

Photo by Stephen Cooney

# J-Div Journal

July, 2009

From left: Amanda Rouch and Mariam Nik

**J-DIV JOURNAL** IS A PRODUCTION OF HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY'S J-DIV PROGRAM.

**STORIES AND PHOTOS BY** TATIANA BERNARD, HEMPSTEAD HIGH SCHOOL; BRIANNA BYRD, SACHEM HIGH SCHOOL NORTH; DANIELLE EVANS, HEMPSTEAD HIGH SCHOOL; TRISHA MAHARAJ, NEW HYDE PARK HIGH SCHOOL; MARIAM NIK, W. T. CLARKE HIGH SCHOOL; KAITLIN PRISCO-BUXBAUM, PLAINEDGE HIGH SCHOOL; AMANDA ROUCH, WEST HEMPSTEAD HIGH SCHOOL; JACQUELINE SALO, COMMACK HIGH SCHOOL; NISHOBA SNOW, UNIONDALE HIGH SCHOOL; SHEREEN TORBATI, KELLENBERG MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL.

**HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY MENTORS:** STEPHEN COONEY, '09; DAVID GORDON, '10; AKEEM MELLIS, '10; DELIA PAUNESCU, '09; A. J. VOELPEL, '09;

**GUEST LECTURER:** ANN GOLOB, DIRECTOR, LONG ISLAND INDEX.

**FACULTY LECTURERS:** JAMES COHEN; CLAUDIA MCGIVNEY; DOUGLAS MORROW; SUSAN MURPHY;

**CO-COORDINATORS:** ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR CAROL T. FLETCHER; ASSISTANT PROFESSOR PETER W. GOODMAN.

### **HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION**

**DEAN SYBIL A. DELGAUDIO**

**ASSOCIATE DEAN CLIFFORD JERNIGAN**

**CHAIR, DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM, MEDIA STUDIES AND PUBLIC RELATIONS ROBERT PAPPER**

*J-DIV IS PARTIALLY FUNDED BY THE RAUCH FOUNDATION*

*J-DIV IS A PROGRAM FOR ASPIRING HIGH SCHOOL JOURNALISTS AT THE HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION. A GROUP OF 10 STUDENTS FROM NASSAU AND SUFFOLK HIGH SCHOOLS WERE CHOSEN FOR TWO WEEKS OF INTENSIVE STUDY IN ALL ASPECTS OF JOURNALISM, INCLUDING REPORTING, WRITING, RECORDING VIDEO AND AUDIO, USING WIKIS AND CREATING WEBSITES. THEY PREPARED STORIES ABOUT THEIR COMMUNITIES ON SUBJECTS RANGING FROM AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND BUSINESS CONDITIONS TO TEEN PREGNANCY AND DOMESTIC ABUSE. THEIR COMPLETED WORK IS PRESENTED ONLINE AND IN PRINT.*



Photo by Susan Murphy

First row, from left: David Gordon, Mariam Nik, Shereen Torbati, Nishoba Snow, Jackie Salo  
Second row, from left: Prof. Carol Fletcher, Delia Paunescu, Amanda Rouch, Akeem Mellis, Trisha Maharaj, A.J. Voelpel, Kaitlin Prisco-Buxbaum, Stephen Cooney, Tatiana Bernard, Danielle Evans, Brianna Byrd, Prof. Peter W. Goodman

# Help for Victims of Domestic Abuse

*National coalition offers advice and comfort*

**By Nishoba Snow**  
*J-DIV reporter*

Whether it is a local couple around the corner, or celebrities like Rihanna, no one is immune from having physical actions taken against them. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence tries to help those who have been affected by violence within their homes. The coalition operates programs that helps victims of violence, including pregnant mothers, children, teens, adults, and the elderly.

"Anyone can be a victim of violence," said Dale, who works in the coalition's Hempstead office (she said it is the organization's policy not to reveal last names).

Dale went on to explain the effects of abuse on the mothers and their children:

According to the organization's pamphlet about protection for pregnant women, one out of six pregnant women is physically abused during her pregnancy. Pregnant mothers usually go through either emotional, economic and/or physical abuse.

Emotional abuse can cause the woman to feel worthless or blamed for the pregnancy. In some cases, women may choose to undergo abortions or hurt themselves to prevent their pregnancy. Nevertheless, some women have their babies, and because their partner may be angry about the birth of the child or children, the mothers may take out their anger on the babies. Financial trouble also limits the mother in being able to support the baby.

Meanwhile, the other partner usually tries to control the decisions over money and medical care, which is greatly needed during pregnancy. Women need money to cover the finances of a baby, and medical care

is needed to make sure that there are no pregnancy-related complications.

***"Name-calling, humiliation and shouting can lead to very harmful things, such as hitting and even rape."***

Consequences to the child include bad health or very low body weight; the woman may even have and can also lead to the mother having a miscarriage. If the parents stay in an abusive relationship, the child will grow up in that environment.

Children raised in such homes can be affected emotionally, in terms of behavior, and in the child's mental and physical development. Most children whose parents are in abusive relationships can tend to feel that they are the cause of their parents fighting. With this problem playing such a big role in their lives, children may not know what to do and can feel helpless.

The violence can also develop anger and sadness, which some kids

cover up by doing bad things. The coalition trains people to help children, Dale said.

"They're able to use dolls, dance and art to help cope," she said. In some cases, a parent is afraid to seek help for both themselves and the child.

Since young children don't completely know right from wrong, they may grow up thinking that an abusive relationship is right, because that is what they are used to seeing. A lot of teens experience unhealthy relationships. Most abusive relationships revolve around jealousy and possessiveness. Name-calling, humiliation and shouting can lead to very harmful things, such as hitting and even rape. "If a person says NO to sex and the partner refuses to take no as an answer, that's rape," Dale said. It is normal for victims to refuse to reach out for help because they're afraid of the outcome, but the coalition provides a 24 hour hotline for victims of all types of domestic violence and a centers that can help.

The elderly are also at risk of abuse. In most cases, their caregiver, who may be a spouse, child or another relative, is the abuser. Abuse of the elderly includes physical, sexual, psychological, and financial abuse, as well as neglect and the violation of their rights. The coalition also provides support groups, counseling, advocacy in courts for the elderly and other victims as well.

Due to the help that the coalition offers, some people can move on with their lives happily and violence-free, even though, according to Dale, the process can take a while. "Sometimes, a person has to come back seven or eight times before they're ready to take charge and move past the abusive spouse."



Photo by Jackie Salo

# Housing costs driving the young away

*Recent grads cannot afford to stay home in Commack*

**By Jackie Salo**  
*J-Div Reporter*

Commack has had trouble keeping and attracting residents who can no longer afford the neighborhood's price-tag, due to its lack of affordable housing.

"When I graduate college, I don't know if I will stay here [in Commack] even though I would like to, because I will not be able to afford it. There are not many affordable homes in Commack; even the apartments are expensive," said sixteen-year-old Commack resident Arielle Lewen.

As the housing cost burden has increased in recent years on Long Island, the market for buyers in the area has become smaller. According to the Long Island Index, household incomes on Long Island increased by 26 percent while home values went up by 124 percent between 2000 and 2007. This has led to many residents leaving for more reasonably priced areas of the country. In a 2007 Long Island Index survey, 21,000 more Long Islanders left than those who arrived from other parts of the United States.

This may be a result of the lim-

ited amount of affordable housing. According to Maritza Silva-Farrel, a community organizer for the Yes In My Backyard (YIMBY) campaign which works to promote the building of affordable housing on Long Island, housing becomes "unaffordable" when more than 30 percent of family income is spent on it monthly. From the 2000 census, 23.3 percent of Commack households spend more than 35 percent of their income on housing, an increase of 30.1 percent from 1990.

"Affordable housing is believed to be for people who need low

income housing, but now it is for a person who makes sixty or seventy thousand a year," said Silva-Farrel. "A Long Island Index survey says that 38 percent of people on Long Island spent more than 35 percent of their income on housing in 2006. If that is the case, they have less money for health care and property taxes. More people need affordable housing."

Someone who makes minimum wage would not be able to afford an apartment in the area. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, a studio apartment in Nassau or Suffolk County costs 302 percent of minimum wage. This affects businesses, which may find it difficult to get workers to do certain jobs.

Many young professionals who grew up on Long Island are having difficulty staying here after they graduate college. Natalie Gaebelein, a native Long Islander, could not find a place to live in the area she grew up in after graduation. She started the organization Stay on Long Island after seeing how hard it was to find affordable housing.

"Here is a crappy basement and I cannot save for a mortgage because I am too busy trying to pay rent," said Gaebelein. "Paychecks do not weigh out the living expenses.

"[The purpose of the organization is] to help advocate affordable housing for young people ages 22 to 32," said Gaebelein, whose own experiences are the basis of her organization. "When I got out of college I did not have a place to live and my parents decided to move, so I had to find a place to rent. Since I had no option of moving back in with my parents, I had to pay \$1,000 a month to live in someones basement, giving everything I was making to live."

For those young professionals lucky enough to find somewhere on Long Island to live where they can manage to pay rent, their living costs may prevent them from being able to save so they can permanent-

ly live in the area.

According to the Long Island Index, the population of young adults between the ages 20 and 34 has decreased by nearly two percent on Long Island since 2007, more than the national average decline of one percent. Young people remain those with the greatest desire to leave the area. Of people aged 18 to 34, 67 percent say they are somewhat or very likely to leave in the next five years.

***"When I got out of college I did not have a place to live and my parents decided to move, so I had to find a place to rent. Since I had no option of moving back in with my parents, I had to pay \$1,000 a month to live in someones basement, giving everything I was making to live."***

"Nearly half of young people 25 to 34 are spending more than a third of their income on housing, so they are moving off Long Island. There is a term for this called 'brain drain.' This is happening and will continue to happen," said Silva-Farrel.

In Commack, there has been a decrease of 38.3 percent in residents between the ages of 18 and 34, over the period from 1990 and 2000, according to the Long Island Index.

The amount of affordable housing in a new development is decided by the town board and supervisors. When a new development is created, a certain amount of affordable housing needs to be set aside. This is because of the Inclusionary Zoning Bill, a Suffolk County law which went into effect in January, 2009.

"When there is a subdivision of five or more units, at least ten percent has to be set aside for affordable housing," said Jill Rosen, Suffolk County Director of Affordable Housing.

If a developer wants to create more affordable housing, it needs to be approved by the town board and supervisors.

Craig Turner, of the Town of Huntington Board of Planning and Environment, said that town board approval is needed partly because "you need to have a zoning change in density increase to make back the money for selling it at a lesser price."

According to Turner, there are no laws to prevent the building of affordable housing in Commack. Developers just need to submit for zoning changes. Recently, three affordable units were built in Commack.

"There was one request on Commack and Wicks Road where the developer had wanted to rezone a residential area to commercial zoning, where we asked that there be three units on the property of affordable housing for seniors [in exchange]," said Turner.

Regardless of whether affordable housing is developed, there will be a change in the population of Commack. Without affordable housing, there will be a shift in the demographic of the area.

"Long Island is going to lose the middle section of professionalism eventually," said Gaebelein, "The young blood, and young life, will not be here when the older people retire. People will go down south where people can live comfortably."

# Cleanup ahead at Hall's Pond Park

*Work slated to begin in fall at West Hempstead park*

**By Amanda Rouch**

*J-DIV reporter*

Hall's Pond Park in West Hempstead was once a clean place for families to visit and enjoy together. Peaceful groups of ducks and geese roamed the area. The water was clear and the grass was frequently dotted with picnickers. Today, however, garbage floats across the surface before getting stuck in shallow water. Geese and ducks perch

on an island of sludge in the middle of the pond. The wind carries food wrappers and newspapers past garbage cans posted along the cracked asphalt walkways.

"The place is a dump," said Matt, who has lived in West Hempstead for twenty-three years.

Betty, who has lived in West Hempstead for six years, took in her surroundings. "I don't see the crowds here anymore," she said.

Due to the degradation of the

park over the years, the number of visitors has dwindled. Many West Hempstead residents feel the same way as Betty, and say that Hall's Pond would be more enjoyable if it were cleaned up.

According to Rosalie Norton, president of the West Hempstead Civic Association, the pond has always been a part of the West Hempstead community. The property, initially owned by the Hall family, has been a part of West Hempstead for over one hundred years. A sepia-toned photograph from the 1930s on the Newsday website shows a group of boys swimming in the pond, and there were ice skating events in the 1970s that often had large turnouts.

Though various events and concerts still take place at the park each year, the area certainly isn't what it used to be.

"Over the years aesthetic degradation has occurred through lack of adequate funding by the County to properly maintain Hall's Pond Park," according to the West Hempstead Civic Association's 2005 proposal for funding from the Environmental Bond Act Committee. "It has been neglected for many years and is showing the ravages of neglect."

The main problem is the garbage that dominates the area. Norton said that since Hall's Pond is a Nassau County passive park, there is no maintenance staff on-site; it's up to visitors to dispose of their garbage properly. Also, high winds often blow branches and debris into the park.

The Nassau County Legislature in 2004 approved the Nassau County Environmental Program, which was designed to grant money to communities wanting to beautify their public parks. In 2005, the



**Garbage floats in shallow water at Hall's Pond**

West Hempstead Civic Association submitted a proposal to the Environmental Bond Act Committee for funds to renovate Hall's Pond Park. Of eighty-three proposals submitted to the committee, Hall's Pond was one of eighteen chosen.

Norton said that for the project, \$573,000 will go to park improvement, which includes the renovation of walkways, the placement of new benches and garbage cans, the institution of goose control, and the building of water fountains. This price also includes the creation of nature trails in the woods on the north end of the park property. An additional \$273,000 will go towards installing a catch basin where a stream empties into the north side of the pond, in order to prevent stream debris from entering the pond.

According to Norton, the money for this project comes from the Environmental Bond Act as well as the

county's budget and federal grants.

The Nassau County Director of Environmental Coordination, Brad Tito, said that there are eleven steps to complete before beginning physical construction on a project such as Hall's Pond. He said that initial work includes all kinds of paperwork, including submitting proposals, requesting permits, and acquiring

***"I think they should stop worrying about paperwork and just do the job,"***

documents and contracts. Nearly \$40,000 has been spent so far on the paperwork required to begin the

project.

West Hempstead residents fear that no progress is being made. Though the Nassau County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Museums website says that twenty percent of the project has been completed, residents say they want to see progress before believing that work is being done.

"I think they should stop worrying about paperwork and just do the job," said Matt.

Norton said that the landscape architecture company Ward Associates PC has been signed on to the project. They will be in charge of the engineering, landscaping, brickwork, and architectural design aspects of the renovation. According to Norton, Hall's Pond should be fenced off by Labor Day this year, with construction expected to begin shortly after.



Photos by Amanda Rouch

# Mystery at Eighteen Page Lane

*Westbury house empty for years, status unknown*

**By Mariam Nik**

*J-DIV reporter*

For the past few years an abandoned house in Westbury has been the source of much concern and agitation among its neighbors.

Once occupied by a couple with two young children, the house – located at 18 Page Lane- is now deserted. According to Sandra Didyk, a long time resident of Page Lane, the family disappeared one night leaving an empty house and baffled neighbors.

Up until a few weeks ago, the property had been left unkempt,

with grass growing over a foot high and mold up the side, said neighbor Susan Oftring.

“Since there is no heat in the house, one of the pipes actually froze and burst,” Oftring said. “Now there is a big hole in the kitchen ceiling.”

Worried about possible health hazards, potential squatters or its attraction for loitering teens, Oftring called the Town of Hempstead Department of Sanitation. She said she searched the internet, trying to find out who the current owner of the house is and whether it is fore-

closed, but hasn’t been able to find any answers.

“There seems to be a phantom owner,” said Tom Oftring, Susan’s husband.

Next door neighbor Caitlin Keyer said, “My sister’s window has a perfect view of the house’s backyard. We’ve seen empty beer bottles, rodents in the pool area and something odd growing out of the hot tub.”

Recently, the Department of Sanitation covered the pool and fenced in the area.

“I know periodically when it’s not



Two views of the house at 18 Page Lane.

cleaned up -- I'm guessing it's the town, puts fines and notices on the door saying 'clean it up or we will send you a bill for it,'" Didyk said. "Something seems to get done, but not much. Nothing inside. It's a disgrace."

Information concerning the owner of the home and whether or not it is officially foreclosed remains unclear. The secretary of the Department of Housing of Nassau County said that the department did not have records showing that the home is in foreclosure.

In addition, an official of the Town of Hempstead Housing Authority said they had no information on the status of the home either.

However, the Nassau County Clerk's office has copies of recorded deeds and mortgages. In a notice dated November 17, 2008, the owner of the home, Anna Cesarini, was given a warning that she was in danger of losing her home. The notice also said that Cesarini should "speak to an attorney or go to the court where your case is pending for further information on how to answer the summons and protect your property."

The contact number for Cesarini was out of service.

Attorney Todd Falasco, representing mortgagor IndyMac Federal Bank, refused to disclose any information regarding the case.

In a New York Times article in May, 2008, on abandoned houses in Florida, Vikas Bajaj wrote, "It can take months, even years, for some homes to wind through foreclosure in the backlogged local courts. The longer a home sits vacant, the more vulnerable it becomes. Mold and mildew creep. Algae chokes forsaken swimming pools. Sometimes vandals strike. And sometimes wiring or plumbing just give out."

"Any empty house is a sad story," said Didyk. "It's a disgrace and it's a shame. We would love to have some nice neighbors, but at least they're taking care of the place now."



Photos by Mariam Nik



The former Packard Middle School.

Photo by Kaitlin Prisco-Buxbaum

# Packard School Project Moves Ahead

*Building site to become playing fields, community center and gym*

**By Kaitlin Prisco-Buxbaum**

*J-Div Reporter*

As the Plainedge School District finalizes plans to sell and demolish the Sylvia Packard Middle School, which had been a staple in the community for the past forty-five years, residents feel nostalgic about the loss of the building.

"The whole thing is pretty sad, almost surreal," said Douglas Pascarella, a trustee of the Board of Education. "The school appears to have been frozen in time. Dates and lessons still remain on the boards in classrooms."

Packard Middle School had been closed since 2004 for various reasons. "A number of years ago, it was decided by the school board that it would be more tax efficient--more cost effective-- to build a new middle school than it would be to fix Packard," said trustee Maryann Capone.

Laura Pokorny, president of the Plainedge Federation of Teachers and a middle school science teacher, attributed the closing to the odd layout of the building and the lack of space for incoming students.

"The closing was bittersweet," Pokorny said. "There was a real community atmosphere there that we lost in the new middle school. In some respects, the fact that it was overcrowded brought the faculty and the students closer together."

The deal with the Town of Oyster Bay states that in return for \$5.5 million, the town will receive rights to 5.16 acres of the land and rights to demolish the building. According to Town Supervisor John Venditto, the town plans to renovate the fields to serve the district and the community. The district will retain a small portion of the land to make a community center and gymnasium to alleviate the tough scheduling among

the district's sports teams.

As part of the agreement, Plainedge sports will have exclusive access to the fields Monday through Friday up until 6 p.m. According to Patricia Rufo, Assistant Superintendent for Business and Administration, money that is not used for construction will be put into a capital reserve to alleviate the strain on future taxpayers.

"To me, I don't know what price you would ever put on providing playing fields for our children," Venditto said. "When children have

***"The whole thing is pretty sad, almost surreal,"***

playing fields to go to, it keeps them from places that they maybe shouldn't be."

According to Venditto, the town is eager to renovate the fields because it helps the community grow in many ways; it increases the property values, gives young people a place for recreation and enhances the quality of life.

According to the Plainedge School District Web site, the idea of selling Packard to the town had been heavily debated. In 2007, the Packard-Picken deal was proposed, which suggested a swap of the Packard and Picken properties and some monetary reimbursement given to Plainedge. Picken is a closed down school building, which the town had been using as a small headquarters, that had potential environmental concerns and

minimal space, according to [www.plaintalkonline.com](http://www.plaintalkonline.com). The deal was ultimately shelved, apparently due to disagreements among residents about the proposal.

The town's new proposal, however, received much greater support during the June 29th vote. According to Venditto, the new deal keeps the Picken property in the town's hands, builds athletic facilities in Packard's place, and provides more money. Ultimately, 80 percent of Plainedge residents were in favor of selling Packard to the town, Venditto said.

According to the Deputy Supervisor of Oyster Bay, Leonard Genova, the town plans to begin construction as soon as the deal closes and hopes to see the fields renovated by fall 2010. The demolition would be a lengthy task due to asbestos removal and attempts not to disrupt the surrounding residential neighborhood, Genova said.

During construction, the sports teams which practice in the Packard gymnasium or on the fields will be temporarily forced to squeeze into the other fields and gyms within the district. The Athletic Director, Jamie Labelle said that with the use of town fields and the rest of the district's athletic facilities, teams will get their practice time, although it will be tight for a while.

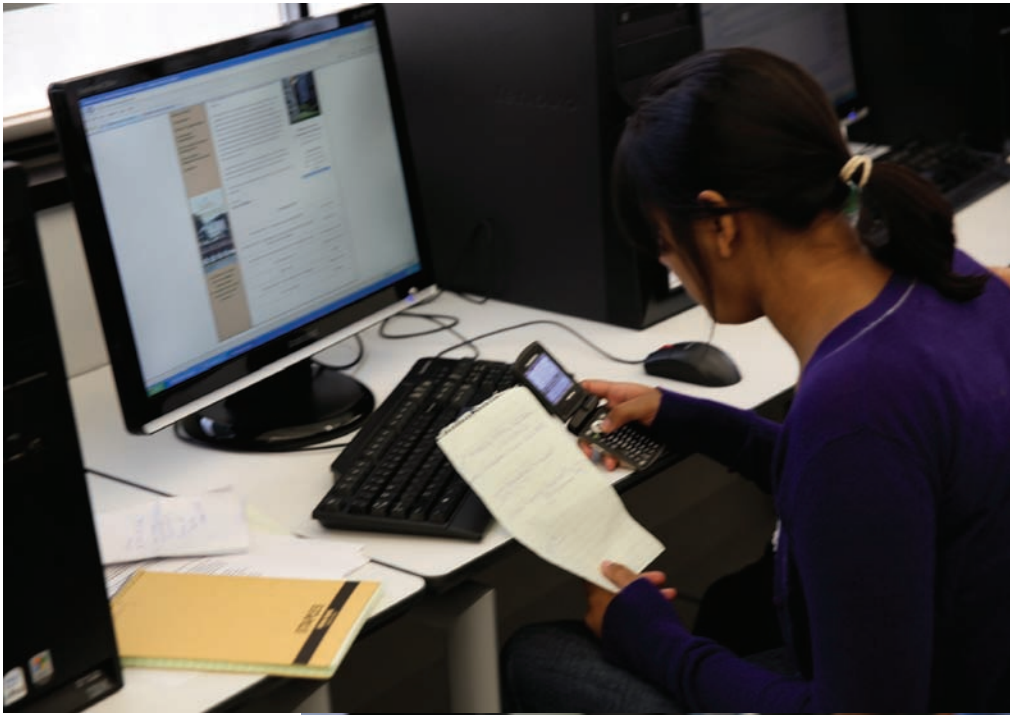
Robert Shaver, the wrestling coach and a physical education teacher at Plainedge High School, said he relied heavily on the Packard facility. To accommodate the wrestling team, which is losing their main facility, the school's weight room will be relocated to the basement and the current weight room will become the wrestlers' practice space.

"It's not always about us," Shaver said. "We understand that this deal is good for the district."



**Clockwise from top left: Akeem Mellis and Brianna Bryd; Mariam Nik; Trisha Maharaj; Prof. Carol Fletcher and Mariam Nik; Nishoba Snow; Danielle Evans and Delia Paunescu; Prof. Fletcher, Prof. Peter W. Goodman and Kaitlin Prisco-Buxbaum; Jackie Salo.**





Photos by Stephen Cooney

# Tough Times in New Hyde Park

*Economic woes affect small business throughout the area*



No more munching.

**By Trisha Maharaj**

*J-DIV reporter*

Many teenagers in New Hyde Park were devastated when the local Starbucks closed down earlier this year. "Starbucks was a place that you could walk into and always run into someone that you knew. I went there a lot to get coffee and just hang out," said 16 year old Nandini Ahuja. "Now that it's no longer here, I've lost my favorite place to catch up with my friends."

Starbucks is just one of many businesses in both the incorporated and unincorporated villages of New Hyde Park that have closed down or changed ownership within the past three years. Such businesses include JC Penney, Henry's Inn, Denton Deli, and NY Precision.

Along with the business closings, countless restaurants along Jericho Turnpike have come and gone so quickly that many people in the community did not even know they existed. "I probably couldn't even name most of the restaurants that have been opened there," Ahuja said.

Anita McCalum, a clerk at the Town of North Hempstead zoning office, said that many of these restaurants may have had problems meeting zoning requirements, especially the stipulations about parking. The Town of North Hempstead offers many of these businesses short term permits. "Some businesses get a time frame to see how well they do," she said. If businesses cannot uphold the zoning codes, they may not be able to renew their permit and be subject to closure.

Within the Village of New Hyde Park, the closing of businesses apparently has not fazed many of the village's officials. A former New Hyde Park official who did not want

her name mentioned said, "We do not have many businesses that are closing and have more businesses that are expanding." She was speaking of businesses such as Gino's Pizzeria, that has expanded.

When asked about possible trends and explanations for the businesses that have closed, Richard DeMartino, president of the New Hyde Park Chamber of Commerce, said, "I don't think that I can help you."

Louise Fishman, Executive Director of the Business and Tourism Development Corporation for the Town of North Hempstead, said there is only one commonality among the businesses that have closed: "The only trend is the economy."

She also said that the problem is much more widespread than just New Hyde Park. "Unfortunately it's

economy driven. Even up and down Plandome Road, in Manhasset, businesses are closing." The high cost of renting commercial properties in North Hempstead is also a contributing factor. "The rents are high and [the businesses] can't sustain themselves," Fishman said. She also added that a lack of employment on Long Island also hurts local businesses. "No jobs; that is the problem."

Still, Fishman does not expect a great many businesses in North Hempstead to close due to the nation's current economic condition. "The town is not suffering," she said. "It's just a matter that things are bad all over."

However, that doesn't change the fact that New Hyde Park has changed, as many popular businesses have gone out of business. Many

New Hyde Park inhabitants recall a more lively business community. "It seemed like everything was flourishing back then," Anthony Regalbutto, a New Hyde Park resident of over a decade, said. Nandini Ahuja agreed, saying "Business boomed and variety was common."

Nevertheless, some residents believe that the New Hyde Park business community will see a revival. According to resident Allen Abraham, 18, "It's all part of the recession. As soon as this recession slows down, the businesses will start to come back."



Photos by Trisha Maharaj

# Business on Grundy Avenue Is Hurting

*Holbrook street shows signs of recession*

**By Brianna Byrd**

*J-DIV reporter*

Being able to walk to the local stores is one of the many advantages of living in Holbrook, New York. However, quite a few buildings on one stretch of Grundy Avenue are empty, creating an eyesore as well as indicating problems with business

in town.

Michelle Lewis, 17, used to walk to a stationary store on Grundy Avenue with her friends--but now the store is gone. She's noticed a lot of businesses closing lately and she's been wondering why.

Holbrook resident James Fallar, 51, said he believes businesses have been struggling due to a combi-

nation of the poor economy and high rents. He said he'd like to see a Spanish restaurant and a White Castle open up. He feels that more restaurants will help attract more business. From outward appearances, he may be right. For example, Outback Steakhouse is frequently crowded, and Greek Islands seems to be a profitable business as well. The Handy Pantry and Ralph's Italian Ices also do well all year round. There is a brand-new sports bar and grill called MoMo's. Many of the food-related businesses in Holbrook don't seem to be having any problems.

Except for Joe's In N Out Burger. That store was recently sued by the California restaurant chain In N Out Burger, and as a result has never officially opened. In N Out Burger requested that the Holbrook restaurant change its name. As a result, it is no longer "In N Out Burger"---it's just plain Joe's Burger. An In N Out Burger official in California said, "All negotiations are confidential, and the matter has been fairly resolved."

But there is still a question: When will the building open? Rick Ammirati, President of the Holbrook Chamber of Commerce, was firm: "It's definitely going to open. I just don't know when." Ammirati also said that were issues involving permits, site planning and parking with the town of Islip which has held back the opening of the building. The owner of Joe's had to purchase the house behind the restaurant so he could utilize it for parking.

Ammirati was also able to give some insight on the empty storefronts. He said that Party Hardy closed because their lease was up and the landlord



Signs of the times in Holbrook.

didn't want to negotiate. He also said that the BJ's Confections bakery failed because not many people knew the store was a bakery.

Only Mei Wei kitchen remains in a strip on Grundy Avenue. Am-

mirati said that the buildings in that area were all in dire need of structural improvements. He also said that most residents can meet their needs on Main Street, so traveling to Grundy Avenue isn't necessary.

Even though there are these empty businesses in Holbrook, Ammirati said, "Holbrook has a very low vacancy rate and the chamber is very proud of that."



Photos by Brianna Byrd

# Mixed Messages for Hempstead Schools

*New superintendent must deal with teacher layoffs*

**By Danielle Evans**  
j-DIV reporter

The Hempstead School District has gotten some bad news and some good news recently. The bad news first: because of budget constraints, about 110 positions, including 25 high school teachers, are being cut, which will only add to the overcrowding. The good news: Prospect Elementary School, one of two

closed in recent years, is scheduled to be renovated and to reopen; and next month the district is getting a new superintendent.

"We have a new superintendent and this new superintendent has a big challenge," village trustee Don Ryan said. "We can't have turnovers too often, so hopefully she's here for a while and she has a positive impact on the things that need to be done in the community."

Patricia Watkins, the new superintendent, was born in Panama, and earned a degree in education from the University of Panama and advanced degrees in bilingual education and teacher preparation from the University of South Florida. She has been a classroom teacher, principal, central office administrator, and college professor. A former superintendent of Central Falls School District in Rhode Island, she most



Prospect Street School to be reopened.

Photo courtesy of [hempsteadhighclassof57.org](http://hempsteadhighclassof57.org)

recently served as superintendent in Virginia's Prince Edward County Public Schools.

She indeed faces challenges. Saeed Dukes, a former student of the since-closed MG Rhodes Elementary School, recalled the conditions of the building: "It sucked. That's why they closed it down. It was horrible. There were two bathrooms for about 800 kids. The roof was caving in. The gym was a mess." But now the Prospect Elementary School, which also had been closed, may be reopened. "I would like to see them open it up," Dukes said. "A lot of kids are going to Franklin, Fulton, and Jackson Main," other district elementary schools.

Despite the passage of a budget of \$157,420,684, however, about 110 jobs are about to be lost. State and district officials say they hope that there will be money from the federal economic stimulus package to save some of these positions.

"I'm hoping some of them can be put back on. I know elected officials are trying to get the district some monies. I'm hoping we can get more," Ryan said. "It's obvious we need more, not less [funding]. But at the same time we have to balance the budget, and get it passed. So there are concerns on both levels. I'm hoping some of these positions can be returned and we can go forward and have some progress."

Recent Hempstead High School graduate Enrique Perez said, of the impending layoffs, "I'm kind of torn about it. I'm sad to see some faces go. And I think that it's going to make some classes worse."

Ryan, who taught in the high school for 25 years before his recent retirement, continues to be hopeful. "The district changes, but I still think that there are great students. There is a good potential to learn. I'm proud of the staff, and the administration has done well."



Photo by Danielle Evans

Overgrown playground at closed MG Rhodes Elementary School

# Illusions of Prosperity in Woodmere

## *Empty storefronts on bustling Broadway*

**By Shereen Torbati**

J-DIV reporter

What looks like a prosperous shopping street on Broadway in Woodmere is actually full of holes. From Lafayette Place to Franklin Place, in the Woodmere Lanes section, there are four vacant stores in a row. They are surrounded by sushi restaurants, apparel stores, kosher delis, a church, a pharmacy, a bike shop, hair and nail salons, and so forth.

The ice cream shop Tasti D-lite used to occupy one of the stores, and a clothing boutique occupied the shop next door. The vacancy on the corner of Franklin Place and Broadway used to be a hardware store. The hardware store has been empty for the longest period of

time.

Sue Schachter of Sue Schachter Realty, a realty agency that deals with properties in Woodmere, said, "There is no business in Woodmere. The market is down 20 percent." But not everyone agrees. Devina Singh of Beautiful Divas, a birthday party shop for girls, said, "Calls have been coming in despite the economy." Singh, whose store opened in February, said, "People always seem to put money aside for their children and their pets."

She has noticed the vacancies around her, but still seemed confident about her own business. Singh also said, "The taxes are very high in this particular neighborhood."

Emmanuel Toribil, head salesman at South Shore Bicycle on the block, said, "Business is pretty good.

It is not doing great, but not doing bad either." South Shore Bicycle has been open for 42 years and, Toribil said, "We are doing better than a lot of other businesses around here because we are a different kind of business."

When officials at Jan Kalman Realty and Pugatch Realty, which own the vacant commercial properties, were asked about the vacancies, they refused to answer any questions. Both Realtors' offices are located on that stretch of Broadway.

Woodmere is one of the wealthiest communities on Long Island. Based on the 2000 Census, 45.9 percent of Woodmere's households had incomes above \$100,000.

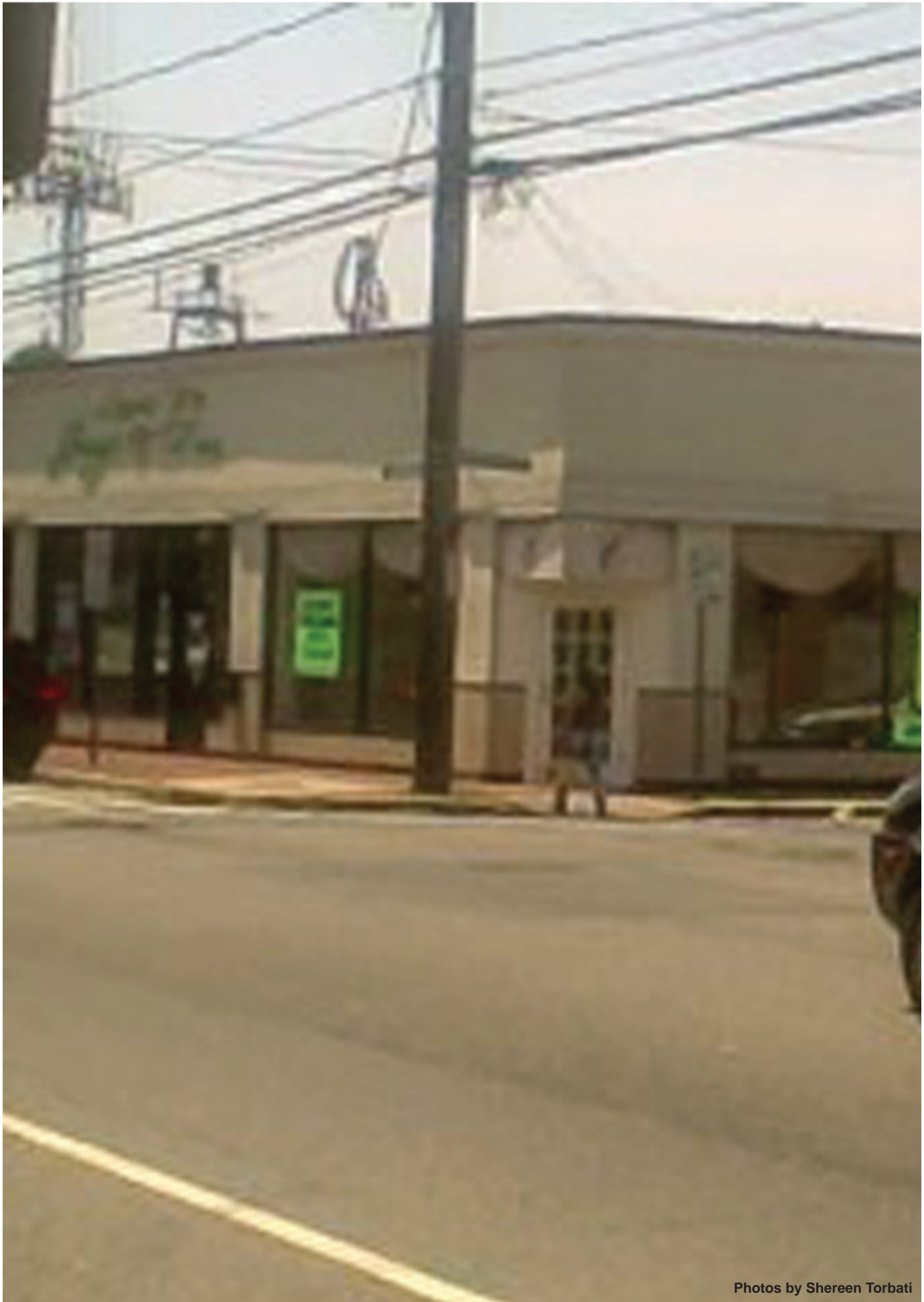
According to the town profile of Woodmere on Newsday.com, there are many kosher delis and restaurants to cater to the growing Orthodox Jewish population. Broadway, the main shopping district, is a bustling area. But some of the shops may not serve the needs of local shoppers.

Resident Sandra Romero said that she does not frequently shop in Woodmere. "The stores are not my type," she said. "I have noticed that many of the stores have closed. Broadway needs less boutiques and more clothing franchises." Romero said she is turned off by the congestion and traffic in the area.

Eileen Rose, another Woodmere resident, also blamed the congestion and the lack of parking. "I don't mind eating at the restaurants in the area," she said. "I'm willing to spend more money for top quality food rather than for clothes." She refers to the clothing shops in the area as too pricey for her taste. Still, her favorite restaurant on the block is the Japanese Takesushi.



The view on Broadway.



Photos by Shereen Torbati

# Survey Finds Teens Want Parental Help

*Long Island youth seek information on sex and pregnancy*

**By Tatiana Bernard**

J-DIV reporter

Many parents complain that their children never pay attention to them. But when it comes to sex, they underestimate themselves. A recent survey by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy found that 43 percent of adults thought their children's friends have the most influence on decisions about having sex. But the same survey found that only 18 percent of teens give their friends' advice much weight--parents get the credit 31 percent of the time.

Nevertheless, Ieasha Galloway, a 17-year-old student at Hempstead High School, had to take a moment to remember how often she speaks to her mother about sex. "I'm thinking maybe every five months," Galloway said.

Sydney Smith, 16, doesn't talk to her mother about sex at all. "You know my mom is always, like, 'talk if you need to...!' But it's kind of hard to talk with her about stuff like that."

When teens do talk about sex with their friends it isn't about the emotional response and repercussions. Galloway laughed as she recalled an awkward moment. She and her friends discussed "random weird stuff, except for that one time we were talking about freaking tentacle porn and stuff and Leonel [a classmate] was listening."

If teens aren't getting the facts from their parents, they often get it from their sexual and health education classes in school. But the information may not be making an impact. In the National Campaign survey, only three percent of teens said that educators influenced their decisions about sex. Smith doesn't even mention what she's actually

learned in her health class when she is asked whether or not her school's sex education was adequate. "Yeah, I love my health teacher," Smith said. "She's awesome."

***"If teens aren't getting the facts from their parents, they often get it from their sexual and health education classes in school."***

Some teens decide on their own not to have sex, without the advice of teachers or preachers. Galloway has already considered what she'd do if she'd gotten pregnant.

"I would go kill myself," she said. "Dude, I can't deal with that. I take care of mad kids [her relatives] already; I can't deal with all of that on my own. I gotta take care of five kids already and I didn't have any of them. I've been taking care of them since they were little. It's mad work, you gotta worry about food, you gotta worry about shelter and

clothes. Are they gonna grow up to be good people? It's too much mental stress. Then you gotta worry about school work, you gotta worry about *their* school work..."

Then she looked down at a bracelet she's wearing. It read: "You can't take a baby to Harvard."

Paul Allen Jr, a senior at Hempstead High School, knows exactly what life would be like if he had a child--- because he has one, a girl who is less than one year old. Having a child has made his life a lot more difficult and has strained his relationship with Rose, his girlfriend and the mother. Still, he said, "from my side it's a great thing to have someone who loves you unconditionally." More often than not, the responsibility of taking care of the child falls on the mother. But Allen said that he refuses to be a black stereotype by making the child's mother a single parent.

From the moment he found out that Rose was pregnant, he said, he was supportive. "Whatever you do I support you," he said he told her. "I can't tell you what to do with your body. Whatever you do, I'm there for you." But Allen's situation is unusual. When both he and Rose are busy, his own mother is available: she runs a day care center. But, Allen added, "It's a lot more fun for me to take care of her."

Allen is lucky, because the odds are that teenagers who are pregnant won't have parents who run day care centers.

Galloway may not be a mother, but she has some advice: "Do not have a kid, man. I take care of mad kids and I can't deal with it."



*Tatiana Bernard, Hempstead High School,*



*Brianna Byrd, Sachem North High School,  
[www.google.com/briannabyrdinc](http://www.google.com/briannabyrdinc)*



*Danielle Evans, Hempstead High School,  
[www.google.com/danielleevans92](http://www.google.com/danielleevans92)*



*Trisha Maharaj, New Hyde Park High School,  
[www.google.com/trishamaharaj](http://www.google.com/trishamaharaj)*



*Mariam Nik, Clarke High School,  
[www.google.com/mariam\\_writer](http://www.google.com/mariam_writer)*



*Kaitlin Prisco-Buxbaum, Plainedge High School,  
[www.google.com/katiepriscobuxbaum](http://www.google.com/katiepriscobuxbaum)*



*Amanda Rouch, West Hempstead High School,  
[www.google.com/amandarouch](http://www.google.com/amandarouch)*



*Jacqueline Salo, Commack High School,  
[www.google.com/jackiesalo](http://www.google.com/jackiesalo)*



*Nishoba Snow, Uniondale High School,  
[www.google.com/nishobasays](http://www.google.com/nishobasays)*



*Shereen Torbati, Kellenberg Memorial High School,  
[www.google.com/shereentorbati](http://www.google.com/shereentorbati)*

