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Not-so-little shop of horrors



JOHN MONTALVO/BELLEVILLE TIMES

Stevyns Smith, 12, finds out what happens when you play with the merchandise at State Fair, located on Main Street in Belleville. Since it merged with Fun Ghou! Costume Company of Rutherford, State Fair has touted itself as the World's Largest Halloween Superstore. Residents from Belleville and surrounding towns have been packing the aisles to see this year's spooky selection. Page 20.

■ Police arrested and charged Marie Marchitto, 27, of Belleville with possession of two vials of cocaine and possession of a hypodermic needle after a motor vehicle stop for a failure to use a turn signal at Academy and Cortlandt streets on Oct. 19. Bail was set at \$250 and she had an outstanding warrant from Jersey City for \$160.

■ Police arrested and charged Jason Kirk, 27, of Nutley with driving while intoxicated, refusal to take a Breathalyzer test, aggravated assault on a police officer and resisting arrest after a traffic stop on his 2003 Mitsubishi station wagon on Joralemon Street on Oct. 22 at 2 a.m. He was pulled over after crossing the yellow double lines several times.

He then kicked officers as they put him into a police car. Bail was set at \$1,000.

■ Police arrested and charged Vincent Colavano, 23, of Belleville with possession of two small bags of marijuana after police were called to an argument between Colavano and a woman near Little and Bell streets on Oct. 25. The woman was standing outside of Colavano's 1997 Pontiac Sunbird, and the marijuana was found inside the car.

■ Police arrested and charged Charles Britting, 20, of Belleville with arson after he set rolled-up paper towels on fire outside a screen door at a home on Belleville Avenue on Oct. 23. Britting showed up at a party

intoxicated, was loud and abusive, and was asked to leave, police said. He came back and set the fire, which was put out by partygoers after the screen door was scorched. Britting was arrested at his home on Belleville Avenue. Bail was set at \$75,000.

■ Police arrested and charged Richard Otero, 24, of Belleville with disorderly conduct and resisting arrest after police responded to a report of a man being unruly inside the Speak Easy Bar and Grill on Union Avenue at 1:30 a.m. on Oct. 23.

All persons charged are considered innocent until proven guilty.

Historical items sought

The Belleville Historical Society is looking for residents of Belleville with a history in the town for inclusion in the society's archive.

Anyone interested in being included in the archive should submit as much information about their family as possible, such as names of ancestors, birth/death dates, when their family settled in Belleville, where they lived, pictures, any noteworthy accomplishments, etc. Pictures from past local events are also desired. Submis-

sions should be forwarded to the Belleville Historical Society, Inc., P.O. Box 192, Belleville, NJ 07109.

All are welcome to join the society which meets at 7 p.m. once a month in the Belleville Library and Information Center, 221 Washington Ave. Remaining meetings for 2004 are scheduled for Oct. 19, Nov. 30 and Dec. 13. Membership fees are \$10 per year. For additional information, call (973) 844-9580.

Blood pressure screenings set

Clara Maass Medical Center provides free blood pressure screenings on a monthly basis: Every fourth Monday, at Glen Ridge Pharmacy & Surgical, Glen

Ridge; every first Thursday at Nutley Shop Rite; and every first Friday and second Sunday at Belleville Pathmark.

Red Cross cupboards bare

Help stock the shelves this summer at the Montclair-Glen Ridge-Nutley Red Cross Food Pantry at 169 Chestnut St., Nutley.

During the pre-autumn months, food donations decline and the Red Cross is asking for community support in stocking the pantry with items such as cereal, Parmalat, canned fruit and vegetables, pasta sauce, beef stew, coffee and

tea. Deliver food donations to the Chapter at 169 Chestnut Street in Nutley between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

For additional information, or if an organization would like to participate in a food drive, call Susan Schwei at (973) 667-3818. In the past year, the Red Cross Food Pantry has served 875 families who needed assistance.

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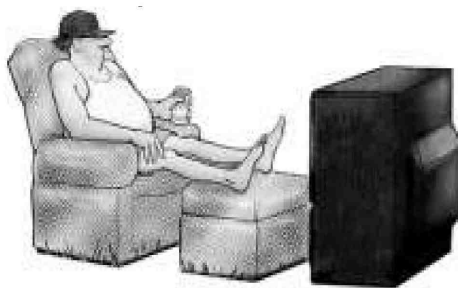
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String of accidents makes residents wonder

BY ANNA SPIEWAK
of Belleville Times

Halloween may be this weekend, but some residents of Joralemon Street near Hoover Avenue have been experiencing the eerie impact of the ghoulish holiday for the past month.

"Bad things happen in threes, people say," said Tom Robinson last Friday, when his 1998 Oldsmobile van was struck by an out of control car while parked in his driveway. It was the latest of a string of accidents near the intersection in a month.

"One...two...THREE," yelled next door neighbors to each other as they surveyed the scene in Robinson's yard last weekend.

At 5:32 p.m. Friday, George Cicchino, 49, of Newark was driving his 2001 black Acura north on Hoover Avenue, according to police. At the same time, Daniel Dally, 34, of Belleville was traveling west on Joralemon Street in his 2003 Red Ford pickup truck. Right before the two vehicles came to the intersection, Cicchino told officers, his vehicle started to accelerate for no apparent reason.

As the car climbed to a high rate of speed — about 70 miles per hour, according to some residents on the scene — Cicchino reportedly tried to pull the emergency brake, which didn't work. He even applied the park and break, but to no avail. As much as he tried to avoid the vehicle in front of him, Cicchino's Acura struck the passenger side front tire of the passenger side on Dally's pickup, said Lt. Anthony Roman-

detto.

The Acura then reportedly jumped a curb and continued to go across Joralemon Street, over the sidewalk and onto the lawn at 850 Joralemon, damaging the shrubbery along with the grass.

The car then traveled across Robinson's property at 844 Joralemon and struck his van, ripping off the hood and damaging the bumper. After colliding with the

Oldsmobile, the Acura came to a final stop at 838 Joralemon, damaging the lawn and shrubbery, but missing a tree by just a few inches.

Although no one was hurt, the residents are fed up with the string of accidents that have been happening in their neighborhood.

Last month, in an apparent hit and run, a vehicle struck a Lexus belonging to the residents at 838 Joralemon Street, where the Acura

rested until it was pulled out.

"The whole front end (of the Lexus) was taken," said resident Tonia Giunta, who came home to the accident scene Friday after her son called her. "People can't drive. This has got to stop."

The next day, a woman fell asleep at her wheel and struck two parked vehicles two houses down, said neighbor Carol Politz.

"I've been here for 40 years and

it's the first time that this has happened," she said of the uncanny string of accidents. "People are speeding up and down here and it's not being patrolled."

Poltz added that now she is getting worried that she might be next, as her house is between the two that have already been hit.

She agreed that the recent chain of events is quite suspicious.

"We live across from the cemetery, it's almost Halloween — that definitely is (a coincidence)," she said. The homes on Joralemon Street in the vicinity of the car accidents are directly across the street from the Glendale Cemetery.

But Politz, like most others, was more inclined to blame the living.

"Everybody drives on (Joralemon Street) like it's a speedway," said Bernice Robinson, wife of Tom Robinson. "Thank God our (three) kids were not around when it happened."

Doris of Guarino Chiropractic Center came out to see what had happened on Friday. She said Cicchino had just left their office at 858 Joralemon St. before the accident occurred. She said she feels bad for him.

"His car was a week and a half old," she said. "He just bought it."

The incident is still under investigation, said Romandetto, as a vehicle inspection is still looking to find out if there was a malfunction of the black Acura.

Anna Spiewak's e-mail address is spiewak@northjersey.com



TIMOTHY DENMAN/BELLEVILLE TIMES

This 2001 Acura allegedly accelerated on its own, causing the driver to lose control. It struck a pickup truck and rolled through three yards, hitting an Oldsmobile van, before coming to rest. It's the latest of three accidents in a month's time on the small stretch of road across from Glendale Cemetery.

Branch Brook landlord fined an additional \$3,000

BY ANNA SPIEWAK
of Belleville Times

Branch Brook Gardens' landlord Larry Lipschutz was fined an additional \$3,000 for four outstanding health violations to which he pleaded guilty in municipal court last week.

This was the fourth time that Lipschutz has been called into court in the past couple of months after the township pressed charges for a chain of property maintenance violations at his 404-unit property at Branch Brook Drive. He has already paid about \$11,000 in fines for 15 violations brought against him by the township

recently, according to the construction official. The Code Enforcement Department is also looking to compare its write ups with those of the state, which has about 2,900 violations pending at the property, said Jennifer Swalek, spokesperson for the Department of Community Affairs.

Ever since Belleville police started holding block meetings in March, heartened tenants started speaking up about building violations that impact their quality of life. In April, Police Officer Gary Souss wrote up a two-inch thick list of complaints from tenants upon investigating the property. The list of violations ranged from

improperly disposed of garbage, stairs in disrepair, dead trees and shrubbery on the ground, graffiti on the building, wild animals in the attic making noises at night and animal urine stains on the ceiling, to name a few.

"It's been years of neglect (at the property) piling up one year after another," said the District V Freeholder Ralph Caputo.

Caputo got involved in the Branch Brook situation after trying to get a grant for the Belleville Park across the street, but then saw that cleaning up the park would be a lost cause until the complex itself is fixed up.

A few current and former ten-

ants have been showing up at court hearings and speaking up before the judge about the living conditions at the property, including lack of adequate heat in the winters, long delays in repairs, and health and fire hazards.

Tenant Anita Tur told Judge Frank J. Zinna there are many more people, especially seniors, who want to speak up about the less than desirable living conditions, but are afraid of allegedly being harassed by the landlord. Zinna said if people don't speak up, no one will know about the maintenance neglect.

Branch Brook resident of 40 years Michael Drake came to court

last week to see which violations Lipschutz is being brought up on this time. Drake contends the property was a prime rental area in the township until Lipschutz took over 10 years ago. To stay warm in the winter, he keeps the electric heater and gas stove on inside his apartment. He also says there is no licensed electrician on the property although a property of that magnitude needs two of them. He also says the batteries inside the smoke detector are expired. In a previous interview, Lipschutz denied that he doesn't replace batteries inside smoke detectors. He also said that

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THIS WEEK IN NEWS

Thumbs up on school violence coming down

School violence

With school violence and vandalism generally on the rise in districts nationwide, the Belleville Public Schools District continues to see a sharp drop in incident, with a nearly 90 percent decrease over three years.

This is no accident. Intervention and a generally proactive approach have reaped benefits. Efforts are made to prevent conflicts and stem violent acts before they start.

Some of the programs include the Peers Educating Peers (PEP) program, where older students teach younger ones how to mediate conflict, and other conflict mediation programs.

Unlike some other districts that allegedly underreport incidents, Belleville gives full disclosure, as

required by the state. Many schools brag about a lack of violence, but don't report everything they're supposed to show.

Police Officer Paul Auriemma at the high school is credited with relating to students and stopping acts before they happen.

Even with their successful reduction of violence, school officials are not resting on their laurels. The district is in the process of installing high tech, digital security cameras in the high school and possibly in all schools to give the district a presence 24 hours a day and to deter illegal acts.

The school board and administration should be commended for taking action against a potentially serious problem.

Superintendent search

The search for a new Superintendent of Schools is taking longer than officials wanted, but based on their success in other areas, the school board and administration should be given the benefit of the doubt. As School Board President John McManus outlined, there are several qualities that must be present in the candidate that is hired. Included in those qualities is the ability to communicate as well as former Superintendent Dr. Joseph Ciccone, who was a master at keeping the lines of communication open with teachers, staff, parents and the community at large.

The new superintendent also must have experience with school construction, since the ancient School 4 is going to have to be

replaced in the next few years. School officials can be counted on to come up with a quality candidate, even if it is later rather than sooner.

Illegal students

Then there is the ever-more-successful efforts to detect and remove students who are illegally attending Belleville schools.

The latest statistics show 28 students have been transferred out of the district, 31 have been denied entrance into the district and another 51 were denied for incomplete registration documentation.

Between June 30, 2001 and this June 30, a three-year report was compiled that showed a total of 476 students removed during that time.

School Board Vice President Arlene Schor has really taken to the job of chairing the residency committee. She continues to vow that a further push is planned to detect and remove students illegally attending Belleville schools.

Getting rid of illegal students helps the other students, by not taking away valuable teacher time. It helps the schools, by not utilizing precious resources, and it helps all taxpayers, who don't have to foot the bill for someone who does not reside legally in Belleville. This school board has correctly made illegal students a priority, and the results have been dramatically successful.

LETTERS

Join up

TO THE EDITOR:

As first vice president of the Clara Maass Auxiliary in charge of membership, I would like to welcome all women to come and join our organization.

We meet the fourth Tuesday of March, May, June, September and October. In December, we have our fundraising tree lighting and at least one large fundraiser a year.

Our second vice president, Tina Orsogno, leads the women in having vendor sales almost every other Friday at the hospital. The monies made go to the various departments in the hospital that are in need of something special.

Our third vice president,

Bernadette Naso, heads our fall gala for the continuing care unit which has been a huge success.

Our meetings are at 7 p.m. and we have a general meeting led by our president, Grace Perdue, and for most of the meetings, guest speakers. The group of women is friendly and cooperative.

Those interested should call Hannah at the medical staff office at (973) 450-2016.

Angela Cuozzo-Zarro

Soccer talk

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to thank the Belleville Times for the coverage being given to the Belleville High School Lady Bucs soccer team. Without Belleville having a trav-

eling girl's soccer program, as exists in many other towns, we see how difficult it is to compete at the high school level with towns that do offer traveling teams.

That being said, I want to compliment Coach Tafur and Coach Cortese for their hard work and commitment to the program. Although I am proud of my daughter, I am equally proud of those girls who have given their all for the past two, three and four years.

Seniors Jen Acosta, Kim Ledger; Juniors Kate Martin, Karina Romero, Tricia Somma and Christa Teemer; Sophomores, Christina Corino, Katherine Cueva, Christal Duarte, Amanda Goscinski, Janette Ramos, Aki-lah Robinson, Nicole Rogucci, and Jen Santos. These girls have given 100 percent and played with heart, and passion through some tough times. Freshmen, Marissa Brown, Jaclyn Corino and Stephanie DeVito now join these young ladies hoping to build the program and encourage more of the young ladies in Belleville to join the soccer program and remain in the Belleville Public School district.

Also, I want to take this opportunity to correct a mistake in the article on the game against Glen Ridge. The goal in that game was scored by Tricia Somma. The Star Ledger incorrectly attributed that goal to my daughter, Stephanie, and I have asked them to print a correction as well.

Carolyn DeVito

Relax? Relax?!

On Oct. 18, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson said, "We want people to relax." Meanwhile in Bloomfield, the township is holding a lottery. The U.S. flu scare is underway. With 36,000 deaths a year in the United States from the flu and a severe shortage of vaccine, the panic has just begun.

Thompson, who did little to allay fears during the anthrax scare in 2001, still hasn't gotten his script right. People will not relax knowing there isn't enough vaccine at the start of the influenza season. The problem was traced to the British plant of an American manufacturer of the vaccine. The vaccine supply was contaminated, and British authorities suspended the license of the plant. Nearly 50 million doses of vaccine were to come from that plant. That is half of what the United States needs.

The other supplier of the vaccine, based in France, produces about 54 million doses. A third company produces one million to two million doses in a nasal spray.

Already politics is spreading like the flu. At the final presidential debate, President Bush said: "My call to our fellow Americans is if you're healthy, if you're younger, don't get a flu shot this year." That is not a public health policy.

Bush also suggested fear of lawsuits was preventing more drug companies from manufacturing vaccines. As early as November 2001, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies warned that the nation was not just ill-prepared to face a biological attack, but there was also a shortage of

commonly used vaccines. It said, "Continually needed vaccines such as tetanus and influenza vaccines are increasingly in short supply."

The report went on to note there were only four major vaccine manufacturers in the world, and only two were in the United States.

At the last debate, Sen. John Kerry also offered little insight. He ignored the crux of the question and talked about affordable health care. Affordable health is not the issue at hand, although it has been reported that price gouging of flu vaccine has driven the cost of a \$60 vial as high as \$800.

Clearly, the nation needs a plan for the production of vaccines. This need transcends the threat of bioterrorism. While the federal government has created a stockpile of vaccines against a projected threat, it has done little to fight a known threat. Compare the 1,000-plus U.S. troop deaths in Iraq to 36,000 U.S. civilian deaths to influenza. It is unacceptable that the federal government put the nation's health in the hands of two manufacturers. It should have spread its vaccine contracts to more companies.

More important, it should focus on the larger issue of encouraging more drug manufacturers to produce vaccines. There is little profit in flu vaccines because they are only good for a single season. But both the Congress and the president have a responsibility to craft public health policy that guarantees that no American is standing in line for hours in the hope of getting a flu shot.

— From Herald News (Oct. 19).

Letters to the Editor policy

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Belleville Times deadline

The deadline for press releases and photos submitted to the Belleville Times for upcoming community events is the Thursday before the publication date. For quicker results, e-mail copy to bellevilletimes@northjersey.com. Copy can be mailed or delivered in advance to 90 Centre St., Nutley, New Jersey 07110, or faxed to the Editor at (973) 667-3904.

Vaccine isn't the final word on facing the flu

BY QUINITA GOOD
of Nutley Sun

In light of the nation's flu vaccine shortage and the cancellation of most area flu vaccine clinics, area residents are clamoring for alternative methods to staving off the virus.

"There are other alternatives," said Francis T. Molinari, M.D., an internist who has a practice in Belleville.

According to Dr. Molinari, several pharmaceutical companies have approached him with antiviral agents like Tamiflu, the Roche pharmaceutical company-produced flu medicine. He recommends 75 mg. per day for adults and the elderly. "Tamiflu is not recommended for children," SAID Dr. Molinari.

Roche's website notes that Tamiflu works by attacking the influenza virus (the flu) and stopping it from spreading inside the body. Scientifically speaking, Neuraminidase (noor-uh-MIN-ih-dase) inhibitors found in Tamiflu treat the cause of influenza infection by inhibiting the critical neuraminidase protein on the surface of the virus.

According to Terry Hurley, director of public affairs for Roche pharmaceutical company in Nutley, one cannot compare the Tamiflu to the flu vaccine, however, he said that Tamiflu is very effective in reducing the duration and severity of the flu.

"It can help patients feel better sooner," said Hurley. "And it can be used for prevention of flue. Tamiflu is shown to be 92 percent effective in preventing influenza in patients 13 years and older."

For children under 13 years, Dr. Molinari recommends Relenza or its generic form Zanamivir, which is an inhalant flu vaccine and which, he said, is not as reliable as flu vaccine. "It will not cure or prevent flu, but may relieve symptoms," he said.

Glaxo Wellcome, the pharmaceutical company, which produces Relenza, claims that the medicine treats the cause of influenza at its source, rather than simply masking the symptoms.

Like Tamiflu, Relenza belongs

to a group of medicines call neuraminidase inhibitors. These medications, which must be prescribed by a medical doctor, attack the influenza virus and prevent it from spreading inside the body.

Dr. Molinari's other recommendations include Flumadine or its generic brand Rimantadine Hydrochloride, which he said comes in a 100 mg. tablet and a 50 mg. cough syrup. "The dose is lower for children under 13," said Molinari, who added that some flu remedies are suitable for children.

According to Flumadine's website, the mechanism of action of rimantadine—the medicine's key ingredient—is not fully understood. Rimantadine appears to exert its inhibitory effect early in the viral replicative cycle, possibly inhibiting the un-coating of the virus.

Some residents are turning to non-traditional therapies to fight the flu. David Okupniak, owner of the Nutley Nutrition Center, in Nutley, said that he expects more patrons as the flu season progresses.

When asked what alternative therapies his store carries, Okupniak said that he has been recommending Astragalus, a Chinese herb which, he said, boosts the immune system. Astragalus, Okupniak said, should be taken as a preventative measure.

Okupniak recommends homeopathic remedies for those who

have already contracted the virus.

"They are extremely safe," he said of homeopathic medicines. He said that Oscilloccinum, a branded homeopathic product, reduces the duration and severity of flu symptoms. These remedies can be dissolved beneath the tongue.

Okupniak also recommends a very strong Echinacea tablet, capsule or liquid.

Sam Kapoor, owner of the Bloomfield Health Center, in Bloomfield, named a couple of alternative remedies for prevention or once a person has the flu. Kapoor said that vitamins A, C and E support the immune system by increasing white blood cells.

Once you have it, Kapoor said that people can take the same vitamins as above and add zinc lozenges, which are potent immune stimulants that nourish white blood cells.

In lieu of the flu shot, Kapoor said that people seeking alternative methods should also take colloidal silver, which he said, is good for viral infections and also promotes healing.

According to Kathy Lesco, director of public relations at Clara Maass Medical Center in Belleville, the hospital is disseminating information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to make residents aware of what they can do in lieu of the flu vaccine.

The CDC's recommendations take into consideration that "vaccination is not the only way to help prevent the flu." According to the

CDC, residents can still protect themselves from the flu, even if

SEE VACCINE, PAGE 14

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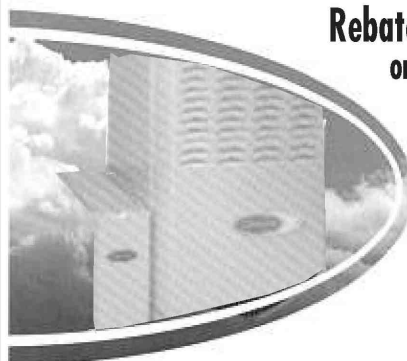
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