



QUEENS

Bizman hit with 7 yrs. in sex abuse

By **SCOTT SHIFREL**
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

A Jamaica businessman was sentenced to seven years in prison yesterday for sexually abusing a 12-year-old girl.

Clarke Ralston, 37, who owns a real estate company on Hillside Ave. at 168th St. and has let police do undercover drug work from his home, was convicted Aug. 2. He had been charged with 10 counts of sexual abuse involving three girls and was facing 25 years in prison, but the jury acquitted him of eight of the charges.

Yesterday, Ralston faced two to seven years in prison, and Kew Gardens Supreme Court Justice Roberta Dunlop gave him the maximum.

"Her sentence will be a lifetime sentence," Dunlop said of the girl Ralston sexually abused while baby-sitting in March 2001. "Yours will only be seven years."

The girl, who was accompanied by her parents in the courtroom, made a brief statement. Speaking to Dunlop directly in front of the bench, the tearful victim quietly told the judge, "He should get 100 years in jail so that he'll never be able to do that again."

Ralston, who owns Traxx Realty on Hillside Ave., also addressed the court.

"The whole story never came out," he said. "Not all the evidence was put in."

The jury never heard he was in the middle of a dispute between the girl's mother and her father, who worked for him, according to Ralston's attorney, Dennis Coppin. Coppin also cited numerous letters of support, including one from a city police officer who said Ralston allowed officers to use his home and office to observe numerous drug deals in southeast Queens.

"Police would go into his home all hours of the day or night," Coppin said, "It just doesn't seem to [add] up."

Coppin said Ralston plans to appeal the conviction.

Meeting on W. Nile tonight in Rosedale

City officials have been invited to an emergency town hall meeting tonight to address the southeast Queens community about West Nile virus and what is being done to combat it.

The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, 224-04 147th Ave., Rosedale. It is sponsored by Councilman James Sanders (D-Rockaway), Assemblywoman Michele Titus (D-South Ozone Park) and Community Board 13.



HEIDI SCHUMANN

WEB MARKETING Gov. Pataki joins Jason Ackerman (c.) and Joe Fedel, co-founders of FreshDirect online food provider in Long Island City, yesterday for its opening. The service, which operates on Roosevelt Island, is coming to Battery Park City on Sept. 2 and will also serve other parts of Manhattan, as well as Brooklyn and Queens.

Logging on for food

Online grocer in L.I.C. gets gov's blessing

By **RUTH BASHINSKY**
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Outside the Long Island City plant of FreshDirect yesterday, Gov. Pataki announced that the new online food provider will invest \$100 million locally and create 652 jobs.

"I don't do commercial endorsements but I just toured FreshDirect, and the concept of what FreshDirect is doing right here is the future of Long Island City," Pataki said. The governor toured the kitchen and bakery of the Borden Ave. facility on its opening day.

"There are already hundreds of jobs here at FreshDirect, and talking with the management team, they are absolutely confident that this facility that used to employ 70 people will have over 1,000 up to 1,200 working

jobs for the men and women of New York. It is a great achievement and a great accomplishment."

FreshDirect, a new online service that provides low-cost home delivery of fresh food and groceries seven days a week, was created by Fairway Uptown co-founder Joe Fedel and business partner Jason Ackerman. The company, in the making for three years, began offering its service to folks on Roosevelt Island July 15, and on Sept. 2 it will launch in Battery Park City.

The service will continue to roll out in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens as well as serve offices, parks and major employers in Nassau and Suffolk counties.

Another pit stop for the governor yesterday was a lunch of shrimp-salad sandwiches and watermelon with a roomful of seniors at the Cardella Senior Citizen Center in Ridgewood. Pataki commended many of the veterans on hand and urged the group to continue to sign up for the state's EPIC prescription discount program.

Eighty-three-year-old Evelyn Biasotti, who has been on the EPIC program for the last decade, couldn't agree with the governor more.

"You save about 80% with EPIC. You can pay \$3 for a

drug and no more than \$20," she said. "I spend \$64 a year on medication with EPIC. It's been a wonderful savings for me."

Dem endorsement

Pataki also was in the Bronx yesterday to announce the start of construction of a new office building for the Visiting Nurse Service of New York in Pelham Bay's Hutchinson Metro Center. The 460,000-square-foot office building will create up to 300 construction jobs.

His public schedule ended in Forest Hills, where he received a campaign endorsement from Democratic Assemblyman Michael Cohen (D-Forest Hills), who said Pataki's "vision and exemplary leadership are unparalleled."