



HOWARD SCHNAPP

Police at the area where Carlos Rivas-Majano's body was found.

3 plead not guilty in alleged gang murder

BY STEFANIE DAZIO
stefanie.dazio@newsday.com

Three of five alleged MS-13 gangsters who law enforcement sources said killed a former member of the gang because of his role as an informant appeared in court Tuesday to face charges in the 2017 slaying.

Carlos Benitez-Hernandez, 21, and William Reyes-Fuentes, 23, both of Uniondale, and Nerlin Chacon-Ruano, 20, of Hempstead, pleaded not guilty through a Spanish-language interpreter during their separate arraignments before Justice William O'Brien in Nassau County Supreme Court. A fourth defendant, Edar Ventura, 21, Hempstead, entered a not guilty plea through an interpreter Monday.

A fifth defendant is scheduled to be arraigned Wednesday, court records show.

O'Brien remanded the four to jail without bail. A grand jury indicted them Nov. 16 in the death of Carlos Rivas-Majano, 22, of Uniondale. Law enforcement sources have said Rivas-Majano was targeted for death because he was an informant for authorities.

In August 2017, at least five MS-13 gang members lured Rivas-Majano to the woods south of Glenn Curtiss Boulevard near Kellenberg Memorial High School in East Meadow where they "viciously and barbarically" attacked him, authorities have said. Rivas-Majano's remains were found a year later.

Chacon-Ruano, known as "Callejero," also faces a second-degree murder charge in connection with another slaying.

Authorities have said that on Sept. 15, 2017, in Uniondale, he fired several shots from a 9 mm pistol that fatally wounded Ayamiguel Ayala-Hernandez.

He has been held without bail in that case, in which he has also pleaded not guilty.

"He's denied involvement in everything," his Garden City-based lawyer, William Kephart, said Tuesday.

Ventura, known as "Despiadado" and "Trauma," is also charged with second-degree murder in a separate homicide. Authorities have said he shot and killed Alexon Moya, 16, in Uniondale in December 2016. He was arrested in that case in December 2017 and online records show he is due back in court Thursday.

"He's plead not guilty as to both," Ventura's Mineola attorney, David Haber, said on Tuesday.

Reyes-Fuentes also maintains his innocence, said his Mineola-based attorney, Steven Barnwell.

"I'd be curious to know how they put my client at the scene of the incident," Barnwell said.

Benitez-Hernandez's lawyer, Jeff Groder, also of Mineola, declined to comment. In August, Benitez-Hernandez was arrested and arraigned in connection with Rivas-Majano's killing. He was arraigned again Tuesday following the grand jury's indictment.

Reyes-Fuentes, known as "Disobediente," and Benitez-Hernandez, known as "Malaspecto," are also charged in an attempted murder that allegedly occurred in March, court documents show. That case is ongoing.

Learning for the

Baldwin High's goal: college and career readiness

BY JOIE TYRRELL
joie.tyrrell@newsday.com

When it comes to college and career readiness, Baldwin High School tries to get as close to the real world as possible.

The classrooms in law and government resemble a courtroom, where on Tuesday a teacher took the stand as a witness. Students studying medicine and health practiced CPR on adult and infant manikins. And students learning about new media ran their own television control room.

It's part of a philosophy that New York high school students should be offered a more modernized path to graduation with a way to earn a diploma that incorporates real-world learning, along with academic achievement, Baldwin school district educators said.

Baldwin Superintendent Shari Camhi, who led a forum on college and career readiness at the school Tuesday, said today's learning should "be more creative and provide more relevant programming for kids and get out of the 1970s, which is where we still are."

She showed local and regional education officials the high school's six Academic Academies that prepare students for careers in fields as varied as medicine, law and new media. The academies immerse students in a specific area of learning, which includes working with professionals in the field — and not just following professionals, she said, adding her students have been in actual surgeries.

In addition, a handful of Baldwin High students are enrolled in classes at Suffolk Community College and are bused to the Brentwood campus four days a week. Several classrooms throughout the high school have been redesigned with furniture on wheels and collaborative work spaces where students look like they are employees of the latest startup.

Of the school's roughly 1,600 students in grades nine through



Students seated at the "Genius Bar" learn about capitalism in a

12, 554 are enrolled in the academies. District students also can get a start before high school, as there are pre-academy classes available for eighth-graders.

Freshman Lakiesha Juin, 14, is enrolled in the district's Education Academy.

"It gives you a better understanding and a background and it prepares you," she said.

Camhi has proposed to the State Education Department another path for graduation that focuses more on college and career readiness — not an overreliance on Board of Regents examinations.

"I am asking State Ed to consider how we can modernize what it means to get a New York state diploma," Camhi said. "What I am trying to show is that in our high school as it is now, we are doing all of that and how much more meaningful a high school diploma could be if we could rebalance."

Lorna Lewis, superintendent

of the Plainview-Old Bethpage school district and president of the New York State Council of School Superintendents, which represents more than 800 top education leaders statewide, toured Baldwin's academies and classrooms Tuesday.

While some of these concepts are "already in other schools, the whole idea of thinking differently about a diploma and having a more expansive view of a diploma is really the important work that you are seeing right now," she said.

Other districts also have incorporated career education into their own curriculum. Six years ago, the William Floyd School District opened its own in-house career and technical education program with initial offerings such as automotive technology, business, carpentry, cosmetology, culinary arts, engineering and medical assisting. The district also offers business tie-in courses, which edu-

real world



social studies class at Baldwin High School on Tuesday.



Students in the control room of the high school's TV studio.

cate students on the skills necessary to own and operate a small business. Students also can earn a technical endorse-

ment on their diplomas, as well as receive industry-specific certifications and college credit for their work.

KENNEDY WINS RE-ELECTION AS COMPTROLLER

Officials: No chance challenger could win

BY RICK BRAND
rick.brand@newsday.com

Suffolk elections officials confirmed Tuesday that County Comptroller John M. Kennedy, a Republican, has won re-election, saying it was impossible for Democratic challenger Jay Schneiderman to overcome Kennedy's 5,823-vote lead.

Nicholas LaLota, GOP elections commissioner, said that with 27,000 of the 33,000 absentee ballots counted, "it became mathematically impossible for a change in result. Even if John Kennedy only wins a third of the remaining absentee and affidavit ballots, he will be certified the winner by almost 4,000 votes."

Kennedy's margin will be far smaller than four years ago, when he first won election by 17,566 votes, running solely on the GOP ballot line. Turnout was 33.1 percent, compared with the unusually large 53 percent turnout in Suffolk on Nov. 6.

Schneiderman, the Southampton Town supervisor, said he's preparing to formally concede, but simply wanted to wait until all the votes are counted, particularly from East Hampton, where he served earlier as town supervisor and believes he did well.

"John ran a strong race and I congratulate him on his victory," he said of Kennedy.

Kennedy said he was, "humbled and honored" by voters' support. "I think it's a reflection that a majority of Suffolk County residents embrace our



Suffolk County Comptroller John Kennedy Jr.

campaign of reform, and finding and extinguishing fraud and abuse."

Kennedy, 62, who is weighing a possible race for Suffolk County executive next year, dismissed the significance of his smaller victory margin.

"The same facts exist today," said Kennedy. "We have a complete absence of leadership in this county and we are balanced on the precipice of financial ruin."

Jason Elan, spokesman for Democratic County Executive Steve Bellone, declined to comment.

Schneiderman said it was an uphill contest, given Kennedy's incumbency and his support from minor political parties. "I think most peo-

ple didn't think I'd do as well as I did," he said. "His margin on Election Day was effectively cut in half."

Richard Schaffer, Suffolk Democratic chairman, said the contest shows Schneiderman is a viable future countywide candidate, even though he comes from one of the small East End towns. "I think he's shown his depth as a candidate, especially running countywide with very little in the way of resources," Schaffer said.

Elections Board officials have counted 80 percent of ballots but have yet to finish in Babylon Town and still must count absentees in Southold, Shelter Island and East Hampton. They said they hope to complete the recount by week's end.