

BRISTOL, CROYDON

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VOLUME 5, NO. 12

Meeting rescheduled

The Neshaminy School Board will vote on elementary school closures on April 12 instead of during their regular meeting. Some school board members have not yet made their decisions. One especially has the attention of some parents. Read the full story on page 3.



Wire File Photo

Sewer grant approved

The Bucks County Redevelopment Authority is beginning a project to install new sewer lines on Route 13. The work is projected to attract new businesses. Read the full story on page 16.

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Building a future

Matt Schickling / Wire Photo
Phil Cacossa, owner of Socrates Developers, strives to purchase and restore neglected homes in an effort to help revitalize communities.

By: Matt Schickling, The Wire

Last Thursday, Phil Cacossa and another worker were gutting the inside of a townhome on New Brook Street in Bristol Borough. Soon, they'll be renovating the inside, improving the long-vacant house with state-of-the-art building materials and energy-efficient HVAC, lighting and plumbing fixtures.

Cacossa wants to remove any potential headaches for the first-time home-

owners who will move in, though he doesn't know who they are yet.

The longtime architect is gradually stepping away from his work at Design

Developer looks to restore blighted homes in Bucks.

Resources Group Architects in Somerset, New Jersey to take on a new mission of purchasing and restoring neglected homes in an effort to help revitalize communities. He calls

the company Socrates Developers, and keeps the Socratic ethic of focusing on the way things could be, rather than how

they are, close to heart.

"For us, the key is to look into properties that someone couldn't move into on their own," Cacossa said. "It's a chance for me to do what I've been doing my whole life, but do it in a way to serve people."

The Bristol Borough house is the first property purchased by Socrates Developers. Cacossa, a Doylestown resident, has visited the town many times. He and his Realtor looked at nearly two dozen properties there to find the right fit. His wife,

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His strength lives on

By: **Matt Schickling**, the Wire

The Fourth Annual Ryan Strong 5K is taking place next week to remember Ryan Viola, a 17-year-old Bensalem resident who died tragically in 2012.

The walk and run is scheduled for April 3 at Bucks County Technical High School, where Viola was a student.

On the morning of Nov. 29, Viola was struck by a car while walking to his bus stop in Bensalem and sustained life-threatening injuries. He was pronounced dead the following day. His organs were donated to help five people in need.

Proceeds from the 5K, his mother Alice Viola said, will benefit Bucks Technical High School, the Wounded Warriors Foundation and Gift of Life Family House, which provides temporary lodging and support programs for organ transplant patients and their families.

"It's what keeps us going on a daily basis, just knowing that we're helping other people," she said. "It's such a wonderful feeling to know that Ryan didn't die in vain and his legacy is going on."

The event flier describes Ryan Viola as "a beloved son, protective older brother and a genuine friend who will be sadly missed by so many." His mother also noted that he intended to join the U.S. Army in August 2013. Viola participated in the Electrical Occupations Technology Program at Bucks Technical High School, following the path of his father and grandfather.

For the first event, held the Janu-

Benefit walk and run held in memory of Bensalem teen.

ary following Viola's death, over 500 people participated. Four-hundred people attended in each of the last two years. These numbers are encouraging for Viola's family, who wants to keep his memory alive through charity and volunteering.

Alice Viola also advocates for Ryan's



Photo courtesy of Alice Viola

Ryan Viola was fatally struck by a car while walking to his bus stop in 2012. The Fourth Annual Ryan Strong 5K will take place next week in his honor.

a suspended license. Under the proposed Ryan's Law, a person could be charged up to a third-degree felony in similar circumstances.

"It might help somebody else's family move forward that is facing this," Alice Viola said. ♦

The Fourth Annual Ryan Strong 5K will be held at Bucks County Technical High School, 610 Wistar Road in Fairless Hills, on April 3 at 9 a.m. Registration is \$25 for adults and \$15 for students under 18. Registration is available up until start of the event. For information, visit www.ryanstrongpa.com.

Socrates

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Linda, is also chief operating officer for Heritage Conservancy, a nonprofit that preserved 80 acres at Croydon Woods and has a conservation easement on Bristol Marsh.

"You've got the river here, you've got a downtown, it's a walkable town, you can commute to the city. It works for working people and it works for community life and families with young kids," Cacossa said. "That's what we were looking for the clients that we want to have move in. We want them to have a neighborhood around them, to have support close by."

Nobody is lined up yet to own the house, but it's expected to be completed within 8 to 10 weeks. Cacossa hopes it never hits the open market, preferring to sell by word of mouth with the help of the Bucks Opportunity Council, A Woman's Place, Bucks County Housing Group and similar organizations.

His fixing and selling these homes has a twofold benefit — a family is able

to buy a reliable home worry-free and a community can lose a blighted property and gain a neighbor.

Cacossa was inspired to do this by his own experience with helping his daughter, Abigail Henshaw, buy and fix up their home in Havertown, instead of having to rent. Now, Henshaw and her daughter Sophia live in the home without worrying whether the roof will hold up or the water heater will leak.

"The amount of pride she's taken in it is astonishing," Cacossa said. "When you're in a rental unit, you don't want to do those things because it's not yours."

With Socrates Developers, he wants to instill that same pride in people who are ready to buy their first homes, and he wants to do it in other neighborhoods all over Bucks County. As the project picks up steam, Cacossa will move even further away from the architecture firm and make this his full-time job. Within three years, he thinks, that's a possibility.

"To see the appreciation on people's faces when you help them out and give them the lift up they need," he said. "It's why we're here, that's why we're on this earth" ♦