



Staten Island Sunday Advance

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DONOVAN



SCHNEIDERMAN

Donovan flashes his badge in AG showdown

Island D.A. focuses
on legal experience
and attacks rival
as Albany insider

By JUDY L. RANDALL
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

Republican Staten Island District Attorney Dan Donovan is banking on his years as a prosecutor to push him over the top in the campaign for state attorney general against Democratic state Sen. Eric Schneiderman, whose slim law enforcement background includes a two-year stint as a deputy sheriff in the Berkshires.

COMING TOMORROW:

Ex-attorney general offers insights into Islander's chances.

But Donovan's contention that a prosecutor's portfolio is essential to hold the top justice job in New York, and lend credibility to the high-profile office, appears belied by the facts: Not all attorneys general came in with the kind of hands-on experience Donovan has.

Three of the most storied AGs — Republicans Jacob Javits and Louis Lefkowitz and Democrat Robert Abrams — were creatures of the state Legislature and the political establishments of the time.

SEE SHOWDOWN, PAGE A 13

CASUALTIES OF WAR SOLDIERS KILLED IN AFGHANISTAN

1,219 Since the war began
12 Last week

WEATHER WATCHER

Juliana Ringston, 5, Westerleigh:



'Sunny and pleasant.
High 68.'

COMPLETE REPORT ON S 14

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ONE IS A MUSLIM STUDENT, ANOTHER A TRANSGENDER ISLANDER. BOTH ARE ...

LIVING WITH BIGOTRY



STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE/JAN SOMMA-HAMMEL

"They called me a Muslim terrorist. ... That I came to this country to blow down houses and buildings because I have long hair, said 16-year-old Kristian.

Young student endures the torment of violence and 'terrorist' taunts

By AMISHA PADNANI / STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

He didn't know if he'd be punched, spat at or taunted, but every day, Kristian counted on some kind of torment at Markham Intermediate School by a small gang of bullies, who called him "terrorist" because he is Muslim.

The one thing he couldn't count on were school personnel stepping up to help him.

Instead, Kristian — too afraid to tell anyone — was on his own.

The soft-spoken teen-ager dealt with it until he parted ways with the bullies after eighth grade.

But when the 16-year-old became a freshman in September at Port Richmond High School, and saw two of his attackers in his class, he finally opened up. His case

is being investigated by the police as a possible hate crime though officials said there have not been any arrests.

Kristian's family requested that his last name be withheld to protect his security.

The bullying started in October 2009, when some classmates in his eighth grade class for students with special needs began poking him on his shoulder and calling him gay.

SEE TORMENT, PAGE A 8

COMBATING BIAS WHEN SEXUALITY IS THE ISSUE

Island's LGBT center
an oasis of hope for
victim of vicious hate

By DEBORAH YOUNG
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

Every day, when she walks out the door of her Mariner's Harbor home, Sarina Bello lifts her head, straightens her back, and readies herself to walk

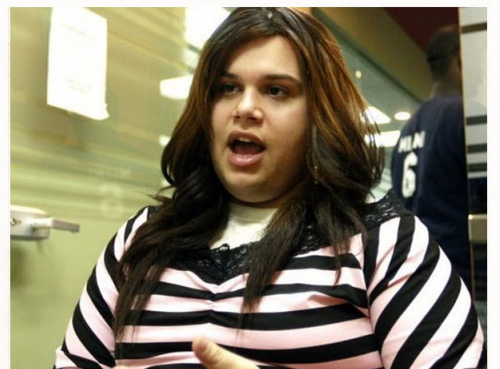
with strength past the insults she knows she will hear — words like "sissy," "hooker" "freak" and worse — muttered under breath by people she doesn't even know.

"There's not a day that goes by when nobody says nothing," said the 22-year-old, dressed in a baby pink striped shirt with lace at the collar, her guard let down in a cozy room in the St. George LGBT

Center. "I've gotten used to their ignorance. It's more in Staten Island; in the city I don't get bothered as much."

The taunts began as a child at PS 30, Westerleigh, before even she understood what made her different. The insults grew more vicious at Totten Intermediate School, "I was always afraid I was going

SEE BIAS, PAGE A 9



STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE/ ANTHONY DEPRIMO

"I've gotten used to their ignorance," said Sarina Bello of Mariner's Harbor.

A bit of paved paradise at last

Advance campaign
gets action from DOT;
drivers relish result

By MAURA YATES
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

The city got the message, and now drivers are enjoying the results.

Many Staten Island roads that were left a crumbled mess after last year's brutal winter have gotten a facelift, thanks to a targeted paving

blitz that focused resources on the borough, vastly improved some of the busiest streets and made eight times more "strip paving" repairs than last year.

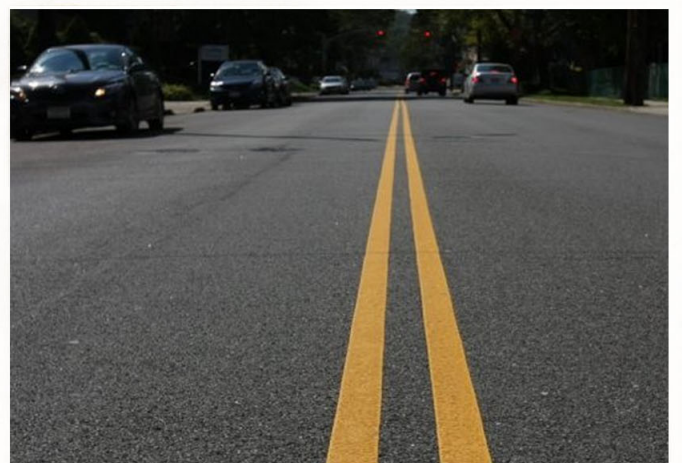
The city Department of Transportation's response to potholes has been lackluster in recent years, when the borough's streets were left to resemble a war zone months after the winter was over.

But after the Advance blast-ed the city's Department of Transportation for the terrible

road conditions with a series of front page articles, online surveys where readers could report the worst streets, and editorials, the DOT concentrated its resources on the streets that needed the most help and the difference has been noticeable.

The turnaround began when DOT launched a pothole blitz from April to June, which saw more than 12,000 potholes filled in just a few

SEE PARADISE, PAGE A 10



STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE/JAN SOMMA-HAMMEL

This year, the Department of Transportation paved 60,000 square yards, compared to about 7,500 last year and 4,500 in 2008.

Young student endures 'terrorist' taunts

The pokes turned to punches, which were delivered not just to his shoulder, but to the back of his head whenever the teacher's back was turned. Then the attacks spread beyond the classroom.

One day, Kristian recalled, he took a seat in the cafeteria to have lunch. A student snuck up behind him, grabbed his hair and yanked his head back, while a second one spat in his face.

"They called me a Muslim terrorist," Kristian said. "That I came to this country to blow down houses and buildings because I have long hair."

Kristian's parents emigrated from Trinidad in the mid-1980s, and Kristian was born in the United States. The family considers themselves Muslim, although they say they are not very religious.

Still, his attackers had no interest in how religious Kristian was. They began as-

saulting him in the hallways between classes, tripping him and then kicking and punching him — in his knees, his groin and his back — while he was on the floor, he said.

"They hurt me bad," Kristian said. "This one kid would take a hard-covered book and a plastic marker and hit me on my head hard. One of them was the leader. He would tell the others to beat me up and then stand there and laugh."

The entire time, Kristian stayed silent. He thought if he didn't show emotion, the boys would stop. But it only got worse.

Nine times out of 10, that method of staying silent will work, said Laura Martocci of Wagner College's sociology department, who runs an anti-bullying program in local grammar schools. But Kristian's tormentors likely had an audience of students who feared them, making them feel powerful, she said.

"In middle school, you're in this developmental period when you're separating yourself from your parents and you have the need to create an identity within your peer group," Dr. Martocci said. "If their behavior had wide appeal and big play in the classroom, it doesn't matter whether the victim said anything. They're always the center of attention."

For some bullies, the need to establish an identity is "on par with our needs for food and water," she said.

The shame victims feel, when unnoticed or undressed, can often turn to rage, Dr. Martocci said. Such was the case with school shootings such as the one in Columbine, Colo., on April 20, 1999.

According to Kristian, teachers observed the bullies taunting him on two occasions, but Margie Feinberg, a spokeswoman for the city Department of Education, said no reports were filed at

the school.

Dr. Martocci wondered how much blame could be placed on teachers.

"Teachers have their hands tied," she said. "These incidents happen every day and it's hard to say which ones need to be brought to the attention of the administration. There's so much paperwork involved and then it just snowballs, so teachers wind up taking a hands-off approach."

It wasn't long before Kristian's grades dropped and he fell into depression. His parents noticed his rumpled clothes and asked him a hundred times — at least — what was wrong, but he wouldn't answer.

Sometimes, his mother would catch him rocking back and forth, muttering, "Why me? What did I ever do to them?"

"I would ask him, 'Kristian, what did you say?' and he would just say, 'Nothing, nothing,'" said his mother, Feroza.

One day, Kristian was in such pain that he asked his mother to take him to a doctor. The findings were frightening: There was blood in his urine and Kristian was reporting headaches and memory loss.

His pediatrician, Dr. Parveen Khan, who had been seeing Kristian since 2003, said his behavior became aggressive. His parents even told her that he broke their 40-inch television. She suggested he see a neurologist, psychiatrist, nephrologist and several other specialists.

"These parents are so scared," she said. "He is an only child and they are extremely, extremely con-



STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE/JAN SOMMA-HAMMEL

The bullying started in October 2009 for Kristian, when some eighth-grade classmates began poking him on his shoulder, calling him gay.

cerned. But he has always been a very, very quiet child."

But nothing got him to talk, until he entered Port Richmond High School and saw two of his tormentors. Unable to endure the thought of another year of bullying, Kristian pulled his father aside one Friday night after dinner and told him everything.

"I said, 'I can't go through this again,'" he said.

His parents were horrified.

"I was shocked," said his mother. "He used to talk and laugh. Now he has no emotion."

The staff at Port Richmond High School has been proactive in protecting Kristian, the family said. Still, they are hoping he can transfer someplace else. Ms. Feinberg, the DOE spokeswoman, said that would be a possibil-

ity. She also said talks on respecting others were being given at Markham Intermediate School and Port Richmond High School.

Kristian's father, Shaffiate, is hoping other families can learn a lesson from his son's experiences.

"What he said he faced every day, it was like living in hell," he said. "He could have collapsed and died and we would have had no idea what happened. I know there are other kids out there who are being bullied, and I know there are parents like us seeing the signs and not knowing. Those kids need to speak up."

Amisha Padnani covers education news for the Advance. She may be reached at padnani@siadvance.com.