

Hello Readers,

India has the second highest COVID-19 cases in the world with over 10 million, but two days ago, there were under 10,000 cases in a day. All of a sudden, the daily case count rose by 20%. The United States has the same trend. It was a little under 53,000 cases, but jumped up to about 64,000 cases. In the world, there were about 246,000 daily cases two days ago, which jumped up to 347,000 yesterday (Feb. 16). So, we all should be honest to ourselves and wear masks and gloves, wash our

hands, use hand sanitizer, and keep social distancing. All of our key officials, from President Biden to Governor Murphy to local leaders, say that we all must be vaccinated. However, the distribution is so poor in the State of New Jersey. There should be only one portal, but now we have to register with many portals, and still, the response is not the way it should be. Also, every time you want to search for it, you have to reregister. So, our information is spread through many portals, and it increases the chances of our information being stolen. Identity theft is the biggest problem for the FBI and CIA. Also, with so many different portals, it is harder to find who will give us a vaccine appointment. So, every day we have to search for it. Also, the portals do not have an identi-

fication and password, so every time you want to look for it, you have to start all over. I have heard from many people that they got a vaccination, and they are not part of Group 1B or 1C, but they are part of who they know! Also, many have complained that they stood in line for hours, and when their turn came, they were told that there were no more vaccines left, so they had to reschedule. Do you blame Governor Murphy or Governor Cuomo? I would say yes. When something is getting right, they love to brag about it and take credit. This time they should take the blame as well. The former Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City was demolished on Feb. 17. It was done by a controlled implosion and demolished in seconds. There were four that casinos

closed down in 2014. With the others be demolished as well? I don't know, but it's still a question in my mind. The crowd was cheering as Trump Plaza was demolished. Some hotels rented rooms just for people to watch the demolition of the Plaza. By demolishing the tall building, more buildings will have a better view temporarily, until other construction comes into play. This week, conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh passed away. Whether you agreed with his stances or not, it is not kind to bad mouth someone who passed away. We extend our condolences to his friends and family members to give them strength in their bereaved time. *Have a wonderful week. I'll talk to you next week.*

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WEATHER FOR THE WEEK

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Heavy Snow	Snow / Wintry Mix	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Rain & Snow Mix	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
HI 30 LO 28	HI 35 LO 25	HI 35 LO 19	HI 35 LO 24	HI 39 LO 30	HI 44 LO 34	HI 47 LO 34

SPORTS WRAP



By William Hathaway

The New Jersey High School basketball season is now in full swing. So far, there are no fans allowed at high school games due to COVID-19, but Governor Phil Murphy announced this past week that he will allow seniors' parents into the games, although no area schools have announced it yet.

Despite the pandemic, some local teams are doing well this season. The Orange Tornadoes boys' basketball team started the season off with a tough 60-50 loss to Newark Tech, but with wins on the road against West Orange, Shabazz and most recently, at home against West Side. The East Orange boys' basketball Jaguars have started with a 4-1 record, with key wins over Newark Tech, Montclair, Irvington and West Orange, but

took a tough loss to Central High School.

Columbia's boys' team is 5-2, and scored a 66-61 win over University to continue their five game winning streak. However, that came to an end at the hands of East Side High. Seton Hall Prep has started off with a 4-1 record with one of those wins coming over Payne Tech. Irvington also notched a win over Payne and Seton Hall Prep, but lost hard to the Phoenix of University High School 87-60.

In college basketball, the Seton Hall men's basketball team won a big game home against Marquette 57-51. The Pirates overcome turnovers, and were led by Jared Rhoden's 20 points and Sandro Mamukelashvili's 11 points and 10 rebounds. SHU has come off of back to back wins on the road against

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HERE'S WHERE YOU CAN GET VACCINATED IN ESSEX COUNTY

By Walter Elliott

WEST ORANGE - The expanding COVID-19 vaccination sites - and the registration headaches that go with them could be exemplified here as late as Feb. 16.

Essex County's regional vaccination center here at West Orange Plaza, 235-51 Prospect Ave., has drawn appointment holders from within the township here plus Newark, Montclair, Nutley, Verona, Cedar Grove and Essex Fells since its Jan. 12 opening in the former K-mart.

A recent weekday afternoon glance at the plaza's parking lot has shown more parked cars there since K-mart turned off its blue light by Feb. 2, 2020.

Those appointees, who may have felt worn down in getting a vaccination reservation and/or see the line entering the former

plaza anchor store may have cast wanting eyes across Eagle Rock Avenue to the newly opened CVS.

CVS and Rite-Aid pharmacies posted an overall list of 101 New Jersey stores that will vaccinate appointees by reservation Feb. 10-12. CVS, on its website registration page, stated Feb. 11, however that its "West Orange" site is "Fully Booked."

Without getting a CVS appointment, as of press time, one will not know which of West Orange's three pharmacies is its vaccination site: the across-the-avenue Pal's Cabin site 265 Prospect, the old A&P Supermarket at 217 Main St. by the Edison superlabs or the former Grand Union supermarket at 20 S. Valley Rd.

Rite-Aid is a little more forthcoming with its East Orange, Irvington and Newark vaccination locations - but one has to pass a vaccination qualifier

before making an appointment at one of three "Local Talk" locations.

CVS, which first came aboard as an U.S. Department of Health "Operation Warp Speed" vaccine distributor, and Rite-Aid are the latest additions to the Department of Health's expanding vaccination site locations. NJDOH had added a range of Federally Qualified Health Centers - from the Newark Health Community Centers to independent drug stores - Jan. 22.

That each of the participating vaccinators have clients applying on their own sites is an example of how they are working from out of their own silos. Those sites may offer appointments to site outside of the "Local Talk" area. Applicants may also learn whether they are getting a single shot or have to make a second shot appointment.

Other problems or backfires

include the short shelf-life of some of the four vaccinations offered, and interference by Mother Nature.

The positive side of this vaccination "work in progress" includes the increasing volume of vaccine supplies, rising vaccination counts and the gradual widening of the "qualified" pool of applicants.

"Local Talk" has compiled the following by-town list that is accurate as of press time:

NEWARK:

Essex County Vaccination Sites

- Essex County College Gym, 303 University Ave. 10 a.m. -6 p.m. Mondays-Saturdays for Newark, Irvington, East Orange residents. NOTE: Newark residents are also

(Continued on page 7)



UNITED STATES

Trump Acquitted...Again

On Feb. 13, the former President of the United States became the first one to dodge an impeachment conviction twice.

In a 57-43 vote in favor of conviction, featuring all 48 Democrats and two Independents, the case against Donald J. Trump failed to reach the 67 vote threshold to secure a full impeachment. This means that Trump would not be subject to a vote that would bar him from running for office again or from receiving any post-presidential perks such as Secret Service protection and a pension.

There were seven Republican senators that did vote with Democrats for conviction. This group consisted of Susan Collins (R-Maine), Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), Ben Sasse (R-Nebraska), Bill Cassidy (R-Louisiana), Richard Burr (R-North Carolina) Pat Toomey (R-Pennsylvania) and Mitt Romney (R-Utah), who voted in favor of conviction in Trump's first trial.

"This has been yet another phase of the greatest witch hunt in the history of our country. No president has ever gone through anything like it, and it continues because our opponents cannot forget the almost 75 million people, the highest number ever for a sitting president, who voted for us just a few short months ago," Trump said in a statement after his acquittal.

Despite avoiding a conviction in the Senate, Trump's legal woes are far from over. In addi-

tion to the possibility of facing charges stemming from the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol, Trump faces bank, insurance, and tax fraud charges in New York, along with Georgia officials investigating his call with that state's Secretary of State, where Trump asked Brad Raffensperger to find the number of votes needed for him to win the state.

AFRICA

Ebola Hits Guinea

Guinean health authorities have declared an outbreak of Ebola in a rural community in the south of the country, with at least seven people infected, two of whom died, the UN World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed on Feb. 14.

This is the first time the disease has been reported in the country since the deadly 2014-2016 outbreak in West Africa which claimed over 11,000 lives.

"It's a huge concern to see the resurgence of Ebola in Guinea, a country which has already suffered so much from the disease," Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa, said.

"However, banking on the expertise and experience built during the previous outbreak, health teams in Guinea are on the move to quickly trace the path of the virus and curb further infections," she added.

According to the UN health agency, the cases, which were confirmed by the national laboratory, occurred in Gouéké in N'Zerekore prefecture, in southern Guinea. Initial investigations found that a nurse from a local health facility died on Jan. 28. Following her burial, six people who attended the funeral reported Ebola-like symptoms and two of them later died. The other

four are in hospital.

Samples of the confirmed cases have been sent to the Institut Pasteur center in Senegal for full genome sequencing to identify the strain of the Ebola virus.

Guinea was one of the three most-affected countries in the 2014-2016 West Africa Ebola outbreak which was the largest since the virus was first discovered in 1976. The outbreak, which saw some 28,000 cases, including 11,000 deaths, started in Guinea and then moved across land borders to Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Ebola virus disease (EVD) is a rare but severe, often fatal illness in humans. The average EVD case fatality rate is around 50 percent, with rates having varied from 25 percent to 90 percent in past outbreaks.

The Ebola virus spreads through contact with the body fluids - such as vomit, feces or blood - of an infected person, or through surfaces and materials (such as bedding, clothing) contaminated with these fluids.

The incubation period, that is, the time interval from infection with the virus to onset of symptoms, is from two to 21 days. The symptoms of EVD can be sudden and include fever, fatigue, muscle, pain, headache, and sore throat.

This is followed by vomiting, diarrhea, rash, symptoms of impaired kidney and liver function, and in some cases internal and external bleeding.

According to WHO, though there are no known treatments for Ebola, an Ebola vaccine rVSV-ZEBOV can offer protection against the deadly virus.

ASIA

More Distress in Myanmar

An increased use of force and the reported deployment of

armored vehicles to major cities throughout Myanmar have sparked the deep concern of UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

In a statement issued on Feb. 14 by his spokesman, Stéphane Dujarric, the UN chief called on the military and police of Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, to ensure that the right of peaceful assembly is "fully respected" and demonstrators are "not subjected to reprisals."

"Reports of continued violence, intimidation and harassment by security personnel are unacceptable," he spelled out. The unfolding situation follows a military takeover on Feb. 1.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas Andrews, tweeted, "it's as if the generals have declared war on the people of Myanmar: late night raids; mounting arrests; more rights stripped away' another Internet shutdown; military convoys entering communities."

"These are signs of desperation. Attention generals: You WILL be held accountable," he underscored.

Meanwhile, on Feb. 12, Deputy UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Nada al-Nashif had noted that the current crisis in the country is "a profound setback after a decade of hard-won democratic gains."

She told a special session of the Human Rights Council that for over 20 years, "successive High Commissioners and many eminent experts have briefed this Council, and its predecessor, on violations committed by the country's military," adding that a lack of action has "emboldened military leaders and contributed to this present crisis."

"The indiscriminate use of lethal, or less than lethal weap-

(Continued on page 5)

BLACK LIVES MATTER - ANIMAL LIVES MATTER - ALL LIVES MATTER



By Michele Lowe

Every day, I am thankful just to have life. I take time out of my daily routine to read all types of things, and some recent news I came across within social media live streaming which I would like to share with you.

Sometimes you might have criminals online, distributors of drugs online, murder online, and not only that, sometimes murder online live on the net. Where and what has the world come to! I just don't understand. How can someone so bluntly commit such a crime by online streaming? This was cold, and a smack in the face for the world.

This incident happened in Vacaville, California. What drove this man to such a heinous crime of insanity? We have crimes within our city as well the internet (cyber). We must protect ourselves all day, keep our eyes open and safeguard



Vacaville, CA

ourselves. Let me tell you something, seeing this just so live it was just horrifying. I say, why do some of us as people overlook and ignore this.

I was raised to mind my own business if it doesn't obtain to me. But in this case, it happened in an apartment building. You mean to tell me no one heard those two women? No neighbors or anyone heard the screams?

It took about six hours for authorities to finally get there. I'm on social media a lot of times. I do not appreciate some things, but I am speaking out for other people.

This may be soothing to individuals. I pray every day. My prayers go to those two women. RIP and may their families get justice.

There is so much going on today in this world, even with COVID-19. When does the madness stop; police brutality, gun and domestic violence, trafficking and so much more crime? It is so much pressure to put on someone. I always say that we all have hard times, struggling in this economy. Did you all just take timeout to think that we are free? There are others that are not across many countries.

We can be and do better. Don't underestimate yourself or get discouraged. Times are hard for everyone, don't hurt people. Let's take an oath for 2021 not to hurt anyone. I wish everyone the best.

Thank you all for listening to me and my opinion.

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WORLD NEWS FLASH

(Continued from page 4)

ons, against peaceful protesters, is unacceptable,” Ms. al-Nashif said. “More violence against Myanmar's people will only compound the illegitimacy of the coup and the culpability of its leaders.”

EUROPE

VAT Scheme Stopped

With the support of Eurojust, the Dutch fiscal authorities have halted a major scam to avoid the payment of VAT (value-added tax) via trading companies. By setting up a string of enterprises in the Netherlands, Hungary, Poland and Croatia, a network of traders in Secure Digital (SD) memory cards for mobile phones allegedly defrauded the Dutch fiscal authorities for an estimated amount of EUR 9 million between 2017 and 2020. During an action day supported by Eurojust, 13 places have been searched and communications equipment, documents and digital evidence was seized.

The traders had organized a complex scheme to avoid VAT payments by using a web company that offered mobile phones, tablet computers and accessories for sale through reg-

ular channels, paying taxes. This company, however, had a low turnover and therefore paid a comparatively small amount of VAT. Alongside these web sales, the suspected traders had set up a fraudulent trade flow solely for the sale of SD cards to drastically reduce the VAT paid by the web company.

VAT was paid on the purchase of these cards, but this was not charged to wholesalers in the Czech Republic and Croatia, using the exemption on these payments within the European Union. The cards were then sold via companies in Poland and Croatia back to other Dutch enterprises, avoiding the final payment of VAT to the fiscal authorities in the Netherlands. For this so-called VAT carousel, the traders used bank accounts in the Czech Republic and Croatia to siphon off tax payments.

Eurojust organized a coordination center to support the action day to ensure the adequate follow-up for the execution of European Investigation Orders to judicial authorities in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. The action on the ground was coordinated by the specialized Public Prosecutor's Office (Functioneel Parket) of Rotterdam in the Netherlands and the Dutch fiscal police FIOD, with support of Europol.

TOWN WATCH

DISCLAIMER: The following items are primarily drawn from first responders. Responders' accounts may not be their full activity range. Grand juries hand down indictments when evidence presented them warrant a trial. Named suspects/defendants are innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

NEWARK - Moving your motor vehicle off major avenues, county roads and "Snow Emergency Routes" onto secondary or tertiary streets here in advance of a snowstorm, in the future, may not be enough to keep your wheels from getting towed.

"We have to do a better job in planning to get to those secondary and tertiary streets," said Mayor Ras Baraka during a Feb. 10 webinar on snow plowing and clearing." We pack people in (to the streets) and we have to figure that out. We're going to have to tow cars; we didn't want to do that during COVID, but trucks can't get down (streets), cars get stuck and then we're towing cars."

Newark uses DPW trucks that are taken off of other duties and are outfitted for brine spreading, salting and plowing. The city also uses other public works vehicles to remove snow piles and are further supplemented by contractors' trucks for plowing and clearing.

One problem common to the some 100 city and contracted vehicles involve their width. Some trucks have plows - or the trucks themselves - that are too wide for the smaller streets.

"It's more difficult to get down side streets," said Baraka that Wednesday night. "Sometimes vendors don't go down those streets because their trucks are too big - especially when there's heavy snow and it turns into a snow removal operation rather than a plowing operation."

The mayor also stressed better communication with the contracted vendor trucks to right-size their plowing territory.

"There are a lot of trucks and

vendors out there that are going different places and are shoveling in different parts of the city that they don't even know," said Baraka. "We have to do a better job to tell them exactly what we need, what we want and what they should be doing because they're getting paid."

IRVINGTON - The owner of two contracting firms here had pleaded guilty Feb. 12 to hiding about \$1.7 million in corporate and personal income from the IRS over a five-year period.

Olger Fallas, 49, of Union, according to Friday's U.S. Department of Justice-Newark press release, pleaded guilty to two counts of tax evasion via video conference before U.S. District Judge Claire C. Cecchi.

Fallas, said Acting U.S. Attorney Rachel A. Honig, had confessed to attempting to hide personal and corporate income by cashing customer checks at a check cashing business and depositing the proceeds "into bank accounts not associated with his companies." This activity was done 2013-17.

Court documents indicate that Fallas owed the IRS \$486,000 in corporate and \$170,000 in personal taxes for 2016 alone.

Hoing was referring to Olger Fallas Painting and Olger Fallas Properties. Fallas Painting and its state license wear a 578 Stuyvesant Ave. address on his same name website. That same site and his LinkedIn page, however, has Fallas also listing another residence - 77 Concord Ave., Union, near Maplewood's Hilton section border.

Fallas is facing up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine per count. Judge Cecchi is to sentence him June 22.

EAST ORANGE - One of the city's favorite daughters, Dionne Warwick, has made the list of Rock and Roll Hall of Fame nominees Feb. 10 for her and the Cleveland institution's first time.

The six-time Grammy Award winner was announced along with nine other individual musicians, including one-time West Orange resident Carole King, and six groups. The nominees were put up for induction consideration by 1,000 musical artists, historians and industry members who consulted the

R&RHoF.

The 1,000 HoF consultants looked at artists who released their first commercial recording at least 25 years ago. The nominees and prospective inductees. Influence on other artists, length and depth of career and the body of work plus innovation and superiority in style and technique are also considered.

"Dionne Warwick is one of the towering figures of popular music," started R&RHoF's three paragraph tribute. "Her vocal delivery was a defining sound of 1960s cool, with an effortless delivery and soulful tone. Dionne Warwick's innovation in song interpretation, combined with a seemingly flawless ability to stay relevant, have made her a mainstay in popular music history."

The sketch included Warwick's gospel family background, early collaboration with Burt Bachrach and Hal David and latest work with Chance the Rapper and The Weeknd.

"What a Day!" said Warwick on her Facebook page that Thursday night. "I'm thrilled. Please vote at vote.rockhall.com."

Warwick's potentially joining her late cousin Whitney Houston in the HoF, however, largely rests with "The Fan Vote." Online and in-person public votes are taken through April 30. The "Top Five" artists who make the induction are to be announced in May.

ORANGE - City Hall officials have quietly replaced their old, mostly (973) 266- phone exchange directory with three lists of largely (973) 592- numbers on the city's website overnight Feb. 16-17.

Those lists, as of 8:30 a.m. Wednesday, are spread among three places on www.ci.orange.nj.us: Phone Directory, Employee Email Listing and Employee Contact List: Cell Phone Numbers.

The Phone Directory is a master landline list of 199 phone numbers across several pages. They include 78 numbers for the Orange Police Department, 23 for the Orange Fire Department and 22 for the Orange Municipal Court.

This directory of all-592 exchange numbers replaces the more familiar 266 exchange

numbers. The latter was still up until at least 4:30 p.m. Tuesday.

The "Employee Email Listing" is actually a second City of Orange Phone Number list of 68 all-592 exchange numbers. The "Employee Contact List Cell Phone Numbers," on the site's blue box, are another 75 numbers with only one 952 number.

City officials have not said, as of press time, why they had to decommission the older 49-nine number listing nor why that had kept that older list up along with the latter two, indirectly posted new number lists. All but four of those numbers on the now-pulled off directory were on the 266 exchange.

"Local Talk" joined those who had apparently had to navigate the site for the new numbers Feb. 9 - the same day four people posted their problems on the Orange NJ - Real Talk Facebook page. Some City Hall employees and City Council members' email addresses can be meanwhile found on the latter's 52-number contact list.

WEST ORANGE - Township Schools Superintendent Dr. Scott Cascone found himself apologizing to some public school parents Feb. 11 for his abrupt "Virtual Learning Day" call he had made early that Thursday for an anticipated snowstorm.

That snowstorm turned out to be an almost "no-show," with a dusting covering here and the rest of "Local Talk Land."

"It's never my preference to make decisions relative to school openings on such short notice," said Cascone in a Noon release. "I thought I'd provide you with some insights to my rationale."

Cascone said that the approaching Feb. 11 storm was being forecasted with up to an inch snowfall the night of Feb. 10. His 4:30 a.m. Feb. 11 call with WOPS Buildings and Grounds and township's DPW directors, however, "that I understood that there were up to two inches of snow in some parts of the township and ice."

After "not having adequate time to survey the entire township" on whether there was enough time for West Orange streets and school properties to be cleared before the first bell, the schools super "decided to err on the side of caution.

(Continued on page 12)

\$3 MILLION LAWSUIT UPDATE...

By Dhiren Shah

A few of Local Talk's readers have ask me about the development of a case we published some weeks ago. So, I would like to update our readers.

I contacted Mayor Tony Vauss of Irvington on or about January 18, 2021, and he told me that he did not hear about the lawsuit filed by Attorney Ahmed Screven yet. He said that he contacted the police department or police director/officer, and he had not heard of the story either. After that, he said that he has no comment.

Later, I contacted Ahmed Screven about the development of the case. He emailed me the following statement:

"On today, Friday, February 5, 2021 the Exxon County Superior Court heard oral arguments from defense counsel for the defendant, Township of Irvington and plaintiff's counsel, Ahmed Screven, Esquire on the defendant Township of Irvington's Motion to Dismiss Complaint. The NJ Torts Claim Act states in relevant part states that the purpose

of the claims notification requirement in the NJ Tort Claims Act is to (a) "allow the public entity at least six months, (6), for administrative review with the opportunity to settle meritorious claims prior to the bringing of suit, and to provide the public entity with prompt notification of a claim in order to adequately investigate the facts and prepare a defense."

"The Court granted the defendants **Motion to Dismiss Without Prejudice**, in lieu of the above referenced part of the TCA, (listed in bold above), limited aspect only, and stated that the plaintiff can file upon expiration of six month, (6), as per the TCA.

"The Township of Irvington has had the plaintiff's Tort Claim Notice since October 19, 2020, and the Amended Internal Affairs Complaint and Report since December 2020."

Per Mr. Screven, he will file the case again after the six month period is over. It will be considered as a new case.

BANKRUPTCY

CHAPTER 7 BANKRUPTCY CHAPTER 13 BANKRUPTCY

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(Continued from page 3)

- welcome at the other sites in West Orange, Livingston and West Caldwell. EssexCOVID.org, (973) 877-8456.
- Essex County Donald M. Payne, Sr. School of Technology, 498-544 W. Market St.,
- Newark Community Health Center, 741 Broadway, 92 Ferry St., 101 Ludlow St., NCHCFQHC.org
- Rite-Aid, 104 12th Ave, riteaid.com/pharmacy/covid-qualifier.
- RWJBarnabasHealth Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, 201 Lyons Ave., (973) 926-4376. rwjbh.org/covid19vaccine
- Newark Department of Health and Community Wellness, 110 William St.,

(973) 733-5728 newarkcovid19.com/home.

- St. James Health Adult Clinic, 228 Lafayette St., (973) 789-8111 saintjameshealth.com
- St. Michael's Medical, St. Mike's POD, 111 Central Ave., (973)877-5000. signupgenius.com/go/1oCoD44A4AD2BA3FB CF8-sign2
- Jewish Renaissance Medical Center, 359 13th Ave., (732) 9333. jrmc.us.
- Liss Pharmacy, 794 Mt. Prospect Ave., (973) 483-4749. lisspharmacy.com
- Shop Rite Pharmacy, 206 Springfield Ave., (973) 877-3641. (Note: Pharmacy open only for COVID services.)

IRVINGTON

- NCHC, 1148-50 Springfield Ave., (973) 675-1900
- Rite-Aid, 35 Mill Rd.,

EAST ORANGE

- NCHC, 444 William St., (973) 675-1900
- Rite-Aid, 547 Central Ave.
- East Orange General Hospital, 300 Central Ave., (973) 266-2995

ORANGE

- NCHC, 37 No. Day St., Third Floor (973) 323-3669

WEST ORANGE

- Essex County Site, W.O. Plaza, 231-51 Prospect Ave.

MONTCLAIR

- Hackensack Meridian Health -Mountainside Hospital, 1 Bay Ave. Mountain-sidehosp.com

BLOOMFIELD

- Riverside Medical Group Urgent Care, 135 Bloomfield

Ave., (973) 748-7459.

BELLEVILLE

- RWJBH Clara Maas Medical Center, 1 Clara Mass Dr.
- Riverside Medical Group, 195 Cortlandt St. (973) 759-1221 riversidemedgroup.com

NUTLEY

- Riverside Medical Group, 228 Franklin Ave.
- Nutley Health Department Adult Clinic, 149 Chestnut St., (973) 877-8456.

LIVINGSTON

- Essex County Site, Livingston Mall/Sears, 112 Eisenhower Pkwy.

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- Essex County "West Caldwell" Technical High School, 420 Passaic Ave., Noon-7 p.m. Mon-Sat.

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"As our Community is impacted by another wave of COVID-19, the Heart Center of the Oranges is here to safely assist our patients. We encourage patients to take advantage of our Telemedicine visits to prevent the spread of the virus. We encourage everyone to come in for the flu shot as soon as possible – *Dr. Rajiyah*

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Newark: 202 Stuyvesant Ave.	Tel. 973-374-8807
West Orange: 77 Main Street	Tel. 973-324-2090
West Orange: 95 Main Street	Tel. 973-736-5552
West Orange: 92 Old Northfield Road <small>(currently closed for renovations)</small>	Tel. 973-736-5552

The Doctor Is In



Dr. Adil Manzoor OP/ED

Why Underserved Population Needs To Be Vaccinated In New Jersey



A few months back, everyone was clamoring for a COVID-19 vaccine. Several companies upped the ante in their research campaigns, trying to find the right formula to beat this stubborn virus. And then, our knight in shining armor finally came around. Of course, I'm talking of the vaccine! Many scientists didn't even expect it to be ready till later this year, but here we are.

However, as it seems, we were so caught up in making a vaccine that we neglected what is perhaps even more important - distributing the vaccine. The past weeks of vaccine distribution have been rocky, to say the least.

First, many states had no idea of how to distribute the vaccines

at all. Some of these states had a surplus of vaccines, while in other parts of the country, some states with good distribution strategies had little vaccine to share. Then, some members of the public started opposing the vaccine. What makes this even worse is the reasons for the opposition were mostly comical.

One of the other major problems, the one I will focus on in this article, is the disparity in vaccine distribution across different populations. Let me get straight to it, certain groups in the country were neglected in the vaccination stage. I'm sure you have a not-so-vague idea of the groups affected. But to be perfectly clear, Black Americans, Latinos, and Asians.

If you're familiar with history, you will know these populations have always been at the bottom of the chain regarding health benefits and grants. But even in a pandemic? Yes, even in a pandemic. We all have a common enemy in the country, but some groups are put in worse positions at fighting that enemy. It makes no sense.

As of a few days ago, NJ stated that it had distributed over 1.2 million vaccine doses. But that's not the fun part. Of the distributed vaccines, 51% have been to Whites, and 15% have been given to Asians, Hispanics, and Blacks. No, not 15% each to these underserved populations,

15% in total, at 6%, 5%, and 4% respectively. This is simply unacceptable.

The governor has recently come out to state that vaccination of these underserved communities will be ramped up, but it shouldn't even have come to this at all. There should have been adequate preparations to ensure that the distribution of the vaccine is fair. But that wasn't done. And knowing our healthcare system, I can't exactly say I'm surprised.

To be fair, this isn't all on them. Undoubtedly, they should have prepared themselves better, but one of the main issues is the nature of the vaccine. Many of these underserved groups are in rural or semi-rural areas. And both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccine need to be refrigerated for proper storage. Transporting them to many of these regions wouldn't have been easy. But, again, this could and should have been dealt with.

The governor has made promises, and I hope the state comes through on them because, otherwise, the results will be devastating. These underserved populations always come last in almost all aspects, and it's only a matter of time before conflicts or even riots start.

And looking at an even more pressing issue - people are dying. Like, people are dying right now. You only need to visit the clinics. It comes as little surprise that the government is securing as many vaccines as possible, with 300 million vaccines going to come through in the next few months.

Yes, I know, 300 million is a lot. But the good thing about this is we don't have to vaccinate everyone in the US to beat the virus; we just need to vaccinate enough people. I'm talking about herd immunity. And to properly

achieve this, we need to vaccinate people from all groups and regions. That's our only shot at beating the virus right now.

This applies to other states, too, not just NJ. Enough is enough. I'm confident we will eventually beat this virus, but what I'm unsure of is how many more lives will go before that happens. I hope very little, but we're not heading in the right direction. Something needs to be done immediately. Let's hope it will. Stay safe.

This article was written by Dr. Adil Manzoor DO, a Board Certified Internist & Board Eligible Pediatrician, who works as a Hospitalist, and Emergency Room Physician. He is also the current President of Garden State Street Medicine, a non-profit organization whose sole purpose is to provide free preventive and acute urgent care services for the homeless. He is also the co-founder of his own unique medical practice Mobile Medicine NJ.

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- <https://www.nj.com/coronavirus/2021/02/how-will-people-who-are-confined-to-their-homes-get-the-covid-vaccine-in-nj.html?outputType=amp>
- <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2021/01/28/961703505/early-data-shows-striking-racial-disparities-in-whos-getting-the-covid-19-vaccine>

FORMER PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND POLITICAL CANDIDATES CHARGED WITH TAKING BRIBES

TRENTON - On Feb. 16, Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal announced that four former public officials and political candidates in New Jersey - including former Jersey City School Board President Sudhan Thomas and former State Assemblyman Jason O'Donnell - have been indicted by a state grand jury on charges that they allegedly took bribes in a major investigation of political corruption in Hudson and Morris counties conducted by the Office of Public Integrity and Accountability (OPIA).

The four defendants were initially charged by complaint-summons in December 2019. A fifth defendant, Mary Dougherty, continues to face a bribery charge filed by complaint-summons at that time.

The four defendants are charged with taking thousands of dollars in bribes from a cooperating witness in the form of illegal campaign contributions. In return, the defendants allegedly promised the cooperating witness, who is a tax attorney, that they would vote or use their official authority or influence to hire or continue to hire his law firm

for lucrative government legal work.

Envelopes and paper bags filled with cash were delivered to the defendants by the cooperating witness at various locations. Other times the cooperating witness offered checks from illegal "straw donors" - individuals reimbursed to write checks to the defendant's campaign in amounts that complied with the legal limit on individual donations.

The following four defendants were charged as follows in four separate indictments returned by the state grand jury on Jan. 20, Jan. 27, and Feb. 3:

Sudhan Thomas, 45, of Jersey City, N.J. - Former Jersey City School Board President

- Official Misconduct (2nd Degree)
- Pattern of Official Misconduct (2nd Degree)
- Bribery in Official and Political Matters (2nd Degree)
- Acceptance or Receipt of Unlawful Benefit by Public Servant (2nd Degree)

Jason O'Donnell, 49, of Bayonne, N.J. - Former State Assemblyman and Former Bayonne Mayoral Candidate

- Bribery in Official and Political Matters (2nd Degree)

John Cesaro, 49, of Parsippany, N.J. - Former Morris County Freeholder

- Official Misconduct (2nd Degree)
- Bribery in Official and Political Matters (2nd Degree)
- Acceptance or Receipt of Unlawful Benefit by Public Servant (2nd Degree)
- Tampering with Public Records or Information (3rd Degree)
- Falsifying or Tampering with Records (4th Degree)
- Concealment or Misrepresentation of Contributions or Expenditures (4th Degree)

John Windish, 68, of Mount Arlington, N.J. - Former Mount Arlington Council Member

- Official Misconduct (2nd Degree)
- Bribery in Official and Political Matters (2nd Degree)
- Acceptance or Receipt of Unlawful Benefit by Public Servant (2nd Degree)

"These indictments are an important step in our prosecutions of these defendants," said Attorney General Grewal. "We allege that these former political candidates agreed to sell the authority of their public office or the office they sought in exchange for an envelope filled with cash or illegal checks from straw donors. The conduct alleged in these indictments is old-school political corruption at its worst - the kind that erodes public faith in government and that we are determined to root out."

"These cases reflect one of OPIA's core missions, which is to uncover and prosecute corruption in state and local government and related elections," said OPIA Director Thomas Eicher. "Three of these defendants face potential mandatory minimum sentences for official misconduct

(Continued on page 14)

BILL INTRODUCED TO ADDRESS STATEWIDE LEAD CONCERNS

TRENTON - Moving to address New Jersey's aging water system infrastructure and the ongoing concerns of lead contamination in many cities across the state, Assembly members Gary Schaer and Angela McKnight have introduced legislation that would require public water systems to inventory and replace lead service lines within 20 years and provide for recoupment of costs by investor-owned public water systems.

In 2019, at least 35 water systems in New Jersey were found to have high levels of lead in their tap water. The state's aging water system quickly became the epicenter of national attention and keeping residents safe in Newark and other cities emphasized the need for a rigorous effort to address our water infrastructure and environmental concerns.

"Before the COVID-19 pandemic began, New Jersey was already facing an ongoing public health crisis," said Schaer (D-Bergen, Passaic). "Every year, more than 4,800 new cases of childhood lead poisoning are reported in our State, causing potentially irreparable damage to our shared future. Ending the lead crisis in New Jersey is not insurmountable, it is achievable if we believe it is worth doing. This legislation provides a path forward to guaranteeing every resident the right to safe drinking water."

The bill (A-5343) would require each public water system (PWS) in the State to develop a service line inventory and a replacement plan for lead service lines that provides for the replacement of all lead service lines within 20 years, and would authorize an investor-owned

PWS to recoup the costs of lead service line replacements.

"Critical upgrades to New Jersey's water infrastructure are needed to modernize a decaying water system and ensure safe drinking water for New Jersey residents," said McKnight (D-Hudson). "Major cities and the most historic cities, such as Jersey City and Newark, continue to battle a lead crisis on top of the current public health crisis in which we find ourselves. Lead contamination and aging water infrastructure will amount to a public health crisis, an environmental emergency, and have an impact on our roadways for future generations if we don't take action and develop a plan now."

Within 12 months of enactment, each PWS would be required to submit, for review and approval by the DEP, an initial plan for replacing all lead ser-

vice lines within its service area. The plan would be required to provide for the annual replacement of at least 7% of all lead service lines known to the PWS on the date it submits its initial plan to the DEP, and the replacement of all lead service lines within the PWS's service area within 20 years. Each PWS would be required to update its replacement plan annually and keep consistent with PWS's updated service line inventory.

The measure would also authorize investor-owned PWSs to recoup the costs of lead service line replacements by including a proposal for recoupment to the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) in a general rate case proceeding. BPU would be required to consider the costs to customers before approving the proposal. The bill has not yet been referred to a committee.



*From
The
Pastor's
Heart*

OP-ED BY DR. ROBERT KENNEDY

Rebuilding The Altar To God

I have been listening, lately, to the formulas given in the public arenas for the strengthening of families, the stabilization of society and the growth of churches. And I have concluded that most prescribers are missing one of the most essential elements that used to be offered as a top priority.

Let me get straight to it, namely the family altar to glorify God. Maybe you have read my notes on this subject before, but let me bring it to the fore again because we must give new attention to it.

Formally, when families faced a problem, they turned to the central place to solve the problems - the altar. These days families have become busy, rushing to the job here and there, competing with one another (the Joneses), and finding whoever they can blame for the pathologies affecting their families, that they find no time for the altar. Yes, families are resorting to the courts and the secular social agencies to do what they used to do at the family altar, forgetting that the family altar worked for generations to strengthen the family.

In biblical history, we read of the institution of the family altar. I wish I had space here to trace the whole sweep of biblical

history, but let me simply reference the earliest history through the times of the Pentateuch, Judges and Kings. In Genesis 3:8, we read of how God came to meet with Adam and Eve in the garden in the cool of the evening. In Genesis 9:1, we read how, after leaving the Ark, Noah offered his sacrifice, blessed the Lord and blessed his sons. In Genesis 12:1-7; 8:13; 13:14-18; 22:9-14, we read about Abraham building his altars of praise, prayer, peace and promise. He was such a prayerful man that he was called "a friend of God" (James 2:23). In fact, when God was about to bring destruction on Sodom, God said that Abraham's nephew, Lot, lived there in Sodom, he God wouldn't hide his intentions from Abraham.

In that context, here is how the comment on Abraham reads, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." (Genesis 18:19)

In Genesis 26 we read of an occasion how Isaac found a broken altar that his father Abraham had built and how he repaired the altar. In Genesis 33 we take note that when Jacob came along, he built and repaired the altar. After the altars of Genesis, we read in later bible stories that Moses built altars, Samuel built altars, Elijah built and repaired altars. Each person, or family in the generations that were faithful to God in Israel rebuilt the altars.

Ancient Hebrew/Jewish families would recite the Schema every day at their family altars. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our

God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength," (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). By repeating this daily, they affirmed who God was, who they were in relation to God (He is "ours"), and how they were to respond to God, namely to "love" Him with everything they had and in all aspects of life.

Having cited the above examples and their implied significance, I need to ask you whether you have built a family altar to glorify God? Are you one of the busy ones that have no time for God? Are you like the fellow I heard about, who was too busy to pray in the mornings and too tired at nights, that he decided on an easy way to pray? He wrote out a prayer, stuck it on a wall in his bedroom, and as he went to bed, nightly, he pointed to the prayer and said, "There it is God, same as last night."

Some time ago, I read in a sermon that said, "God is jealous for our families. He wants to invade our space - occupy our living rooms and turn up the spiritual thermostat of our homes! God is longing to restore the place of prayer and worship in our families and give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to change our lives forever!"

So, let me ask my questions again.

1. Do you have a family altar?
2. Do you have a special space (room, corner) in your home that is dedicated to prayer?
3. Do you have a set time (10-20 minutes, morning and evening) dedicated to the reading and study of God's word?
4. Do you have a prayer agenda

(petition, projects, plans, purpose) that you place before God each day?

5. Do you meditate on (or sing) a classic hymn, a spiritual song or chorus at the altar?
6. Do you take a moment to testify (give God praise) at the altar?
7. Do you take a moment to confess to God and each other and share the forgiveness God has given to you?
8. Do you speak a blessing into your life and the life of your family members around you?
9. Do you remember to pray for your neighbors, missionaries, the work you have to do and your nation?
10. Do you understand that the most significant legacy that you can leave for your family is an altar?

Satan hates family altars with a passion, and he will do whatever he can to tear them down, or replace them with idolatrous ones. Satan has been tearing down family altars for the whole history of humanity. Today he has become most aggressive at doing what he likes to tear the down and set up his own altars.

So, we need to do all we can to secure, build, rebuild and repair our altars. It is said if we have a fiery family altar, the devil will not be able to touch us. He will not be able to make a shipwreck of your family.

Yes, rebuild your family altar. Refurbish it today. Dust off the Bible. Call your family together and let them know you are removing the idolatrous altar. Let them know that you are replacing it with an altar to God.

TOWN WATCH

(Continued from page 6)

"You should know that this would've been a day where we would've called a delayed opening," concluded Cascone. "However, as you are probably aware within the COVID environment, that's not an option at our disposal."

The superintendent, in the Feb. 8 WOPS Board of Education meeting, said that he has been trying to give all school community "stakeholders" ade-

quate time to pivot from hybrid to all-remote learning.

SOUTH ORANGE / MAPLEWOOD - The two-town public school district, in a matter of three hours here Feb. 15, have gone from "Phase 3" hybrid learning to all remote learning for the time being.

By "the time being," there may be a hybrid resumption either after March 15 or April 19, depending on which education party one listens to.

South Orange-Maplewood Education Association leader-

ship, in a late Monday afternoon notice, said that its teachers will not re-enter the 11 school buildings. The teacher's union issued seven bullet points, involving teachers requests for classroom relocations were denied and/or moved to other spaces shared with other classes or personnel, for their re-entry refusal.

The South Orange-Maplewood School District, later that evening, said all 11 schools will be all remote "indefinitely" until April 19 - including its central office staff. District administrators said that

the union's "disagreement of 34 workspaces, more than 12 of which were brought to our attention as recently as (Jan. 13), has led to this reaction."

The administration-teachers impasse more than puts the reopening plan into limbo. The disagreement may tear up the Jan. 27 "sidebar" agreement SOMSD and SOMEA had reached to move reopening forward.

April 19 is five days after the traditional end of the winter heating season. Shutting off the boilers may or may not help in

(Continued on page 15)



Wyclef Jean leads roundtable discussion with East Orange high school students about police brutality and the current state of race relations in America to create concepts for his music video "Hendrix."

EAST ORANGE HONORS

THE FUGEES

(Continued from page 1)

cludes record-breaking sales of over 20 million copies worldwide.

On "The Score," the Fugees skillfully combined beats layered with consciousness to carve out a new genre in Hip Hop and R&B music. Once called the most unfettered and undeniable portrayal of urban life in New Jersey music history, "The Score" continues to be socially

his "Hendrix" video on South Clinton Street in 2016 and Lauryn Hill supporting the grand opening of her personal chef's restaurant "Spice N Thing" on Main Street in East Orange in 2018.

Prior to taping Wyclef's video, which also featured East Orange native Kyemah McEntyre, members of the East Orange All-Stars Cheerleading Team, and other East Orange teens, Wyclef sat down and held a roundtable discussion with local high school students about police brutality and the current state of race rela-



Left to Right: Chef Roger Miller, Lauryn Hill, and Mayor Ted Green at the 2018 opening of Miller's restaurant Spice N' Thing a 442 Main Street in East Orange.

relevant 25 years later.

Members of the Fugees have maintained a connection to East Orange over the years, most recently with Wyclef Jean filming

tions in America.

He also was recently spotted supporting Burnet BBQ, a family-owned restaurant, on Hoffman Boulevard.



Wyclef Jean records PSA in front of East Orange City Hall Plaza.

ESSEX COUNTY COVID-19 CASE TALLY

Weekly Statistics from February 10 - February 17, 2021

Municipality	2-10-2021	Deaths	2-17-2021	Deaths
Belleville	4065	95	4179	96
Bloomfield	3870	95	3994	97
Caldwell	423	14	432	14
Cedar Grove	1184	119	1207	119
East Orange	5018	264	5161	266
Essex Fells	140	2	142	2
Fairfield	612	26	640	27
Glen Ridge	250	11	261	11
Irvington	3301	195	3358	202
Livingston	1352	81	1397	81
Maplewood	872	31	900	33
Millburn	625	8	646	8
Montclair	1582	63	1626	64
Newark	28692	842	29573	853
North Caldwell	318	6	336	6
Nutley	2077	51	2174	51
Orange	2542	116	2618	118
Roseland	371	15	382	15
South Orange	548	11	573	11
Verona	682	16	709	16
West Caldwell	780	50	805	51
West Orange	3473	214	3549	215
Total	62777	2325	64662	2356

OTHER COVID-19 TALLIES (As of Feb. 17, 2021)

NJ: 673,108 cases / 20,343 deaths (Plus 2,289 probable)

United States (approx.): 27.8 Million / 490,000 deaths

Worldwide (approx.): 109.8 Million / 2.43 Million deaths

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy has extended the state's public emergency declaration for another 30 days.

MULTIPLE FIRES IGNITE

(Continued from page 1)

Fire Division extinguished a 2-alarm fire at 910 18th Avenue.

The fire began Feb. 15 at 10:14 p.m. at the location of two businesses, Kimka Liquors and C-Town Supermarket. Responding firefighters located a large fire in the shared storage area of the attached buildings. The floor began to collapse, and a second alarm was sounded at 10:34 p.m.

No injuries have been reported and the fire was considered under control at 1:02 a.m.

Later, firefighters dealt with a 3-alarm fire at 221 Emmet Street. The original address for this fire was given as Miller Street and Avenue A. It

was later corrected.

At approximately 5:37 a.m., firefighters responded to the vacant, 3-story, large commercial building and located extremely heavy fire upon arrival. A second alarm was sounded, followed by a third alarm, with some 90 firefighters responding. The building sustained major fire damage with a total roof collapse.

A building at 219 Emmet Street was exposed to fire from the initial building and also sustained fire damage. No injuries have been reported. The fire was considered under control at 10:13 a.m.

The causes and origins of these fire are under investigation by members of the Newark Fire Division's Arson Unit.

THREE MEN CHARGED IN CONSPIRACY TO DISTRIBUTE DRUGS INTO NEW JERSEY

NEWARK - Three New York men have been charged in connection with a conspiracy to distribute fentanyl, methamphetamine and cocaine in New Jersey from locations in Manhattan, Acting U.S. Attorney Rachael A. Honig announced Feb. 16.

Juan Carlos Merced Moreno, aka "Samuel," 43; Antonio Hidalgo, aka "Cacona," 43, and Jose Miguel Abreu, aka "Pelú," 26, all from Manhattan, are charged by complaint with one count of conspiracy to distribute 400 grams or more of suspected fentanyl, 500 grams or more of suspected methamphetamine, and 500 grams or more of suspected cocaine. Merced Moreno appeared by videoconference before U.S. Magistrate Judge Cathy L. Waldor and was detained. Hidalgo is in custody on other charges and Abreu is at large.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court: In February 2019, law enforcement officials began investigating a drug trafficking

organization based in Hudson County, New Jersey, and intercepted telephone calls made by its members. Officials learned of a fentanyl pill press based being operated by Moreno, Hidalgo and Abreu in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan.

Based on intercepted telephone calls and surveillance between November 2020 and January 2021, law enforcement officials learned the defendants supplied fentanyl pills to the New Jersey drug trafficking organization, which subsequently distributed them throughout New Jersey. Law enforcement believes that the three defendants supplied approximately at least 25,000 fentanyl pills to the New Jersey organization.

Law enforcement officials began to intercept telephone calls made and received by Moreno and Hidalgo, as well as telephone calls between the two men and Abreu, and identified various residences and stash locations in Manhattan associated

with the DTO-NY. On Jan. 29, 2021, law enforcement officials executed search warrants on Moreno's residence, Hidalgo's residence, Abreu's residence and other stash and manufacturing locations.

They recovered: 5.4 kilograms of a suspected combination of methamphetamine and fentanyl; 1.7 kilograms of suspected methamphetamine in a crystalized rock form; 1.6 kilograms of suspected methamphetamine pills; 1.5 kilograms of suspected fentanyl pills; 1.3 kilograms of suspected cocaine; 788 grams of suspected fentanyl in brick form; two pill presses; four scales; and \$11,180. The seized narcotics have an estimated street value of \$700,000.

The drug distribution conspiracy charge carries a mandatory minimum penalty of 10 years in prison, a maximum potential penalty of life in prison, and a maximum \$10 million fine.

Acting U.S. Attorney Honig credited special agents of the

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Investigations, New York City Airport Border Enforcement Security Taskforce, under the direction of Peter C. Fitzhugh; special agents from U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Investigations - Newark, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Jason J. Molina; members of the New York Police Department, under the direction of Commissioner Dermot F. Shea; and investigators and assistant prosecutors from the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Hudson County Prosecutor Esther Suarez, with the investigation leading to the charges and arrests.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Benjamin Levin of the U.S. Attorney's Office Violent Crimes Unit in Newark.

The charges and allegations against the defendants are merely accusations, and they are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND CANDIDATES CHARGED

(Continued from page 11)

in accepting bribes. New Jersey has some of the nation's strongest anti-corruption laws, and we will use them to hold government officials accountable if instead of honestly and faithfully serving the public interest, they betray their duty by corruptly serving their own interests."

Mary Dougherty, 60, of Morristown, N.J., a former candidate for Morris County freeholder, continues to face a charge of second-degree bribery in official and political matters filed by complaint-summons on Dec. 19, 2019.

The defendants were charged in an investigation by the OPIA Corruption Bureau which began in early 2018 and focused on political figures in Hudson and Morris counties who allegedly solicited illegal campaign contributions from the cooperating witness in return for promised official action to provide him with government work.

Additional details regarding

the alleged conduct of the defendants, as set forth in the criminal complaints initially filed against them, are contained in the press release posted at this link: <https://www.nj.gov/oag/newsreleases19/pr20191219a.html>

Deputy Attorneys General John A. Nicodemo, Trevor Taniguchi and Eric Cohen are prosecuting the defendants, under the supervision of OPIA Corruption Bureau Chief Peter Lee and Counsel to the Director Anthony Picione. OPIA Chief of Staff Pearl Minato, former Deputy Attorney General Anthony Robinson, and former OPIA Deputy Chief Jeffrey Manis also assisted in the case. Attorney General Grewal commended all of the prosecutors and detectives who conducted and supervised the investigations for the OPIA Corruption Bureau, under the leadership of OPIA Director Thomas Eicher.

Second-degree crimes carry a sentence of five to 10 years in state prison and a fine of up to \$150,000. The second-degree charges against those who held public office at the time of the

alleged conduct - Thomas, Cesaro, and Windish - carry a mandatory minimum sentence of five years in prison without eligibility for parole under New Jersey's enhanced penalties for official corruption. Third-degree charges carry a sentence of three to five years in prison and a fine of up to \$15,000, while fourth-degree charges carry a sentence of up to 18 months in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000.

The charges are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Attorney General Grewal created the Office of Public Integrity and Accountability in September 2018 to combat corruption and strengthen public confidence in government institutions. In December 2019, the Attorney General issued a directive codifying OPIA and making it a permanent part of the Attorney General's Office. That directive established the OPIA Corruption Bureau as the lead office within the Department of Law & Public Safety for the investigation and prosecution of state criminal violations in-

volving corruption and abuse of public trust.

OPIA has a toll-free Tipline 1-844-OPIA-TIPS for the public to report corruption. The AG's Office has an Anti-Corruption Reward Program that offers a reward of up to \$25,000 for tips leading to a conviction for a crime involving public corruption. Information is posted at: <http://nj.gov/oag/corruption/reward.html>.

SPORTS WRAP

(Continued from page 3)

UConn and Providence after three straight losses. The Pirates are in the running for a spot in this year's NCAA Tournament, with a 12-8 overall and a 9-5 record in the Big East Conference.

The Seton Hall women's basketball team has had some key victories this season, with one at Providence and other wins on the road against Butler, Marquette, St. John's, and Georgetown.

TOWN WATCH (Continued from page 12)

keeping open-window or fully ventilated classrooms above the state's 68 degree workplace minimum.

Ventilator installation, other classroom repairs and inspections are to meanwhile continue.

BLOOMFIELD - Members of the Essex County Emerald Society Pipe Band serenaded one of their own - Retired East Orange Police Department Detective. Sgt. John "Jack" McGarry, Jr., 69 - before and after his Funeral Mass here at Sacred Heart Church Feb. 12.

EOPD's headquarters meanwhile paid tribute to McGarry's 24 years' service by putting up mourning bunting and lowering is American flag to half-staff since Feb. 9. McGarry's loss was also felt in Newark, West Orange, Belleville and Little Falls since his Feb. 8 death here.

McGarry, from when he was born in the old Presbyterian Hospital Dec. 12, 1951 to when he joined "East Orange's Finest" in 1976, was a Newarker. He was raised above grandparents Thomas and Kathleen McGarry's Tavern at 413 Central Ave. and graduated from Essex Catholic High School in 1970.

The BSA Troop 40 Eagle Scout was a Local 10 Sheet Metal Workers Union member when he joined the U.S. Army Reserve in 1970. Specialist Fifth Class McGarry was a reservist, splitting time with PSE&G's Auto Maintenance Department (1971-73), until he joined BFD in 1976.

The PBA Local 16 member, who moved into Bloomfield's Second Ward after 1986, retired in 2000 to the Essex County Prosecutor's Office Homeland Security Department through 2016. The West Orange St. Patrick's Day Parade 2006 Grand Marshal was also a member of Bellville Knights of Columbus Council 1008, American Legion Post No. 121 -- Little Falls and a life member of the West Orange Elks.

Life Louise, daughter Amy and brothers Brain and Kevin are among McGarry's survivors. Memorial donations may be made to the Essex County Emerald Society Pipe Band.

MONTCLAIR - Teachers who are Montclair Education Association members may continue to virtually instruct Montclair Public Schools students from their homes at least until March 9.

State Chancery Court-Newark Judge James R. Paganelli denied MPS, Schools Superintendent Dr. Jonathan Ponds and the Board of Education their injunction petition Feb. 10 to bring MEA members back to in-classroom instruction.

Paganelli said that the plaintiffs had not proven that their facilities are safe enough to allow in-person teaching. The

judge added that the district had failed to show how the teachers union members' instruction from their homes was equal to a lost day of teaching.

The MPS and fellow plaintiffs had contended that MEA members' insistence on remote learning from home since Jan. 22 constituted an illegal work stoppage or job action. Ponds had to postpone Jan. 25's intended launch of hybrid learning on Jan. 22 because he said he could not get enough staff into the buildings.

Paganelli has scheduled MPS and MEA to return before his Newark bench for March 9 oral arguments. The parties are to file their respective briefs March 5 and 1.

BELLEVILLE - Township officials and historians more than ran up the Qing Dynasty flag before its Municipal Building to observe the 150th anniversary of the first Chinese Lunar New Year celebration on the East Coast here Feb. 12.

Mayor Michael Melham welcomed Facebook.com/OfficialBellevilleNJ viewers to a virtual fireworks celebration here 7:15 p.m. Friday. Melham, after brief remarks on the importance of the occasion, yielded to 10 minutes of exploding fireworks superimposed above Belleville's town hall accompanied by traditional Chinese music.

"I've been working on this for the last two years since I was elected mayor," said Melham in the still-available clip. "We were going to have fireworks, music, lanterns, dragons and crazy things but that was before the pandemic hit."

The global COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic, depending where one has lived the past 15 months, has brought a first or a second subdued Lunar New Year's celebration. Township celebrants, however, went to the livestream for Friday and intend to do so for Feb. 22.

The nearest thing to a live in-person event is the ceremonial launching of 150 Chinese lanterns at Belleville Municipal Stadium after sunset Feb. 22 - but all 150 reserved spaces were taken by 9 a.m. Feb. 16.

Some 67 Chinese men and boys welcomed their Belleville area neighbors to celebrate the Lunar New Year here at the then-Dutch Reformed Church Feb. 12, 1871. They were a sliver of the 20,000 Chinese who were recruited by the Central Pacific Railroad who helped build the first transcontinental railroad 1864-69. (Many chose to work or start businesses on the West Coast)

The original 68 (one man died two months after their Sept. 20, 1870 arrival here) took up an offer to work in the Passaic Steam Laundry across the Passaic River in present-day North Arlington. Their 1871 New Year's celebration predated ones at Newark's Mulberry Street and in Lower Manhattan.

NUTLEY - The former Nutley Volunteer Emergency Rescue Squad president is scheduled to appear in State Superior Court-Newark March 1 to answer to a charge of stealing \$105,000 from the squad.


Jonathan Arredondo, 30, of River Vale, said Acting Essex County Prosecutor Theodore "Ted" Stephens II Jan. 29, has been charged with one count of second-degree theft. The charge came six months after he was fired by the squad and after Nutley Public Safety Commissioner Alphonse "Al" Petracco had turned over the institution's financial records to ECPO.

Arredondo is accused of stealing \$75,000 from NVERS accounts and charging more than \$30,000 in unrecompensed personal expenses of a squad-issued debit card.

"It's alleged that Arredondo withdrew cash from squad accounts from May 2019 to August 2020 in 19 increments of \$5,000 and deposited the money in his personal bank account's TM," said Stephens. "For much of that time the position of (squad) treasurer was unfilled until a new one was elected in 2020. An investigation was opened after the treasurer's audit."

NVERS officials, on Aug. 12, agreed to turn over their financial records to Petracco in exchange of the commissioner tabling his ordinance that would have dissolved the largely independent squad. The agreement had also called off Arredondo's "Save the Squad" rally that would have preceded the commissioners' Aug. 18 meeting and vote.

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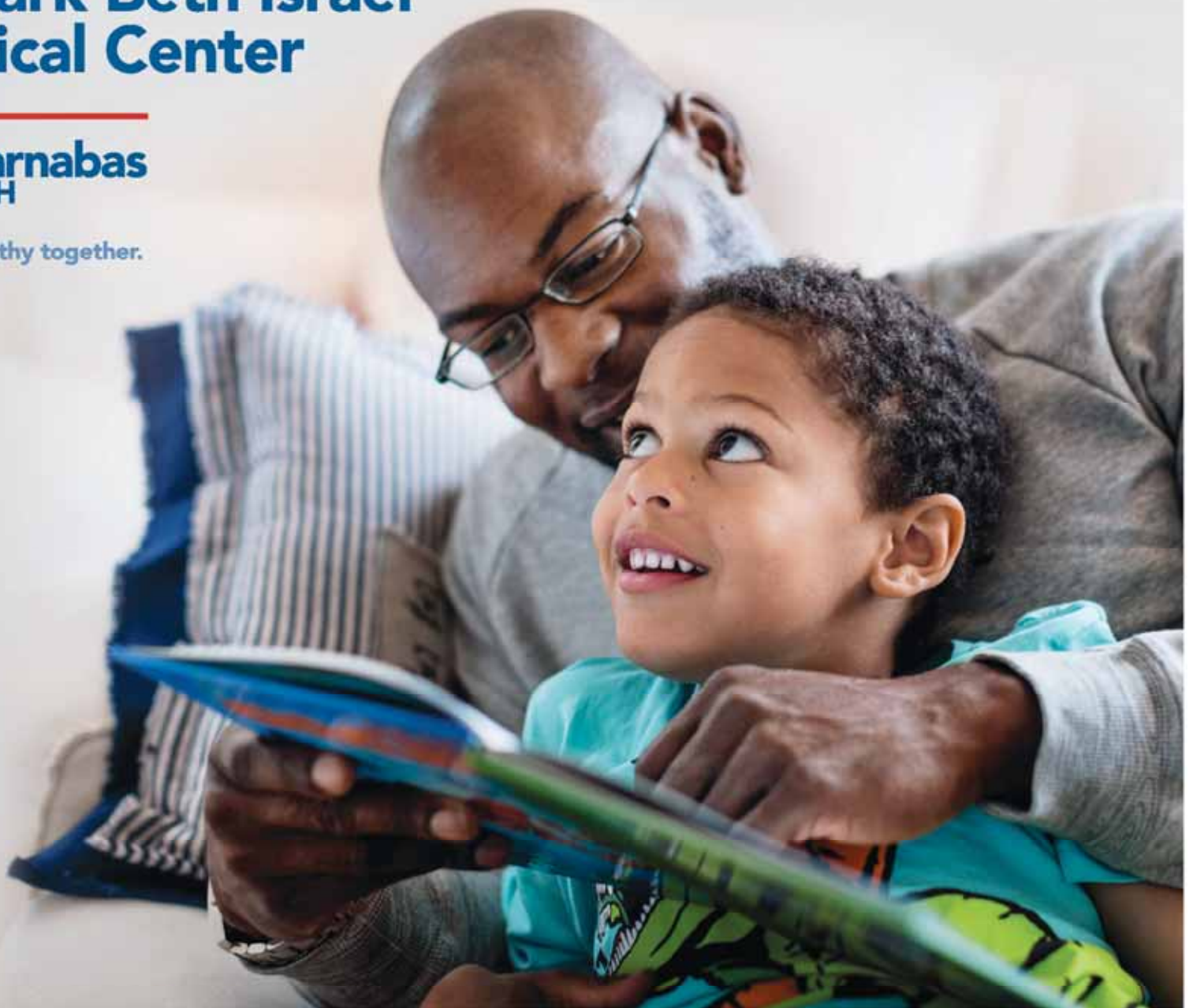
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