

Cape May Star and Wave



159TH YEAR NO. 37 CAPE MAY, N.J. SERVING AMERICA'S NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK CITY WEDNESDAY, September 11, 2013 50¢



HOUSE OF THE WEEK

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County forum attempts to 'put a face on addiction'

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE - At a special forum set up to discuss drug addiction in Cape May County, members of the public were able to put a face on the epidemic proportion of heroin use.

That was the theme of the forum put together by Freeholder Kristine Gabor with Health and Human Services Director Pat Devaney and Communications Director Lenora Boninfante, title "Putting A Face On Addiction."

Gabor said the motivation for setting up the forum was the epidemic proportion of heroin use.

Just before the meeting began, Cape May County Prosecutor Bob Taylor said since the beginning of the year there have been 80 heroin/opiate related overdoses, and 18 deaths associated to heroin or other opiates, primarily prescription drugs.

"The enormous increase (in

heroin/opiate use) is a huge problem," Gabor said. "As the (Freeholder) Director of Health and Human Services, I thought we had to bring this out into the open and have a discussion on the problem."

Speakers at the Forum, including Pat Campbell from Families Matter, Chris Burns from Addiction Recovery Systems, and Kathryn Gibson from Cape Counseling Services, said young people are turning to heroin and opiates faster and are quickly using more than heroin users of the past. Gibson, in particular, works with young people who are abusing drugs. She said more and more kids are admitting to using heroin. Statistics indicate kids are first going to their household medicine cabinets and finding opiate-based pain relievers, including codeine, hydrocodone and oxycodone. Young people might try some Percocet left in the medicine cabinet, and later find the pills cost \$1 per milligram on the street, and area generally in 30mg or 60 mg doses. Faced with paying \$30 to \$60 for pills, kids turn to heroin,



Above, Kreni DiAntonio, who lost a son to drug addiction after a 16-year battle tells a packed house at the county's "Put A Face On Addiction" forum what she and her ex-husband went through with their son, who died of a fatal overdose in August 2012.

which is \$10 to \$20 a bag. Taylor, in a previous interview, said the street heroin is so pure these days it can be snorted, which eliminates the

fear of needles. A member of the audience, who identified himself as Jim Mahoney, who has worked in the addiction field in north

Jersey for many years, said this is the first countywide forum on drug addiction he has ever heard of. "I didn't know we were the

only ones to do this, but I'm glad we started something and I hope other counties follow suit," Gabor said.

Gabor said the county can't worry about appearances - the problem has to be addressed openly.

"I am shocked by it (widespread drug use) happening, and because nobody is really talking about it. Now we know it's an issue," she said.

The forum began with a mother named Kreni DiAntonio holding up a photo of her son Greg, taken shortly before he died. DiAntonio said her son was raised in a home where he was not wanting for anything. As a high school soccer and tennis player he was winning awards as MVP, picking up the Coach's Award, and being commended with a "best kid" award. However, things weren't the same at home.

"Around (age) 13 things changed," DiAntonio said. "At around 16 his behavior started to change."

She said their first clue that Greg was being exposed to

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County Tourism and Chamber heads talk about summer season

By ERIC AVEDISSIAN
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE - Cape May County's summer tourism season for 2013 was only average, but the tepid performance had less to do with Hurricane Sandy's aftermath and more on the current economic climate, according to county Department of Tourism Director Diane Wieland.

This county is world famous for sandy beaches, vibrant boardwalks and plentiful wetlands which translates to a multitude of recreational activities and noteworthy attractions.

Wieland said the county surveyed its business community to gauge whether visitors kept flocking to the shore in strong numbers, or if the tourist population dwindled.

She said only 9 percent of businesses surveyed responded, and that most businesses rated the season only as "fair" and "good."

"We're looking at that between fair and good as a pretty good assessment of how the summer was," Wieland said.

She said the county is waiting for numbers from the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism on the total Occupancy Tax. Passed by local ordinance,

the occupancy tax is a tax on rents from occupying hotel or motel rooms. The collected tax is used for tourism promotion. Cape May County hotels collect nearly 10 percent of the state's occupancy tax, sending \$9.43 million in additional revenue to Trenton.

Wieland said the county's occupancy tax collections were down in 2013, with the ramifications affecting the local accommodations, amusements and restaurant industries.

New Spending Habits

Vicki Clark, president of the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce, characterized the 2013 season as "very sporadic."

"I'm hearing from businesses they were off in general. It could range from anywhere from 5 percent to 40 percent, some have said. Obviously, we hope that won't be the end result," Clark said.

Clark said the state will furnish the county with accurate figures of revenue from the 2013 season for a few months.

She said restaurants this year had their projections not met, and a number of room vacancies existed throughout the summer.

Campground members

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Solicitor, attorney disagree on law

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

LOWER TOWNSHIP - With the resignation of Councilman Glenn Douglass due to a state pension requirement, Lower Township Republican Committee Chairman Jeff Lindsay and Lower Township Solicitor Charles Sandman disagreed at the township's Sept. 4 meeting over which law pertains to fill the vacant seat.

According to Douglass, he retired from his state job effective Sept. 1. He was told he could not collect his state pension at the same time he was paying into the Public Employees Pension System (PERS) from his elected official's salary. Douglass intends to run for reelection to his seat in the Nov. 5 election.

Lindsay, when contacted later in the week, said he and Sandman had come to an agreement over the matter.

At the Sept. 4 meeting, Sandman said the committee was attempting to follow New Jersey statute 40A:16-11, which outlines the procedure for an individual had been a candidate nominated by a political party. Douglass was the Republican candidate when elected to council.

Sandman said statute 40A:16-5(B) was a more pertinent to Douglass's situation. That section says if the vacancy occurred before Sept. 1 a candidate to fill the vacancy should be put on the ballot at the general election, which this year is Nov. 5. "I spoke with Chuck (Sandman) the day after the



Above, Glenn Douglass explains his resignation as Lower Township Ward 3 Councilman. Douglass retired from his state job and was told he could not collect his state pension while paying into the fund as a councilman. He has elected to run for reelection on the Nov. 5 ballot.

meeting and everything is resolved," Lindsay said.

According to Lindsay, statute 40A:16-11 deals with the situation Lower Township is now facing, filling the vacancy until the general election. He said 40A:16-5 deals with filling out the unexpired term.

Sandman said how to fill the vacancy was something he was still reaching, look-

ing for case law. He said the question was, does 16-11 supersede or further define 16-5.

"I am inclined to say it further defines it, but I'm still in the process of looking into it," he said.

Sandman said statute 40A:16-5 says the vacancy "may be" filled by an appointment of the governing body, but it does not say

the governing body must or shall fill the vacancy. The other statute, 40A:16-11, indicated the process for filling the position; that is, the party of the individual who vacated the seat would submit three names to the governing body, which would have 30 days to fill the position. If the governing body

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