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News

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Plea bargain and probation for sex offender

Charles Zusman • Local
Published: 05 June 2009

With a series of simple “yes” answers, Adam Melzer of Teaneck pleaded guilty to child endangerment charges involving nude pictures of young boys taken while Melzer was a youth program supervisor and basketball coach at the Rosenbaum Yeshiva of North Jersey in River Edge.

Melzer agreed to a plea deal, which enables him to avoid prison but requires life-time parole supervision and for him to register as a sex offender under Megan’s Law.

After Superior Court Judge Lois Lipton read the details of the plea deal Wednesday at the courthouse in Hackensack, her question was succinct: “How do you plead?” And Melzer responded quietly: “Guilty.”

“Are you pleading guilty because you really are guilty?” she asked. “Yes,” he responded. By pleading guilty, Melzer waived his right to a grand jury hearing and, if indicted, a trial.

Actual sentencing is scheduled for Aug. 28 after an evaluation at the Adult Diagnostic and Treatment Center for sex offenders at East Jersey State Prison in Avenel.

The 34-year-old Melzer was arrested July 21, 2008, in the incident involving four boys, then 14 to 16, who were volunteer referees at the school after their graduation. According to the accusation, Melzer persuaded the boys, in separate pairs, to supply nude photos of themselves on a digital camera that he provided.

He claimed that a ring of blackmailers had nude photos of the boys and their families taken with a telephoto lens, and that they would surrender the photos if the boys would supply the photos of themselves.

The scheme was broken when one group of boys overheard the other talking about it.



Adam Melzer BERGEN COUNTY POLICE

MOST POPULAR

**Praying while female at the Kotel
Women of the Wall representative to speak locally**

Joanne Palmer • 17 April 2015
Local | World

What’s going on with the Women of the Wall now?

What’s happening with gender equality and pluralism in Israel, now that the Israeli election is over?

Women of the Wall, made up of women from across the Jewish spectrum, has fought for the right to pray at the Kotel — Jerusalem’s Western Wall, the symbolic center of Jewish life, the magnet that draws observant and non-observant Jews, non-Jews, poets, and often even skeptics, close to it, as if they were pure iron filings.

The group, which was formed in the late 1980s, has been bolstered by legal wins. Its most important recent victory was the April 2013 decision by Judge Moshe Sobel of the Jerusalem District Court, who ruled that the city police were wrong when they arrested five women for the crime of wearing tallitot at the women’s section of the Kotel.

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**Twenty years later
Stephen Flatow remembers his murdered daughter Alisa**

Joanne Palmer • 9 April 2015
Local

When you ask attorney Stephen Flatow of West Orange how many children he has, his answer is immediate.

“I have five children,” he says.

Not surprising. What father doesn’t know how many children he has?

And how are they doing?

Four of them are flourishing; they are all married and all parents. Mr. Flatow and his wife, Rosalyn, have 13 grandchildren, and another one’s on the way. (And three of the Flatows’ children live in Bergen County.)

But the fifth, his oldest, Alisa, was murdered by terrorists when she was 20; her 20th *yaahrzeit* was last week. She has been dead as long as she was alive.

“Just because she isn’t there now, that doesn’t mean I’m not her father,” he said. “I just don’t have any recent pictures of her to show.”

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**‘A do-it-yourself disease’
Before Saddle Brook walk, families of ALS patients talk about the disease’s impact**

Lois Goldrich • 15 May 2015
Local

In early 2014, just shy of his 12th birthday, Eitan David Jacobi of Teaneck told his parents he was having trouble

The incidents took place in 2006 to 2007. Melzer, who in answer to a question said he is a law school graduate, has been free on \$50,000 bail.

Lipton, in reading the questions, acknowledged that the list was extensive and repeatedly asked Melzer if he understood. He said he did. The judge said the plea arrangement had been meticulously worked out by the defense and prosecution.

The actual charges are third-degree child endangerment, carrying a possible sentence of five years, Lipton told the defendant. Under the plea arrangement, the sentence would be three years, and — providing Melzer meets the stipulations — would be suspended.

The Avenel session, she said, is to determine if the crimes were “compulsive and repetitive.” If such crimes are deemed “compulsive and repetitive,” violators must confirm their addresses every 90 days, and all others must do so every year.

If he violates his parole, Melzer would face prison time.

As a violator under Megan’s Law, Melzer must notify law enforcement agencies of his address, and keep them updated on any moves. His date of birth, address, and details about his car will be public knowledge and may be found on the Internet.

As part of the proceeding, Melzer had to acknowledge details of the incidents as read by one of his lawyers, Tim Donohue of West Orange. He was also represented by Benjamin Braford of New York. The state was represented by Assistant Prosecutor Kenneth Ralph.

Megan’s Law refers to state laws requiring that addresses and other details about convicted sex offenders be available to the public, and posted on the Internet, to alert neighbors. The laws are named for Megan Kanka, 7, who was kidnapped and murdered on July 29, 1994, by Jesse Timmendequas in West Windsor.

Timmendequas had been freed on an earlier sex conviction, and Megan’s mother, Maureen, said if she had known of the situation, she would have warned her daughter to stay away from his home. Timmendequas is now in prison for life.

Maureen Kanka then spearheaded a drive to adopt the laws, informally named for her daughter.

After the hearing, Melzer’s attorneys issued a statement on his behalf:

“Today’s disposition, that allows for a suspended sentence, is truly in the best interests of all parties. A long, difficult trial would have subjected all parties to a terrifying and humiliating ordeal.

“Adam Melzer is a fundamentally decent young man from an extraordinary family. He clearly has some personal issues to deal with, but the appropriate remedy is treatment, not incarceration.

“We are hopeful that Adam’s community will ultimately extend the same compassion and understanding towards Adam that the prosecution and the court already have.”

raising his arms. It was particularly hard for him to shoot basketballs.

This was a first for the youngster, said his mother, Rabbi Lori Forman-Jacobi, who described her son as an active, funny, and very social kid.

In fact, she said, he had spent the previous summer as a camper at Ramah Nyack. And when he fell off a horse in early November, “we told him to get back on.” Usually that’s good advice. But Eitan did not have the strength to stay on the horse.

“We didn’t have a clue,” Rabbi Forman-Jacobi, a past vice-principal of the Bergen County High School of Jewish Studies. “It took us until Thanksgiving to get to a neurologist.” By that time, Eitan was “unable to reach to get to the microwave or to open cabinets.”

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RECENTLY ADDED

Yiddish in the city

Folksbiene Theater, as it turns 100, makes everything old new again. (And its artistic director lives in Teaneck!)

Joanne Palmer • 5 June 2015
Local

The week is just so stuffed full of everything that it’s hard to know where to start.

A huge, bursting, ripe, aromatic, extravagantly sensual flowering of Yiddish culture, backward and forward, history and prophesy, will bloom on New York City streets on the week from July 14 to July 21. Theater, music, dance, poetry, academic analysis — all will flourish up and down Manhattan.

The festival, called KulturfestNYC, celebrating the Folksbiene Theater’s first hundred years and moving it into its second century, is the brainchild of the theater’s artistic director, Zalmen Mlotek of Teaneck.

As is true of so many things in life, the festival, and the centennial it celebrates, represent a balance. The obvious one, of course, is the bridge between the old and the new. Another one, which plays itself out continuously during the week — and constantly for the staff at the Folksbiene — is the creative, energizing tension between the general and the particular, the highly specific Yiddish culture that nourishes the Folksbiene and the emotional and artistic connection it provides to people outside as well as inside that culture.

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‘Put this at the top of our agenda’

Federation and day schools join OU for state funding push

Larry Yudelson • 5 June 2015
Local

A new coalition that brings together the Orthodox Union, almost all local Jewish day schools, both Orthodox and Conservative, and the Jewish Federation of Northern New Jersey — as well as their counterparts elsewhere in the state — hopes to ramp up efforts to maintain and increase state funding for New Jersey day schools.

The new coalition, called “Teach NJS,” was launched last week at a meeting in a Teaneck synagogue that drew about 200 people on a rainy night.

“One of the most important levers to change the economics of Jewish education is increased state funding,” Sam Moed of Englewood told the meeting. Mr. Moed is president of Jewish Education for Generations, a local effort launched in 2009 to help day school education. “We need to put this at the top of our agenda, and devote our time and energy to the public policy agenda where the allocation of resources is determined,” he said.

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From four Hillels to Israel

Rabbi Ely Allen pulls up his deep local stakes to make aliyah

Joanne Palmer • 5 June 2015
Local

Here are some possibly obscure riddles, along with their answers.

When is a Hillel director not a Hillel director?

When he works for the local federation and directs Hillels on four separate colleges.

When does a Hillel director get to interweave four local colleges and the community into a real network?



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When he works for the local federation and directs Hillels on four separate colleges.

Who is that Hillel director and what Hillels does he direct?

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