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SPORTS, 1B

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## UP, UP AND AWAY FOR FRONTLINE WORKERS



The New Jersey Lottery Festival of Ballooning thanked frontline workers like first responders and teachers with a tethered balloon ride at Solberg Airport in Readington on Tuesday, at the site of the balloon festival that returns in July. Howard Freeman, at right, is the executive producer of the New Jersey Lottery Festival of Ballooning.

CHRIS PEDOTA/USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY



## Therapist accused of false billing by district

Mike Deak MyCentralJersey.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

**EAST BRUNSWICK** - The township school district has sued a Bridgewater woman who owns a pediatric therapy company for allegedly overbilling the district more than \$200,000.

Rebecca Dean, of Bridgewater's Martinsville section, is already facing second-degree theft by deception and money laundering charges for allegedly submitting more than \$75,000 in fake invoices to the Edison school district for services that were never provided.

Dean is tentatively scheduled to go to trial on those charges June 15 in Superior Court in Middlesex County.

Dean served as the president of Tiny Tots Therapy, now known as United Therapy Solutions, based in Fanwood. According to the lawsuit filed in Superior Court on April 26, in 2008 Dean signed a contract to provide therapy services for East Brunswick students. For 10 years, until June 15, 2018, Dean submitted monthly invoices to the school district, which were all paid, the lawsuit says.

But in January 2018, Dean became a target of a Middlesex County Prosecu-

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## NJ grants will fix 10 bridges in Central Jersey

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USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

**TRENTON** - The state Department of Transportation has awarded \$8.5 million in grants to improve 10 bridges throughout Central Jersey.

Somerset County received \$2.77 million to upgrade three bridges. Only four of New Jersey's 21 counties received more money.

Union got \$1.94 million for four projects. Hunterdon received \$1.85 million for two projects and Middlesex was awarded \$1.97 million for one project.

The bridges targeted for improvements are:

- Somerset County:** Tullio Road bridge over the West Branch of Middle Brook in Bridgewater (\$500,000); Morton Street bridge over Cuckles Brook in Bridgewater (\$900,000) and Pottersville Road bridge over Peapack Brook, Peapack-Gladstone (\$1,367,930).
- Union County:** Martine Avenue bridge in Scotch Plains (\$700,000);

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## Indian-American fathers die of COVID-19 during visits to India

Suzanne Russell MyCentralJersey.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

**EDISON** - As India is being overwhelmed by a record-breaking wave of COVID-19 cases, at least two local families are dealing with the sudden tragic loss of loved ones who traveled there to visit relatives.

Ashher Aamir, 36, and Pradeep Kumar Verma, 45, both recently died in India of COVID-19 complications.

The married fathers, and sole financial support for their families, leave be-



Verma behind three young children, including Verma's 9-year-old autistic son who doesn't understand his father will never return home. Fundraising campaigns have been created for both families to cover funeral expenses, the children's education and financial support.

Verma, who had no preexisting medical conditions, died after traveling to India to support his aging parents dur-

ing the pandemic, according to the GoFundMe page - Support Pradeep Verma's autistic son - Daksh Verma - set up by Amit Tiwari, of Edison, and four others.

As of Tuesday afternoon, more than \$91,000 from 1,400 donors was raised, surpassing the initial \$75,000 goal.

Verma, who worked in information technology, is survived by his wife, his son and his parents.

"Family was of utmost importance

See COVID-19 DEATHS, Page 2A

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**New era for Patriots begins**  
The Somerset Patriots play their first game as a New York Yankees affiliate. Game report at MyCentralJersey.com.

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