

Teen with gun charged in armed robbery

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Shaw, Vogt homer as Brewers beat Yankees 5-3

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Darien man gives 'mental fitness' classes based on improv games

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STAMFORD ADVOCATE

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Higher cost, less service

Commuter outrage as MTA's meltdown exceeds summer heat



GETTING THERE

Jim Cameron
COMMENTARY

It's not just the summer heat that's causing an operational meltdown at the MTA, parent agency of Metro-North and the NYC subways. It's the years of neglect, underfunding and misplaced priorities that are taking a toll on our vital transit infrastructure.

And it's only going to get worse, as the President of Metro-North has chosen to retire, long before his work is done.

Hardly a day goes by without delays on Metro-North caused by "wires down," signal problems, stuck bridges, poor track conditions or even the occasional "minor derailment." The work crews just can't keep up with the aging equipment and commuters are justifiably angry about paying high fares for worsening service.

The New York city subway system is in such crisis that Gov. Andrew

Cuomo recently declared a state of emergency, finding \$1 billion in investment and even offering a \$1 million "genius prize" to anyone who can come up with a solution to improve service.

Dozens of lawsuits drag on from Metro-North derailments and train crashes going back to 2013, costing the agency (and taxpayers/riders) tens of

See Cameron on A6



Hearst Connecticut Media file photo

Metro-North President Joseph Giulietti, pictured in 2014 speaking with reporters at the MTA's offices, plans to retire at the end of August.

LOCAL JUDGE TOPS BENCH IN STAMFORD



H John Voorhees III / Hearst Connecticut Media

Gary J. White is the presiding criminal judge of the state Superior Court in Stamford and an amateur boxing judge.

By John Nickerson

STAMFORD — Judge Gary White has rarely given an interview in more than two decades on the bench.

A local kid made good, the presiding judge for criminal matters at state Superior Court moved to Stamford from Pittsburgh in 10th grade, joining the Black Knights basketball team as a guard.

A bookworm, White, 63, is the son of the Rev. Samu-

Q&A

An occasional series of interviews with various denizens of Stamford.

el White at Faith Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church on Grove Street, and was a public defender in Norwalk for 13 years.

Since taking the bench in 2008, he has tried about 30 cases, including 10 homicides.

As if making legal decisions wasn't difficult enough, the snappy-dress-

ing jurist has been a judge in amateur boxing rings all over the state for the past dozen years.

The Stamford Advocate recently sat with him in his office, which, among other interesting decorative items, features a psychedelic poster of Jimi Hendrix. Here are excerpts from the discussion.

Q: What's it like switching roles from a public defender to a judge?

A: It's a unique perspective. Often, I know where the defense lawyer is going ahead of time. I think like a defense lawyer. Of course everybody is different and a lot of lawyers don't do it the way I would do it, but I think it helps me on the bench because I can anticipate what is coming up in a trial.

Q: Do the best lawyers
See Judge on A4

HEALTH

Nurses help victims 'navigate' stroke

Provide support, fill in gaps as patients transition maze of care

By Ed Stannard

Suffering a stroke sends a person onto a formidable and confusing path through medical treatment, rehabilitation and home care.

Registered nurses Kaile Neuschatz and Kelsey Halbert help guide those who have suffered an often-devastating attack, assisting doctors and other health care providers by "focusing on the gaps," as Neuschatz said. "We want continuity of care to optimize outcomes for the patient."

Their job titles are apt: Neuschatz and Halbert are stroke nurse navigators at Yale New Haven Hospital. "Although we're not active members of the treatment team ... our relationship with those

See Stroke on A5



Bob Luckey Jr. / Hearst Connecticut Media

An Audubon education specialist displays two Asian shore crabs, an invasive species.

OUR D.C. BUREAU

Funding cuts could change fight against invasives

By Dan Freedman

WASHINGTON — Invasive species are everywhere you don't want them to be — curling through your garden, killing your local ash trees or strangling your motorboat propeller.

"It's an ongoing problem," said Donna Ellis of the University of Connecticut, who coordinates the state's Integrated Pest Management program and co-chairs the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group. "I like to say it's a 'growing concern.'"

Connecticut has fought against these foreign intruders for decades. Washington has been a key player, supporting local and state efforts through the Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Forest Service, and the inter-agency Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force.

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WAVE OF APPRECIATION

Awards honor those who serve immigrants

By Martin B. Cassidy

STAMFORD — Every October, Eden Huang, a city health inspector, helps organizers of the Hispanic Health & Heritage Fair meet city health codes for serving hot food at the event, said Stephanie Paulmeno, a longtime board member of the Hispanic Advisory Council of Greater Stamford that organizes the event.

Now in its 24th year, the fair dispenses thousands of dollars of free health and dental care to area immigrants, Paulmeno said.

"Every once in a while, you meet somebody who is so special," said

Paulmeno. "(Huang has) spent countless hours of her own time unpaid in helping to keep this component of our health fair together."

Huang, a Chinese immigrant who came to the United States in 1980, said Sunday that she wants to provide help to immigrants who face challenges acclimating to life in America.

"There are so many people who contribute and I am just a minuscule part of it," she said.

Huang and eight other people were recognized on Sunday with awards from Wave of Appreciation

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Martin B. Cassidy / Hearst Connecticut Media

Bruce and Linda Koe are honored for their work helping the area's Hispanic community.



FROM THE FRONT PAGE

WAVE

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for their longtime efforts to help members of Stamford's growing Hispanic community.

The winners were nominated by colleagues or non-profit leaders from the city and region and ranged from local immigration attorney Philip Berns, to Stamford residents Linda and Bruce Koe, who are on the board of Building One Community, to Victor Trejo, an outreach worker for Stamford day laborers.

Catalina Horak, executive director of Building One Community, nominated the Koes because of their leadership and organizing efforts to help open the Building One Community facility at 75 Selleck St. in Stamford. Previously known as Neighbors Link, Building One Community is a nonprofit that provides educational services, such as English as a Second Language classes and job interviewing workshops for immigrants.

"There would be no Building One Community or Neighbors Link without Bruce and Linda Koe," Horak said. "The lives of thousands of immigrants would be tremendously different without Bruce and Linda Koe."



Martin B. Cassidy / Hearst Connecticut Media

From left, Vincent Leclercq, of Wave of Appreciation, and Stephanie Paulmeno, of the Hispanic Advisory Council of Greater Stamford, honor Edén Huang with an award for her assistance to the Hispanic community in Stamford.

Bruce Koe, 74, said they got involved in starting a Stamford version of the nonprofit after a men's group at Trinity Church in Greenwich visited a Neighbors Link facility in Mt. Kisco, N.Y. and he saw the uphill battle Honduran immigrants faced assimilating and making ends meet.

"I was not particularly conscious of the hardships

they faced in their lives," Koe said. "Most of them didn't leave their country because they wanted to. They left because of economic problems or some kind of instability."

The Koes served on a steering committee that helped organize fundraising to pay for a Stamford facility and a lengthy site search to locate a suitable building, Bruce Koe said.

The nonprofit has 1,200 active English language learners of varying fluency and 350 volunteers who act as teachers for various programs.

"These are not people looking for handouts or entitlements," said Bruce Koe, also the retired vice president of global operations for Reader's Digest. "They are prideful people who want to give their chil-

dren a better life and are willing to make significant sacrifices to ensure their children have a better education."

Ayesha Santana, 39, who is the practice administrator for the five Optimus Health clinics in Stamford, received an award based on the recommendation of her colleague Kislene Bosse, the chairwoman of Stamford's Hispanic Advisory Council.

The clinics mostly treat underserved populations, including immigrants but also the homeless.

Bosse said Santana stands out for her involvement, often working with Optimus clients in the office to assure they get the right services.

"I basically am honoring her for her open door policy," Bosse said.

Santana, a Norwalk resident, said her attention to detail is rooted in her own experience as the daughter of a father from the Dominican Republic and a Puerto Rican mother.

"I basically want to get people the assistance and the kind of attention my family needed," said Santana, 39.

The awards were created by the new Wave of Appreciation group to show appreciation for unsung leaders who assist Stamford's immigrants but also to draw

attention to key non-profits who do most of the work helping immigrants, said Vincent Leclercq, a French immigrant who serves on the Hispanic Advisory Council.

The group plans to keep an online catalogue of providers of health care and other services to immigrants at www.waveofappreciation.com updated, Leclercq said.

"We realized the awards are a way for people inside these organizations to thank each other, but also for the community to realize these organizations exist," Leclercq said. "Whether they want to improve their English or learn to interview for a job these are skills that are important for everyone."

Also honored at the event were:

- ▶ Local immigration attorney Philip Berns who provides legal counsel to Hispanic and Haitian immigrants.
- ▶ Hazael Rojas, owner of Stamford's Latin Dance Moves studio.
- ▶ Ana Gallegos of People Empowering People.
- ▶ Elena Padin, of the Southwest Community Health Center in Bridgeport.
- ▶ Juan Morales of Darien Physical Therapy.

For more information, visit www.waveofappreciation.com.

STROKE

From page A1

patients begins when they roll through the door" of the emergency department, Halbert said.

"We provide support to the neurologists and the emergency department nurses for the initial coordination of care, which also allows us to start an education process with the patient," he said. "There's a lot of activity going on, so we can alert the patient" about what's going to happen.

"We can continue educating them to discuss stroke and what their expected hospital course is going to be, especially for the first 24 hours," Halbert said. "They will be seen by countless providers, so it's nice to establish a familiar face."

Navigators have been part of the health care team in pediatrics and oncology for some time. They became part of the stroke care team in May 2016.

The two nurses begin their work even before stroke is definitively diagnosed.

"Every minute matters. Time is brain," Neuschatz said. With every minute that goes by, 1.2 million neurons are lost.

"The outcome for the quality of life for the patient will be improved if they access care and treatment more quickly," she said. Stroke is always a complex condition, with symptoms that can range from vision loss to paralysis. Nurse navigators are an especially valuable addition to the medical team at Yale New Haven. The hospital serves a low-income urban population, which is more susceptible to illnesses such as heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes, all risk factors for stroke.

"Because we are one of two comprehensive stroke centers in Connecticut, our patient population tends to be more complex, which



Peter Hvizdak / Hearst Connecticut Media

Yale New Haven Hospital Stroke Program Manager Karin Nystrom, left, with Nurse Navigators Kaile Neuschatz, center, and Kelsey Halbert, all of the Yale New Haven Hospital Comprehensive Stroke Center, with a brain scan showing a large stroke, rear in photo.

necessitates the importance of the navigator role, because patients have so many complicated co-morbidities or illnesses that complicate their stroke," said Karin Nystrom, an advance practice registered nurse who is manager of Yale New Haven's Stroke Center. Hartford Hospital is the state's other comprehensive stroke center.

Stroke, which hits 795,000 people per year, is the fifth-leading cause of death in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with more than 130,000 deaths per year, one-fifth of total deaths. Most strokes, 87 percent, are ischemic strokes, caused by a blockage in a blood vessel leading to the brain, according to the National Stroke Association. Stroke also can be caused by a burst blood vessel in the brain.

Unique symptoms

Signs of a stroke include sudden weakness, especially on one side of the body,

confusion, difficulty speaking, trouble with vision, balance, coordination or a sudden headache, according to the stroke association.

One problem is that a patient may be suffering a stroke without realizing it.

"There are many symptoms that can mimic a stroke and while we have identified many common symptoms that we educate the public about, these are often ignored or unrecognized by the patients, and so a key part of the education process is reinforcing stroke warning signs and the importance of coming to the hospital," Nystrom said.

Because the brain is so complex, each patient suffering a stroke will have a unique set of symptoms.

The nurse navigators are ready to take on whatever challenges that must be met.

"You can't see inside your skull," Neuschatz said. "These events can have so many different consequences requiring all the different resources," including speech therapy, physical therapy and occupational therapy. Long-term effects of a stroke include mobility, speech, cognitive ability and other functions, which can require months of rehabilitation.

The first task of the nurse navigators is to educate the patient and family members about what to expect.

"We also help coordinate the care based on what the first findings from their first workup is and coordi-

nate with different departments to expedite their care, especially if there is an urgent intervention that takes place," Halbert said.

Whether surgery is needed or not, the patient will then be admitted to the hospital.

"Once they get admitted, the medical team does a standard workup and part of our role is to help [patients] understand why we're doing these tests and what the test results mean," Neuschatz said. "The brain is very complicated. Problems in various areas can cause different symptoms for the patient, so we help them understand their diagnosis."

Providing transitions

Nystrom said the navigators "provide a seamless transition from the acute phase of care to the recovery care phase."

"The recovery process from stroke can be very long and frustrating for a patient and family," Neuschatz said. "The stroke team works closely with lots of other teams ... to help patients with mobility and adapting back to normal life."

In addition to physical and occupational therapists, other caregivers are brought in. For example, "stroke can affect swallowing abilities, so we work with speech pathologists and nutritionists to optimize a patient's diet and safe swallowing," Neuschatz said.

They also help arrange brain scans "and are available to answer any questions they might have or concerns that are directed to the doctors. We maintain

ourselves as a resource for them," even after discharge, Halbert said.

If the patient is sent to a rehabilitation facility, "we try to really smooth the transition from the hospital to wherever they're going afterwards so no aspects of their care are missed," Neuschatz said. The navigators have visited rehab centers in the area as well and know the services offered at each.

Going home is often the hardest transition.

"When a patient is going from rehab to home, I think there's a lot of fear," Neuschatz said. "It's very scary." Family caregivers have concerns about physically caring for the patient, including giving medications.

"We explain ... the process of stroke recovery care and that it's usually longer than we want ... every patient is different," Neuschatz said. "Sometimes a daughter will need to cry on your shoulder and we have the time to offer that support."

The navigators help set up visiting nurses and physical therapy at home, and keep the patient's primary care doctor informed of the patient's progress — or help find a primary physician if the patient doesn't have one. They help make appointments at a stroke clinic or to have their blood drawn. Many of the tasks are simple but they help keep the patient on the way to a faster recovery.

"One of our goals is to help prevent readmission of patients, so some of these issues that might seem smaller might be very critical for the patient," Neuschatz said.

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