

Vaccinations required in schools, state agencies

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House of the week

B1



167th YEAR NO. 34 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2021 \$1.00

CMBP lifeguard, 16, dies after boat capsizes

City to name beach in boy's honor; family starts scholarship fund

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

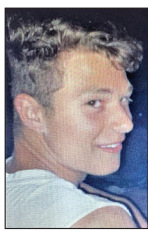
CAPE MAY — Norman V. Infrerra III, 16, of Phoenixville, Pa., a first-year lifeguard with the Cape May Beach Patrol, died Aug. 21 at Cooper University Hospital from injuries suffered on duty when the boat he was rowing was broadsided by a wave and capsized.

Infrerra was rowing off Reading Avenue on Aug. 19 when his boat was flipped over by a wave, knocking him unconscious after

the boat hit his head, according to City Manager Mike Voll.

Fellow lifeguards responded immediately to his aid. Infrerra later was declared comatose at Cooper.

"My heart, prayers and condolences go out to the Infrerra family," Mayor Zack Mullock said. "Even at such a young age, Norman was loved by his fellow lifeguards. No words can express the sadness suffered by all of



INFERRERA

our beach patrol family. Norman chose to protect others. He did so professionally and worked hard at it. That is an extraordinary attribute for anyone, especially at 16 years old. The Cape May community cares so deeply for those who protect us. I know this entire community is going to do anything it can for Norman's family and friends." Other southern New Jersey beach patrols sent their lifeguards

to the city to assist following the incident.

They also posted messages of support for the family and their fellow lifeguards in Cape May.

Cape May Beach Patrol Chief Harry Back expressed his condolences.

"My thoughts and prayers are with the Infrerra family. He was a beloved member of our beach patrol family. Norman had a permanent smile on his face and was living out his dream to be a lifeguard."

Grief counselors were provided for all beach patrol staff. The city issued a proclamation asking flags to be flown at half-staff for the weekend in Infrerra's honor.

"Chief Back and the entire beach patrol have shown the utmost professionalism, while simultaneously providing care to all those touched so deeply by Norman," Voll said.

Infrerra's aunt, Kathleen Infrerra Price, established a Go-

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Chuck Lear/Specail to the STAR AND WAVE

Congratulating new Coasties

U.S. Coast Guard Recruit Company Yankee 200 graduated from basic training Aug. 20 at Coast Guard Training Center Cape May. Members of the community gathered on the corner of Pennsylvania and Pittsburgh avenues in Cape May to greet them as they passed by, something they do every week.

Diamond Beach group: Inspira no better

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — According to Diamond Beach Citizens Action Group President James Sanford, Lower Township's switch to Inspira to handle emergency medical calls following the collapse of Lower Township Rescue Squad on June 19 has not improved response times to Diamond Beach.

"In the last month,

there was eight medical assistance calls that Inspira handled to Diamond Beach. Again we're back to numbers, 12 and a half minutes to get to Diamond Beach," he said. "It is a physical impossibility to get to Diamond Beach in under eight minutes, the least amount of time that was spent getting to Diamond Beach was to Two Mile (Landing), it took 10 minutes to get to a guy that dropped from exhaustion

on the bridge." Sanford said other response times were 13, 14 and 15 minutes. Inspira, as did Lower Township Rescue, responds from the mainland and must cross bridges to reach Diamond Beach.

He said he reviewed all 90 calls Inspira responded to in Lower Township during its first week of service and on the whole, every other place in the township was in a better position

timewise than Diamond Beach.

Of the eight medical assistance calls to Diamond Beach, three persons seeking help were under the age of 60 but the rest were over 60 years of age.

"We ain't got time to wait 12 and a half minutes if we're hurting or if we have a heart attack," Sanford said.

He said he did not be-

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NJDEP settles in Sewell Tract case for \$19M.

Deal with ECMA preserves 100 acres from residential development plans

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The Sewell Tract has been preserved following a settlement that pays the owners, East Cape May Associates (ECMA), \$19 million for the property and prevents development.

Concerned Citizens for Sewell Tract Preservation, the not-for-profit entity that acted as plaintiff-intervenor in the longstanding litigation over the area, announced last week that it had completed a settlement of the case with the other parties, ECMA and the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

The settlement ends the dispute and provides for preservation of all ECMA's land in Sewell Tract. Bordering the U.S. Coast Guard training facility in east Cape May, Sewell Tract is the largest undeveloped area in the city and one of the more significant natural resources in the state's coastal region.

Under the terms of the governing settlement agreement, the state paid ECMA \$19 million for conveyance of all its property in Sewell Tract, amounting to about 100 acres. The payment had been conditioned upon the completion

'The parties found a basis to settle their differences in a way that not only were the interests of the litigants served, but also the broad public welfare has been promoted by preserving a vital natural resource for the Cape May area.'

—James Testa, Concerned Citizens for Sewell Tract Preservation

and delivery of satisfactory appraisals supporting that value, surveys, reviews and various other conditions that were fulfilled over the past several months, according to the citizens group.

All land was conveyed to the DEP for purposes under various state preservation statutes and rules that would not include residential development.

Allowing residential development of about 25 percent of the tract had been an objec-

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City has largest population loss in state for municipality its size

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Data from the 2020 census show Cape May had the largest population loss in the state for a municipality with more than 1,000 residents. Cape May's population fell from 3,607 in 2010 to 2,768 on 2020, or 23.3 percent.

The county's population dropped 2.1 percent, from 97,265 to 95,263.

On Aug. 17, Mayor Zack Mullock said the city is not in good shape regarding its population.

"I think there's things

we do need to look at as a council. Workforce housing and affordable housing of course come to mind, but there are other things that need to be looked at," he said.

Mullock said nontraditional rentals such as Airbnb may have displaced former workers. He called the decrease in population significant.

Lower Township lost 809 residents from 2010 to 2020. According to Mayor Frank Sippel, the township's population dropped from 22,866 in 2010 to 22,057 in 2020.

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Costs of HVAC repairs at Convention Hall top \$335,000
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School board gets update on Lafayette Street Park
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Bezaire returns to City Council

Offers public apology for behavior leading to arrest

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Councilman Chris Bezaire returned to City Council on Aug. 16 after missing three meetings and offered an apology to the public.

The Cape May County Prosecutor's Office arrested Bezaire on June 16 on charges of invasion of privacy, cyber harassment, stalking and contempt of court. He was released from the Cape May County Jail on June 28 following 13 days of incarceration.

He said there were several accusations and charges against him on a personal level unrelated to his duties as an elected official.

"While I cannot directly speak to these charges due to the ongoing investigation, I can tell you I am fully cooperating with investigators in the prosecutor's office and I'm confident this matter will be resolved fairly," Bezaire said.

He said his ability to



BEZAIRE

serve the citizens of Cape May would not be affected. Bezaire thanked those who reached out to him to offer their support.

"That's why it's important for me tonight to stand here before the citizens, my colleagues, my constituents, my friends and take ownership for the mistakes I've made in my personal life by actively engaging in and

See Bezaire, Page A3

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