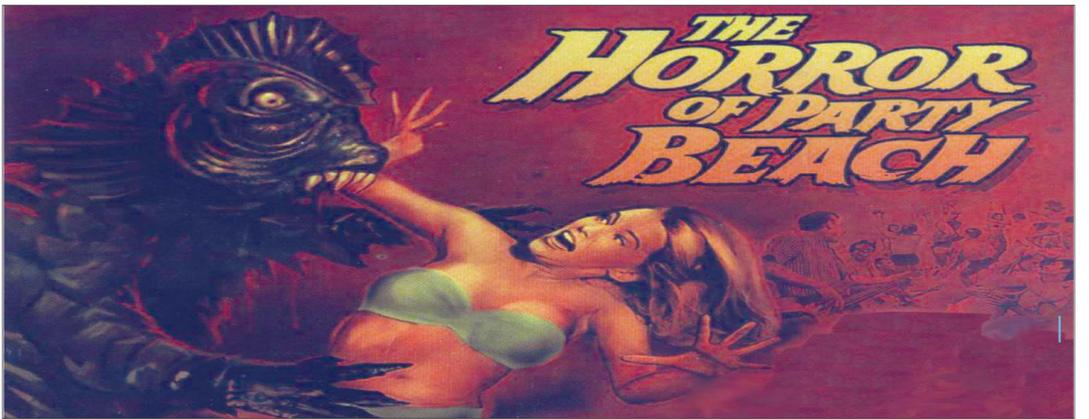


# STAMFORD'S B-SIDE

More than 40 years ago, the city's shoreline birthed a monster of a cult film.

See Page B1



\$1

THE  
Sunday  
August 19, 2007

# Stamford Times

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## A RICH HISTORY



Contributed photo

**BUILDING FAMILY** In 1985 this picture was taken for Real Estate Forum magazine and shows from the left, Robert N. Rich, F.D. Rich, Sr. and F.D. Rich, Jr. who recently passed away.

## RICH, DEAD AT 83, LEFT A LASTING ARTS INFLUENCE

By **STEVE KOBAK**  
skobak@thestamfordtimes.com

STAMFORD— Frank Rich, who helped architectural-ly transform the city's downtown during urban renewal along with his brother Robert M. Rich, died Thursday, Aug. 9.

Rich, 83, suffered from Parkinson's syndrome for the last five years but managed to write an autobiography, released this year on his July 4 birthday.

"He was a giant in terms of his vision and understanding of what a city needs in order to make a city dynamic," said Sandy Goldstein director of Downtown Special Services District. "He went about and made that happen." F.D. Rich Company, the Rich family development

► See **RICH**, Page C6

## West Nile found in two city parks

By **STEVE KOBAK**  
skobak@thestamfordtimes.com

STAMFORD— Mosquitoes trapped in Sleepy Hollow Park and Cove Island Park tested positive for the West Nile Virus.

Traps set in Stamford by the Connecticut Agriculture Experiment Station [CAES] yielded infected mosquitoes in three separate instances on July 30 through Aug. 2. No human cases have

been reported in the city. "We have very clear indications that the virus has built up to a high enough level that there is a threat of human transmission," said Dr. Theodore Andreadis, director of CAES' Mosquito Surveillance Program.

This summer, West Nile virus infected two Connecticut residents in Danbury and New London and infected mosquitoes were also

► See **WEST**, Page A6

## READ or BLEED

WWE wrestlers C.M. Punk, Mike "The Miz" Mizanin and Kristal pose for a photo shoot at the Ferguson Library in downtown Stamford for Teen Read Week.

TURN TO PAGE C4

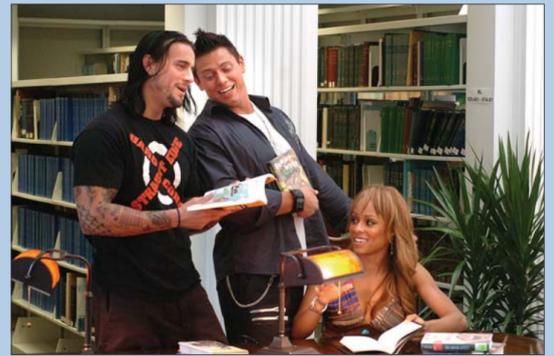


Photo by Alex von Kleydorff

## Unapproved hires, transfers, rile BOE

By **A.J. O'CONNELL**  
aoconnell@thestamfordtimes.com

STAMFORD — School board members say the 28 special education aides cut from the budget this summer should never have been hired in the first place.

Board president Martin Levine said the

schools hired 29 educational aides without board approval last year.

"For a peculiar reason, there was a sudden increase [in educational assistants] last year," said Levine, who referred to the hires as a "blip."

The reductions, which sparked outrage in the special education community this month, will

► See **SCHOOL**, Page A6

## Katz still has the Courage to Speak against drugs

Editor's note: Activism is defined by Webster's New World Dictionary as "a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action... in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue." This is the third in a series of articles exploring the stories of Lower Fairfield County's activists. They are the representatives of their respective issues — often their voices and faces are they only reason the public is aware of an issue; be it child advocacy,



environmentalism, immigration or animal rights. This series will explore our activists, our issues and the connections between the two.

By **A.J. O'CONNELL**  
aoconnell@thestamfordtimes.com

NORWALK — It's been 11 years since Ginger Katz began telling the story of her son Ian Eaccarino's death. In the decade since her 20-year-old son died of a heroin overdose in her home, Katz, 59, has been a tireless advocate for drug prevention. She travels the nation, delivering 100 presentations every year to thou-

► See **KATZ**, Page C6



Photo by Alex von Kleydorff

Norwalk resident Ginger Katz created the Courage to Speak Foundation.

## Sports

On the regional and national tennis levels, these players have made names and waves for themselves. Meet the stars and the staff of Stamford's premier tennis academy. **SEE PAGE C1**



## Inside News

Stamford residents of Indian decent celebrate Indian Independence Day on Saturday. The mayor helped other dignitaries raise the Indian flag at government center and the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin [GOPIO] spread the message of communication **SEE PAGE A2**



## Business

At 92, Pete Perillo still has a workday routine. He says a prayer and then heads off in uniform to guard the city courthouse. Perillo works as a judicial marshal in Stamford Superior civil court division. He is one of a growing number of people for whom retirement age has lost its meaning. **SEE PAGE D1**



### SALE THIS WEEK

The **Treasure House**, a thrift shop on 5 Isaac Street, Norwalk operated by The Woman's Board of Norwalk Hospital, week of August 13 — **MOST ITEMS ON SALE** (Not accepting donations this week) Closed August 20 - Sept. 4



The right care is right here.

# Rich

► Continued from Page A1

firm, fashioning the city from a sleepy industrial town into a lively metropolis after securing a contract to redevelop the city in 1960.

"Most people know Frank because he, his brother and his family had a vision of what Stamford could become," said Mayor Dannel M. Malloy. "They argued for that vision and successfully convinced the city to commit to that. The rest is history."

F.D. Rich's conference room on the 19th floor of One Landmark Plaza, a Rich-built project and the city's tallest building, gives a panoramic view of the firm's accomplishments; from St. John's Towers, perched on both sides of Tresser Blvd. across the street from

Government Center, to the Stamford Marriott, where he invented HABSsystem, a patented architectural innovation.

The Stamford Center for the Arts, Rich's most cherished accomplishment in downtown's revitalization, sits to the right of the view.

"For 20 years and to his dying day, he spent an enormous amount of time working on the Stamford Center for the Arts," said Robert Rich. "He made it all happen. So, that's his greatest achievement."

The center conformed to Rich's vision of creating a "well-rounded city," according to his autobiography. Separated into two segments, The Palace Theater and the main center, the arts space united Rich's love of opera with his developmental vision.

"I think it speaks volumes about Stamford, in general, and Frank Rich, in particular," said Mike Cacace, president of the Stamford Center for the Arts' board of directors, "that he had the vision to see what an important institution the Stamford Center for the Arts could be."

Prior to the Stamford Center for the Arts, city operas and symphonies were regimented to high school auditoriums and suffered from poor acoustics, limited stage room and sub-par equipment, according to Rich's autobiography.

"When you have to operate out of a high school auditorium, it takes the professionalism away from it," said Goldstein, "no matter how good the actors are."

As urban renewal progressed,

the corporation-dominated downtown failed to draw crowds, as it lacked stores and evening entertainment, according to Cacace.

"In order to make what was a successful business urban renewal into a truly dynamic urban center," said Cacace, "people needed to be brought downtown not just during the workday but afterwards."

Rich, a devout opera enthusiast who served on the Stamford State Opera board, envisioned a "mini-Lincoln Center" which would attract multitudes of people to the downtown area. In addition to his personal investment, he raised money for the center from the local business community and federal, state and local government.

"He put his money where his mouth is," said Goldstein. "Not

many people do that and that's the sign of a real visionary."

He founded the Stamford Center for the Arts in 1978 to garner support for the arts, eventually raising \$50 million for his vision. F.D. Rich renovated the newly-acquired Stamford Theater.

Soon the company began the long process of renovating the Palace Theater and building the Rich Forum, a theater named after his family. Rich Forum opened in September 1992 and an October 2003 gala marked the reopening of the Palace Theater.

Cacace the center attracts around 200,000 people to Stamford's downtown yearly and he attributes the popular restaurants surrounding the center to Rich's vision.

"By bringing people downtown, it made people feel safe," said Cacace. "It put people on the sidewalks and it added life to downtown."

Frank Rich still maintains influence over Stamford's downtown, according to friends and family. Rich worked on future developments like Trump Parc. Ken Wesler, Stamford Center for the Arts executive director, said he programmed big band concerts into the 2007-2008 season as "a Valentine to Rich."

"I think that downtown will be a lasting tribute to Frank Rich," said Goldstein. "His name is synonymous with what he build downtown in those fabulous buildings and what he saw for the arts."

# Katz

► Continued from Page A1

sands of students, parents and communities. She developed a drug prevention curriculum for elementary, middle and high school students. She and her husband Larry Katz this year published "Sunny's Story," which details Ian's descent into drug use from the family dog's perspective. This fall, she will unveil "Courageous Parenting 101," a curriculum for parents which will help them prevent and identify drug use.

The Katzes' Courage to Speak Foundation has expanded significantly since Ginger Katz decided she would tell people the truth about her son's overdose on the night before his funeral, and she's garnered countless awards and accolades for her activism. Despite her success, Katz says her foundation started humbly; her first presentation was to a class of 22 sixth graders in a Greenwich classroom.

"I was afraid of public speaking, and I was gripping the podium," said Katz. "And I looked up into

their eyes and I saw Ian's eyes. And I thought, '22 kids are listening to Ian's story. Ian had a hard time listening to me and 22 kids are listening to Ian's story.'"

Katz's activism did not begin in 1996. She advocated fiercely for children with special needs after her daughter, Candace Eaccarino, was born with Down syndrome in 1969. As a 20-year-old mother, she fought with doctors and educators who told her that her daughter would never read. Later, Katz founded the first Parent-Teacher Association for families with children who have special needs and lobbied to have the special education students graduate with the rest of their class. Eaccarino, 38, who now lives in a group home and works in Norwalk, is a veteran athlete with the Special Olympics. Her latest hobby, said Katz, is power lifting.

"Oh, I was a renegade," she laughed, remembering her advocacy for her daughter.

When her son became the reason for her advocacy, Katz was no less

fierce.

Ian Eaccarino died on Sept. 10, 1996, relapsing into heroin use after a summer of being clean, going to rehabilitation, counseling, and reconnecting with his family. Eaccarino admitted his relapse to his mother that night and said he wanted to seek treatment the next day. In the morning, Katz found him dead in his bedroom.

She and her husband knew they would face difficult questions about her son's death from the mourners at his wake and funeral. The doctors advice: tell people he died of an aneurysm.

"At the wake, we were telling people 'We're going to wait for the toxicology report, we're going to wait for the toxicology report,'" said Katz. But at the funeral the next day, Katz faced the other mourners and told them the truth: her son overdosed on heroin.

Her change of heart came to her in a vision the night before the funeral.

"I visualized speaking out on an international level," she said. She

woke her husband and told him that she wanted to speak out. Larry said yes immediately, and the next day Katz — who had thought she would not be able to attend the funeral — got up, went to the church and told anyone who asked how her son really died. She's never stopped.

"I want people to start talking about the problem," said Katz. She believes that it was the silence of her son and his peers that got him hooked on drugs, and ultimately, killed him. Nobody seemed to be talking about addicted teens, 11 years ago, she said.

"I thought I was the only one," she said. But after she lost her son, Katz began to hear about other parents who lost their kids to drugs. Today she runs a long-standing support group for bereaved parents.

Katz put together her four-course "Courageous Parenting 101" course to keep other families from going through what those parents have experienced. The course, which was written but will not be facilitated by Katz, explores addiction, what drugs can do to an ado-

lescent brain, why kids use drugs, ways to talk to a child about drugs and what to do if your child is using.

"Parents are the number one key to preventing drug use," said Katz. "One in three parents talks to their children about drugs, and they have a 57 percents better chance of their kids not using drugs."

The program will debut in Brookfield this fall, but locally, will be rolled out at West Rocks Middle School's Family Night in January.

West Rocks School is a kind of home base for The Courage to Speak. A few years ago, she worked with principal West Rocks' principal, Lynne Moore and health teacher York Mario to develop and debut her drug prevention health curriculum.

"She's quite a taskmaster" said Moore. "I think I've had more meetings with her than I have with anyone."

Moore said the relationship between the Courage to Speak and West Rocks grew from a 2001 presentation Katz gave for the school's

parent-teacher organization. She's looking forward to hosting the parents' class.

"It's been a really wonderful partnership," said Moore.

Father Richard Murphy was the Katzes' parish priest at St. Thomas Church when Eaccarino passed away. He remembered first seeing Katz's determination to make some good come out of her tragedy at a bereavement meeting in 1996.

She gave her second Courage to Speak presentation at St. Thomas, before an audience of 300. It was a fervent discussion, said Murphy, and it wasn't much different from the talks Katz gives now.

"She does them as passionately now as she did back then, which is impressive," said Murphy.

Those presentations, says Katz, are at the heart of the Courage to Speak. Yes, she is the face of her organization, but her son's story is the most important part of her mission.

"It's not the messenger, it's the message," she says. "I want to let people know."

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