

## Cops... From page 16

release.

Almestica, a student at the Academy of American Studies High School in Long Island City, is facing nine years behind bars after her arraignment on January 6 on charges of robbery and attempted bank robbery.

Prosecutors charged during the arraignment at Queens Criminal Court that on January 5 Almestica allegedly walked into a Commerce Bank branch at 31-09 Ditmars Blvd. in Astoria, where she handed a teller a note demanding cash that read, "Is your job worth your life?"

The teller laughed off the threat and walked away from the teen to call the cops, prosecutors said. Almestica sensed what was going on and ran off.

Police questioning bank employees a short while later received a call about another, successful heist at a First Central Savings Bank at 37-28 Ditmars Blvd., the sources said.

Prosecutors charged Almestica used an identical note at the First Central Savings branch, where a teller took her threat seriously and handed over \$3,090.

Eyewitnesses told police the teen ran from the bank and handed the cash to a man who ran along Ditmars Boulevard, the sources said. Almestica took off running down 38th Street, followed closely by a bank employee and the manager of a nearby Sprint cellphone store, both shouting, "Get her. She robbed the bank", the eyewitnesses said.

The Sprint manager told media gathered at the site that his "instinct took over" when he realized what had happened.

"I yelled, 'Freeze, police,'" the manager said.

home this week after her parents posted \$5,000 bail for her

"She got nervous and stopped, and I said, 'Get on your knees'. I told her to put her hands behind her back and she did. She didn't put up any fight."

Shoppers along Ditmars Boulevard expressed shock when they learned that the bank was robbed and said it was "unthinkable" that the robbery was pulled off by a teenage girl.

"This is unbelievable," said longtime Ditmars resident Tony Kyros. "A girl? She must have been desperate or something."

Almestica told authorities she was approached by two men on Friday afternoon, one armed with a knife, who forced her to take the note into the Commerce Bank, according to her Legal Aid attorney, Gerard Savage.

The men, "both known bank robbers, told her they knew where she lived," Savage said. "They told her they'd hurt her family, murder her mother, if she didn't follow their orders. She was terrified. Her conduct was the result of their coercion."

Almestica at first claimed she hadn't done anything wrong, law enforcement sources said. Her story changed when she was told she had been caught on surveillance cameras at both banks.

"When she realized she was caught on tape, she said the men put a knife to her throat and forced her to rob the bank," they said. "It seemed, at first, as though she had been coached on what to say if she was caught. But when she learned that bank robbery is a federal crime, and she could be tried as an adult, she got skittish and began crying." Almestica appeared stoic at her arraignment in the Kew Gardens courthouse on Saturday, wearing a black jacket with a fur-trimmed hood, jeans and white sneakers. She watched silently as prosecutors read from a two-page confession, in which the teen said, "I went to the bank, handed them the slip and they gave me the money."



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#### Chabad of Rego Park:

•Jan. 14, Sunday, 7:30 p.m. The Jewish Women's Circle month of Tu B'Shvat "The Green Thumb for Your Jewish Soul", \$7 donation, 62-38 99th St.; Mushky Mendelson, 718-897-6578.

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#### Community United Methodist:

•2007 Playgroup registration, nine months to 4 years, 75-27 Metropolitan Ave., Middle Village; 718.894.2293 or 718.894.8654.

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#### Congregation Machane Chodosh:

•Jan. 20, 8 p.m., Saturday. Festive Melave Malka, concert, food, free transportation for seniors, \$20/\$22 at the door, 67-29 108th St., Forest Hills.

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#### Free Synagogue of Flushing:

•Jan. 12, 19, 26, Friday, 8:15 p.m. Shabbat service.

•Jan. 17, 31, Wednesday, 8 p.m. Adult education, "The History of Anti-Semitism", free.

•Jan. 21, Sunday, 2 p.m. The Joel Chernet Klezmer Quartet, \$25/\$10, free parking.

•Jan. 28, Sunday, 9:30 a.m. The Brotherhood presents: Bagels & Lox & A Movie "The Chosen", \$6 donation, 41-60 Kissena Blvd, Flushing; 718-961-0030

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#### Forest Hills Jewish Center:

•Jan. 10, Wednesday, 9:30 a.m. Yoga classes, \$150, 10-week session.

•Jan. 11, Thursday, 8 p.m. Men's Club volleyball, \$5, pizza and soda.

•Jan. 13, Saturday, 9:45 a.m. children services; 3 p.m., Hebrew literature group.

•Jan. 14, Sunday, 9 a.m. Semi-annual blood drive.

•Jan. 19, Friday, 7:30 p.m. Friday night Chavurah, Kabbalat Shabbat.

•Jan. 21, 1 p.m., Sunday. First Annual Mahjong & Tea Event, \$7 nonmembers.

•Jan. 22, 29, Feb. 5, 12, 19, 26, Monday, 7:45 p.m. Adult education, Zohar-The

Book of Splendor, \$90 non-members.

Jan. 26, 27, Friday/Saturday. Twenty-third Scholar-in-Residence Kallah Kabbalat Shabbat services, luncheon/dinner, paid reservation only.

•Feb. 1, 7:30 p.m., Thursday, Political Seminar with Michael Schenkler, free.

•Feb. 4, Sunday, 6 p.m. Sixth Annual Men's Club Super Bowl Party, RSVP by Jan. 29, \$35 per family, 106-06 Queens Blvd.; 718.263.7000.

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#### St. Mel's Rosarians:

•Jan. 13, Saturday, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Defensive driving course, 28-20 154th St., Flushing; 631.360.9720.

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#### Queens Community for Cultural Judaism:

•Jan. 20, 2 p.m. Saturday. Discussion on the topics of Zionism, Non-Zionism, Anti-Zionism and Post-Zionism, \$5 nonmembers, refreshments; Temple Israel of Jamaica, Library, 188-15 McLaughlin Ave., 718-380-5362.

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#### Reform Temple of Forest Hills:

•Jan. 12, 6:15 p.m. Friday. "Temple Tots" monthly dinner and service \$8/\$5.

•Jan. 13, 20, 10:30 a.m., Saturday. "Food for Thought" study and discussion, brunch.

•Jan. 21, 10 a.m. Sunday. "Ushpizin", \$10 includes buffet breakfast, 71-11 112th St.; 718.261.2900.

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#### St. Nicholas of Tolentine R.C.:

•Jan. 14, 28, Sunday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Indoor flea market, "White Elephant" tables, admission/parking free, food/refreshments available, 150-75 Goethals Ave., Jamaica; 718.969.3226.

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#### St. Patrick's:

•Jan. 14, Sunday, 11:30 a.m. procession followed by Novena prayers, 12:30 p.m., Holy Mass honoring The Holy Child Jesus 25th Anniversary, 38-39 29th St., LIC; 718.729.6060.

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