



MELINDA KATZ DISTRICT ATTORNEY

FOR THE DA'S WEEKLY EBLAST,
EMAIL REQUESTS TO
INFO@QUEENSDA.ORG

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A Message from District Attorney

MELINDA KATZ

HIGHWAY SAFETY SAVES LIVES

I want to stress to everyone who gets behind the wheel of a car that they have a responsibility to be mindful of others on the roadway, and to follow the law.

Sadly, there was a horrible and preventable death on the highway recently. A woman who was working as a flag person on a construction site was struck and killed on the Nassau Expressway.

My office is prosecuting a Queens man who is now charged with manslaughter and other serious crimes for ignoring the signs and other markers designating that the construction zone was closed to traffic.

The defendant allegedly sped into the closed left lane that feeds into the Van Wyck Expressway then slammed into traffic drums and ultimately struck the 44-year-old worker.

The victim was thrown 168 feet in the air and her body landed on the shoulder, where she was pronounced dead at the scene.

Driving is a privilege, not a right. And when you break the law, you will be prosecuted.

In Friendship,

STAY CONNECTED



BEWARE OF INVESTMENT SCAMS

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz is warning New Yorkers to beware of new “friends” offering great investment opportunities. These unsolicited offers are often the first signs of a pig butchering scam.

In these scams, a stranger – often on Facebook or another social media platform – befriends the victim. The new friend chats with the target, establishes a rapport and over time gains the victim’s trust. This “friend” then mentions a lucrative investment opportunity.

Once the scammers believe that they have achieved all they can from the victim, they abandon the scam and abscond with the money, leaving the victims out thousands or millions of dollars – in many cases life savings.

The DA’s office recently charged a Bayside woman in a 27-count criminal complaint in connection with a complicated scheme that bilked 17 victims nationwide out of roughly \$2.1 million.

One of the victims in this case began talking to an individual named “Lily List” on Facebook. Eventually the individual offered a financial opportunity to the victim on a trading platform that had a similar name as a legitimate financial site.

The victim made 13 transfers totaling \$1,086,244 over the span of a year. At first, the victim was able to regularly log into his account and see his investments, that appeared to be making money.

But eventually the victim attempted to make a withdrawal and he was unable to transfer money out. He was then locked out of the website altogether.

An investigation tied one of the victim’s wire

transfers to the defendant’s address in Flushing. Investigators with the District Attorney’s Detective Bureau then identified an additional 16 victims who had wired their money into accounts registered to the home.

“Pig butchering scams are organized, calculated and cruel,” DA Katz said.

The term pig butchering comes from the scammer building trust with the victim, or “fattening him up,” before taking his money. A few red flags to watch out for: receiving an “accidental” text from a stranger who then strikes up a conversation or promises of making quick money and being pressured to turn over money.

To protect yourself from fraud don’t send money to anyone you don’t know in real life. Do not share financial information with people you meet online. Anyone thinking of investing money in any venture should be wary of advice from new “friends” you have never met in person.

Approximately \$6.57 billion was lost in the last year alone from investment fraud in the U.S., according to the FBI’s Internet Complaint Center.

The DA’s office has a dedicated Cyber Crime Unit that prosecutes pig butchering schemes and other scams. If you think you may have been victimized, reach out to the office at 718-286-6673.



MISSING PERSONS DAY



DA Katz recently hosted the inaugural Queens Missing Persons Day to help the families and loved ones of people who have been missing for more than 60 days find closure. US Rep. Grace Meng and the New York City Office of the Chief Medical Examiner co-sponsored the event.

More than 500,000 people go missing every year in the United States, according to the FBI's National Crime Information Center. Not knowing what happened to your loved one can be heartbreaking and a mystery that never ends.

This recent gathering was an opportunity for people to submit DNA samples, file reports and update records to hopefully locate and identify a missing loved one.

Held at the DA's office's training center, this free event included access to resources, information and support. It was covered by CBS New York.

More than a dozen people – representing nine different families -- attended the event. Appointments were scheduled for five other families that could not make it to the Missing Persons Day event.

DA Katz created the first-ever Cold Case Unit in Queens after taking office. The Unit is currently investigating approximately 47 unidentified homicide victims.

"While these cases have grown cold, the victims are never forgotten – nor are their family members who are still searching for answers," said DA Katz. "Updating records and collecting DNA from relatives of the missing could be the key to identifying some of these victims. This is why we never give up."

Anyone with a loved one missing for more than 60 days may reach out to the OCME for assistance at missingpersonsday@ocme.nyc.gov or call 212-323-1201.

CASES OF INTEREST

Nineteen-year-old **Mahindra Hansraj** was sentenced to 18 years in prison for a February 2023 attempted car theft. The incident turned deadly when the victim, who spotted his car being stolen, jumped onto the roof of the vehicle as Hansraj drove off. The defendant sped through a solid red light, swerving erratically before crashing into a fire hydrant.

The Richmond Hill victim was thrown from the car's hood and sustained a traumatic brain injury. After being in a coma for several months, the 29-year-old victim died in January 2024. Hansraj pleaded guilty to manslaughter in the first degree in September.

In another case, a convicted drug trafficker – peddling the deadly substance fentanyl – was sentenced to 18 years in prison. Long Island resident **Dennis Carrol** was convicted at trial in March of criminal possession of a controlled substance in the first degree.

Two kilograms of fentanyl (pictured above)



with a street value of \$80,000 were recovered from the trunk of the defendant's car in November 2022, following a car stop by agents of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. Carrol was driving from Suffolk County into Queens to sell the narcotics.

CELEBRATING HISPANIC HERITAGE

The Queens DA's office commemorated Hispanic Heritage Month recently with a celebratory gathering at the Café Rubio Sports Bar and Restaurant in North Corona. The annual event was co-hosted by Assembly Member Larinda C. Hooks and the QDA Latino Advisory Council.

Emmy Award-winning PIX-11 investigative reporter and TV host Monica Morales was the event's emcee. Notable leaders in the court, community and within the DA's office were honored for their outstanding work in Queens County and beyond.



QDA CLOTHING DRIVE FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

October was Domestic Violence Awareness Month and to help support the survivors of intimate partner abuse, the DA's office hosted a clothing drive. The goal was to collect professional clothing, shoes and other attire to help survivors have access to appropriate apparel

for the workplace and job interviews.

The dresses, jackets, slacks, shoes, handbags and more were donated by members of the DA's staff and the items were provided to the Queens Family Justice Center of the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence.

