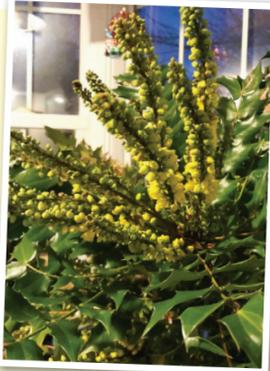




House of the week

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Bring a little green into your life

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165th YEAR NO. 2 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2019 \$1.00

City sound, stable, Lear says in annual address

'We know we cannot move forward by standing still, yet we want to assure that each step forward honors those taken in the past.'

—Mayor Chuck Lear



By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Mayor Chuck Lear highlighted a number of projects on the horizon for the city in his state of the city address on New Year's Day. He said the new year would bring new and continuing opportunities and challenges. They include:

- Making decisions and taking action on constructing a new public safety building.

- Unveiling a new, upgraded user-friendly city website.
- Completing a safe bike route from the Coast Guard base to elementary school.
- Completing the application to become a designated "Bicycle Friendly Community."
- Publishing a "Cape Island Bicycle and Pedestrian Friendly Guide."
- Making decisions on the Franklin Street School as a new library and multipurpose center.

- Exploring new possibilities with and for the housing authority.
- Considering information technology upgrades and looking into "Smart City" technologies.
- Making more informed studies of redevelopment and rehabilitation options.
- Exploring new public and private grant opportunities to kick-start, up-grade or extend city programs and services.
- Reviewing and enhancing

- ways to promote community safety and security.
- Developing and refining creative approaches to beach and dune management and surf zone safety.
- Studying, refining, implementing and monitoring new remedies to the city's parking problem.
- Progressing with Phases II, III and IV of Lafayette Street

See City sound, Page A5

Van Drew has work ahead as he goes to Washington

Immigration; working with liberals, GOP and Trump; taking over LoBiondo office

By ERIC AVEDESIAN
Sentinel staff

For Jeff Van Drew, the trip to Congress continues a long career in public service.

There were many stops on the way: Dennis Township where he was mayor, in Cape May Court House, where he did a stint as freeholder, and Trenton, where he served as a legislator, first in the Assembly and then the Senate.

Van Drew took his oath of office Jan. 3 as a congressman representing New Jersey's Second District.

A Democrat in a highly conservative region, Van Drew defeated Republican challenger Seth Grossman in November.

Incumbent U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo decided not to run for re-election after serving for 23 years, setting the stage for Van Drew's ascendancy to representing the state's geographically largest district. The largely rural Second Congressional District stretches from Salem County to Cape May County in the south and parts

'You've got moderates, you've got those that are progressives and traditional liberals. You have a mixture of people that are there and they have different concerns and different ideas and interests but I think they all want to hopefully leave a good mark.'



—Jeff Van Drew

of Ocean and Burlington counties in the north. It encompasses farmlands, seashore towns, sleepy bedroom communities, and industrial centers in Cumberland and Atlantic counties.

For Van Drew, the move to Congress has been a bitter-sweet whirlwind punctuated by hard and fast deadlines.

"It's a lot to do very rapidly," Van Drew said. "You start right after New Year's Day. You really have got to move quickly."

Orientation teaches incoming freshmen representatives the House's operating procedures and rules of order. Freshmen members also posed for a photograph on the steps of the U.S. Capitol.

In the photograph, Van Drew stands front and center — literally — with newly elected representatives. The orientation also gives members time for hobnobbing with other representatives.

In New Jersey, Democrats won a majority of House seats. Van Drew will be rubbing shoulders with others from the New Jersey delegation: Andy Kim, a Democrat who ousted incumbent Republican Tom MacArthur after a nail-biting race; former U.S. Navy helicopter pilot and former federal prosecutor Mikie Sherrill; and former Obama administration official Tom Malinowski,

See Van Drew, Page A4



Robert Newkirk/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Melody Murphy reportedly died of carbon monoxide poisoning during a fire the morning of Jan. 4 at her home on the 200 block of East Florida Avenue in the Villas section of Lower Township. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

Villas woman dies in fire

VILLAS — A Villas woman died in a structure fire after being overcome by smoke, authorities said.

Lower Township police were dispatched at about 6:45 a.m. Jan. 4 to the 200 block of East Florida Avenue for a reported structure fire. Upon arrival, they found the homeowner, Joseph Murphy, outside being attended to by neighbors, suffering from smoke inhalation and other

minor injuries. According to police, the man's wife, Melody Murphy, was found dead in an upstairs bedroom. According to the Southern Regional Medical Examiner Office, her cause of death was carbon monoxide poisoning as a result of the fire. Authorities said the home did not have working smoke alarms.

The Villas Fire Department, with the help of Erma Fire and Townbank Fire,

quickly responded to the scene and was able to extinguish the blaze. Lower Township Rescue was also on scene. The county Prosecutor's Office and county Fire Marshal's Office were also at the scene.

The cause of the fire is currently under investigation by the county Fire Marshal's Office, the county Prosecutor's Office and Lower Township police.

Medical marijuana company seeking dispensary locations

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — A medical marijuana company is continuing to seek dispensary locations in Cape May County.

Dennis Township resident Emmett Vandergriff, an owner of Evergreen Curative LLC, approached Lower Township Council in August seeking a letter endorsing his company's operation of a dispensary at the county airport. Council took no action at that time.

He revisited council Jan. 3.

"We did in fact submit an application to the state for six available licenses; we did not get the license," Vandergriff said. "But we did score just about the

seventh highest in the state."

He said Evergreen Curative was given a very brief window of time to complete a very thorough application. He said his proposal did not receive support from any municipality in the county.

Additional licenses will be available next year, he said.

"The patients have already doubled since Gov. Murphy extended the program," Vandergriff said. "Even with the new six facilities out there, there is no way they are going to be able to compensate for the steady patient growth, so new licenses will be available in the next year and we wanted to get a head start on trying to secure a

municipality that would be willing to have the industry operate within it."

Vandergriff asked to make a formal presentation before council at a future meeting. He said Township Solicitor David Stefankiewicz stated council would meet behind closed doors and make a decision and discuss the prospect of a dispensary in the future.

Mayor Erik Simonsen said Vandergriff could schedule a presentation for a future work session with Township Manager James Ridgway.

"It's something that will be discussed obviously in all the municipalities," Simonsen said.

In August, Vandergriff

See Medical, Page A5

Efforts appear to have curbed drug activity at Lepore's Pits

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — In August, residents near an abandoned farm that was intended to become a vineyard complained the acreage had become a campsite for vagrants and drug users.

Seven streets off Route 9 — from Holly Shores Campground to the Waggin' Tail Pet Store — back up to the privately owned farm, which connects to a wildlife area known as Lepore's Pits. Residents expressed concerns with drug activity taking place on the former farm.

One resident spoke of a "ton of needles, heroin baggies" visible. Another spoke of people walking through neighborhoods to



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Lower Township authorities have taken steps to prevent drug activity and vagrancy at the site known as Lepore's Pits off Route 9 near Holly Shores Campground.

get to the farm and wildlife area, where they had taken up residence.

Last summer, Lower Township police found a

Villas man dead in the pits. An autopsy conducted by the Southern Regional Med-

See Efforts, Page A2

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