

The Record

Local



Sunday's rain made it a day to stay inside, or at least under cover. 6



Residents shed tons of old electronics in a county recycling effort. 6

# Woman's life remembered in benefit



LESLIE BARBARO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Joe Johnson and Rolanda Hossack, friends of Jessica Gelok, standing where she was killed while walking along Route 23.

## Golf outing aids abused kids, animal shelter

**By KERI ANN FLACCOMIO**  
STAFF WRITER

WEST MILFORD — Jessica Gelok's big heart is what those close to her mention the most. So they're ensuring it's remembered, by supporting those who help the abused kids and stray animals Gelok cared so much about.

The township resident, struck and killed by an auto while walking along darkened Route 23 nearly two years ago, would have been 28 on Tuesday. Family and friends, doing their best to turn tragedy into charity, will mark that occasion with The Jessica Gelok Foundation's 2nd Annual Golf Outing at Ballyowen

Golf Club in Hamburg.

The pain of Gelok's passing still fresh, there's urgency in the mission.

"People forget over time," said close friend Rolanda Hossack, "and I just hope we can do everything in our power to remember the great girl she was — a great friend, a great family member."

All money raised through the non-profit organization benefits the Wayne Animal Shelter and Court Appointed Special Advocates — designed to help child victims of abuse and violence who are put through the court system.



GELOK

It costs about \$1,800 to fully support one child in the association. C.A.S.A. has agreed to provide updates on those sponsored by money from the foundation — and to call them "Jessica's children."

"It's great that they can turn their tragedy into something positive for society and for other people," said James Wilson, Passaic County chief assistant prosecutor, who reviewed the accident. "I think that speaks volumes about the kind of people they are. We're proud of them."

Gelok is also remembered at the site of her death, by a little cross and a simple plaque.

Those close to her, along with authorities who worked on the

### How to help

**To make a donation to The Jessica Gelok Foundation:**  
E-mail: JessicaGelokFoundation@gmail.com  
Make checks payable to: Jessica Gelok Foundation  
c/o 1400 Willowbrook Mall  
Wayne, NJ 07470  
**For more information visit:**  
JessicaGelok.com  
facebook.com/JessicaGelok

case, said the incident was an isolated tragedy, on an unlit stretch of highway dangerous for pedestrians and in need of safety precautions to prevent future accidents.

On the night of Oct. 19, 2008, See **BENEFIT** Page **L-2**

# Die-hard bikers brave storm

## 300 help to raise funds for children's hospital in Hackensack

**By JOAN VERDON**  
STAFF WRITER

A morning thunderstorm and scattered showers throughout the day Sunday dampened but didn't deter the 10th annual charity motorcycle run to raise money for the Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital at Hackensack University Medical Center.

About 300 motorcyclists gathered in the rain in a parking lot at the Meadowlands Sports Complex for the ride, about a third as many as usually ride when the run is held on a sunny day.

But because most of the money raised by the event comes from corporate sponsors, organizers expected they still would come close to their goal of raising \$500,000 for the children's hospital.

Joseph M. Sanzari, the prominent Bergen County contractor and chairman of the HUMC board of governors who is the lead sponsor of the event, said he tried to line up perfect weather

See **CHARITY** Page **L-2**

### Fast facts

**What is it?** The Hackensack University Medical Center Foundation's annual motorcycle run and raffle.

**Why is it held?** To raise money for the Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital at Hackensack University Medical Center.

**Results:** The run has raised more than \$2.5 million for the children's hospital over the past 10 years. This year's run is expected to raise about \$500,000.

**Sponsors:** Joseph M. Sanzari Inc., A. Macchione Bros., Power Concrete and more than three dozen other corporate sponsors.



AMY NEWMAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Despite some inclement weather, about 300 bikers turned out on Sunday for the 10th annual charity motorcycle run to raise money for the Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital at Hackensack University Medical Center.



# Oops! Absence of 'front door' at Overpeck is a delicate topic

Imagine building a sparkling new house but forgetting to install the front door. That's the problem right now at Bergen County's new 100-acre Overpeck Park.

The place has baseball and softball fields, an outdoor amphitheater, an expansive lake for kayaking, plenty of bathrooms and parking spaces — even digital signs to remind visitors that Dennis McNerney is the county executive and that tennis courts lights stay on until 10 p.m.

But how do you get into this joint?

Good question.

The park has been criticized for all manner of reasons, from no-bid contracts passed out by politicians to contractors, to mountains of debris dumped there, to decades of delays in finishing the job.

But when all the trees were finally planted and all the asphalt had dried and McNerney showed up in July to open the park and declare it a "model for good government," there was no main entrance.

Can we all say "oops"?

The long-anticipated park entrance on Fort Lee Road that had been used for years by construction trucks was nothing more than a pot-holed gravel driveway, blocked now by an iron gate. A sign, planted next to the fire hydrant and knee-high weeds told visitors to take a four-mile detour — and two passes over the New Jersey Turnpike — to the park's back door in an office park in Ridgefield Park.

Among Bergen officials, the lack of a main entrance is a delicate topic, especially in an election

See **KELLY** Page **L-6**

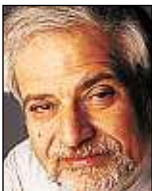


MIKE KELLY

RECORD COLUMNIST

# Homeless find an affordable place to get 'a leg up'

*Editor's note: As part of his Charity Watch column, Harry Lipman profiles a local non-profit with the goal of helping readers make wise choices about their contribution dollars.*



HARRY LIPMAN  
CHARITY WATCH

Creating one housing unit a year for homeless individuals and families isn't the kind of accomplishment that draws a lot of attention.

Do that for a decade, however, and you can have real impact on people's lives.

That, at least, is the approach of the DACKKs Group for Supportive Housing Development in Ramsey.

Since its formation in 2000, DACKKs

## Group uses grants, gifts to buy housing for needy to rent

has used government grants and private donations to buy 11 units — mostly condominiums — around Bergen County and rent them out at affordable rates to people who have become homeless.

The result: Today 17 people have permanent housing who otherwise would be living in shelters or on the streets. Altogether DACKKs has housed 27 people; none has ended up becoming homeless again. Those who have left DACKKs housing either were able to move into their own apartments or supportive units operated by human service agencies.

"We're very proud of the fact that none has gone back to the streets," said DACKKs president, Karen Amy.

Amy and the board members started DACKKs — the name is an acronym of

**DACKKs Group for Supportive Housing**  
PO Box 702  
Ramsey, NJ 07446  
201-236-9001  
dackksgroup.org

The DACKKs Group purchases scattered site housing units and rents them to homeless individuals and families at reduced rents.

the founders' initials — out of personal concerns about the lack of affordable housing in Bergen County, she said.

"I had been working at the county jail, and I got involved in the county human

services' committee," Amy said. "In 2000 the biggest part of the homeless problem was housing. There was nothing available."

DACKKs operates on an annual budget of about \$230,000 with Amy taking a small salary as its only paid employee; that helps explain its slow but steady pace of expansion. While Amy works to secure government housing grants, coordinates maintenance of the apartments and stays in touch with the various human service agencies, unpaid board Vice President Addie Caputi oversees most of the private fund raising.

DACKKs' tenants run the gamut of reasons for being homeless. They include victims of domestic abuse referred by Shelter Our Sisters, homeless families

who have been clients of Bergen's Family Promise (formerly the Interreligious Fellowship for the Homeless) and those made homeless because of a disability.

"To a large extent, the kind of tenant is driven by what the government grant requires," Amy explained. The group just completed buying five units with combined funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and Bergen County.

"The last project was for five chronically homeless, disabled adults," she added. "Right now it seems that's what the money is available for."

All of the government grants require DACKKs to raise some matching funds on its own. It had to come up with \$100,000 in donations to qualify for its most recent \$900,000 from the county and HUD.

See **DACKKs** Page **L-3**



# Charity: Motorcyclists brave weather to help fund hospital

From Page L-1

for the ride. "I made a phone call, but it didn't work," he joked, as dark clouds threatened to cancel the ride. After a 30-minute delay due to a torrential downpour, the skies cleared long enough for the cyclists to take off on their route across the George Washington Bridge and back, and into Rockland County and down the Palisades Parkway to Ross Dock Park in Fort Lee. Sanzari, 64, an avid motorcyclist, led the pack of riders on his Harley-Davidson Road King.

Joining Sanzari for the ride were motorcycle groups from throughout the state and metropolitan region, including the Christian Riders Motorcycle Club of Paterson, led by Father Mark Giordani of St. John's Church, and the Ghost Riders, a group of hospital employees that includes doctors, nurses and surgical technicians. The riders were escorted by 27 motorcycle police officers from East Rutherford, Carlstadt, Hackensack, Fort Lee and other departments. While Sanzari couldn't requisition perfect riding weather,

he was able to enlist the help of dozens of sponsors, and celebrity supporters like actor Vincent Curatola, who played "Johnny Sack" on "The Sopranos." Curatola, who is a member of the Hackensack University Medical Center Foundation's board, said Sanzari excels at hosting charity events. "What Joe Sanzari does, nobody does," Curatola said. "He's the prince." Curatola said he has ridden in past runs, but chose not to this year. "I punked out because of the

weather," he said, choosing instead to go from the Meadowlands to Fort Lee by car. The after-party had some of the princely Sanzari flavor Curatola referred to. In addition to the usual motorcycle run staple — a beer truck — partygoers had the option of champagne served in plastic champagne flutes. Food donors, including Sanzari's restaurants, Sanzari's New Bridge Inn and Stony Hill Inn, along with Dinallo's, Personal Touch Caterers, and Inserra Supermarkets, served sausage and peppers, meatball heroes, baked

ziti and other refreshments. Participants paid \$25 to ride, and also purchased \$100 raffle tickets for a chance to win a 2010 Harley-Davidson motorcycle donated by Sanzari. The other top sponsors of the event were A. Macchione Brothers construction company in Hackensack and Power Concrete in Newark. There were more than three dozen other corporate sponsors, including several construction-related firms and trade unions. HUMC President Robert C. Garrett said the annual event is an important fund-raiser for

the children's hospital and the money raised will help its efforts to expand important programs, such as pediatric pulmonology and gastrointestinal services. Robert Torre, executive vice president of the HUMC Foundation, said the 300 riders who braved the rain are the diehard supporters who show up every year, rain or shine. "These are the best guys in town, these bike riders," Torre said. "They've become members of the [hospital] family."

E-mail: verdon@northjersey.com

## Man on tracks killed by train

A NJ Transit train struck and killed a Paterson man on the Main Line west of the Paterson station, not far from where another man was killed by a train a week ago, officials said. Mark Popewiny, who would have turned 47 today, was sitting on the train tracks just before 10 p.m. Saturday, Penny Bassett Hackett of NJ Transit said. The train engineer reported sounding the horn and activating the emergency braking system, but "the man did not move and the train struck him," Bassett Hackett said. There were about 75 passengers on the westbound train. Passengers were delayed about an hour and transferred to another train. The death was the 21st train fatality in the state this year.

— Karen Rouse

# Benefit: Golf outing proceeds to help abused kids

From Page L-1

Gelok, 26, was coming home from work at Willowbrook Mall. She'd taken the bus to the stop off Route 23 northbound, south of Clinton Road. As she walked in the dark along the highway's northbound lanes, she was struck from behind by a 2000 Pontiac driven by an 18-year-old woman. Wilson said the woman briefly panicked and drove to a nearby church parking lot before calling 911. She initially was charged with knowingly leaving the scene of a motor vehicle accident resulting in death, but a grand jury declined to indict on that charge, leaving her with motor vehicle summonses. Don Gelok, Jessica's father, usually drove her home from the bus stop after work. But on the night of the accident, he was away in Boston; he'd left money and told Jessica to make sure she called a cab. It's unclear why Gelok was walking that night; the weather was windy, and the highway's stretch there is without illumina-

tion and has no guardrail or pedestrian walkway — only a service lane. "If you live in West Milford and you're trying to get home, there aren't really a lot of options for you," Hossack said. Hossack and Joe Johnson, operations manager for Willowbrook Mall and a close friend of the family, both agreed that the highway there could use better lighting so that no other family would have to experience the same kind of tragedy. But state highway authorities have no plan for improvements. "The area is very rural, so it's kind of hard to work with," township police Lt. Timothy Storbeck said. In 2009, Don Gelok joined with

family and friends to create The Jessica Gelok Foundation, hoping to carry on his daughter's love of animals and devotion to social work — she had worked for the state Division of Youth and Family services as an intern — and to support the causes she was passionate about. "I think for [Don] it's great therapy," Johnson said. "It keeps the positive things about her in his mind, over the tragedy." The first event held in Jessica's honor was a night at T.G.I. Friday's in Wayne. That inspired Don Gelok's idea to hold a follow-up gala: An annual golf outing to celebrate both his daughter's birthday and her kindness by bringing in more donations that would help others. Between the two events,

the foundation raised nearly \$10,000 for the Wayne Animal Shelter last year. At least 120 golfers are expected to attend this year's outing, and committee members hope to raise \$5,000 to \$6,000 to benefit C.A.S.A. Johnson noted that a golf outing is an effective way to gain corporate sponsorships, because a lot of businesses use the sport as a way to network and rendezvous with clients. The event, at the state's top-rated public golf course, costs \$175 per golfer, including a continental breakfast, lunch and dinner with a two-hour open bar. There also will be door prizes, 50-50 raffles and a silent sports memorabilia auction. Breakfast will begin at 8 a.m., followed by tee time at 9:30 a.m.

And those who loved Jessica are committed to more such good work by the Foundation in her name. "We plan on doing this for a long time," Don Gelok said. On Friday, as the big day approached, Johnson and Hossack rendezvoused with a reporter at the spot their friend had died, where the cross installed by Jessica's uncle now encourages people to both remember her and take care when traveling the area. At one point, they knelt to survey the plaque at the base of the cross. The summer grass had overgrown it, but they took care to clear it, so everyone could again see it's simple message: "Jessy we miss you."

E-mail: flaccomio@northjersey.com

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