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MARCH 2023

HOUSING CRISIS

Vacancies Plummet: Shortage Has Regional Impact

BY LIZ DUPONT-DIEHL

TORRINGTON – Connecticut’s rental vacancy rate in 2022 was at a historic low 3.3%—nearly the lowest in the country, according to the U.S. Census.

This fact—spurred in part by an influx of homebuyers from New York and other regions—is combining with soaring rents and home prices to create what many are calling a housing crisis.

The causes range from zoning issues to a dearth of Section 8 options. The effects include displaced workers, unhappy home buyers, and even homelessness.

“People who are homeless never imagine being homeless,” said Deirdre Houlihan DiCara, executive director of the FISH Shelter in Torrington, which serves the region. “In many cases it has nothing to do with addiction or people’s choices. For many it’s the housing shortage, which is quite desperate.”

This housing shortage is impacting virtually everyone:

- Employers who can’t find workers
- Seniors who can’t afford to remain in their communities
- Workers who move to where they can afford housing
- People becoming homeless
- People having a hard time finding the homes they want to rent or to buy.

It’s a fundamental issue of supply and demand, according to housing experts. Housing is considered to be affordable if it costs no more than 30% of a family’s income. Housing creation in Connecticut has been driven by local zoning laws, which favor single-family homes on large lots.

Experts estimate there is a shortage of 140,000 affordable housing units in the state.

“The supply is out of whack with the demand,” said Jocelyn Ayer, director of the Center for Housing Opportunity’s Litchfield County branch. “It’s definitely at a crisis point. We know a lot more people are renting than in previous decades across the state. One factor is home prices; another is debt and student loan debt.”

Katie Vaill, Winchester’s Director of Social Services, said that of 202 requests she saw for service last year, 50-60% were regarding housing.

“Most people I deal with who call me saying they are being evicted are very upset,” she said. “They didn’t see it coming.”

Public Policy Around Housing

“We treat housing as a commodity rather than as an essential need for people,” said Erin Boggs, Executive Director of the Open Communities Alliance, a statewide research and advocacy organization “That leads to builders building large and expensive homes, and to towns acting to retain people’s investment.”

The primary program to make housing affordable for people is Section 8 vouchers, which require recipients to pay 30% of their incomes, with the government providing the balance of the rent directly to the landlord. Many landlords like the reliable income stream; others avoid Section 8 tenants for various reasons, which include firm building

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FISH Shelter residents and staff in the shelter’s common room. From Left, Andrew Boyd, 33, currently beginning work on his GED; standing, Russell Brown, the shelter’s residential monitor; 8-month-old Rayven Plummer, who was born while her mom was living at FISH, and her mother, 32-year-old Amanda Plummer; FISH Executive Director Dierdre Houlihan DiCara, standing; and Brandy Fenstermaker, 46.

| Housing Affordability in Region | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|---|
| Municipality | Total Housing Units | % of People in Poverty | % of units now considered affordable by state Department of Housing |
| Barkhamsted/Riverton | 1,462 | 2.30% | 1.64% |
| Colebrook | 806 | 4.20% | 1.11% |
| Hartland | 857 | 2.30% | 0.93% |
| New Hartford | 2,892 | 2.30% | 2.63% |
| Norfolk | 958 | 4.20% | 2.79% |
| Winchester/Winsted | 5,547 | 17.30% | 10.76% |

Chart by Serena Piervincenzi

Northwestern CT Community College Soon To Be a Name in Rear-View Mirror: Merger Means New Name, Efficiencies, Choices...And How About Community?

BY KATHY MEGAN

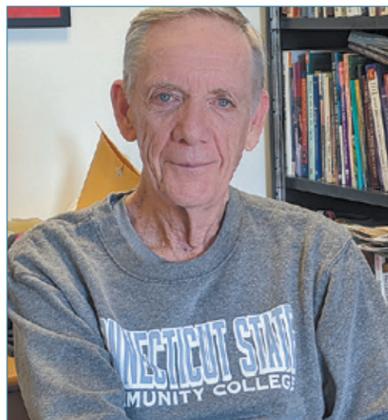
WINSTED – Northwestern Connecticut Community College professors and students are anticipating the merger of the school in July with 11 other colleges with a mix of excitement and concern.

There will be new opportunities, for sure, but also uncertainty about whether accreditors will approve the new institution, about how the costs and benefits of the merger will play out and about whether the small tightly-knit college community will retain its special identity and intimacy in the midst of a sprawling bureaucracy.

“We take a lot of pride in what we do, but we’re small,” said Charles Kelly, a sociology professor and representative of the faculty union. “We’re just concerned that we’re going to get swallowed up, especially by the bigger schools ...”

“I’m confident that this will be successful,” Kelly said. “I just think it’s going to take a while.”

Lily Barry a first-semester student



Charles Kelly, a sociology professor and union representative at Northwestern, said he’s confident that the merger will be successful.

from Colebrook said the ability to take classes on other campuses easily will be an advantage of the merger, though she has worries.

“Northwestern is such an iconic campus. I feel it’s just been a staple in this town and everyone knows it by Northwestern,” Barry said. “The



First-year student Brianna Nemcik said she’ll need a new sweatshirt with the upcoming name change for Northwestern.

professors know people by name and I know them. That’s something you don’t find at other schools.”

When the merger was proposed in 2017 by Mark Ojakian, then president of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, it was billed primarily as a means to save money and enable the

fiscally-threatened community colleges to continue operating on all 12 campuses. He called it “Students First.”

After six years of persistence amid fierce criticism from many faculty as well as sharp comments from its accrediting agency, CSCU is finally on the homestretch toward consolidating the state’s 12 community colleges into a single statewide college.

If all goes as CSCU leaders hope, their accrediting agency, the New England Commission of Higher Education, will provide approval by July 1 to the new institution, Connecticut State Community College.

“We’re only three or four months away,” said Michael Rooke, president of Northwestern and a leader in the development of the merger. “Every indication of what we’ve shared with our accreditors is they’re very happy with the progress we’ve made.”

“Do I think there’s anything going to

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Looking Forward to Winsted's Past At the Winsted Historical Society



Photo courtesy of William Hosley

Built in 1813 for iron magnate Solomon Rockwell at 255 Prospect St., the house was given to the Winsted Historical Society sometime in the early 1900s.

BY NANCY GOTTFRIED

WINSTED—Standing prominently on a hill at 255 Prospect St. is an 1813 Classical Revival Colonial mansion once owned by local iron merchant Solomon Rockwell. Many years later, around 1913, the house became the Winsted Historical Society, honoring Winsted veterans who fought in the Civil War. Today it is home to one of the largest collections of Civil War memorabilia in the state.

"It is almost a living museum," said newly-appointed President Michael DeClement. "Many of our collections are out there, as opposed to being in glass cases—and more memorabilia is always coming in."

On display are Charlie Pine's bugle, drum straps, and medals. William Hyde's weapons are also there, along with Dandy, William Batcheller's horse's saddle. Caleb Newman, who



Photo courtesy of William Hosley
Milly Hudak, Volunteer Curator of the Winsted Historical Society. Mrs. Hudak passed away last year.

later became Winsted's first police chief, has his barbershop mug on exhibit, as well as his sword.

"We want to get into the schools and involve students so they can learn about local history."

— Museum President Michael DeClement.

Muskets, knives, hats, epaulets, saddles, and weapons of all kinds aside, the Historical Society has much of its 11 rooms filled with art and artifacts commemorating Winsted's history as one of Connecticut's most prosperous manufacturing towns.

Curated by volunteer Milly Hudak up until her death last year, many of the collectibles are products from manufacturers

who gained their fame locally. Located in the adjacent Carriage House, the exhibits contain many products created in Winsted. Items include Gilbert Clocks, Waring Blenders, Ricoh Electric Coffee Pots, Capitol Products Popcorn Poppers, Winsted Hosiery and Naval Blue sweaters.

With Hudak's passing, the future of the organization had been tenuous before the appointment of DeClement in November 2022.

William Hosley, a museum curator and friend of the late Mrs. Hudak, said the group's endowment is sufficient to care for, but not operate the building. No money is allocated to the Historical Society by the town or state.

DeClement said the first order of business before reopening in April is to build a website.

"We will have outreach into the community and have the ability to schedule tours," he said. "This will undoubtedly increase our exposure ... We also want to get into the schools and involve students so they can learn about local history."

The staff consists of volunteers. There will be no open hours during the week, but weekend time slots will be available online. Prospective members of the Historical Society are asked to contact the group by postal mail at 255 Prospect St., Winsted, CT 06098 and enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

The Winsted Citizen

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See the pilot edition online at winstedcitizen.org

CORRECTIONS

The Weekend in Norfolk story on page 5 in the pilot edition was written by Marie Bonelli. The story carried the wrong byline. We apologize to our readers and staff. The buck stops with the editor and publisher. No excuse. We will try harder. New procedures implemented.

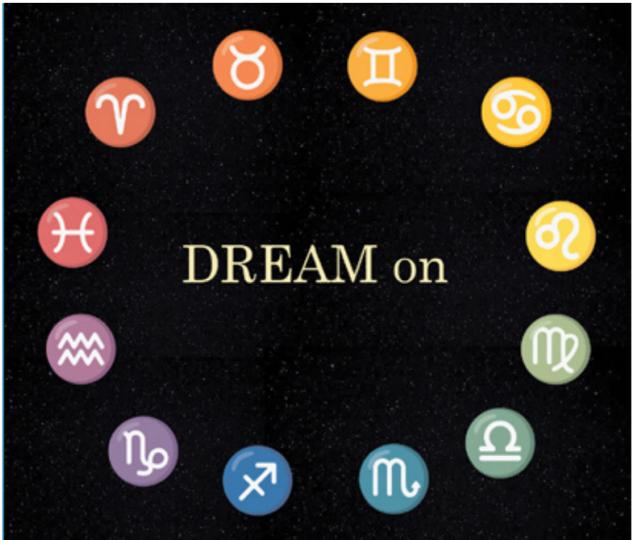
The identities of two Northwestern Regional High School students were reversed beneath their photos in the February edition. A photo identified incorrectly on Page 1 was Fiona Leon; the photo identified incorrectly on Page 10 was Asa Bannerman.



Asa Bannerman, a junior at Northwestern, said she gets a lot of her news from Instagram and TikTok. Often it's questionable, she said, so if she's really interested, she researches it.



Fiona Leon, a junior at Northwestern Regional High School, said that at times she has found the news so upsetting, she had to take a break.



ASTROLOGY COLUMN

BY HILARY CARPENTER

This month brings nonlinear revelations. Keep those dream journals handy, especially mid-month.

On March 3, reach out to deeply comfort someone who is in pain, even if that someone is you.

Mid-month begins a period of speaking boldly and cutting to the chase. Dare to call your congressional representatives and speak at that town council meeting about issues closest to your heart. Tempers may flare during this time, so stay out of the fray with aggressive self-care.

The end of the month sees a shift in tone, where we will be encouraged to dare to care, dare to cry and dare to mother. Speak your pain—it matters.

On March 30, instead of taking action, make an action plan. Remember to set rules and limits for whatever warfare you are about to engage in. We close out the months with a sweet reminder that love transforms. Your connections to others will not only be changed, but will cause change.

MARCH FOR THE SIGNS*

ARIES: The full moon on the 7th asks you to discern and perfect work and health routines. On the 11th, spur your comrades into action, talk about that elephant in the room and spin that crazy idea you've been incubating. The new moon on the 21st is your new moon—the best one for your sign to set intentions. Focus on how you want to be seen in the world because the spotlight will be on you for the next few weeks.

TAURUS: Be on the lookout for meaningful and helpful revelations about your community and friendships, especially mid-month. On the 7th, hone your creative practices, whatever those may be. On the 20th, the spotlight is on your hidden life—dreams, deep sorrows and loss—for the next month. Set intentions at this time to record and honor this part of your life. Use this time to heal.

GEMINI: Communications in your career and public roles are prominent this month—look for unusual revelations in those areas and be sure to record them. The full moon on the 7th helps you perfect your relationship to your parents and your foundations. It's a good time to ask what makes a home and a family. Later in the month, the sun shines on your friends, community and good fortune. Enjoy these next few weeks, and set intentions in those areas on the 21st.

CANCER: Interesting revelations come in the areas of travel, higher education, philosophy and religion. Keep track of them. The full moon on the 7th gives you a boost in perfecting your daily rituals as well as your relationships with siblings and extended family. Make note at this time of what works and what doesn't in those areas. Starting on the 20th, the spotlight is on your career and/or public roles for the next month—step into it and set intentions in that area on the 21st.

LEO: Communicating about your mental health this month will give you some unexpected insights. Use the full moon energy on the 7th to discern and perfect your finances—review your budget and make adjustments. Aries season on the 20th heralds a month of focus on travel, higher education, philosophy and religion—set intentions in one or more of those areas.

VIRGO: Communications in committed partnerships is where you will find interesting and unexpected insights this month. Pay attention. On the 7th, use the full moon to reflect on how you present yourself to the world and make any necessary adjustments. Starting on the 20th, there will be a focus on mental health, as well as on shared resources (inheritances, financial partnerships), so set some intentions on the 21st to help you in these areas over the next weeks.

LIBRA: Communications and interesting revelations in the areas of your work and health routines dominate this month. Experiment with some different ways of doing things in these areas. The full moon on March 7th is a powerful one for you, coming as it does in the area of your hidden life—keep that dream journal handy around that time. The spotlight moves on the 20th into the area of your life concerned with committed relationships. It's time to set new relationship goals.

SCORPIO: Look for revelations and unusual lessons in communications about your creative pursuits and work with children. On the 7th, the full moon gives you guidance in honing your relationship with your friendship circles and the wider community. When the Sun moves into Aries on the 20th, the spotlight is on work and health routines. This is a good time to start something new in these areas.

SAGITTARIUS: Talks with parents, and writing and

continued on page 7

On The Job With Maeghan LeBlanc, Rebecca Corcoran, Isaiah Grant

EDITOR'S NOTE: On the job will be a regular feature of The Winsted Citizen, focusing on people who bring exuberance and vitality to our community. Interviews are edited for clarity and length by reporters and editors.

Maeghan LeBlanc and all the staff at McGrane's are among the greatest hosts of all time. We at The Winsted Citizen thank them for their welcome to our staff and our venture.

People will tell you that I am kind, that I go out of my way to help people and that I am always trying to bring a positive vibe everywhere I go and to everyone I meet.

I have lived in Winsted for about eight years, and I have worked for almost two years at McGrane's—I was born in Tennessee.

Most people don't know this because I am very outgoing at work, but I am actually very shy. I love to fish, but I also love animals. My life goal is to open an



Maeghan LeBlanc says her goal is to open an animal sanctuary.

animal sanctuary and bring in dogs, cats, wild birds, foxes and others. I find peace in any body of water, whether it is a lake, a pond or the ocean. Being able to sit by the water and hear the water move helps me ground myself when things in the world are chaotic.

My most incredible adventure, and maybe the craziest thing I did would probably be the road trip from Arizona to Connecticut—me, two dogs, two snakes, a cat and an ex-boyfriend. We drove from Arizona to Florida to South Carolina to Connecticut. It took us almost a whole week because I didn't drive. We had to make several stops on the road to take breaks.

My favorite colors are purple and black. My music preference is all over the place. I listen to hard rock, alternative, today's pop, and, when I feel in the mood for it, I listen to country.

– Reynaldo Cruz



Rebecca Corcoran, owner of Cura Di Sé in Winsted, says she loves to interact with her customers, but also enjoys quiet time alone with her family.

Rebecca Corcoran, opened Cura Di Sé, in Winsted in June where she whips up her protein shakes and boosted teas and also runs exercise programs and other activities. She and her husband have transformed a storefront at 60 Main St. into a comfortable respite with wifi for customers who want to sit and sip.

Everybody would say I love to talk to people. I just love to get to know everybody. I like to feel that connection. And there's the energy.

I worked in healthcare for a long time. And I just feel it's important. I don't like people coming in here and I just take an order and they turn around and walk out. I want to get to know them.

Being a business owner, especially in today's day and time, I think that's really important to know your customers, to know how they are. People want that. They want you to take that interest.

Yes, I'm interested in health. For awhile, I did home care and hospice care. And then I was a medical assistant in a pediatrician's office.

So I'd worked with the elderly and then I worked with children. And during COVID, I actually left and I stayed home with my son. And then I really started to pay attention to my health journey and lost a lot of weight. And I started helping other people, just as a coach, who were looking to lose weight. They needed a

shoulder to lean on, someone to help keep them accountable.

My slogan is self-care for the soul... Without it, things can kind of go lopsided a little bit.

I'm very vocal and I love to talk with people, but I think few people would know that I can be very much an introvert. I love being home in my house. I love to garden. We have five acres and I've always had chickens and been out in the yard with my family. I love that time. So balancing now, having a storefront, having all these people coming in.

Craziest thing I ever did? We got married in St. Lucia. We did! It's called "a wedding moon." We got married with just the two of us there.

I'd never left the country. I'd only gone, you know, on a car ride maybe to Maine or whatever. So that was it for me. I had three older children and then I got remarried.

– Kathy Megan

Isaiah Grant is a second-year student at Northwestern Connecticut Community College. He's from Winsted and is the oldest of six children.

I hope everybody that knows me at least knows that I try. You know what I mean? Yeah, like I try my best to meet other people's expectations and my own expectations as well. I do a fair amount of

community engagement with peer-to-peer mentoring. I am up at the tutoring center as well. I also coach at a boxing gym and I do martial arts.

Anything that I do, I really try my best.

If the first-year students sign up for the peer-to-peer program, we assign them a mentor who is in their second year or maybe second semester. When people go into college, there's like a lot of stuff, a lot of information that you just don't know.

So you know, let's say they're having trouble in a class. They don't know how to approach their professor. Well since you know I've been at the college the past year and I've experienced this already, I kind of know, you can just come up to a professor and be like, "Hey, what are your office hours? You know, I mean like, when can we meet? I'm struggling with this aspect. Can you help me?"

And most of the professors are very,



Isaiah Grant, a second-year student at Northwestern Connecticut Community College, hopes to become a social worker.

very good.

Originally, my childhood dream was to become a police officer. They are the person that comes no matter what the crime is ... And then living though life, experiencing what police are like, and I'm not saying that police are bad or anything. There's a lot of good police officers out there, but my focus more switched to the social work aspect and that's my major.

If it's like, let's say an overdose. They bring you to the hospital and then you might even get charged for doing the drugs. Right there, that step afterward, that's where I want to be: helping people. I have a lot of experience doing that.

I've seen mental health first hand with my stepdad. He passed away a little while ago. He committed suicide. That's pretty much my main motivation for why I want to become a social worker.

This coming March, I'm going to England to attend the Oxford Consortium, which is basically a meeting about human rights and the specific one I'm going to is about climate change, so I'm going out there learning about the effects of climate change, but also learning about what to do about climate change.

It's pretty crazy, honestly, it's pretty amazing. When I graduated high school, I did not plan to go to college. I just planned on working. I ended up going to college for the reasons I outlined earlier. I could not even imagine getting this opportunity when I first applied to college.

I thought I wasn't going to be any good at college. I graduated high school with a 2.3 GPA—something not great at all. Why would I go to college? Now, I have a 3.59 and I'm a tutor. I couldn't even imagine doing this.

– Kathy Megan



Youth Soccer Board Applauds Approval of Funds for Replacement Field Lights

WINSTED – The Winsted Youth Soccer Association (WYSA) is hailing town officials and members of an ad-hoc committee for their swift, thorough efforts to bring lights back to the athletic fields along Willow Street.

The Board of Selectmen on Feb. 6 voted unanimously to allocate \$194,250 of the town's federal American Rescue Plan Act funding to cover the cost

of replacement lights at the field, which is home to WYSA and municipal Recreation Department programming.

"This is fantastic news for the children of our town, and our team at WYSA looks forward to bringing back the great fall tradition of soccer under the lights after a brief one-season hiatus," board President Kevin Lillie said. "To see the town manager and Board of Selectmen

support this community project was truly heartening, and the work of Recreation Lighting Subcommittee volunteers can't be overlooked—it was their dedication to a collaborative process with rigid timelines that got this done."

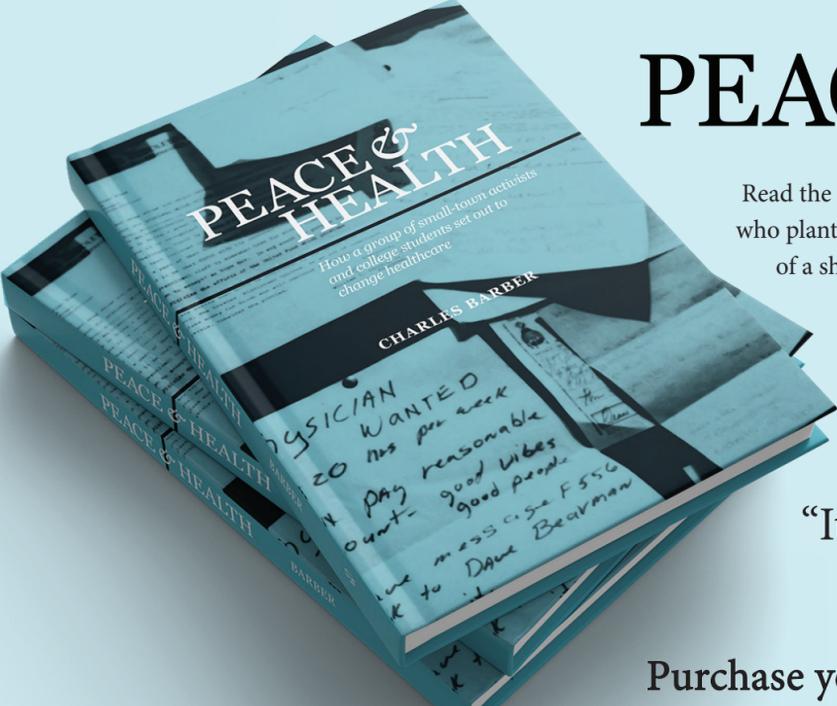
The Recreation Lighting Subcommittee was formed last August when the old lights—installed in the mid 1980s—were removed over safety concerns

after two of them fell to the ground. WYSA's fall schedule was affected, with games and practices for its more than 125 fall registrants squeezed into daylight hours. Semi-final playoff games for the regional youth soccer league were moved to New Hartford.

"There was definitely a feeling of disappointment among players, parents and coaches once everyone realized the lights

had been taken down. Some worried we'd never get them back," Lillie said. "I know there will be a lot of excitement around the news that we're getting the field lighted again so quickly. I hope a lot of people make it to the field that evening to see the kind of good work that can be accomplished when everyone is working together."

The project is expected to be completed by Aug. 15. ■



PEACE & HEALTH

Read the inspiring Connecticut-grown story of the Middletown 20-year-old who plants the flag for health care being a right, not a privilege; the daughter of a sharecropper, who becomes the North Star in the quest to transform health in the community; the pharmacist son of a Jewish émigré who breaks from his peers to support the cause; the musician and patient who played in the big bands of the South in the 1930's; and the college student and future U.S. Senator who helps ensure the free clinic would not be shut down.

"It reads like a novel, but it's all true."

— Joseph J. Fins, MD
Professor of Medicine & Medical Ethics, Weill Cornell Medical College

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EDITORIAL & OPINION

How I Prepped for Solo

BY ELLA GANNON

Sophomore
Northwestern Regional High School

My feet are glued to the floor, my eyes scanning the gymnasium. The bleachers hold people I've never seen or met before. They are all sitting and watching me. My mind is racing, and it feels unreal that I'm standing here, waiting to accomplish something this big.

"Please rise for the singing of the National Anthem!" the announcer said.

I heard my name being called and the room went silent.

My name is Ella Gannon. I am a sophomore at Northwestern Region 7 High School and it took a lot of work for me to get here. Singing a solo is a goal that I have always had, and this was about to become a reality for me.

As a little kid, I always loved music and singing songs for my family, so when I got to 7th grade, I decided to take choir as an elective and I have been doing it ever since.



In choir, I have worked on many skills including how to sight read, how to count rhythms, and so much more. However, the jump from middle school choir to high school choir was unexpectedly difficult at first. It took some practicing and getting used to because of the unfamiliar sight reading and higher-level pieces. In my freshman year of high school, we sang two pieces that were in Latin, and they were both a capella—meaning they had no piano in the background to guide us.

That was definitely a challenge.

This year, three pieces we are working on for the 2023 Spring Concert are not in English. One is in Sesotho, an African language. I love that we have such diversity in the music we sing. There are so many different kinds of music out in the world and I like being exposed to different languages and genres.

I love being around other students that share the same interest as me, and the atmosphere the students and the teacher create is something I look forward to every day. Our choir teacher, Mr. [Dylan] Pedersen has always been so supportive and willing to help guide me when I need it. He helps make choir as fun and enjoyable as it is.

Aside from all of the opportunities in the regular choir, there are other experiences for choir students, including Regionals auditions and the Regionals festival, Chorus Angelicus, All States, and Honors Choir which is a club that meets after school.

Mr. Pedersen, the choir teacher at NWR7, suggests auditioning and trying out these options.

"It's a nice opportunity for students who want to push themselves a little bit more," Mr. Pedersen said.

We have a Winter Concert in December and a Spring Concert in May. Concert time has always been one of my favorite parts of choir. It is such a fun experience every year. Everyone around you is wearing all black, and there are conversations and giggling before we go onstage. I love the feeling of stepping onto the risers and feeling warm and excited under the bright lights. I always look forward to concerts because they are our chance to show what we have learned and accomplished.

Because I joined choir, I was able to have the opportunity to sing the anthem.

In the middle of January, I sought out the chance to sing the National Anthem at a school sports game. As soon as I heard the news, I signed up to sing at a Varsity Girls Basketball game and I practiced with my choir teacher, Mr. Pedersen beforehand.

Although I was nervous about singing a solo in front of so many people, I knew I wanted to do this, because this was my chance to show off my voice and have people listen. A lot goes into a small performance. As a singer, you have to be aware of a lot of things to sing your best. You have to take deep breaths and make sure you are using your air sparingly so you can hold long notes. In the end, it felt so good to push my nerves aside and perform in front of people. It made me feel proud and accomplished knowing I did something this big.

In high school, it's important to be involved. Don't let an opportunity pass you by. You should look into your passions, and seek out clubs or activities that interest you even if it involves taking risks.

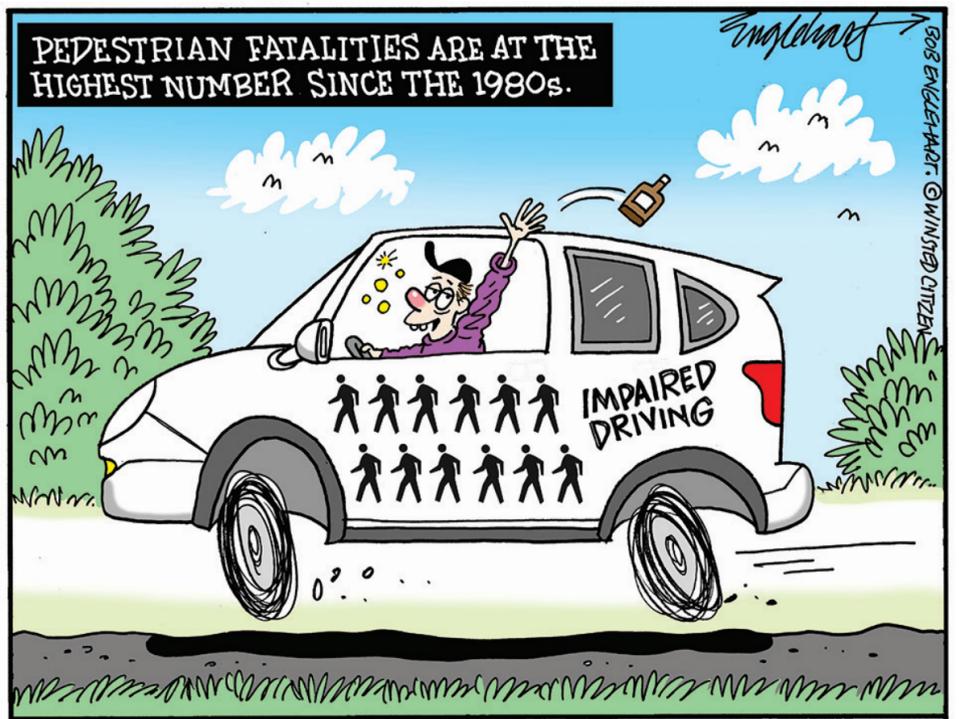
Mr. Pedersen encourages students to try new things.

"A lot of people will spend their entire lives never changing their opinions," Mr. Pedersen said. "It's one thing to try it and not enjoy it, and it's another thing to just never try it."

I encourage the same idea. I have experienced nervousness surrounding trying new things, but over the years I have worked on not letting that stop me. High schoolers and kids of all ages should always try new things and learn to step out of their comfort zone because no matter what the outcome, it will be worth the experience in the end.

A Reader Writes ...

I really enjoyed your premier issue. I cancelled my HHS. Courant subscription after Alden Global Capital took the helm and decimated a 250 year history of journalistic integrity. Best of luck...



Diplomacy on the Back Burner

BY REYNALDO CRUZ

Editor's Note: Reporter Reynaldo Cruz interviewed U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., on Jan. 23, shortly after the senator's return from his most recent trip to Ukraine. Following are highlights of the interview, edited for length and clarity.

At some point diplomacy may well end the war with Russia, but not in the immediate future.

A temporary solution or a ceasefire only enables Putin to amass more strength and prepare for another invasion. Putin is determined to conquer Ukraine.

If he's committed to defeat Ukraine, he will go to NATO allies. And that will mean American troops on the ground because we have a duty and a treaty obligation to defend them with American troops.

That's the reason why Poland is so steadfast and determined to help Ukraine. They know they'll be next. Our own national security is at stake.

If we want to avoid American troops being involved, we have to be prepared to provide Ukrainians—who are fighting this battle, which is our fight as well—with what they need to win it.

And a diplomatic compromise only postpones Putin's repeated attempts to restore the old Soviet Union or the Russian Empire as it was known before, and dominate Eastern Europe.

Our own national security is at stake. If we want to avoid American troops being involved, we have to be prepared to provide Ukrainians—who are fighting this battle, which is our fight as well—with what they need to win it.

And a diplomatic compromise only postpones Putin's repeated attempts to restore the old Soviet Union or the Russian Empire as it was known before, and dominate Eastern Europe.

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Ukraine, defeating them in Russia's attempt to conquer Kyiv. They have made progress in the east and the south. Because they have conscripted individuals, emptied some of their prisons. But the Russians outman the Ukrainians. They have more troops by far now on the Eastern Front. We can't afford to allow Ukraine to be outgunned as well as outmanned.

Russia Weakened

Putin wants Ukraine to be the sole combatant right now, because he believes he can conquer Ukraine, and that he can just throw human beings into this fight, literally, without caring that they

die or are wounded. He's treating human beings as totally expendable. And he has more of them than Ukraine. So he believes that eventually, he can win a war of attrition.

He doesn't want all of NATO to come down on him. So retaliation that would provoke NATO, and most especially a unified NATO, to counterattack would

be his worst nightmare. He can't win that. And in fact, you lose very quickly to the combined forces of NATO which can barely stop Ukraine from pushing Russian forces out of that country.

And I think that's why you hear less about the danger of escalation or retaliation from our military. That was a concern at the beginning, when Putin seemed much stronger, and the Russian military appeared to have much more prowess and strength than it does.

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Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shymal meets with U.S. officials. L to R: U.S. Ambassador Bridget Brink, Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, Sen. Richard Blumenthal, Sen. Lindsay Graham. Contributed photo.

The way to avoid a stalemate is to enable Ukraine to win.

see it again in the civilized world. But it shows that Putin is a butcher. He's a war criminal. He is a thug, and he should be held accountable. And while we were there, we spoke to the chief prosecutor of Ukraine responsible for going after the war crimes and we are working to

provide assistance from the United States. Senator Sheldon and Graham and myself are going to be seeking assistance, resources and support from the United States to his efforts in amassing the forensic and other evidence that is necessary to pursue these cases successfully.

The war crimes include not only what happened in Bucha, but also what happened in Dnipro, and all around Ukraine where apartment buildings, hospitals, schools, civilians generally have been targeted. They have tried to intimidate, panic, defeat the country psychologically as well as militarily, through targeting civilians.

We will spare no effort to bring to justice Vladimir Putin, his senior commanders, anyone who condoned, encouraged or ordered these war crimes as well as the ones who committed them directly.

Author Courtney Maum Just Can't Rest, Maybe She Never Will

BY MICHELLE MANAFY

NORFOLK – Courtney Maum is a writer and a teacher. Above all, she is a truth teller—even when it hurts.

The author of five books—three novels, a book about the business of publishing, and most recently a memoir—Maum also is the executive director of Norfolk's artists' retreat, The Cabins. She teaches at Drexel University, is a writing coach, prolific author of personal essays, and publishes a newsletter on writing and publishing called Before and After the Book Deal.

Does she sleep?

In 2015, her nearly lifelong struggle with insomnia caused a level of exhaustion that pushed her to the brink. Her memoir, *The Year Of The Horses* explores depression, along with the frailty of memory, human resilience, and how connecting with animals better connects us with ourselves.

The book is told through her perception and recollections, and also those of her family and friends.

"I went to great pains to include other people's version of the story," Maum said. "I talked to family and they might say I got something totally wrong. I include that. If I'm recalling an experience with my husband, then I included his point of view."

Maum describes the process as "trying to find the truth—in my experience, in the human experience. I think that's what most art makers are trying to do."

Born in Greenwich, Maum attended Brown University and has lived in Paris and Brooklyn. Though New York is widely viewed as the epicenter of publishing, Maum says the only work she published at that time was catalog copy for Victoria's Secret. Her work began to bear fruit once she and her husband moved to a cabin by the Farmington River in Sandisfield, Massachusetts, where they lived from 2007 to 2015.

Country life suited Maum much better than New



Photo By Holly Lynton

York. But after a few years, when they were looking for a preschool for their child, the pair discovered a lack of options near Sandisfield.

They started making the 25-minute trip to Norfolk Early Learning Center and it wasn't long before they realized that the community offered them much more than quality early childhood education.

"It's not easy to make friends as an adult," Maum said. "It's also not easy when you are an outsider. Locals don't need you. They've already got their people."

At the learning center, Maum began to find her people: "I never dreamt we could afford a house here, but we were happy to find otherwise."

Now, she describes her life as one filled with inspiring individuals from a wide range of professions.

"Something I really love about the Northwest hills is that I find the people to be 100% themselves," she

said. "People are very much marinated in their own juices ..."

"We have met life-changing people living here, in the woods. The walls are down when you are in the countryside."

The countryside is also the setting in which Maum's enjoys her other great passion: horses. During the worst of her depression, she rediscovered her childhood love of horses, which helped her find her way back to joy.

"I like riding in places with a view," she said. "My old barn in Goshen, which closed during the pandemic, had the most beautiful view of the mountains. I find that top of the world feeling so spiritual."

She describes her second book, *Touch*, as being about loneliness and touch-deprivation.

"We just aren't in physical contact in the way we used to be," Maum said. "Then, with Covid, it became so bad for so many people. Thankfully, people started asking for help more, started talking about mental health. Maybe the pandemic gave us permission to say, 'I'm struggling.'"

Her memoir is certainly a reminder that women need to stop simply saying they are fine: "For women, especially, the people I value aren't pretending we can do it all. We drop balls. Things fall through cracks."

These days, Maum said she measures success "in contentment and security, access to necessities, a sense of peace, having dear friends, and something to look forward to: a horse at the end of the day. Getting a sentence right. That makes me feel really successful and content."

That contentment does not mean Maum has any intention of slowing down. She did recently cut back the coaching of writing, but only to focus on the home stretch of her next novel which at this stage looks at "performative feminism."

Maum also has "another giant project" in the works; She's planning to start a series of writers retreats with a method she devised through coaching.

"I may never sleep again." ■

Billion-Dollar NW Community Bank Charts Growth Path Following Merger

Maura Malo 1st Woman To Lead Bank Since Its Founding Before the Civil War

BY MICHAEL PUFFER

Hartford Business Journal

WINSTED – Retiring Northwest Community Bank CEO Stephen P. Reilly can look forward to spending more time with his wife, traveling, boating and working on his golf game knowing he's leaving the bank on solid footing and in good hands.

Having led the 2021 merger with Collinsville Bank and Litchfield Bancorp, Reilly has helped significantly increase Winsted-based Northwest Community's size, growing the mutual lender from \$411.8 million in assets at the close of 2020 to nearly \$1.1 billion today.

The deal also gave Northwest greater ability to invest in its digital offerings—key to any bank's future as consumers increasingly prefer to manage their finances online.

MAURA MALO

Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer; incoming CEO

Northwest Community Bank

Education: Bachelor's degree, Western New England University; MBA, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; graduate of National School of Banking

Age: 51

Northwest Community's board of directors recently announced Maura Malo, currently executive vice president and chief operating officer, will step into Reilly's shoes effective Sept. 1.

She'll be the first woman to lead the bank since its founding the year prior to the Civil War's outbreak.

"If the bank were in a different position financially and succession were more of an issue,



clearly I would not have been as comfortable as I am retiring," said the 60-year-old Reilly. "That is important. I've been here 26 years and 14 as CEO. I want to see continued success."

Achieving scale

Northwest Community Bank traces its roots to the founding of Winsted Savings Bank by community leaders in 1860. Fifteen years later, business leaders opened Mechanics Savings Bank of Winsted, later renamed Northwest Bank for Savings.

The two merged as Northwest Community Bank in 1996.

Northwest Community Bank and Litchfield Bancorp came together as wholly owned subsidiaries of Connecticut Mutual Holding Co. in 2001, producing savings on shared back-office support.

Each bank maintained its own management, board of directors, charter and identity. Collinsville joined in 2010.

The three banks took another big step two years ago, merging under the banner and charter of Northwest Community Bank.

While the banks merged, their 14 combined branches have retained their individual names: Northwest Community Bank, Collinsville Bank and Litchfield Bancorp. There are no immediate plans to change that, Reilly said.

"Those names are very familiar to the communities in which we provide banking services, where we give donations," he said. "And they are highly recognizable names, so we felt it is important to maintain them."

Reilly said the pending retirements of the former

CEOs of Collinsville Bank and Litchfield Bancorp were a key driver of the 2021 merger.

There was significant cost savings, too, including consolidation of redundant technology services, which added more than \$1 million to the bank's bottom line, Reilly said, adding there were no layoffs related to the deal.

Northwest Community has grown its assets by 10% since the deal was completed, which Reilly said has been "very solid growth."

"Generally, you might see 5%

AT A GLANCE

Company: Northwest Community Bank
Industry: Financial services
Top Executive: Stephen P. Reilly, current CEO; Maura Malo, incoming CEO
HQ: 86 Main St., Winsted
Assets: \$1.1 billion
Employees: 156
Branches: 14
Website: <https://nwcommunitybank.com/>
Contact: 860-379-7561

is a lot going on in the state of Connecticut," Reilly said.

Growth plans

The aim is to spread those wings further across the state.

Those efforts are already underway. In 2020, Northwest Community opened a branch in Simsbury, while Collinsville Bank debuted a new Farmington location. Both branches are on track to meet revenue projections despite some road bumps caused by the pandemic.

Northwest saw opportunity in the Farmington Valley following a spate of small-bank mergers, including People's United Bank's 2018 acquisition of Farmington Bank, and Liberty Bank's 2019 purchase of Simsbury Bank & Trust.

In a competitive banking landscape, Malo said Northwest Community's value proposition is to be local, nimble and serve as an alternative to much larger regional banks that have acquired nearby competitors.

"There is a lot of analysis that goes into determining the placement of a branch, given the commercial activity we are seeing in the market and what's going on with mergers and acquisitions in the market," Malo said. "We saw value in those communities. We saw opportunity, particularly with mergers and acquisitions."

'Peaks and valleys'

Malo said Northwest Community plans to invest in modernizing its digital offerings.

Northwest Community reported \$2.76 million in profits through the first three quarters of 2022, down from \$4.1 million in the year-ago period, according to Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. data.

The bank's real estate loan portfolio has grown significantly over the past year to \$764.6 million at the end of September 2022, compared to \$601.9 million a year earlier, data shows.

"You have the peaks and valleys," Reilly said. "So, we are going to be in a deep valley for awhile and chances are earnings across the industry are going to subside because of that. But it's going to recover at some point in time." ■

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WHO ARE THOSE GUYS?

Prophets of Mainlining Coffee Cultivate a Sophisticated Crowd

BY DOUGLAS P. CLEMENT

NEW HARTFORD – Those Guys Coffee Co.—tucked inside an early 19th-century brick factory building off Route 44 in the Pine Meadow section of town—offers a window into our thriving coffee culture and the conversion of cup-of-Joe consumers into connoisseurs.

Could Those Guys be the true prophets of the obsession with specialty roasted beans and nuanced flavor profiles demanding descriptions that rival wine lingo?

The artisan roaster was founded in 2018 by Victor Tomasso and Parker Gregory Shpak.

Both come to the coffee roasting venture with significant experience. Tomasso was a principal behind the launch of Dom's Coffee in Avon in 2015, which his wife, Gitana Plankiene, stepson Andrius Plankis, and daughter-in-law, Asta Plankiene, still operate.

Following the success of Dom's, which includes a cheese shop and a creamery featuring homemade ice cream, Tomasso began thinking about specialty roasting, but timing didn't turn out to be right.

Then Shpak arrived as a barista at Dom's in 2017 after having worked at Starbucks



Doug Clement

Parker Gregory Shpak, left, and Victor Tomasso, right, are the owners of Those Guys Coffee Co. in New Hartford.

and completing the now-defunct Coffee Master training. "I had gotten really into coffee," Shpak recalled of his weekend job at Dom's while he was at the University of Connecticut studying American literature and analytic philosophy.

After Shpak graduated in May 2018, he and Tomasso went to the Specialty Coffee Association-certified Academy

for Coffee Excellence in Williamsburg Va., for a week of green coffee and roasting training.

The artisan roaster sold its first bag of coffee in December 2021, focused on ecommerce amid COVID, and then began building local partnerships, which have included collaborating with Brewery Legitimus on a breakfast stout and an espresso martini.

Bags of Those Guys' medium roast Eyes Wide Open beans and cups of brewed coffee can be purchased Barden Farm Market in the center of New Hartford. It's a blend of beans from Brazil, Colombia, and Ethiopia with a flavor profile described as hinting of dates, dark chocolate, and dry-roasted walnuts.

The Home Place gift and home décor shop and the America the Beautiful Country Store, both in New Hartford, also carry bags of Those Guys' beans, which include Off the Rails, a dark roast, 35 Hands, a winter 2023 medium roast, and More Than Enough, a decaffeinated roast.

"[T]his decaffeinated coffee feels like a treat! Not a deprivation. It is just as amazing as their full caffeine roasts," customer Darcy Anderson-Abbott wrote on Facebook.

Big things are happening this spring at Those Guys Coffee Co. Shpak and Tomasso will attend the Specialty Coffee Expo in Portland, Ore., in April, new cutting-edge fluid bed roasting machines are coming, and they're moving from one side of their building to the other to gain a massive garage-style door that can accommodate deliveries and forklifts.

"Coffee prices are going up and really high-quality coffees are going to \$1,000 a pound green. It's the future."

– Victor Tomasso

Relocating might also eventually lead to the addition of public-facing elements such as a monthly open roaster day or even a tasting room or tasting area.

After all, it takes tasting high-quality coffees made from artisan roasted, ethically sourced beans to understand the upward trend of pricing for specialty brews.

"Coffee prices are going up and really high-quality coffees are going to \$1,000 a pound green," Tomasso said. "It's the future."

Those Guys Coffee Co. is at 8 Wickett St. Website: www.thoseguyscoffee.com. Phone: (860) 238-4515. Inquiries can be emailed to Shpak: parker@thoseguys.coffee.



Doug Clement

Parker Gregory Shpak shows off a new, cutting edge coffee roaster from South Korea at Those Guys Coffee Co.



Doug Clement

"Big Red" is what Tomasso and Shpak affectionately call this coffee roaster.

Pearson School played host to a Robotics Education & Competition Foundation drone scrimmage on Feb. 11. Students at the Wetmore Avenue school have been studying drones as part of school's STEM initiatives, with coding, flight fundamentals, and communication as part of the coursework. Teams from across the state participated, including four from Pearson. DRONE COMP 1 (From right) Pearson competitors Kadence Godfrey (FINGERS IN THE AIR) and Illyana Borelli-LaBarre (PINK) react as a drone takes flight and navigates a series of brightly-colored obstacles. DRONE COMP 14 (From right): Pearson students Illyana Borelli-LaBarre (PINK) reacts to a drone with teammate Penelope Goldie (PLAID) next to her.



Contributed photos



Savage Frieze

CHEERLEADER AERIAL – Jillian Hackett performs an aerial.



Savage Frieze

BASKET TOSS – The Northwestern Regional High cheer team tosses Paige Marchione into the air and she does a split and touches her toes to execute the move.

LET US COUNT THE WAYS

Why We Love Libraries

Photos by Bob Thiesfield



CULTURAL MEETING PLACE – The Norfolk Library was given to the town in 1889 by Isabella Eldridge, who had it constructed as a memorial for her parents. Her vision: The library would be a cultural meeting place for the community. This vision remains alive today. There have been two additions to the building since its original

construction, one in 1911 which was another gift from Eldridge; the next in 1985 via donations by Abel Smith and community members. The building was designed by George Keller of Hartford. The outside is longmeadow stone, fish scale shingle tiles and a Spanish fluted tile roof. All of the stones on the exterior, even those used in the

children's room addition of 1985, came from the same stone quarry in Massachusetts. The stained glass windows were made by Maitland Armstrong & Co of New York City. For more than 130 years, the library has provided a space for the community of Norfolk to read, share ideas and appreciate art.



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ASTROLOGY COLUMN

continued from Page 2

studying your ancestral roots, will be unusually revealing this month. Pay attention to the murky messages that lie beneath. The full moon on the 7th is a good time to make some career tweaks (nothing drastic!) and fine-tune your public roles. On the 20th, focus moves to creative pursuits and/or work with children. Set intentions in these areas on the 21st and watch them unfold.

CAPRICORN: Communications in general are very revealing this month, particularly with respect to siblings and extended family. Look to them for surprising insights. On the 7th, the full moon helps you perfect your pursuits in higher education and/or philosophy/religion, as well as travel. The sun in Aries on the 20th and the new moon on the 21st shine a light on your parental relationships, ancestry and home for the next month.

AQUARIUS: What are you worth? Not only in terms

of money, but overall value. Interesting insights will come to you in this area through your communications with others. Take note. Use the energy of the full moon on the 7th to fine-tune your mental health. If you share resources with someone, it's also a good time to work on that. The sun shines in the part of your life dealing with communication, daily rituals, and relationships with siblings and cousins starting on the 20th. Set intentions in those areas at the new moon on the 21st and watch them play out over the next month.

PISCES: Welcome to Pisces season! For the first few weeks, the spotlight is on you, so now is the best time to show the world how you want to be seen. The full moon on the 7th asks you to review and perfect your committed partnerships (romantic and otherwise). Starting in the third week of the month, the spotlight moves to your assets, resources and self-worth. Ask for that raise. On the

21st, set specific intentions in those areas.

*For best results, check the reading for your rising sign. Don't know it? Online birth chart calculators can tell you in a matter of minutes, as long as you know the exact time and place of your birth. If you don't know it, go ahead and use the entry for your sun sign.

Hilary Carpenter is a public defender representing clients in the greater Hartford area. She has also worked as a post-conviction attorney, challenging wrongful convictions and illegal sentences throughout the state. As president of the Connecticut Network to Abolish the Death Penalty, she mobilized victims' family members, law enforcement and exonerees to successfully push for the repeal of the death penalty in Connecticut. Prior to her legal career, Hilary worked as a grant writer for public television at KCTS-Seattle. An amateur astrologer in her spare time, Hilary also enjoys rescuing dogs and following her favorite sports teams.

Today's Poets

PATRIOTISM AT LARGE

BY SAMUEL JOHN HAZO

They made a commode of a senator's
chair as well as a drawer
in his desk.

Some shouldered a bat.

Some carried a gun.

Some marched
with confederate flags.

They pledged
their allegiance with TRUMP
on their T-shirts and star-spangled
hoods.

They swore they would
lynch the disloyal.

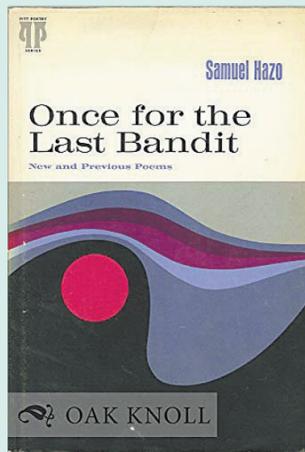
The behavioral
age of the crowd was gauged
by experts as close to twelve
years or younger.

Sewage
and garbage crews labored
for weeks to remove the debris.

The stench lasted longer.



Spanning six decades and circling the globe, author and Marine veteran Samuel John Hazo's oeuvre includes poetry, fiction, drama, essays, and various works of translation. He has published more than 50 books that have been translated into numerous languages, and his literary distinctions include The Griffin Award for Creative Writing from the University of Notre Dame and the Maurice English Award for Poetry. His collection of poems *Once for the Last Bandit* became a National Book Award finalist. Hazo's work scrutinizes themes of family and faith, mortality and love, and the passage of time with what poet Naomi Shihab Nye describes as "immense intelligence, lyricism, and humanity."



A VETERAN SPEAKS OUT

BY SAMUEL JOHN HAZO

Despite the propaganda, Patton
the war lover and His Majesty
MacArthur were lesser men
than generals like Smedley Butler
and David Shoup.

Butler spurned
his second Medal of Honor
and wrote WAR IS A RACKET.

Shoup landed with marines
on Tarawa, was wounded and later
served as Commandant, warning
Johnson that the Vietnam War
was a mistake.

Like Kennedy, both are
half-remembered.

Kennedy's tribute
was posthumous with more than
two hundred and fifty thousand
forming a line ten persons
wide and forty blocks long
to pass his casket in Washington.

Afterward, seven wars happened,
and young men paid the price.

During the war in Vietnam
Dick Cheney ducked the draft
By claiming he had "other priorities."

To protect Texas from Oklahoma,
Bush faked five years of service
in the Texas National Guard.

Both liars later offered shock,
Awe, invasion and delusion
In Iraq.

Young men paid the price
again.

Most common wounds
Losing
legs and arms to land mines.

One marine lost all his toes
and both hands.

He's leaned
on others since.

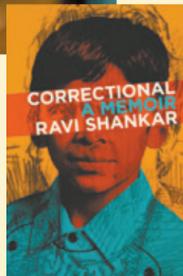
Is saying
the war was based on lies
enough to compensate a man
who'll need someone to help him
eat, wash or wipe himself
each day for the rest of his life?

DEADLINE POEM

BY RAVI SHANKAR, PAPERBOY AND REPORTER

There can be no daily democracy without daily citizenship.
— Ralph Nader

1.
Upon my bike, I flung the newspaper,
its tomahawk flight lit by faint taper
of swooning moon and rising sun,
out delivering before my day has begun.
The police blotter tells of a sad caper
gone wrong; a petitioning landscaper
argues to rezone parks for a skyscraper;
the high school star hits another home run:
the news connects us.
Now we can vote against that skyscraper,
scour the classifieds for a modern draper,
see a show with an acrobat shift-shaper,
learn who paid bribes to the mayor's son
before another day disappears like vapor—
The news connects us.



2.
Scoop and sidebar, the cropped column, the headline,
breaking news an anonymous source below the fold,
waiting for clickbait delivered straight to each household.

The death knock, off the record, an obit killed for a deadline,
slugs to layout, the slant, the spin, still trying to uphold
scoop and sidebar, the cropped column, the headline,
clickbait demographically targeted to a certain household.

Seek truth and report it. Forget advertisers, the byline,
the buried lede, editors who yowl do as you're told!
even your readership, whose unlike opinions can be polled
by scoop and sidebar, the cropped column, the headline.
Breaking news? An anonymous source below the fold
dictates what untold forces slow the average household.

Ravi Shankar Ph.D. is a creative writing professor, translator, Pushcart Prize-winning poet and author of 15 books. He teaches creative writing at Tufts University and his memoir "Correctional" was published in 2022.

OBITUARY

Dorothea Murray

Dorothea Elizabeth “Dottie” (Miller) Murray, of Canton, died Tuesday, January 31, 2023 at her home on her 85th birthday. Born in Cincinnati, OH, she was the daughter of the late Bruce Ervin and Elizabeth Miller and had lived in Canton Connecticut for over 40 years. Dottie graduated from Madera High school in 1956, and from Miami University, Oxford Ohio Class of 1960. Mrs. Murray was employed full time as an Auditor for Guardian Reed group for 24 years after retiring from Cigna life health, where she was employed for 38 years. She was a member of the Canton Commission on Aging. Dottie enjoyed sewing, cooking, her gardens and many cultural events including live theater, music performances, flea markets, antique shows and of course playing her own piano. She is survived by her son,



William J. Murray of West Hartford, and her brother Bruce Miller of Hamilton, Ohio and her sister Ruth Rucker, of North Bend Ohio. She was predeceased by her twin Brother David Miller of Spotsylvania Virginia. She lived a life of selflessness, always humble displaying loyalty kindness and caring for strangers and friends alike.

Donations in her memory may be made to South Park Inn a shelter in Hartford, CT or the Jimmy Fund.

Submitted by the Murray family



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ENTERTAINMENT

Susan Granger Reviews *Alaska Daily*

BY SUSAN GRANGER

I have never felt any empathy with two-time Oscar winning actress Hilary Swank. I've always found her to be humorless, abrasive, even pugnacious—both on-screen and in person.

Casting her as humorless, abrasive, pugnacious journalist Eileen Fitzgerald on Hulu and ABC-TV's drama "Alaska Daily" really works. Despite encouraging initial ratings, the series took a long hiatus which might have dissipated whatever tension and interest it initially provoked.

Based in Manhattan, Eileen is a nationally renowned investigative reporter for *The Vanguard*. When her high-profile 'scoop' that condemns the U.S. Secretary of Defense backfires because of an unreliable source, she's summarily fired.

Unemployed, she begins writing a book, accusing her colleagues of being "woke wussies." But then her former boss from years ago, Stanley Cornik, played by Jeff Perry, offers her a job with *Alaska Daily*, a struggling newspaper situated on a modest strip mall in Anchorage.

At first she refuses, but then he tempts her with a story about missing and murdered Indigenous women. Her arrogance still intact, along with a martyr complex, Eileen arrives only to be chagrined when Cornik astutely pairs her with Alaskan Native Roz Friendly, played by Grace Dove. Predictably imperious Eileen is condescending until she realizes how much Roz can teach her about her new environment.

A crisis occurs when a white woman passenger on a cruise ship falls overboard while filming a video. As national attention mounts, the Governor launches a huge search—while, at the same time, a Yupik woman has disappeared. Eileen and Roz come up with a provocative piece comparing the horrific discrepancy between both investigations, along with political corruption.

Writer/director Tom McCarthy ("Spotlight")



creates quirky colleagues who interact with Eileen—portrayed by Matt Malloy, Meredith Holzman, Pablo Castellblanco, Ami Park and Craig Frank. While the series was not filmed in Alaska, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada serves as an authentic substitute.

As stated in the end credits, the series was inspired by The Anchorage Daily News and Pro Publica Series "Lawless Sexual Violence in Alaska" by Kyle Hopkins, who serves as a producer.

Unfortunately, episode six concludes with a cliffhanger—and episode seven was not scheduled to air until Febr. 23. That was the week when ABC's "Grey's Anatomy" and "Station 19" also resume. So—if you're intrigued—now is the time to start streaming. Meanwhile, you can always retrieve "Men in Trees" and "Northern Exposure," two previous series based in Alaska.

On the Granger Gauge of 1 to 10, "Alaska Daily" is a struggling 6 - on ABC-TV and streaming on Hulu.

Litchfield Historical Society Acquires Letters Of a Civil War Surgeon with Ties to Winsted, Colebrook

LITCHFIELD – The Litchfield Historical Society has acquired a collection of original letters from Dr. James Russell Cumming, a Civil War surgeon who once taught in Colebrook, studied medicine in West Granby and entered the Union Army from Winsted.

Born in North Adams, Mass., in 1830, Cumming studied at the Canajoharie Academy in Canajoharie, N.Y., prior to teaching in Colebrook and Farmington, Conn., according to a historical society press release.

In 1853, Cumming married Jane Elizabeth Cowles, who died in 1856. The couple had a daughter, Daisy.

Cumming studied medicine with Dr. Holcomb of West Granby while continuing to teach, according to the historical society, and later graduated from the Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1862.

He entered the army from Winsted in 1862 and served an assistant surgeon with the 12th Regiment of Connecticut Volunteers. He was promoted to surgeon in 1865 and mustered out later that same year. The 12th Regiment was organized at Hartford in late 1861.

Following the war, Cumming returned to Columbia to continue his study of general medicine, according to the historical society. He and his daughter moved to Bridgeport in 1867,

where he started a general practice. In 1871 he married Anna Stillman Hubbell with whom he had two sons, Timothy Cowles Cumming, and Pierson Russell Cumming. Dr. Cumming died in 1891 and is buried at The Mountain Grove Cemetery, in Fairfield, Conn.

During his years in the Union Army, Cumming served in New Orleans, Port Hudson, Brashear City, Winchester, Fisher's Hill, and Cedar Creek.

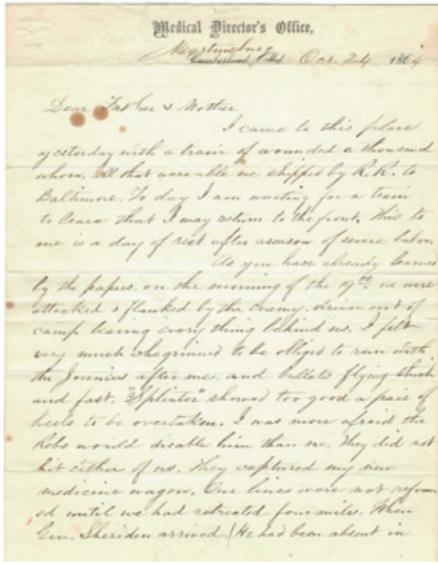
The correspondence contained in the collection consists of letters to his parents written from several cities, ships, and army camps. The letters reference food, clothing, prices, Army pay, medical procedures, skirmishes and retreats, and race, among other topics. The collection also contains several military records and a tribute to Cumming from his peers following his death.

The Dr. James R. Cumming Civil War letters, along with historical notes, are a gift of Robert Cumming and family, direct

descendants of James Russell Cumming.

Robert Cumming provided the historical society with a transcription of the correspondence, which may be obtained upon request. For more information see the historical society's website, litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org, or call (860) 567-4501.

– Douglas P. Clement



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Awk Word signs are also available through the Norfolk Artisans Guild - Norfolk, Connecticut

Housing Shortage Crisis

continued from Page 1

standards that require rigorous inspections.

Because the number of applicants far exceeds Section 8 housing availability, the application process for the region is closed. It rarely opens and generates hundreds of applications.

"It's pretty much impossible to get a Section 8 voucher," said Ayer. "It's literally like winning the lottery. And once you get a voucher that doesn't mean you can get a unit. Many landlords don't want them, which is illegal—but people do it every day."

In many towns and cities, Section 8 is administered by the local housing authority. A federal lawsuit against the Winchester Housing Authority, claiming it prevented hundreds of low-income Black and Hispanic renters from occupying apartments, resulted in a consent decree in which the Authority paid \$350,000 to the plaintiffs and relinquished its role administering Section 8, according to a 2013 Connecticut Law Tribune story. The Section 8 program for the region is now run by J. D'Amelia and Associates, whose website lists the application process for Section 8 and Rental Assistance Program Vouchers as closed.

There are also Supportive Housing Vouchers, which include individualized Case Management to help people access needed training or services to retain housing, and project-based financing and tax credits, assisting developers—usually non-profits—to create housing, usually multi-family, which is guaranteed to remain affordable.

Current state law around affordable housing originated in the late 1980s. Towns with less than 10% of their housing stock considered affordable can be sued for unjustly denying an application for an affordable housing development, said Boggs. About 75% of these lawsuits are successful, she said—but they don't result in changes to a town's zoning rules, and they are very costly and cumbersome for developers to bring.

Another law, passed in 2017, requires each town to submit an affordable housing plan, and to update it every five years. Ayer has assisted with plans for Winchester, Colebrook, Barkhamsted, Norfolk, East Hartland, Riverton and Hartland.

"The current law has not generated changes to zoning," said Boggs. "It is unaffordable to

try to build affordable housing, because towns just deny and it's so expensive and cumbersome. And there is no penalty. Name for me another important public policy that has no enforcement arm."

There are 1,100 households on waiting lists for affordable housing in Litchfield County, according to Falls Village Community Development. In Litchfield county, there were 9,735 households paying more

couldn't find anything closer he could afford."

John Ozerhoski, now living in Torrington, has been caught up in the real estate cycle. He sold his longtime home when prices were high and was renting a condo with his two children, aged eight and six, while bidding his time and waiting to buy again. But the condo was sold and he had to move, landing in a smaller apartment, with less space and no garage.

"It was a real challenge finding a place," Ozerhoski said. "Some of the apartments he looked at,

affordable housing, allocate a share to every municipality, and establish penalties for those failing to submit plans. An interactive map on the concept is at ctoca.org/fair_share_map.

"Zoning is a state power delegated to towns with certain rules," Boggs said. "Those rules now say income diversity and multifamily housing have to be included as part of any town's local zoning ... but right now towns are disregarding that requirement. This hurts the public interest.

"Under the Fair Share bill,



Rep. Jay Case, at podium, Rep. Michelle Cook, left, at the Feb. 17 Rally to End Homelessness and Hunger at The Gathering Place in Torrington.

than 50% of their income on housing in 2019, Ayer said.

Who is Impacted?

The ripples from the affordable housing shortage are far reaching—from people couch-surfing or living in their cars to homeless shelters to employers who can't find workers.

"I sell 40-50 homes a year, and since COVID, 50% of the homes I sell are to buyers from New York," said Christine Hunter, of Hunter Real Estate in Winsted.

She also helped with the town's Housing Affordability Plan: "Many of those people kept their properties here and there....People can work from anywhere now.

"First time homebuyers are having a very hard time competing. Houses are overpriced, rentals are overpriced, but the market is dictating it. Landlords are increasing rent, and people have to stick with it because there's no place else to go. And the quality of what you get when you rent is rent is not good. It just breaks my heart."

Examples abound

"My son was at the regional high school and his guidance counselor just left his job," Ayer said. "He told me he had an hour-long commute, and he

he said, were in such poor shape he was surprised they were on the rental market at all.

"When you look at the cost of rent, and of everything else going up—food, electricity, heating ... It is excruciating as a single parent. I'm not optimistic that it will be any different a year or two from now. I'm not a pessimistic person, but when prices go up, they don't usually come down."

"We treat housing as a commodity rather than as an essential need for people."

Legislature Considers Options

Connecticut's legislature operates on a two-year cycle. This year is the long session, running from January to June. Next year is a short session, making revisions to the budget adopted this year. A number of bills now before the legislature would address housing and homelessness.

Boggs' Open Communities Alliance is working for passage of HB 6633, or the Fair Share bill, which would require the state to assess the need for

without spending any additional state of federal money, we can create the housing we need," Boggs said, "which will create an estimated \$47 billion in income for Connecticut residents, \$9.6 billion in local and state taxes, and 63,000 new jobs."

Boggs pointed to a recent statewide poll showing support for the notions included in the Fair Share bill:

73% of respondents said there should be housing options in every town for residents of all incomes, and 61% said when towns won't act to make housing affordable the state government should so that housing doesn't get too expensive for everyone.

"We are also spending a lot of time on the economic argument," said Boggs. "We have 100,000 vacant jobs in this state and a lot of those are about workers not being able to find affordable housing. So to get our economy going, for the jobs we are missing, this is important."

Deirdre Houlihan DiCara, executive director of the shelter FISH, organized a rally in Torrington last month to urge support got RB 6554, allocating funds for homelessness response programs, and testified at a public hearing for the bill, emphasizing the need for

dedicated funding.

"I fundraise raise half of my operating budget every year," she said. "It's unbelievable to me that the money we get from the state for the front-line homeless work comes from the federal government—the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Nonprofits have really stepped up and worked together to make this happen, but we can't keep doing this and raise money also. The legislature has to step up or there will be a tragedy. People will die."

Ayer and others are working equally hard to create affordable housing in their communities. DiCara is the Treasurer of the Northwest Senior Housing Corp., which helped create Susan M. B. Perry Senior Housing in Winsted. They are now working on a similar conversion now for the Batcheller School, where DiCara went to grammar school. Their proposal to build 32 units of affordable housing will have to be approved by voters in town.

Local Solutions

Vaill, Winsted's social service director, is on the front lines, hearing from residents experiencing housing and other needs.

"One of the things that concerns us the most has been the senior citizens," she said. "It was shocking to find we had so many people on fixed incomes who thought they were all set ... and bam.

"When people call, InfoLine 2-1-1 is my first go-to," she said. "There is a new system requiring everyone to have an HMIS [Homeless Management Information System] number to get in line for a shelter bed. That's intimidating for a lot of people, so I say come in, and we do it together.

"I also have a list of landlords who are more inclined to work with people with a housing voucher," she said. "We are doing a good deal of education in the area to inform landlords about these programs. We do credit counseling and help people repair credit. We try to avoid an eviction at all costs."

Vaill also supports creation of Fair Rent Commissions, a tool suggested in Winsted's housing plan.

"Everyone needs to understand the repercussions, without getting overwhelmed and having it lead to paralysis," Ayer said. "But there are things we can do. I hope everyone reads their town's housing plan: We try to describe ways people can help in small and big ways. If you hear there is going to be a zoning meeting about an affordable housing development, go testify in support! Make a donation or volunteer at one of the nonprofits working on this."

Ayer points out that many area nonprofits working on affordable housing can use support and volunteers, and are listed at nwcthousing.org.

"Creating these options does take time, but there is opportunity in every town, and a lot of great community members who want to create those opportunities," she added. "It's just bringing everyone together and making it happen." ■

Editors Note: The following are source citations for the chart found on page 1.

1. Total housing Units and Percentage of People in Poverty: https://www.ctoca.org/fair_share_map

2. % of units now considered affordable by state Department of Housing: CT Department of Housing: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/D OH/2021-Final-Appeals-For-Report-On-Line.pdf>

3. Since Winsted's current % of affordable housing is higher than 10%, it is exempt from current state law around affordable housing.

The Principal's Corner

BY DEBRA LEWIS

Principal, The Gilbert School, Winsted

Gilbert Teacher Tina Keegan To Present At New England Conference

Gilbert Middle School English teacher and seventh grade team leader Tina Keegan will present a professional development workshop for teachers at the New England League of Middle Schools conference. Her workshop is entitled "Brain Breaks Using Multiple Intelligences" and will be presented on March 28, 2023 at 10 am Springfield, Massachusetts.

Prestigious Law Professor Speaks to Gilbert Students

Gilbert upperclassmen heard a lecture from Professor of Law Ugo Mattei on Feb. 17.

Mattei is distinguished Alfred and Hanna Fromm Professor of International and Comparative Law at the University of California, Hastings College of Law in San Francisco. He is also chair of Civil Law at the University of Turin in Italy. He is widely known in Italy for his work leading to a nationwide referendum in 2011 in which voters rejected the privatization of water.

Mattei also presented at the American Museum of Tort Law the same day.

He spoke to students about constitutional law topics, focusing on capitalism and resources. Advanced Placement History and English students as well as Introduction to Law students were sure to make many connections once back in class. A huge thank you to Ugo Mattei and his wife for visiting The Gilbert School as a part of his itinerary in CT. We were honored to have him!



Schibi Siblings Make States

Gilbert student Emma Schibi, a senior, and her brother, Evan Schibi, a freshman, have both been honored with state-level nods in their respective sports. Emma, a varsity cheerleader for four years, has made the All-State Cheer squad for CT. She is slated to graduate this June and will continue to cheerlead at Eastern Carolina University in the fall. Her brother, Evan, placed third last month in the CT State Wrestling Championships. In the semi-finals, Evan faced the No. 1 seed who happened to be a twice undefeated state champ senior and lost 2-0.

See related story, page 11

SPORTS

Share of League Title for Northwestern Girls' Hoop

BY JOHN TORSIELLO

WINSTED – Mid-February was a momentous time for the Northwestern Regional 7 High School girls basketball team.

One game after head coach Fred Williams recorded his 700th victory as a mentor of the Highlanders, Northwestern grabbed a share of the Berkshire League regular season title with



DRIVING HARD -- Senior Natalie Brodnitzki goes in for the layup as the Northwestern Regional 7 Highlanders beat the Gilbert Yellow Jackets, 53-44, on Feb. 10.

a 55-51 win over Nonnewaug. Williams, who has coached Northwestern girls hoops since the 1978-79 season, won his 700th game when his club beat Terryville, 57-23. He became only the second coach in state history to notch 700 wins. He only needed four to break the record and be the all-time leader. Masuk's Dave Strong has 704 coaching victories.

Maddie Topa's 25 points paced the Highlanders against Nonnewaug while Morgan Plitt added 11.

"To reach 700, it means I have been around for a long, long time," Williams said. "It's hard to believe I have been doing this for so long. I do love being with our players and watching them mature as players and young adults. Having players from earlier teams coming back to support us and watch games is pretty awesome. Monday we had players that were on my first team here watching and celebrating with us. They started the run to 700."

Williams said the success of

the program is due to many factors, citing "great assistant coaches, players that were willing to work hard and improve their game, in and out of season."

"Also," Williams said, "to have the support of the Board of Education, the school administration and the parents has made Northwestern a great place to teach and coach ... I have coached at Northwestern since the fall of 1974 at least one season and for many years three seasons. I started with Middle School soccer and basketball my first year and eventually did Middle School softball as well. It has been a wonderful experience."

Williams also coached the high school's boys and girls soccer teams and has piled up over 900 wins counting all Regional 7 teams.

Northwestern concluded its regular season beating Nonnewaug in Woodbury, only a game after they gave their coach his 700th win. The Highlanders concluded the

regular campaign with a gaudy 19-1 mark. Talia Brodnitzki had 21 points and Topa 20 to lead Northwestern.

"This year's team is a closely knit group," Williams said. "They constantly support each other through game and practices as well as in their daily lives. For leaders, we look to the two captains, Morgan Plitt and Tal Brodnitzki, but with this group they all are positive people looking to help others."

Williams said he believed coming into the season that he had a good team on his hands: "I said to the girls and repeated it throughout the year that this could be a special year and special it is. Any goal that we would talk about is to make sure you are giving it your best effort, whether that effort leads to a win or a loss. When a game or other task is done, did you give it your all? If you can say yes then the goal was met."

After the games, Northwestern set about preparing for the Berkshire League playoffs and state tournament.

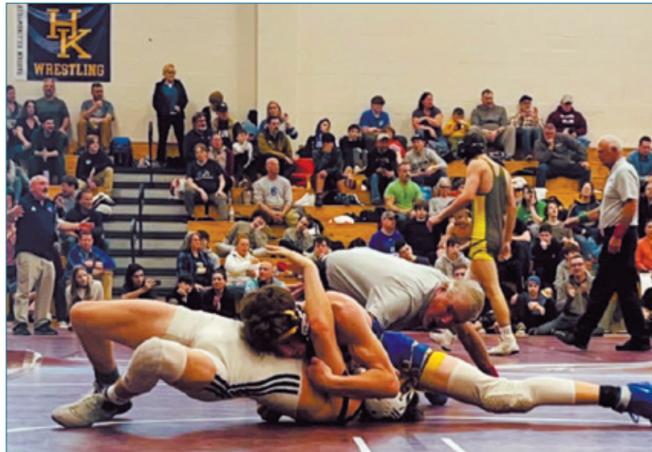
Gilbert Wrestlers Second at League Meet Against Bigger Schools

BY JOHN TORSIELLO

WINSTED – The Gilbert High School wrestling team came out of the rough and tumble Naugatuck Valley League/Berkshire League tournament at Derby High School recently with their collective heads held high.

Gilbert placed second while battling larger schools in the event. Evan Schibi, Sam Goncalves and Andy Rodriquez won their weight classes for the Yellowjackets. Gilbert finished 7-10 with two ties in regular season matches.

"Second was a good finish being that we didn't have a full lineup," said head coach



Megan Shibi

ON TOP – Freshman Evan Schibi finished third in the State Meet.

Darek Schibi. "We had nine out of our 10 wrestlers finish third or higher and the other was a fourth place finish."

Two other wrestlers, who compete and train with Gilbert as teams of one, also won; Trevor Llewlyn of Torrington High School and Dylan Desanti of Wolcott Tech High School.

Schibi, only a freshman, finished third at the State Meet held at Killingly High School.

Coach Schibi said of his squad: "This team is young and continues to learn and get better every day. We are planning to be a full co-op next year to increase the team's numbers and make us even more competitive."

Community College

continued from Page 1

disrupt it? No. Do we count our chickens? No," said Rooke.

Lawrence Schall, president of the accrediting agency, said the commission could approve the consolidation or could turn it down.

"They could turn it down flat or likely they would say, 'Here's six things you need to complete before you consolidate and so we're going to push the potential consolidation into the future, later in 2023 or 2024,'" Schall said. "It's been a very meticulous, rigorous, detailed process over six years."

In any case, the merger will go forward on July 1, with the 12 colleges melded into one statewide institution that will be known as Connecticut State Community College or CT State. Northwestern will be known as CT State Northwestern.

The statewide college is expected to have about 37,000 students. Northwestern is likely to be the second smallest college in the group with a headcount of 1,160 students this spring, compared to four or five times that many at the larger colleges.

Rooke said that much of the merger has already occurred with other key aspects—including a single application for all 12 campuses—poised to take effect July 1.

Other aspects of the merger have already long been in place. In June, Dr. John Maduko, a medical doctor and formerly a vice president at Minnesota State Community and Technical College, was hired at a salary of \$300,000 to lead the new CT State system. Shortly before his hire, an administrative office for the colleges was opened in New Britain with many of its employees pulled from the

college campuses to provide services in a more centralized location to all campuses.

Ben Barnes, chief financial officer for the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, estimates 10 positions in the new central office have been filled by people hired from outside the community college system.

When Ojakian proposed the merger in 2017 as a way to shore up the colleges' ailing finances



Andy Garcia, a first-year student, said the ability to easily enroll in classes on other campuses is a plus for him.

he said the merger would save \$28 million annually by consolidating administrative services. The savings would be directed into improving services that directly affect students, he said.

Barnes said recently that the savings is actually now at \$34.5 million because of the extensive attrition in recent years. The boost in attrition numbers last year resulted from the change in the state's retirement program that provided an incentive for long-term employees to leave.

How have these changes played out for Northwestern?

Rooke sees the Students First consolidation plan as a "net gain" for Northwestern and for students.

A good example, Rooke said, has been the hiring of more

advisers who help students choose a cohesive collection of classes through a program known as "Guided Pathways."

"The idea is to ensure that they're not floundering around taking a bunch of classes that don't add up to anything," said Rooke, as has happened in past.

Under the new system, Rooke said the adviser is actively reaching out to students multiple times in a semester



Delia Browning, a history student from Winsted, said Northwestern tries to make sure every student knows about help available to them.

saying, "How's it going? What else do you need? It's like we're not going to just leave you out there in left field to sink or swim. We're going to support you and stay connected to you."

Brianna Nemcik, a first-year student from Torrington, said the new advising system has been positive. Her aim is to go on in her education and she said the adviser assessed her credits to ensure they will transfer to a four-year university.

"She was very helpful," she said of the adviser.

Rooke also sees the merger as removing barriers for students if they wish to take a class—online or in person—at another college. In the past, if a student wanted to do this, they would have had to file a separate application to that college.

"So they only have to apply once. They only have to apply for financial aid once," Rooke said. "They only get one transcript. They can take classes freely at any campus."

Many of the students interviewed for this story said they see this as a plus.

Madison McLaughlin, a second-year social work student from Torrington, said, "Personally I think it's a good thing because I want to take some classes that aren't offered here at Northwestern, so if the merger is successful in July, then I'll be able to take online classes elsewhere. It will give me more options."

"I'll be able to take classes from Tunxis," she said, "but still be in the comfort of my hometown, which I find is really nice."

Andy Garcia, a first-year student from Torrington, who hopes to go into speech pathology, agreed, and said he also considered the merger a positive.

"If it's centralized, I feel like it will be easier to take classes at different community colleges," Garcia said. "It will be like you are attending multiple schools at the same time."

Rooke said it took an immense amount of work over the last six years to align the courses across campuses to ensure that, for instance, the outcome of an English Composition class at Manchester Community College was the same as that for a class at Northwestern.

That effort raised concern among faculty, Rooke said, who feared it would interfere with their freedom to design their courses as they like.

He said he has worked hard to assure faculty members that this is not the case.

Sharon Gusky, a biology professor, has concerns about maintaining community

connections.

"We are such a small college and we're so integrated with our community and connected with community partners, with industry and with schools," Gusky said. "This raises concerns about being able to respond to the needs of our community."

"... The faculty position right now is just wait and see," she said. "We don't really know what it's going to look like. Obviously, there will be more layers of bureaucracy to work through."

If there's anything that the Northwestern community seems to pride itself on, students and faculty alike say is its caring for the community in the college and in the region.

"They really try to make it personal here." Said Delia Browning, a history student from Winsted.

Every syllabus, Browning said, has basic information about a food pantry on campus for students, about mental health services, and emergency financial help and other available services.

"They always make sure that we know that we have those resources," she said.

Kelly pointed out that there's also a food bank that provides food to those in need in the community.

Tracy Smith-Michnowicz, an assistant professor in early childhood Education, said she worked at a four-year college and that the feeling at Northwestern is "extremely different because we are a small community. We know our students by name. We make connections with them in a way that is harder to do at a larger school."

"Our students face a lot of barriers and faculty recognize that," Smith-Michnowicz said. "Staff recognize that we are all here to support the students. We want them to be successful." ■

Maura Malo Is Named Bank President and CEO Elect

The Northwest Community Bank Board of Directors has elected Maura Malo, currently Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, to succeed retiring President and Chief Executive Officer Stephen P. Reilly, effective September 1, 2023. Mr. Reilly and President Elect Malo will work together in the coming months to ensure a seamless transition.

Mrs. Malo has 30 years of senior level experience in the banking industry. Prior to her being named EVP and COO two years ago, she was Senior Vice President and Chief Risk Officer and Internal Auditor. She was an FDIC Bank Examiner from 1993-2003 before she joined Litchfield Bancorp – A Division of Northwest Community Bank, in 2003. She holds an MBA from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and a BS from Western New England University. She is also a graduate of the National School of Banking, and has received the New Leaders in Banking Award from the Connecticut Bankers Association.

Northwest Community Bank Board Chair William J. Shea II states, "We are so pleased to promote Maura, a candidate from within our bank family, to continue the legacy of Northwest Community Bank and to lead us forward. Our Board has every confidence in Maura and our talented team to sustain our success."

Northwest Community Bank President and CEO Stephen P. Reilly comments, "Maura has been one of our rising stars for some time, and she is incredibly qualified to take on new leadership responsibilities. I know she has the background and skills necessary to lead the bank to serve our employees, customers and communities well. I could not be happier for Maura and I know I will be leaving the bank in very capable hands."

Maura Malo currently serves on the boards of FISH, Warner Theatre, Northwest CT Chamber of Commerce, and has served on numerous other boards in the region. She has been a Girl Scouts of CT Troop Leader since 2006. She and her husband Stephen Malo and their two daughters reside in Litchfield.



Northwest Community Bank President and CEO Elect Maura Malo with Northwest Community Bank President and CEO Stephen Reilly



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An Invitation to Non-Profit Organizations

Area non-profit organizations are invited to look into the grant application process for a 2023 grant from The Northwest Community Bank Foundation. We have two grant cycles this year, and the first application cycle opened on February 15, 2023.

Spring grant applications are due by April 1, 2023. Guidelines and eligibility information are available on the bank's websites, from branch managers or by email at Foundation@nwcommunitybank.com.

In 2022 the Foundation awarded 66 grants totaling \$425,000. Combined with the \$300,000 donated through the Bank's traditional Corporate Giving Program, the Bank contributed \$725,000 to non-profit organizations last year. Now we look forward to seeing how we might assist organizations in fulfilling their missions in 2023.



The non-profit organizations that received grants in 2022 were invited to a special event – A Gratitude Gala – hosted by the Foundation on January 10, 2023 at the American Mural Project in Winsted. Representatives from the agencies, bank employees and bank board members celebrated the roles each plays in building up our local communities.



Celebrating the first year of our charitable foundation



nwcommunitybank.com/foundation

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We offer sincere thanks to all the non-profit organizations and volunteers who so generously serve our community.