



# Staten Island Advance

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## PARENTS COUNT THEIR BLESSINGS

### Mom and dad persevere to have quintuplets

Doctors had told the couple to 'reduce' the pregnancy — a suggestion they ignored

By PHIL HELSEL  
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

The Christmastime quintuplets that made a Grant City couple the proud parents of four daughters and a son almost didn't happen. "A lot of doctors told us we were doing the wrong thing," said new dad Kevin Ferrante, 34, whose wife, Jamie, gave birth to quintuplets Saturday with the aid of fertility drugs. Many doc-



Kevin Ferrante, 34, speaks in front of his Grant City home about his five new children born on Dec. 27.

my deathbed knowing I did something like that, and neither could she. We figured we'd put it in God's hands, and so far so good."

The five children born in six minutes at Staten Island Hospital, Ocean Breeze, were born about two months premature and all but one were on respirators in the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit yesterday. None of the children weigh more than three pounds, but doctors say that's a perfectly good weight under the circumstances.

"They were born at a healthy weight for the risky birth that it was," said a

tors recommended the couple undergo "reduction" — or abortion of one or more fetuses to improve the chances of the other. "I know I couldn't go to

SEE BABIES, PAGE A 6

## SPRING FOR A DAY



STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE/JOSHUA CARP

Allison Russo, 5, left, and Cynthia Russo, 3, of Tottenville look out over the water at the Conference House. By late afternoon, the temperature had hit 65 degrees, matching the record high for the date in 1982. It was almost like spring for a day.

### A boy's life cut short, mom charged

10-year-old son dies after suffering blow to the head, officials say

By DEBORAH YOUNG  
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

Jaquan Porter lived a short and tragic life. The 10-year-old boy died Friday night — after his head slammed repeatedly into a wall during an alleged brutal beating by his mother in the first-floor apartment the two shared on a lonely, industrial street in Mariners Harbor.

Melissa Sekulski, who was arrested Saturday night, was arraigned yesterday in Stapleton Criminal Court, charged with manslaughter in the first degree.

The 30-year-old woman stood with an unflinching expression in front of a judge, listening to attorneys describe statements she allegedly made to police that detailed at least three years of abuse of her 250-pound son — a boy neighbors said they never saw leave the apartment, until Friday night — Ms. Sekulski's birthday — when he was carried by six emergency workers into an ambulance.

"The defendant has been



STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE/MICHAEL GATES

Melissa Sekulski, mother of the late Jaquan Porter, 10, is led from Stapleton Criminal Court after being charged with manslaughter in the first degree.

physically abusing the victim for years, by her own admission," said Assistant District Attorney Michael

SEE ARRAIGN, PAGE A 5

## IN SPORTS: PENNINGTON, DOLPHINS SEND JETS HOME FOR SEASON

Chad Pennington walked off the field where he spent his first eight NFL seasons after leading Miami to an improbable AFC East title. On the Jets' sideline, a disappointed Brett Favre jogged off the field and into the locker room, maybe for the last time in a storied career. **Page B 1**



## HEADLINES

### TOP NEWS FOR TODAY

#### GAZA ASSAULT WIDENS IN DEADLY AIR OFFENSIVE

Israel widens its deadliest-ever air offensive against Gaza's Hamas rulers, sending more tanks and artillery toward the Gaza border and activating thousands of reservists for a possible ground invasion. **Page A 9**

#### WEATHER WATCHER

Taurean Lanier of Park Hill



Very cool tonight, much colder tomorrow

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## Economy puts dorms on hold

Groundbreaking for 2 CSI buildings is delayed indefinitely due to lack of financing

By PHIL HELSEL  
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

In this economy, not even a university can get a break. Groundbreaking for the College of Staten Island's first-ever student dorms, once slated for October, is on hold indefinitely, because no banks will finance the project right now, officials said.

"We were in the queue to go forward, and all of a sudden the credit crunch hit," said Bob Huber, CSI vice president for external affairs. "Trying to get a loan for anything in this environment ... all the banks basically got religion at the same time."

CSI, part of the City University of New York, has long hoped to change its role from a commuter school, and still plans to build three residence halls housing 600 students near the Student Center, Huber said.

SEE CSI, PAGE A 4

## Looking for a turnaround



"He's for everybody, not just the rich."

— EVELYN DOHERTY,  
NEW DORP



"He's going to put us in the right direction."

— ANGELO FIGURELLI,  
PORT RICHMOND



"He has got a real mess on his hands."

— LISA BUNGAY,  
NEW DORP

## Islanders hope new year, new president will spark change

By AMISHA PADNANI  
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

With his swearing-in to take place on Jan. 20, the new president and the future of the economy are the prevalent issues on the minds of many Islanders for 2009. "He's going to put us in the right direction," said Angelo Figurelli of Port Richmond. "He's not going to work miracles, though. People have all these great expectations of him and they

will blame him when things don't change overnight. But he'll put us in the right direction and that's all I ask."

Figurelli said he's looking forward to the troops returning home from Iraq and improvements to the health care and education systems, all of which he expects will boost the economy over the next few years.

SEE CHANGE, PAGE A 6

## 10-year-old is picture of positive thinking

Youngster held a fund-raiser for hospital that took such good care of her

By STEPHANIE SLEPIAN  
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

She's just 10 years old, but Jacqueline DiForte has the poise and confidence of someone much older.

The Rosebank girl showed no fear when faced with surgery to remove a benign tumor from her thigh bone two years ago, and she dedicated herself to her rehabilitation without a word of complaint. When she recovered, Jacqueline returned to school, plus soccer, swimming and competing with her dance troupe.

She also did something



JACQUELINE

SEE HOSPITAL, PAGE A 6