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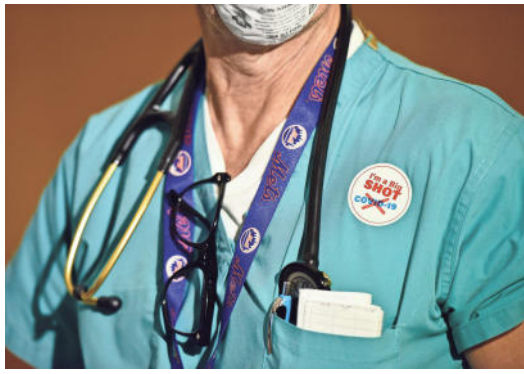
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State COVID-19 hospitalizations surpasses 5,100

NEWS, 9A

Merger between Lunch Break, Family Promise may save lives

Jerry Carino
Asbury Park Press
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

Christina Lane ran a cleaning business before she fell on hard times, between the pandemic and trying to raise a young son by herself.

"I was living out of my car and in hotels, just really struggling," she said. "I had a lot of trouble with being a single mom and not having any help."

Then she connected with Family Promise of Monmouth County.

"They were literally lifesavers," Lane said. "They helped me with housing. They were there for emotional support. They've literally given me hope again."

Family Promise found Lane and her 4-year-old a

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place to live in Red Bank and also connected her with fellow nonprofit Lunch Break, which helped her repair her car so she could resume working — and provided a life-skills coach for a mentor.

"I was feeling really down and defeated," Lane, 35, said. "They've really helped inspire me to start my cleaning business back up."

Lane's story is an example of the synergy between

See **MERGER, Page 4A**

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ASBURY PARK PRESS

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Flu season off to fast start — on top of COVID omicron surge

Lindy Washburn
NorthJersey.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

The flu is rebounding in New Jersey, after historically low rates of influenza during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns and social distancing of last winter. The state is on track for a bad flu season, with infections high across every region, new data from the state Health Department shows.

Confirmed cases of flu in New Jersey have climbed higher at a quicker rate than in previous flu seasons, even compared to pre-pandemic years. Flu vaccination rates across the country are significantly lower than they were last year and more people are traveling and gathering.

Plus, the majority of cases, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control, are of a strain of flu —

See **INFECTIONS, Page 4A**

Brick police develop intensive drug education program



Brick Patrolman Sean Flynn speaks about the dangers of vaping to fifth grade students at the Lanes Mill Elementary School in the township. PHOTOS BY THOMAS P. COSTELLO/ASBURY PARK PRESS

Attorneys: Lodzinski's murder conviction reversal was just

Suzanne Russell
Central Jersey Home News Tribune
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

Standing in a Middlesex County courtroom on March 16, 2016, attorney Gerald Krovatin told 17 jurors in his opening statement that his client, Michelle Lodzinski, did not "purposely and knowingly" cause the 1991 death of her first born son, Timothy Wiltsey.

Krovatin said Lodzinski was not the monster as she had been portrayed. She was a good mother who loved her son and she had never admitted to anyone — family, friends, police or the FBI — to killing the boy.

See **LODZINSKI, Page 2A**

'AS REAL AS IT GETS'

Nicolas Fernandes
Asbury Park Press
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

Brick police officers noticed something when they started interviewing drug overdose victims in 2019 — they needed to do more to reach students than just one or two drug prevention classes.

And so the department decided to "get real" with the youth in town: by developing an intensive drug prevention curriculum aimed at students in fifth, seventh, ninth and 11th grades.

"We're going to have a little more of a real conversation in seventh grade, a little bit more of a real conversation in ninth grade and then by junior year it's as real as it gets," Sgt. Jim Kelly said.

These interviews were part of a new initiative called Because We Care, in which officers from the communi-

See **EDUCATION, Page 5A**



A Lanes Mill Elementary School fifth grader's DARE book is shown during Flynn's presentation about the dangers of vaping. More grade levels will be added to the program.

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USA TODAY
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