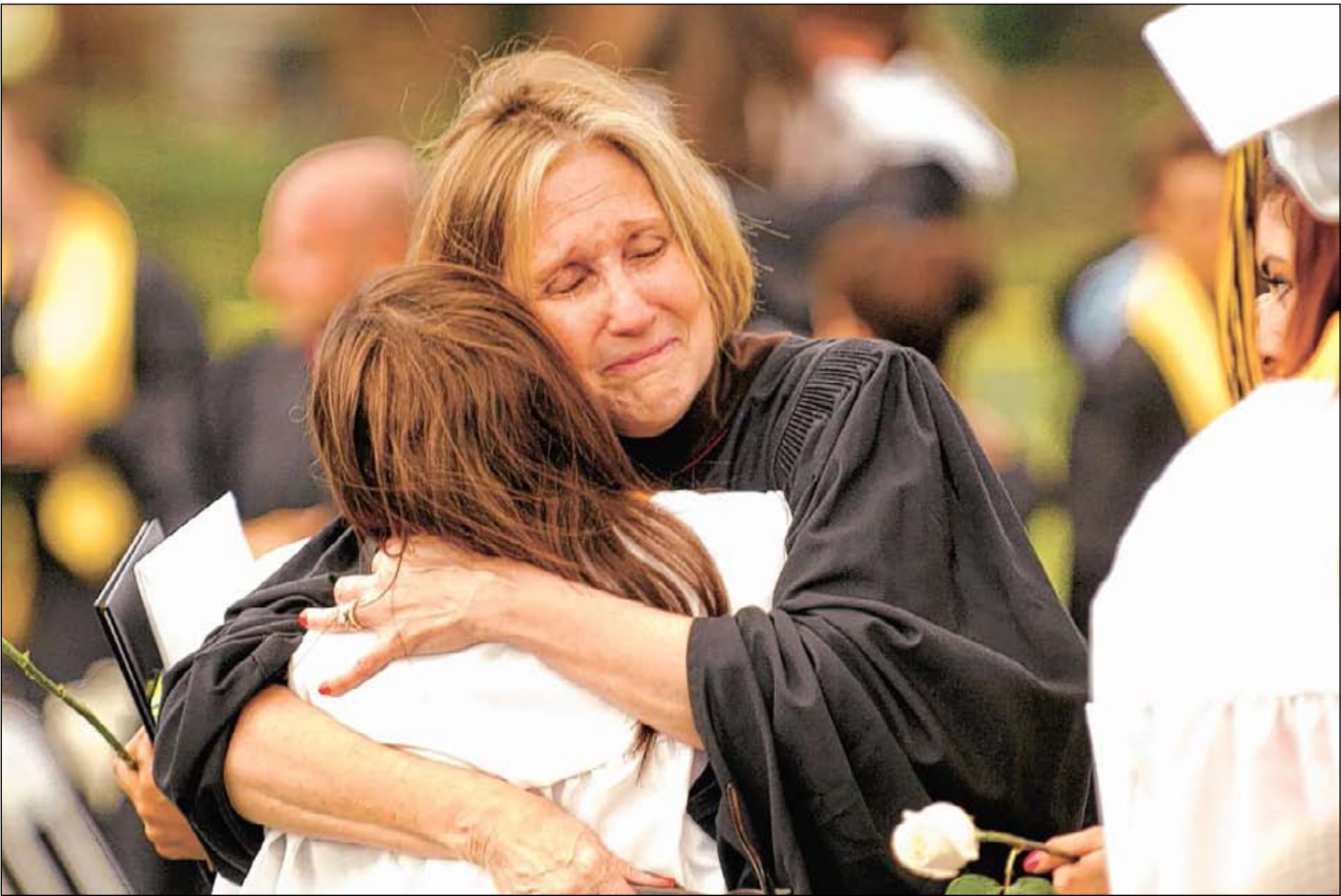


Holding onto the memories



In the past week, Cedar Grove and Verona high school seniors officially became graduates. Above, Cedar Grove arts teacher Sheila Salka gives an emotional embrace to graduate Jacqui Lopez. **See our complete Cedar Grove graduation coverage on page A10.** At right, a final inflatable balloon appears as the Verona Class of 2013 begins the recessional. **Read more about Verona High School's graduation on page A8.**

PHOTOS BY ADAM ANIK/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



HELD WITHOUT BAIL

FBI arrest man connected to armed robbery

BY LILLIAN ORTIZ
Editor

More than a month after a Verona Subway restaurant was robbed at gunpoint, there's been a break in the case. FBI special agents arrested a 26-year-old Newark man at his home Friday in connection with the robbery, according to a release from the U.S. Attorney's Office. Jamar Darby, 26, was charged with one count of committing a Hobbs Act robbery and one count of using a firearm during a crime of violence, the release indicated. On Friday, June 21 – 32 days after three men tied a Subway employee's hands and

feet and took \$400 from the eatery's cash registers – Darby appeared in Newark federal court. He was held without bail, according to the release. "We were all holding our breath ... I was very relieved [that someone was arrested] and the police did such a great job," Subway owner Don Johnston told the Times. "We all worked together really hard ... it just feels good to have this guy behind bars." Darby is said to have participated in a number of armed robberies throughout Essex and Union counties between December 2012 and May 2013, accord-

SEE ROBBERY, PAGE A2

YEARS-LONG CASE

Lawsuit unsettled as election draws near

BY JOSHUA JONGSMA
Managing Editor

Due to her years-long lawsuit in a district tenure case, Judith DiNapoli's name may sound familiar to those who follow the Verona Board of Education. DiNapoli's name could become even more well-known as the Verona resident recently filed a petition to run for a seat on the five-member board. The former school district employee filed paperwork earlier this month for the upcoming

Verona Board of Education election, all the while still waiting for an outcome on her claim against the board, first issued in 2011. According to attorney Michael Gross, who represents the Verona Board of Education, and DiNapoli, the case is still awaiting a decision from the appellate court. Gross said an oral argument was heard in either February or March of this year, but he is unsure when a decision could ultimately be made.

SEE LAWSUIT, PAGE A3

A TIME OF NEED

Cedar Grove rallies around the Russo family

BY JOSHUA JONGSMA
Managing Editor

During one of her treatments, Cristina Russo required a week-long stay at a hospital, with her room's window as the only glimpse at the outside world. She likened the experience to being locked up in prison: confined and without freedom. The 19-year-old Cedar Grove resident was restricted to her room after she was diagnosed with leukemia two days after her high school graduation in 2012. Rather than let the news become a death sentence, Russo persevered through the adversity and a year later, remains undeterred in pursuing all that life has to offer. When the news spread throughout Cedar Grove, there were no shortage of volunteers

Know the facts

Every four minutes, one person in the United States is diagnosed with a blood cancer, according to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. An estimated 149,990 people in the US are expected to be diagnosed with leukemia – a type of cancer that affects the blood and bone marrow – lymphoma or myeloma in 2013. For more information, go to www.lls.org.

ready to come to Russo's aid. Over the past 12 months, many events and fundraisers helped raise thousands of dollars to support the local family. "You don't realize how good-hearted people are until something crazy like this happens," Russo said. "It's amazing to see that."

Russo and her mother, Debbie, estimated there were about 10 gatherings to aid the family so far. Some of the events included a "can shake," walkathons, fundraisers sponsored by the high school girls tennis and basketball teams, three by the Cedar Grove Elks and two from the Junior Women's Club, among other contributions.

When he heard about Russo's situation, Mike Corbosiero, special community co-chairman with the Elks, said the organization was eager to join the cause. "People were rising above the norm to help out," Corbosiero said. "People got side donations from businesses and paid the normal price and then some. It always does my heart good when the community steps up and helps our own." Though unable to participate in the earlier events due to her illness, Russo said she now goes to "show her face" at some of the more recent fundraisers. "I can't be around crowds too much, but it's nice to actually go now and see how much everyone is impacted," she said.

SEE RUSSO, PAGE A11



ADAM ANIK/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Cristina Russo, at left, walks around the track with her sister Marissa during a fundraiser at Cedar Grove High School earlier this month. The community joined together to raise money for Russo's cancer treatment.

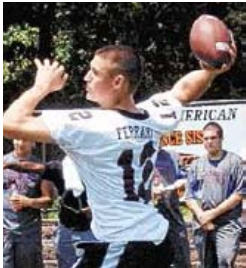
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Airing it out
High school football
teams turn to
passing game.
Page B1



Memories
of 'The Sopranos'
Verona and Cedar Grove
featured in iconic series.
Page A3

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POLICE BLOTTER

BURGLARY

Verona
On June 15, Officer Dave Wardrope took a report of a burglary that occurred at an Afterglow Avenue residence, police said. Entry was gained through a rear window. Missing at the time of report was jewelry and a small amount of cash, according to police.
On June 17, a Brentwood Drive resident reported that a cell phone was taken from their vehicle sometime during the previous week, police said. The value of the phone was unknown at the time of report, according to police. Officer Brendan Huber responded to the incident.

DEER

Cedar Grove
Officers responded to Young Avenue on a report of a deer that had been struck by a vehicle on June 18, police said. Upon arrival, officers discovered the badly injured deer in the roadway and decided it was necessary to kill the animal, police said. The involved vehicle left the scene prior to the arrival of officers, according to police.

DWI

Verona
A Cedar Grove resident was arrested on June 16 for driving while intoxicated after being stopped for erratic driving on Pompton Avenue, police said. Officer Ed Carattini and Sgt. Tim Banta stopped Abdul Ali, who was processed and issued summonses before being released, according to police.

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Cedar Grove
On June 23, two males were arrested on marijuana charges after being found in a vehicle parked in the Mills Reservation lot after the posted curfew, police said. Sgt. Edward Conlon stopped

Please note

Police news is compiled by the Verona-Cedar Grove Times from information provided by the Verona and Cedar Grove police departments. The information released to the press is at the discretion of the police departments and may not represent the total scope of police activity. All persons are presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

to investigate the vehicle and arrested Edward J. Haracz, 18, of Little Falls and charged him with being under the influence of marijuana, police said. Todd A. Morici Jr., 18, of Saddle Brook was arrested and charged with being under the influence and in possession of marijuana and drug paraphernalia, police said. Both males were processed and released pending municipal court appearances, according to police.

LOST PROPERTY

Verona
A Claridge Drive resident reported a lost driver's license on June 14, police said. The incident was reported to Officer Bill Frazee and the resident was given information to obtain a duplicate license, according to police.

POSSESSION

Cedar Grove
On June 18, a Cedar Grove resident was arrested for underage possession of an alcoholic beverage after it was reported that a bottle was thrown at a vehicle on Sunrise Terrace and Winding Way, police said. While checking the area, officers located two young males walking in the vicinity and subsequently arrested Colby W. Nighland, 19, who was processed at police headquarters and released pending a municipal court appearance, police said. There was no damage to the reporting person's vehicle and the two males denied any involvement in the bottle throwing incident, according to police.

SECURITY

Board approves \$100k for upgrades

The Cedar Grove Board of Education last week approved to spend over \$100,000 on security upgrades for the district's four schools.
The upgrades include an improved public address system at North and South End elementary schools that will allow louder announcements both inside and out, including bathrooms and hallways, according to Business Administrator Renee Taveniere. Additionally, Cedar Grove High School and Memorial Middle School will have dome cameras installed outside and in the hallways. They will also include digital recording devices.
Taveniere said the district is contracted to pay \$20,600 to Cedar Grove-based Bingham Communications for the announcement systems and \$84,618 to Haig Service Corporation for surveillance.
Taveniere said construction should begin this summer.
Earlier this year, the district installed video intercom and door release systems at the board's headquarters at 520 Pompton Ave.
The additions were part of recommendations made by Triangle Training Group, which was contracted by the district to improve school security.
— Dan Rosenblum

POLICE ACADEMY

Learn about a career in law enforcement

Registration is underway for the ninth annual Essex County College's Junior Police Academy at the Cedar Grove facility from July 15 to 19. Participants will learn about the education and other requirements needed for a career in law enforcement.
Topics to be covered include the juvenile justice system, fingerprinting and identification, K-9 demonstrations, gang awareness, drug awareness, Internet safety, fire safety, first aid and crime scene investigations. A field trip will also be included as well as a physical training component.
The program is open to teens, ages 13 to 16, as of July 1.
Registration and other information is available by calling 973-877-4350 or by contacting Captain Lori Apicelli at apicellil@essex.edu. The academy will run from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day.

WARNING

Mail solicitation could be a scam

Sheriff Armando Fontoura advised Essex County residents to be on the look out for what may be a fraudulent fundraising letter issued by an organization listed as the United States Deputy Sheriffs' Association, which claims to be headquartered in Wilton, N.H.
According to a release from the Essex County Sheriff's Office,

the association alleges to be dedicated to officer survival training and it seeks donations to underwrite its programs.
Charity Navigator, an independent charity evaluator, gives the United States Deputy Sheriffs' Association very low marks for accountability and transparency.

PROPERTY DAMAGE

Verona
On June 14, landscaping, decorative rocks and a metal gate was damaged at a Bloomfield Avenue business, police said. A neighbor heard a collision and saw a small SUV driving away from the area, police said. The value of damage was unknown at the time of report, according to police. Officer Anthony Condorelli responded to the incident.
A Depot Street resident reported damage from a small amount of water in his basement, police said. The incident was reported to Officer Joel Martin on June 20, according to police.

RESCUE

Verona
Officer Anthony O'Connor and the Verona Rescue Squad responded to the municipal parking lot on a report of a person with a head injury on June 20, police said. After treatment by the rescue squad, the victim refused transportation to the hospital, according to police.
Officer Wardrope and the Verona Rescue Squad responded to Lanning Avenue on a report of a person with a facial injury on June 20, police said. After treatment by the rescue squad, the victim was transported to St. Barnabas Hospital, according to police.

SHOPLIFTING

Verona
Upon reviewing store video, a Pompton Avenue business owner observed a male place an item into his pocket and leave the

store, police said. The male reportedly asked multiple questions about several products while in the store and left without making a purchase, police said. The incident was reported to Officer Steve Young on June 18 and an area check was conducted with negative results, according to police.

THEFT

Verona
On June 17, a Pompton Avenue resident reported that his vehicle was parked at 9 p.m. and was not there when he went out the next morning, police said. The incident was reported to Officer Joe Ballantyne and the vehicle was entered as stolen in the state computer, according to police.

Cedar Grove
The store manager of a CVS Pharmacy on Pompton Avenue reported that several men in a white box truck removed approximately 90 empty plastic totes from the side of the building and left the area, police said. The incident was responded to on June 18 and an area search was conducted with negative results, police said. The plastic totes had an aggregate value of \$270 and are believed to have been stolen for their recycling value, according to police.
On June 21, a Pompton Avenue business employee reported that \$70 was removed from her pocketbook while it was left unattended, police said. The matter was referred to the detective bureau for follow-up investigation, according to police.

WARRANT

Verona
On June 20, Officer Condorelli arrested Desean Willis for having an outstanding warrant from the Newark municipal court, police said. Willis was transported to police headquarters and processed before being turned over to Newark police, according to police.
— Compiled by Carolyn Maso

ROBBERY

FROM PAGE A1

ing to a criminal complaint. However, additional details regarding those robberies was not available, according to Rebekah Carmichael, public affairs officer for the U.S. Attorney's Office.
“This is still an ongoing investigation,” Carmichael stated in an email. “The complaint charges him [Darby] with the one robbery, but it isn't unusual for later documents to charge more than the initial complaint.”
The Hobbs Act charge – which prohibits actual or attempted robbery affecting interstate or foreign commerce – carries a maximum potential penalty of 20 years in prison, according to the release. “The gun charge carries a maximum potential penalty of life in prison and a mandatory minimum of seven years in prison ... Each count also carries a maximum \$250,000 fine, or twice the gross gain or loss from the offense,” the release continued.

As the case relates to a string of robberies in violation of federal law, the FBI became involved in the case, Carmichael stated. More than 10 agencies were involved in the investigation, included Verona police.
On May 20, as previously reported in the Times, Darby and two other men entered the Subway on Bloomfield Avenue, bound a female employee's hands and feet with plastic zip ties, and took several hundred dollars from the sandwich shop's register.
The employee, a 21-year-old, is said to be doing okay after the late-night robbery.
“She still works for me and she's doing a great job,” Johnston said, adding that customers have been extremely helpful and kind in the wake of the crime. “They will leave her extra tips and people have been pouring their hearts out to her. I can't express how much that means to me. They say she's a hero. It's so cool

to see the community coming together and make you feel like family.”
According to the criminal complaint, Darby wore a dark New York Yankees baseball cap with white lettering, dark pants, black boots and gloves during the May robbery. When law enforcement officials searched Darby's home and car Friday, they discovered items that resembled the clothing the man wore during the robbery, the complaint indicated.
“Law enforcement also obtained records associated with Darby's phone number ... The historical cell site data corresponding with Darby's toll records indicates that Darby's phone was in the vicinity of Subway around the time of the Subway robbery,” the complaint continued.

Increased security

While the Subway restaurant has surveillance cameras in place, which did assist police in the investigation, Johnston said he plans to add even more security on the premises.
He's in the process of working with CBS regarding an outdoor billboard located between his business and that of Dante Zeller Tuxedo and Formal Wear. Around the billboard, there are bushes and foliage that can block the view of “evildoers,” Johnston said.
“They can park and hide behind the bush out of line of sight. We are working together to make sure the hiding space is limited,” he added.
The business owner will also add additional outdoor surveillance on the property, as he experienced first hand the importance of doing so after the May robbery. Verona police and law enforcement officials utilized not only Subway's surveillance video of the robbery, but also that of the business across the way – Mountain Auto Body – to determine what type of getaway car the perpetrators used, Johnston said.

Email: ortizl@northjersey.com