



## DEFENSIVE WIZARD

AT 80, PHILLIES LEGEND LARRY BOWA — WHO HELPED PHILLY WIN ITS FIRST WORLD SERIES IN 1980 — REMAINS DEDICATED TO IMPROVING PLAYERS' SKILLS. **F1**

CAMDEN

## Fallen firefighter and father hailed as mentor to peers, children



**H**undreds of firefighters, police officers and public officials gathered Wednesday in Camden to honor firefighter Howard Bennett, who drowned last week after falling through ice at the Wiggins Park Marina. Bennett, 60, of Maple Shade, was a 26-year veteran and died while working on a department vessel in the Delaware River. Speakers memorialized Bennett as a steady, gifted troubleshooter who mentored younger firefighters. His wife, Fran, said he was devoted to their children and proud of the work he took up in his 30s. Gov. Mikie Sherrill ordered flags lowered to half-staff statewide, and Camden's mayor posthumously promoted him to captain, a rank he was set to receive. Authorities have ruled his death accidental as state and local investigations continue. See more on A5. *Photos by Ed Murray, for NJ.com*



### HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

## They beat a 'rival' school 102-16 — but changes loom

*The former private school powerhouse Trenton Catholic is now a public charter competing against N.J.'s smallest schools. But a new policy intended to balance out the competition will take effect next season.*

Keith Sargeant *For NJ.com*

Khalid Lewis was on the verge of a meltdown. The Thrive Charter boys basketball coach had taken his team on the road to face juggernaut private school Roselle Catholic last month, and his players seemed overwhelmed early, turning the ball over and falling behind by double figures.

But Lewis knew his team needed this game — and this challenge — as much as any on the schedule. After all, Thrive Charter wouldn't be getting much competition from the teams in its own public school division.

That's because after eviscerating one



Players from Thrive Charter celebrate on March 15, 2025, after winning the NJSIAA Group 1 boys basketball final against Newark Tech. *Scott Faytok, for NJ.com*

opponent this season by a score of 102-16 and dismantling another 74-10, it's clear that Thrive Charter is far from a typical public school.

Just two years ago, before transitioning into a public charter school, Thrive Charter was known as Trenton Catholic, a private school and perennial state powerhouse

that captured New Jersey's ultimate basketball title, the Tournament of Champions, in 2010.

Before it was Thrive Charter, the school played in the Non-Public B playoff bracket — an exclusively private school section filled with the top programs in the state. But since transitioning to a charter, Lewis and his team have found themselves in a type of basketball limbo, competing in the Group 1 section against the smallest public schools in the state.

The results have been eye-popping. This season, Thrive Charter has won its games by an average of 28 points — including that 86-point rout of Pemberton and 64-point blowout of Cinnaminson, plus a 54-15 dismantling of Medford Tech.

"We're not breaking any rules or anything like that," said Lewis, whose team clawed back Jan. 17 before eventually falling to Roselle Catholic 57-52. "We heard a lot of it last year, a lot of stuff on social media this year, too. We don't get into all the outside noise, man. We control what we can control."

Thrive Charter (16-3) is a heavy favorite to win its second consecutive Group 1 state title this winter — and it's fueling an ongoing debate about fair play and charter schools in high school sports. Unlike most **SEE SPORTS, A2**

### STATEWIDE

## N.J. unveils way to report ICE agents, puts limits on use of state property

*New portal allows residents to upload photos, videos for state AG's Office to review.*

Jelani Gibson *For NJ.com*

Gov. Mikie Sherrill on Wednesday unveiled a statewide portal for residents to upload photos and videos of federal immigration activity, as her administration moves to more aggressively scrutinize the work of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Standing alongside acting Attorney General Jennifer Davenport, Sherrill also announced a new "know your rights" website ([www.nj.gov/knowyourrights](http://www.nj.gov/knowyourrights)) and signed an executive order barring ICE agents from accessing non-public areas of state property without a judicial warrant.

The ban would also prevent agents from using property as staging areas for operations.

"We have seen dozens, even hundreds of videos of Donald Trump's ICE agents abusing their power, smashing cars, tear-gassing families, gunning down American citizens and violating our most basic rights," she said.

Sherrill first previewed the portal ([www.njoag.gov/portal](http://www.njoag.gov/portal)) in late January during an appearance on "The Daily Show," where she urged residents to film Immigration and Customs Enforcement operations and submit the footage to the state.

"So we see agents hiding behind masks, no insignias, constantly changing license plates, breaking the core principles of what good policing needs to be to keep people safe," Sherrill said at the Wednesday news conference.

State officials have said the database will allow residents to upload photos, videos and information about ICE activity, with the material reviewed by the Attorney General's Office.

Davenport also signaled she was willing to prosecute federal agents for violations of state law.

"While we cannot guarantee any particular action by our office in response to reports on the portal, we will review every report with care," she said.

The Sherrill administration has framed the initiative as a transparency measure meant to track federal enforcement and document potential misconduct. Similar portals have already launched in New York and California.

The governor's push comes amid heightened ICE activity in New Jersey and a series of high-profile incidents that have drawn national scrutiny.

**SEE ICE, A3**

### NEWS

## Grim winter toll rises

The number of deaths in New Jersey following a fierce winter storm and a bitter cold snap has increased to 20, the state says. **A4**

### NEWS

## School funding spared

New Jersey has reached a deal with the Trump administration to prevent more than \$1B in federal education funds from being cut off, the acting AG says. **A4**

### ENTERTAINMENT

## TV star dies at 48

James Van Der Beek died Wednesday, his family says. The "Dawson's Creek" star who went to college in N.J. had been treated for colorectal cancer. **12**