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PRINT-ONLY SUBSCRIBER-EXCLUSIVE SPECIAL EDITION INSIDE

2026 NFL season preview: Rams look unstoppable



Wali Muslim, a highly respected elder and pioneer of the Muslim community in Newark, at Masjid Muhammad.
PHOTOS BY MICHAEL KARAS/NORTHJERSEY.COM

How NJ became ‘a pivotal place for the rise of Islam’

Hannan Adely NorthJersey.com | USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

Wali Muslim, 94, slipped off his shoes and stepped into the prayer hall. Worshippers moved in quiet unison — hands raised, then folded, bodies bowing and lowering to the floor — as verses from the Quran marked the rhythm of the afternoon Asr prayer. • These same motions were once carried out by enslaved African Muslims, often in secret, hundreds of years ago. Torn from their homelands and families, they struggled to preserve the faith they had carried across the Atlantic from West Africa. But many saw those traditions erode amid forced conversions.

See ISLAM, Page 5A



Imam W. Deen Shareef, convener of the Council of Imams in New Jersey, greets an attendee during an Eid celebration at Newark’s Weequahic Park.

Falco new Edison High School principal

Suzanne Russell
MyCentralJersey.com
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

EDISON — James Falco, a district assistant principal, has been selected as the next principal of Edison High School following the retirement of Charles Ross, who served in the school district for 18 years.

Superintendent of Schools Edward Aldarelli announced the selection in an email to the Edison High School community. Falco, who previously served as an assistant principal at Thomas Jefferson Middle School, is scheduled to be formally appointed by the Board of Education on Aug. 25.

Aldarelli said Falco has distinguished himself as a highly visible, hands-on, student-centered leader.

“Throughout our extensive and competitive selection process, he demonstrated a clear understanding of what makes a strong school community: meaningful relationships, high expectations, effective communication and a commitment to ensuring every student feels supported, challenged and connected,” Aldarelli said.

The superintendent described Edison High School as a school with a proud tradition, talented students, dedicated educators and a deeply engaged community.

“As we considered the leadership qualities needed for its next chapter, we sought someone who would be present, approachable, responsive and invested in the success of students, staff and families. I am confident that

See FALCO, Page 4A

NJ grandparents use social media to remind that diseases can kill

Scott Fallon
NorthJersey.com
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

A year before Gail Pfeifer stood in a long line outside her Sayreville elementary school to be among the first in New Jersey to get a polio shot, a kindergartener at the school had died from the virus that was crippling tens of thousands of children each year in the U.S.

Pfeifer, now 76, recounted the fear that spread in her neighborhood over the death of 5-year-old Kathleen Mullen in 1954 and the collective sense of relief that came a year later with Jonas

Salk’s vaccine in an essay she wrote this year for a local magazine in Cape May County.

It was an effort by a group called Grandparents for Vaccines to remind the public — especially today’s growing number of vaccine-hesitant parents — about the ravages of communicable diseases that now seem like a distant memory.

“There seems to be a collective amnesia about what happened before we had these vaccines,” said Pfeifer, who joined the group this year. “Kathleen didn’t have the chance to grow up — but I did.”

As vaccination rates continue to fall

in the U.S. and New Jersey — and diseases such as measles have resurfaced — such groups as Grandparents for Vaccines have emerged in recent years in the hope of bringing the vaccination numbers back up to where they had been.

To do this, nearly 6,000 volunteers across 32 states have begun to reach out to the public in two distinct ways, targeting two different groups.

The first is with letters to the editor, op-eds and essays in print media favored by other grandparents and their grown children. The other way is by

See DISEASES, Page 3A



Gravesite of Kathleen Mullen of Sayreville, who was 5 when she died in 1954 of polio. PROVIDED BY JOYCE ELYEA

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