



HOUSE OF THE WEEK

Page B1



OCEAN CITY GIRLS TRACK AND FIELD CHAMPS AGAIN

Page B4-5



Artisans Alcove robbed of \$95,000

Group of five works to steal diamond rings, police say

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — A group of five suspects conspired to steal \$95,000 worth of diamond rings from Artisans Alcove Estate Jewelers just after 4 p.m. May 8, police said.

According to Cape May police, three of the suspects distracted manager Patricia Raspa while two others opened an unlocked jewelry case and

removed trays containing 30 engagement rings.

The suspects were clearly captured on high-definition video, which has been disseminated to numerous media outlets.

Artisans Alcove owner William Scott said he left the store to attend his daughter's softball game. Raspa was working alone when a couple entered the store.

Scott showed the Star and

Wave security video showing a well-dressed couple entering the store. Minutes later, three other individuals, two men and one woman, entered, he said.

"They pretended they weren't together," Scott said.

He said the couple that had entered the store earlier told Raspa they would continue to look at merchandise while she attended to the new customers. The three new arrivals then

kept Raspa busy on the opposite side of the store, blocking her view of the couple, police said.

Video shows the couple working together on the other side of the store. The male suspect reaches over the display case and opens the rear door, removing a tray of rings, which the woman accompanying him places in her purse. In order to



Surveillance footage captured this couple entering Artisans Alcove Estate Jewelers, followed by three others, prior to the robbery.

See Robbery, Page A2

Better year for tourism anticipated countywide

Growth seen last year expected to continue

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CREST HAVEN — County Freeholder Director Gerald Thornton summed up the economy of this peninsula in one short sentence: Tourism is the lifeblood of Cape May County.

He also acknowledged the commercial fishing industry and Coast Guard Training Center Cape May, which Thornton said generates \$169 million per year in revenue in the county.

The county Department of Tourism gathered a group of experts on the industry May 7 for a conference here, armed with statistics and a positive outlook for the coming summer season.

Freeholder Marie Hayes stated that tourism in Cape May County topped \$5.5 billion in 2013, creating 25,000 direct jobs, and the outlook for this year is favorable.

"Early indicators are pointing to another great season. Rentals and reservations are up, and after a slow start from a cold, snowy and awful season," she said.

Hayes said 80 percent of visitors are return guests.

"Cape May County is looked upon as a safe and very friendly place to relax,"

See Tourism, page A2



WORLD SERIES OF BIRDING FINDING FEATHERED FRIENDS

Deborah McGuire/Special to the CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

The World Series of Birding featured more than 70 teams competing May 10 in New Jersey to count as many bird specials as they could in a 24-hour period by identifying them by sight or sound. The Seaside Sparrows, based on Cape Island, tallied 113 species. The team consisted of Laura Jacobs, Emelia Oleson, Bob Hall and David Schmittou.

Cape May wants more representation on LCMR school board

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city made a request to First District legislators state Sen. Jeff Van Drew and Assemblymen Bob Andrejczak and Samuel L. Fiochi to amend legislation to allow Cape May an additional seat on the Lower Cape May Regional School Board of Education.

In addition, Cape May is requesting a change in the school-funding formula from the regional Board of Education to return the district to its original per-pupil tax allocation.

Last week, Cape May City Council passed a resolution asking that repre-

City Council asks legislators to intervene on behalf

sentation on a regional school board be proportionate to the tax allocation as opposed to the "number of each constituent district's inhabitants."

The resolution noted Cape May has only one representative on the regional BOE, which consists of nine members, "although the city of Cape May is currently paying 35 percent of the total taxes levied by the regional district."

Cape May Deputy Mayor Jack Wichterman said that when Cape May joined the regional school district in 1956, the funding formula was based

on the number of children sent to the district. He said that also determined the number of members Cape May had on the school board.

Wichterman said when the state revised the funding formula in 1975, based on the equalized value of property in each municipality, the city chose to leave the formula as it was for the staffing of the regional school board.

"We are going to try and work through our state legislator, Jeff Van Drew, to pursue this in Trenton to get this changed," Wichterman said.

Van Drew told the Star and Wave that he would speak with Lower Township and Cape May officials with hopes of bringing representatives of both municipal governments and the town school boards together.

"I'm hopeful (a meeting to address) what has been a very contentious process in the past regarding the cost of education will become a very productive and cooperative process," he said. "I'm hopeful to bring everybody to the same page and I'm hopeful we can work together."

The cooperation of all parties would

be necessary to increase Cape May's representation on the regional school board, he said.

"I'm not going to move forward until I have cooperation. I want to create consensus," Van Drew said.

He said special legislation would need to be passed that pertained only to Lower Township and Cape May.

Van Drew said special legislation was passed regarding the school relationship between Ocean City and Upper Township.

However, their relationship was always a sending-receiving district rather than a regional district.

See Representation, Page A3



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