

**Prosecutor's Corner**  
**Roselle Man Pleads Guilty To String of Bank Robberies**



**From the Office of Theodore Romankow  
Union County Prosecutor**

ROSELLE - Baron Warren, 44, of Roselle pled guilty last week to a string of bank robberies and attempted bank robberies he committed within a week's time, according to the Union County Prosecutor's Office. He faces up to 14 years in prison when sentenced by State Superior Court Judge Scott Moynihan on Friday, June 1.

According to Union County Prosecutor Anelise Sieber, he entered the Valley National Bank in Roselle Park on January 3 and handed a teller a note stating, "Don't do nothing stupid." The teller handed Warren \$1,250 in cash.

At about 10 a.m. on January 9, Warren walked into the Sovereign Bank on Union Square in Elizabeth. He gave a teller a note that stated, "Nobody is going to get hurt." The teller asked what he wanted, at which time Warren asked for the note back and left the bank, authorities said.

At 1:10 p.m. the same day, Warren returned to the Valley National Bank in Roselle Park. "Warren approached a teller who recognized him from his first 'visit' on January 3," Ms. Sieber said. "The woman excused herself and walked over to alert the bank manager. As the manager approached him, Warren walked out of the bank."

At 2:30 p.m., authorities said Warren entered Sovereign Bank on North Broad Street in Elizabeth and passed a note demanding money to a teller, who handed him three or four \$100 bills.

"He told the teller, 'Give me more. Don't be stupid.' Then he appeared to get nervous and he left the bank," Ms. Sieber said.

According to Ms. Sieber, on January 9, a Roselle Park police sergeant driving west on East First Avenue near Chestnut Street in Roselle saw Warren, blocked his Oldsmobile with his patrol car and arrested him.

Authorities said Warren has had convictions for theft, resisting arrest and possession of drugs in New Jersey and drug convictions in New York and North Carolina.

**Elizabeth Woman Faces Five Years for Drug Possession**  
ELIZABETH - Markeith Simms of Elizabeth faces five years in prison after being found guilty of possessing cocaine and possessing cocaine with the intent to distribute it, according to the prosecutor's office.

The jury came to its verdict after 30 minutes of deliberation following a three-day trial in the courtroom of

State Superior Court Judge James Heimlich.

According to Assistant Prosecutor Jillian Reyes, armed with a warrant, 13 officers went to the multiple-family dwelling where Simms lived on July 12, 2006. Police found a white tube sock filled with 46 glass vials with green caps, all containing cocaine, at which point Simms was arrested.

Simms, who has one prior felony conviction for drug possession, will be sentenced on June 1, authorities said.

**UC Prosecutor's Office, Fed. DEA Conduct Wiretaps, Indict 20**

ELIZABETH - In early 2005, the Union County Prosecutor's Office in conjunction with the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) conducted "one of the largest and most successful wiretaps in state history" - a wiretap investigation that resulted in 20 indictments.

On February 5, 2006, Wilson Valdez of Elizabeth, the primary target of the wiretap, pled guilty to racketeering, distribution of drugs and possession with the intent to distribute drugs, according to authorities.

Valdez was sentenced on April 20 to 20 years in prison, 10 of which must be served before he can apply for parole. According to Assistant Prosecutor Julie Peterman, Valdez distributed between three and six kilos of heroin and "significant amounts" of cocaine on a weekly basis. One kilo of heroin can net \$60,000 wholesale and up to \$200,000 on the street.

Authorities said State Trooper Moises Hernandez, 39, who warned Valdez he was under surveillance, pled guilty to money laundering, witness tampering, conspiracy and official misconduct in April 2006 and has been sentenced to 24 years in prison.

"This was a perfect example of cooperation between local and federal government agencies," Union County Prosecutor Theodore Romankow said, "and a perfect example of cooperation between United States agencies and Colombian authorities. We are all fighting the drug scourge. Together we will beat it."

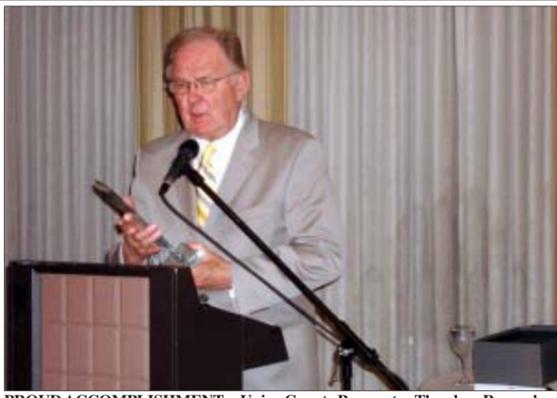
**Police Seek Elizabeth Man Following Jury Conviction**

ELIZABETH - On April 10, a jury convicted Jesus Colon, 21, of Elizabeth of eluding police and aggravated assault after a one-day trial. Colon, however, fled before the verdict came. A warrant has been issued for his arrest. He faces up to 20 years in prison, according to the prosecutor's office.

Colon was accused of eluding police on September 1, 2006. Assistant Prosecutor Jason Gareis said an Elizabeth police officer was on patrol when he and his partner saw Colon speed past. Colon refused to pull over and sped off.

Colon's car swerved as it approached a drawbridge and veered into a ditch, striking a large cement block adjacent to a utility pole. Officers pulled Colon and two passengers from the car, which had flames coming from under the hood. The officers arrested Colon, who has one prior conviction for unlawful possession of a handgun.

Anyone with information on Colon's location should call local police or the Crimestoppers' anonymous tip line at (908) 654-TIPS. Police are offering a reward for information leading to Colon's arrest.



**PROUD ACCOMPLISHMENT...** Union County Prosecutor Theodore Romankow accepts an award from the Union County Educational Services Foundation on April 26 for his work in educating the public about Shaken Baby Syndrome.

**Prosecutor Lauded for Work On Shaken Baby Syndrome**

AREA - Union County Prosecutor Theodore Romankow's work in educating the public about Shaken Baby Syndrome was recognized April 26 by the Union County Educational Services Foundation, which honored him at its annual awards dinner.

The UCESF is an organization dedicated to raising funds for educational programs and services to children who are physically, socially, emotionally or intellectually challenged.

As he accepted the award, Mr. Romankow said he was humbled by the recognition. "At the prosecutor's office, our main focus is prosecuting crimes, but it's not our only focus," he said. "If we can educate the public about the dangers of Shaken Baby Syndrome we can actually prevent not only a crime, but a tragedy."

During his tenure as prosecutor, which began in 2002, Mr. Romankow set in motion a program to educate new parents, child-care providers and babysitters about the growing epidemic of death and disability suffered by infants and small children who have been shaken by caregivers. He said he was able to enlist the services of law enforcement, educators and government officials, among others, to assist in the education program.

In order to reach the youngest caregivers, the Union County Prosecutor's Office requested and received a grant from the New Jersey State Bar Foundation to underwrite literature, educational films and Shaken Baby Syndrome demonstration dolls to teach middle and high school students throughout the county about the dangers inherent in shaking a baby.

But Mr. Romankow said he wanted the education of new parents to begin before the newborn is even taken home from the hospital. The prosecutor's office then entered into an agreement with the St. Barnabas Health Care System to begin an educational program for new parents and caregivers.

St. Barnabas has approximately 18,000 births in its member hospitals per year. Mr. Romankow said his dream is to expand the training programs to every hospital in New Jersey.

**Voters Approve 78.1 Percent Of Local School Budgets**

TRENTON - New Jersey voters on April 17 approved 78.1 percent of local school budgets in the annual school elections.

"School elections represent the only opportunity for citizens to directly have a say in how their tax dollars are spent," said Commissioner of Education Lucille Davy, a former Westfield resident. "I believe that Governor Corzine's commitment to increasing state aid and new limits on how much local school budgets can increase from one year to the next have made a big difference this year and have contributed to the dramatic rise in local support."

"This year's approval rate represents a significant increase from last year's rate of 53.4 percent," Mrs. Davy said. "It also represents the highest rate of voter approval since 2001, when 81.1 percent of voters approved their local budgets."

She said the Governor's 2007-2008 budget contains the first increase in state aid for most school districts in five years. The \$580 million increase includes \$61.9 million in additional state funds to help underwrite local costs for pensions, Social Security and medical costs, which will total \$2.3 billion in the coming year.

State aid for education in the coming year totals nearly \$11 billion, about one-third of the state's budget for the 2008 fiscal year.

Reported results do not include the Somerset County districts of Bound Brook and Manville and the Essex County school district of Fairfield.

all of which experienced severe flooding from the April 15 nor'easter and received court permission to postpone elections.

Because Fairfield also sends students to West Essex regional public schools, election results from that school district will not be available until Fairfield's results are counted.

In addition to the base budgets, voters approved 45 of 91 separate ballot questions. Voter participation, at 13.9 percent, dropped from 15.7 percent last year.

For election details, see nj.gov/education/data/vote/07.

**Two Rivers GOP Honors MacRitchie**

TWO RIVERS - The Two Rivers Republican Conference honored Kenneth MacRitchie for his service on the Westfield Town Council at a reception on April 11 at the Shadowbrook Restaurant in Shrewsbury.

John Minton, Conference chairman, presented Mr. MacRitchie with a framed resolution from the state legislature commemorating his service.

Mr. MacRitchie served on Westfield's council from 1990 to 1994. He chaired its solid waste committee in 1990 and its transportation, parking and traffic committee from 1991 to 1994. He also represented Westfield on the Union County League of Municipalities and the Community Development Block Grant Commission.

Prior to his service on the council, Mr. MacRitchie said, he wrote a proposal to the council successfully asking it to repeal Westfield's McCarthy-era censorship ordinance and abolish the town's board of censors.

"I am pleased to be honored by an organization with a reputation for spotlessly clean integrity," he said.

The Two Rivers Republican Conference encompasses Fair Haven, Little Silver, Oceanport, Red Bank, Rumson and Tinton Falls in Monmouth County.

**Club Offers Variety Of Outdoor Activities**

COUNTY - The Union County Hiking Club offers a variety of hiking and bicycling activities, most of which take place in central and northern New Jersey. Annual membership dues are \$10. Guests are invited to participate in several outings. For a complimentary schedule, please call (908) 527-4900.

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**VFW Sets Award Luncheon for May 6**

GARWOOD - Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6807 of Garwood and Westfield and the Ladies Auxiliary will hold their annual Loyalty Day Awards Luncheon on Sunday, May 6, at 1 p.m. at the post home, located at 221 South Avenue in Garwood.

They will present awards to youth scholarship winners and outstanding teacher, police officer, fire department and EMT heroes.

A buffet luncheon will be served. Tickets are \$15 per person; a cash bar will be available. For tickets, call Dennis Clark at (908) 247-5389 or Catherine Madara at (908) 789-1108. Proceeds go to veterans, community service programs and VFW PAC. The groups appreciate donations.



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