

CITY & REGION

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Woman pleads guilty to 2020 firebombing

By MAKI BECKER
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

On Jan. 28, 2020, a fire ripped through 79 Kilhoffer St., a house being renovated by Habitat for Humanity that was going to become a community drop-in center. The building burned to the ground and a Buffalo firefighter suffered a back injury while crawling through the attic.

Investigators suspected arson. It turned out the house was firebombed, and on Monday, a Buffalo woman pleaded guilty in federal court to setting the blaze.

Jade Smart, 34, faces a minimum of seven years in prison and also may be fined between \$15,000 to \$250,000 and sentenced to two to five years of supervised release after she serves her

prison sentence, according to her plea agreement.

Investigators used surveillance video footage and DNA left on a gas can to confirm the identity of the arsonist.

At the time of the fire, Habitat for Humanity was renovating multiple houses on Kilhoffer in the Genesee-Moselle neighborhood and nearby. The Stop the Violence Coalition and the Buffalo Peacemakers planned to use 79 Kilhoffer as a community drop-in center for youth and the elderly. It was part of the Bailey Green initiative, a public-private partnership spearheaded by Harmac Medical Products on Bailey Avenue.

Just after 5 p.m., members of Stop the Violence and Peacemakers were at

See **Firebomb** on Page B2

Developer sought to restore Central Terminal complex

By MARK SOMMER
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

If all goes as planned, the Central Terminal — Buffalo's last remaining architectural giant not in use — could have a plan by this time next year and a developer to pursue it.

The Central Terminal Restoration Corp., along with the City of Buffalo, notified developers Tuesday that the former 1929 art deco train station, located in the Broadway Fillmore neighborhood, is available for development.

The announcement has been expected since the not-for-profit released its master plan last August for the property. The decision follows Gov. Kathy Hochul's June an-



Harry Scull Jr./News file photo

Buffalo's Central Terminal is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

ouncement that \$61 million in state and philanthropic funds will be used to refurbish the Central Terminal's grand concourse, the exterior of the 17-story tower building and the grounds.

"We are looking for a development partner to reimagine the majestic historic landmark as a lasting cultural and economic hub of activity — a beacon and a destination that attracts people and investment," said Monica Pellegrino Faix, executive director of the Central Terminal Restoration Corp.

"Some developers have reached out, and we have a consultant team supporting us with this endeavor,"

See **Terminal** on Page B2



Harry Scull Jr./Buffalo News

Buffalo teachers union will appeal strike ruling

Staff took day off after student threat

By BARBARA O'BRIEN
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Buffalo Teachers Federation President Philip Rumore said the union will appeal a decision that 16 teachers engaged in an unlawful strike.

A total of 23 teachers at Dr. Charles R. Drew Science Magnet School called in sick the day after a youth fleeing from an altercation four years ago threatened to come back the next day and shoot and kill everyone in the school.

A state appeals court last week upheld an administrative ruling that 16 of the teachers engaged in an unlawful strike when they used a sick day following the fight.

The Appellate Division of State Supreme Court, Third Depart-

ment, upheld a ruling by the Public Employees Relations Board (PERB) against the New York State United Teachers, Buffalo.

The penalty issued by PERB was a suspension of union dues at the school for four months. Each teacher who was found to have participated was also docked two days pay for the one-day strike, according to Nathaniel J. Kuzma, general counsel for Buffalo Public Schools.

"The District is pleased with the decision of the Appellate Division and expects the ITF to abide by the law in the future regarding the prohibition of public sector labor strikes," Kuzma said in a statement.

Rumore said the teachers did not strike in March 2018.

"I think what this shows is the vindictiveness and the meanness

See **Teachers** on Page B2

After 2 pandemic years off, Kingdom Bound returns

35th year of Christian rock at Darien Lake

By LEAH CLARK
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

For the past two years, something had been missing for Kara Klump of Buffalo. It was a feeling of camaraderie that had been in her life for almost the past decade.

But the cause was no mystery: The Covid-19 pandemic made it impossible to see the friends she made while volunteering at the Kingdom Bound Festival.

"There are people that I only get to see at Kingdom Bound that I now consider friends but live everywhere else," Klump said.



Skillet's Corey Cooper shares on guitar during a set.

Look: CHRISTIANS GATHER AT KINGDOM BOUND AT DARIEN LAKE. SCAN THIS CODE ON YOUR MOBILE DEVICE TO SEE MORE PHOTOS.

The festival is back this year. So are Klump's friends. And so is her smile.

"Being able to see them again and catch up, it's like our annual reunion," she said.

On Sunday, people of all ages from all over the nation gathered at Six Flags Darien Lake Amusement Park for the 35th annual Kingdom Bound Festival. The festival is a four-day multistage Christian music and arts festival. With close to 40,000 attendees throughout the week and 400 volunteers, the festival is the biggest of its kind in New York and one of the biggest in the nation.

Hannah Fowler of Oswego has been attending the festival with her family and church since she was 6. Now, a mother of her own, she says

See **Festival** on Page B2

Ben Fuller performs at Kingdom Bound on Sunday. The Christian Music and Arts Festival is held each year at Six Flags Darien Lake. For more photos, see page B7.

CITY & REGION



Harry Scull Jr./Buffalo News photos

Tammy Tims and her dog, Diamond, listen from the audience as Josh Vacanti performs at Kingdom Bound, a Christian music and arts festival held annually at Six Flags Darien Lake. The event is back after two years off in the pandemic.

Worship services, seminars alongside concerts

FESTIVAL • from B1

that she is excited to share the tradition with her newborn daughter.

Fowler, like two-thirds of Kingdom Bound attendees, stayed on the Six Flags Darien Lake campgrounds either lodging in cabins and RVs or setting up tents during the festival. Families and friends alike can be seen eating, worshipping and hanging out together throughout the site.

Festival attendees start their mornings with worship services, seminars, workshops and programs, hearing from several speakers. Throughout the day, they can visit a bustling marketplace filled with vendors including Christian service organizations, colleges and universities, and merchandise businesses. Attendees also can enjoy the rides and attractions at Darien Lake.



Ron Westphal gives communion to his wife Kris at Kingdom Bound on Sunday.

student in 2013.

"To me, it's really exciting. I've been on the (students') side of the table before and have been through that," Dingy said. "But to be on this side and see the new generation is really cool, too."

Forty artists have been tapped to perform concerts

that cap each day for attendees as gates open at 4 p.m. and performances begin at 5 p.m. at the Darien Lake Performing Arts Center. Festival favorites such as For King & Country and Blues Counsel returned to the festival, but there were also some new faces to the Kingdom Bound

stage. Christian singer-songwriter Ben Fuller, a newcomer to the festival, performed Sunday night and Monday morning. But last week he joined the Christian service group Eight Days of Hope in the Fillmore District of Buffalo as they provided free home repairs to 200 residents. Volunteers from Eight Days of Hope were given one-day passes to access Kingdom Bound.

Fuller says the word "family" comes to mind when he thinks about his time in the Buffalo area and performing at Kingdom Bound. "It doesn't matter where you're from or who you are or what your background is," he said. "I've just learned that everybody is looking for the same thing and that is love, kindness and confirmation on who they are."

Kingdom Bound 2022 ends today. Performances include artists For King & Country, We Are Messengers, Casting Crowns, Matthew West, TobyMac and Big Daddy Weave. For more information and tickets, go to kingdombound.org.

City to improve area infrastructure

TERMINAL • from B1

Faix said. "They've had conversations with developers as well, so we know there is a lot of interest."

Developer Douglas Jemal, who is redeveloping the former Statter Hotel, Hotel Henry at the Richardson Olmsted Campus and several other major projects in the city, has also expressed interest.

"I think it's one of the top 10 coolest buildings in the world," Jemal told The News in March 2021. "It's phenomenal. I would love to do that. One that is the coup de grace."

Mayor Byron Brown said his administration will make "major infrastructure investments" to improve the Central Terminal area. "The phenomenal I would love to do that. One that is the coup de grace."

The master plan also called for community events and activities on the grounds. There are three property owners at the Central Terminal: Central Terminal Restoration Corp., which has 12.5 acres, owns three buildings. There is also a one-level above-grade parking garage with 18-foot ceilings that holds 300 cars. The tower building is envisioned in the master plan as potential office space or high-rise residential, with some floors as a possible boutique hotel. The passenger concourse, the plan suggested, could be used for a cultural center, film production or as a community and nonprofit anchor. The former Mail & Baggage Building, with dome-height ceilings and numerous loading docks on the first floor, could be used for housing, the plan suggested, or as an innovation hub with small-business offices, light manufacturing and workforce training. Three floors of live/work space and rooftop agriculture were also suggested.

The City of Buffalo, which has 16 acres, owns the former three-story brick U.S. Terminal Railway Post Office Building and the two-story Railway Express Building, both suggested for light manufacturing and industrial workforce training.

The remaining 33 acres of land at the Central Terminal are owned by Amtrak and the tracks by CSX, and are not available for development.

The Central Terminal Restoration Corp. will remain owner of the property and offer a long-

term lease or joint partnership. The nonprofit in 1997 acquired the abandoned property, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and has made its revival its mission.

"We tried to lay out in the plan a broad framework for developers to respond to, but at the same time give them creative autonomy to bring their ideas to the table, married with the master plan," Faix said.

The community-infused master plan imagined the Central Terminal as a hub of activity with a mix of uses and a connection to the future of the Broadway Fillmore neighborhood. That includes the Broadway Market, which is receiving \$37 million to create an international market, part of \$225 million in East Side investments Hochul announced in the spring.

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Gave no motive for torching house

FIREBOMB • from B1

a meeting a block away at Har-mac when they received word about the fire. When they arrived, they saw flames shooting through the roof.

Investigators with the Buffalo Fire Marshals Office at the scene found a partially burned iced tea bottle and a gas can. To aid in the investigation, the investigators contacted the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives for additional help. In the criminal complaint, prosecutors said Smart was identified as a suspect and ATF agents and city fire marshals interviewed her.

According to a criminal complaint against Smart, she told investigators that on the morning of Jan. 28, 2020, she went to the back of 97 Kilhofer and found a gas can that she placed on a garbage tote before leaving the area. She then met up with a friend and the two of them returned to get the gas can. A third person came to pick them up in a blue Ford Taurus and they drove to a gas station on Bailey Avenue where she bought a bottle of



Murray Holman of Buffalo Peacekeepers surveys 79 Kilhofer St., after fire destroyed the building in 2020.

iced tea and \$4 of gas to put in the can. The driver dropped off the woman on Kilhofer. Smart admitted she poured gasoline into her empty tea bottle but then left it on the garbage tote at 97 Kilhofer and walked away. She said a few minutes later the fire started.

Tests on the gas can found DNA that matched Smart.

In the plea agreement, she admitted to starting the fire. Murray Holman, executive director of the Stop the Violence Coalition, said he doesn't know Smart and doesn't know why she started the fire. But he believes the building was

targeted. "It set back our organization," he said. "It took away resources from that neighborhood."

Holman said he's glad that Smart admitted to the crime and hopes to one day meet with her to ask her about why she set the fire.

"Her conviction is a step in the right direction... Hopefully, she'll get the help that she needs," he said.

In the meantime, he said his group plans to build a new community center at the same location.

Reporters' Notebook / Bits and pieces of news ...



OLAF FUB SEZ: A thought from comedian Bill Engvall, born on this date in 1957. "When the bus driver gets off the bus, who shuts the door?"

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TIME OF NEED - Diagnosed with an aggressive tumor on her brain stem in May, Noelle Gabrieli-Marcucci, a Cheektowaga resident and mother of four, has been undergoing chemotherapy and radiation. To help with her medical bills, friends and family are holding a fundraiser from 5 to 9 p.m. Thursday in Fontana's Grove, 2299 Clinton St., West Seneca. Tickets are \$20. For more info and donations, email noellemiracle@gmail.com or visit the Noelle's Miracle page on Facebook.

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DINNER DATE - A cold plate with homemade chicken pasta salad is featured at the monthly community dinner from 4 to 6 p.m. Friday at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 3512 Clinton St., West Seneca.

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CREATURE FEATURE - Catch sight of more than 750 exotic ducks, geese and swans from all over the world from 2 to 5 p.m. Sunday at Gosseneck Hill Waterfowl Sanctuary, 5067 Townline Road, Delevan. Visitors have a chance to hand feed the geese and more than 1,000 koi fish. For more info, call 716-942-6835 or email rosebird@frontiernet.net.

OLD WORLD TREATS - SerbFest celebrates Serbian culture from noon to midnight Saturday and noon to 10 p.m. Sunday at St. Stephen Serbian Orthodox Church, 177 Weber Road at Abbott Road, Lackawanna. Attractions include spit-roasted lamb and pork, the grilled Serbian meat dish cevapi and ethnic desserts, along with continuous live Serbian music and dancing. Admission is \$2 for those over 18.

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY - Robert F. Moss, Pawan Matta, Bonnie Flickinger, George Costello, Maria Genero, Brandon Beane, Chuck Specht, Floyd "Tod" Beckham, Annette Wahs, Jeff Rapp, Kimberly Uzar-Witkop, Madeline Topor, Alex Scott Prell, Janet Roetzer, Teena Wise, Tom Safe, Sandy Maguda, Patricia Przewlocki, Lorraine Cieslak, Nancy Tobias Mourad, Tony Berec, Paul Kamrowski Jr., Carolyn Clancy Higgins, Ryan Koczaja, Donald Yager and Westside Gunn.

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AND THURSDAY - Janique Curry, Dave Meinzer, Michelle Dickman, Tracey Drury, Sara Jo Kakulka, Dinorah Santos, Katie O'Hearn, Evelyn Johnson, Gladys Moore, Brad Philipps, Alex Pronobis, Dawn Skowronski, Kelly Clark, Ann Erker, Cameron Panepinto, Michael Smolen, Dr. Michael McCormick, Susan Hastings, Ty Jeffrey Baker, Emerson Hall, Sister Suzanne Marie Kush, Nancy Galvin Schmeizer, Mary Ann Ballotta, Marianne N. Vallet-Sandre, Kathleen Gentile, Angelo Sole and

Scotty Bapst.

To submit birthdays and other items of interest to Reporters' Notebook, please email olaf@buffalo.com or send a letter to Reporters' Notebook, Buffalo News, Box 100, Buffalo, NY 14240.

Lottery Picks /

Winning numbers for Tuesday

N.Y. Evening Number: 827

N.Y. Midday Number: 0007

Win Four Evening: 9449

Win Four Midday: 2354

Cash4Life: 11 25 26 41 45

CashBall: 4

Take Five: 11 19 21 27 29

Pick 10:

1 3 11 17 19 24 27 28 30 33

36 38 41 45 51 61 64 70 72 79

Mega Millions not available

Pick 3 Evening: 145

Pick 3 Day: 768

Pick 4 Evening: 4864

Pick 4 Day: 3953

Late numbers for Monday

Take Five: 8 12 17 26 36

These numbers are unofficial.

For official New York Lottery results go to buffalo.com/lottery or your lottery retailer.

Union condoned action, court says

TEACHERS • from B1

of the school district, at least at the time," Rumore said.

"Teachers went in afterwards and were consoling each other and someone was saying that they were going to

take off, they were just so sick of it," Rumore said.

He said union officials told the union representative in the school to make sure that no one took a sick day who was not sick, and she notified members via email.

Although there was evi-

dence to support a different conclusion, there was substantial evidence that the union "caused, encouraged, instigated, and/or condoned an unlawful strike by 16 of its unit members at Public School 59," the Appellate Court decision said.