

# 20 years in friend's death

BY CHAU LAM

chau.lam@newsday.com

Shortly before he was sentenced to 20 years in state prison for stabbing and killing a childhood friend, Jermaine Holmes turned and faced the victim's family and took responsibility for the crime.

"At the end of the day, a mother has lost a son, and a brother has lost his sibling," said Holmes, 26, facing Calvin D. Butts' mother and father, Sharon and Herman Butts, who were in the Riverhead courtroom yesterday with other family members. Reading from a handwritten note, Holmes, of Riverhead said he accepted the full blame for stabbing Butts, 26, on May 24, 2009.

Holmes, initially charged with second-degree murder, pleaded guilty last month to a lesser charge of first-degree manslaughter, which carries a maximum sentence of 25 years in prison. Had he been convicted of the more serious charge, Holmes would have faced a maximum of 25 years to life in prison. The deal called for him to be sentenced to between 12½ and 25 years.

Instead, Suffolk County Court Judge James F.X. Doyle said Holmes had confessed to the crime, sparing Butts' family from having to endure a trial.

Still, said Doyle, "a life has been needlessly lost."

Holmes and Calvin Butts grew up in Riverhead and were "best of buddies all through high school," Butts' mother had said. She and Holmes' mother used to



Sharon Butts, right, mother of victim Calvin Butts, is comforted yesterday.



Jermaine Holmes



Calvin Butts

take turns chaperoning the boys.

Yesterday, Sharon Butts had urged the judge to impose a maximum term of 25 years, noting that Holmes — unlike her son — would have time to live out the remainder of his life as a free man.

"Time is not over for him. We cannot say the same for Calvin. Time has ended for him," Sharon Butts of Riverhead said before Doyle handed down the sentence.

Susan Menu, attorney for Holmes, urged the judge to impose a sentence of 12½ years, saying Holmes has a drug problem and had no history of violence until this incident. "This is an anomaly," Menu said in court.

According to Assistant Dis-

trict Attorney James G. Chalifoux, a fight began between Holmes' brother and Butts' brother outside the Hampton Bays Diner & Restaurant, off West Montauk Highway. Holmes came out of the diner after the melee erupted.

Within seconds, Chalifoux said, Holmes had stabbed Butts in the back five times, puncturing Butts' lung and aorta. Chalifoux said authorities recovered a black folding knife in a wooded area across from the house where Holmes' brother lived.

Holmes confessed to the stabbing but has not provided authorities with a motive, Chalifoux said. "I don't know if anybody knows," of the reason for the killing, Chalifoux said.

## 3 charged in \$12.2M mortgage fraud

BY CARL MACGOWAN

carl.macgowan@newsday.com

Two mortgage brokers and a loan officer surrendered yesterday in Riverhead to face charges that they were part of a \$12.2 million mortgage fraud involving more than three dozen homes, the Suffolk district attorney's office said.

The three defendants were arrested as part of a continuing probe of an alleged scam in which straw buyers used phony pay stubs to obtain bank loans for the purchase of 40 houses, mostly in Central Islip and Brentwood, prosecutors said.

Ten people have been arrested in connection with the investigation, and more arrests are expected, prosecutors said.

Connie Salas, 46, of Brent-

wood, pleaded not guilty yesterday in Suffolk County Court to multiple counts of third-degree grand larceny, first-degree falsifying business records and first-degree scheme to defraud.

Romel Pierre-Lys, 57, of Central Islip, and William Wild, 54, of Coram, each pleaded not guilty to multiple counts of second-degree forgery.

"These particular defendants left a trail of frauds, forgeries and foreclosures in Suffolk County," Assistant District Attorney Marc Lindemann said following the arraignments.

Salas, chief broker of Easy Homes Realty in Brentwood; Pierre-Lys, a loan officer for National City Mortgage in Melville, and Wild, a mortgage broker, are among 16 people named in a 282-count indictment handed up

last week by a Suffolk grand jury.

Attorneys for Salas and Pierre-Lys said their clients are victims of the declining Long Island real estate market.

"Mrs. Salas is a hardworking, law-abiding citizen who, not unlike many other Americans, was victimized by the irresponsible practices of the mortgage lending industry," said her attorney, Keith Abramson of Central Islip.

Pierre-Lys left the mortgage industry more than two years ago because of the economic downturn, said his attorney, Jason Russo of Uniondale.

An attorney for Wild could not be reached for comment.

Salas was ordered held on \$20,000 bond or \$10,000 cash bail by County Court Judge James Hudson. Wild and Pierre-Lys were ordered held on \$1,000 bail.

## IN BRIEF

Get the latest at  
newsday.com/crime

### FREEPORT

#### School administrator's plea deal in dog cruelty

A Brooklyn high school assistant principal pleaded guilty yesterday to charges he abandoned his French bulldog in his Freeport home in 2008, according to Nassau District Attorney Kathleen Rice's Office.

Frank Hopson, 59, was promised a sentence of 15 days in prison and 200 hours of community service in exchange for a guilty plea to charges of animal cruelty and abandonment of animals, the district attorney's office said.

His lawyer, Patrick Brackley of Manhattan, said, "He just wants to put all this behind and get on with his life."

Hopson was reassigned from his position as assistant principal at the Clara Barton High School, according to New York City Department of Education spokeswoman Margie Feinberg.

The dog was rehabilitated and adopted by an out-of-state family, the district attorney said.

— SOPHIA CHANG

### LEVITTOWN

#### Man pleads not guilty in nightclub stabbing death

A Brentwood man pleaded not guilty to murder and assault charges yesterday in the killing of a man at Levittown nightclub in May.

Jovany Huddleston, 23, an appliance installer from Brentwood, was ordered held without bail by County Court Judge George Peck at his arraignment on a grand jury indictment.

According to his lawyer, Dana Grossblatt of Jericho, Huddleston was acting in self-defense on May 22. Prosecutors said he used a pocketknife to stab Bryant Nunez in the abdomen and Rainero Ramirez in the neck outside the Shy Lounge on Hempstead Turnpike.

Nunez, 19, died of his injuries, while Ramirez was treated and released.

— SOPHIA CHANG

### WESTBURY

#### Not-guilty plea in crash that killed attorney

A Huntington Station man accused of driving a stolen car and fatally hitting Nassau County deputy attorney Joseph Carney was charged with murder, manslaughter, aggravated vehicular homicide, driving while impaired by drugs and dozens of lesser charges in a grand jury indictment yesterday.

Robert Feder, 51, pleaded not guilty at the arraignment at County Court in Mineola. He was ordered held without bail by County Court Judge Meryl Berkowitz. He is represented by Legal Aid, which did not return a phone message yesterday.

On May 4, Feder was driving a 2010 Hyundai on a residential street in Westbury when he broadsided Carney's car, police said. Officers on patrol for aggressive drivers were about to attempt to pull Feder over when he sped away and ran a red light, colliding with Carney and another vehicle, police said. Feder is due back in court July 21.

— SOPHIA CHANG

### REGION

#### Franzese jury to begin deliberations today

The jury in the racketeering trial of Long Island mob legend John "Sonny" Franzese is set to begin deliberations today after receiving its charge late yesterday from U.S. District Judge Brian Cogan in federal court in Brooklyn. Franzese, 93, reputed underboss of the Colombo crime family, and three others are charged with extortion, robbery and loan-sharking.

### N. LINDENHURST

#### Boy, 14, shot in arm while leaving park

Two men fired at a 14-year-old boy leaving a park near the North Lindenhurst Pool on Straight Path, striking him in the left forearm, police said yesterday.

Suffolk police said the shooting happened at 5:42 p.m. Monday. They said the boy did not realize he had been shot until a passerby told him he was bleeding. The boy was taken to a hospital in stable condition, police said.

— JOHN VALENTI