



NEWSDAY PHOTO / THOMAS A. FERRARA

Flowers left in the snow mark site of a fatal crash on Old Tappan Road in Lattingtown yesterday.

Teen killed in head-on crash on way to school

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A teenager from Locust Valley died yesterday morning in a two-car crash as she was driving herself to high school in Hempstead, police said.

Isabella Grasso, 18, a senior at Sacred Heart Academy, was airlifted after the accident to Nassau University Medical Center in East Meadow, where she was pronounced dead at 9:16 a.m., about two hours after the accident, Nassau police said.

Grasso, who friends said was an aspiring actress and dancer, lived on Mindy Court, about a mile from the accident scene.

She was traveling southwest on Old Tappan Road in



Isabella Grasso, 18, was killed.

Lattingtown in a convertible 2003 Mercedes-Benz, police said, when her car crossed over the double yellow line and collided with a 1998 Ford Explorer driven by an unidentified 17-year-old from Locust Valley, police said.

That teenage boy suffered injuries to his chest and arms and was taken to a hospital, police said. His condition was not immediately known.

Grasso's family declined to comment at their home yesterday, but a friend who had known her since fifth grade said she was fun to be with, outgoing and someone who could be depended on.

"She was one of my first friends there because of how easy to talk to and how friendly she was," said Cristina Cappiello. "Whenever we were together it was just so much fun, I looked forward to the dance classes I had with her. We took a lot of tap and competition classes together. Isabella was probably one of the funniest and outgoing people I know. She had countless . . . friends.

"I knew that when I was upset, I could go to her and she would make me feel better."

The accident is being investigated.

Drunken driver sentenced

A van driver who downed drinks before plowing onto a crowded sidewalk near the Empire State Building and killing a pregnant woman on her wedding anniversary was sentenced yesterday to seven to 15 years in prison for the rush-hour carnage.

Manhattan state Supreme Court Justice Gregory Carro imposed the maximum possible sentence for Keston Brown's conviction on manslaughter and other charges, telling Brown he had no one but himself to blame

for the 2009 crash.

Brown, 29, had acknowledged drinking three beers and a shot of cognac at a bar an hour before, but pinned the crash on mechanical problems with the van. He told the judge he was deeply sorry for the wreck, which killed Ysemny Ramos and her unborn child and injured a friend walking with her.

"It sickens me" to think of what happened, Brown said. "I beat myself up every day. I never wanted to hurt anyone," he added as about a dozen of Ra-

mos' family members and friends watched with tears and ire.

A row of Brown's relatives sat across a courtroom aisle, where his wife sobbed on hearing his sentence and rushed from the room afterward.

Brown and Ramos were wrapping up their work weeks and heading home to their families when their paths crossed on March 27, 2009.

Brown has six children; Ramos and her husband had three and were expecting another. — AP

IN BRIEF

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MANHATTAN

2 more guilty pleas after Gambino family roundup

The last two of 14 defendants in a major Gambino family roundup last fall that included charges of sex trafficking a minor pleaded guilty in federal court in Manhattan yesterday.

Prosecutors said the guilty pleas from all 14 defendants — including, in December, 70-year-old Gambino boss Daniel Marino — had struck a "significant blow" against the crime family.

"As the result of our prosecution, one of the mafia's pre-eminent leaders and many of its rising stars will now serve significant prison sentences," said Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara.

The final two pleading guilty yesterday were Thomas Orefice, 34, and Dominick DiFiore, both of Staten Island.

Seven of the defendants were charged with using Craigslist to run a prostitution ring, a criminal venture that was unusual for the mob.

Other charges included the 1997 murder of Frank Hydell, Marino's nephew, who was suspected of being an informant, and involvement in gambling, extortion, narcotics and jury tampering.

— JOHN RILEY

OCEANSIDE

Prison for club owner convicted in shakedowns

A Long Island nightclub operator convicted last year of extortion and racketeering along with former Colombo family underboss Sonny Franzese was sentenced to 51 months in prison yesterday in federal court in Brooklyn.

Joseph DiGorga, 70, of Oceanside, was convicted of shakedowns involving an Albertson pizzeria and two Manhattan strip clubs in concert with Franzese and other mobsters.

Franzese, 93, is scheduled to be sentenced on Friday.

— JOHN RILEY

HICKSVILLE

Informant tips feds off about robbery plan

Five men who were plan-

ning to stage the armed robbery of an illegal Hicksville gambling operation have been arrested by federal agents and Nassau police, according to officials.

Several of the would-be robbery crew attempted to get an informant with the federal Drug Enforcement Agency to take part in the robbery, but he told agents about the plan, according to federal court documents.

The defendants were arrested in the parking lot adjacent to the gambling location late Sunday night, shortly before the planned robbery, the documents said.

The exact location of the gambling operation was not disclosed, but the suspects believed 50 people were regularly present there, according to the papers.

The five were arraigned in federal court in Brooklyn last night on a charges of attempting to interfere with interstate commerce and held without bail, according to Robert Nardoza, a spokesman for Eastern District U.S. Attorney Loretta Lynch.

They were identified as Duane Costa, 25, Trenton Drew, 34, Gary France, 27, Frank Myers, 31, and Emory Watkins, 29.

— ROBERT E. KESSLER

MASSAPEQUA

Police: Couple stole DVDs in child's diaper bag

A Mastic couple was charged with stealing DVDs from the Walmart on Sunrise Highway in Massapequa by placing them in a diaper bag belonging to their 3-year-old, Nassau County police said.

Then when stopped by security personnel, the father is accused of pulling a knife and swinging it at the security guards, police said. And after the weapon was knocked to the ground, the mother is charged with picking it up — and threatening an officer with it, police said.

The man, Fred Puryear, 39, was arrested at the scene, police said. The woman, identified by police as Bernadette T. Robledo, 30, was arrested Sunday.

— JOHN VALENTI