NEWS

"I didn't do anything bad." **DANIIL MEDVEDEV** RUSSIAN TENNIS PLAYER

Toad's Place patron arrested after alleged attempt to stab bouncer

BY EVELYN RONAN
STAFF REPORTER

A 19-year-old resident of Madison, Conn., was arrested in a Broadway parking lot early Sunday morning after allegedly attempting to stab a Toad's Place security guard.

Ethan Finn was charged with second- and third-degree assault and second-degree breach of peace. The security guard sustained a laceration to his hand, according to New Haven Police Department spokesperson Christian Bruckhart.

At approximately 12:38 a.m. on Sunday, NHPD officers were dispatched to Toad's upon receiving reports of an assault, Bruckhart wrote in an email to the News. As security guards attempted to remove Finn from the club, he allegedly punched one of the guards and then attempted to stab another with a knife, according to Bruckhart.

Bruckhart wrote that the assault could have been related to a fight that happened inside that night. A video posted online shows three young men assaulting another man on the floor, although Finn does not appear to participate in the fight.

Finn allegedly fled Toad's on foot towards Whalley Avenue and was arrested in a Broadway parking lot across from the Apple Store, where he was taken into custody by officers, according to NHPD dispatches.

Finn's bond was set at $25,000.

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ERIC WANG / PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

Officers arrested a man in a Broadway parking lot early Sunday morning after he allegedly attempted to stab a security guard at Toad's Place, according to a New Haven Police Department spokesperson.

Wilbur Cross junior is newest school board student representative

BY JINGCHU SOPHIA ZHANG
STAFF REPORTER

New Haven high school student Dani McTiernan Huge has a wealth of experience performing onstage — but this school year, she is stepping into a different kind of spotlight.

On Monday, McTiernan Huge, a junior at Wilbur Cross High School, began her term as a student representative on the New Haven Public Schools Board of Education. In late May, McTiernan Huge won a four-way race for the seat. Along with Hill Regional Career High School senior Abdellah Aly, she will attend biweekly board meetings as a non-voting participant to advocate for student interests.

"I would describe Dani as a very gentle force," Ashley Stockton, a kindergarten teacher and a longtime friend of McTiernan Huge's family, said in a phone interview. "She's a force, but she's a really astute listener. She asks a lot of really good questions."

Her teachers and family members called the junior's new role on the Board of Education a big step. But they said they believed her reserved yet resolute personality and ability to connect with others equip her well for the challenge.

Finding her voice

Since the beginning of last school year, McTiernan Huge has served on Wilbur Cross' student council, where, she said, "the stakes are not very high."

When a spot opened up for student representative, McTiernan Huge recalled, social studies teacher and student council advisor Brian Grindrod encouraged his students to run.

"And then no one volunteered," McTiernan Huge said. "I was like: Okay, someone has to do it, so I will. It will be fine — what's the worst thing that could happen?"

As she campaigned for the role and spoke with students about what changes they wished to see in the school system, McTiernan Huge said she felt a growing sense of responsibility to make change happen. She began actively taking in more student input and launched a website where students could upvote or downvote her proposals.

McTiernan Huge also spoke with John Carlos Serana Musser, a past student representative who graduated from Wilbur Cross last year, who advised her to "have big goals." She decided to focus on school start times, which she said have been a problem in her personal experience.

"I wake up at 6 a.m. to get on my bus, and I have friends who wake up at 5 a.m., 5:30 a.m. to get on their buses," McTiernan Huge said. "They get up so early, and, especially in winter, it's cold, it's dark — it's dark when you're getting on the bus — the vibes are really down."

As she did more research, McTiernan Huge said, she learned more about how a lack of sleep harms teenage development and learning.

Since being elected, she added, she has tempered her expectations around the potential for policy change. While she knows that other districts have successfully altered school start times, she said she is wary of the complex coordination such a move would require.

"I think the goal of a later start time is a long term one. It's not going to happen in my time," McTiernan Huge said. "I think that's unrealistic, but it'd be great if I could at least get the board talking about it in a serious way."

A more pressing concern for McTiernan Huge, she said, is the state of facilities at schools like her own. A July article in the New Haven Independent had noted sightings of mold at Wilbur Cross and an ongoing need for roof repairs. McTiernan Huge also described problematic bathroom conditions: doors with no locks on them, broken sinks and times when there is no soap or paper towels.

District leaders have attributed poor school infrastructure to limited finances and inefficient systems for managing repairs.

To discuss plans moving forward, McTiernan Huge said she has met with Aly, as well as Brandon Daley, a Metropolitan Business Academy student and lead liaison for the Citywide Student Council, an assembly of student leaders across the district. McTiernan Huge said they discussed involving more students in district decision-making and plans for an upcoming protest about the state of facilities.

The latter is one of many unfamiliar things her new role has called on her to do.

"I haven't done something like this, so we'll see how it goes," she said. "I haven't been so outspoken in such a big group, or with many eyes watching."



JINGCHU SOPHIA ZHANG / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

On the stage

Still, performance has long been an important part of McTiernan Huge's life, she said, adding that she loved to sing aloud as a child and sang choir with the Trinity Church on the Green. She also started last year at the ACES Educational Center for the Arts Theatre, a half-time magnet arts school, after searching for a way to do more theatre in high school. She called art "a beautiful thing to spend your time doing."

Last May, in the theatre's original student-created production "AUTOMATOWN! The Musical," McTiernan Huge played Annabelle, a sheltered teenager who helps uncover a hidden truth about her small town.

Recalling the musical, Stockton said she was most struck by a duet that McTiernan Huge performed.

The song, in part, followed Annabelle as she grew skeptical of the town's peaceful facade. In the character's transformation, Stockton also saw evidence of McTiernan Huge's own growth.

"That performance, it was different. She's not just doing the choreography and singing the songs — you could feel a shift in confidence," Stockton said. "You could hear a pin drop."

"A gentle force"

When McTiernan Huge was younger, Stockton remembered her to be "very happy, very thoughtful, very creative, all of these positive things – but not necessarily someone who I thought would put themselves out there."

Over the years, especially throughout McTiernan Huge's time at Cross, Stockton noticed her confidence around others grow.

She said McTiernan Huge has the ability to connect with people of all ages and backgrounds. Her sister, Rhea McTiernan Huge '27 — who ran for Ward 1 Alder last summer before dropping out of the race — said that ability is rooted in her younger sister's relationships with their siblings at home.

The sisters' four younger siblings range in age from one to 11. The Yale senior pointed to her younger sister's sensitivity to the needs of all her siblings and willingness to speak up for them.

"I think these are qualities that are very important for everyone to have, but especially in a role like this where you have to represent a set of people, and you have to be their voice within this space where there's not a lot of other people who are their direct voice," Rhea McTiernan Huge said, referring to the student representative role.

Dani McTiernan Huge said that her work in theater has also helped inform her approach to leadership.

Her experience repeatedly performing in front of an audience despite feeling nervous beforehand gave her the confidence that she could handle the public speaking required for her campaign and now for her work as a student representative, the high school student said.

"I think she puts herself in situations that a lot of people wouldn't put themselves in, and that are scary because you fear outside judgment," Rhea McTiernan Huge said. "But because her goal is to help someone or to uplift someone, she can overcome that fear that a lot of us have and get to the point of action."

Grindrod said that when he first met the new board representative, in an AP U.S. History class he taught, she was a quiet student.

"From May of last school year and the first two weeks of school, I have seen a different Dani," Grindrod wrote in a text message, adding that "she is definitely no longer this soft spoken kid. She has a voice and is starting to use it."

Dani McTiernan Huge will join Aly in representing over 18,000 students across New Haven Public Schools.

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JINGCHU SOPHIA ZHANG / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Dani McTiernan Huge began her two-year term as a non-voting student representative on the New Haven Public Schools Board of Education on Monday. On her mind are issues including student sleep deprivation and poor school facility conditions.