

South Jersey

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A Sicklerville man is charged with a series of bank robberies in South Jersey.
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\$2M pact OK'd for transit center

PENNSAUKEN — Officials on Wednesday approved a \$2.1 million contract that will launch construction of a \$40 million transit center connecting the Atlantic City Rail Line and the River LINE.

The Pennsauken project, expected to create 300 jobs, will rise on vacant land off Derousse Avenue. The site, which will also be served by NJ Transit buses, is to open by the end of 2012.

The initial contract, approved by NJ Transit's board of directors, calls for construction of a 200-foot platform with related facilities for River LINE patrons. Work is to begin this fall.

A second phase will add elevated platforms on either side of the Atlantic City line and a 280-space parking lot. The project will be funded with federal stimulus dollars.

Man badly hurt in Camden holdup

CAMDEN — A man was beaten and critically injured during a daylight robbery here, city police said Wednesday.

Camden police said they arrested a woman and were seeking a man in connection with the 9:30 a.m. attack in the 2600 block of Carmen Street. Police said the assailants fled after a witness yelled "Stop!"

The victim, identified only as a 39-year-old, was in critical condition with severe head injuries at Cooper University Hospital, Camden.

Laurie Davis, 36, of the 1400 block of Park Boulevard, Camden, was arrested later Tuesday and charged with robbery, aggravated assault and other offenses. She was held at Camden County Jail with no bail.

Anyone with information should call police at (856) 757-7486.

Hospitals open graceful spaces

MOUNT HOLLY — Two South Jersey hospitals this week are unveiling new facilities meant to offer a place of refuge to patients, staffers and visitors.

A "healing garden" is to open today at Virtua Memorial in Mount Holly. The all-season garden, with falling water and colorful flowers, occupies a hospital courtyard.

And Cooper University Hospital in Camden marked the opening of a nondenominational chapel off the main lobby of its new patient Pavilion. The Margaret L. Isaacs Chapel, which has stained glass windows and a "running water feature," will be open around the clock.

The chapel is the last space to open in the Pavilion, which debuted in December.

Camden woman robbed near home

CAMDEN — A city woman was robbed at gunpoint in her driveway, police said.

The victim, identified only as a 54-year-old, handed over her purse during the incident in the 1000 block of Lakeshore Drive shortly before 10 p.m. Tuesday, said Camden police.

Anyone with information about the crime should call Camden Police at (856) 757-7486.

— Courier-Post staff

DRPA quits option deal

Agency spends about \$35 million in transaction

By EILEEN STILWELL
Courier-Post Staff

The Delaware River Port Authority approved spending about \$35 million Wednesday to cash out of a risky swap option deal created by the prior administration.

The option, held by UBS Bank, is on \$108 million of port district bonds that were sold in 1999.

Rather than agree to USB's demand, which calls for a variable interest rate on annual payments of about \$5 million beginning in January, DRPA agreed to cash out.

"A side benefit to cashing out is it removes the risk from our debt portfolio which will put us in a better position when we sell future bonds," said CFO John Hanson.

The authority expects to sell bonds in excess of \$1 billion for capital improvements to its four bridges, the PATCO Hi-Speedline, the passenger cruise terminal in South Philadelphia, the seasonal RiverLink ferry system and its headquarters at One Port Center.

DRPA's existing debt is \$1.14 billion, said Hanson. In other business, Tam-

arisk L. Jones, director of Health and Senior Services for Gloucester County, was sworn in as a commissioner on the 16-member board. All serve without compensation.

Jones was among three people nominated by Gov. Jon S. Corzine in June to the board. She and Richard Sweeney, business



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TAMARISK L. JONES



DOUGLAS M. BOVITT/Courier-Post

Workout stations at Saratoga Park are designed to encourage adults to exercise.

Playground additions to aid children, adults

By JULIA HAYS
Courier-Post Staff

STRATFORD
New additions to a Stratford park are directed at keeping children safe and encouraging adult exercise.

Saratoga Park, at Saratoga and Laurel roads, has several new additions, thanks to two \$25,000 grants from the Camden County freeholders.

"In the last two years, we had a new swing set put in, a walking track, a fence, and we just installed life trails exercise equipment for adults," said Bill D'Ambrosio, the borough's parks commissioner. "It's exercise equipment with five different units. It's the only one here in South Jersey."

The equipment allows adults to engage in about 15 different exercises, including push-ups and chin-ups. The LifeTrail adult fitness equipment was purchased from PlayWorld Systems, which sells LifeTrail equipment to retirement communities and parks.

"A lot of people can't afford a gym," said D'Ambrosio. "They can use the equipment and walk the track, and what's hap-



DOUGLAS M. BOVITT/Courier-Post

Grants from the Camden County freeholders helped pay for additions at Saratoga Park in Stratford.

pening now is people are coming over and teaching their grandchildren to ride bikes on the track. It's just really nice."

Adding a fence around the park was the primary reason that Stratford's park commission applied for the county grants.

"The park is on a main road — Laurel Road. I think people could have been afraid to have their children play there because of the traffic," said D'Ambrosio. "Now people come to the park because it has gates, and the children can run around freely."

"The whole thing is

safety," continued D'Ambrosio. "People come from other towns because they feel safe there and a lot of area parks don't have swings or a track."

For future park projects in Stratford, D'Ambrosio noted that the commission now has financing through the residents.

"Last year, we went out to the neighborhoods to get a petition signed that the park commission has its own budget," said D'Ambrosio. "Now we get about \$30,000 a year to start fixing up our local parks."

Land negotiator cited for saving tracts in Burlco

Matthew Johnson credits freeholders for commitment to preservation

By CAROL COMEGNO
Courier-Post Staff

MOUNT HOLLY

A nonprofit group that works to preserve land along the Rancocas Creek has honored Burlington County's open space coordinator.

The Rancocas Conservancy this week cited Matthew Johnson of Lumberton for his role in helping it to protect property along the stream.

Johnson's office has provided technical assistance and funding to aid the Conservancy's efforts, said Barbara Rich, a Moorestown environmentalist who is the organization's president. Over the past 18 years, the Conservancy has preserved more than 1,700 acres along the creek, using \$3 million in donations, Green Acres grants and other funding.

"Matt Johnson is one of the most talented land negotiators I have met," Rich said. "When others haven't been able to finalize land acquisition, he and the consultants the county uses have been successful like a silent army."

The Conservancy's holdings include several hundred acres of forested land in Tabernacle and hundreds of acres in the North Branch Preserve in Pemberton Township, which is owned in partnership with the Burlington County Boy Scout Council.

It also owns the Wurst tract in Medford.

Johnson said the county contributed \$200,000 toward the Conservancy's purchase of 150 acres of wildlife habitat in Pemberton Borough and the Cramer Farm property in Springfield and Pemberton Township.

The Mark Thomas Conservation Award — named



Photo provided

Matthew Johnson of Lumberton received the Mark Thomas Conservation Award for helping to protect land along the Rancocas Creek.

for the Conservancy's founder — cites Johnson's "unwavering dedication to fostering partnerships" that help preserve, protect and enhance the Rancocas Creek watershed.

"We've worked together and sat down with a number of land owners and helped both the landowner and the nonprofit understand the goals and figure out the best way to achieve their goals, whether it be tax benefits or easement options," Johnson said.

He said credit for his efforts should go to Burlington County's freeholders and their commitment to preservation and smart growth.

The Conservancy initiated the effort to preserve the Boundary Creek natural resource area in Moorestown that eventually led to its preservation by Burlington County several years ago.

"The Conservancy furthered what the county is now trying to do in creating a greenway along the Rancocas," he said.

Johnson said it has been a joy to work with conservancy members, calling them "visionaries" whose efforts have been effective.

Judge Solomon fractures skull in bicycle accident

By GEORGE MAST
Courier-Post Staff

CAMDEN

A Superior Court judge is recovering after fracturing his skull in several places during a bicycle accident Sunday morning.

Superior Court Judge Lee Solomon, who sits in Camden, was expected to be moved from Cooper University Hospital's Trauma Intensive Care Unit late Wednesday or today, according to his wife

Dianne Solomon.

Solomon said her husband, who has been a state judge for more than three years, is doing remarkably well but will need quite a while to fully recover.

"He is not going to be at the courthouse as soon as he thinks he is going to be at the courthouse," she said.

Solomon, 55, of Haddonfield, has also served as a freeholder, county prosecutor and a top member of the U.S. Attorney's Office.

In addition, he has served in the state Assembly, representing the 6th District. He also ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. House in 1992.

Solomon said her husband was training Sunday morning for a future bike ride to Ocean City to raise money for awareness about multiple sclerosis when he hit a pothole on Church Road in Medford and fell headlong into the street.

Aside from his head in-

juries, Solomon said her husband also fractured his hip and pelvis.

If he hadn't been wearing a helmet, Solomon said the injuries could have been much worse.

Solomon joked her husband has always liked to try new things, such as visit new restaurants, and now he has had a chance to visit Cooper's newly minted trauma center.

"He had to come see Cooper too," Solomon said.



LEE SOLOMON