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SUNDAY



ROCWEATHER
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HEAD TRAUMA



UR STUDY EXAMINES IMPACT OF REPETITIVE HITS IN ROCSPORTS

CLOTHESLINE

NEXT WEEK'S MAG FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS THE BEST OF AREA ARTISTS IN ROCBUSINESS AND ROCLIVING



ROCHESTER SCHOOLS » FIRST 90 DAYS

Vargas the lion tamer

Interim chief calms roars, nails initial expectations

TIFFANY LANKES
Staff writer

The argument quickly escalated, as do so many at Rochester School District board meetings.

One board member raised a concern, touching off a heated debate that culminated in raised voices. Another board member ordered the first to stop patronizing him and get his hand off his shoulder. Administrators in the audience traded tired looks — they seemed headed for yet another midnight meeting.



Vargas

But in roughly eight minutes — a record for the school board's notoriously long spats from the dais — the board was on to another topic.

Interim Superintendent Bolgen Vargas stepped in, acknowledged the problem and without a trace of defensiveness vowed to personally see the matter taken care of.

"I guess what I'm asking you is to please give us some time," he said. "And that we can move on."

And that was the end of it. When he first took the helm of the Rochester schools about three months ago, insiders joked that it might just take a high school guidance counselor like Vargas to stabilize a district rocked by tumultuous relationships.

Vargas came onto the job at a time when the district was at odds with the teachers union over stalled contract negotiations, and hundreds of parents and community members were up in arms over the budget.

That doesn't even begin to address the in-fighting and divisiveness on the board, which seemed to be getting worse at the time of former Superintendent Jean-Claude Brizard's departure.

Board and community members said they needed more than an interim superintendent. They wanted a healer, a mediator, a caretaker.

In his first three months on the job,

See VARGAS, Page 6A

ATTICA

40 YEARS LATER

WATCHDOG REPORT

Many of state's files on prison riot remain unavailable to public

GARY CRAIG
Staff writer

The brutal legacy of the Attica riot is stuffed away in dozens — and possibly hundreds — of boxes closed to the public.

The Attica uprising, which erupted 40 years ago on Sept. 9, has been dissected by state investigators, grand juries and authors. Yet much of the deadliest riot in the country's history is still blocked from public view, considered exempt from state public access laws or sealed by court order.

"Until these records are released, the full extent of how horrific this story is will not be known," said Heather Ann Thompson, a Temple University history professor who is writing *Blood in the Water: The Attica Uprising of 1971 and its Legacy*, a book scheduled to be released next year that could be, to date, the most definitive history of the riot.

There have been occasional pushes to bring the records to light, most prominently an effort by a group called the Forgotten Victims of Attica, which comprises civilian hostages, their families, and the families of hostages killed in the Sept. 13 retaking of the prison.

The revelations within the records could help bring closure to the families, said Dee Quinn Miller, whose father, William Quinn, was a corrections officer who died from injuries suffered when he was beaten by inmates on Sept. 9.

"People were murdered (in the retaking)," said Quinn, one of the organizers of Forgotten Victims. "I know every single family member of those (prison

See ATTICA, Page 16A

ONLINE EXTRA

Click on this article at DemocratandChronicle.com for links to a multimedia package, including videos and historic photographs.

MORE INSIDE

- » More about online package. **16A**
- » Governor urged to issue a state apology over Attica riot. **16A**

TOP STORIES

SERIES BEGINS ON ECONOMY

A new series, Our Economy's Future, launches with a look at agriculture and food processing, which combined employ almost 19,000 people in the nine-county Rochester/Finger Lakes region. Not only are they big businesses, they also offer strong prospects for growth. Each week, we'll examine another key industry. **Page 1E**



CITY SCHOOL BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

Editorial Board presents its recommendations for the Rochester school board in the Sept. 13 Democratic primary election. **Page 24A**

TROPICAL STORM LEE

Thousands in Louisiana and Mississippi lose power as bands of heavy rain and strong wind gusts from Tropical Storm Lee prompt evacuations in bayou towns. **Page 4A**

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