

LOCAL TALK

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25¢

“LET’S TALK FOR THE BETTERMENT OF OUR COMMUNITIES”

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER

ESSEX COUNTY • EAST ORANGE • ORANGE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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ECC PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT NAMED IN HONOR OF SENATOR RONALD L. RICE

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Cutting the ribbon are, in foreground from left, Ronald Rice, Jr., Trustee Isabel Cruz and Trustee Chair Marion A. Bolden. Watching are, from left, Trustee Lanel Guyton, ECC President Dr. Augustine A Boakye, NJ Assemblywoman and former ECC Trustee Carmen Morales, and Trustee Johanna Wright

FINAL FOUR MATCHUPS SET

Photos By Marvin Chambers

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HILBERT DEBUNKS RESIDENCY RUMORS

VOTE 1A DEMOCRAT

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Residency here
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Prepared by: KEITH R. CAMPBELL, ESQ.

This DEED is made on the 26th day of June, 2023, between June 30, 2023

BETWEEN: Lucía D. Elena v/w/a Lual' Di Sena Estrella; married, and Anna DeP' Heria, married

whose post office address is: Anna DeP' Heria, 368 Jackson Avenue, Orange, NJ 07050

referred to as Grantors

AND: Michael Jean Baptiste and Quantavia L. Hilbert, husband and wife

whose post office address is about to be: 368 Jackson Avenue, Orange, New Jersey 07050

referred to as Grantees,

City of Orange Township
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
28 NORTH DAY STREET
ORANGE, NJ 07050
DWAYNE D. WARREN, Esq. Mayor
(973) 952-6066
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Jonathan House

Orange Councilwoman and Mayoral candidate Quantavia Hilbert stated:
 “My husband and I have been Orange Residents for a long time. In June 2023, we bought a house in Orange, in which the deed shows the truth, because we love Orange.
 “Like I have published my deed, I appeal to Mayor Warren to publish his deed or the proof of his residency in Orange.”
Advertisorial

COURT ORDERS MAY END "THE COUNTY LINE"

PAGE 7



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Turn To PAGE 16



Editorial
Dhiren Shah
 Editor-In-Chief

Hello Readers,

.Right after coming from India, I got COVID. Maybe it happened inside the plane. I called my doctor, and he told me that he travels a lot. However, he always takes a heavy dose of Vitamin D before traveling. People from India upon coming to America are low in Vitamin D, as our daily routine is inside the house, inside the car and inside the office. We do not get enough sunlight. Many Americans have the same problem. So, his advice might be good to protect people against COVID. However, I do not have a great knowledge of it, but the next time I travel, I will take Vitamin D. I cannot suggest anyone to take it, as I am not a medical professional. However, it is a good point to do research before you make any decision.

Israeli forces executed a drone attack and killed seven aid workers for the World Central Kitchen. They were helping distribute food to hungry Palestinians. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israeli forces “unintentionally hit innocent people.” He said that it was a tragic accident, and it happened in war. The victims were from the U.S., Canada, Australia, Poland, Britain and a Palestinian. The United Nations will investigate the incident and Israel will as well. However, the war is not over and there is no clear sign of a truce. The U.S. and its supporting countries are supporting Israel.

The total number of deaths in Gaza were over 30,000 as of February 2024 and about 33,000 so far as per one news outlet. However, our president is not strict enough to stop the war, but is ready to help Israel with more money. As of April 2, Defense Subcommittee Chairman Ken Calvert released a bill text of the Israel Security Supplemental Appropriations Act. This will provide \$17.6 billion in military assistance for Israel, as well as

funding for U.S. Forces in the region.

New Jersey Senate candidate Andrew Kim won his case to change the ballot structure, so it will not help Democratic Party bosses due to county line ballots. By the judge’s order, the office block design employed in the 49 other states must be applied. It was a judgment by a federal judge. 17 of the 19 county clerks, including Essex County Clerk Chris Durkin, appealed to the superior court as I heard.

The ballots deadline has passed, and they are supposed to be mailed at the end of April 2024. However, there was ample time to change the design for printing. I have been in the printing business since 1985 and it is not impossible to change the design of the ballots and print them right in time or I would say way ahead of time.

Former President Trump as I mentioned last week was offered reduced bond of \$175 million to appeal the ruling in his fraud case. Trump teamed up with another billionaire, Don Hankey of Knight Specialty Insurance, to make the payment and stop col-

lection action on his assets. The insurance company that provides specialty insurance is known for providing subprime auto loans to auto buyers with weak credit scores. Hankey contacted Trump for raising the previous \$464 million bond. However, once the bond was reduced by a New York Appeals Court, it became a little easier for Trump to raise this money.

The world is going crazy. A father, Manuel Rivera, 43, left a suicide note and apology video for killing his own son and burning his body. He sent the video to his wife. Rivera killed his son, sat in the car, and set it on fire. However, he got out of the car, maybe because of the flames or heat. The police arrested Rivera not long after.

What a heinous act, the death of a son, the lifetime of misery for the mother. This happens almost every week. The world is going crazy, weather its for money and power or otherwise. We must find peace within us.

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>
AM Rain	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy
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LO 37	LO 38	LO 40	LO 41	LO 47	LO 46	LO 49

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FDA Warns Consumers to Avoid Certain Topical Pain Relief Products Due to Potential for Dangerous Health Effects

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is warning consumers not to use certain over-the-counter analgesic (pain relief) products that are marketed for topical use to relieve pain before, during or after certain cosmetic procedures, such as microdermabrasion, laser hair removal, tattooing and piercing. The agency issued warning letters to six companies for marketing these products in violation of federal law.

Some of these products are labeled to contain ingredients, such as lidocaine, at concentrations that are higher than what is permitted for over-the-counter,

topical pain relief products. When these products that contain high concentrations of lidocaine intended to be used before or during certain cosmetic procedures are applied in ways that could lead to increased absorption of the drug product through the skin, it may lead to serious injury such as irregular heartbeat, seizures and breathing difficulties. These products may also interact with medications or dietary supplements a consumer is taking.

“These products pose unacceptable risks to consumers and should not be on the market,” said Jill Furman, J.D., director of the Office of Compliance in the FDA’s Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. “We are committed to using all available tools to stop the sale of these illegal high-risk products.”

Despite FDA warnings to consumers Disclaimer about similar products over the past decade, the agency continues to find potentially dangerous products available online and in retail stores. The FDA is not aware of evidence demonstrating these products are safe.

Additionally, when lidocaine is applied over large areas of skin,

particularly on irritated or broken skin, for prolonged periods of time and when the skin is covered, the product may cause serious injury.

The products in the warning letters are:

- TKTX Company: TKTX Numb Maximum Strength Pain Reliever, Mithra+ 10% Lidocaine, TKTX During Procedure Numbing Gel 40% and J-CAIN cream [LIDOCAINE] 29.9%
- SeeNext Venture, Ltd.: NumbSkin 5% Lidocaine Numbing Cream (15 grams), NumbSkin 5% Lidocaine Numbing Cream (30 grams) and NumbSkin 10.56% Lidocaine Numbing Cream
- Tattoo Numbing Cream Co.: Signature Tattoo Numbing Cream and Miracle Numb Spray
- Sky Bank Media, LLC, doing business as Painless Tattoo Co.: Painless Tattoo Numbing Cream and Painless Tattoo Numbing Spray
- Dermal Source, Inc.: New & Improved Blue Gel, Superior Super Juice, Premium Pro Plus, Five-Star Vasocaine and Maximum Zone 1
- Indelicare, doing business as INKEEZE: Ink Eeze Original B Numb Numbing Gel, Ink Eeze B Numb Numbing Spray Black Label and Ink Eeze B Numb Numbing Foam Soap

The FDA recommends consumers:

- Not use OTC pain relief products with more than 4% lidocaine on their skin
- Not apply OTC pain relief products heavily over large areas of skin or to irritated or broken skin.
- Not wrap skin treated with OTC pain relief products with plastic wrap or other dressings. Wrapping or covering treated skin with any type of material can increase the chance of serious side effects.

The FDA is aware of reports of adverse events related to these products and encourages consumers and health care professionals to report any adverse events with use of any drug to the MedWatch Adverse Event Reporting program so the agency

can take action to protect the public from any unsafe products.

The FDA has asked the companies to respond to the warning letters within 15 days of receipt stating how they will address these issues or provide their reasoning and supporting information as to why they think the products are not in violation of the law.

Failure to address violations promptly may result in legal action, including product seizure and/or a court order requiring a company to stop manufacturing and distributing violative products.

Additionally, the agency has placed some of these companies on import alert to help stop their products from entering the U.S. and reaching consumers.

New Jersey COVID-19 Vaccine Call Center Ends Operations

TRENTON - As part of the transition to routine, commercial access to COVID-19 vaccines, the New Jersey COVID-19 Vaccine Call Center closed operations on March 28, the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) announced.

Residents can continue to call the national COVID-19 Vaccine Hotline at 1-800-232-0233, where assistance is available in English, Spanish, and other languages. Deaf and hard of hearing individuals can call TTY 1-888-720-7489. Persons with disabilities can seek COVID-19 vaccination support through the Disability Information and Access Line at 1-888-677-1199. During the transition, calls to the New Jersey COVID-19 Vaccine Call Center will be rerouted to the national COVID-19 Vaccine Hotline.

Over more than three years, the New Jersey COVID-19 Vaccine Call Center scheduled over 170,000 vaccination appointments, made nearly 40.9 million outreach calls, and sent over 300 million text messages.

“Whether speaking to an agent or providing automated information to answer their questions, the NJ COVID-19 Vaccine Call Center has helped hundreds of thousands of New Jerseyans get much-needed information on vaccine eligibility and vaccination locations for themselves and their loved ones, as well as to learn more about other important

(Continued on page 7)

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SPORTS WRAP



Head Coach Kim Mulkey coaching the Tigers during a timeout. Photos By Marvin Chambers

By William Hathaway, Jr.

The NCAA tournament is winding down, with the conclusion of the regional finals.

In the women's tourney, the defending women's champion LSU Tigers had a comeback victory over UCLA to advance from the Sweet 16 by the final 78-69. LSU star Angel Reese had 16 points and Lauren Betts had 14 points and 17 rebounds. Iowa beat Colorado 89-69 to reach the regional final thanks to 29 points from superstar Caitlin Clark. In a rematch from last year's National Title game, Iowa got revenge in a 94-87 win over LSU to reach the Final Four. Clark scored 41 points and dished out 12 assists while Reese had 17 points and 20 rebounds.



Iowa vs. Colorado

Baylor lost to Juju Watkins and USC 74-70 while the UConn women's team beat Duke 53-45. UConn and USC would then clash, with the Lady Huskies sending Watkins and her team home in a USC 80-73 win. Undefeated South Carolina defeated Oregon State 70-58 and NC State upset Texas 76-66 to round out the ladies' Final Four.

On the other side, the defending men's NCAA champion Connecticut is headed back to the Final Four after a 77-52 rout over Big Ten favorite Illinois to capture the East Regional Final. They will take on West Regional Final was won by Alabama, who took down Clemson 89-82. Midwest Regional winner Purdue beat Tennessee 72-66, and will take on South Regional winner NC State, who stunned ACC rival Duke 76-64. The last time the #11 seeded NC State got this far in the tournament, they won it all in 1983.

Although they were snubbed by the NCAA tourney committee, the Seton Hall men's basketball team has had a decent season and made improvements under head coach Shaheen Holloway. The Pirates have worked their way through the National



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LSU star Angel Reese cries after being eliminated by Iowa

Invitational Tournament, with an opening round win over St. Joseph 75-72, and a quarterfinal win against UNLV 91-68. Both wins came at Walsh Gym in South Orange. Leading SHU was the usual crew of Kadary Richmond, Newark native Al-Amir Dawes, and Dre Davis.

Next week, we will have the results of the NIT tournament, with Seton Hall taking on Geor-

gia, and the winner taking on the winner of Indiana State and Utah.

Finally, NBA guard Rajon Rondo is calling it a career after 16 years in the league and one title with the Celtics in 2008. In MLB, Astros pitcher Ronel Blanco tossed a no-hitter in a 10-0 win over the Blue Jays. Meanwhile, the New York Yankees have gotten off to one of the best starts in franchise history thanks to newly acquired Juan Soto.



UNITED STATES



BIRD FLU RESURFACES

A person in the United States has tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) A(H5N1) virus (“H5N1 bird flu”), as reported by Texas and confirmed by CDC. This person had exposure to dairy cattle in Texas presumed to be infected with HPAI A(H5N1) viruses. The patient reported eye redness (consistent with conjunctivitis), as their only symptom, and is recovering. The patient was told to isolate and is being treated with an antiviral drug for flu.

This infection does not change the H5N1 bird flu human health risk assessment for the U.S. general public, which CDC considers to be low. However, people with close or prolonged, unprotected exposures to infected birds or other animals (including livestock), or to environments contaminated by infected birds or other animals, are at greater risk of infection. CDC has interim recommendations for prevention, monitoring, and public health investigations of HPAI A(H5N1) viruses.

CDC is working with state health departments to continue to monitor workers who may have been in contact with infected or potentially infected birds/animals and test those people who develop symptoms. CDC

also has recommendations for clinicians on monitoring, testing, and antiviral treatment for patients with suspected or confirmed avian influenza A virus infections.

This is the second person reported to have tested positive for influenza A(H5N1) viruses in the United States. A previous human case occurred in 2022 in Colorado. Human infections with avian influenza A viruses, including A(H5N1) viruses, are uncommon but have occurred sporadically worldwide. CDC has been monitoring for illness among people exposed to H5 virus-infected birds since outbreaks were first detected in U.S. wild birds and poultry in late 2021. Human illnesses with H5N1 bird flu have ranged from mild (e.g., eye infection, upper respiratory symptoms) to severe illness (e.g., pneumonia) that have resulted in death in other countries.

H5 bird flu is widespread among wild birds in the U.S. and globally. These viruses also have caused outbreaks in commercial and backyard poultry flocks, and sporadic infections in mammals. HPAI in dairy cows was first reported in Texas and Kansas by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on March 25, 2024. Unpasteurized milk from sick cattle collected from two dairy farms in Kansas and one in Texas, as well as a throat swab from a cow in another dairy in Texas, tested positive for HPAI A(H5) viruses of the genetic clade 2.3.4.4b, which is the same clade that is widespread among birds globally.

On March 29, 2024, USDA’s National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) confirmed HPAI in a Michigan dairy herd that had recently received cows from Texas. The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is providing regular updates on detections in dairy herds, as well as information on epidemiological findings and biosecurity guidance for farmers

and veterinarians. Preliminary analysis of A(H5N1) viruses has not found changes that would make these viruses resistant to current FDA-approved flu antiviral medications, so these are believed to be effective against these viruses. Candidate vaccine viruses (CVVs) developed against related clade 2.3.4.4b viruses are available for vaccine manufacturing if necessary and preliminary analysis indicates that they may provide reasonable protection against H5N1 influenza viruses. Seasonal flu vaccines do not provide protection against these viruses. Analysis of virus samples is ongoing.

CDC is working closely with state and federal agencies, including USDA, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and local health authorities to further investigate and closely monitor this situation.

MASS SHOOTING UPDATE

Information recent as of 4-2-2024 at 12 p.m.

2024 Mass Shooting Stats: (Source: Mass Shooting Tracker, <https://www.massshootingtracker.site/data/?year=2024>)



- Total Mass Shootings: 124
- Total Dead: 199
- Total Wounded: 426
- Shootings Per Day: 1.33
- Days Reached in Year 2024 as of April 2: 93

**MIDDLE EAST
ISRAEL REBUKED
FOR DEATHS OF
AID WORKERS**

The killing of seven aid workers from the NGO World Central Kitchen in Israeli military airstrikes in central Gaza has been strongly condemned by senior UN humanitarian officials who on April 1 reiterated repeat-

ed concerns that "there is no safe space left in Gaza."

"This is not an isolated incident," said Jamie McGoldrick, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). "As of March 20, at least 196 humanitarians had been killed in the OPT since October 2023. This is nearly three times the death toll recorded in any single conflict in a year."

Mr. McGoldrick repeated appeals to "all parties to the conflict, including the Government of Israel," to respect international humanitarian law, which prohibits the targeting of humanitarian personnel.

"The role of aid workers is to alleviate the suffering of people in crisis. Their safety, along with that of the civilians they serve, must be guaranteed," he said.

The senior UN official's comments came after World Central Kitchen reported that an Israeli airstrike was responsible for the deaths of its aid workers in Deir Al-Balah. Following those reports and images of the non-governmental organization (NGO) vehicle showing a large hole in its roof, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths expressed his outrage at the attack and described the victims are "heroes, killed while trying to feed starving people."

From the UN World Health Organization (WHO), spokesperson Dr. Margaret Harris maintained that the NGO mission had been agreed with the Israeli authorities ahead of time and that the organization’s car was "well marked, it was very clear: it was World Central Kitchen."

"How many more lives will be lost until there is a cease-fire?", said UN health agency chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus in a tweet. He said WHO was outraged by the killing of humanitarian workers, and safety must be a basic requirement for all who do relief work.

COURT ORDERS MAY END JUNE 4 BALLOT "COUNTY LINE"

By Walter Elliott

NEWARK - A U.S. Judge's recent order on changing what some call "The County Line" on election ballots - barring a 10 a.m. April 3 motion filing deadline by objecting county clerks at the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia - may well face voters as early as the June 4 major party primary election.

U.S. Federal Magistrate Zahid Nisar Quraishi, from his Newark bench, had ruled on March 29 that the traditional placing of candidates on election ballots by party was unconstitutional. The judge, that Friday, issued a temporary injunction against New Jersey's county clerks from using the county line ballot design.

Quraishi, in a further ruling April 1, said that his ruling to switch candidates' ballot grouping by-party to by-elected office blocks pertains only to June 4's Democratic party ballot.

The judge, also on Monday, rejected the request made on March 29 by 19 of New Jersey's 21 county clerks to stay his ballot change ruling beyond June 4. The clerks, who are elected as Democratic or Republican candidates for their offices, said that there was not enough time to redesign the June 4 ballot.

"The court declines to re-tread the same ground a second time," said Judge Quraishi to the county clerks Monday.

The appealing county clerks do not include their Salem and Sussex county colleagues. It is presumed that Essex County Clerk Christopher Durkin (D-Roseland) had joined the appeal to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals.

The judge's rulings basically sided with attorneys representing Rep. Andy Kim (D-Moorestown) and two other Congressional candidates' ballot design argument. They said that clerks can change the ballot layout from a county line to an office block "is a relatively easy task, taking a few hours or a day at most, and may be easier to

program and check in its totality."

Kim, his attorneys and other candidate-plaintiffs have claimed since last winter that using the county line in ballots put opposing party or independent candidates at a presentation disadvantage. What has been the traditional ballot practice gives prime ballot space to candidates who have received endorsements from officials from major parties.

Kim, who is running for the Democratic nomination to succeed U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez (D-Paramus) in a three-person primary race. (Lawrence Hamm, of Montclair, is among the other two runners.) His chief rival, NJ First Lady Tammy Murphy (D-Rumson) had been running with about 40 percent Democratic county committee support since her November announcement.

Murphy, citing possible damage from primary infighting detracting from the November General Election, ended her campaign March 29. Part of Murphy's decision to suspend campaigning may have been from the split support of county Democratic committees during their endorsement meetings so far; some endorsed Murphy, others endorsed Kim.

Kim, who had been campaigning as an underdog, now finds himself the primary front runner. He continues his campaign to end the county line ballot.

East Orange's LeRoy Jones, Jr. - who is the city, county and state Democratic Committee Chairman - had called for "ballot uniformity" in keeping the county line March 12. He had personally endorsed T. Murphy for the U.S. Senate Nov. 19.

Jones and the Essex County Democratic Committee had endorsed Robert J. "Rob" Menendez, Jr. (D-Union City) for the Eighth Congressional District primary - but not his father. Robert Menendez, Sr, due to his additional bribery indictment over the winter. has decided to pursue his U.S. Senate re-election bid as an independent.

EASTER TREATS DISTRIBUTED TO FAMILIES IN NEED BY ARCHDIOCESE OF NEWARK'S RESOURCE CENTER



Mercy House volunteers Albertha Mullings (left) and Barbara White (right) prepared Easter goodie bags for families in need during the Archdiocese of Newark's annual Easter Giveaway at The Mercy House in Newark on March 26, 2024.

Photo by Archdiocese of Newark / Sean Quinn

HEALTH CORNER

(Continued from page 4)

programs," said Health Commissioner Dr. Kaitlan Baston. "We thank all of the agents over the years for their tremendous work in helping to inform and direct our residents during this critical time."

Since the initial rollout of COVID-19 vaccinations in 2021, the Call Center answered questions on COVID-19 vaccines and assisted residents in finding or making a vaccination appointment.

Its mission expanded to include robocalls and text messages to circulate information about upcoming vaccination events in the recipient's area, an app for accessing digital vaccination records, and scheduled appointment reminders. The Call Center supported targeted outreach efforts, such as to senior housing residents, home-delivered meals recipients, homebound residents, and childcare centers. The Call Center also provided outgoing information on the availability of free COVID-19 tools like HEPA filters for

schools & COVID-19 test kits.

Through the end of February 2024, the Call Center fielded over 7.4 million inbound calls. Agents provided assistance in languages including English, Spanish, Portuguese, Creole, French, Bengali and Swahili. The Call Center also partnered with an interpretation company to accommodate callers in additional languages.

The Department continues to encourage that all residents ages 6 months and older be up to date against COVID-19 in the 2023-2024 respiratory virus season. The latest eligibility information is available here: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html, including the recent recommendation for adults ages 65 years and older to get another updated 2023-2024 dose if it has been at least four months since their most recent dose. COVID-19 vaccinations are offered across the state.

In addition to through the national call center, locations can be found at vaccines.gov and covid19.nj.gov/communitycalendar.

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ECC PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT NAMED IN HONOR OF SENATOR RONALD L. RICE

The life and legacy of the late NJ Senator Ronald L. Rice, Sr. (ECC Class of 1974) was front and center as the College’s Public Safety Department was renamed in his honor during a special ceremony on March 21.

ECC Board of Trustees Chair Marion A. Bolden, a high school classmate of Ronald Rice, called him a “good friend” who cared deeply about his constituents and was always ready to help when asked. The dedication was spearheaded by the College Trustees soon after his death last March. Chari Bolden also read aloud the Board of Trustees proclamation for Senator Rice.

“Today, we are here to celebrate the life of Ronald Rice,” ECC’s President, Dr. Augustine A. Boakye told the audience that included his son, Ronald, Jr.,



former members of his legislative staff and former colleagues.

“I want to thank everyone who made today possible. You have made my father an integral part of this great institution that he loved so much. Today I feel him smiling down on us, said

Ronald Rice, Jr. “I remember my father saying whatever he was able to achieve in life started at Essex County College. He understood the importance of community colleges.”

Dr. Boakye noted Senator Rice’s long affiliation with ECC.

“He was first a student, and then served as President of our Alumni Association,” Dr Boakye stated. “The Senator said be committed to everything you want to do, and don’t be afraid,” Dr. Boakye added.

Senator Rice devoted nearly half a century to public service, working as a Newark Police Officer and serving as a Newark City Council member, as well as a New Jersey State Senator for 36 years in the 28th Legislative District.

He spearheaded legislation to provide relief for individuals in a wide range of quality of life issues. He was a founder and the longtime chair of the Legislative Black Caucus, and focused on

(Continued on page 11)



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 - City and county investigators have been looking for two people and the "dark colored Audi" they got away in from West Side High School after shooting two students at dismissal time here on March 26.

Members of the high school told detectives that dismissal here at 603 South Orange Ave. went like most other Tuesday afternoons until "a gunman fired eight to 12 shots at a 17-year-old boy and a 15-year-old boy at the t-intersection with South 12th Street at about 2:45 p.m.

NPS security promptly called for backup and Newark Police Division officers promptly responded. Some NPD officers blocked the avenue between South 11th and South 16th streets - detouring NJTransit Route 31 buses and other traffic - for their field investigation. Other officers chased the alleged gunman on foot and saw the Audi flee.

Some other officers called for University Hospital ambulances for the two teenage boys. The 17-year-old was admitted in critical but stable condition. The 15-year-old is listed in serious but stable condition. Newark Public Safety Director Fritz Frage said that a third student was injured while people fled the scene.

Students and staff remaining within WSHS were kept in their classrooms for 20 minutes. Traf-

fic continued to be diverted during the rush hour. At least one New York City television news helicopter provided live coverage.

A four-to-eight member delegation from the STOPNOW Patrol, modeled after the Guardian Angels, volunteered March 27 to assist school, security and city police in patrolling the school's perimeter.

The KIPP Rise Academy, at the former Catholic school on 21 Ashland St., held their students until that day's 3:45 p.m. dismissal time.

IRVINGTON - The FBI-Newark Field Office, on March 19, reissued a wanted poster for the man still wanted in a May 12, 2017 fatal shooting here.

The State of New Jersey and ECPO have charged Dennis M. Cunningham June 15, 2017 in absentia with murder, robbery, unlawful possession of a firearm and possession thereof by a convicted felon. The US Federal Court-New Jersey District added an unlawful flight from prosecution charge and a federal arrest warrant on Cunningham Sept. 17, 2017 after he was determined to have eluded law enforcement.

Cunningham, now 64, is accused of accosting, robbing and fatally shooting Dino Bermudez here May 12, 2017 while the latter was sitting on his front porch. He had later died from the gunshot wounds.

The suspect is described as a 6-ft., 2-in, African American man weighing between 200 to 220 lbs. His eyes are brown and his hair black - if he has not shaved himself bald. He has a tattoo on his left arm and a scar on his left forearm.

Cunningham may also go by the names Dennis Brown, Denie Cunningham, Muhammad Cunningham, Dennis Muhammad or Dennis M. Thomas. He has relatives in Atlanta and connections to Irvington, Newark and Easton, Pa.

Cunningham is considered to be armed and dangerous. Anyone spotting him or knowing his whereabouts is to call 911 or the FBI.

EAST ORANGE - Details of East Orange police officers returning fire on and injuring a suspect here March 23 are missing some details as of press time - except that the injured person has been treated and subsequently charged with aggravated assault and related weapons charges. The N.J. Office of the Attorney General is also investigating the exchange.

ECPO Chief Assistant Prosecutor Thomas S. Fennelly said on March 27 that EOPD officers had conducted a motor vehicle stop within their city at about 5:22 p.m. that Saturday. Officers then ordered the vehicle's occupants out - when one of them started to flee the scene.

Police officers told county detectives that they began chasing that man until he turned around, pulled out a handgun and fired at them. One officer fired back, striking the suspect.

Local EMS medics, who were promptly called, rushed the suspect to a local hospital to treat his injury. He was later charged with aggravated assault of a police officer and unlawful possession of a weapon.

The ECPO, following N.J. Attorney General guidelines, has turned over the gunfire exchange part of the incident to state detectives - as whenever a law enforcement officer discharges a firearm.

The suspect's identity as of press time has not been disclosed. The traffic stop location and the outcome of the stopped vehicle's other occupants have not been stated.

ORANGE - The City of Orange's 3 p.m. March 28 commitment to follow Superior Court-Newark Judge Robert Gardner's order to redraw the candidates' placement on the May 14 election ballot became "Must See TV" on YouTube.

Municipal Clerk Joyce Lanier, with an assistant from her office at her side, redrew the three mayoral candidates ballot placement and placement for the three at-large council candidates in a 15 minute, 56 second video

clip. The drawing, like the initial March 22 drawing, was held in City Hall's Council Chamber.

Lanier painstakingly had the six candidates or their representatives and other observers inspect the card sheet with the candidates' names, evenly tore along the sheet's perforations and folded the candidates' cards.

Before inserting the three mayoral candidates' cards and making three turns before the assistant picks one, Lanier asked, at every step, if anyone wanted to inspect the cards, the drum and if anyone had any questions.

The three mayoral candidates - Quantavia L. Hilbert, April Gaunt-Butler and Dwayne D. Warren - had their name cards picked in order and placed on an oversized ballot on an easel. There were several people taking still photos or moving pictures with smartphones, professional cameras or a video camera - for a reason.

Judge Gardner, on March 26, enjoined any public official from banning photography or recording in any public area of City Hall. He also determined that Lanier had "improperly and unlawfully" conducted the draw.

Gardner received a complaint from Hilbert's attorneys on two counts. The first was that Assistant City Attorney Aaron Mizrahi had taken a cell phone out from one of Hilbert's attorneys and stood in front of the drum during Lanier's first draw. Mizrahi claimed that there was an executive order barring the recording of city business - an order that was found to be non-existent.

Hilbert's legal council also claimed that "the slip of paper containing Warren's name appears to have been cut at an angle on the top left corner, which would give it a physically distinguishing characteristic noticeable at the touch of the deputy city clerk's hand." (The said deputy clerk March 22, was replaced by another clerk's office staff member for the March 28 drawing.)

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BLOOMFIELD COLLEGE CHANCELLOR ACCEPTS PRESIDENT'S POST AT ST. CATHERINE UNIVERSITY

By Lev D. Zilbermintz

BLOOMFIELD - After four years as President of Bloomfield College and one year as Chancellor, Dr. Marcheta P. Evans has accepted the position of President at Saint Catherine's University in St. Paul Minnesota, effective July 15, 2024.

Dr. Evans will be the 12th President of the St. Catherine's University, as well as the first African American person to hold that position.

According to the website of St. Catherine University, "Evans will be the first African-American and the 12th woman to serve as president of St. Catherine University. Becky Roloff, the University's 11th president, announced her plans to retire on August 15, 2024 after an eight-year tenure. A search committee composed of Trustees and University representatives immediately launched a national search for the next leader."

According to the website of St. Catherine University, Ken Charles and Anne Gotte, presidential search committees co-chairs, said, "Dr. Evans' astute understanding of higher education trends, particularly as they relate to smaller, private institutions, and her track record of developing and activating growth and transformation strategies, impressed the entire committee. She clearly demonstrated her ethical decision - making process, rooted in values and principles consistent with our University's mission, vision, and values, which made her selection a logical choice."

cal choice."

According to St. Catherine University's website, Jean Winchek, CSJ, '62, chair of the Board of Trustees, said, "We were impressed with Dr. Evans's demonstrated commitment to and experience with advancing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging for students, faculty and staff. Her embrace of the Catholic intellectual tradition, emphasizing scholarly inquiry and social justice teaching, was a noted strength and led to the Trustees' unanimous vote on her selection."

Before accepting the president's position at St. Catherine University, Dr. Evans was for four years the first female President of an independent Bloomfield College.

In its October 28, 2021 issue, "Local Talk" reported on Dr. Evans' public appeal for help to prevent the closure of Bloomfield College. In its April 1, 2022 issue, "Local Talk" reported that Montclair State University extended a financial lifeline to Bloomfield College. This allowed Bloomfield College to complete the 2022-2023 school year.

On May 20, 2023, as reported by "Local Talk" in its issue three days later, Bloomfield College held its 150th and last independent graduation. The last graduating class was made up of 280 students.

Bloomfield College merged with Montclair University. Its new name became Bloomfield College of Montclair University.

Dr. Marcheta P. Evans became the first chancellor of the new college.



Message from Chancellor Marcheta Evans

On March 21, 2024 Chancellor Marcheta Evans released the following message to both the Bloomfield College and Montclair State University communities. The chancellor expressed heartfelt appreciation and warm regards to everyone at the end of her message.

"It has been an incredible journey serving as your President for four years and one year as your Chancellor. I am grateful for the opportunity I have had to lead and serve our close-knit Bloomfield College community, and for the support and camaraderie that I experienced during my time here.

"Today, I write to let the Bloomfield College network of alumni and friends know that I have accepted the position of President at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Min-

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ECC PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLEX

(Continued from page 9)

racial and social justice issues throughout his career.

Dr. Mamie Bridgeforth, Chair of ECC's Division of Social Sciences, served as Mistress of Ceremonies at the program. She recalled her long friendship with Senator Rice.

In 1998, she replaced him on the Newark City Council, representing the West Ward.

Senator Rice's pastor, Bishop Jethro James of Paradise Baptist Church, offered the Invocation.

Other dignitaries at the ceremony included ECC President Emeritus A. Zachary Yamba; ECC Trustees Isabel Cruz, Rev. Dr. Lanel Guyton and Johanna Wright; Newark

City Council members Patrick Council, Dupre Kelly, Louise Scott-Rountree and Michael Silva; State Legislators Carmen Morales (a former ECC Trustee), Gordon Johnson, Shanique Speight and Cleopatra Tucker; former State Assemblyman Ralph Caputo, and Democratic State Committee Chair LeRoy Jones.

WORLD NEWS

(Continued from page 6)

The key UN agency providing relief to Palestinians, UNRWA, tweeted that it was devastated by the killing of seven humanitarians, pointing out that 176 of its own workers have been killed since the violence erupted on October 7.

In a video statement released on the morning of April 2, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the killing of the aid workers by an Israeli strike was unintended and tragic.

Earlier, World Central Kitch-

en released a statement saying its convoy had been hit "despite coordinating movements" with the Israel military, after the team had unloaded more than 100 tons of food aid at its Deir-al-Balah warehouse brought to Gaza along its newly devised maritime route.

Turning to the destruction of Al-Shifa Hospital following a two-week siege by the Israeli military, Dr. Harris said that it had "ripped the heart out of healthcare" in the enclave.

In a stark assessment of the closure of 750-bed Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, WHO

maintained that aid teams had been waiting for "days and days" for Israeli permission to reach the stricken facility, where staff and patients endured "horrific levels of violence."

"We've had contact with the staff; the (hospital) directors told us that Al-Shifa has gone, it's no longer able to function in any way, shape or form" as a medical center, said Dr. Harris.

Speaking to journalists in Geneva, Dr. Harris said that the facility was now "in ruins" and that at least 21 patients had died during the Israeli Defense Forces siege.

As the situation deteriorated at Al-Shifa, medical staff had to move patients to an office space within the hospital grounds without toilets and where there was no water or food; "they were sharing one bottle of water between 15 people by the end," the WHO spokesperson continued.

She noted that medical staff "had no means of looking after patients, many of whom were severely injured (or) intensive care-level patients" fitted with urinary catheters but lacking urinary bags. "You can imagine the horror that has been going on,"

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WORLD NEWS

(Continued from page 11)

Dr. Harris said.

If permission is granted on Tuesday to reach Al-Shifa and northern Gaza's last few remaining health facilities, priorities for WHO teams include bringing medicines, fuel and food and assessing what other supplies are needed and how to provide relief to the most severely injured and sick.

"We've been trying to go for days and days and days, and most of our missions have been rejected," Dr. Harris said. "We're not going to be able to provide the things that, say, a functioning hospital needs, but first of all, we need to do an assessment to understand what we can do. Secondly...who needs to be evacuated...where can they go and what can we do to save the lives of those patients (who are) remaining."

To date, hundreds of healthcare workers have been killed "doing their job", the WHO official noted, along with 32,000 of civilians, 70 percent of

whom are women and children, amid constant Israeli bombardment launched after Hamas-led terror attacks on Israel on October 7 that left some 1,200 dead and more than 250 taken hostage.

"We are struggling to understand the mortality numbers beyond the numbers that are reported of people who are killed in the bombardment because many people don't even get to hospital," the WHO spokesperson said.



In the aftermath of a stunning event, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak spoke to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He said he was appalled by the killing of aid workers, including three British nationals, in an airstrike in Gaza and de-

manded a thorough and transparent independent investigation into what happened.

The Prime Minister said far too many aid workers and ordinary civilians have lost their lives in Gaza and the situation is increasingly intolerable. The UK expects to see immediate action by Israel to end restrictions on humanitarian aid, deconflict with the UN and aid agencies, protect civilians and repair vital infrastructure like hospitals and water networks.

The Prime Minister reiterated that Israel's rightful aim of defeating Hamas would not be achieved by allowing a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.

Netanyahu also caught heat from Minister for Development and Africa Andrew Mitchell, who said, "I summoned the Ambassador of the Israeli Embassy in London to the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.

"I set out the government's unequivocal condemnation of the appalling killing of seven World Central Kitchen aid workers, including three British na-

tionals. I requested a quick and transparent investigation, shared with the international community, and full accountability.

"I reiterated the need for Israel to put in place an effective deconfliction mechanism immediately and urgently to scale up humanitarian access. We need to see an immediate humanitarian pause, to get aid in and the hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable ceasefire."

UK & US TEAM UP

On April 1, the UK and US have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which will see them work together to develop tests for the most advanced artificial intelligence (AI) models, following through on commitments made at the AI Safety Summit last November.

Signed by Technology Secretary Michelle Donelan and US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, the partnership will see both countries working to align their scientific approaches and working closely to accelerate *(Continued on page 13)*

TOWN WATCH *(Continued from page 10)*

WEST ORANGE - It is unlikely that high schooler Khameryn Oliver will be able to attend the April 13 funeral for her parents Rhakeem Oliver and Shavonn Stewart-Oliver.

Khameryn, 17, has been in an induced coma since being admitted to the Jersey City Medical Center after a five-car collision on Kearny's stretch of the Newark-Jersey City Turnpike 7 a.m. March 16. Her parents were taking her to a volleyball tournament as part of the Paramus Catholic High School team. She is also a member of the PCHS track team.

Father Rhakeem was declared dead at the crash scene. Mother Shavonn, an assistant principal of Passaic School 6, died in a local hospital about a week later.

The Hudson County Prosecutor's Office Regional Fatal Accident Unit and the Kearny Police Department Traffic Unit are investigating the March 16 crash.

Jamaal Stewart, Shavonn's brother, has established a GoFundMe.com page to help with the funeral and Khameryn's medical expenses.

SOUTH ORANGE - Peter Shapiro, who rode the crest of a reform wave into becoming Essex County's first County Executive, had died here at home March 29. Wife Bryna Linett said Shapiro, 71, had respiratory failure after a long bout with lung disease.

A majority of participating registered county voters selected the off-line Democrats United in Essex Shapiro as its executive in 1978 over a Democratic Committee. The reform-minded Shapiro was re-elected in 1982 but went on to an unsuccessful 1985 gubernatorial campaign against Republican Thomas H. Kean, Sr. and lost a third executive term bid in 1986 to Democrat-turned-Republican Nicholas Amato.

A majority of voters had approved a charter change in 1977 which replaced a strong board of freeholders and county supervisor format with a freeholder-strong executive model. Shapiro, 26 in 1977-78, was in his second term as the youngest General Assemblyman, representing South Orange, Irvington and Newark's West Ward.

Born in Newark April 18, 1952, Shapiro was among the Columbia High School Class of 1969. He was first known as the organizer

of an anti-Vietnam War protest that the school suspended him over - and was reinstated after the ACLU-NJ interceded.

Shapiro returned to New Jersey with a degree in economics and history from Harvard and managing editorship in the "Harvard Crimson" - and a job as Gov. Brendan Byrne's DOT Commissioner. He left NJDOT to run for assemblyman six months later.

The reform-minded Shapiro, while county executive, decentralized county services from Newark to other towns. and promoted shared services with municipalities. Out of office, Shapiro worked for Citibank and the New York-based Swap Financial Group. He was also a member of Caldwell's Green Brook Country Club.

Son Samuel and sisters Nancy and Margaret Shapiro are also among his survivors. Bernheim-Apter-Kreitzman Suburban Funeral Home, of Livingston, who is handling Shapiro's arrangements, has not announced a public memorial as of press time.

MAPLEWOOD - South Orange-Maplewood Board of School Estimate has *(Continued on page 14)*

BLOOMFIELD PRESIDENT (Cont. from pg. 11)

nesota, effective July 15, 2024. Although I am saying goodbye for now, I will carry with me heartfelt memories of our time together and deep appreciation for the contributions you have made to help make Bloomfield College a vibrant and thriving community.

“During my time with you, I have been inspired by an outstanding student body that has shown the perseverance to stay the course and move forward on their paths to earning a college degree, while facing the tremendous challenges of a global pandemic and the pivoting required during our historic merger between a public and a private institution in the state of New Jersey. I have also witnessed our dedicated faculty expeditiously adapting to the changes while continuing their important work of expanding the minds of our students. And I have been moved by the generosity of our alumni community and friends of the College.

“As I begin my next journey later this summer, I will take all of these memories with me and I will miss all the people that make up the fabric of our amazing community. Your kind and generous commitment of time and support continues to ensure that Bloomfield’s legacy and dedication to the academic and economic success of young people from traditionally underserved communities not only persists but is enhanced.

“Until we meet again, I wish you continued success and fulfillment in your respective endeavors, and I look forward to hearing about the great achievements that lie ahead for Bloomfield College of Montclair State University.”

Curriculum Vitae of Dr. Marcheta Evans

According to the website of St. Catherine’s University, before the historic merger of Bloomfield College and Montclair State University, Dr. Evans served in transformational leadership roles in higher education for nearly 30 years at both public and private institutions, including provost and vice president for academic affairs at Our Lady of Lake University (OLLU) - Catholic College in San Antonio, Texas - vice president for academic affairs, dean sat OLLU, and associate dean and department chair at University of Texas at San Antonio.

According to the webpage of St. Catherine’s University, “Evans is also a past President and Fellow of the American Counseling Association, past President of the Association for Creativity in Counseling, and is the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions. A small sampling of these recognitions includes the Outstanding Multicultural Leadership Award, Yellow Rose of Texas Lifetime Educator Award, and Counselors for Social Justice Ohana Award.

Evans has authored numerous articles and book chapters, focusing on issues of diversity, multiculturalism, women’s issues, and leadership. In her international work, Evans has traveled extensively, including a length of time in Malawi where she worked with educators and counselors on literacy initiatives sponsored by USAID.

Evans graduated from the University of Alabama with a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Counselor Education and Supervision, specializing in Student Affairs, Administration in Higher Education, and Human Re-

source Management. Additionally, she has a Master of Arts degree in Education in Elementary Education from the University of Alabama-Birmingham, a Master of Arts degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from the University of Alabama.”

Message by the President - designate to St. Catherine University community

According to St. Catherine University’s webpage, Dr. Marcheta P. Evans said, “The mission of this University, to educate women to lead and influence, and its emphasis on the importance of welcoming a rich diversity of students across the three colleges and four schools resonates deeply with my core values,” says Evans. “St. Catherine University’s commitment to empowering women and promoting social justice aligns with my own dedication to fostering inclusive and purpose-driven academic environments. These principles as well as St. Kate’s core values of academic excellence, community, integrity, social justice and reflection seamlessly align with my identity as a servant leader in higher education.”

Full Disclosure: Lev D. Zilbermintz graduated Bloomfield College magna cum laude in 1996 with a B.A. in Political Science. Mr. Zilbermintz was the President of the 1995-96 Day Student Government, a member of the Judiciary Board for two years, and a reporter for the Collective Voice, the school newspaper. While at BC, Mr. Zilbermintz won the 1995 Essex County Chess Championship.

WORLD NEWS

(Continued from page 12)

and rapidly iterate robust suites of evaluations for AI models, systems, and agents.

The UK and US AI Safety Institutes have laid out plans to build a common approach to AI safety testing and to share their capabilities to ensure these risks can be tackled effectively. They intend to perform at least one joint testing exercise on a publicly accessible model. They also intend to tap into a collective pool of expertise by exploring personnel exchanges between the Institutes.

The partnership will take effect immediately and is intended to allow both organizations to work seamlessly with one another. AI continues to develop rapidly, and both governments recognize the need to act now to ensure a shared approach to AI safety which can keep pace with the technology’s emerging risks. As the countries strengthen their partnership on AI safety, they have also committed to develop similar partnerships with other countries to promote AI safety across the globe.

UK Secretary of State for Science, Innovation, and Technology, Michelle Donelan said, “This agreement represents a landmark moment, as the UK and the United States deepen our enduring special relationship to address the defining technology challenge of our generation.

“We have always been clear that ensuring the safe development of AI is a shared global issue. Only by working together can we address the technology’s risks head on and harness its enormous potential to help us all live easier and healthier lives.

“The work of our two nations in driving forward AI safety will strengthen the foundations we laid at Bletchley Park in November, and I have no doubt that our shared expertise will continue to pave the way for countries tapping into AI’s enormous benefits safely and responsibly.”

United States Secretary of Commerce, Gina Raimondo said, “AI is the defining technology of our generation. This partnership is going to accelerate both of our Institutes’ work across the full spectrum of risks, whether to our national security or to our

broader society. Our partnership makes clear that we aren’t running away from these concerns - we’re running at them. Because of our collaboration, our Institutes will gain a better understanding of AI systems, conduct more robust evaluations, and issue more rigorous guidance.

“By working together, we are furthering the long-lasting special relationship between the U.S. and UK and laying the groundwork to ensure that we’re keeping AI safe both now and in the future.”

The UK and the United States have always been clear that ensuring the safe development of AI is a shared global issue. Reflecting the importance of ongoing international collaboration, the announcement will also see both countries sharing vital information about the capabilities and risks associated with AI models and systems, as well as fundamental technical research on AI safety and security. This will work to underpin a common approach to AI safety testing, allowing researchers on both sides of the Atlantic - and around the world - to coalesce around a common scientific foundation.

The Observation Booth

SHE'S ALL THAT



OP-ED By Andrea Dialect

WOMAN TO WOMAN

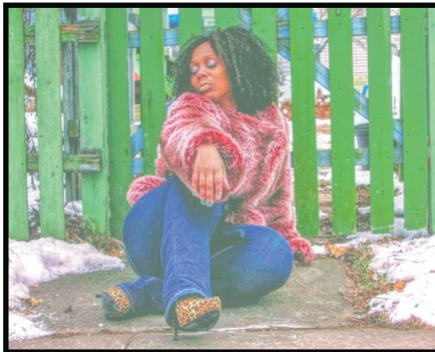
"I am a woman; you are a woman. I am you and you are me; we are one. I feel that!" - Andrea Dialect

The month of April has marched in, ushering March out. So that means Women's Month is officially over. But I thought, why not have one for the road? Today, we celebrate the makings of a woman. Our theme is to conjure up the images of women who represent womanhood to the fullest. Those who are ALL WOMAN, not only in action but merely by their presence. At present, so many of those lovely ones are infiltrating my head. What about you?

As a school bus driver, my role has taken me on quite the adventure, navigating through different school grounds over the years. Along the way, I've had the privilege of meeting a lot of beautiful people, forming bonds with some remarkable students and staff.

This year, almost daily, once having had the guys in tow upon reaching Westlake School, I'd often notice a particular woman with a clipboard and pen in hand, weaving in and out of a seemingly endless row of buses, scanning bus numbers and tallying number counts. Staff members move around her comfortably as she exudes an air of quiet calmness and competence.

Initially, I assumed she was part of the teaching staff or perhaps a secretary. After all, at this school, everyone pitches in during the morning and afternoon routine of organizing and dispersing students. So, a secretary or receptionist with a clipboard was nothing out of the ordinary.



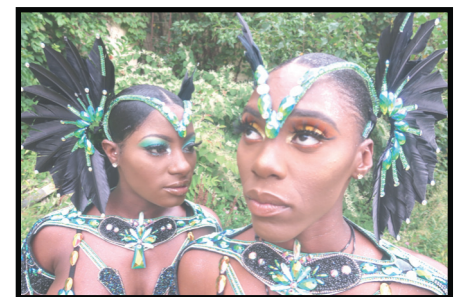
Imagine my surprise, then, when I stumbled upon her photo while browsing the school website for closures on a particularly snowy day. There she was, not just a lady with a clipboard, but the principal herself, as indicated. I was utterly shocked. The ease with which she interacted with her staff had led me to assume she was just another member of the team. Her leadership style fostered an atmosphere where everyone felt like equals.

Upon returning to work after a well-deserved day off, I couldn't resist sharing my discovery with her. To my delight, she found it quite amusing. "Your secret is safe with me," I assured her.

I commended her for her lovely disposition and kindness, traits that are often rare to find. I expressed my admiration for her

leadership. Now, whenever she approaches my bus, that same kind and unassuming woman greets me. I can't help but smile at the sight of such a remarkable woman.

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.



TOWN WATCH

(Cont. from page 12)

decided to spin off the controversial Ritzer Field renovation project March 18 in the hope of passing the now-\$26 million bond issue to fund other school property projects.

The two-town board, after two previous meeting attempts, had found themselves in a 3-3 tie vote, which killed the original \$29 million bond issue package The South Orange - Maplewood Board of Education had meanwhile unanimously approved the Ritzer project, 9-0.

The BSE, made up of educators and elders from both towns, now wants the BOE to approve the now \$25 million bond issue authorization at the latter's upcoming public meeting. The bond issue is part of the previously approved \$157 million Long Range Facilities Plan.

BSE had done what SOMSD Board Ad-

ministrator Eric Burnside said was impossible: separate the \$4 million Ritzer Field project. Such a cut, said Burnside, would add three months of project reapplication to the NJ Department of Education and keep the board from meeting USDOE Title IX requirements.

The Ritzer project, to Columbia High School's north here, would have had their artificial turf field doubled from one to two. The question reignited the artificial versus grass field pros and cons debate.

The bond issue had been needed, with or without Ritzer, due to inflation and supply chain issues affecting the LRFP.

BLOOMFIELD - A township man went from approaching a teenage girl on a local street to being held in Newark's Essex County Correctional Facility on criminal contact and endangerment charges the same day, March 28.

Kenny Gastone, 54, is being held on charges of criminal sexual contact and endangering the welfare of a child through sexual contact. He is being held without bail.

The victim told Bloomfield Police Special Victims Unit officers that she was walking home that Thursday when Gastone approached her.

She said that Gastone had exposed himself, "touched himself inappropriately and asked her a lewd question" before he left the scene.

Bloomfield Police Chief George Ricci said his officers promptly responded, identified and apprehended Gastone.

MONTCLAIR - An SUV driver from Paterson, who surrendered himself to Montclair Police Headquarters March 14, is to return here at Montclair Municipal Court May 21 over a Feb. 29 traffic dispute and

(Continued on page 15)

TOWN WATCH (Continued from page 14)

assault on an Upper Montclair street.

Steven Ruiz-Santana, 23, turned himself in in response to his being charged with second degree aggravated assault of a 53-year-old man who accused him of illegally passing a stopped school bus at Norwood Avenue near Norman Road.

The victim and other witnesses said that Ruiz-Santana was driving a white Dodge Durango south on Norwood after a northbound school bus had stopped to drop off Nishuane School students that Thursday afternoon. He was accused of disregarding the bus' deployed stop sign and stop lights and drove past.

The victim said he saw and was able to stop Ruiz-Santana's Dodge. Ruiz-Santana got out of his Durango and an argument ensued. Witnesses said he had felled the victim with a closed fist to his face.

Police and Montclair EMS arrived at 4 p.m. to find the victim still on the ground and Ruiz-Santana a couple of blocks later; he had fled the scene but stopped to call police a block later. EMS took the victim to Paterson's St. Joseph's Medical Center for treatment.

The ECPO has since taken over prosecution. Ruiz-Santana said that he has since retained an attorney.

GLEN RIDGE - Members of the Montclair State University community came to Hackensack University Meridian Mountainside Medical Center's auditorium here March 23 to pay tribute to student Ashton Myles Clatterbuck. Clatterbuck, 22, was a transgendered journalism and political science junior hoi had committed suicide early on Feb. 27.

Clatterbuck had expressed sorrow in Nex Benedict's Feb. 8 suicide after the nonbinary teen being assaulted in an Owosso, Okla. high school girls room. He was also writing an op-ed piece on gender discrimination for his hometown Lancaster, Pa. newspaper - but never finished. He was the fourth transgendered Lancaster County youth to commit suicide in a 16 month period.

Clatterbuck was the first transgender person to enroll into his local Mennonite high school in Lancaster. Friends at the auditorium March 23 said that he had a passion for social justice.

The tribute kicked off OutMontclair's Trans Day of Visibility at the auditorium. Panel discussions, moderated by trans activists, and workshops were held for 6.5 hours. Live music and food vendors were also on hand.

"We have an obligation to stand up,"

said guest speaker State Attorney General Matthew Platkin, of Montclair. "Either you believe in equality or you don't. We stand up for this community every time, at every opportunity, because we believe, I believe, in equality."

Ashton's family held a memorial in Lancaster March 16. A GoFundMe.com page was set up by mother Melinda as his memorial fund.

BELLEVILLE - Relatives and friends of Teresita Saavedra Cenit are preparing her funeral arrangements in the wake of her being fatally struck along Union Avenue here March 22.

The ECPO and Belleville Police Chief said that Cenit, 78, was crossing on the avenue's 100 block when she was hit at 8:53 a.m. that Friday. She was rushed to RWJBarnabas Health Clara Maass Medical Center - where she died 90 minutes later.

The driver stayed at the scene and was interviewed by detectives. He has not been charged as of press time. Traffic, including buses on the NJTransit 74U route, were locally detoured during the crash scene investigation.

Cenit - who was born Jan. 2, 1946, Manilia, RP - into a family of eight children. She was a restorative technician at the Paramus Veterans Memorial Home for 25 years before retiring.

The Meals on Wheels and Bible Church International volunteer is survived by children Prometheus, Clytemnestra and Agamemnon; siblings Antonio, Julian, Jr., Danilo, Virgilio, Macaria, Ramon and Veronica; eight grandchildren and a great-granddaughter.

Cenit's services are set for 11 a.m. April 13 at the Bible Church International, 791 Rt. 10, Randolph.

NUTLEY - It is not only the Nutley Board of Education looking over the shoulders of its hired financial auditors lately. Eyes from Nutley's Commissioners, the Essex County Superintendent of Schools and the N.J. Department of Education are also anticipating the auditors' findings later this season.


Board President Salvatore Ferraro, at its March 25 meeting, said that the audit is continuing, and further information will be available at the proper time. Ferraro added that he was aware of rumors circulating about the township of Nutley Public Schools' finances the last month.


Schools Superintendent Kent Bania said that the scheduled NPS springtime activities, from concerts to the Nutley High School graduation, will continue

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with either no interruptions or a minimal amount.

When a resident asked about finances at the Spring Garden and Washington elementary schools, Ferraro said that these matters included personnel issues which neither he nor the board would comment about. Another resident, who asked if the rumored financial problems include repairing the fire-damaged Lincoln School auditorium, Ferro said that the district had received money from their insurance carrier and that repairs are to be made over the summer.

The latest independent annual audit, through June 30, 2023, stated that NPS spent \$11.4 million more than it took in. Its capital reserve fund swooned from \$1.66 million to \$21,258 and its maintenance reserve budget was down to \$40. NJDOE sent a warning notice to NPS that the latter has a potential budget deficit heading towards June 30, 2024.



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