

Complaints allege USMMA harassment

BY ROBERT BRODSKY

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The U.S. Coast Guard has filed a pair of complaints against a shipping captain, alleging he sexually harassed and sent inappropriate messages to a cadet from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point in 2017 and to a Baldwin woman who was working as chief cook of another vessel in 2021, records show.

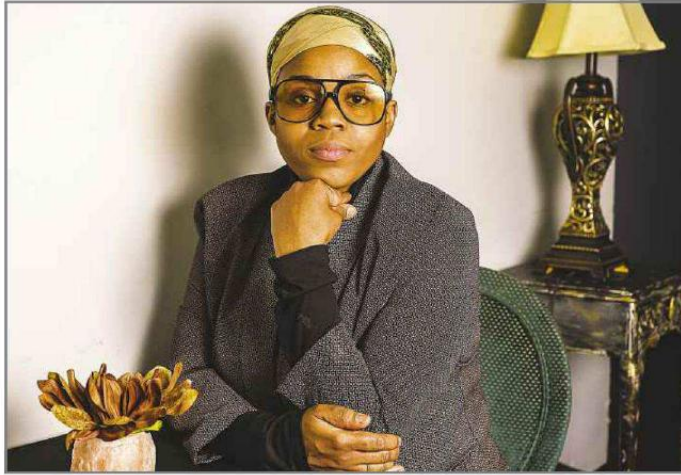
The USMMA complaint, which was filed last month, seeks the suspension and revocation of Capt. Joseph McCann's license and merchant mariner credentials. J. Ryan Melogy, a maritime employment attorney, said he believed the complaint regarding the USMMA cadet is the first by the Coast Guard under the Safer Seas Act, which became law in late December making sexual harassment grounds for suspension and revocation.

The other complaint, which also seeks to suspend and revoke McCann's license and credentials, alleges he sexually harassed the civilian cook, who publicly identified herself as Ashley Codrington of Baldwin, between Feb. 11, 2021 and April 30, 2021 on a Maersk vessel.

That complaint states that McCann "made unwelcome sexual advances toward the chief cook by sending inappropriate text messages and making comments expressing a desire for a sexual relationship with her, which created an intimidating and hostile work environment."

In an interview Monday, Codrington, who now owns a vegan cafe in Baldwin, said the texts, which never escalated to physical contact, made her worry for her safety. They included messages asking Codrington to take a picture of herself after getting out of the shower and another suggesting he would pour whipped cream on her, she said.

Eventually, Codrington said, McCann suggested that he would come to her room at night. When she declined McCann's advances, rumors circulated that she had slept with the captain, Codrington said.



JEFF BACHNER

Cafe owner Ashley Codrington said she was sexually harassed while serving as a cook at sea. ■ Video: newsday.com/longisland

"It's super uncomfortable," Codrington said, adding that she was often scared to go to the gym or a crew lounge. "I'm trapped on this ship and I can't really like get away. The vessel is big, but it's not that big. It creates an environment that's not healthy to work in."

After reporting the sexual harassment to Maersk, Codrington left the vessel in Singapore and returned to Long Island. She recently settled a civil suit with Maersk.

McCann's Coast Guard hearing on Codrington's allegation is set for next month.

Brian McEwing, McCann's New Jersey-based attorney, declined to comment.

In a filing seeking the complaint's dismissal, McEwing said his client denied the allegations and said Codrington was a "willing participant" in the texting exchanges and was the aggressor at times, using "sexually explicit language" in her communications.

While preparing for Codrington's hearing, Coast Guard prosecutors said they received information that McCann, while chief mate of a Crowley Maritime vessel in 2017, sexually harassed an unnamed USMMA cadet who was on her Sea Year assignment, where midshipmen are required to complete more than 300 days of work on commercial vessels in international waters, according to hearing records.

The Coast Guard said it in-

terviewed witnesses aboard the vessel who confirmed the allegations, records state.

Last month, the Coast Guard filed a complaint alleging that between July 22, 2017 and Aug. 12, 2017, McCann sent "inappropriate text messages to the deck cadet via social media expressing an unwelcome desire for an intimate relationship. [McCann's] actions were an intentional or repeated unwelcome verbal comment or gesture of a sexual nature toward the deck cadet when [McCann] was the deck cadet's supervisor."

McCann's behavior, the Coast Guard alleges, "created an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment." The complaint charges McCann with official misconduct and a violation of the Safer Seas Act.

A Crowley spokesman told Newsday they terminated McCann based on the allegations. But McCann found work shortly thereafter at Maersk, the nation's largest shipping company.

"This shows how the system works," said Melogy, Codrington's Manhattan-based attorney. "Even when somebody gets fired, they just move to the next ship. And then the guy gets promoted from chief mate to captain and now he's doing the same thing ... It really shows a broken system where these offenders are able to just simply move around from company to company, even after getting fired."

STUDY SEEKS

'First of its kind' look into effects of exposure

BY LISA L. COLANGELO

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Yale researchers are looking for 500 Long Islanders to participate in a study that will help them better understand exposure to the chemical 1,4-dioxane, a likely carcinogen found in both drinking water and common household products.

Participants will have their blood as well as their home's tap water tested to help determine if there is any correlation

between levels of 1,4-dioxane found in water and a person's body, researchers said. The study is part of an effort to understand links between exposure to 1,4-dioxane and potential health risks.

The study, being conducted by the university's Yale Superfund Research Center with a grant from the National Institutes of Health, will start with a small pilot project this summer.

The chemical — found in drinking water on Long Island — has been used as a stabilizer in solvents such as paint strippers and waxes. It is also a byproduct in the manufacture of shampoos, shower gels and other consumer goods and in laboratory animal tests has

Market discounts

BY TORY N. PARRISH

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Eggs, milk and bread.

They are staples of most Americans' kitchens.

They also are among the quickest to be bought via an app-based marketplace, Flashfood, that recently began selling discounted food near its best-by date at about 60 more of Stop & Shop's New York State supermarkets, including 31 of the 50 on Long Island.

High inflation and growing food insecurity on Long Island are spurring more demand for discount programs and other food assistance, retail experts and food bank officials said.

Stop & Shop customers' use of the Flashfood app is increasing, according to the grocer, but the Quincy, Massachusetts-based retailer said it cannot say if high inflation is the reason.

Nationwide grocery price inflation, which soared by 11.4% last year, the fastest growth in nearly 50 years, has slowed, but not enough to quell consumers' demand for discount programs for their food shopping, retail experts said.

Coupon redemption rates are up 20% year over year, even though grocery inflation dropped to 8.4% in March, said Andy Jump, vice president and general manager of the Incen-

WHAT TO KNOW

- **Stop & Shop has expanded its partnership with app-based marketplace Flashfood** to about 60 of its New York State supermarkets, including 31 of the 50 on Long Island.
- **Shoppers use the Flashfood app on their cellphones** to get discounts, typically 50% off, on purchases of food that is near its best-buy date. Customers pick up their purchased items in designated Flashfood Zones inside stores.
- **High inflation and growing food insecurity on Long Island** are spurring more customer demand for discount programs and other food assistance, retail experts and food bank officials said.

tives and Loyalty unit at Inmar Intelligence, a retail industry analytics company in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

"Shoppers haven't felt the relief yet because the demand is still there," he said.

With Flashfood, shoppers use an app on their cellphones to get discounts, typically 50% off, on purchases of perishable

DIOXANE LINK TO LIERS' HEALTH

been linked to cancers as well as liver and kidney damage.

"Who has one of the highest exposures in the nation? Long Island. And that's where this is focused on," Vasilis Vasiliou, director of the Yale Superfund Research Center, said Monday during a virtual conference to discuss the study and seek participants.

"We really just don't have a lot of information or data on this chemical," said Nicole Deziel, associate professor at the Yale School of Public Health and a graduate of Longwood High School in Middle Island who is leading the study. "Exposures and health impacts are really poorly understood and we really hope to provide

more information to better understand this chemical so we can reduce people's exposures and risk."

The study is part of a larger initiative at the Yale Superfund Research Center that includes examining how 1,4-dioxane can cause cancer, monitoring water for the chemical in real time and developing affordable methods for purifying water, said Vasiliou. The center this fall received a \$7.3 million grant over five years from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences for the research.

Deziel said it has not been determined yet when the study finding would be released.

In recent years, New York

State has enacted strict limits on 1,4-dioxane in drinking water and household products. Drinking water must not contain more than 1 part per billion of the chemical while personal care and household cleaning products were required not to exceed 2 parts per million by the end of 2022. That limit drops to 1 ppm by the end of 2023.

Newsday reported Monday that the state has granted temporary waivers to manufacturers allowing more than 1,400 products over the state limit to remain on store shelves. Waivers are permitted under the state's law, which gives manufacturers time to comply with the limits.

The Long Island-based Citi-

zens Campaign for the Environment, which advocated for limits of the chemical, is working with researchers to help them find volunteer participants.

"This is the first of its kind study we believe anywhere in the nation and specific to Long Island," said Adrienne Esposito, executive director and co-founder of the CCE.

People interested in more information about the study can go to the CCE website to sign up.

Deziel said growing up on Long Island sparked her interest in environmental health.

"When I was growing up in the '80s and '90s there were a lot of concerns about cancer clusters," she said, noting peo-

ple wondered if pesticides from farms or power lines could be the cause. "I was really frustrated by the lack of information and uncertainty about these exposures and that really motivated me to get my degree in this area and become an environmental epidemiologist."

Researchers are hoping to get a cross section of Long Islanders including residents connected with municipal water systems and those who rely on well water.

Participants take a 90-minute survey at home with researchers, who will take a sample of their blood and tap water. In return they will receive a \$20 gift card and all test results.

food near best-by dates via Flashfood app



Supervisor Ray Miller organizes the Flashfood pantry at Stop & Shop in East Northport on Friday.

food that is between one and five days from its best-by date, Stop & Shop spokesman Daniel Wolk said. Nonperishable items can be bought on the app within a year of their best-by dates, he said.

Customers pick up their pur-

chased items in "Flashfood Zones" inside stores.

The food sold via the Flashfood app is safe and of high quality, said Jordan Schenck, chief brand officer at Flashfood.

Having first partnered with

Flashfood in 2021, Stop & Shop now offers the app program at about 300 stores in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Founded in 2016, Toronto-based Flashfood Inc. has partnered with 23 retailers to offer

the app deals at more than 1,700 stores in the United States and Canada, but Stop & Shop is the only Long Island retailer participating.

"Flashfood is a tool for grocers to recover dollars to their bottom line and reduce even more food waste," the company says on its website.

There are 3 million customers using the app in North America, the company said.

Worcester, Massachusetts, couple Laurence and Paula Jaffe buy 75% off their groceries from Stop & Shop via the Flashfood app, and the remainder from a military commissary, said Laurence, 80, a retired Air Force master sergeant.

"It's worth my time... because it decreases the food waste," said Jaffe, who said he and his wife have saved about \$4,000 in the last 1½ years.

Stop & Shop food that is not sold by the best-by date but falls under the guidelines of Feeding America, a network of food banks, for being safe to consume is donated to local hunger-relief groups, the grocer said.

Stop & Shop is one of the biggest retail food donors to Island Harvest Food Bank, the largest food bank on Long Island, said Randi Dresner, president and chief executive officer of the Melville-based non-

profit. About 12 years ago, Island Harvest piloted a meat rescue program with Stop & Shop, which froze meat near its best-by date and donated it to the nonprofit, she said.

Now, under the expanded program, Island Harvest receives an average of 800,000 pounds of donated frozen meat and other proteins annually from Stop & Shop and other retailers, Dresner said.

Island Harvest sees the grocer's Flashfood partnership potentially having both positive and negative impacts on the nonprofit's work to feed those in need, she said.

"On one side of it, if it's successful, it will probably have a negative impact on us in the amount of food that Stop & Shop donates to Island Harvest so that we can provide it to people in need in the community," she said.

On the other hand, for shoppers using the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, Flashfood will increase the number of grocery items they could affordably buy, giving them the independence to buy healthy food, she said.

Food insecurity is rising on Long Island. In the first quarter of 2023, the five food pantries operated by Long Island Cares assisted 36,043 people.