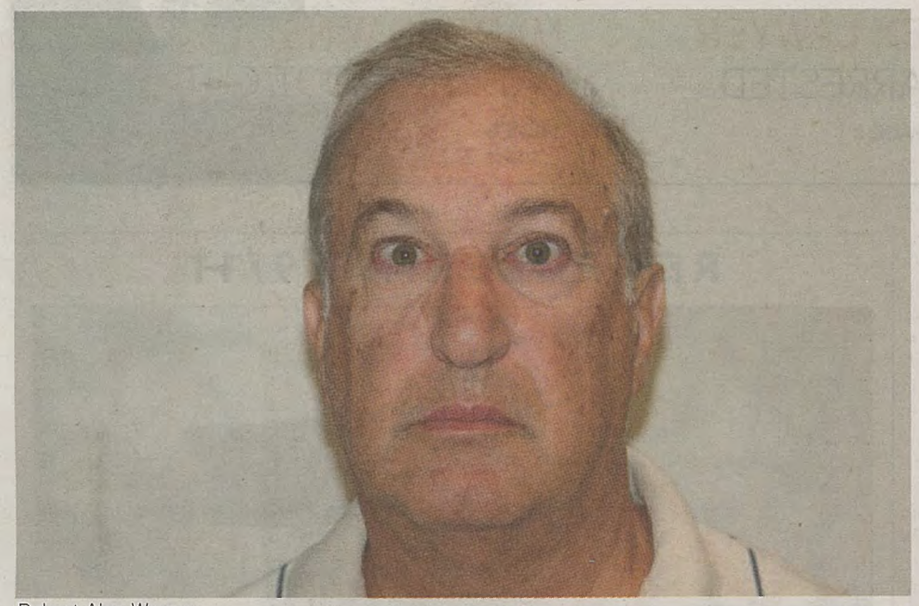
Lawyer arrested for stealing $400K: DA

Ex Manhasset attorney charged with theft from estate



Robert Alan Wagner

BY CHRIS ADAMS

An attorney formerly based in Manhasset was arrested last Thursday for allegedly stealing more than $400,000 from an estate he represented, according to Nassau County District Attorney Madeline Singas.

Robert Alan Wagner, 63, who currently resides, was arraigned the same day and charged with second-degree grand larceny, a class C felony, the district attorney's office said.

If convicted of the charge, Wagner could face up to 15 years in prison, Singas said.

"This defendant is charged with stealing more than $400,000 in estate funds that he held for a client, and using that money for his own personal purposes," she said. "Attorneys hold a special position of trust with their clients, and stealing from those grieving from the loss of a loved one is especially despicable."

> This defendant is charged with stealing more than $400,000 in estate funds that he held for a client, and using that money for his own personal purposes,"
>
> *Madeline Singas.*
> NASSAU COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Wagner was retained by a woman before she died in Dec. of 2013, and allegedly misappropriated funds from the sale of her property after her death for his personal use, including expenses for his law practice, Singas said.

The $407,000 account was to be used for matters related to the estate, including the distribution of funds to family members, she said.

In Feb. 2014, the account had been depleted to $300, even though none of the beneficiaries had received payments from the estate, Singas said.

The executor of the estate and a beneficiary complained in July 2015 after they hadn't received payments, Singas said. The beneficiary was entitled to $100,000.

At the time of his arrest, Wagner was disbarred from practicing law, Singas said.

Assistant District Attorney Jennifer Contreras will be prosecuting the case. The defendant is represented by Joel R. Weiss.

Attempts to reach Weiss were unavailing.

Group fights to end substance abuse

Campaigns aim to prevent youth drug use

BY CHRIS ADAMS

When it comes to the topic of substance abuse, Manhasset anti-drug leader Cathy Samuels said it starts with the wellness of children.

"When my son was in fourth grade I saw my first prevention needs assessment survey in my community, and I realized that it's not just about navigating your child through high school to get good grades or to go to the best college. It's really the mission that we as parents have first and foremost — to make sure our children grow up healthy," she said.

Samuels is the project director for Manhasset's Coalition Against Substance Abuse, which is finding ways to reach the youth and parents in the community about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse.

The non-profit is an awardee of a Drug-Free Communities grant through the White House, which funds programs to spread awareness about the issue.

CASA has spearheaded numerous campaigns the get the word out in the community, including information about prevention and how to families can keep an open line of communication about substance abuse.

"It's almost like the foundation of a house," Samuels said. "Setting the right foundation with our children is paramount to ensuring they grow up healthy and safe."

The group doesn't get involved politically with the issue of substance abuse, but serves as an informational source for the Manhasset community, officials said.

CASA has implemented creative ways of leaving its message around town, like stickers on pizza boxes from restaurants on Plandome Road, or tabletop advertisements at various businesses.

"We implement many environmental strategies, like social marketing campaigns such as 'Talk, They Hear You' and 'Lock Your Meds,' in order for the message to get across the community, and for people to internalize it," CASA Executive Director Caryn Sawyer said.

The "Talk, They Hear You" campaign encourages parental communication with teenagers about underage drinking, and "Lock Your Meds" promotes safely storing prescription drugs so they don't fall into the wrong hands.

CASA is focused on creating sustainable programs so if the funding from grants runs out,

Continued on Page 74

Members of the Coalition Against Substance Abuse in the Manhasset Middle School library

TO REACH US

MAIL:
105 Hillside Avenue
Williston Park, NY 11596

FAX:
516-307-1046

SUBSCRIPTIONS:
Sue Tabakin 516-307-1045 x206
stabakin@theislandnow.com

DISPLAY ADVERTISING:
Steven Blank
516-307-1045 x201
sblank@theislandnow.com

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING:
Linda Matinale
516-307-1045 x210
lmatinale@theislandnow.com

EDITORIAL:
Editorial Submissions: news@theislandnow.com / Sports Submission : sports@theislandnow.com
Assistant Editor: Anthony Bosco 516-307-1045 x205 • abosco@theislandnow.com
Great Neck News: Joe Nikic 516-307-1045 x203 • jnikic@theislandnow.com
New Hyde Park Herald Courier: Noah Manskar 516-307-1045 x204 • nmanskar@theislandnow.com
Manhasset Times: Chris Adams 516-307-1045 x215 • cadams@theislandnow.com
Roslyn Times: Chris Adams 516-307-1045 x215 • cadams@theislandnow.com
Williston Times: Noah Manskar 516-307-1045 x204 • nmanskar@theislandnow.com
Port Washington Times: Stephen Romano 516-307-1045 x214 • sromano@theislandnow.com

MANHASSET TIMES (USPS#11850) is published by Blank Slate Media LLC, 105 Hillside Avenue, Williston Park, NY, 11596, (516) 307-1045.

The entire contents of the publication are copyright 2016. All rights reserved. The newspaper will not be liable for errors appearing in any advertising beyond the cost of the space occupied by the error.
Periodicals postage paid at Williston Park, NY, POSTMASTER. Send address changes to the Manhasset Times, C/O Blank Slate Media LLC, 105 Hillside Avenue, Williston Park, New York, 11596.

Town comes together for 9/11 anniversary

Continued from Page 1

birth and the date of their death.

The 56 North Hempstead residents who were killed during the attacks were honored during the morning ceremony held at Mary Jane Davies Green in Manhasset.

Town Council members present each read off the names of the victims according to their district, followed by the ring of a bell after each name was called.

Town Supervisor Judi Bosworth said the attacks marked a significant chapter in the lives of those who witnessed it.

"Most of the adults here today, including myself, will forever divide our life experience into two halves, before 9/11 and after 9/11," she said. "That was the day when everything we though we knew about the world, and our place in it, changed."

The ceremony had two moments of silence, at 8:46 a.m. and 9:03 a.m., to observe the times when each of the Twin Towers were struck.

Albertson VFW Post 5253 presented the colors to start the ceremony, and performed taps and fired a rifle salute.

Wink said there are more young people growing up without a memory of the attacks as the anniversaries pass. It is important, he said, to continue to recognize the loss experienced by our nation.

PHOTO BY CHRIS ADAMS

A member of Albertson VFW Post 5253 carries the nation's flag as members of North Hempstead's Town Council say the Pledge of Allegiance during the town's Sept. 11 memorial service last Sunday in Manhasset.

One Manhasset teen, Corey McCluskey, has paid tribute to the victims at the town ceremony with a bagpipe performance for the past eight years.

"Every year I feel an honor to be a part of this ceremony, and it's really something special to grow up with my community, and I'm just happy to be here," McCluskey said.

This year he performed the national anthem on his bagpipes, the last time he'll perform at the ceremony before he goes off to college.

A member of Boy Scout Troop 10 of Great Neck presented a wreath of white flowers to memorialize the 9/11 victims.

The Boy Scouts silently marched in a line, placing the wreath at the foot of the park's gazebo.

Bosworth said she took the day of reflection as a chance to also recognize other cities around the world that had experienced terrorist attacks.

"We have become a global family who has collectively mourned the loss of 49 people murdered in Orlando, Fla. this past June, the 130 people killed in Paris last November, and the 32 people killed in Brussels by suicide bombers, among so many tragic attacks throughout the world," Bosworth said. "Just as we stood together on Sept. 11, 15 years ago, we must stand together now, because we are Orlando, we are Paris and we are Brussels."

Car salesman convicted for theft of $350,000

BY CHRIS ADAMS

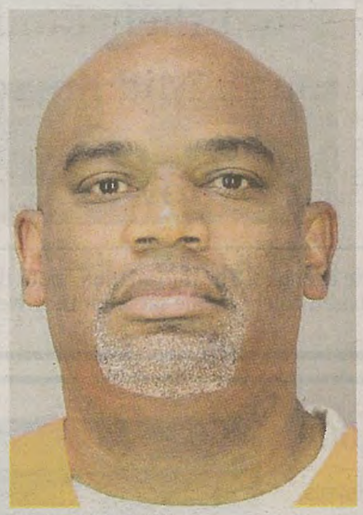
A used car salesman who had worked for a dealership in Roslyn was sentenced to up to four years in prison on Monday for stealing over $350,000 in car payments from customers, according to Nassau County District Attorney Madeline Singas.

Freeport resident Michael McGriff, 43, pleaded guilty to multiple charges of theft before a Nassau Supreme Court judge on July 7, and was recently sentenced for the crimes, according to a release from Singas' office.

McGriff made fraudulent contracts with customers at Port Motors Lincoln Mercury in Roslyn and Lexus of Rockville Centre to charge them higher monthly payments than were agreed to, and forged loans under customers' names without their authorization, the release said.

"Buying a car can be a stressful experience, and this defendant took advantage of his customers' trust when he stole more than $350,000 from car buyers and dealerships," Singas said. "I'm grateful to the [Nassau County Police Department] and our prosecutors for bringing this case to ensure that this scam artist is out of business and behind bars."

Some of his victims had their cars repossessed because they refused to make payments for the extra loans he took out for them, the release said.



Michael McGriff

In some cases, he collected cash from customers' down payments, but never produced a car, the release said.

Under the alias of Michael Glenn, McGriff took $12,900 from a customer to buy a car at auction, but never acquired the car.

Customers defrauded by McGriff complained to the dealerships about his actions, and he was then reported to the police, the release said.

Judge Jerald Carter oversaw McGriff's sentencing, and ordered him to repay victims a total of $365,546.

His attorney Lloyd J. Nadel said he doesn't have the money to make the payments, and for now will have a civil judgement documented against him until the restitution is paid.

The sentence ordered McGriff to a minimum of 16 months and a maximum of four years behind bars.

"They negotiated for a sentence with the judge, and he said he wanted to put this whole incident behind him," Nadel said. "He acknowledged that he made mistakes, and he's ready to move on with his life."

His sentence includes time served since his arrest, which currently meets the minimum 16 months, Nadel said.

Once McGriff is processed from county to state prison, he will have a parole hearing set, he said.

McGriff pleadws guilty to second-degree grand larceny, seven counts of third-degree grand larceny, first-degree identity theft, and first-degree scheme to defraud, the release said.

Assistant District Attorneys Matthew Sotirhos and April Montgomery prosecuted the case.

Detective Jeffrey Marshall from Nassau County Police conducted the investigation and arrested McGriff, the release said.

Group fights to end drug abuse on L.I.

Continued from Page 2

the group will have partners to help continue its campaigns, Samuels said.

One of those partnerships is with the Town of North Hempstead, through the Stop Throwing Out Pollutants (STOP) program, which encourages residents to safely dispose of prescription medications.

Last week CASA announced that the group was one of the recipients of a $360,000 grant from the Cardinal Health Foundation to help with their efforts of medication disposal.

"Manhasset CASA is effective in educating residents about the importance of safely disposing of unused prescription drugs, as well as increasing awareness of the town's Stop Throwing Out Pollutants prescription drug disposal program," North Hempstead Town Supervisor Judi Bosworth said. "Our continuing partnership with CASA and the Nassau County Police department will remove dangerous drugs from the mainstream before they can fall into the wrong hands and lead to addiction and heartbreak."

Sawyer said her work as a clinical psychologist drew her to the issue of substance abuse because of it's connection to mental wellness.

"It is so important, it's part of mental health and I just was pulled towards it," Sawyer said. "In our community, and in every community, there are issues with substance abuse among youth. By reaching parents and youth early we can make a real difference in preventing youth substance abuse."