

LOCAL TALK

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VOLUME 25 • ISSUE 17 * FEBRUARY 27, 2025 - MARCH 5, 2025

25¢

"LET'S TALK FOR THE BETTERMENT OF OUR COMMUNITIES"

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER

ESSEX COUNTY • EAST ORANGE • ORANGE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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CONGESTION PRICING IN REAL JEOPARDY

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ESSEX COUNTY TOURNAMENT CHAMPIONS CROWNED



Photo By Felicia Laguerre Owens



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Photo By William Hathaway, Jr.

STATEWIDE SCHOOL SEGREGATION CASE BACK TO COURT

By Walter Elliott

TRENTON - A seven-year-old public school segregation case whose outcome may affect the structure of the "Local Talk" area 11 districts and the other 663 across New Jersey is now back here in State Superior Court-Trenton since Feb. 18.

The respective sides in "Latino Action Network and NAACP State Conference v. New Jersey Department of Education et. al." told State Superior Judge Robert T. Lougy that, after 15 months of negotiations, they have reached an impasse. Their mediation, headed by former State Supreme Court Associate Judge Barry T. Albin, has failed.

Lougy has meanwhile set an April 15 deadline for the plaintiffs and respondents to file their intentions to him. LAN, of Freehold, and the NAACP State Conference, of Trenton, as of press time, are leaning towards having the case be heard in his court as a trial.

It was Lougy who directed

them to mediate after his preliminary ruling here Oct. 10, 2023. The judge, in his 99-page ruling, on one hand, agreed with the plaintiffs that "a marked and persistent racial imbalance" exists among the state's public schools. Lougy, on the other hand, said that the plaintiffs had failed to prove that the said school districts are "unconstitutionally segregated because of race or ethnicity."

LAN, NAACP-New Jersey, several individual students and parents filed suit against NJDOE and the State Board of Education in 2018. They contend that state educators had left a de facto (in effect) segregated public school system which violates New Jersey's 1947 Constitution and keeps some students access to what the State Supreme Court calls "a thorough and efficient education."

The plaintiffs cited the 2017's: "New Jersey's Segregated Schools; Trends and Paths Forward" by the Civil Rights Project. The study found that



some public districts have 90-to-99 percent non-white student enrollment and some others the same percentage of white enrollment. A contemporary survey ranked New Jersey as the sixth

most segregated state in the U.S. for African American students and seventh most for Hispanic or Latino students.

They plaintiffs assert that
(Continued on page 12)



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Turn
To
PAGE
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Editorial
Dhiren Shah
 Editor-in-Chief

Hello Readers,

After a brutal winter and cold temperatures, finally it seems a little better for now.

President Trump appointed Elon Musk to run DOGE (Department of Government Efficiency) and reduce the waste at the government level. However, President Trump allowed access to all the government data, and with that authority Musk wrote an email to all the employees. We all know that the government is working slowly. However, we do not want to disrupt the system as well. Some feel it should be done slowly. It is not a private entity, so it will not change overnight. Change is necessary though. Even many republican leaders have objected as well. However, it is very es-

sential to change the system. Many leaders do not show up, and they still get paid. Many powerful employees show up late, but make sure they attend all of the events arranged by their favorite leader (most of the time it's on paid time). Trump is supporting Musk's mandate that all employees write a report every week about what they do. It is good, in that way, where we will know if the employees really work for the people, not for the party or some leaders.

President Trump and his economy are a key question on everyone's mind. The economy has almost been the same since Trump took office a little over a month ago. However, the people voted for him to do better. The expectations are very high. Trump's goals are to stop the wars in the world, which is very good. He achieved that in his first term in office. By hook or crook, he wants to stop wars. Ukraine knows that without help from the U.S., the war would not last for 3 months but lasted for 3 years. However, millions of peo-

ple have lost their lives. Basically, the war started because Russia opposed Ukraine joining NATO. Now, Trump is not supporting President Zelenskyy having Ukraine be part of NATO. Eight or nine countries of the European Union are ready to support Ukraine even today. But without the support of the United States of America, it cannot go far. But why talk about war. Let everyone live in peace.

Education is key to the growth of the country. The U.S. is way behind. We are not even in the top 20 countries in the world. However, with money spent per student we are number one in the world. This hurts. Just throwing around money does not improve education. We need teachers who guide the students and improve quality. However, the worst lacking point is the parents and society. Most of the parents are busy with their work and life. Strong laws also can restrict parents from being tough on their children. If some parents hit their child, they can go to jail. In this case, it is the worry of the par-

ents if they go to jail, who can take care of their child. However, hitting is not the only solution. Parents have to use many tricks to raise their child. From the age of 1, they have to teach the child to respect others, and that education is very important. If one can go to any field of their choice but with a good education, he/she will be respected in society. He/she has the knowledge to place their opinion or thought with others, and ultimately the respect he/she receives will make the person happier.

How much money are pharmaceutical companies making? How much money is the medicine industry making? Maybe it's less than they were making in the 1980s and 1990s. However, they are still making enough to have a comfortable life. Politics in the medical field is too much. Nepotism is hurting all our medical industry as well.

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>
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HI 59 LO 39	HI 49 LO 35	HI 57 LO 27	HI 39 LO 21	HI 41 LO 24	HI 49 LO 38	HI 55 LO 44

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NJ Health Department Alerts Residents of Confirmed Measles Case, Urges Individuals to Stay Up to Date on Vaccines

TRENTON - The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) is alerting residents about potential exposure associated with a confirmed case of measles. Individuals – especially parents, guardians, health care providers, and caregivers – are urged to be aware of the symptoms of this highly contagious virus and to stay up to date with the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) shots.

The single confirmed case is a resident of Bergen County who presented with measles following recent international travel. At this time, New Jersey is not experiencing a measles outbreak, which is defined as three or more related cases by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Measles symptoms include a high fever, cough, runny nose, watery red eyes, and a rash that usually appears between three and five days after symptoms begin. The rash usually begins as flat red spots that appear on the face at the hairline and spread downward to the neck, torso, arms, legs, and feet. Measles can also cause serious complications, such as pneumonia and encephalitis (swelling of the brain), and can lead to miscarriage in pregnant people, premature birth, or a low-birth-weight baby.

NJDOH recommends that anyone who visited the following locations during the specified dates and times may have been exposed and should contact a health care provider immediately to discuss potential exposure and risk of developing the illness.

Location: Englewood Hospital Emergency Department, 350 Engle Street, Englewood, NJ 07631; Date & Time: February 9,

2025, between 11:30 AM and 5:30 PM

Those who may have been exposed or who suspect illness should call their health care provider first before arriving at any facility so that necessary infection prevention precautions can be taken to protect other patients and staff.

NJDOH is working in collaboration with local health officials on ongoing contact tracing and on efforts to notify people who might have been exposed and to identify additional exposures that may have occurred.

Potentially exposed individuals, if infected, could develop symptoms as late as March 6, 2025. As of February 14, no additional associated cases have been identified.

The virus spreads easily through the air when someone coughs or sneezes and can remain in the air for up to two hours after an infected person leaves the area. People can also get sick when they come in contact with mucus or saliva from an infected person.

Individuals at risk include those who have not been fully vaccinated or have not had measles in the past.

NJDOH encourages all residents to stay up to date on routine vaccinations and especially recommends that New Jersey residents planning to travel, regardless of destination, are up to date on MMR shots. MMR vaccine, administered in two doses, is safe and the most effective way to protect against measles, mumps, and rubella. The vaccine is also effective at preventing complications caused by these highly contagious diseases.

NJDOH is also requesting that health care providers use every opportunity to assess for immunizations to ensure all patients are current on routine immunizations, especially MMR for children aged 12 months and older as well as respiratory virus vaccines against COVID-19 and influenza for everyone aged six months and older.

CDC Reports Nearly 24% Decline in U.S. Drug Overdose Deaths

CDC - New provisional data from CDC's National Vital Statis-

tics System predict a nearly 24% decline in drug overdose deaths in the United States for the 12 months ending in September 2024, compared to the previous year. This is the most recent national data available and shows a continued steep decline in overdose deaths. Provisional data shows about 87,000 drug overdose deaths from October 2023 to September 2024, down from around 114,000 the previous year. This is the fewest overdose deaths in any 12-month period since June 2020.

"It is unprecedented to see predicted overdose deaths drop by more than 27,000 over a single year," said Allison Arwady, MD, MPH, Director of CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. "That's more than 70 lives saved every day. CDC's public health investments, our improved data and laboratory systems for overdose response, and our partnerships with public safety colleagues in every state mean that we are more rapidly identifying emerging drug threats and supporting public health prevention and response activities in communities across America."

While this national decline is encouraging news, overdose remains the leading cause of death for Americans aged 18-44, highlighting the importance of sustained efforts to ensure this progress continues. President Trump first declared opioid overdose to be a public health emergency in 2017, a designation that remains in place, and the subsequent public health investments to CDC from Congress have transformed the nation's ability to use data to save lives. In the most recent data, 45 states showed declines in overdose deaths, but five states - Alaska, Montana, Nevada, South Dakota, and Utah - still saw increases in overdose deaths, highlighting the continued need for rapid local data and tailored response. In addition to the large provisional drop in fatal overdoses, we also see smaller decreases in nonfatal overdoses, as measured by emergency department visits for overdose, and welcome continued decreases in self-reported youth substance use.

Multiple factors contribute to the drop in overdose deaths, in-

cluding widespread, data-driven distribution of naloxone, which is a life-saving medication that can reverse an overdose; better access to evidence-based treatment for substance use disorders; shifts in the illegal drug supply; a resumption of prevention and response after pandemic-related disruptions; and continued investments in prevention and response programs like CDC's flagship Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) program.

CDC's OD2A program provides the United States with robust data through its fatal (SUDORS) and nonfatal (DOSE) overdose data systems. Currently, 49 state and 41 local health departments receive OD2A funding to collect, improve, and immediately use the data in their communities to implement life-saving activities. For example, the OD2A program funds comprehensive laboratory testing, which allows us to identify emerging substances involved in nonfatal and fatal overdoses and quickly highlight geographic shifts in the illegal drug supply. State and local public health departments, in partnership with CDC experts, use the data to inform where, what, and when overdose prevention efforts are needed in communities to have the greatest impact and save lives. Finally, CDC funds the Overdose Response Strategy, an innovative public health-public safety data collaboration in every state which allows public safety professionals like law enforcement officials to use data to better understand and intercept illegal drugs.

We are moving in the right direction, and we must accelerate and strengthen CDC's continued investments in prevention to reduce overdose deaths. Expanding access to evidence-based treatment for substance use disorders - including medications for opioid use disorder such as buprenorphine and methadone - is important, in addition to building more community-driven interventions and promoting education and early intervention to prevent substance use disorders before they begin.

BLACK LIVES, ANIMAL LIVES, ALL LIVES MATTER



By Michele Lowe

Hello and good day, people. Glad to be back. What a cold winter we had, or should I say brisk. Well, let's be blessed regardless of the weather; things can always be worse. Wishing you all well.

Let's accomplish some new achievements and make things happen. People stay true to themselves despite what or who comes around. Do what you got to do, no matter what a person says. The devil always stays busy, he comes in many forms, even those closest to you at times. I am fighting strongly in my own situation and to be honest, the devil isn't gonna win. Evil is gonna crumble because I have a higher power in my life, and there's nothing greater than Christ.

Over the week, I went to visit a good friend of mine. You can't break that bond once we are together. It's us against the world. You can call us the 2 musketeers. Hey Meesha Boo, Mrs. May.

I was so caught up in this innocent sweet little girl's case, Naziyah Harris. Tears just come to my eyes and the simple fact is that this case is still going on and they still have not found that little girl. Now, I'm not sure about who is familiar with this case of the missing girl, but Naziyah is 13 years old and was also expecting a child. It's just so sad because after looking into this, clearly no one cared or loved that little girl poor baby. and that makes me so heated.

I'm trying to tell you if I could curse and let the words really out, oooo trust I would. She was sexually abused and such more horrific things. I mean people, when I tell you, no one paid attention to this young girl. Her own relatives, grown women jealous of her, smdh. They were even very aware of the abuse right inside their own household, and accounted for other younger siblings there as well.



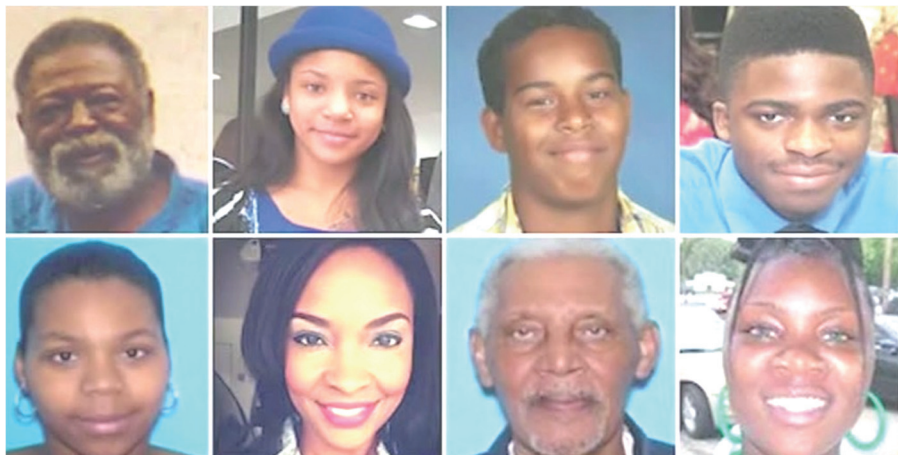
Now people, what I'm gonna say right now goes for everyone. Make sure you background check those folks you say you're so cool with; you just never know, and that's for everyone. Hope you all are listening. So many predators among us in East Orange as well and Newark and Essex County. We have to stay safe.

I don't have kids as of yet, but when God makes it time, it will be fine but no rush. I have a lot to succeed in. Mothers, don't neglect your children because the wrong hands cause wrong turns and sometimes you can't fix what is broken. Parents and guardians, pay attention to your children and build a relationship if there isn't one; it's never too late.

Before I leave you all, take heed into what I'm saying. There is so much we tolerate and just sit back and don't speak up. Enough is enough. You never know the outcome that can save someone's life in many ways. If you suspect something, say something folks. And again, we must never forget our missing persons, vanished, abducted and what more else to say.

Until next time, peace and love.

ADVERTORIAL



CONGESTION PRICING IN REAL JEOPARDY



Last week, the Trump Administration made an announcement that even some of his biggest critics might have applauded.

On Feb. 19, the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration today terminated approval of the pilot for New York's Central Business District Tolling Program (CBDTP).

In a letter to New York Governor Kathy Hochul, the Department rescinded a November 21, 2024 agreement signed under the Value Pricing Pilot Program (VPPP) that effectively ends tolling authority for New York City's cordon pricing plan, which imposes tolls on drivers entering Manhattan below 60th Street.

"New York State's congestion pricing plan is a slap in the face to working class Americans and small business owners," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy. "Commuters using the highway system to enter New York City have already financed the construction and improvement of these highways through the payment of gas taxes and other taxes. But now the toll program leaves drivers without any free highway alternative, and instead, takes more money from working people to pay for a transit system and not highways. It's backwards and unfair.

"The program also hurts small businesses in New York that rely on customers from New Jersey and Connecticut. Finally, it impedes the flow of commerce into New York by increasing costs for trucks, which in turn could make goods more expensive for consumer. Every American should be able to access

New York City regardless of their economic means. It shouldn't be reserved for an elite few."

The construction of federal-aid highways as a toll-free highway system has long been fundamental to the Federal-aid highway program. Except for limited exceptions allowed by Congress, highways constructed with Federal-aid highway funds cannot be tolled. The construction of Federal-aid highways as a toll-free highway system has long been fundamental to the Federal-aid highway program. The VPPP is one of the exceptions to the general prohibition against tolling.

As detailed in the letter, the Secretary is terminating the pilot for two reasons. First, the scope of the CBDTP is unprecedented and provides no toll-free option for many drivers who want or need to travel by vehicle in this major urbanized area. Second, the toll rate was set primarily to raise revenue for transit, rather than at an amount needed to reduce congestion. By doing so, the pilot runs contrary to the purpose of the VPPP, which is to impose tolls for congestion reduction - not transit revenue generation.

The Federal Highway Administration will work with the project sponsors on an orderly termination of the tolls.

"CONGESTION PRICING IS DEAD. Manhattan, and all of New York, is SAVED. LONG LIVE THE KING!", President Trump posted on Truth Social.

"I want to thank President Trump and Secretary Duffy for their efforts to halt the current congestion pricing program in Manhattan's Central Business

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UNITED STATES



MEASLES OUTBREAKS SPREADING

The Texas Department of State Health Services is reporting 124 confirmed cases of measles in the ongoing outbreak in the South Plains and Panhandle regions. DSHS is working with local health departments in that area to investigate cases, provide immunizations where needed, and keep the public informed.

Additionally, DSHS issued a health alert after a person with measles traveled from the outbreak area to San Marcos and San Antonio before they knew they were infected. Measles exposures may have occurred at several public locations during that trip:

Friday, Feb. 14

- 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. - Allsup's Convenience Store, Wall
- 3 to 7 p.m. - Texas State University, San Marcos
- 6 to 10 p.m. - Twin Peaks Restaurant, San Marcos

Saturday, Feb. 15

- 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - University of Texas at San Antonio Main Campus
- 2:30 to 7:30 p.m. - Louis Tussaud's Waxworks, Ripley's Believe It or Not!, and Ripley's Illusion Lab, San Antonio
- 6 to 10 p.m. - Mr. Crabby's Seafood, Live Oak

Sunday, Feb. 16

- 9 a.m. to 12 noon - Buc-ee's,

- New Braunfels
12:30 to 3 p.m. - Allsup's Convenience Store, Wall

Meanwhile, the New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) reports two adult Lea County residents tested positive for measles - as confirmed by the NMDOH Scientific Laboratory Division - totaling to three cases this week.

New Mexico meets the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's outbreak criteria with three unrelated cases in Lea County. The cases border Texas's Gaines County, where cases have jumped from 2 to 48 cases in two weeks. While a connection to the Texas outbreak is suspected, it remains unconfirmed.

"We are investigating every suspected case, and we encourage sick individuals with symptoms consistent with measles to seek medical care," said Dr. Chad Smelser, NMDOH Deputy State Epidemiologist.

NMDOH is notifying potentially exposed individuals and providing prevention guidance. If you visited these locations during specified times, you may have been exposed:

- Stone Elementary School, Hobbs, N.M. on Thursday, Feb 6.
- Albertsons grocery store, 2402 N. Grimes St., Hobbs, N.M. between the hours of 1 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. on Thursday Feb. 6.
- Albertsons grocery store, 2402 N. Grimes St., Hobbs, N.M. between the hours of 1 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. on Saturday Feb. 8.
- Crosswinds Community Church, 1701 N Jefferson St., Hobbs, N.M. between the hours of 9 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. on Sunday Feb. 9.
- Walgreens, 801 Joe Harvey Blvd, Hobbs, N.M. between the hours of 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday Feb. 9.
- Nor-Lea Hospital emergency department between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. on Monday Feb. 10.
- Nor-Lea Hospital extended hours clinic, 1923 N Dal Paso, Hobbs, N.M. between the hours of 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. on Monday, Feb 10.
- Nor-Lea Hospital emergency department between the hours of 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. on

Tuesday, Feb. 11.

If you were at these locations during the listed times, monitor for symptoms. If symptoms develop, isolate and call your healthcare provider and inform them of possible measles exposure before visiting.

MASS SHOOTING UPDATE

Information from 2-25-2025

2025 Mass Shooting Stats: (Source: Mass Shooting Tracker, <https://www.massshootingtracker.site/data/?year=2025>)

- Total Mass Shootings: 49
- Total Dead: 73
- Total Wounded: 176
- Shootings Per Day: 0.88
- Days Reached in Year 2025 as of February 25: 56

WORLD MOVING TO END THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

In a Feb. 18 evening press release, the Holy See Press Office says that Pope Francis has double pneumonia, but nevertheless "remains in good spirits."

Three years to the day since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the UN General Assembly adopted two competing resolutions on resolving the conflict, one initiated by the United States and the other by Ukraine - a sign of strategic differences within the transatlantic alliance over the way forward for peace.

The resolution tabled by the United States, which omitted mention of Russian aggression, only passed after a majority of Member States voted to add EU-led amendments which led to the US abstaining on it own motion and voting against the Ukrainian text.

However, the text in the original US resolution was passed hours later in the Security Council - the first to do so since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia on February 24, 2022.

Until the high stakes diplomatic debates, the Security Council - which is responsible for maintaining international peace and security - has been unable to find consensus, owing largely to Russia's veto power as a permanent member.

The two General Assembly

draft resolutions put before UN Member States during the morning session both ostensibly called for peace and an end to the conflict - but diverged fundamentally.

"Advancing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine", proposed by Ukraine and co-sponsored by a host of European countries, was a three-page document that included clauses noting that "the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation has persisted for three years and continues to have devastating and long-lasting consequences not only for Ukraine, but also for other regions and global stability."

It called for a commitment to "the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders" and the need to ensure accountability for crimes committed under international law, through "fair and independent investigations and prosecutions at national and international level."

The US tabled its own version alongside, titled "Path to Peace", a brief draft limited to mourning the loss of life throughout the Russian Federation-Ukraine conflict, reiterating that the principal purpose of the UN is to maintain international peace and security and to peacefully settle disputes and imploring a swift end to the conflict, urging a lasting peace between Ukraine and Russia.

Amendments to the text were put forward by Russia and the European Union. Russia proposed adding the words "including by addressing its root causes" to the third paragraph (on a swift end to the conflict).

The EU proposed adding some of the language in the Ukrainian resolution, referring to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation (rather than the Russian Federation-Ukraine conflict), the "territorial integrity" of Ukraine and calling for a peace in line with the UN Charter.

When it came to the vote, Ukraine's version passed by 93 votes to 18. The US voted against, alongside Russia, marking a major shift of its position on the conflict and previous votes.

The US supported a similar
(Continued on page 7)

WORLD NEWS (Cont. from page 6)

resolution submitted in February 2023 which received 141 votes in favor.

A total of 65 nations abstained, including South Africa, whose representative, Ambassador Mathu Joyini, said the draft “does not go far enough in terms of inclusivity and creating a positive momentum towards a peaceful negotiation.”

The US version was also adopted (93 in favor, eight against and 73 abstentions), but Member States also voted to add the European Union amendments with 60 in favor, 18 against and 81 abstentions.

The US voted against the amendments and abstained on its own resolution (the General Assembly failed to adopt the Russian amendment, with 31 in favor, 71 against and 59 abstentions).

Ukraine’s Deputy Foreign Minister Mariana Betsa told the Assembly that the way Russian aggression is answered “will define the future of Ukraine...Europe and our common future.”

Later, flanked by co-sponsors of the country’s General Assembly resolution, she delivered a statement at the media stakeout just outside the Security Council Chamber. She said the General Assembly had demanded “an early end to this war of aggression and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in Ukraine, in line with the UN Charter.”

The General Assembly’s reaffirmation of support for international law and the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity was profoundly important, she said, warning that a peace deal that “risks rewarding aggression increases the risk” and creates a dangerous precedent for the future.

**MIDDLE EAST
POLIO RESPONSE
CONTINUES IN GAZA**

The emergency polio outbreak response in the Gaza Strip is continuing, with a mass vaccination campaign scheduled from February 22 to 26. The novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2) will be administered to over 591,000 children under 10 years of age to protect them from polio. This campaign follows the recent detection of poliovirus in wastewater samples in Gaza, signaling ongoing circulation in the environment, putting children at risk.

Pockets of individuals with low or no immunity provide the virus an opportunity to continue spreading and potentially cause disease. The current environment in Gaza, including overcrowding in shelters and severely damaged water, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructure, which facilitates fecal-oral transmission, create ideal conditions for further spread of poliovirus. Extensive population movement consequent to the current ceasefire is likely to exacerbate the

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- ETC.....



201-234-7765

spread of poliovirus infection.

Two previous vaccination rounds in the Gaza Strip were successfully conducted in September and October 2024, reaching over 95% of the target. As poliovirus is found to remain in the environment, additional vaccination efforts are needed to reach every child and strengthen population immunity. The presence of the virus still poses a risk to children with low or no immunity, in Gaza and throughout the region.

In 2024, health workers faced significant challenges accessing certain areas of central,

north and south Gaza, which required special coordination to enter during the conflict. In inaccessible areas such as Jabalia, Beit Lahiya, and Beit Hanoun, where humanitarian pauses for the vaccination campaign were not assured, approximately 7 000 children missed vaccination during the second round. The recent ceasefire means health workers have considerably better access now.

No additional polio cases have been reported since a ten-month-old child was paralyzed in August 2024, but the new environ-

(Continued on page 13)

SPORTS WRAP

By William Hathaway, Jr.

This year's Essex County high school boys and girls championship games were strong contests hosted by Essex County College this past Saturday. It was the 78th annual Essex County Tournament final for both boys and girls basketball.

In the first game of the doubleheader, the Seton Hall Prep Pirates defeated Payne Tech Lions 65-61. The big issue that the capacity crowd had were some questionable calls by game officials on both sides of the ball at Essex County College. Leading SHP was Anthony Gonzalez with 20 points. Teammate Dylan Guzzardo had 15 points and 3 rebounds and Alex Ante had 15 points and 11 rebounds. The #1 seed in the bracket earned their ranking, and they broke Payne Tech's 14 game winning streak.

Leading the Lions was Robert Foster with 16 points and 5 rebounds, Gerald Edwell with 17 points and 8 rebounds and Dean Armstrong with 11 points. Going into the ECT, Payne Tech was 18-7 and Seton Hall Prep was 20-6.

After the victory, Head Coach Sterling Gibbs, who is a

former standout player at Prep, said "It took everything we had. We battled through the whole game. Everyone who played today contributed in the game for a big time victory."

At the end, Payne Tech Head Coach Brad Howard said, "I think we are going to do well going forward." Also, Robert Foster said, "We fought hard and it was a good game today."

In the girls bracket, the West Orange girls basketball team slipped by defending champion Montclair Immaculate 43-41. Sophomore Rhyann Watt led West Orange with 24 points, hitting five big 3 pointers. Teammate Anaya Karriem had 10 rebounds and 8 points. Leading Montclair Immaculate was Nila Giraud with 20 points.

The West Orange girls last appeared in the Essex County Tournament final in 2019, where they lost to Montclair Immaculate.

In college basketball, the Seton Hall women's basketball team had their biggest test against conference juggernaut Connecticut at Walsh Gym. Unfortunately, they fell to the Huskies 91-45. Point Guard Jada Eads



Photos By William Hathaway, Jr.

had 12 points for the Pirates, while Yaya Lops had 15 points.

Leading UConn was likely WNBA first overall pick Paige Bueckers with 23 points. Speaking of the WNBA, legendary superstar Diana Taurasi announced her retirement after 20 seasons.

Despite the loss, they did much better in a game against St. John's on the road 66-57. Leading The Hall was Savannah Cat-alon with 19 points. The victory clinched a first round bye for the upcoming Big East Tournament.

They will have their last game of season at home against DePaul on Senior Night at Walsh Gym.

On the men's side of the ball, the Seton Hall men's lost a tough game against Xavier, who is in 5th place in the Big East, 73-66. Isaiah Coleman had 24 points for Seton Hall, who played a better second half compared to the first half of the game. The Pirates will play rival St. John's on Saturday at Madison Square Garden.



Photos By Felicia Laguerre Owens



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ESSEX COUNTY CELEBRATES AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH

NEWARK - On Wednesday, February 19th, Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. hosted the Annual African American History Month Celebration. During the ceremony, the County Executive presented the Essex County Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership Award to Essex County Sheriff Amir Jones and the Essex County Coretta Scott King Leadership Award to Assemblywoman Shanique Speight.

“African American History Month is a special time of the year when we highlight the many contributions and achievements African Americans have made to our culture, economy and daily lives throughout our history. We are honored to recognize Amir Jones and Shanique Speight for their commitment to improving the lives of all residents, their leadership, and their dedication to public service in Essex County,” DiVincenzo said.



Photo Courtesy Essex County

Essex County Sheriff Amir D. Jones is responsible for leading and operating New Jersey’s largest and most active Sheriff’s Department. The Essex County Sheriff’s Office serves the over 850,000 residents of Essex County as well as the New Jersey’s largest Superior Court vicinage. He was elected in November 2024 and is the first African

American Sheriff in Essex County history.

A seasoned police executive, Jones began his law enforcement career at the Essex County Sheriff’s Office in 2012. With over a decade of professional experience in investigations, government, and law enforcement, Jones’ leadership has resulted in an overall average of a 40 per-

cent reduction in crime. Additionally, nearly 500 guns and assault rifles have been removed from Essex County communities.

After serving some time in almost every single sheriff’s unit, Sheriff Jones was promoted to the distinguished leadership role of Essex County Undersheriff in 2016. Sheriff Jones led day-to-day operations of the Essex County Sheriff’s Office Field Operations Division including the Patrol Division, which is responsible for monitoring Essex County municipalities and parks.

Additionally, Sheriff Jones oversaw New Jersey’s oldest and most active county-wide Bureau of Narcotics. Working in response to citizen complaints and in tandem with the federal Drug Enforcement Agency, the Essex County Prosecutor’s Office, and municipal police agencies. During his tenure leading the Bureau

(Continued on page 12)



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 - The Newark Public Schools and the Newark Teachers Union, with two strokes of a pen here Feb. 11, have a new five-year teachers contract.

NPS Superintendent of Schools Roger Leon and NTU President John M. Abeigon, signed the pact in a ceremony that Tuesday under the watch of Newark Board of Education Hashani K. Council and members of their respective negotiating teams. The 2024-29 collective bargaining agreement takes retroactive effect from July 1.

Teacher salaries will retroactively annually increase by 4.5 percent. New annual teachers' salaries will start at \$65,000, step up to \$67,000 the next school year and rise to \$74,000 for 2028-29. Instructors who hold masters and/or doctorate degrees and those who have been teaching at least 15 years will also receive commensurate increases.

Teachers will be instructing for five periods per day with the option to voluntarily take on a sixth period. NPS administrators said that, should five teachers add a sixth period, a teaching vacancy would be filled. Administrators, due to a national shortage, may assign teachers to a sixth period.

Instructors will be teaching elementary (Pre-Kindergarten through Eighth Grade) students 10 minutes more daily and high school students 15 minutes more daily. That daily increase trans-

lates to 7.5 more days' instruction per school year. Students will have available 30 more hours of tutoring time.

The contract revises "School Leadership Councils." The SLCs now have teachers, school principals, "non-instructional support staff," parents/guardians and community representatives on their panels.

Although the new contract was approved by NTU's rank and file members June 4, details on some of the pact's finer points had to be sorted out before the NBOE would fully approve.

IRVINGTON - The Newark Police Division has put out an all points bulletin since Feb. 22 for an SUV and its occupants - implicated in a Feb. 21 armed robbery in Irvington - who engaged law enforcement in a two-town chase before escaping.

The white Range Rover with license plate P25-MLC had already been on an Irvington police Be On the Look Out notice that Friday, and said it was headed east into Newark, when patrolling NPD officers noticed a vehicle matching the description along Frelinghuysen Avenue and tried to make a traffic stop.

The Range Rover driver, ignoring NPD cruiser lights and sirens, began the pursuit by speeding into Elizabeth. The chase re-entered Newark's South Ward into the Central Ward's University Heights section.

NPD and NJIT units followed the suspected car into Warren and Norfolk streets, where it then evaded its pursuers.

Details on whether Irvington and/or Elizabeth police took part in the pursuit and the Irvington armed robbery were not available as of press time.

EAST ORANGE - East Orange School District named at least six community members on its 2025-26 School Budget Task Force.

EOSD Superintendent of Schools Dr. Christopher Irving said that Shantel Harrison Bullock, Danna Dennis, Loretta Onyeani, Jazmine Parker, David Sharp and Mayor Theodore "Ted" Green liaison Melody Scott have had their first meeting here Feb. 13.

Bullock had been the Third Ward's representative on the

East Orange Water Commission. Dennis is policy vice president of the EPSEPAG group for special needs students' parents.

Onyeani has retired from EOSD as a nurse and as its Adult School Principal. Parker, a former district student, is studying to become a social worker at Montclair State University.

Sharp is MOET's coordinator. Scott may be best known as a real estate agent.

The task force intends to hold public review meetings on the prospective school budget, provide "accessible financial reports" and talk with the EOSD, the larger community and its stakeholders.

The task force was created to prevent the chain of events that led to the 2024-25 School Year Budget's \$25 million shortfall. The district had to layoff or transfer 93 instructors and staff members on Dec. 15 to plug that budget gap.

ORANGE - The Orange Planning Board, on January 22, approved the replacement of a 149-year-old South Ward house at 551 Lincoln Ave., with a three-story, 17-unit apartment building that includes 27 parking spaces on the .343 acre lot.

Applicant NkeChris Property Management LLC, of East Orange and Inglese Architect & Engineering, of Cedar Grove will be replacing a house that was damaged by fire April 18, 2022. Their drawings intend to reflect the former three-story and 10-room house's Tudor style. The four-alarm fire was put out by 13 units from Orange and 11 neighboring departments.

NkeChris 551 Lincoln Ave. LLC's approval is the fourth recent case where the planning board is replacing Victorian and Edwardian era houses with multi-unit apartment buildings along Lincoln and Highland avenues.

The board had approved construction of PEEK's Highland II for 178 units and 243 parking spaces at 407-415 Highland Ave., in 2022. It also permitted Highland Park at 394-416 Highland Ave., for 131 units and 213 spaces. The board's latest plan approval for the old Tremont Avenue School and Orange Police Station at 593 Lincoln Ave.'s was in 2023.

Public speakers at the Jan. 22 session voiced their concern over

curbside parking along Lincoln becoming scarcer. The city had held a parking space lottery at 407-415 Highland Ave. over the Year End Holidays.

The house at 551 Lincoln, which predates 1900, was the remnant of J. Ralston Grant's estate. Grant used part of his treasurer salary from the Jersey City-based Woodstock Lumber Company to construct a mansion set inside 123 Tremont Ave.-- and 551 Lincoln either for staff or guests.

WEST ORANGE - Township elders and Lakeside Avenue residents received word that their neighborhood, as of Feb. 18, made this year's list of 13 Brownfield Development Area sites.

State DEP Commissioner Shawn LaTourette announced that Tuesday that Gov. Phil Murphy had approved 13 BDA site memoranda of understanding with West Orange and nine other municipalities. It is a revival of a program which last announced its list of BDAs in 2009.

West Orange and Orange were last awarded a BDA designation for its shared Central Valley District in 2006. That project covered the 15 sites among the 10.5 acres between them to remediate and redevelop residential and commercial space and opened a new park.

Awarded towns are now open to receive up to \$5 million in individual Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Fund grants covering up to 75 percent of the cleanup expenses. The Lakeside Avenue BDA will get a designated Office of Brownfield and Community Revitalization officer who will coordinate cleanup and redevelopment among the municipality, stakeholders and Licensed Site Remediation Professionals.

The Lakeside Avenue BDA is centered on 55 Lakeside Ave., where the township's DPW calls home. 55 Lakeside dates back to 1912, when Thomas A. Edison Industries built his phonograph works there. Rebuilt after a 1914 fire, it became McGraw-Edison property in 1955 and was demolished in 1974. A two-story Barton Press plant was built there and is now the DPW garage and yard.

The 12.2 acre BDA site in-
(Continued on page 13)

LOCAL TALK

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ESSEX COUNTY (Cont. from pg. 9)

of Narcotics, thousands of arrests of drug dealers have been arrested and removed from our communities.

Among his additional responsibilities, Sheriff Jones led and oversaw the operations of the Essex County Sheriff's Office's Criminal Investigations Unit, Tactical Response Team and has served as a Deputy overseeing Emergency Management.

With over a decade of time served in the Sheriff's Office, Sheriff Jones has a compiled a distinguished background outside of his work as Undersheriff and has long been an active member of community organizations including the Essex County Chiefs of Police Association and the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives.

Throughout his career in law enforcement, Sheriff Jones has demonstrated a solid commitment to community-driven, problem-oriented, and intelligence-led policing, as shown through his numerous commendations and awards, including the Medal of Merit and Excellence in Police Duty Awards.

A lifelong resident of Essex County, Sheriff Jones resides in East Orange with his wife and children.

"Thank you to the County Executive for honoring me and giving me this award. I am here because of Dr. King and how he fostered understanding and transformed law enforcement. I stand before you as evidence of that transformation," Jones said.

Shanique Speight has represented the 29th Legislative District in the New Jersey General Assembly since 2018 and was selected as the Deputy Parliamentarian in 2022. As an Assemblywoman, her goal is to continue progress in New Jersey on housing, affordable healthcare, criminal justice reform, and much more. Over the years, Speight has created senior feeding programs, provided affordable childcare for families, conducted food drives and toy drives, and overall continues to strive to make positive changes in her district.

Speight served briefly on the Municipal Council of Newark after being nominated by then-Mayor Cory Booker in November 2012 to fill a vacant seat. An officer in the Essex

County Sheriff's Office, Speight was first elected to the Newark Public Schools Advisory Board in 2007 and served as the board's vice chair from 2007 to 2012. A resident of Newark, Speight graduated from Lincoln University with a Master of Arts in Human Services.

"Thank you to Joe DiVincenzo for the trust and belief you have shown in me. Receiving this award means so much to me. Coretta Scott King was a woman who carried the Civil Rights movement forward with grace," Speight said.

The Arts High School Jazz Band performed the National Anthem, Lift Every Voice and Sing and Stand Up. Pastor Thurselle Williams from New Hope Baptist Church in East Orange gave the invocation.

The African American History Month Celebration is the part of a year-long cultural series created by County Executive DiVincenzo to highlight Essex County's diversity. Other cultural celebrations highlight Irish, Italian, Jewish, Latino and Portuguese heritage, and Women's history.

COURT (Cont. from page 1)

historic racial residential segregation and housing discrimination policies have led to imbalanced student body demographics and in property tax-fed school funding.

This is despite some 50 "Abbott v. Burke" court rulings over "thorough and efficient education," zoning and property taxes. Student Raymond Abbott's family sued State Education Commissioner Fred G. Burke over how Mt. Laurel's school property taxes left him with a disproportionate educational disadvantage.

One Abbott v. Burke ruling established the Education Quality Act and designated 31 "neediest" school districts - including Newark, Irvington, East Orange and Orange - to receive state aid to correct instructional and infrastructural deficiencies.

The respondents - NJBOE and NJDOE - counter that racial segregation in some districts does not rise to the level of constitutional violation. The Abbott cases were based on students being required to enroll in their home districts with one and, after 1994, two exceptions.

The first exception is a student going out of the home district for special education. The other, for the last 30 years, is where the home public district sends 90 percent of a student's tuition with the student to a receiving state-chartered school district.

New Jersey is among five states who have segregation discrimination cases before them. Another 200 cases are being circulated at the federal level. A 2020 Century Foundation study found over 700 public and charter districts either under a voluntary desegregation agreement or a desegregation order.

All of these cases, agreements and orders are happening while the U.S. Supreme Court

"Brown v. Board of Education" ruling nears its 71st anniversary. The high court unanimously ruled on May 17, 1954 that segregating public school students by race were inherently unequal and ruled in favor of Rev. Oliver Brown's family against the Topeka, Kan., BOE.

April 15 may not be the only deadline that this case faces, depending how long it continues to a resolution, starting with the Nov. 4 General Election.

That election's voters will determine who will succeed the term-limited Phil Murphy (D-Rumson) as governor. There are currently six Democrats and four Republicans seeking their respective party voters' nomination in the June 10 primaries. The governor, with State Legislature consent, chooses the education commissioner and state BOE members.

There may not be a U.S. Department of Education or a federal level Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policy when "LAN and NAACP v. NJBOE and NJDOE" is settled.

President Donald J. Trump's pick for Education Secretary, Linda McMahon, was confirmed by the U.S. Senate Feb. 20. McMahon is believed to supervise the abolition of the department (which still needs

Congressional consent) and turn school aid funding and enforcement of civil rights over to the states.

Trump, since Jan. 20, has signed executive orders to abolish DEI policies among federal agencies and lay off relevant employees in favor of what he sees as "a meritocracy" in hiring and promotion. Other agencies and vendors dealing with the U.S. government are warned that not dismantling their DEI infrastructure would risk losing their funding and/or contracts.

Military branches have since dropped all ethnic, gender and other cultural awareness month observances. The National Park Service has removed "Transgender" names and references Feb. 13 from its Stonewall National Monument in New York City's Greenwich Village.

The "U.S. News and World" 2023-24 Education report lists "Local Talk" area public schools' racial makeup percentages by "Black," "Hispanic" and "White." A fourth category - for Asian, Pacific Islander and Native American - had been combined for space consideration.

	Black	Hispanic	White	AAPI/Native American
NEWARK	36.3	55.2	7.1	1.2
IRVINGTON	70.6	27.9	0.4	0.8
EAST ORANGE	82.5	15.0	0.8	0.7
ORANGE	49.6	48.6	0.4	0.5
WEST ORANGE	34.1	36.9	17.5	0.4
SOUTH ORANGE				
-MAPLEWOOD	23.5	9.7	54.1	3.8
BLOOMFIELD	22.6	44.5	24.5	6.0
MONTCLAIR	19.8	14.8	50.3	5.4
GLEN RIDGE	3.6	7.7	73.8	0.9
BELLEVILLE	7.9	71.9	11.2	0.7
NUTLEY	3.2	23.2	63.2	9.6

TOWN WATCH (Cont. from pg. 10)

cludes a house on Babcock Place to the former Edison factory site's north plus 1 and 25 Lakeside Ave. The township had transferred the parcels to Matrix Development Group, Co., of Monroe Sept. 24, 2024 towards construction of up to six movie and video production studios with the intention to generate 300 to 600 full time jobs.

SOUTH ORANGE - When township voters cast their choice for the three Township Committee seats open for the Nov. 4, 2025 General Election, Councilwoman Karen Hartshorn Hilton's name will not be there.

Hilton, whose current term expires Dec. 31, announced on Feb. 13 that she will not be pursuing a third Village Council term. She and her husband Jim, who first moved here in 1995, will be returning to Massachusetts on April 15.

Hilton, who also raised their four children with Jim here, was first elected in May 2017 and re-

lected in 2021. She was elected onto the then-Village Board of Trustees - whose name was changed with State Legislature blessing in 2024.

That same state permission gave village elders the option to move their municipal nonpartisan election from May to the November General Election - which now-Village Mayor Sheena Collum and the council exercised on Nov. 25. Hilton, Bobby Brown and Bill Haskins had their June 30 terms extended to Dec. 31.

Neither Brown nor Haskins, who ran together in 2021, have indicated as of press time on whether they will seek reelection. Hilton's seat may remain vacant April 15-Dec. 31.

MAPLEWOOD - The Democratic Committee club here is looking for letters of interest in filling an impending Township Committee seat this year on or by March 3.

The MDC is more than making their regular appeal for Township Committee candi-

sey families, their wallets, and the environment. From Day One, when we first started this fight, we knew that the Congestion Tax was just a giant cash grab for New York and the MTA - all on the backs of hardworking Jersey families. They never cared about how the tax would hurt Jersey families - they just needed the cash to pay for the MTA's woeful mismanagement. That was just confirmed today - and now, we can all breathe a sigh of relief. I'll never stop fighting to protect Jersey families. As I always say, don't mess with Jersey. Screw with us, and you'll find out why," said NJ 5th Dist. Rep. Josh Gottheimer.

While everyday citizens were mostly appreciative of the move, New York officials were none too pleased.

"Public transit is the lifeblood of New York City and

CONGESTION PRICING

(Cont. from pg. 5)

District," said NJ. Gov. Phil Murphy.

"While I have consistently expressed openness to a form of congestion pricing that meaningfully protects the environment and does not unfairly burden hardworking New Jersey commuters, the current program lines the MTA's pockets at the expense of New Jerseyans.

"Although we have had a difference of opinion with our colleagues in New York on congestion pricing, we have always had a productive relationship with our neighbors across the Hudson. I look forward to continuing that spirit of partnership for the benefit of the entire Tri-State Area."

"Today is a huge win for Jer-

WORLD NEWS

(Continued from page 7)

mental samples from Deir al Balah and Khan Younis, collected in December 2024 and January 2025, confirm poliovirus transmission. The strain detected is genetically linked to the poliovirus detected in the Gaza Strip in July 2024.

The upcoming vaccination campaign

aims to reach all children under 10 years of age, including those previously missed, to close immunity gaps and end the outbreak. The use of the oral polio vaccine will help end this outbreak by preventing the spread of the virus. An additional polio vaccination round is planned to be implemented in April.

The campaign will be led by the Palestinian Ministry of Health and implemented with support from the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund

PUBLIC NOTICE

In accordance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975, Public Notice is hereby given that the East Orange City Council will have a Retreat on Saturday, March 1, 2025, at 10:00 AM at the Ocean Casino Resort, in the Tank 1 Meeting Room, Boardwalk, Atlantic City, New Jersey. The purpose of said Retreat is for Educational purposes relating to Professional Development.

No formal action will be taken.

Vernon Pullins, Jr.
City Council Chairman

Cynthia S. Brown
City Clerk

dates for the now-June 10 party primary and Nov. 4. general election. They are looking for a candidate to succeed Deputy Mayor Deborah Engel, who announced her lame duck status on Feb. 4.

Party committee chairman Ian Grodman had put a Feb. 19 public information session on YouTube. The recorded-live meeting discussed serving on the Township Committee, candidacy requirements and the election process. The Party will be hosting a post-March 4 public candidate

forum here March 10.

Maplewood operates on a party primary and partisan general election calendar. The township operates on the committee format, where each member is also the head of an administrative department. Committee members also annually choose a mayor and a deputy mayor from among themselves.

There is no word as of press time on whether the Maplewood Republican Committee will be
(Continued on page 14)

critical to our economic future - as a New Yorker, like President Trump, knows very well," said NY Gov. Kathy Hochul, who made a statement in support of the congestion pricing program.

"Since this first-in-the-nation program took effect last month, congestion has dropped dramatically and commuters are getting to work faster than ever. Broadway shows are selling out and foot traffic to local businesses is spiking. School buses are getting kids to class on time, and yellow cab trips increased by 10 percent. Transit ridership is up, drivers are having a better experience, and support for this program is growing every day.

"We are a nation of laws, not ruled by a king. The MTA has initiated legal proceedings in the Southern District of New York to preserve this critical program. We'll see you in court."

"Today, the MTA filed papers in federal court to ensure that the highly successful program - which has already dramatically reduced congestion, bringing reduced traffic and faster travel times, while increasing speeds for buses and emergency vehicles - will continue notwithstanding this baseless effort to snatch those benefits away from the millions of mass transit users, pedestrians and, especially, the drivers who come to the Manhattan Central Business District," said MTA Chair and CEO Janno Lieber

"It's mystifying that after four years and 4,000 pages of federally-supervised environmental review - and barely three months after giving final approval to the Congestion Relief Program - USDOT would seek to totally reverse course."

(UNICEF), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) and other partners.

Polio vaccines are safe and there is no maximum number of times a child should be vaccinated. Each dose gives additional protection which is needed during an active polio outbreak.

WHO, UNICEF, and partners welcome the recent ceasefire and urge for a lasting ceasefire that leads to long-term peace.

The Observation Booth



OP-ED By Andrea Dialect

DPW DOING POWERFUL WORK (PART 1)

When it comes to those streets, can't nobody do it like Mocha. They yank those pile ups to and fro, makin' whateva's curbside disappear when forced to bow down to their command when they place them hands on it. That synchronized banter between the crew as they do what they do is priceless and a joy to see. Simply amazing, because they do all that for me, for us, they do it for the tribe. Embarking upon most things on a daily that most dare not touch just for us. Putting that capital E on that word Essential!

This article draft is dedicated to East Orange DPW Sanitation in its entirety as so all things that

make up DPW's that service humanity throughout each State. A special shout out to Gary, Albert and Eli - recycling crew - and Gary, Shack and Arthur - Sanitation crew. I am going to include the name Anthony just in case the name that I scribble on that envelope is minus that n and that y. I can't read my own writing oftentimes honestly, lol.

DPW crew member no matter when we cross paths are my inspiration for the story short below and why, of course, I wrote a dedication piece for the E.O crew from around the way so be on the lookout for DPW Part 2 .What amazing guys; I have been admiring their dedication to service and their kind spirits for quite some time.

Visit Localtalkweekly.com to read the full story in the Entertainment section. While you're at it, check out the archives and get familiar with all things Andrea Dialect. You'll also want to come along on my Andrea Dialect Facebook Lab live session. Buried treasures turn up every morning. Come and join me live as I develop my daily "PORTAL" sessions. I'll see you between 5-6 a.m. Set those notifications. Remember, everything I do on social is raw, homegrown, and experimental mockups. Follow my [msdialect](https://www.instagram.com/msdialect) Instagram, and let's grow out loud together! Like, follow, and share.

YOU'VE BEEN SERVED

One of my greatest fascina-

four story building abutting the former Erie Railroad Orange Branch right-of-way Dec. 4 and left an earthen mound on the site by Jan. 31. It was awarded the \$100,000 demolition contract from the township last summer.

Caravella could not move in its excavators until another contractor had removed asbestos and any other hazardous material. The demolition and remediation were covered by a \$1.4 million grant from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. The council had used a \$58,305 remediation grant on the site in 2011.

Although the township received the buildings and the yard from Bloomfield College in the 1950s, the discovery of asbestos in the 1990s prevented its use. The township demolished the other eight Bakelite office and

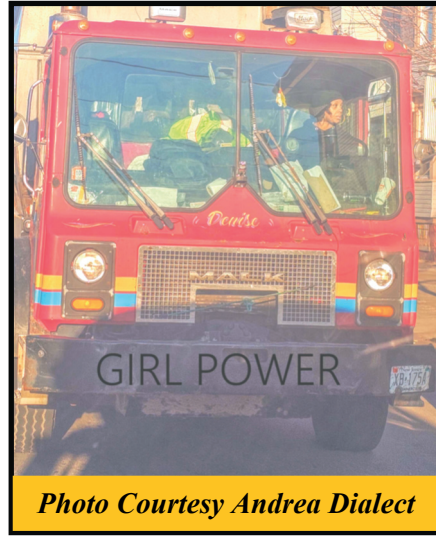


Photo Courtesy Andrea Dialect

tions has always been watching those amazing truckers driving those 18 wheelers, aka semi-trailers, as haulin' all those many loads of our life necessities to and fro. But there is one truck that's attention-grabbin' even more so and dear to my heart. Perhaps it's that melodic demand that suggests you get out of the way during that back-in when they pull up. Perhaps it's the way our guys make that swagga drip when that truck whizzes by, lookin' fly like that, as they dangle from all those sides, while directing traffic, as making those bins sway and slide.

It's a systematic vibe, buds in ears make beats play as bodies sway. Swagga says outta my way while grabbin and stackin'. Work is play, if rhythms tight, those head tunes force moves - so you getting' a dance performances too? So enjoy the entertainment when idling behind as they stack on the pull back.

Note, they be the ears and

factory buildings for temporary DPW bays and office trailers.

The Bakelite Company gave the complex to Bloomfield College for science lab use before moving to Bound Brook in 1939. Its founder moved into 230 Grove St. to produce resin-based plastic materials - from resistors to napkin rings - in 1920.

MONTCLAIR - The township, since Feb. 13, has two institutions supporting the "LGBTQIA2S+" community here: OutMontclair and, now, the Pride Center of Montclair.

"The Pride Center of Montclair will be a vital resource hub for the LGBTQIA2S+ community, offering a safe space amidst a shifting political landscape," said its founding executive director Marie Cottrell that Thursday. "The Pride Center will

eyes when those blind spots block out rear views and sides, but that crew knows what to do; they can do it all blindfolded while they holla back at their boy when he come through too, So when they speak to ya... You'd betta Holla Back!

Bruh, at the wheel with that cig dangling from his lip as he talkin' to his girl while winking at that chic on the slide just made the impossible, possible with that oversized whip. Squeezing into place that most can't go. For sho. Yo, my boy can drive. Music pumpin', yeah, that's true. But, don't get it twisted - my boy can hear those bangs, knocks, and warning cues on an instant clearly in between those resounding beats. Cause his head games on fleek.

Knows how to do what he do. Now he wavin' at you? Unmistakably the Kings of the road; Poetry in motion at best, ain't nobody got nuthin' on 'em. So baby, in that case, competitors rest... In our Hood these unsung heroes are a sight to see, merely because of who they are and what they do for you and me. DPW - from the back office to the boots in them streets - We salute you!

FYI...Garbage trucks are notorious for having large blind spots. These "no-zones" are often at least 20 feet wide to the sides and rear of the vehicle, making it difficult for the driver to see pedestrians, cyclists, or other vehicles. ...

Read this article in its entirety at www.localtalkweekly.com

serve as a lifeline to the community, fostering resilience, hope and action."

The Pride Center does not have a physical space but a Facebook page. That page includes a Feb. 26 3-4 p.m. Lambda Legal workshop for transgender, gender nonconforming and non-binary people - followed by a 7-9 p.m. bingo fundraiser at Just Jake's.

Cottrell left OutMontclair and its president, Lenore Horton, after the latter issued a Feb. 7 post on its transition. Horton explained that OutMontclair is moving from a paid administration team to a volunteer board to direct its events and outreach. OutMontclair started talking with its June MontclairPride 2025 festival in Feb. 14.

Horton is meanwhile urging (Continued on page 15)

TOWN WATCH (Cont. from pg. 13)

fielding any candidates this year.

Prospective township committee candidates are to send their letter of interest and resume to iangroadman@gmail.com and/or

hello@maplewooddemocrats.org on or before March 3. Petitions - which need at least 25 signatures on or by March 10 - are available from Grodman and/or the Township Clerk's office.

BLOOMFIELD - The last of the Bakelite buildings here on the DPW yard and recycling facility at 230 Grove St. has been leveled about a month ahead of the township's Feb. 29 contract completion date.

Workers and equipment from Caravella, of East Hanover, began demolishing the three-and-

TOWN WATCH

(Continued from page 14)

Cottrell and the Pride Center to change its name to prevent confusion among the two groups and MontclairPride. The OM president said she is concerned that those wanting to donate to MontclairPride will get confused. She said that Cottrell started creating The Pride Center while she was still on at OM.

OutMontclair's structural changes were in response to MontclairPride2024 ending up in debt. One of the older group's founders, Councilman Peter Yacobellis, resigned there and from the Township Council in 2023 and moved to the Pacific Northwest.

GLEN RIDGE - The Glen Ridge Congregational Church will celebrate Shrove Tuesday March 4 with dates and rose syrup instead of pancakes and maple syrup.

GRCC and Peace Islands Institute, for the first time here, will be holding a "Multi Faith Iftar Dinner" 6-8 p.m. that Tuesday. Diners will be sharing the nightly Ramadan Iftar dinner with invited area Muslims and those of other faiths.

Practicing Muslims will be into their sixth of 30 nights of Ramadan, the period of daytime fasting, prayer and almsgiving. This year's period overlaps the 40 days of Lent which many Christians are to practice from March 5 - Ash Wednesday - through April 17 - Holy or Spy Thursday. This confluence offered an opportunity for Peace Islands to offer a free Iftar to the GRCC area community.

"GRCC received a kind letter from Peace Islands offering to share their Ramadan traditions and to provide an Iftar meal to their congregation," said church spokeswoman Holly Eastman Feb. 22. "We're very interested in hosting such an event and encouraging the greater community to join us in learning about our Muslim neighbors and their faith traditions. Sharing a meal, taking time to talk to each other and to learn a little bit about each other goes a long way towards bringing us together."

Eastman said she first learned about Peace Islands' from Bloomfield's Temple Ner Tamid and attended their Nov. 16, 2023 joint interfaith Thanksgiving celebration in the wake of the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on southern Israel. (Many Jews will observe the Fast of Esther and Purim March 13-14 this year.)

"I experienced such warmth and generosity that night," said Eastman, who brought several GRCC congregants with her, "a time when coming together was of supreme importance for our community."

The March 4 Iftar is free but requires a reservation. One can register with a qc code provided at glenridgecong.org. De-

tails are also found at (973) 743-5596. Peace Islands - who has also held a Sept. 2, 2022 backpack distribution with the FBI Newark Field Office and an April 23, 2022 Itfar at Nutley's Grace Church - has an Hasbrouck Heights office and reached at peaceislands.org.

BELLEVILLE - Township firefighters, with help from neighboring departments, put out a house fire along Baldwin Place Feb. 15. The Saturday morning blaze displaced seven people from among three families.

That day's BFD blotter stated that firefighters first responded to fire reports at 10:35 a.m. The first units arrived at the 70 block of Baldwin with "flames coming out from the building" and all occupants having self-evacuated.

The incident commander instantly pulled two more alarms - one for all BFD hands and the other for mutual aid. The fire was brought under control within the hour while units from other towns covered the township's fire stations.

The local American Red Cross chapter provided temporary housing and other emergency needs. No injuries were reported.

Washington Avenue or "Trump Avenue?"

Former Congressional candidate "Jersey Joe" Belnome presented a proposal to rename Washington Avenue to "President Donald J. Trump Avenue," and presented a sample honorary street sign, here at the Jan. 28 Belleville Township Council meeting.

"President Trump's 'America First' policies have strengthened communities like Belleville by promoting economic growth, supporting small businesses and prioritizing national security," said Belnome. "This renaming would honor his contributions and reflect the values held by many in our town."

The 1.75-mile President George Washington Avenue has been so named here since before Belleville became independent in 1839. Replacing the partial state highway's name from the first President to the 45th/47th would require an endorsing council vote, coordination with NJDOT, sign installation and a dedication ceremony.

NUTLEY - Township police have put out an area bulletin regarding a Jeep and its two occupants who allegedly attempted to lure a child here Feb. 10.

A 14-year-old boy described to police about a "dark grey or black Jeep Wrangler" that he said had pulled up alongside him near Passaic and Hancock avenues between 3:30 and 4 p.m. that Monday. He said that he was heading home from school at the time.

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The teen noticed a "heavy set white male" driver and his "black female" passenger. The driver offered him \$10 to get aboard the SUV.

The minor ignored him, walked home - and called NPD. He was not physically harmed in the encounter.

NPD detectives are also asking their neighboring colleagues if the luring duo and the Jeep made similar overtures to other people in their towns.



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