

LOCAL NEWS

Rally at LOVE Park for kidnapped girls in Nigeria. **B3**



Emily Byllott gets a hula-hoop vibe going at the Jam on the River at Penn's Landing. Byllott, 22, from Long Island, teaches HoopYogini, a fitness program that combines hoops, modern dance, and yoga. RACHEL WISNIEWSKI / Staff Photographer

Hooping It Up

The Jam on the River brings a summer groove.

By Jeff Gammage
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

The Jam on the River, a music festival that's been cheered, changed, merged, and abandoned, returned triumphantly to Penn's Landing on Sunday.

This time it was reincarnated as — of course! — an electronic dance party.

The come-and-go history of the event made no difference to hundreds of fans who came to hear bands such as GRiZ, Conspirator, Zoogma, Grimace Federation, and the headliner, Lotus.

It was a crowd mostly in its 20s that exuded a peace-and-love vibe, where clothes the color of the rainbow were standard, and dozens of people moved to the music accompanied by a throw-back accessory: the hula hoop.

"It's just kind of like ..." began Emily Byllott, 22, as she moved her hoop in circles.

"... fun," concluded her friend, Shaye Smith, 24.

Byllott, of Long Island, teaches HoopYogini, a fitness program that combines modern hoop dance with yoga.

Both she and Smith, of Brooklyn, said they were determined to be at Penn's Landing on Sunday, the lure



This year's Jam on the River was an electronic dance party featuring bands including Lotus, Grimace Federation, Papadosio, and GRiZ.



Homeless project reaches out to veterans

The nonprofit gives legal help to those in need, pressing Veterans Affairs to get medical coverage and disability payments.

By Jennifer Lin
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Life fell apart quickly for the young Marine when he returned home to Philadelphia from Iraq a few years ago.

While deployed, he worked as a guard, sometimes protecting convoys from ambushes.

Back home, the veteran slept with a knife under his mattress. Or a sword.

He could not sit with his back to a door. He could not handle crowded SEPTA buses. He was tormented by nightmares and would wake up sweating and screaming that he was under attack.

His girlfriend couldn't take it anymore.

He tried to get medical help, but was denied benefits by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. He was told he was ineligible because his discharge had been "other than honorable."

"He didn't take kindly to being barked at and would bark back," said Michael Taub, a lawyer for the nonprofit Homeless Advocacy Project. "The military has little tolerance for insubordination."

Taub met the veteran at a North Philadelphia shelter and offered his help. After more than a year of pressing his case, Taub was able to get him medical coverage from the VA, as well as a disability payment.

"This was the type of case where the system becomes very difficult to navigate," Taub said. "And that's the type of situation where we're at our best."

Others have noticed.

In the last year, federal support for the project's See **VETERANS** on B4

“ There’s a lot of lip service to, ‘We’re taking care of our vets’ and then we don’t. It’s a group that needs it.

Thomas Duffy, a personal-injury lawyer

Phila. courts, D.A. launch ‘johns’ diversion effort

Program shows prostitutes' clients the grim reality behind their crimes.

By Joseph A. Slobodzian
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Three years ago, the courts and the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office began a pretrial diversion program for prostitutes offering counseling to

NEWS IN BRIEF

Scuba diver at Northampton aquapark dies

A scuba diver from Kennett Square died Saturday after he was found unconscious at Dutch Springs, a lake popular with divers in Northampton County, police said.

Authorities responding to a 1 p.m. call said that Pax Williams was found in the water by fellow divers, who took him ashore. Staff at the lake began resuscitation efforts, which were continued by first responders, police said. Williams was transported to St. Luke's Hospital's Anderson campus in Bethlehem Township, where he was declared dead.

Dutch Springs, a former quarry in Lower Nazareth Township, about 1½ hours north of Philadelphia, is a 47-acre freshwater lake with facilities for scuba diving and snorkeling. The privately run aquapark contains several submerged vehicles, including a bus, firetruck, and helicopter, for divers to explore at various depths.

— Kristin E. Holmes



The bear in a Bensalem yard. It climbed a fence and eluded authorities. Courtesy of Rick Voran Jr.

Bear sighting reported again in Bucks

A bear spotted in Bensalem eluded authorities Sunday afternoon for the second time in three days.

The bear, seen in the parking lot of the Bucks Meadow Apartments, climbed a fence and escaped from police shortly after 1 p.m., said Rick Voran Jr., who lives in the complex.

Police told residents to stay inside. Voran then spotted the bear in the backyard and watched as it climbed a fence and escaped. Later, the state gaming commission set up traps

with doughnuts and maple syrup to try to catch the bear. It was the second bear sighting in the township since Friday, when a bear was seen near a wooded area along the Neshaminy Creek. Last summer, a bear was spotted in Warrington.

— Kristin E. Holmes

Man fatally shot in West Philadelphia

A 25-year-old man was fatally shot in the head early Saturday in West Philadelphia, according to police. Officials have not made an arrest or determined a motive, police said.

Officers responded to the 100 block of South 62d Street at 3:11 a.m. after receiving a report that a man had been shot. The victim was found unresponsive on the sidewalk, and pronounced dead at 3:25 a.m., police said. Officials have not released the man's name.

— Tricia L. Nadolny

Homicide suspect, 16, was murder witness

SCRANTON — A 16-year-old boy charged with fatally shooting a Pennsylvania cabdriver who didn't take his preferred route was interviewed as a witness to a triple homicide in New Jersey last year, police said.

Aazis Richardson was charged with murder Friday night, hours after cabdriver Vincent Darbenzio, 47, was found shot twice in the head in Scranton. Police said Richardson had complained that the driver was "taking the long way and ripping him off."

According to the criminal complaint, Richardson confessed to the shooting. He also told police he had been a suspect in a Newark triple homicide, authorities said. But Newark Detective Anthony Ambrose told the Star-Ledger that police had interviewed Richardson as a witness to the Christmas slayings of three teenagers, but he wasn't a suspect.

— AP



Center City lawyer Thomas Duffy has underwritten the cost of the Homeless Advocacy Project's employing lawyer Neha Yadav (right) full time to work exclusively with veterans.

Homeless Advocacy Project helping vets

VETERANS from B1 work with homeless veterans has doubled to \$110,000.

Three Center City law firms — Pepper Hamilton, Cozen O'Connor, and DLA Piper — have reached out to Taub to train their lawyers on how to help veterans.

And Thomas Duffy, a personal-injury lawyer in Center City, has underwritten the cost of the Homeless Advocacy Project's employing another full-time lawyer — Neha Yadav — to work exclusively with homeless veterans.

"There's a lot of lip service to, 'We're taking care of our vets' and then we don't," Duffy said. "It's a group that needs it."

In recent weeks, the VA system has come under fire, with some critics in Washington calling for the resignation of Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki. The uproar stems from revelations in Phoenix that veterans have died waiting for medical care.

Marsha Cohen, the Homeless Advocacy Project's executive director, said she was not surprised.

"It's not that the VA doesn't want to help," Cohen said. "But they are overwhelmed and not sufficiently staffed. They can't handle the volume."

Applications for medical care or disability benefits "can languish for years," she said. "There are no deadlines with the VA."

"Unless veterans have an attor-

ney who is pushing their cases, they are not going to get benefits," she said.

The project works with about 100 homeless veterans a year. Cohen said most suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury.

Their descent into homelessness is "a slow spiral," Cohen said. "People lose control of emotions and their ability to comport themselves, to manage relationships, to take care of themselves, to get up and go to work."

About 50 lawyers in the city have volunteered to work with the project on cases for homeless veterans. Because of federal rules, they must receive three to six hours of training before they can be certified by the VA to offer pro bono help to veterans.

"We've had a few big wins," Taub said. Some veterans have received six-figure settlements for back benefits.

Taub, meanwhile, has become a nationally recognized expert in this area. He presents two large training sessions a year to accredit volunteers.

"It's one of the areas across the country where attorneys are recognizing that they can help," Taub said. "There's a general goodwill of doing right by veterans."

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