

Fatal Route 4 accident

Rescuers work to remove the body of Asim Khawaja from his car following an accident on Route 4 in River Edge. The 21-year-old Elmwood Park man was killed when he apparently lost control of the eastbound car, which hit a curb and slammed into a guard rail, police said. Photo by Richard Raska



State offers counties a 'sweetener' on homeless

Continued from Page One

children and get the parents stabilized to see what caused the homelessness, what kinds of services they need and eventually get them into employment or REACH (the state's welfare reform project)," McKenna said.

Bergen is looking for an architect to convert the former county planning board offices into temporary housing. McKenna hopes will "fit right into the neighborhood."

With limited shelter space, Bergen County uses motel rooms for 50 to 75 families a month, McKenna said.

Monmouth County also has a temporary shelter program almost ready for 35 families who will occupy 15 trailers and three former staff homes on the grounds of Marlboro State Psychiatric Hospital.

The \$240,000 tab, which Monmouth will split with the state, includes utility hookups for the trailers as well as a contract with a nonprofit agency to provide security and a van to transport children to school and parents to stores.

"We're grateful for the assistance. At this point, we are very concerned about the plight of these families and we were pleased to be able to get this kind of help from the state to be able to put together this kind of program," said Louis Paparozzi, the county's director of human services.

According to the state, 54 Monmouth families got motel eviction notices last month after a State Supreme Court decision upholding the state's five-month limit on emergency shelter assistance. The 37 families who remain pay 30 percent of their welfare checks toward the bill.

Because the federal, state and county government spent \$36 million on the emergency assistance program in the past year, efforts are now fo-

cused on ending the state's reliance on motels.

In Essex, which has the most severe problem with 600 families in North Jersey motels, County Executive Nicholas Amato called the state's offer "encouraging."

"I would accept any alternative to a motel. I'm not saying it's the answer, but at least it's moving in the right direction," he added.

Essex County has been accused by the state of not reducing its motel population in proportion to other counties. Amato counters that as more families leave motels, new homeless families request housing. From April to July, Amato said, 292 families found apartments, but 352 more sought emergency shelter assistance.

Essex County Freeholder President Thomas P. Giblin said, "The problem is escalating and I think we just have to explore all alternatives. Warehousing homeless people in second-class and rundown hotels hasn't worked."

Giblin cited a joint project in Newark by Hartz Mountain Industries Inc. and a nonprofit agency called the New Community Corp. as an example of model alternatives.

The project entails building housing for 102 Newark families, who will stay for a year while receiving job skills, counseling, day care, medical checkups, nutrition and health services to start a new life.

Essex had 220 families facing motel eviction last month and another 100 whose emergency housing benefits expire this month.

According to figures supplied by the state, 190 of the 220 families who faced eviction last month are still in motels at \$70 a day per family. The tab is being paid with \$611,000

earmarked for rent subsidies. Close to half was used for rent subsidies, but the remainder will soon be absorbed by hotel landlords.

"If we had available shelters, we wouldn't need to go looking to the state for help," Amato said.

Statewide, there are fewer than 1,500 shelter beds. Housing activist Tricia Fagan called the scarcity of space a "tremendous problem," especially for homeless individuals, whom she said receive less attention than mothers with children.

About \$4 million in state funds will be spent in the next year to continue shelter subsidies and to build others.

Dennis Beatrice, associate com-

missioner in the state Department of Human Services, said the state would "like eventually to use family shelters as the safety net rather than welfare hotels."

Beatrice said all of the counties, except Essex, have done a good job reducing motel populations and some counties may not need the offer of matching funds.

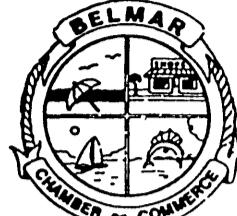
Fagan, executive director of the statewide Right to Housing Coalition and a frequent critic of patchwork solutions to homelessness, said, "All these pieces one by one are fine, but they don't form a comprehensive picture for dealing with this crisis."

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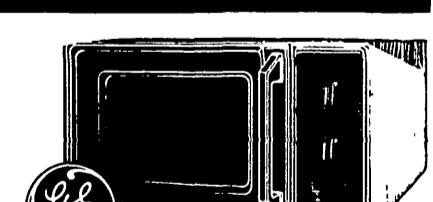
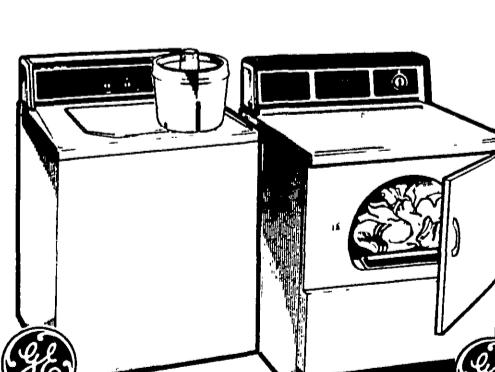
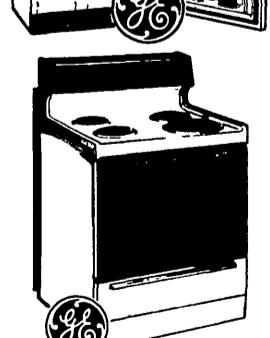
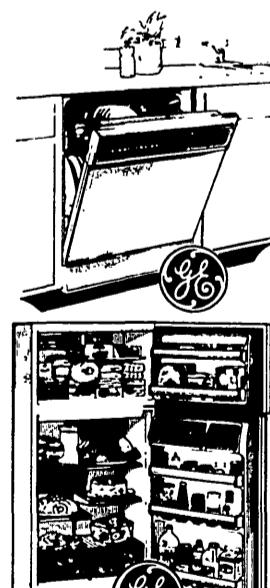
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2 seized in video burglary

Witnesses to an Orange video store burglary yesterday were credited with helping lead police to a man and a woman charged with the crime.

Police Director Charles Cobbert identified the suspects as Maurice Schell, 26, of Nicholas Boulevard in Plainfield, and Cynthia Davis, 22, of Gray Street in Orange.

Schell and Davis were charged with burglary and possession of stolen property in connection with the break-in and theft at Vista Rentals on Main Street at 11:40 p.m. on Tuesday, Cobbert said.

City Police Lt. Anthony Setaro and Officers Charles Folston and Kenneth Gernert arrested the pair at a public housing building on Wilson Place, he added.

The police said the pair apparently gained entrance to the store by prying open a rear steel gate and smashing open a glass door.

Shortly after the burglary was reported, Cobbert continued, two eyewitnesses told police where to seek the pair.

The police director said Davis later was picked up—with one video tape recorder in her possession—outside the apartment building.

According to Cobbert, police found Schell inside a third floor hallway of the building.

Cobbert said both suspects were jailed and last evening were being held in the municipal lockup without bail, pending a court arraignment.

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