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STATEN ISLAND

A look at notable lawsuits in 2017



A dean at Tottenville High School has sued the city, alleging other teachers should have been present to help him when he was injured while trying to break up a fight.



Marcos Castillo, 16, suffered fatal injuries on Oct. 9, 2015, when he fell down an elevator shaft in an abandoned building in Tompkinsville, the site of a former hospital. Castillo's mother alleges in a lawsuit he would still be alive today if the city and property owner had properly sealed and secured the abandoned buildings.



WILLOWBROOK

Graduation rate at CSI lags behind other Island colleges

Thomas Erik Bascome
tbascome@siadvance.com

The graduation rate at the College of Staten Island (CSI) has lagged significantly behind the borough's other two universities, Wagner College and St. John's University.

A recent report, published by the Center for an Urban Future, found that just 52 percent of CSI students earned a bachelor's degree within six years, below the City University of New York (CUNY) average of 55 percent.

However, the rate may actually be even lower.

According to the CSI Office of Institutional Research, the six-year baccalaureate graduation rate is just 48 percent.

WAGNER COLLEGE

The six-year baccalaureate graduation rate at Wagner College is 64 percent, according to the school's website.

Wagner College acknowledged that several factors contribute to its high graduation rate, noting that class size and student-teacher ratio as two of the major driving forces.

"Nearly two-thirds of our classes (62 percent) have fewer than 20 students, making it easy for students to work directly with professors on class material. And our **SEE RATES, A8**



The wife of a construction worker, killed in March at a Chelsea job site when he was crushed by a large conveyor being hoisted by two cranes, is suing the crane companies.



The city in February sued Grandmaster Jhong Uhk Kim, alleging he let his property, the 180-year-old landmark John King Vanderbilt House, languish in disrepair.



A former nursing home aide at Sea View Hospital Rehabilitation Center and Home is suing the city, saying his belief in Wicca, a modern form of paganism, got him fired.



Two workers on a renovation project at the Michael J. Petrides School in 2015 allege a city School Construction Authority supervisor discriminated against them.



The mother of a special-needs student alleges he was sexually molested by fellow pupils on the bus between his home and his school, PS 373R, in Sunnyside.



A male librarian at Wagner College alleges that his ex-boss, also a man, sexually harassed and hit on him, and the school failed to prevent it, despite his complaints.

Frank Donnelly fdonnelly@siadvance.com

BELIEF IN PAGAN WICCA GOT HIM FIRED, NURSING HOME AIDE ALLEGES

Carl DeLuca, a former nursing home aide at Sea View Hospital Rehabilitation Center and Home, sued the city Health + Hospitals Corporation for \$10 million alleging he was discriminated against at work and fired due to his belief in Wicca, a modern form of paganism.

DeLuca alleges co-workers and bosses accused Wicca of being "Satanism" and a "hate crime" against Christianity. They so feared and misunderstood his religious beliefs that a director asked his mother if he was a "terrorist and a Satanist," according to a civil complaint.

The suit is pending in state Supreme Court, St. George.

HERPES IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR LOVE, \$5 MILLION LAWSUIT ALLEGES

A 53-year-old Staten Island woman sued her former lover in June for \$5 million alleging she contracted herpes from him despite his assurances he was free of any venereal diseases. The woman contends the man, a 56-year-old New Jersey resident, knew he had herpes, yet lied to entice her into having unprotected sex with him.

The case is pending in state Supreme Court, St. George.

TEEN'S FALL DOWN ELEVATOR SHAFT AT ABANDONED HOSPITAL COULD HAVE BEEN PREVENTED, MOM CONTENDS

The mother of a 16-year-old Sunnyside boy who plunged six stories to his death down an elevator shaft at the former **SEE LAWSUITS, A8**

LAWSUITS

FROM A1

Staten Island Hospital site in Tompkinsville alleges in a lawsuit he would still be alive if the city and property owner had properly sealed and secured the abandoned buildings there.

Marcos Castillo suffered fatal injuries on Oct. 9, 2015, at the old hospital site at 101 Castleton Ave..

The city and property owner, Shore Holdings UK LLC, failed to properly safeguard the building, one of several that had sat vacant for decades, allowing it to be “repeatedly entered” by neighborhood children, graffiti vandals and drug users despite its “dangerous, dilapidated and hazardous condition for years,” alleges the civil complaint.

The suit is pending in state Supreme Court, St. George.

WORKER CRUSHED BY LARGE CONVEYOR IN CHELSEA DUE TO OTHERS' CARELESSNESS, WIFE ALLEGES

The wife of a construction worker, killed in March at a Chelsea job site when he was crushed by a large conveyor being hoisted by two cranes, has sued the crane companies, rigger and several other parties.

Maria Veloso, the spouse and administrator of Antonio Manuel Veloso's estate, alleges her husband was killed at 356 Meredith Ave., the site of Staten Island Asphalt Inc., due to the defendants' “carelessness, negligence, wanton and willful disregard.”

The case is pending in state Supreme Court, St. George.

WORKERS ALLEGE SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION BOSS THREATENED THAT TRUMP WOULD DEPORT THEM

Two workers on a renovation project at the Michael J. Petrides School in Sunnyside in 2015 allege a city School Construction Authority supervisor discriminated against them, in part by threatening that Donald Trump would deport them once elected president.

The supervisor also derided their looks and non-American heritage, allege Antonio Firmino and Celso Martins, who are both Portuguese.

The suit, which was transferred to Staten Island this year from Bronx County where it was originally filed, alleges violations of state Human Rights Law through racial discrimination, harassment, infliction of emotional distress and creating a hostile work environment. The suit is pending in state Supreme Court, St. George.

GRANDMASTER KIM LET 180-YEAR-OLD HISTORIC HOME FALL INTO DISREPAIR, ALLEGES CITY

The city in February sued well-known Staten Island entrepreneur and philanthropist Grandmaster Zhong Uhk Kim alleging Kim has let the 180-year-old landmark John King Vanderbilt House in Sunnyside languish in disrepair for years, and asked a judge to order him to restore the historic home, scorched by fire

two years ago.

The suit, filed in state Supreme Court, St. George, seeks to compel Kim to repair and maintain the two-and-a-half story wood-frame Greek Revival-style home built around 1836 and to penalize him tens of thousands of dollars for his alleged failure to upkeep the house as required by the city's Landmarks Law.

Kim has denied the allegations in court filings; the suit is pending.

MALE BOSS SEXUALLY HARASSED ME, MALE WAGNER COLLEGE LIBRARIAN ALLEGES

Roger McSorley, a male librarian at Wagner College, alleges in a lawsuit that his ex-boss, also a man, sexually harassed and hit on him, and the school failed to prevent it, despite his complaints.

McSorley alleges his ex-boss, Timothy Hickey, continually harassed him over the course of three years even though he had rejected his superior's unwelcome sexual advances, creating a hostile work environment and causing him emotional and physical stress.

McSorley sued Wagner College, Hickey and the head of the school's Human Resources Department. The suit is pending in state Supreme Court, St. George.

'I SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ALONE IN CAFETERIA,' TOTTENVILLE HS TEACHER, HURT IN FIGHT, ALLEGES

Adam Yannotta, a teacher and dean at Tottenville school, has sued the city, alleging other teachers should have been present to help him when he was attacked and injured while trying to break up a fight in the cafeteria on May 13 of last year.

Yannotta was the “only authority” in the lunchroom when the fight broke out; however, three teachers “were supposed to be ... in the school cafeteria at all times,” his civil complaint alleges.

The city and Education Department, also a named defendant, were “negligent and careless in allowing their personnel to be left alone with over 250 high school students,” contends the complaint.

The suit is pending in state Supreme Court, St. George.

SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENT SEXUALLY ABUSED ON BUS, MOM ALLEGES

The mother of a special-needs student from Eltingville alleges he was fondled and sexually molested multiple times by fellow pupils on the bus between his home and school, PS 373R, on the Petrides campus in Sunnyside.

The alleged incidents occurred between September 2012 and April 12, 2013. The boy was 7 years old when he was allegedly first abused.

The suit was commenced in state Supreme Court, St. George, against the Travis-based IC Bus Inc., IC Escorts, IC Coachways and other similarly-named entities believed to own or operate the school bus. It seeks unspecified monetary damages and is pending.

RATES

FROM A1

student-to-faculty ratio is 13:1,” said a Wagner College spokesperson.

ST. JOHN'S

Meanwhile, the St. John's Staten Island campus boasts a six-year baccalaureate graduation rate of 68 percent, according to a school spokesperson.

“The six-year graduation rate for students who study at St. John's Staten Island campus is a point of pride for the University as it outpaces the national average,” said Jorge Rodriguez, vice provost and chief enrollment officer.

“However, we always look

to improve upon academic outcomes — which is in keeping with our highly personalized focus to ensure student success,” he continued.

ADVISER-TO-STUDENT RATIO

The Center for an Urban Future report cited a poor ratio of full-time advisers to students as a possible reason for the low graduation rate at CSI, claiming one full-time adviser per 940 students.

The college refutes this claim, stating that there is one academic adviser per 424 students, according to the CSI Office of Institutional Research.

“The ratios of professional academic adviser to

student are only one metric in a complex system of student support at a college,” said Ralf M. Peetz, associate provost, Undergraduate Studies and Student Success.

“What is not captured in that number are professional counselors and faculty who help students make decisions along their journey as well,” he continued.

Peetz went on to explain that CSI uses a mixed model with professional advisers providing guidance in early years and general support throughout, while departmental faculty in the student's discipline take over advising in later years.

“These faculty advisers help students make difficult decisions about choos-

ing and sequencing elective courses that align with the degree requirements and potential future employment opportunities,” Peetz said.

He also referenced the fact that CSI was selected by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, through the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, to participate in a national group of universities considered to be leaders in best practices surrounding student success.

“This group, called the Frontier Set, receives generous funding and other support to improve metrics around student success even further by focusing on areas of high impact and best practice,” said Peetz.