



**DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME
BEGINS THIS SUNDAY**



PAGE 5

**FORMER
VETERANS
AFFAIRS
MEDICAL
CENTER
EMPLOYEE
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VOLUME 21 • ISSUE 18 * MARCH 11, 2021 - MARCH 17, 2021 "LET'S TALK FOR THE BETTERMENT OF OUR COMMUNITIES"

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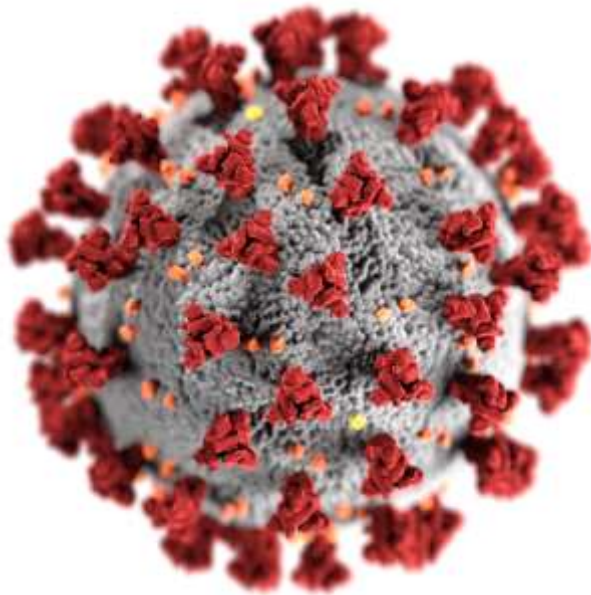
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ONE YEAR LATER ... (WHAT) HAVE WE LEARNED? THE AMERICAN RESCUE ACT

By Kristopher Seals OP/ED

By the time you read this, it will be one year since the world changed forever.

On March 11, 2020 a few things happened: Donald Trump, who was President at the time, was telling people not to worry, actress Thora Birch turned 38, and the World Health Organization announced that it was officially designating the Novel Coronavirus 2019-nCoV / COVID-19 that originated in Wuhan, China as a pandemic.



Life on Earth changed quickly and brutally. Sickness, death, postponements, cancellations, jobs being lost, businesses closed, businesses gone forever, working from home (if you were fortunate enough to keep your job), anger, depression, despair, no sports, no theaters, no concerts, no parks, no school, no houses of worship, no funerals, no routine health care, no public services, no indoor services, reduced services, messed up services, unreliable

schedules, testing, quarantines, pods, curfews, virtual press conferences, capacity limits, social distancing, gloves, endless sanitary cleaning, a renewed emphasis on hand washing, and the ubiquitous face coverings.

Yes, all of that happened. While some of those restrictions were lifted or eased, others were not. "Local Talk" was one of the fortunate entities that

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11 CANDIDATES, 7 SEATS



PAGE 7

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Turn to
PAGE 16



Editorial

Dhiren Shah
Editor-In-Chief

Hello Readers,

Meghan Markle married Prince Harry in 2018 and they became the Duke and Duchess of Sussex. Like Princess Diana and Duchess Kate Middleton, she has drawn the attention of the world. This is Meghan's second marriage. She was married in 2011 to Hollywood producer Trevor Engelson. Within a short period of two years, Meghan divorced him, as living separately (Meghan in Canada and Engelson in Los Angeles) did not work out.

In a March 7 interview with Oprah Winfrey, Meghan and Harry opened up and talked about their struggles being in the Royal Family. Meghan is preg-

nant, but there is a guessing game that the about the skin tone of her child.

In the magazine Town & Country, Oprah asked Meghan what she was excited about in her new life (i.e. post-working royal life), and the Duchess replied, "Just being able to live authentically... it's so basic but it's really fulfilling." She continued, "I was thinking about it, you know our wedding - three days before our wedding, we got married. No one knows that. We called the Archbishop and we just said, look, this thing, this spectacle is for the world. But we want our union between us, so the vows that we have framed in our room are just the two of us in our backyard with the Archbishop of Canterbury and that was the piece that..."

It was a bombshell that she got married before the royal wedding. Sources say that in a statement agreed on by all three households, Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Charles and Prince Wil-

liam, the Queen is eager to bring calm to the situation.

Speaking of "queens", Essex County native Queen Latifah got vaccinated at Essex County College. That was broadcasted all over, as County Executive Joseph DiVincenzo made a huge announcement before the vaccination. However, we received calls from our readers concerned about how she was able to jump the line at only 50 years old and receive a vaccination, when they have been in line and meet the requirements. According to Governor Murphy, people from age 65 and up or people with health complications may receive vaccination in New Jersey. Also, one reader suggested that Joe D. should have picked a celebrity over 65 years old. I think it was a good idea of Joe D. to try and get more African Americans to come out and get vaccinated. The vaccination is for your safety. While the vaccine is not a guarantee that you will not get the virus, it will protect you

from getting really sick or going to the hospital. I have received my first dose of vaccination and will receive another dose in two weeks.

For NJ gubernatorial candidates from the Democratic Party, incumbent Phil Murphy is the only candidate declared to run for the primary on June 8, 2021. In the Republican Primary, there are five candidates who have already declared their candidacy. They are: Jack Ciattarelli, Brian Levine, Philip Rizzo, Hirsh Singh, and David Winkler. There might be more candidates who jumps into the primary race, as well as in the November 2 election as independent candidates. But as you all know, only two candidates will have a close contest, the Democratic candidate and the Republican candidate.

Have a wonderful week.

I'll talk to you next week.

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WEATHER FOR THE WEEK

<u>THURSDAY</u>	<u>FRIDAY</u>	<u>SATURDAY</u>	<u>SUNDAY</u>	<u>MONDAY</u>	<u>TUESDAY</u>	<u>WEDNESDAY</u>
Partly Cloudy	Sun, Clouds, AM Rain	Sunny	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy
HI 67	HI 65	HI 50	HI 52	HI 42	HI 45	HI 50
LO 56	LO 35	LO 35	LO 29	LO 32	LO 35	LO 38

NEW RULES FOR FULLY VACCINATED PEOPLE

On March 8, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued its first set of recommendations on activities that people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 can safely resume.

The new guidance - which is based on the latest science - includes recommendations for how and when a fully vaccinated individual can visit with other people who are fully vaccinated and with other people who are not vaccinated. This guidance represents a first step toward returning to everyday activities in our communities. CDC will update these recommendations as more people are vaccinated, rates of COVID-19 in the community change, and additional scientific evidence becomes available.

“We know that people want to get vaccinated so they can get back to doing the things they enjoy with the people they love,”

said CDC Director Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH. “There are some activities that fully vaccinated people can begin to resume now in their own homes. Everyone - even those who are vaccinated - should continue with all mitigation strategies when in public settings. As the science evolves and more people get vaccinated, we will continue to provide more guidance to help fully vaccinated people safely resume more activities.”

- Visit with other fully vaccinated people indoors without wearing masks or staying 6 feet apart.
- Visit with unvaccinated people from one other household indoors without wearing masks or staying 6 feet apart if everyone in the other household is at low risk for severe disease.
- Refrain from quarantine and

testing if they do not have symptoms of COVID-19 after contact with someone who has COVID-19.

A person is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after receiving the last required dose of vaccine. Although vaccinations are accelerating, CDC estimates that just 9.2% of the U.S. population has been fully vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine that the FDA has authorized for emergency use.

While the new guidance is a positive step, the vast majority of people need to be fully vaccinated before COVID-19 precautions can be lifted broadly. Until then, it is important that everyone continues to adhere to public health mitigation measures to protect the large number of people who remain unvaccinated.

CDC recommends that fully

vaccinated people continue to take these COVID-19 precautions when in public, when visiting with unvaccinated people from multiple other households, and when around unvaccinated people who are at high risk of getting severely ill from COVID-19:

- Wear a well-fitted mask.
- Stay at least 6 feet from people you do not live with.
- Avoid medium- and large-sized in-person gatherings.
- Get tested if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
- Follow guidance issued by individual employers.
- Follow CDC and health department travel requirements and recommendations.

CDC has released resources to help people make informed decisions when they are fully vaccinated.

SPORTS WRAP



By William Hathaway

The Big East Basketball Tournament is one of the famous tournaments in the tri-state area. Last year, COVID-19 put an end to the tournament and much of the sports world for months. This year, the tournament is back at Madison Square Garden, and will start March 10 before finishing up March 13.

In other college basketball news, the Rutgers program seems like it will be heading to the NCAA Tournament for the first time in a long time. Rutgers now plays in the Big Ten Conference, and finished the season with a 14-10 record, 10-10 in the conference. With the strength of the Big Ten, their NCAA resume looks strong enough for an at-large bid.

The NBA hosted its annual all-star game in Atlanta, with Team LeBron beat Team Durant 170-150. While the game featured shooting displays from Damian Lillard and Stephen Curry, the game was marred by Durant being unable to play due

to injury, and Sixers stars Joel Embiid and Ben Simmons being unavailable due to COVID-19 tracing. Milwaukee forward Giannis Antetokounmpo won the MVP Award, going 16-16 from the field, although it appeared he missed two dunks.

In other All-Star news, Anfernee Simons won the Slam Dunk Contest, Stephen Curry won the Three Point Competition, and Domantas Sabonis won the Skills Challenge. The day was dedicated to supporting HBCUs.

The regular season for New Jersey boys' basketball has ended. East Orange beat Orange 63-57, Seton Hall Prep defeated University High 56-47, Central rode by West Side 68-48, Columbia beat West Orange 67-53, and Payne Tech slipped by Irvington 55-52.

Finally, Dallas Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott is going to be very rich. He is set to sign a 4-year, \$160 million deal, with \$126 million guaranteed, and a \$66 million signing bonus.

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UNITED STATES

The American Rescue Act

After false starts and arguments, an Act to assist millions of Americans is finally on the verge of being activated.

All that is missing is a signature from U.S. President Joe Biden for the American Rescue Act to be put into action, with an overall price tag of roughly \$1.9 trillion. It was not an easy road for the ARA to come to fruition. The measure took a reconciliation maneuver, which started the bill in the House, then to the Senate for changes, and then back to the House for another vote. In each case, the legislation passed in a Democratic led majority party line vote.

Of course, the reconciliation process led to the aforementioned changes. Most notably, a push by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) to boost the U.S. minimum wage to \$15 per hour was struck from the Act. Also, moderate Democrat Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV) forced a hold on keeping unemployment checks at \$300, instead of an increase to \$400. Democrats could not lose his or any senator's vote, as the bill would have been instantly defeated.

Here now are some more details of the ARA:

- Individuals making \$75,000 / Couples making \$150,000 or less with \$1,400 stimulus checks
- Paid emergency leave for employees via a tax credit to employers
- A 15% increase in food stamp benefits
- A child tax credit worth \$3,000 or more depending on a child's age
- Another \$7 billion to the Paycheck Protection Program
- \$350 billion in assistance to local and state governments
- Money for COVID-19 vaccinations, testing, etc.

While many Americans are welcoming the imminent aid coming their way, most are concerned if the help could have come sooner had legislators prioritized it over the Trump impeachment proceedings.

EUROPE

Royal Pains

A seemingly routine interview has turned many heads on the status of one of the world's most famed monarchies.

In a conversation with Oprah Winfrey, Prince Harry and wife Meghan Markle discussed various matters on their lives. However, while many expected it to be mostly about what they are up to now, it shifted into their treatment by The Royal Family. Needless to say, it was quite controversial.

Among the concerns addressed were questions about their son Archie's skin tone, not getting a royal title, racism, and simple respect for their relationship. Meghan also discussed feeling at one point that she did not want to be alive, but people with The Royal Family not wanting her to seek treatment as it would look bad.

In response to the interview, Buckingham Palace released this statement:

"The whole family is saddened to learn the full extent of how challenging the last few years have been for Harry and Meghan. The issues raised, particularly that of race, are concerning. While some recollections may vary, they are taken very seriously and will be addressed by the family privately. Harry, Meghan and Archie will always be much loved family members."

Meanwhile, in some kind news, Harry and a pregnant Meghan did announce that they were expecting a girl.

MIDDLE EAST

Pope Francis Visits Iraq

The visit by Pope Francis to the northern Iraqi city of Mosul at the weekend will be a symbol of hope and an opportunity to join forces for peace and unity, the UN cultural agency, UNESCO, said of his touchdown

in the capital, Baghdad.

The Pope's arrival in the Christian northern heartland, will come as a "message of peace and unity supported on a pillar of diversity," UNESCO said.

"This message is at the core of our mandate, where inclusion and diversity are critical to understanding, mutual respect, and ultimately a more peaceful and just world," it added.

Pope Francis arrived in Iraq on March 5, and traveled to Mosul two days later, where, according to media reports, he will pray for the victims of the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which has left thousands of civilians dead.

Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) Karim Khan, welcomed the historic visit of Pope Francis to Iraq, and the message it carries to all communities, "who have severely suffered from the atrocities perpetrated by ISIL."

"The Pope's visit to Iraq, his meetings with Iraqi religious leaders and the religious sites he is visiting carry a unifying message of peace and coexistence among all communities in Iraq, especially those who have suffered at the hands of ISIL from all faiths, including the Christian community," said the Special Adviser, in a news release.

He added that "the fact that the Christians of Iraq will receive communion from the Holy Father in Iraq is a huge and momentous event. In particular, His Holiness' visits to Mosul and Qaraqosh, and his prayer of suffering for the victims of war at the Church square of Hosh al-Bieaa; one place that was ravaged by ISIL crimes, will obviously be a deeply personal moment for many of the Christian flock in Iraq. It will also underline that Iraq is enriched by people of all faiths - and from all ethnic groups - and that every life matters."

The Special Adviser added that the pursuit of accountability in fair trials is crucial to achieving the healing and reconciliation that the Pope calls for.

UNESCO also noted that the

visit to Mosul carries particular significance, as the city - one of the oldest in the world, and a cultural and religious center for centuries - suffered extensive damage during the occupation by ISIL extremists between 2014-2017.

ASIA

COVID-19 & North Korea

Disturbing reports have emerged from North Korea - aka the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) - that people have starved or been executed because of COVID-19 restrictions, a leading rights expert said on March 10.

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Tomas Ojea Quintana, highlighted "deaths by starvation" linked to a "drastic" decline in trade and commerce, as well as an increase in the number of children and elderly people forced to beg.

Severe containment measures had also led to "a number of concerning consequences" that further isolate the country's people from the outside world, Mr. Quintana said in a report to the Human Rights Council.

Although the country has no recorded cases of infection, the pandemic has worsened an already deteriorating economic situation in DPRK, the rights expert insisted.

Almost all humanitarian work has stopped as the country's authorities have been effectively isolating their people from "social, political, economic" and even diplomatic engagements, including with the United Nations, Mr. Quintana told the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Several cities had been locked down to prevent coronavirus transmission, while several individuals who were caught breaking anti-epidemic prevention measures were reportedly executed in public, he said.

This included a man in his fifties, in December 2020, was allegedly involved in illicit trade with China, along with a money-changer who was allegedly executed in Pyongyang the same month.

RWJBarnabas Health Wins AAMC Group on Institutional Advancement Silver Award for Excellence in Crisis Management

New Jersey health system recognized for communications initiatives during COVID-19 pandemic

WEST ORANGE - March 3, 2021: RWJBarnabas Health has been recognized with the 2021 Association of American Medical Colleges, Group on Institutional Advancement's (GIA) Silver Award for Excellence in the Crisis Management category for disseminating critical health and safety information to hospital system employees as well as New Jersey residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The GIA Awards for Excellence Competition is an annual, peer-reviewed competition that recognizes outstanding work by members of the Group on Institutional Advancement (GIA) and their staff. The awards honor the most creative and effective approaches used to promote academic medicine through alumni relations, communications, development, marketing, and public affairs/community relations programs and projects.

RWJBarnabas Health is the largest, most comprehensive academic health care system in New Jersey, with a service area covering nine counties with five million people. As a major health care provider in a densely populated state, the system serves an incredibly diverse range of communities, ethnicities, and demographics. New Jersey's health providers were some of the first in the nation to be inundated with COVID-19 patients. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck New Jersey, RWJBarnabas Health was uniquely equipped to lead communications for the academic

health care system. At the highest level, the RWJBarnabas Health communications team approached the challenge as if it were creating a news outlet. Vulnerable communities - which have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic - are of particular concern for the system; addressing the adverse social determinants of health is core to its mission. The team juggled a nonstop flurry of media requests, connecting local, trade and national reporters with medical authorities from the system. At the same time, they worked to fulfill the system's commitment to its patients and communities by proactively creating and distributing much-needed information on the virus, in English and Spanish, all of which contributed to the system's recognition with the GIA Award.

"The AAMC Group on Institutional Advancement's recognition of RWJBarnabas Health as the winner of the Silver Award for Excellence in the Crisis Management category is a well-deserved testament to the system's commitment to the well-being of our New Jersey neighbors and the communications team's agility in the face of one of the greatest challenges this country's medical system has ever seen," said Barry. H Ostrowsky, President and Chief Executive Officer of RWJBarnabas Health.

"As frontline staff were working nonstop to fight the virus, the communications team was also working intensely to ensure that internally, crucial communication was taking place, and externally, New Jersey's communities were armed with the tools and knowledge they needed to stay well."

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FORMER VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER EMPLOYEE CHARGED

NEWARK - A former pharmacy technician was arrested today for stealing prescription HIV medications from the pharmacy of the Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) in East Orange, Acting U.S. Attorney Rachael A. Honig announced.

Lisa M. Hoffman, 48, of Orange, is charged by complaint with theft of medical products, specifically HIV medication. According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court: Hoffman's responsibilities at the VAMC included ordering the necessary drugs and supplies for the outpatient pharmacy, including determining when to place orders and for what products, as well as regularly maintaining inventory levels of needed drugs and supplies.

From at least August 2017 through November 2019, Hoffman used her position to steal prescription HIV medication from the VAMC. She placed large orders for HIV medication, purportedly on behalf of VAMC, and then stole the medication after it was delivered. VAMC surveillance footage captured Hoffman regularly taking dozens of bottles of HIV medications from the shelves of the outpatient pharmacy, placing them in a white mail bin, and then transferring the medications from the mail bin to her bag and exiting with the stolen medication. Hoffman stole approximately \$8.2 million worth of the

VAMC's HIV medication.

Once Hoffman had the medication, Hoffman met her associate, Wagner Checonolasco, aka "Wanny," 33, of Lyndhurst, New Jersey, often at her residence, so that she could sell the stolen HIV medication to Checonolasco for cash. After obtaining the stolen HIV medication, Checonolasco resold it to others.

Checonolasco was previously charged with conspiracy to steal government property. Those charges remain pending.

The charge of theft of medical products is punishable by a potential penalty of 20 years in prison, and a fine of \$1 million, or three times the economic loss attributable to the offense.

Acting U.S. Attorney Honig credited special agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge George M. Crouch Jr. in Newark, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Inspector General, Northeast Field Office, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Christopher F. Algieri, with the investigation leading to the charges.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Nicole F. Mastropieri of the Health Care Fraud Unit.

The charges and allegations contained in the complaints are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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 - Residents who are concerned about a proposed solid sewage-to-biochar plant by Newark Bay and Doremus Avenue, may want to see if its site plan application hearing will make March 15's Central Planning Board online agenda. That agenda is to be posted after the "Local Talk News" deadline.

CPB members had adjourned Aries Clean Energy's presentation Feb. 22 at the request of Mayor Ras Baraka's administration. The postponement allowed Baraka and Deputy Mayor of Economic and Housing Development Allison Ladd to hold an online March 4 community meeting to discuss the biochar plant.

Aries, of Nashville, proposes adding the biochar plant to a truck depot that already exists at the east end of Doremus at Newark Bay. Solid human waste, treated at other treatment plants, would be converted to biochar through gas combustion. The biochar would then be sold as a base for concrete.

Attorney Ernando Webster, Jr., speaking on client Aries' behalf, said that the human waste will be delivered in sealed containers. The proposed facility would operate in a negative pressure atmosphere, eliminating any odor emissions.

Aries' plant, however, would depend on the depot's 100 trucks, who are projected to make 400 daily trips from nearby New Jersey and New York wastewater treatment plants. (It is not known whether Aries would draw from the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission's neighboring waste treatment plant.)

That each truck is to make four daily round trips into the far east Ironbound neighborhood, however, is one issue East Ward residents and environmental activists are apprehensive of. The Ironbound Community Corporation, citing the area's asthma rates and use of neighborhood streets, is against the proposal.

Webster said that Aries' attempts to meet with ICC have broken down over whether those sessions would be public or private. East Ward Councilman Augusto Amador, citing that the site's I-3 heavy industrial zone prohibits sludge processing, said that the application should rather go to the city's Zoning Board of Adjustment. (That board's next meeting is set for March 16.)

IRVINGTON - Although funeral arrangements for Victor A. Milello, 21, have not been fully released as of presstime, New Jersey FMBA President Ed Donnelly is offering his family a line of duty funeral with full honors for the IFD recruit.

"While Victor Milello was only starting his career," said Donnelly Tuesday afternoon, "he was a member of the fire service family."

Condolences have been pouring into Irvington Fire Headquarters from within and outside of the "Local Talk News" area since Milello's death at Morristown Medical Center was announced Tuesday afternoon. Members of Irvington FMBA Local 14 and International Association of Fire Fighters-Irvington Officers Local 2004 have added their own condolences, in turn, to Milello's family.

Irvington Fire Chief Antonio Gary and Donnelly with the family at Milello's passing and at an organ donation ceremony with the NJ Sharing Network, of Springfield.

Milello, 21, had suddenly collapsed during a Morris County Public Safety Training Academy exercise in its parking lot in Parsippany 9:30 a.m. March 4. Several first responders present, including county EMT technicians, offered immediate aid. Atlantic Ambulance paramedics and Morris County OEM medics rushed Milello to the Morristown Medical Center, where he was listed in critical condition for five days.

Milello was following in the

footsteps of his father, the late Victor G. Milello. Father Milello was a longtime Belleville Fire Department firefighter and arson investigator before his retirement. He was 59 when he died June 8.

Mother Maria and uncle James Milello are among V. A. Milello's survivors.

EAST ORANGE - Only in East Orange where bus riders would find themselves rolling by a Wu-Tang Clan episode filming here Feb. 26.

"Local Talk" was taking a scheduled northbound NJTransit bus on its No. 90 Grove Street route when it drove along eastbound William Street past North Arlington Avenue that late Friday morning.

East Orange Police had closed North Arlington between City Hall Plaza and William while the musical group filmed a scene for its second season of "Wu-Tang Clan: An American Saga."

Riders knew some kind of video production was going on when their bus turned onto William from North Walnut Street. The Cicely Tyson Fine and Performing Arts school complex's parking lot was partially taken up with Haddad and other production support trailers and vehicles plus all of William's south side curbside parking lane.

Other No. 90 riders may have received a Wu-Tang sneak peek so long as an unrelated construction project was underway north of North Grove Street and Freeway Drive West for that day.

EOPD had also closed North Grove between the drive and William Street while an NJTransit contractor installed four-foot-tall yellow bollards in front of its Morris & Essex rail line bridge pillars. The closure detoured northbound No. 90 buses onto Freeway Drive West, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, North Walnut and William.

Wu-Tang's location scouts may have recommended that apartment building block of North Arlington for its resemblance to those from 1990s New York City. The Wu-Tang Saga series revolves around Bobby Diggs' (aka "RZA") "striving to unite a dozen young black men (who) are torn between music and crime." Its second season is

to air on Hulu later this year.

ORANGE - A proposed seven-story, 87-unit apartment building's application, to be sited southeast of the Highland Avenue railroad station, may be coming before the Orange Planning Board in the near future.

Trillium Equities, of Ann Arbor, Mich., is proposing to build five stories of apartments above a two-story parking garage at 448-452 Scotland Rd. The 120,000-square-foot structure, featuring a terrace for each unit, is to rise from the southeast corner of Scotland Road and Mountaintop Avenue.

The development, pending planning board approval, would replace 448 and 452 Scotland Rd. 448 is a two-story single family house on a 7,200-sq. ft. lot. 452, also known as Alberona Welding & Iron Works, stands on a 17,495-sq. ft. lot.

The City Council had received an Orange Historic Preservation Commission resolution Nov. 20, 2019 for a Certificate of Appropriateness. The COA would allow demolition of 448 and 452 Scotland. The two lots area and proposed development would be within the Montrose-Seven Oaks Historic District and the Central Valley Redevelopment Area.

WEST ORANGE - Customers of Prospect Exxon here have been getting garage service discounts, from its March 8 reopening through March 11, after Coronavirus precautions closed the station March 1-5.

"Thanks to everyone for your patience, support and understanding during these trying times," said Prospect Exxon on its March 5 Facebook posting. "We're all in great health and are ready to get back to fixing cars."

The station at 486 Prospect Ave. and its staff had a three-week saga with COVID that had it closed March 1-5. and three employees battling the virus.

This story began with an employee getting a positive test Feb. 22. Station management promptly went to an appointment-only car service and otherwise forbade customers from coming into the building through Feb. 28. Prospect Exxon, however, had to close all operations and follow CDC quarantine and

(Continued on page 14)

11 CANDIDATES, 7 SEATS

By Walter Elliott

NEWARK - Registered voters here and in Irvington have 11 candidates to fill an overall seven board of education seats on or by April 21.

A majority of the said candidates are more familiar to voters than others. There are six incumbents - three each sitting on the respective Irvington Public Schools and Newark Public Schools boards - are running together with municipal office holders and/or political party committee endorsement and/or support.

At least two Newark Board of Educator challengers have run last year, including one competing against a relative newcomer for a fourth, unexpired term.

At least Newark and Irvington voters will get to approve their respective 2021-22 school board budgets - and their property tax shares - for the third straight year. The final budget question figures will be posted on ballots as soon as the current IPS and NPS boards ratify them in their late March meetings.

April 21, 2020 voters will be mostly using Vote By Mail Ballots, with limited polling station locations and hours. This year's school board elections will not be on the same ballot as the non-partisan municipal elections as they were due to the COVID pandemic last year.

Speaking of nonpartisan, "Local Talk News" will be looking for whether school board candidates will allow themselves to be identified as "Democrats" or "Republicans."

School board candidates are nonpartisan by state election law. With eight other public school districts having moved their election in the last decade to November, that line has become blurred.

Orange's three Democratic Committee-supported candidates - two incumbents and a newcomer - allowed themselves to be called "Orange's BOE Democratic Team" in the five weeks leading up to the Nov. 3 General Election.

Such identification ran counter to the spirit, if not the letter, of state election law. A majority

of registered city voters split their tickets, returning an "Orange BOE Democratic Team" incumbent and a newcomer with another runner. from another platform.

In IRVINGTON, there are three incumbent IPS board members on the ballot. They, barring an unanticipated write-in campaign, are most likely to get re-elected.

Annette L. Beasley, Ronald Brown and Gloria Chison are running together.

Beasley and Chison, whom voters elected to complete the respective unexpired terms of Romaine Graham and Orlander "Glen" Vick last year, are seeking their first full three-year terms.

Mayor Anthony "Tony" Vauss had appointed Beasley and Chisholm in 2017 when Vick and Graham respectively accepted Democratic Committee appointments to the Irvington Township Committee and the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders. South Ward Councilwoman Sandra Jones and Freeholder Lebbly Jones (no known relation) had died in office.

Brown is looking for his third elected term.

Beasley, Brown and Chison since 2018, are running with the "Team Irvington Strong," "Irvington Schools Strong" or a variant. Such labelling is permitted so long as the name of a political party is not added.

Both Irvington and Newark hold nonpartisan May elections for their mayor and council members.

In NEWARK, voters, and four ticketed candidates and (presumably as of press time) and four independent candidates for four seats.

Former NPS BOE Vice President Dawn Haynes and Asia J. Norton are running for their second elected terms together with recently appointed colleague Vereliz Santana on the "Moving Newark Schools Forward" team.

Moving Newark Schools Forward was formerly known as "Newark's Unity Team" through 2017.

This team supported candidates who previously ran for or

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were considered by the opposing "Newark Children First" and "For Our Kids" slates. The annual competition between the two slates were replaced in 2016 by a fusion ticket as a condition of the State of New Jersey returning autonomy to Newark Public Schools and its BOE.

It is not coincidental that the "Moving Newark Schools Forward" banner is similar to "Moving Newark Forward" used by Mayor Ras Baraka since 2014.

Baraka, among the 15 city and state-level legislators on MNSF's website March 10, are endorsing those three and a fourth candidate for the unexpired term.

The names and endorsements are permitted - so long as no one adds "Democrat" or "Democratic" to the ticket's name. (Note: "Local Talk" would be calling this out if the political party here or in Irvington was "Republican," "Libertarian," "Green" "Garden" or some other.)

The three challengers for the three-year terms are newcomer Nadirah A. Brown, Yolanda

Johnson and Phillip "Phil" Wilson. Johnson and Wilson ran solo campaigns in 2020.

There are two people looking for voters' approval in completing the late Tave Padilla's remaining two years.

Santana, who was appointed to succeed Padilla earlier this year, was initially thought to be running for his term's remainder. She instead was "promoted" to run for a three-year term when incumbent Yambeli Gomez decided not to pursue re-election. (A majority of participating registered voters elected Gomez with Haynes and Norton April 23, 2018.)

MNSF is fielding Daniel Gonzalez for Padilla's leftover term. Competing is Sheila Montague.

Octavio "Tave" Padilla, 57, suddenly died Nov. 25. Padilla, who was first elected on the Unity Team in 2016 and re-elected in 2020, was five months into his third term.

Those who want to register for the April 21 elections, who have other related questions, are to contact essexclerk.com.

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THREE CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS AND A SERGEANT CHARGED WITH ASSAULTING FEDERAL PRETRIAL DETAINEE

NEWARK - Three Essex County correctional officers and one sergeant have been charged with conspiring to violate a pretrial detainee's civil rights, Acting U.S. Attorney Rachael A. Honig announced March 5.

Officers Angel Chaparro, 38, Damion James, 40, and Luis Ortiz, 29, and Sgt. Herman Pride, 51, are each charged by complaint with one count of conspiracy to violate civil rights. Pride and Ortiz were arrested on March 4, 2021, and had their initial appearances before U.S. Magistrate Judge James B. Clark III. Both were released on bail. Chaparro and James were arrested the next day and had their initial appearances by videoconference before Judge Clark.

According to the criminal complaint: On the evening of Aug. 17, 2020, a federal pretrial detainee at Essex County Correctional Facility (ECCF) squirted a mixture of urine, yogurt, and milk onto a correctional officer. The detainee subsequently was transported to a disciplinary cell, where Chaparro, James, and Ortiz assaulted the detainee, striking him multiple times.

Pride did not intervene to stop the assault. At the end of the assault, Pride said, "okay, that's enough." During the assault, James' watch fell off. He and other officers returned to the detainee's cell to retrieve his watch.

The detainee asked for, and was initially denied, medical as-

sistance. The victim later told Pride that if Pride would provide the victim with medical attention, the victim would lie and say that he had fallen off his bed. Pride refused to provide any medical attention.

Two days later, the detainee was finally taken to the emergency room at University Hospital in Newark. He was diagnosed with large swelling and tenderness in the right side of his face and discoloration and bruising around his right eye.

The defendants all were required to submit documentation regarding their use of force. None of them submitted any such reports. Instead, Chaparro signed a false report indicating that no force had been used.

Acting U.S. Attorney Honig credited special agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge George M. Crouch Jr. in Newark; and the Essex County Correctional Facility Internal Affairs Bureau, under the direction of Director Alfaro Ortiz and the Office of the Warden, with the investigation leading to the charges.

The government is represented by Acting Principal Assistant U.S. Attorney Rahul Agarwal.

The charges and allegations in the criminal complaint are merely accusations, and the defendants are all presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

TWO NEWARK MEN CHARGED WITH ATTEMPTED CARJACKING AND DISCHARGING A FIREARM

NEWARK - Two Newark men made court appearances March 9 on charges stemming from a Feb. 22, 2021, attempted carjacking in Newark during which a firearm was discharged, Acting U.S. Attorney Rachael A. Honig announced.

Antwan Malone, 34, and Dawan Walker, 24, both of Newark, are charged by complaint with one count of attempted carjacking and one count of discharging of a firearm during a crime of violence. They appeared by videoconference before U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark Falk and were detained.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court: On Feb. 22, 2021, law enforcement officers responded to the area of the I-78 West entrance ramp and Irvine Turner Boulevard in Newark on a report of an attempted carjacking with a weapon. They learned that Malone and Walker had pulled up beside a blue BMW

M5 SUV that was stopped at a stop light and blocked the BMW's ability to enter I-78.

Malone approached the vehicle brandishing a handgun, and then pointed the gun at the driver's face while repeatedly telling the driver to either exit the vehicle or Malone would shoot them. At that point, the driver was able to escape by ramming the BMW into Malone and Walker's vehicle and entering the I-78 entrance ramp. Malone fired two shots at the BMW.

The count of attempted carjacking carries a maximum potential sentence of 15 years in prison. The count of discharging of a firearm during a crime of violence is punishable by a mandatory minimum of 10 years in prison and a maximum sentence of life in prison, which must run consecutively to any term of imprisonment imposed on any other charges.

Acting U.S. Attorney Honig credited the New Jersey State

Police, under the direction of Col. Patrick J. Callahan; the Essex County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Acting Prosecutor Theodore N. Stephens II; special agents of the DEA, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Susan A. Gibson in Newark; and special agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge George M. Crouch Jr. in Newark, with the investigation leading to the charges and arrests.

This case is part of the Violent Crime Initiative (VCI), which was formed in August 2017 by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Jersey, the Essex County Prosecutor's Office, and the City of Newark's Department of Public Safety for the purpose of combatting violent crime in and around Newark.

As part of this partnership, federal, state, county, and city agencies collaborate and pool

resources to prosecute violent offenders who endanger the safety of the community.

VCI is composed of the U.S. Attorney's Office, the FBI, the ATF, the DEA, the U.S. Marshals, the Newark Department of Public Safety, the Essex County Prosecutor's Office, the Essex County Sheriff's Office, N.J. State Parole, Union County Jail, N.J. State Police Regional Operations and Intelligence Center, Real Time Crime Center, N.J. Department of Corrections, the East Orange Police Department, and the Irvington Police Department.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney George L. Brandley of the OCEDTF Unit in Newark.

The charges and allegations contained in the complaint are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The Doctor Is In



Dr. Adil Manzoor OP/ED

U.S. Veterans And Access To The COVID-19 Vaccine

It is no longer news that the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine is well underway. As I type this, about 27.8 million people have been fully vaccinated against the coronavirus. That's barely above 8% of our population. I can't be in any way mad about that figure, considering a few months ago, I didn't even know when a vaccine will be available.

However, the distribution of the vaccine has also brought some challenges. In this article, we will focus on the challenge of getting these vaccines to veterans.

Right now, it hasn't been smooth sailing getting vaccines to veterans. Many factors contribute to this and very rarely is it a lack of vaccines. It is actually fascinating that our major problem in the US is not the availability of the vaccine but how to distribute them.

The first issue was transporting the vaccines to rural areas. This is a problem that has affected both vets and ordinary citizens. The initial release of the

vaccines needed to be kept at very low temperatures - lower than anything we've seen before.

This is very disadvantageous in transporting the vaccines to rural areas. I mean, the long journey to these areas is something the vaccine cannot bear. One thing health workers did was to set up certain bases, but it still poses the same problem as the vets still had to travel long distances to get the vaccine. And as you may imagine, many of them didn't buy into this. With time, there have been better ways of storing the vaccine. And the much-anticipated release of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine will certainly do a lot of good to people in these regions.



Another problem was the veterans just saying no. Yes, they just said 'no, I'm good.' While I definitely cannot blame health workers for this, I also wouldn't blame these vets too much. Seriously, some of the things I see on the internet baffle me. And I'm an experienced Physician. How much more aged vets who have been through myriads of health challenges?

For example, people claiming the vaccine is a ploy by the government to insert trackers into our bodies. Why would the government want to do that? We are all already being tracked via our smartphones and others devices. Another one I personally

like is that the vaccine can turn us into zombies. Yes, there are actual human beings who believe this. Aged people, of which vets are included, buy into many of these wild assertions in a bid to keep their health as optimal as possible. You can't blame them for that, can you?

Who I will blame are the people that bring up these ridiculous and false allegations for no sensible reasons. Why would you do that in the middle of a pandemic that has claimed the lives of over 520,000 people and counting here in the US. Raising better awareness will help combat this problem. There have validated large studies on these vaccines before they were even re-

leased into circulation. And, I really can't stress this enough, the vaccines will not turn you into a zombie. I swear.

Another problem that limits access is the bureaucracy involved in administering the vaccine. For one, only vets registered to the VA's health program are entitled to vaccines. Then, the vaccines are distributed following CDC distribution guidelines. Higher-risk patients are more entitled to the vaccine. At times, it may just be easier for the vets to just get the vaccine directly from their states.

I don't believe I have to stress just how important it is to vaccinate these veterans. Aside

from the fact that many of these vets have given so much of their lives to serving the country, they are also at the highest risk of death from the virus. Any medical doctor's primary goal is to better people's health; chronic illnesses and death don't fit that bill.

One way or the other, the government needs to buckle down on its effort to vaccinating veterans, both in rural and urban communities. 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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ONE YEAR LATER ...

(Continued from page 1)

survived. However, it was not without cost. From April 2020 to June 2020, we operated exclusively online before returning to a print format in July 2020. We even moved to Maplewood, away from a small business sector in Newark that was slowly dying.

Before all of that came to fruition, we informed the public about the online move in a March 26, 2020 edition. In that edition was an article I wrote titled: "Warning: Do Not Underestimate Coronavirus." Now, I want to see what have we learned, and, *have* we learned?

First, in the March 26, 2020 article, I made a case for not taking COVID-19 lightly. I would like to take the unusual but necessary step of quoting, well, myself:

"...this is the most critical aspect of this novel coronavirus. I am going to post something that might scare you, but it's the truth. Two words: VIRUSES MUTATE."

I wrote that on March 26, 2020. This year, variations, aka mutations, of the virus have surfaced in Europe, South Africa, Brazil and more. All of these places have a diverse population, which is perfect for a virus to gather enough genetic material to mutate, and infect more people. Because of the lack of adherence to protocols to effectively stop transmission of the virus, in that way, we did not learn.

Secondly, the experts at the CDC and respected immunologist Dr. Anthony Fauci pleaded with us to keep social distancing of at least six feet, wear face coverings, wash our hands, and for government officials to take steps to keep people safe. Did we learn?

Well, while it is not that easy to posit a response on the subjective scale, I can look at objective metrics. Earth has about eight billion people. So far, close to 120 million people - officially - have caught the virus. That is just about 1.5% of the human

population. Also, close to three million have died, which is about 2.5% percent of those who caught it, and less than 0.1% of the global population.

As for the United States, in a word: ough. Close to 30 million people - officially - have caught the virus. That is around 9% of the U.S. population, and 25% of all official cases on the planet. Yes, 1/4 of COVID-19 cases on Earth have come from the U.S. alone. There is also a death count approaching 530,000, or about 1.8% of those who caught it.

On one hand, we did not learn. If you have something designated as a pandemic, and millions of people catch and spread it, that is not conducive of following directions. So, in the case of the world, no, we did not learn. Oh, and in the case of the United States, did we learn? Yes, we learned...how to spread a pandemic like a viral tweet!

As putrid as these numbers sound, we actually got lucky. Remember this from the March 26, 2020 article: "...Today, coronavirus primarily kills the elderly and immunocompromised. Tomorrow, it might turn into bird flu, which can kill 80-90 percent of the population."

Remember the 120 million virus cases and three million dead worldwide? Well, these numbers are estimates based on what was OFFICIALLY reported. If you were to combine those who had the virus but were not tested, which includes those who live in areas without resources for testing, there could be as many - or more - than 300 million people on the planet who at one point had the Novel Coronavirus - and 10 million dead.

Even if you include all undocumented cases, COVID-19 has infected less than 2% of the planet's population and killed less than 1% of all people who caught it. That makes this a mild pandemic. While things were closed down, they eventually reopened, even before vaccines were readily available.

The CDC has a pandemic severity index. COVID-19 is hovering in the Category 5 range

ESSEX COUNTY COVID-19 CASE TALLY

Weekly Statistics from March 3 - March 10, 2021

Municipality	3-3-2021	Deaths	3-10-2021	Deaths
Belleville	4447	99	4569	101
Bloomfield	4216	100	4338	103
Caldwell	454	15	466	15
Cedar Grove	1276	119	1321	119
East Orange	5410	273	5541	275
Essex Fells	150	2	154	2
Fairfield	666	29	683	29
Glen Ridge	295	11	310	11
Irvington	3521	207	3600	211
Livingston	1475	81	1530	81
Maplewood	957	33	998	33
Millburn	688	8	699	8
Montclair	1734	65	1808	66
Newark	31056	879	31757	886
North Caldwell	367	6	383	6
Nutley	2337	56	2408	57
Orange	2753	122	2828	123
Roseland	392	15	402	15
South Orange	637	12	665	12
Verona	777	16	801	16
West Caldwell	841	51	873	51
West Orange	3691	218	3796	219
Total	68140	2417	69930	2439

OTHER COVID-19 TALLIES (As of March 10, 2021)

NJ: 729,403 cases / 21,294 deaths (Plus 2,474 probable)

United States (approx.): 29.1 Million / 529,000 deaths

Worldwide (approx.): 118 Million / 2.61 Million deaths

Capacity limits in New Jersey and New York City will expand to 50% next week. Social distancing rules still apply (face coverings, six feet of spacing, etc.)

High schools in NYC will reopen March 22

- the highest level. Category 5 has a fatality rate of 2% or higher for those who catch a pandemic virus. The 1918 Spanish Flu was the last one to officially achieve that status.

Imagine this: A "Major Pandemic" would infect 25-49% of the populace, and claim the lives of at least 50% of those infected. A "Severe Pandemic" would infect 50-70% of the populace, and claim the lives of at least 75% of those infected. Finally, an "Extinction Level Pandemic" would infect over 70% of the populace, and claim the lives of at least 80% of those infected.

In the most extreme circumstances, governments would fail, resources like electricity and clean water may be gone or se-

verely restricted, and civilization would resemble that of "The Walking Dead" or any Hollywood pandemic movie. So, yeah, in my opinion, we got lucky.

Finally, I want to address vaccinations. Some people are fine with getting vaccinated. However, others are hesitant, especially those in the African American community, as Black people have been used as guinea pigs with an indifference to their long term health (look up the Tuskegee Experiments). Here is my philosophy. Everything is a risk; it's just a matter of taking the most calculated risk with the best potential outcome.

Also, as someone from *(Continued on page 12)*



From The Pastor's Heart

OP-ED BY DR. ROBERT KENNEDY

Revolution or Transformation

A few days ago, as I was driving to fulfill an appointment, I began to flip through the channels to find a station with meditational music or socio-political discourse to which I might listen. I paused on one station on which I heard a discussion that blew my mind.

The panelists were discussing "Radical Revolutionary Resolution" as the alternative to the "Radical Right" and "Radical Left" (I am using the terms from the discussion) visions that are being tossed about today as ideals for the transformation of the society. The argument was that the storming of the U.S. Capitol on January 6th was built on flawed ideologies conspiracies.

For them, the Radical Left's effort to correct the conspiracies is as flawed as the Radical Right's. Besides, they purported that Radical Revolutionary Resolution is what is needed today. I tried to listen keenly to see if I could have gotten a clear definition or description of Radical Revolutionary Resolution, but it did not come through to me.

So, I started to think that for all I have read of the historical

revolutions, whether they have resolved anything, I concluded that they only seem to set up cycles of power trading and violence that only lead to destruction, poverty, inequality and death. They seem very utopian but offer no systems of justice they were describing, but instead perpetuate the very evils against which they revolted in the first place.

I am not intending to disappoint anyone who is promoting revolution to transform our social systems. Indeed, the oppressive behavior of humanity, racism, classism, genderism, sexism, and all the other oppressive isms lead individuals to ideate that a revolution is the best method of transformation.

But the lessons of history recorded in such works as Simon Schama, *Citizens: The French Revolution*, Karl Marx, *Das Capital*, Bill O'Reilly, *Killing England*, Angela Davis, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle*, Doris Lessing, *The Good Terrorist*, Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, and multiple other historical recommendations and records, have all shown that humanity's way of social revolution is the path to constant frustrations and destruction. *The revolutions have not worked out as expected. In fact, I might also tell the ones now recommending Radical Revolutionary Resolution as the solution to our present social crisis that it is a path down a rabbit hole.*

Frankly, I confess that the gun-carrying - gun-toting culture thinking that this is the way to

bring transformation is also frightening to me. And it is the greatest of contradiction that some in the gun-carrying, gun-toting culture are naming themselves as Christians. In his effort to bring about social transformation, Jesus Christ never promoted guns, swords, and all of the war machinery that we are boasting about today. Jesus Christ was the author of peace.

When he was attacked in the Garden of Gethsemane, his disciple, Peter, reacted by pulling his sword and cutting off one of the arresting soldier's ears; Jesus immediately reminded Peter to put up his sword because those who live by the sword will die by the sword. (Cf. Matthew 26:52)

Throughout his ministry, Jesus taught his disciples and all who would listen to him that the world will not be transformed by weaponry or the revolutionary methodologies that humanity has concocted throughout history. He taught that the world will only change by transforming human hearts, minds, souls, or spirit, if you will. This is why he called his representatives "The salt of the earth" and "the light of the world." (Matthew 5:13-16)

They are change agents, but not with the revolutionary methodologies that are being offered in the world. Jesus proclaimed loving service and the new birth experiences as the way to new societies. I do not know that you want to call what Jesus did revolutionary or transformational, but what I know is that his meth-

odology was different from what I hear being promoted as revolutions in the common culture or Radical Revolutionary Resolution by those who are now promoting this as an innovative idea.

If by any means you are a Christian and will listen, here is a warning to Christians offered by Ed Stetzer in his book *Christians in the Age of Outrage*:

"Christians spark outrage when we get caught wavering between the gospel and some worldly power. And the response is not to dig deeper into the well of humanity's ingenuity, wisdom, or culture. If the disease is sin, the remedy is found at the Cross. Though the heart forges idols of politics, identity power, and more, the gospel both overcomes those temptations and addresses the underlying outrage we wrongly thought they'd solve. The fountain of living water, flowing and bubbling up with rest, refreshment, and joy, satisfies the ultimate longing of our forgetful hearts."

Some of you who have read this reflection might be saying that the Jesus way of transformation that I seek to recommend does not work effectively in our messed-up world. But do I suggest that since the human revolution methods have made such a mess that we try the Jesus way - love one another and serve one another.

Be kind to one another. Make peace with one another. Do those things that come from a heart transformed by grace.

ONE YEAR LATER ...

(Continued from page 11)

Newark, I feel that there is a better chance of getting killed from a gunshot than getting killed from a vaccination shot. (I don't care if that makes someone mad. Make the city safer and I won't have to write things like that.)

With all these things in mind, it is time for a reinforcement of the previous March 26, 2020 warnings. In some of these cases, I will once again be quoting myself.

One: "Do not assume how good your health is."

Two: Your main objective should be: "Avoid Catching It All Together."

Three: "VIRUSES MUTATE." The variants / mutations out there now might either mutate further themselves, or be joined by other mutations.

Four: Follow directions. By getting vaccinated, wearing face coverings, washing your hands, keeping your distance, and self-quarantining as much as possible, "you can avoid having to spend money on cold medicine (if you can find some) and hoping your immune system is fighting a cold or is able to shake

off COVID-19, or being hospitalized (and possibly catching something else while next to other sick people), or needing a ventilator that might not be available, or being in intensive / critical care, or worrying about lifelong complications or those that might hit you later on, or dying and having a funeral with no one present because people are barred from holding functions with too many people."

One more thing, which is a repeat from last year's article. "There are some of you out there who are saying, 'They can't tell me what to do!' If you are one of

those people who are too grown for your own good, please understand that this isn't about bossing you around right now. This is about someone saying, 'Don't put that fork in the electrical outlet.' Sure, you could do your little, 'They can't tell me what to do!' thing, but do you really want to get electrocuted to prove a point that no one cares about concerning your adulthood?"

In closing, "Remember, this is just advice, based on facts. Please take it." I don't want to have to quote myself again next year.

BRAVING BITTER COLD, PROTESTERS DEMAND JUSTICE AT PENN STATION RALLY

By Lev D. Zilbermintz

NEWARK - Dedication to justice meant everything to the people who rallied at 1 Gateway Center, opposite Penn Station on March 6.

Despite the bitter cold that made ink freeze in reporters' pens, about 25 - 40 people from at least ten different organizations held a public rally opposite Penn Station. As banners flapped in the cold wind, speakers read a list of goals. Chief of these demands was the liberation of all 14,000 immigrant detainees currently held without charge or trial in Essex, Bergen and Hudson County jails and across the United States.

Madelyn Hoffman, Communications Director of the Green Party, and 2018 candidate for U.S. Senate, gave a six-minute speech at the protest.

"Free them (immigrants and detainees) all! President Biden, Senators Booker and Menendez, Governor Murphy, stop talking,

let's do something! We demand that refugees be treated like human beings!" Hoffman said in her address to the crowd.

According to a flyer distributed at the protest, "Biden and Murphy must free the immigrants immediately with emergency orders NOW. Booker and Menendez must introduce legislation, which Democrats can pass immediately, to end all detentions and deportations and to guarantee EQUAL RIGHTS TO ALL THAT LIVE HERE, regardless of place of birth. Every day they delay deepens the injustices and helps the virus. Detainees must be tested for COVID and vaccinated upon release."

"Local Talk" interviewed two key protesters, Eric Lerner of Essex County, and Cari of Bergen County, via email.

Eric Lerner said, "Immigrants that were detained after serving their sentences for crimes have completed their sentences, so need to be released, just as citizens, just as citizens

who completed sentences are released."

Cari responded that she agreed with Lerner's position regarding criminals. Furthermore, wrote Cari, "jails in the US keep people enslaved for profits, especially after the 13th Amendment was passed. The mission statements of these county jails to rehabilitate people and keep the community safe are lies. Jails are all about profits.

"If jails are closed in larger counties in NJ and CA then the US would have nowhere to put citizen inmates and detainees. The government would be forced to stop incarcerating innocent people and/or those with frivolous charges for profits. The US has the highest rates of incarceration in the world."

According to a flyer distributed by the protesters, "14,000 immigrants remain detained without charge or trial in Essex, Bergen and Hudson County Jails and across the United States.

Brick City Mutual Aid distributed food, literature, water and pins at the protest. In a statement released to the media, Brick City Mutual Aid pledged to support striking workers who live or work in the Newark area.

The statement read in part, "In solidarity with workers during this extraordinarily difficult time, Brick City Mutual Aid commit us to provide grocery support and other material needs to striking workers living in the Newark area...Brick City Mutual Aid has delivered thousands of dollars in groceries to over 150 homes.

"In keeping with our principles, we extend this offer to all rank and file, striking union workers except Police, ICE and Corrections Officers. We work to support our community from the harms of capitalism, oppression, and the prison industrial complex, and to that end will not materially support those who serve in the interwoven systems of these harms."

GOV. MURPHY SIGNS LEGISLATION DESIGNATING MARCH 9TH AS "COVID-19 HEROES DAY"

TRENTON - On March 9, NJ Governor Phil Murphy signed SJR82, which designates March 9th of each year as "COVID-19 Heroes Day" in New Jersey.

"From nurses and doctors to grocery store workers and law enforcement, countless essential workers have been working day and night to serve New Jerseyans during these trying times," said Governor Murphy. "It is my honor to sign this bill recognizing the heroic efforts of those who have been serving on the front lines. These heroes have brought us to this moment where we can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel."

"Too often, essential workers

in this state go unseen and toil for years without being recognized for the tremendous, selfless service they provide to our state, and to its people," said Senator Vin Gopal.

"Establishing March 9 as 'COVID-19 Heroes Day' is a way of saying thank you to those who have gone well beyond the call of duty, especially during the darkest days of the coronavirus pandemic, often putting their own health and safety on the line for the welfare of their fellow New Jerseyans. All of our essential workers are 'heroes' in every sense of the word, and deserve recognition for the work they have done, and continue to

do for the greater good of our state."

"Essential workers are undeniably the heroes of this pandemic," said Assemblymembers Valerie Vainieri Huttle and Annette Chaparro, in a joint statement. "Childcare providers, food service and grocery store employees, transportation and postal workers, warehouse employees, first responders, healthcare professionals and all other front-line workers have all kept New Jersey running through an unprecedented crisis. Without them, where would we be? Every day, they have risked their health and safety in order to ensure the well-being of families

and communities throughout our state. Designating a COVID-19 Heroes Day is a way for us to thank our essential workers and make New Jersey never forgets their hard work, dedication and heroism."

"Where would New Jersey be without our COVID heroes," said Cathy Bennett, President and CEO of the New Jersey Hospital Association. "Our Superheroes protect the health and well-being of Garden State residents when they need it most. Thank you to Gov. Murphy and the Legislature for ensuring that their selfless acts will be remembered for years to come."

ATTENTION BUSINESS OWNERS

This includes corner stores, bodegas, supermarkets, etc. and other stores / outlets with retail capability. As Local Talk marches on in its 20th year of existence, we are looking to launch a bold new program. Before we go public with it, we want to discuss the program with local business owners - the very lifeline of the community. PLEASE CALL 973-280-7547 TO GET THE DETAILS.

Legally Speaking



Cassandra Savoy, Esq.
OP/ED

Those Things Belong To Us!

I got a call the other day from a frantic woman who said: "My mom died. She did not have a Will and Joe, her second husband of only two years, won't let us get our mother's things out of the house! There are four of us siblings. While my mother was ill, I had her power of attorney. I did everything. Joe did nothing but eat the food we purchased for my mother and enjoy my mother's house. As my mother's power of attorney, am I not authorized to gather all of the valuables she promised us and divide them among my siblings?"

First, let's resolve the power of attorney issue. You can only act as another person's agent,

that is to say use the power of attorney given you, while the person is alive. More likely than not, when Mom died, the power of attorney was voided and no longer gives you authority to act in her stead. For example, if the power of attorney permitted you to withdraw money from Mom's bank account, once Mom died, you can no longer exercise that privilege.

Mom died intestate. This means that Mom died without saying what she wanted to happen with her assets and liabilities, and without naming who she wanted to put in charge of closing out her life in an orderly manner. Sadly, for these four, the law favors "the second husband of only two years," Joe.

If the children decide to challenge Joe being named as administrator of Mom's estate, they should decide who will be their spokesperson in the probate process. The reality is that in order for the court could grant Letters of Administration to one of the children, Joe would have to affirmatively renounce his right to get Letters of Administration in favor of one of the children, or the children would need a compelling reason, like Joe has dementia, or Joe is bedridden.

Just as an explanation, "Letters of Administration" makes the recipient the personal

representative of the deceased and grants the representative the right to do whatever is required to close out the deceased person's life in an orderly manner.

With Letters of Administration, the representative can, for example, sell real estate, divide the proceeds and possessions among the heirs, pay taxes and other debt, and accept rents or other payments due the deceased.

Mom had insurance two insurance policies. Mom named one child the beneficiary of a \$25,000 policy and another child the beneficiary of a \$10,000 policy. The child receiving the lesser amount thought it was unfair and wanted to know if the insurance company could be compelled to equalize the two policies so that each would get \$17,500.

No way! An insurance policy is a contract between the deceased person and the insurance company. The contract goes something like this: Mr. Insurer, I will pay my premiums during my lifetime. When I die, you will give the person I name the value of my policy. No one can change the beneficiary after the policy holder's death. A contract is a contract!

There is a minor consolation for the children though. Often families don't have \$10,000 sit-

ting around to pay for funeral expenses. Therefore, funeral expenses are often paid with money from an insurance policy. However, Joe was not a beneficiary of an insurance policy.

The children who are beneficiaries have no obligation to use their insurance money to pay for Mom's funeral. As the decedent's spouse, Joe is exclusively responsible for the funeral expenses. If Joe does not have the money, there may be room for the children to negotiate.

The children want some of the contents of the house. Mom had many antiques and valuable art works. Among her valuables, Mom had Limoges China and original art works purchased before the artists like Leroy Campbell and Charles Bibb became known and famous. Mom had Mikimoto pearls given to her when her first husband, the children's father, was stationed in Japan. Mom had always promised that the children inherit them.

Unfortunately, Mom died without a Will and that means that the contents of the home belong to her surviving spouse, "the second husband of only two years, Joe!"

In the event he chooses not to share, not to negotiate...too bad, so sad!

TOWN WATCH

(Continued from page 6)

guidelines.

Prospect Exxon, just north of Mt. Pleasant and Marcella avenues is nearest to Essex Green Town Center. It is not to be confused with Eagle Rock Auto Care Exxon, 270 Prospect at Eagle Rock Avenue.

SOUTH ORANGE / MAPLEWOOD - Parents and neighbors were not seeing mirages, in the form of some South Orange-Maplewood School District students, returning to some of the 11 schools in both towns since March 1.

The district and South Or-

ange-Maplewood Education Association leadership had agreed to have some Pre-Kindergarten-through-Second Grade and all English language learners and special education students to in-person classes.

In-person classes return the district to a hybrid instructional plan with remote learning. That phase was suspended last month, when SOMEA members, citing classroom ventilation concerns, continued their remote instruction from their homes.

The SOMSD, in a March 10 morning release said it had ended negotiations with SOMEA, which had been through a state-appointed Public Employee Relations Commission mediator. A disagreement over whether to

add Sixth-through-Ninth grade students into the classrooms starting March 15 has led to this breakdown.

The district's Board of School Estimate has scheduled a March 11 virtual meeting to discuss construction and debt service issues.

BLOOMFIELD - Some 200 police and law enforcement officers from within and outside of the "Local Talk News" area helped bring one of their own - Ret. BPD Off. Ben Christiano - home March 2-6.

The first police detail brought Christiano's body from Hackensack Meridian Health University Hospital to the O'Boyle Funeral Home March 2.

An honor guard stationed themselves during March 5's visitation and into March 6's funeral there.

The first detail and honor guard were joined by some 150 of their colleagues for Christiano's Saturday funeral and burial at Montclair's Immaculate Conception Cemetery. Thirty-eight of them rode their motorcycles - including one pulling Christiano's hearse - led the other officers and relatives on a route to the cemetery via the Bloomfield Police Headquarters. Two BFD ladder trucks raised an American flag over part of the procession's route.

Christiano, 53, lost his battle against COVID around Noon,

(Continued on page 15)

TOWN WATCH

(Continued from page 14)

March 2. The 26-year officer, who retired Dec. 1, was hospitalized with the virus March 7.

Benedetto "Ben" Christiano, Jr. was born in Belleville July 12, 1967 but was otherwise a lifelong Bloomfielder. He followed father Ben, Sr.'s path though Bloomfield High School (Class of 1985) before eventually joining the BPD.

Benedetto was most familiar as a Traffic Bureau motorcycle officer. The Bloomfield Local No. 32 treasurer and Harley Davidson enthusiast was also a member of the Hire Guns Motorcycle Club-NJ Chapter.

Wife Julie, daughter Lyndsey and sister Donna Williams are among his survivors. The PBA and Shonah Maldonado have launched a Gofundme.com page to help with the Christianos' funeral expenses.

GLEN RIDGE - The New Jersey Department of Education is reviewing the Glen Ridge Public Schools Student Safety Data System, for a grade, while you read this.

The district's self-assessment, as presented before the GR Board of Education Feb. 22, reports only one incident July 1-Dec. 31, 2020. The sole incident is lower than the seven, found across violence, vandalism and Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying incidents reported the same period in 2019.

GRPS Director of Student Services Jack DeWitt said that the half-year reporting period and the school-closing COVID pandemic account for the 86.4 percent drop. Glen Ridge High School, for example, did not reopen until October.

There were 33 district employees who took 36 related training sessions July 1-Dec. 31, compared to 51 sessions the same time last year.

NJDOE is to present its safety and HIB report grade later this school year.

MONTCLAIR - Township residents and 60 percent of its smaller businesses are being asked not to put their recycling out on the curb for pickup but, for the time being, drop them off at the Department of Community Services yard at 219 North Fullerton Ave. during its expanded hours.

Mayor Sean Spillar and Township Manager Timothy Stafford had to suspend curbside recycling since the department's "significant decrease in its workforce due to COVID-19" Feb. 24. Affected DCS employees include those who had tested positive for the virus and/or those who have been so exposed.

Spillar, while allowing already placed recycling to get picked up through Feb. 27, sought an emergency contract with four private recycling collectors. Three of

the companies had similar staffing woes and a fourth, said the mayor, provided a monthly "six-figure quote."

Residents, since March 3, may bring their recycling materials to the DCS yard 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

Councilman Peter Yacobellis reminded residents to have all cardboard flattened and containers cleaned of food. The yard will accept plastic materials graded one, two and five. Otherwise, check recycling details at montclairnjusa.org.

BELLEVILLE - The late Frank P. Caputo's four decades of educational and civic service included three stints here among other towns and public school districts.

Mayor Michael Melham and the Township Council recently honored Caputo, 76, with a proclamation for his being Second Ward Commissioner 1990-94 and as deputy mayor 1992-93. Caputo was also a Belleville Zoning Board of Adjustment member during that time.

Caputo had first been a longtime Belleville Little League coach and president. His last Belleville contribution was as a Belleville Middle School vice principal 2013-14. He was commuting from Barnegat, where he had moved to in 2010, to the building where he had graduated from as among the Belleville High School Class of 1962.

Caputo, whose 2016-18 Barnegat commissioner term included being deputy mayor in 2017 and mayor in 2018, died from COVID complications Jan. 11 at Stafford's Hackensack Meridian Health Southern Ocean Meridian Medical Center.

Born in Newark May 6, 1944, Caputo was raised in Belleville. He had left for Dodge City, Kan. 's St. Mary of the Plains College and Newark's now-Kean University and returned with respective bachelor's in education and master's in administration degrees.

Caputo's 34 years in secondary school education ranges from teaching to district superintendent. His residences in Clifton, East Rutherford and Mt. Olive yielded board of education seats there. He also worked for the N.J. Sports and Exposition Authority 10 years as Giants Stadium Security and Meadowlands Arena Event coordinator.

In his SMPC Alumni summary, Caputo said his first taste of politics came while he was student council president. (SMPC closed in 1992) Wife Dee, son Frank, daughters Kellie Jackson and Danielle Benanti, three grandsons, four granddaughters, brothers Anthony and Patrick and sister Barbara Blahut are among his survivors. His Funeral Mass was held Jan. 16 at Manahawkin's St. Maty of the Pines.

NUTLEY - That Steve DiGregorio had

recently announced his retirement from being head coach of the Nutley High School varsity football team - but not from teaching NHS social studies here - has prompted residents and local football fans to call it the end of an era.

DiGregorio, 60, after three head coach stints over a 17-year span, turned in his clipboard and whistle in a March 4 teleconference with the Maroon Raiders team. He is finishing his 12-year career on a high note, helping to guide NHS to a 6-0 undefeated record last autumn.

Those last six victories were added to the career 57 DiGregorio's teams have scored 2004-11 and 2017-18. The Maroon Raiders, under his watch, made the NJSIAA playoffs seven times and reached the 2010 North Jersey Section 2 Final game.

DiGregorio, however, had to step aside in 2019 so he could focus on battling cancer. He told a reporter last week that has been taking chemotherapy sessions between his 12-hour days here and a two hour Nutley-Princeton commute.

"I've enjoyed my time here at NHS; it's been the best coaching experience of my life," said DiGregorio. "However, it's time to turn my attention to my health and wellbeing."

DiGregorio himself was a Maroon Raider gridiron standout 1976-78 before he graduated here in 1979. The Muhlenberg University scholar-athlete's first return to NHS came by way of his coaching apprenticeships at Clifton's Paul VI HS, Hobart College Allegheny College, Princeton University (for 13 years) and, as athletic director, Paramus Catholic HS.

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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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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