

tion for 'Truck-Eating Bridge' is
s way, but will take time/10

'Crazy for You' and 'Little Mermaid'
make for a musical month/11 & 13

14-year-old local
herself as a fenc

The Metuchen Mix

MARCH 2018

REFLECTING YOUR LIFE IN THE  OF NEW JERSEY

Security schools gets new attention

district, PTO reach out
parents in wake of
shooting in Florida

LAUDE DELTIEURE
AL TO THE MIRROR

In the aftermath of the deadly high school shooting in Florida, Metuchen public school officials have reached out to parents with a summary of in-house security measures already in place and supported by local police presence.

Meanwhile, the head of the district's Parent Council said school security is the subject of presentations before parent-teacher organizations in

a joint statement Feb. 20 by Superintendent Vincent Caputo and Board of Education President Dan Bender. In addition to other district efforts: morning programs that aim to prepare children with social coping and problem-solving skills beyond their academic learning.

A 19-year-old accused of killing 17
See SECURITY, Page 9

BOROUGH RALLIES IN SUPPORT OF INDONESIAN FAMILY



The Rev. Ellen Clemot, temporary senior pastor at First Presbyterian Church, and other clergy and church members pray over the wife of Roby Sanger during a prayer vigil, another way Metuchen rallied to the side of the local man who was snatched from a Metuchen street in January and threatened with deportation. Story on Page 3.

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News



Hundreds of Metuchen residents showed up at a rally to demonstrate their support for Roby Sanger and his family and opposition to his arrest and detention. — PAUL NADLER

Efforts to free detainee continue

Borough rallies in support of local resident threatened with deportation over status

BY CHRIS LISEE
SPECIAL TO THE MIRROR

At the Essex County Correctional Facility, in Room 1, Bed 32, Metuchen resident Roby Sanger sits reading his family Bible. He wears a sweatshirt and the white wristband denoting immigration offenders. He has been there since Jan. 25, when he was arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement after dropping his daughter off at Metuchen High School.

Now he bides his time in Newark as a federal judge reviews his request to reopen his asylum case.

Sanger's hope – and that of his family, his church community and many Metuchen residents – is that he will eventually be able to reopen his asylum case and seek legal residency.

An Indonesian Christian, Sanger came to the United States in the 1990s to escape the violence of Suharto's regime. He overstayed his tourist visa and missed the filing deadline for claiming asylum.

He has remained in the country thanks to a patchwork of special arrangements with ICE and a federal policy that made him a low priority for deportation. He secured a job, paid taxes, got married and had two children. Nevertheless, a final deportation order has loomed over him since 2006.

An executive order by President Donald Trump in early 2017 widened ICE's focus from criminal offenders to all immigrants who have a final order of removal, a decision that directly affects Sanger and scores of New Jersey's Indonesian nationals, as well as countless others across the nation.

After Sanger and another Indonesian national, Gunawan Liem of Franklin Park, were arrested on the same morning in January, the American Civil Liberties Union filed a class-action lawsuit arguing that detaining Indonesian nationals on years-old removal orders without notice violated their due process rights.

On Feb. 2, U.S. District Judge Esther Salas in Newark issued a temporary restraining order that prevents ICE from deporting Sanger and other undocumented Indonesians who have final orders for removal. The order gives Salas more time to review the case for giving the immigrants another chance to apply for asylum. Under the order, ICE is still able to arrest and detain Indonesian nationals. The ACLU estimated the order affects 50 to 55 people.

Though past attempts to reopen Indonesian immigrants' asylum cases have failed, increasing violence against Christians in Indonesia and the ACLU's attention could change the status quo, said Asma Warsi, who is representing Sanger and Liem. On Feb. 1, a

Massachusetts judge halted the deportation of about 50 Indonesian Christians living in New Hampshire so they could reopen their asylum cases, citing the danger of returning to their birth country.

The situation in Indonesia is a double-edged sword for immigrants. Religious tensions pose a threat to Christian deportees, but those same tensions could also convince a judge to allow them to reopen their asylum cases.

"There have been dramatic shifts in Indonesia recently," Warsi said. "There have been a lot of instances where Christians have been targeted based on their religious beliefs."

Islamic conservatism is on the rise in Indonesia. Last year, Jakarta's Christian governor was ousted on blasphemy charges. In February, a man wielding a sword attacked congregants at a Sunday church service on the island of Java, injuring four before being shot in the legs and subdued by officers.

In October 2015, a mob of about 500 people burned down a Protestant church in the Aceh province, and in August 2016, a suicide bomber attempted to attack a church in North Sumatra, but his vest failed to detonate.

There are also growing concerns that the Islamic State could gain influence in the world's most populous Muslim na-

tion, threatening religious minorities, including Shia and Ahmadi Muslims, who are also increasingly persecuted.

Metuchen has come together to support Roby Sanger, his wife and their two daughters. First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen, which Sanger has attended for 22 years, has been a focal point for arranging aid and educating the public.

"It's part of Christ's message to us that we would visit the imprisoned to bring good news to the captive, to help support those that are grieving in difficult situations," said the Rev. Ellen Clemot, First Presbyterian's temporary senior pastor.

"The congregation has banded together to help the family and raise funds for help paying the rent, and provide support for the children while he's detained. So it's been really wonderful to see that response."

Compounding the emotional toll of his absence, Sanger is his family's sole breadwinner, making his detention and possible removal financially devastating. Even if he is granted the opportunity to stay and reopen his asylum case, there is no guarantee his factory job will still be waiting for him.

Blue and red "Keep Families Together" signs have popped up around

Metuchen. An initiative of a group from First Presbyterian, the signs point to SpeakUpNJ.org, which was created to provide resources and solicit donations. In-person and online donations through youcaring.com have raised \$16,525 to support the family.

Members of the church community have also sent postcards to apply pressure to ICE.

Metuchen Mayor Jonathan Busch sees Sanger's ongoing detention as a disruption to both family and community life.

"Our issue is that this is a member of our community, with a family in our community, who's been taken," Busch said. "At this point, in view of the fact that Mr. Sanger has been granted a stay, at least temporarily, we see no reason why he isn't allowed to be home with his family, at least during the period of his stay."

"If in the worst-case scenario Mr. Sanger is openly deported – which would be horrible – at a minimum, allow the man to be home with his family, help him get his family's affairs in order and allow him the opportunity to say goodbye to his family, friends and neighbors."

On Ash Wednesday, Clemot and the Rev. Justin D. Karmann, temporary associate pastor of First Presbyterian, vis-



BUSCH



KARMANN

ited Sanger to apply ashes. "I think the feeling is that he wants to be the provider he always has been, and he's not able to do that right now," Karmann said after the visit.

"He said, 'All this is for my children, that I can be with them,'" Clemot recalled. "That's his goal. It's not about him at all. He wants to be present and a father to his family, and a breadwinner, and to be where his heart is."

Meanwhile, nearly a year has passed since Metuchen resident Arino Massie was arrested and deported after a routine check-in with ICE officials, leaving behind a wife and 13-year-old son, Joel.

Steven Rantung, pastor of Massie's home church, First Indonesian Seventh-Day Adventist Church in South Plainfield, said Massie is safely living with family in Jakarta, but has had trouble getting a job there due to his religious affiliation.

Indonesian national identity cards, required for employment, list the religious affiliation of their holders. Rantung said Christians living in some Muslim-majority provinces have experienced long delays in procuring the cards. To circumvent this issue, Massie applied for and received an ID card from a Christian-majority province, but faces another, though slightly easier, struggle: transferring it to his home province.

In the meantime, Massie is receiving financial support from his wife, while the Indonesian Christian community is aiding his wife and son.

The family longs to reunify, but the choices are not easy, Rantung said. Joel and his mother could join Massie in Indonesia, but that would mean uprooting from a life and community they've known for years, and the only country Joel has ever known. Rantung also fears growing Islamic radicalism in Indonesia, and whether Joel, as an American citizen, could become a target of violence.

"My biggest concern right now is American kids," Rantung said. "If they go to Indonesia, they could be easily targeted, because that's how the radicals function everywhere in the world – they want to hurt America by hurting Americans."

But it would also be difficult for Joel to grow up in New Jersey without a father. "I can see the damage from the separation," Rantung said. He has seen children grow frustrated and withdrawn after one or both parents are removed. Some require counseling because of the trauma.

"The best is really for the parents to be together with Joel here," Rantung said. "We are hoping for the best but preparing for the worst."

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