

# LOCAL & STATE

## Middletown man sentenced to life in prison in child porn case

DAILY NEWS  
USA TODAY NETWORK

PROVIDENCE — A former U.S. Navy pilot who admitted to coercing a minor to engage in illicit sexual conduct and to distributing, receiving and possessing child pornography, all while actively serving in the U.S. Navy and following his retirement from active service, was sentenced today to life in federal prison.

Acting United States Attorney Richard B. Myrus announced the sentence Friday.

Lt.Cmdr. Ronald W. Zenga, 45, of Middletown pleaded guilty on Nov. 19, 2020, to coercion of a minor, distribution of child pornography, receipt of child pornography, and possession of child pornography.

He was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Chief Judge John J. McCon-

nell, Jr., to life in federal prison and lifetime federal supervised release, and pay restitution to the victim in the amount of \$500,000.

"Cases involving the coercion and sexual exploitation of children are among the most heart-wrenching and disturbing cases that federal prosecutors confront," Myrus said in a prepared statement. "This case is particularly troubling because, as the prosecutor in this case stated in a court filing, '(Zenga) abused the most sacred trust a human being can be given, responsibility for the health and well-being of another living soul.'

"Thanks to the work of our dedicated law enforcement partners both here and abroad, this defendant has been held to account for his vile crimes. We hope that today's result will provide some relief to the victim in knowing that the

man who preyed upon her will be safely locked away."

"Ronald Zenga committed heinous crimes and had the audacity to brag about his exploits online — hubris which ultimately led to his arrest. The abuse and exploitation of children is deeply cruel, violating the trust and safety of victims and generating trauma that may never fully heal. We hope that today's sentence provides a measure of justice to those he harmed," said Matthew Millhollin, special agent in charge for the Homeland Security Investigations' Boston Field Office.

According to court documents and information provided to the court, in September 2018, Homeland Security Investigations agents in Providence received information from the Bedfordshire Police Department in the United Kingdom that an individual, later iden-

tified as Zenga, was communicating with a BPD agent through a Russian file sharing website.

The communications graphically described ongoing sexual encounters with a young minor child. Zenga described several years of sexual encounters with a child, dating back to the child's prepubescent years.

On Oct. 17, 2018, HSI agents and members of the Rhode Island State Police Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force arrested Zenga and executed a court-authorized search of his Middletown residence. Forensic previews of Zenga's electronic devices resulted in the discovery of emails and files of child pornography shared, received, and possessed by Zenga.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney John P. McAdams.

## Lecture explores Irish, African heritage experience in Gilded Age

Daily News  
USA TODAY Network

The Museum of Newport Irish History will host the first talk in its 20th annual Michael F. Crowley Lecture Series, to be presented virtually on Monday, Sept. 13 at 6 p.m. via Zoom.

Dr. John Quinn and Keith Stokes will present a talk entitled "Shared Spaces: The Irish and African Heritage Experience in Gilded Age Newport." The lecture has been made possible by a gift from Virginia Pittsley, given in memory of her husband, Bill Pittsley, and their son, Jay Pittsley.

Stokes will examine neighborhoods including West Broadway/Kerry Hill and Memorial Boulevard/Historic Hill and show how Irish and African heri-



**Rev. James Coyle.** PROVIDED BY MUSEUM OF NEWPORT IRISH HISTORY

tage families interacted within them. He will also discuss George T. Downing and the Rev. Mahlon Van Horne and explain the leading roles that they played in campaigns for equal rights and voting rights.

Quinn will seek to demonstrate that the two groups were often allies as well as neighbors. He will focus on Irish leaders such as Father James Coyle, the pastor of St. Joseph's Church. Coyle sought to include Downing and other black leaders at lectures and performances promoting Home Rule for Ireland, the temperance movement, and the campaign to extend suffrage to foreign-born Rhode Islanders.

Stokes is Vice President with the 1696 Heritage Group, a historical consulting firm. A native of Newport, Mr. Stokes is

a frequent national, state and local lecturer in community & regional planning, historic preservation, and interpretation with an expertise in early African and Jewish American history.

Quinn is Professor of History at Salve Regina University, where he has taught since 1992. Dr. Quinn specializes in Irish history and American ethnic and religious history.

The lecture is free of charge, but reservations are required to receive the Zoom login information.

To reserve, please visit the "Lectures" page at newportirishhistory.org, where you may also access descriptions and videotapes of past lectures. For additional information, please contact Ann Arnold at newportirishhistory@gmail.com or 401-841-5493.

## Biden vaccine mandate could cover more than 500 businesses

**Katherine Gregg**  
The Providence Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

PROVIDENCE — Rhode Island's business owners and public officials, from the governor on down, sought answers Friday on the reach and impact of President Joe Biden's new vaccine-and-testing mandates.

But immediate answers were not easy to come by.

Here's what is known so far: In his most aggressive action yet in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, Biden on Thursday ordered employers with 100 or more workers to ensure their workforce is entirely vaccinated, or face weekly COVID testing.

There are 536 companies in Rhode Island with 100 or more employees, according to Margaux Fontaine, a spokeswoman for the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training.

It is not yet known how many have already instituted their own vaccination requirements.

Asked if the new mandates apply to businesses with employees working remotely, or only those with a majority of employees working on-site, Fontaine said: "This is a federal-level mandate enforced by [the U.S. Department of Labor]. DLT does not have any authority on eligibility decisions."

Among the many other questions awaiting answers:

When do the mandates take effect? What is the cost, if any, of regular testing of asymptomatic employees? Who is responsible to pay for it?

Do the mandates extend to state and municipal workers? Public school teachers?

Is there any effect on Gov. Dan McKee's own Oct. 1 vaccination deadline for health-care workers in the state with, no option for resistant workers to get regular testing instead?

Will the Rhode Island Department of Health reverse its own decision to stop providing rapid-result tests to asymptomatic people, if a fast turnaround is required for employees to work? The apparent answer to that one: no.

On Friday, the Department of Health stood pat by its decision to end rapid testing. Responding to an online query, the department tweeted: "According to the CDC, antigen tests perform best in symptomatic people & within a certain number of days since symptom onset.

"To ensure that patients get the appropriate type of test and most accurate results, State-run sites offer rapid tests to symptomatic patients only."

During his announcement on Thursday, Biden alluded to stepped-up production and availability of rapid tests, "including those you can use at home,"

for workers who choose not to be vaccinated.

"In order to better detect and control the delta variant, I'm taking steps tonight to make testing more available, more affordable and more convenient," Biden said. No later than next week, he said, major retailers such as Walmart and Amazon "will start to sell at-home rapid test kits at cost for the next three months."

The cost? Unclear, though Reuters has reported an Amazon announcement that it will "cut the cost of its direct-to-consumer COVID-19 PCR Test Collection kit to \$36.99, a \$3 price reduction.

Some businesses have already instituted their own vaccine mandates, including the Rhode Island-based CVS pharmacy chain.

On Aug. 23, the company notified its workforce that: "Effective August 23, 2021, CVS Health will require certain employees who interact with patients to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 by October 31, 2021. The company will also require all corporate staff to be fully vaccinated no later than October 31."

The requirement extends to nurses, care managers and pharmacists in its employ, though "pharmacists working in the company's retail stores will have until November 30 to be fully vaccinated due to the size of this employee popula-

tion.

"Other roles at CVS Health are under review and may be added based on updated data and public health guidance," the company said in its notice to employees.

"While the vast majority of our employees have chosen to be vaccinated, this decision is in direct response to the dramatic rise in cases among the unvaccinated," CVS Health President and CEO Karen S. Lynch said at the time.

Earlier this week, Peter Marino, the president and CEO of Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island, announced that his company is implementing a COVID-19 vaccination requirement policy, effective Sept. 17.

"Neighborhood's policy is not only the right thing to do to keep our staff, our members and our communities healthy and safe, it also aligns with Neighborhood's mission as a trusted healthcare service provider serving Rhode Island communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic," Marino wrote.

"Our new policy requires staff to provide proof of vaccination against COVID-19 as a condition of employment, subject to limited medical and religious exemptions, by October 1."

*With reports from Staff Writer Patrick Anderson*

## Events

Continued from Page 2A

ly closely with them on the Oyster Festival when capacity was limited. That was right on the cusp of everything opening up again."

Health officials have not made any recommendations on restrictions for the upcoming festival, she said.

"Until then, we are going forward as planned, with a full capacity outdoor event," Krueger said. "It's a little different than the Oyster Festival in that we are not selling tickets for the Seafood Festival, which is a free event. That might change in the coming weeks."

Attendance at the festival is always weather dependent.

It was a warm, sunny weekend in 2019, when it was estimated up to 9,000 people came through Bowen's Wharf throughout the weekend, Krueger

said. The total included shoppers, restaurant diners, and sightseers besides those who participated in the festival.

"I would estimate 5,000 for the Seafood Festival, spread out over Saturday and Sunday," she said.

The festival will expand out into Market Square this year because Bowen's Wharf was able to lease all the parking meters in the square from the city for the event, she said. There are about 15 vendors so far, mostly restaurants and others with a mobile food license.

There is a city-approved traffic plan for the event and there will be a police detail there, Krueger said. "As for masks, that depends on people's comfort level," she said. Under the open-sided tents is still considered outside. "We want to be cautious going into the fall, that's for sure," she added.

## Nature

Continued from Page 1A

developed that space and we created also an outdoor classroom, so that teachers can bring their teaching and learning outside. So it's not about only bringing the sciences outside, it's about bringing all sorts of different lesson areas," she said.

Viveiros said teachers have taught math lessons in the outdoor classroom, and have brought students out there to write and read.

"It really is connected to all the work we're doing as a district in really trying to create these experiences for these students, so they can be these life-long learners of really connecting with the environment around them. That's really important to us. We want them to have these real world experiences,"

she said.

The district's science standards connect to the outdoor learning and extends their learning authentically, and it allows them to apply the content and concepts to those real world experiences.

"It also provides that connection to nature, so that it's a multi-sensory experience for the students," she said.

Since the Portsmouth School Department began implementing outdoor learning, Viveiros said it's been well-received by both students and parents.

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