

LOCAL TALK

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Phone: 973-622-1111 • www.localtalkweekly.com

E-mail - Newspaper: localtalk@aol.com * Printing: localtalkprinting@gmail.com

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IS IRVINGTON HIGH SCHOOL SAFE?



By Walter Elliott

IRVINGTON - Township officials and the reporter of a statewide radio station have been debating over conditions in Irvington High School since earlier this month.

Exchanges between Irvington Public Schools and WXRK New Jersey 101.5 FM, June 6-12 have included photos taken by both anonymous teachers and administrators, documents from the N.J. Department of Health and Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health and three Irvington Police Division arrest reports.

The general public first learned of the dispute when WXRK aired and posted a report from David Matthau and News Director Eric Scott from its Ewing studios June 6. Its website headlined the article: "Horror Inside NJ High School: Shocking Fights, Riots, Rats, Plague Crumbling School."

A video and 34 photos - both screenshots and video stills from

cell phones "taken from the past year" - were the article's basis. They were submitted by a person who said is an IHS teacher.

"Our day at Irvington High School is basically trying to make sure no one gets hurt," said the teacher. "This is something that's being constantly covered up. The children are suffering."

Most of the photos show mold on walls, live and dead rats, litter in hallways and classrooms and a dislodged toilet. Several depicted fights in hallways or classrooms. They seem to be taken in both the 1926 core building and its 1960s-built southeastern wing.

Matthau also published part of a response from Irvington Public Schools Superintendent Dr. April Vauss. Vauss' response started with her being perturbed that Matthau's source would turn to him on the outside instead of making complaints within channels.

"It's quite disturbing that I'm

(Continued on page 9)

SISTERS NETWORK OF ESSEX COUNTY CELEBRATES PINK RIBBON TEA



Several survivors celebrate their wins over breast cancer.

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LAWYER CONVICTED IN EX-GIRLFRIEND'S DEATH FOUND DEAD



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SCATHING REPORT LEADS TO CONSENT DECREE

PAGE 6



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To
**PAGE
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Editorial
Dhiren Shah
 Editor-In-Chief

Hello Readers,

Hunter Biden, a son of President Biden, has copped a plea deal with the federal justice department. It seems like he will not serve any jail time, except he will be put on probation. The second charge is a serious charge, when he possessed a gun, a Colt Cobra 38 special, while on drugs in 2018. This can carry a maximum sentence of 10 years. However, with the plea deal, he will not serve any prison term. The deal must be approved and accepted by the judge. In most cases, with a plea deal, the judge accepts the prosecutor's deal conditions.

The worst things are happening in New Jersey. The Democratic stronghold, elected by the people, wants to change the

OPRA laws to protect the political machine who controls the majority of the government. Right now, under New Jersey law, OPRA, or the Open Public Records Act, is enacted to give the public greater access to government records maintained by public agencies in New Jersey. If the government does not supply you the records within the time frame, people have the right to go to the Superior Court of New Jersey, and the Superior Court dishes out penalties to anyone who knowingly and willfully violates OPRA. Some of the government records are protected for security reasons, and are not provided under OPRA law.

Now, the Democratic lawmakers in New Jersey are trying to indirectly restrict the public's access to making OPRA requests by making it harder for the public to get the information. First, they restrict the public to access through the Superior Court, so they cannot get fast information. They can apply to the Government Records Council (GRC), which takes about two years to get a judgement. The public does

not have time to get the information and the cost for getting the OPRA information.

Also, they want to restrict the lawyers' remuneration for their charges. However, at the same time, the government administration can spend any amount of money to defend their cases, even if it is political and they are intentionally not giving the information to the public. Right now, I am asking our readers to call on our elected representatives to vote against the bill, even though they are democrats. The bill is against our first amendment rights in my opinion.

The main point for the lawmakers who are elected by us is to protect the administration, but they make it look like they are trying to save the taxpayers' money. Every government administration is spending too much money to protect their privacy, rather than working with the constituents and making life simpler. It is going in the wrong direction.

OPRA is the best source for the public to make the administration transparent. Once it is

taken from our hands, it will be very difficult for us to get the information. Even the information might be recorded in a different way, as they will not be afraid anymore. If someone does not provide the information under OPRA law, they might not be in the administration after two years.

I hope people can wake up and call their representatives and ask them to vote no on crippling OPRA. If passed, it will be clear control in favor of administration by ignoring the public. There are some citizens who regularly make OPRA request. However, they are spending their time and money to keep the administrations on their toes. Some of them have faced retaliation with lawsuits and intimidation just for exercising their rights. Without those brave citizens, the administration would have ignored the people and impeded their rights.

Have a wonderful week.

I'll talk to you next week.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS FOR LOCAL TALK WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

- Publisher & Editor-in-chief : Dhiren Shah
- Editors : Kristopher Seals / Anuj Shah
- Journalists / Writers : Kristopher Seals | Walter Elliott | Bro. Thomas Ellis | Dhiren Shah | William Hathaway Jr.
 Dr. Daniel Louis | Ahmed Screven, Esq. | Anuj Shah | Lev Zilbermints | Kinjal Shah | Asha Shah | Akshat Shah, MD | Ivy Mahabir | Kalindi Bhatt | Dr. Robert Kennedy
- Photographers : Dhiren Shah | Kristopher Seals | Thomas Ellis II | D. Adams, Jr.
- Distributors : Larry Wright | Walter Elliott | Fred Simpson
- Newspaper Designer : New Image Art Studio
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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>
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NJ DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RELEASES NJ REPORT CARD OF HOSPITAL MATERNITY CARE

TRENTON - As part of its ongoing efforts to improve maternal health outcomes and reduce racial disparities, the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) released its annual New Jersey Hospital Maternity Care Report Card on June 20, which showed cesarean delivery rates have continued to drop for all delivery hospitalizations.

The report card outlines key metrics on maternal health care in 2020, using data provided by licensed birthing general acute care hospitals in New Jersey, so that individuals can make informed comparisons. The annual report card includes interactive data on hospital-specific and statewide surgical births, complication rates and severe maternal birth complications.

“When we launched the Nurture NJ Maternal and Infant Health Strategic Plan in 2021, one of our many recommendations was to lower the cesarean delivery rate for mothers in our state. It is promising to see this statistic improve and we are in-

credibly hopeful it is a harbinger of overall improvement in our maternal health outcomes,” said First Lady Tammy Murphy.

“There is still much more to do to ensure that every mother in New Jersey enjoys a healthy and safe pregnancy and birth, particularly our Black and Hispanic mothers, but I remain committed to continuing this work with our dedicated health care professionals and building on these best practices so that we can achieve our goal of making New Jersey the safest, most equitable place in the nation to deliver and raise a baby.”

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Healthy People 2030 national target for surgical/cesarean birth rates among women considered at low risk for birth complications was 23.6 per 100 live births, and New Jersey’s 2020 rate was near that target at 25.9 per 100 live births. Seventeen out of 49 New Jersey birthing hospitals met that benchmark, which is an improvement over the last report

when only 16 of those hospitals met that benchmark and from 2019, which noted 10 hospitals.

Cesarean delivery rates dropped to 32.9 percent of all delivery hospitalizations, a slight decrease of 1 percent from the 2019 rate. These delivery rates have steadily improved since the release of the first New Jersey Report Card of Hospital Maternity Card, which showed cesarean delivery rates at 35.7 percent.

However, cesarean deliveries still have higher rates of complications compared to vaginal deliveries per 1,000 delivery hospitalizations, including: obstetric hemorrhage (123.8 cesarean versus 16.1 vaginal); post-admission infections (25.1 cesarean versus 14.5 vaginal); and Severe Maternal Morbidity (SMM) with transfusion (41.6 cesarean versus 11.7 vaginal).

Disparities continue to persist among Black and Hispanic mothers in New Jersey. Non-Hispanic Black mothers had the highest rate of obstetric hemorrhage with 62.6 per 1,000 delivery hospitalizations, followed by Hispanic mothers with a rate of 52.5 per 1,000. Non-Hispanic Black mothers also had the highest rate of SMM with transfusion at a rate of 36.5 per 1,000 delivery hospitalizations, up from 35.6 in 2019, followed by Hispanic mothers at 25.2 per 1,000. The rate of SMM with transfusion for Non-Hispanic White mothers was the lowest at 15.7 per 1,000 delivery hospitalizations.

“Each report card provides invaluable data that will help guide us in our goal to make New Jersey the safest and most equitable place to have a baby,” said Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli. “We will also use this data to further inform our efforts to continue to reduce inequities in maternal health care.”

As 2020 was the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the report also shows the impact of the virus. Of all hospital deliveries in 2020, 3.8 percent of delivering mothers experienced COVID-19 infections at some point during their pregnancy. Among mothers with COVID-19

infection, more than half (60.1 percent) were positive at the time of delivery (within two days of admission for delivery) as opposed to positive any other time during pregnancy.

Key among the report’s recommendations, in collaboration with the New Jersey Maternal Care Quality Collaborative (NJMCQC), is the need for further research to understand the mechanisms that contribute to obstetric hemorrhage, third- and fourth-degree perineal lacerations that occur during vaginal births, post-admission infection, and SMM at the hospital level. Also cited was the need to study and identify modifiable risk factors that contribute to cesarean deliveries.

The Murphy Administration has been dedicated to improving maternal health outcomes through Nurture NJ.

In January 2021, First Lady Tammy Murphy unveiled the Nurture NJ Maternal and Infant Health Strategic Plan, with the goal of reducing New Jersey’s maternal mortality by 50 percent over five years and eliminating racial disparities in birth outcomes.

Governor Murphy has signed 43 pieces of maternal and infant health legislation, including measures focusing on family planning, Medicaid, health equity, substance use disorder, and data innovation. Legislation established the report card, the NJMCQC, New Jersey Maternal Mortality Review Committee (NJMMRC), and the New Jersey Maternal Data Center (NJMDC).

This report card is part of the larger NJMDC in NJDOH, which is responsible for developing data collection and submission protocols for maternal mortality, morbidity, and racial and ethnic disparity data from relevant health care facilities in the state; conducting data analyses and developing reports and a public-facing dashboard on the state of maternal health; and disseminating information and analyses to the NJMCQC, the NJMMRC, other relevant stakeholders, and the public.

(Continued on page 11)

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SPORTS WRAP

By William Hathaway, Jr.

This past weekend, the second annual Jamar Summers ambitious football camp took place at Central Playground. There were about 187 participants that took place, with ages ranging from 5-13 and also 14-17. The youth at this camp did warmups to stretch beforehand and worked on developing ball handling skills.

There was a seven on seven scrimmage there were current and former football players, featuring XFL star Jamar Summers who played for the Vegas Vipers. Another player at the event was local favorite Jason Alford, who won Super Bowl XLII with the New York Giants and even sacked Tom Brady in the closing moments.

Other football players that played college and high school

football included Juwann Winfree from the Indianapolis Colts, Nyquee Hawkins from the University of Virginia Tech, Taquan Roberson from the University of Connecticut and Rasul Douglas from the Green Bay Packers, plus former East Orange Campus football player Anthony Brown from the Baltimore Ravens. One key supporter of this event was former New York Giants defensive back Jabrill Peppers, who also stopped by.

“It’s about giving back to the community. We have a lot talented kids in our community,” Jamar Summers said.

Finally, unless something strange happens, Victor Wembanyama is expected to be the first player drafted in the 2023 NBA Draft by the San Antonio Spurs.

Photos By Felicia Laguerre Owens



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UNITED STATES

SCATHING REPORT LEADS TO FEDERAL CONSENT DECREE

After the death of George Floyd, the federal government took a closer look at policing in Minneapolis, and its findings were not good.

Following a comprehensive investigation, the Justice Department announced today that the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) and the City of Minneapolis (City) engage in a pattern or practice of conduct in violation of the U.S. Constitution and federal law. The Department also announced that the city and MPD have agreed in principle to resolve the Department’s findings through a court enforceable consent decree with an independent monitor, rather than through contested litigation.

Specifically, the Justice Department finds that the MPD:

- Uses excessive force, including unjustified deadly force and unreasonable use of tasers
- Unlawfully discriminates against Black people and Native American people in its enforcement activities, including the use of force following stops
- Violates the rights of people engaged in protected speech
- Along with the city, discriminates against people with behavioral health disabilities when responding to calls for assistance

The Department identified and concluded that persistent deficiencies in policy, training, supervision, and accountability contribute to the unlawful conduct.

“George Floyd’s death had an irrevocable impact on his family, on the Minneapolis community, on our country, and on the world,” said Attorney Gen-

eral Merrick B. Garland. “The patterns and practices of conduct the Justice Department observed during our investigation are deeply disturbing. They erode the community’s trust in law enforcement. And they made what happened to George Floyd possible. Today, we have completed our investigation, but this is only the first step. We will continue to work with the city and the MPD toward ensuring that MPD officers have the support and resources they need to do their jobs effectively and lawfully as we work together toward meaningful and durable reform.”

The city and MPD cooperated fully with the Justice Department’s investigation. The Department provided a comprehensive written report of its investigative findings to the city and MPD. The report acknowledges the changes already made by the city and MPD, and it identifies additional remedial measures that the Department believes are necessary to fully address its findings.

The Department opened this investigation on April 21, 2021. The investigation was conducted by career attorneys and staff in the Civil Rights Division’s Special Litigation Section and the Civil Division of the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Minnesota. The team conducted numerous onsite tours of MPD facilities; interviewed MPD officers, supervisors, and command staff; spoke with city officials and employees; accompanied behavioral crisis responders and officers on ride-alongs; reviewed thousands of documents; and watched thousands of hours of body-worn camera footage. Department attorneys and staff also met with community members, advocates, service providers, and other stakeholders in the Minneapolis area.

The Department conducted this investigation pursuant to 34 U.S.C. § 12601 (Section 12601), which prohibits law enforcement officers from engaging in a pattern or practice of conduct that deprives people of rights protected by the Constitution or federal law, the Safe Streets Act of 1968, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Title II

of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The findings announced June 16 are the result of the Department’s civil pattern or practice investigation and are separate from the Department’s criminal cases against former MPD officers for federal crimes related to the death of George Floyd.

The Department will reach out to members of the Minneapolis community for input on remedies to address the Department’s findings. Individuals may also submit recommendations by email at Community.Minneapolis@usdoj.gov or by phone at 1-866-432-0268.

Additional information about the Civil Rights Division is available on its website at www.justice.gov/crt. Additional information about the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Minnesota is available at www.justice.gov/usao-mn.

Information specific to the Civil Rights Division’s Police Reform Work can be found here: www.justice.gov/crt/file/922421/download.

MASS SHOOTING UPDATE

Information recent as of 6-20-2023 at 12 p.m.

2023 Mass Shooting Stats: (Source: Mass Shooting Tracker, <https://www.massshootingtracker.site/data/?year=2023>)

- Total Mass Shootings: 372
- Total Dead: 490
- Total Wounded: 1443
- Shootings Per Day: 2.18
- Days Reached in Year 2023 as of June 20: 171

Latest High Profile Incident

- Location: Strip mall parking lot - Willowbrook, IL
- Time: Around 12:30 a.m. local time, June 18.
- Deceased: 1.
- Injured: 22, including two critical.
- Shooter(s): Number of shooters unknown as of press time.
- Weapon(s): Unknown style of weapon.
- Motive: Unknown. Details unknown as of press time.

- Status: At-large.
- Notes: Shooting happened during a Juneteenth celebration event. There was a fight reported near the shooting location.

WORLD

WATER TROUBLES ABOUND FROM DESTROYED DAM

A UN humanitarian continues bringing life-saving aid to survivors of the flooding from the Kakhovka Dam, but they’ve warned that hundreds of thousands more people in the country’s south face severe water shortages.

On June 16, relief supplies were delivered to vulnerable families in the rural Kherson region close to the front line.

The destruction of the dam on June 6 has impacted water supplies, sanitation and sewage systems, in addition to health services.

As part of the aid effort, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and UN World Food Program (WFP) transported live-saving water and food to families by boat, only 15 kilometers from the contact line.

“We are using today four boats to deliver assistance to these 500 families, a small community that is here close by where I am now,” said Saviano Abreu, head of communications for UN aid coordination office OCHA, in Ukraine.

“These communities, they already have been facing the consequences of the war. This area was under Russian control. Late last year around November, it was retaken by Ukraine and now, they are now facing this new catastrophe with the flooding here.”

The emptying of Kakhovka Reservoir has left tens of thousands of people in southern Ukraine without access to piped water, mainly in the Dnipro region.

The reservoir - one of the largest in Europe - is reportedly 70 percent empty, according to Ukrainian authorities. The width of the reservoir has also de-

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JUNETEENTH AND THE VIOLENCE

By Thomas Ellis II

It's a shame that a National Holiday to celebrate the end of slavery back in 1865 turns very violent in many cities with mass shootings.

June 19th, or Juneteenth as it is known, is the day in 1865 that slaves in Galveston, Texas were informed that they were free, even though slavery was ended everywhere else in 1863.

158 years later, many of our people may physically be free from slavery, but mentally their minds are still enslaved, and we can see that when it comes to the violence that happens in our communities and our neighborhoods.

This past weekend, while cities and states all over were holding Juneteenth Celebrations

there were several mass shootings with 60 plus people shot and 9 deaths. The number of deaths may rise by the time this article is out because of the many injured and the location of the injuries. Many of the victims were young people with several adults also suffering or dying from gunshot wounds.

It's sad when a historical celebration turns into violence. That's not what Celebration is about. A celebration is about good times, festive activities, happiness, joy, laughter, and love.

Juneteenth is about freedom, and real freedom is about being able to walk freely, live freely and not have to worry about being shot or killed in your community, or at a festive event. Now that's freedom as a whole.

WORLD NEWS FLASH

(Continued from page 6)

creased from three kilometers to one, while the water level is now at around seven meters, well below the 12-meter operational threshold, OCHA reported.

"Our calculation is that 200,000 people in the Dnipro region, for example, have already been cut off from the water from their houses," said Mr. Abreu.

But that could rise to affect more than 700,000 people as the reservoir is the only source for that whole part of southern Ukraine, not just the Kherson region, he warned.

Large urban areas in the Dnipro region, including Pokrovska, Nikopolska and Marhanetska, are completely cut off from centralized water and others like Apostolivska and Zelenodolska have extremely limited access.

The receding floodwater has also created other deadly challenges in the form of landmines that have been scattered far and wide.

"This area, I think it is one of the most mine contaminated parts of the world," said Mr. Saviano. "It is the reason, why for example, agriculture in

Kherson, in Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhia have been impacted because of the mine contamination, so the floodwater is moving the mines, that is a reality."

Abigail Hartley, Chief of Policy, Advocacy and Donor Relations section from the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) added that "when the water subsides the mines are there.

"(The) good thing is that mines float, so they do stay on the surface. But, of course, there's a lot of other flood debris and they can get buried in sediment. So, it is a challenge."

She said Ukrainian authorities had done "a good job of demining so far."

Since the destruction of Kakhovka dam, OCHA and humanitarian partners have continued life-saving operations. At least 10 inter-agency convoys have reached those in need.

EUROPE

UK OFFICIAL WANTS STOP & SEARCH

UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman has written to chief constables of all 43 police forces

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- **JUNE 22: Better Together Dads** meets 6:30 p.m. monthly on 4th Thursdays to give fathers a safe place for connection with other passionate dads.
- **JUNE 27: Nurtured Heart Approach** meets 6:30 p.m. monthly on 4th Tuesdays to connect and address their concerns, questions, and feelings about raising a child with special needs.

These support groups occur on Zoom, so visit our website for the links: <https://bit.ly/fsoeevents>

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IS IRVINGTON HIGH SCHOOL SAFE?

(Continued from page 1)

now responding to an anonymous complaint when there are processes and procedures in place to deal with such matters," said Vauss to Matthau, "i.e. reporting to principal, to union representatives, etc. It's concerning to me, out of the 70-plus teachers, this' an anonymous complaint that should affect the entire school and just not one teacher."

WXRK's source said that teachers have brought up their complaints to officials "but the constant answer is, 'We're working on it.'"

Both Irvington Education Association President Michael Bycock and a New Jersey Education spokesman said that they have been responding to the complaints.

"There's no question that more work needs to be done," Bycock told Matthau. "The fact of the matter is, without significantly more aid from the state, meaningful progress remains elusive."

"The NJEA and our Irvington local have been working tirelessly to address the issues," said the state spokesman. "It's concerning to hear 'nothing has happened' because that's simply not true. Nonetheless, much work needs to be done."

Irvington Public Schools had received about \$138 in state aid last school year as a

result of the NJ Supreme Court "Abbott vs. Burke" rulings for a "thorough and efficient education." IPS is among the 31 "Abbot" or "needy" public school districts statewide.

NJ101.5 had submitted an OPRA request for five years of IPD reports regarding the high school.

"The records show," said Matthau, "that officers have responded to more school incidents since the return to in-class learning than before the pandemic."

IHS is across Clinton Avenue from D. Bilal Beasley Civic Square. The one block long square is where Irvington's police and fire headquarters, municipal building and court and Irvington Public Library are.

It should also be noted that IPS has a security guard staff and at least one IPS School Resource Officer in the high school.

Township authorities' response came before June 5's nightfall.

IPS Facility Supervisor Zorana Figuerora gave RLS Media a set of photographs, taken earlier that Monday, of cleaned or cleared classrooms and hallways, a functioning toilet and emptied garage dumpsters.

RLS' Richard L. Smith also received full copies of Matthau's query letter to Dr. Vauss and the superintendent's response.

Dr. Vauss, in her full response to Matthau, said that her district had been working "hand in hand" with PEOSH and the IEA.

"As of May 11, we've satisfied all con-

cerns within the building, which is why I'm perplexed by the assertions about the conditions of the building," said Dr. Vauss. "I'd hope that your source is not using your reporting as a way to attack the building administration."

Dr. Vauss also said she would welcome Matthau's prospectively sending "what photos and videos pertaining to the high school at your earliest convenience for validation."

The RLS article lead was of "Irvington Township and state officials" finding the NJ101.5 article "unfounded and misleading."

The radio station's report was based on an anonymous educator as its only source. "However, according to reliable sources including NJDOH and PEOSH, some claims in the article have been debunked."

"IHS recently underwent a thorough evaluation conducted by NJDOH and PEOSH, assessing the school's safety standards, environmental conditions and compliance with regulations," said the Smith article. "The school received a satisfactory rating, debunking the allegations made in the NJ101.5 report."

The RLS article continued with the DOH officials' declaring that "the school administration had addressed several minor issues that had been previously identified. The DOH's Environmental and Occupational Health Assessment Program Project Manag-

(Continued on page 12)

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.

LAWYER CONVICTED IN EX-GIRLFRIEND'S DEATH FOUND DEAD

MONTCLAIR - The Regional Medical Examiner is conducting an autopsy on the body of a man, who was convicted on May 12 of killing his ex-girlfriend here in 2018, who was found in what authorities are calling "a medical emergency" in his jail cell June 18.

Essex County authorities, on June 19, said that James Ray III, 60, was rushed to University Hospital when he was found unconscious in his Essex County Correctional Facility cell on Father's Day. A jail guard, said a corrections officers union official, had administered Narcan in his cell. Ray was declared dead later that day.

Both the county jail's internal affairs office and ECPO's Professional Standards Bureau, said the same spokesmen, are probing the circumstances of Ray's death. Attorneys Thomas R. Ashley and Brooke Barnett, who represented Ray and believed he had an in-cell drug overdose, called on June 18 for an independent investigation.

Ray, formerly of Montclair, was facing an up to maximum life in prison sentence by Superior Court-Newark Judge Verna G. Leith June 22. A jury - after a six-week trial and three hours' deliberation on May 12 - found the former police officer and attorney guilty of first-degree murder plus two weapons offences.

Ray was convicted of shooting Angela M. Bledsoe, 44, in their Upper Montclair house Oct.

28, 2018. He then packed travel bags for their 11-year-old daughter and for himself before picking their girl up from school.

Afterwards, Ray turned over custody of the daughter to his brother, from Allentown, Pa. at a Piscataway restaurant and fled to Cuba. He was extradited back to Havana Nov. 6, 2018.

Ray was a former Marine and an NYPD cop who left the force to study law at the University New Hampshire. The father of three had graduated from UNH in 2008.

NEWARK - Over 100 mourners received three caskets - for an adult and two children - for a June 1 Funeral Mass here at St. Michael's Church. They were carried by members of the Newark and Newton police and the Essex County Sheriff's Office.

The larger casket carried retired Newark police and sheriff's officer Andrew Benavente, Sr., 36. The two smaller ones were for Andrew, Jr., 13, and Madelyn, 5 - a product of a love story that began in a city pizza parlor here 15 years ago.

Both Andrews and Madelyn were on their way to Newark May 26 to have both children dropped off with relatives. Andrew Sr. would then pick up his wife, Dinga Melendez-Benavente, for their Friday date night. The trio never made it.

Andover Police Chief Eric Danielson said that their 2001 Ford extended cab pickup truck was running east on Newton-Sparta Road when the westbound 2021 Jeep of Blairstown's Bruce Cseh crossed into the Benaventes' lane by Limecrest Road and struck them head-on at 4 p.m. that Friday.

Cseh was rushed to Morristown Medical Center, where he died from internal injuries; his Jeep's black box recording is being analyzed. The three Benaventes died at the scene.

Andrew, Sr., who was born April 29, 1987, met Dinga while he was in the Essex County Police Academy and she was getting her cosmology diploma at a pizzeria here in 2008. Andy broke up Dinga's argument with

another person with "A beautiful girl like you shouldn't be mad."

The Mass at St. Michael's was from Belleville's Megaro Funeral Home on the way to North Arlington's Holy Cross Cemetery. Police officers closed Broadway between Fourth Avenue and Crittenden Street for overflow parking. Parents Adelino Sr. and Sylvia, brother Adelino, Jr., sister Natalie and brother-in-law Edwin Melendez are among Andy, "AJ" and "Maddy's" survivors.

IRVINGTON - A 10-car crash here on the southbound Garden State Parkway June 15 further congested that toll road stretched well into the evening hours.

The multi car accident was first reported to the State Police at 8:15 p.m. that Tuesday. State Troopers, Irvington firefighters and contracted EMS, on their arrival found the vehicles blocking four of its five lanes by Exit 144 - South Orange Avenue.

Responders diverted the traffic to the far right lane and shoulder while assessing for injuries and damage. One car, a two-door late model coupe, was lying on its driver's side against the center divider.

The crash had occurred after a late afternoon to evening rush hour where traffic volume congested the GSP up to eight miles - from Exit 148 for Bloomfield's JFK Drive to Exit 140 for US Rt. 22 in Union.

The State Police-Bloomfield Barracks reported "no severe injuries" in the pileup. An investigation on the cause of the accident continues.

EAST ORANGE - A city man may be away from East Orange for up to seven years, depending on what sentence New Jersey State Superior Court - Toms River Judge Kimarie Rahill hands down on July 28.

The Ocean County Prosecutor's Office has been asking for an overall seven-year sentence on Marquis Belnavis, 29, of East Orange since June 5. Belnavis had pleaded guilty that Monday before Judge Rahill to a counts of possessing cocaine with intent

to distribute plus the aggravated assault of a police officer.

Belnavis was confessing to attempting to distribute cocaine at Toms River, Ocean Gate and Stafford Township between July 9 and Nov. 10, 2021 and between July 28 and Aug. 31, 2022. He also admitted to biting a Toms River police officer's hand in an attempted flight from a July 9, 2021 traffic stop.

The TRPD Special Enforcement Team said they had stopped a 2018 Nissan Altima July 9, 2021 where passenger Belnavis "had distributed narcotics to another individual."

Belnavis was being arrested for drug possession when they said he bit one of the officer's hands in an escape attempt. He was subdued and taken to the Ocean County Jail until released under the state's revised bail statutes.

The township police's team spotted Belnavis entering and leaving a Toms River residence they were staking out for suspected narcotics trafficking Nov. 10, 2021. Their subsequent investigation found that Belnavis had distributed cocaine there and was subsequently arrested. He was also released as per the new bail guidelines.

Rahill may take into account Belnavis being in county custody since Spt. 2. He was arrested then for attempted distribution in Ocean Gate.

ORANGE - Whatever the future holds for 410 Main St., a parking garage is apparently not part of it.

"Local Talk" recalls a city official talking in 2018 about the .501 acre site at Main Street and Scotland road's southeastern corner being eyed as a site of a several story parking garage. It would be primarily used for the residents and users of the Orange Recreation, Educational and Cultural Center that will replace the Orange YWCA and Rossi' Paints' 1876 mixed use building.

The garage's construction, five years ago, would be a private-public partnership like Orange REC. It would also likely

(Continued on page 14)



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Funding provided by the NJ Community College Opportunity Grant program

WORLD NEWS FLASH

(Continued from page 7)

in England and Wales, to give her full backing to the common sense policing tactic and to urge them to ensure their officers are prepared to use the full powers at their disposal, so they can be more proactive in preventing violence before it occurs.

The Home Secretary also calls on the police to use powers to arrest and investigate instances where someone is unlawfully obstructing a stop and search and for police to publish more body-worn footage quickly. It is hoped that by telling the whole story quickly, innocent police officers will not be subject to trial by social media over their actions.

The drive comes as new data shows more than 100,000 weapons have been removed from Britain's streets since 2019 through a range of tactics - almost half of which were seized in stop and searches, which have also lead to more than 220,000 arrests. The latest data available shows that serious violence has been driven down by 25% since 2019.

Home Secretary Suella Braverman said: "Carrying weapons is a scourge on our society. And anyone doing so is risking their own lives as well as the lives of those around them. This dangerous culture must

be brought to a stop.

"My first priority is to keep the public safe and people who insist on carrying a weapon must know that there will be consequences.

"The police have my full support to ramp up the use of stop and search, wherever necessary, to prevent violence and save more lives.

"Every death from knife crime is a tragedy. That's why I also back the police in tackling this blight in communities which are disproportionately affected, such as among young black males. We need to do everything in our power to crack down on this violence.

In the year ending March 2022, 99 young people lost their lives to knife crime in England and Wales, and 31 of those victims were black. Black males are, therefore, disproportionately more likely to be killed by violence and knife crime. Though the government recognizes black males are more likely to be stopped and searched, our first priority must be on prevention and public safety.

The Home Secretary has also provided an update on safeguards the government is putting in place on stop and search powers to strengthen trust between the police and local communities. After consulting with the policing sector, the government will go further

to strengthen 2 of the conditions of the former Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme by putting them into law.

These conditions are:

- Police should communicate with the local community when a Section 60 order is being put in place in an area, unless this would hinder a sensitive operation
- Data on every stop and search interaction must continue to be collected for the Home Office to publish for transparency and public scrutiny

As committed to in the government's Inclusive Britain report, the Home Office is al-

(Continued on page 13)

MATERNITY CARE *(Continued from page 4)*

The ultimate goal of the New Jersey Maternal Data Center is to provide timely data on the state of maternal health in a transparent manner to the public and to help drive changes to improve maternal health outcomes.

To view previous Maternal Health Hospital Report Cards visit: https://nj.gov/health/maternal/morbidity/mhh_reportcard.

To learn more about the Nurture NJ Maternal and Infant Health Strategic Plan, visit NurtureNJ.nj.gov.



*From
The
Pastor's
Heart*

OP-ED BY DR. ROBERT KENNEDY

Care For One Another

Over the last few weeks, several disasters have occurred across the United States and the world, but I take note of Turkey and India, where buildings have collapsed. The report is that trains have derailed, hundreds of people have been injured, many have died, and some have been poisoned, all because of the carelessness of engineers and contractors who short-shifted their work. And the painful thing is that the greed of those in charge is to be blamed. In the interest of making a few extra bucks, they put people's lives at risk. They did not follow the codes required for safety.

Political leaders in the parliaments and congresses of many countries are making policies based on extremist ideologies of cost cuttings rather than the safety of people. Interestingly, because of the susceptibility of many of the citizenry, the politicians are not being punished. I wish that it could be understood by more of our public leaders

that to care is to preserve lives.

In our world of brokenness, we must show that we care. The following epoch-making words attributed to President Teddy Roosevelt are often quoted to leaders: "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care."

Here are a few more quotes from prominent leaders: "Never be so busy as not to think of others," - Mother Teresa, Founder of the Missionaries of Charity that served in slums of India.

"Sometimes it takes only one act of kindness and caring to change a person's life," - Actor Jackie Chan.

"Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have," - Anthropologist Margret Mead.

"Beginning today, treat everyone you meet as if they were going to be dead by midnight. Extend to them all the care, kindness, and understanding you can muster, and do it with no thought of any reward. Your life will never be the same again," by the author, Og Mandino.

I could give many more quotes from those who have recognized that our world needs more caring people, but I conclude with this simple command that the apostle Paul gave to the church in Corinth, "Care for one another," (1 Corinthians 12:25).

As is told when all is said and done, people may admire how much you know, how well versed you are in your field (medical doctor, mechanic, lawyer, engineer, community leader, and teacher), how famous you are, how well you dress, and how much money you might have, etc., but they will remember more your acts of kindness, your caring attitude, and your selflessness for many years to come. Jesus is remembered for his self-giving life on earth. He came into the world to seek and save the lost and give his life for it.

On the night before his arrest, he could have taken his exit from the world and returned to the Father, but he loved his disciples so much that he got up from supper, girded himself with a towel, and washed the disciples' feet. (cf. John 13). The point is that it takes at least the seven following things to show that we care.

1. Love - Self-giving love
2. Compassion - Consideration for others
3. Empathy - Understanding others
4. Humility - Getting down off the high horse
5. Personal sacrifice - Paying the cost - suffering personal loss
6. Vulnerability - Open the heart to others
7. Godliness - Modeling the

goodness of God

Ed Welch has written a guide for small groups showing how caring about others can help build trust and strengthen personal relationships. By expressing empathy and understanding, we can create a sense of belonging and connection with those around us. This can lead to deeper, more meaningful relationships and a greater sense of fulfillment for both the person receiving care and the person doing the caring. By caring for others, we can find a sense of purpose and pride that goes beyond our personal interests. He argues it well that caring also has a positive impact on the broader world.

When we show empathy and compassion for those who are less fortunate, it can inspire us to take action to make the world a better place. This can lead to a more just and equitable society, benefiting the person receiving the care and others facing the same challenges.

Part of my call for caring comes in the powerful appeal from one of my morning devotionals: "The angels of God are seeking to attract us from ourselves and earthly things. Let them not labor in vain." - (Faith I Live By, 171). We need to care for one another more. Let us practice caring.

IS IRVINGTON HIGH SCHOOL SAFE?

(Continued from page 9)

er also cleared the school of any violations."

RLS' Smith noted that the photos in Matthau's article did not indicate dates, times or exact places where they were taken.

Smith also quoted Mayor Anthony "Tony" Vauss regarding NJ101.5's OPRA request on IPD's police reports on the high school. The information indicating riots, violence and dangerous conditions as misleading and unfounded."

"There have been no riots in or around the school," said Mayor Vauss.

The RLS article included a lengthy career narrative of Dr. April Vauss. The Indianapolis native and Richmond, Ind. 's Earlham College history and world language major was first hired by IPS as math teacher in 2002. Her first administration job was as Mt. Vernon School assistant principal in 2011.

Dr. Vauss received her doctorate in superintendency in 2017. She and Mayor

Vauss got married in 2018.

Smith's article ended with, "The IPS Legal Department is contemplating legal action."

Matthau filed a June 12 update entitled, "It's a War Zone" - More Teachers Speak After Officials Lash Out at NJ 101.5 Report." Its lead paragraph is: "State inspectors found health and safety violations at IHS that weren't addressed until late in the school year after the district was ordered to do so by the State DOH."

The June 12 update noted that local officials had criticized the June 5 report, which was based on the whistleblowing teacher and the DOH Consumer, Environmental and Health Service's May 11 letter that "certain violations have been abated."

Matythau also noted IPS Board Attorney Ronald C. Hunt's calling out the first WXRK report as having "contained unfair and potentially slanderous descriptions of IPS and Dr. April Vauss. Your article contained numerous misstatements, erroneous facts and pho-

tographs that are undated and without location."

Hunt, Esq. had been Orange Public Schools' attorney.

"But district officials declined to provide NJ 101.5 with documents detailing those violations and repairs," continued Matthau. "Instead, they provided photos of empty hallways and classrooms as proof that all is well."

Matthau posted a copy of the May 11 DOH letter stating that IPS had been cleared of violations found in the high school in January. He also posted copies of three IPD arrest reports where many adult individuals had been charged with "rioting" one late Spring 2022 day on IHS property.

The June 12 update added reports of other anonymous teachers of IHS basement flooding and deteriorating conditions in one of the district's middle schools.

Untenured teachers do not speak up, declared the update, "for fear of losing their jobs."

SISTERS NETWORK OF ESSEX COUNTY CELEBRATES PINK RIBBON TEA

The 11th Annual Pink Ribbon Tea took place at Galloping Hill Caterers in Union, NJ on June 17, 2023. The purpose is to educate and celebrate, this time with guest speaker Dr. Susan E. Pories, MD, a Professor in the Department of Surgery, Division of Surgical Oncology, and section of Breast Surgery at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. A few other speakers elaborated on their experiences with breast cancer at Beth Israel Hospital and Rutgers Medical School.

Every year we get together and are inspired by our guest speakers to honor our survivors of breast cancer and our caregivers. Black women are impacted the most by breast cancer. So, we are trying to educate the people of our community, which includes men and women. We urge people to read about it and to have yearly screenings by having a mammogram. Early detections help save lives.

If you need any information of if you have any concerns, please contact Sisters Network, Essex County New Jersey, at (201) 259-0141. The email address is: essexcounty@sistersnetworkinc.org. For more information about national programs, please visit www.sistersnetworkinc.org.

Sisters Network Essex County is an affiliate chapter of Sisters Network Inc., A National African American Breast Cancer Survivorship Organization.



Mildred White, the oldest known Breast Cancer Survivor and her son Terence White at the event at Galloping Hill in Union, NJ



Guest speaker Dr. Susan E. Pories



Sisters Network of Essex County President Catherine Cooper welcoming guests

WORLD NEWS FLASH

(Continued from page 11)

so working with partners to develop a national framework on how the use of police powers - including stop and search - are scrutinized at a local level.

Currently, local panels made up of members of the public, chaired often by an independent party, review randomly selected records and footage of incidents of stop and search and reflect on whether officers have acted appropriately, providing feedback

to their local force. The national model will improve consistency and standards across forces, help strengthen local communities' confidence in their local force and improve the police's confidence to exercise these powers.

Too many criminals who carry knives and weapons go on to offend time and again. Our new serious violence reduction orders aim to help end that cycle by giving the police powers to automatically search those already convicted of knife and offensive weapon offences. This

acts as a deterrent, while also ensuring that those who persist on carrying knives are more likely to be caught. The orders are being piloted in 4 police force areas for 2 years.

The government recognizes that the drivers behind serious violence are complex. Tough law enforcement action is only one

part of our approach to tackling the root causes of serious violence. The government has also invested £170 million in early intervention, education and prevention schemes since 2019, with our network of Violence Reduction Units supporting more than 215,000 vulnerable young people in the past year alone.

The Observation Booth



OP-ED By Andrea Dialect

A PIC SPEAKS LOUDER



JUNETEENTH

(Demographic: Orange New Jersey)

I had a blast on Monday at the "JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION OF FREEDOM" which had been sponsored by Mayor Dwayne D. Warren Esq. and Co-sponsored by Councilmember-At-Large Adrienne Wooten, and The Department of Community Service at Colgate Park.



Unfortunately, I arrived at the tail end of the Celebration because my duties as a school bus driver took precedence. But I assured my friend Tommy Edwards (A Need to Feed) who had extended the invite that I would show up with my journalist cap on, so I did.

I missed many activities, including the OHS Drumline performance, The Flag Raising, The Skatefest, The Proclamation Ceremony, the Fun Violence Balloon Release, and the Juneteenth Reenactment. I could still enjoy the beautiful vibes and souls that I had the pleasure of crossing paths with. Luckily, I got some pretty cool takeaways in the form of these pics, which is pretty cool because we all know that A PIC SPEAKS SO MUCH LOUDER... ENJOY!

More than half of states recognized Juneteenth as an official public holiday!

In most of these states, Juneteenth is designated as a permanent state holiday and commemorated annually. In Alabama and West Virginia, Juneteenth has been authorized as a state holiday for this year by a governor's proclamation; the holiday can become permanent in these states if their legislatures pass bills to make it so.

Juneteenth is a combination of the words June and nine-

teenth. It commemorates the day more than two months after the end of the Civil War - and more than two years after Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation - when enslaved Black Americans in Galveston, Texas, were informed of their freedom.

Public awareness of Juneteenth grew in 2020 amid nationwide protests after the police killings of several Black Americans, including George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. President Joe Biden signed the legislation that made Juneteenth a federal holiday in June 2021.

Read this article in its entirety at www.localtalkweekly.com and type *The Observation Booth, Andrea Dialect and/or Entertainment Section* in the search bar. If you are interested in participating in a challenge, project sharing a topic, news or if you have any questions, comments or concerns, send them to localtalkandrea@gmail.com.

Photos By Andrea Dialect



TOWN WATCH (Continued from page 10)

mean the demolition of the two-story mid-20th Century office building that houses a PNC Bank branch.

That garage project, as of latest word, is not on the City of Orange's radar. Orange's 2021-drafted Main Street Development Plan has Block 2603 Lot 8 zoned for mid-size mixed use building for residential and commercial use. A photo of 410 Main was used on the 56-page plan's p-age 25 as an example of a structure that needs either encouraged office space or mixed residential-office space.

"To my knowledge," said Orange Planning and Economic Development Deputy Director Chris Mobley to "Local Talk" May 23, "the building at the corner of Main Street and Scotland Road is not being considered as a site for a parking garage."

410 Main has had a bank branch as a main tenant, going back to National Newark and Essex Bank in the 1960s. It was also a Midatlantic Bank branch in between.

WEST ORANGE - A majority of the Township Council told Township Attorney Richard Trenk and Assistant Attorney Kenneth Kayser, on June 13, paraphrased a Waylon Jennings song title: "You've Been a Long Time Leaving but You'll Be a Long Time Gone."

The council, in a 3-2 vote that Tuesday night, passed Resolution 232-22 that effectively fired Trenk, Trenk's law firm and Kayser. They then hired Keith Y. Moon to represent the township while its elders search for new attorneys and/or a firm.

The resolution immediately bars the township from paying Trenk, Kayser et. al., prevents future township matters to go to

them and refrains from dealing with any entity that has any connection against the three-some.

This resolution ends a five-month saga which started in January with Mayor Susan McCartney forwarding a four-year contract renewal of Trenk. The contract was first approved in March after McCartney broke a 2-2 council tie vote. That vote and the contract were later rescinded when it was learned that McCartney, as mayor, does not have tie-breaking power.

The June 13 firing ends Trenk's representing the township since 1998. Several council members began questioning his work after a couple of court decisions went against the township.

Council Members Asmeret Ghebremichael, Rev. William "Bill" Rutherford and Susan Scarpa carried the measure. Col-
(Continued on page 15)

TOWN WATCH

(Continued from page 14)

leagues Michele Casalino and Tammy Williams dissented.

Mayor McCartney posted a nine-paragraph rebuttal on the township website, calling 232-23 "a statement of vague opinion, bordering on defamation and slander, alleging that each attorney of being unethical or unprofessional."

SOUTH ORANGE - The peaceful transfer of village government power was served here at the Orange Lawn Tennis Club June 15.

Newly-elected Trustees Olivia Lewis-Chang and Jennifer Greenburg were inaugurated into office that Thursday night. They succeeded outgoing Trustees Steve Schnall and Donna Coallier - who were also recognized for their service.

Summer Jones was then sworn into her second term. Village President Sheena Collum was re-inaugurated into her third term.

Callum headed a "South Orange 2023" ticket with Greenburg, Jones and Lewis-Chang in the May 9 nonpartisan municipal election. They, for the first time, ran unopposed on the ballot.

Collum, Jones, Lewis-Chang and Greenburg now join incumbents Bobby Brown and Karen Hartshorn-Hilton in conducting village government business for the next two years. It is the first time in South Orange history at the trustees panel has had a female majority.

MAPLEWOOD - Police detectives here are reviewing an inventory list of items stolen from a Hilton section store from an early June 12 burglary.

Maplewood Police officers are also comparing notes with colleagues statewide over similar break-ins and thefts.

MPD patrol officers were responding to a 4:14 a.m. alarm activation that Monday from 1847 Springfield Ave. The officers arrived to find the front door windows to Trimarco Jewelers damaged.

Officers then searched the store. They said that it had appeared to them that "gold jewelry had been taken from the display cases." The store's owner was meanwhile notified and was advised to take inventory jewelry store.

Similar predawn jewelry store thefts have been reported from Union, Scotch Plains, Linden, Westfield, Green Brook, Eatontown, Hainesport, Long Branch and Robbinsville.

Union Police Deputy Chief Scott

Breslow told of a June 2 smash-and-grab from a Route 22 jeweler. The suspects used a white Jeep, later reported as stolen, which UPD officers pursued into Newark.

Anyone with information and/or possesses a neighborhood video recording is to contact Det. J. Zuhowski at Jzhowski@maplewodnj.com Or (973) 761-7929.

BLOOMFIELD - It appears that the search of a missing township man has ended at the base of the Palisades June 5.

A Palisades Interstate Parkway spokesman said that one of his officers came across a 2010 Nissan Murano parked at Rockefeller Lookout in Englewood Cliffs at 5 a.m. that Monday. The Murano's New York license plate and registration numbers matched that of a 54-year-old Bloomfield man reported as missing since June 2.

A man who identified himself as the Bloomfielder's brother reported him as missing to Clifton police that Friday. CPD then posted the person and vehicle's description on its missing/endangered advisory alert.

The PIP officer called the department's detective bureau. The Bergen County Sheriff's Office K-9 Unit, an NYPD helicopter, the Bergen County Medical Examiner, the East Bergen Rappel Team and New Jersey Search and Rescue joined in the search.

New Jersey Search and East Bergen Rappel located a man's body later that Monday at the cliff base. The Bergen Medical Examiner then took custody of the remains for an autopsy and a toxicological exam.

The autopsy and exam's results have not been disclosed as of press time. The deceased's identity has also not been disclosed.

GLEN RIDGE / NUTLEY - "Local Talk" has learned that Matthew S. Ciccolini - a name familiar to Glen Rogers and Nutleyites in the 1980s and 90s - has died.

Ciccolini, 56, who was born in Newark July 22, 1966, was raised in Glen Ridge. The Glen Ridge High School Class of 1984 graduate went on to attain a bachelor's degree in recreation from St. Augustine, Fla.'s Flagler College.

Mathew returned to the borough to start a family with Donna Ambrose Ciccolini. They raised Joseph Peter and Nicholas Matthew Cicciolini here and, after 1998, in Verona.

He started working in logistical sales for the Five Cicciolini Brothers appliance sales and service in Nutley. The Ciccolinis

had moved out 537 Franklin Ave. before a 2021 lightning strike and partial collapse sealed the building's fate. Nutley Township bought and leveled the property in preparation for that block's residential/commercial redevelopment.

Matthew Cicciolini had also moved on from Nutley to the Verona Recreation Department and that township's Lakeside Deli. He died in Teaneck's Holy Name Hospice May 6 from prostate cancer complications.

Brothers Joseph and Bart Ciccolini and sister-in-law Donna Ambrose are also among his survivors. Matthew's memorial service was held at Verona's Prout Funeral Home May 8.

BELLEVILLE - Last rites for a township man were held in Newark June 2 although the investigation of what led to his fatal May 27 jet ski accident continues.

The body of Charles Sanchez was brought to Newark's St. Michael's Church from the nearby Alvarez Funeral Home June 2. Sanchez's last trip started after he was declared dead late May 27 at Newburgh, N.Y.'s St. Luke's Hospital.

Sanchez, 48 and his passenger -Davis Torres, 49, of Lodi- were brought to St. Luke's in critical condition. The Newburgh area New York State Police Barracks spokesman said that their 2017 Yamaha jet ski had collided with another jet ski with two other Garden Staters aboard on the Hudson River near the Newburgh marina.

All four people were thrown into the river by the impact. Boaters at the marina promptly pulled them from the water while calling for first responders. NYSP troopers arrived at 2:48 p.m.

NYSP only added that alcohol consumption was ruled out as a factor. It is not clear whether the other jet skier - identified as Jorge Arribasplata, 48, of Saddle Brook - and/or his unidentified passenger were injured.

Charles Edgar Sanchez, according to Alvarez's obituary, was born on Aug. 7, 1974.

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