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Sheriff's Officers, Marshals Arrest Abdullah Associate

ELIZABETH — Union County Sheriff's Officers and U.S. Marshals on Friday arrested a city man suspected of being a member of a drug ring run by wanted felon Luqman Abdullah, Union County Sheriff Ralph Froehlich said.

Hamid Holloway, 30, was arrested without incident in Newark on a no-bail

'Taste of Cranford' to Benefit Response Fund

CRANFORD — United Way of Greater Union County and the Cranford Community Council will host a "Taste of Cranford" on Sunday, February 21, from 5 to 8 p.m. at the Cranford Community Center, 220 Walnut Avenue in Cranford.

Attendees will be offered a varied selection of appetizers, entrees, desserts and wines. Advance tickets are \$25, and \$30 at the door.

Proceeds from this event will benefit United Way of Greater Union County's Special Response Fund. The 2010 designee will be Cranford Family Care.

Tickets are available at the following locations: Cranford Family Care, 61 Myrtle Street; Cranford Public Library; Milk Money, 6 Eastman Street; Periwinkles, 17 North Union Avenue, and Rockin' Joe, 5 Eastman Street.

Tickets can also be purchased online at brownpapertickets.com/event/95612. For questions or more information, contact Jackie Park Albaum at (908) 353-7171, extension no. 112, jackie.albaum@uwguc.org, or visit uwguc.org/tasteofcranford.

warrant for conspiracy to distribute drugs and racketeering, according to authorities.

Holloway's capture was the most recent in a series of arrests resulting from an investigation into Abdullah's drug ring, dubbed Operation Red Zone. On January 14, Union County Sheriff's Officers arrested Lamont Harris, another Abdullah associate wanted on drug and racketeering charges.

Abdullah, 27, is an alleged Bloods gang member who is believed to have led a violent drug ring that operated in Essex and Union Counties. He has been at large since April 2009.

According to authorities, Abdullah rose to prominence when he allegedly participated in the shooting of a rival drug dealer in the trunk of his car, assisted by three other men, including twin brothers Naim and Hamid Holloway.

All four were convicted for their roles in the shooting. Following this, Abdullah gained a bloody stranglehold on the cocaine trade in that area of Elizabeth and later expanded into portions of Newark. Anyone who sold cocaine on Abdullah's turf had to purchase it from him or face violent retaliation, authorities said.

On April 23, 2009, police attempted to arrest Abdullah in the parking lot of a mall in Edison. Abdullah, a former Elizabeth high school track star and college football player, led the police on a foot-chase through the parking lot, across six lanes of traffic and into an apartment complex, where he disappeared in the night amidst dozens of buildings.



AWARDS NIGHT...Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7th) recently participated in the second annual Kenilworth Awards Night sponsored by VFW Post 2230. Pictured, from left to right, are: Veteran Edward Miller of Kenilworth, Kenilworth Mayor Kathi Fiamingo, Rep. Lance, Former Cranford Mayor Barbara Bilger, Kenilworth Fire Chief Lewis Giordino, and Kenilworth Police Officer and Veteran Daniel Sims.

Lance to Hold Town Meeting, Feb. 6

BRANCBURG — Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7th) will hold a Town Hall meeting on Saturday, February 6, at 11 a.m. at the Raritan Valley Community College Conference Center, located at 118 Lamington Road in Branchburg. All Seventh Congressional District residents are invited to attend. The district includes towns in Hunterdon, Somerset, Middlesex and Union Counties.

Mr. Lance will take questions on the issues including the economy, health care, federal spending and out-of-control debt, and share his views. Addition-

ally, members of Mr. Lance's staff will be available to assist residents who are experiencing difficulties with federal agencies, such as the IRS, Social Security Administration, Veterans' Affairs, the State Department.

For directions see raritanval.edu/about/directions.html. Seating may be limited. The event is free and open to the public.

For more information, call (908) 788-6900.

State Revenue Falls \$1.2 Billion Short in Current Budget

TRENTON — State revenue collections continue to be less than the amounts estimated, according to the Christie Administration. Most significantly is the revenue shortfall of its sales and corporate business taxes of \$442 million and \$180 million, respectively. The State expects its estimate of realty transfer and insurance premium taxes to be short by \$200 million. The state projects an aggregate net revenue shortfall of \$1.2 billion for Fiscal Year 2010, which ends June 30. Also a funding shortage and additional spending needs is projected to total \$2.2 billion.

"We have a commitment to anyone with a vested interest in New Jersey — taxpayers, investors and entrepreneurs — to be transparent about our fiscal and economic conditions," Governor Chris Christie said. "It is a priority of this Administration to be open and forthcoming not only in the realities of the challenges we currently face, but the process with which we aim to close the budget gap, restructure spending and prepare for next year's budget. We owe the people of New Jersey nothing less."

In order to address the shortfall, the Governor's Office \$260 million in savings is under consideration, including a requirement to have school districts offset state school aid payments with their accumulated surplus balances. Another \$20 million will come from the implementation of Powerball, and \$150 million in additional federal Recovery Act

payments to offset costs from the Earned Income Tax Credit program.

Due to deteriorating economic conditions, the state unemployment rate reached 10.1 percent in December. The state's Unemployment Compensation Fund is at \$3.3 billion in unemployment benefits. The Fund has been depleted and the state has borrowed approximately \$1.1 billion from the U.S. Department of Labor to provide for benefits.

"Because the Fund is in deficit, the current law provides for an increase in the employer tax rate. It is expected that the employer tax rate to be calculated for Fiscal Year 2011 will be significantly higher than the present rate, resulting in a total estimated increase of approximately \$1 billion. However, no change in the employee rate is anticipated," according to the Governor's Office.

Estrada Serving on Immigration Panel

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Union County Freeholder Angel Estrada is serving on an Immigration Reform Task Force created by the National Association of Counties.

The panel briefed congressional staffers on January 13 on the role counties play in providing public safety and health to persons residing in their boundaries, regardless of citizenship status.

Mr. Estrada emigrated from Cuba 44 years ago as a 10-year-old refugee.

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