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Friday, September 20, 2024

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USS Charter Oak holds “Star Trek” Day food drive



Jason Bleau

Crew members of the USS Charter Oak, a local independent “Star Trek” fan association, held a food and product drive on “Star Trek” day to benefit local causes.

BY JASON BLEAU
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

PUTNAM — Sept. 8 is an important day for fans of the long-running “Star Trek” franchise. Affectionately and fittingly known as “Star Trek Day,” the date marks the television debut of the first “Star Trek” series by science fiction legend Gene Roddenberry in

1966. It also marks a day when many fans come out to support local causes in honor of Roddenberry’s legacy of promoting a better future for all.

Locally, the USS Charter Oak, an independent “Star Trek” fan association, decided to use the day to give back to several causes close to their heart by collecting food and pet goods

during their Fill a Shuttle Craft Campaign outside of the Chubby Dog Coffee Company on Main Street in Putnam. Ryan O’Connor, captain and founding crew member of the USS Charter Oak said all the donations would support Putnam’s own food pantry at Daily Bread and the Humane Society. The event also served as an opportu-

nity to spread Gene Roddenberry’s inspirational messages from throughout the “Star Trek” universe.

“Ironically, if the ‘Star Trek’ timeline was our timeline this past week would have been an event in San Francisco called the Bell Riots. In ‘Star Trek: Deep Space Nine’, which told us about the Bell Riots, it changed

the world for better. That was one of those melting pot moments in history. Luckily the riots didn’t happen in our reality, but since the beginning in 1966, Gene Roddenberry said he wanted to promote a future where there’s no hunger, there’s no greed, there’s no poverty, there’s no disease, and that’s what we’re trying to do here one

piece of food, one can, one bag of dog food at a time. We’re trying to help anyone who is less fortunate,” said O’Connor.

The USS Charter Oak also took the time to meet with fellow fans to embrace their love of “Star Trek” and the science fiction genre in general. Their placement along Main Street proved

Turn To **FOOD DRIVE** page **A10**

Killingly approves funding for WPCA plant design

BY JASON BLEAU
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

KILLINGLY — As Killingly continues to seek solutions for its wastewater treatment plant the Town Council has earmarked \$2 million to spearhead a design for expansion which Town Manager Mary Calorio hopes will make the project more attractive to potential funders.

Earlier this year, Killingly enacted a moratorium on new connections to the town’s wastewater treatment plant after the facility reached capacity. The plant serves not just Killingly, but also parts of Brooklyn who signed an intertown agreement in 2022. During the Town Council’s Sept. 10 meeting Town Manager Calorio reminded the Council that Killingly has been unsuccessful in procuring congressional designation funding to

expand the plant’s capacity for several years with part of the problem being the project is merely a concept with no official planning or design work conducted to justify the investment. The federal funds are usually reserved for projects that have a design or proof of concept in place that indicate an investment on the town side. With that in mind, Calorio and the Town Council want to spearhead a design phase that would produce documents to show the project is shovel ready.

“We have the developed cost for what it will be for design and that is \$2 million. I had originally gone to the Fiscal Subcommittee requesting \$1.5 million of the ARPA because that’s all that we expected to have left was \$1.5 million. In that meeting the Fiscal Subcommittee recommended we utilize this alternative funding

source as opposed to using the ARPA funds,” said Calorio.

The money will instead come from undesignated Capital Project Funding.

“We’d look to really be able to leverage that town investment with state and federal money to be able to get construction dollars so that’s really what we’re trying to go after, especially being able to go into the next application process for congressional monies,” Calorio explained. “We would be able to show the town’s active investment and actively engage in the design process for the project and we’re hoping we’d be able to leverage federal and state money for that.”

Calorio and the Town Council made it clear this money will fund a design not a “study” as a study would explore the need for an expansion, which

Turn To **WPCA** page **A10**

Suspicious fire results in fatality

BY JASON BLEAU
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

THOMPSON — A fire on Quaddick Town Farm Road in Thompson on Sept. 11 resulted in one confirmed death, with law enforcement and fire officials deeming the incident suspicious.

The East Thompson Volunteer Fire Department confirmed calls reporting the blaze at 519 Quaddick Town Farm Rd. came in at around 10:43 p.m. with both a two-story home and a nearby garage with vehicles fully involved and power line on the roadway obstructing access to the scene. First responders immediately requested additional tankers due the lack of hydrants on the roadway.

Firefighters and responders from Thompson Hill, Community Fire Company, Quinebaug



Courtesy

East Thompson Volunteer Fire Department A fire tears through a home on Quaddick Town Farm Road in Thompson on Sept. 11.

Turn To **FIRE** page **A10**

Eastern CT youth find purpose and opportunity in CT Youth Employment Program



Courtesy

Youth workers Madison L. (left) and Keyanna M. (right) at Covenant Soup Kitchen food pantry in Willimantic.

REGION — This summer, 634 eligible young adults across Eastern Connecticut embarked on a transformative and educational journey as part of the CT Youth Employment and Training Program.

The CT Youth Employment and Training Program is a program of the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB) and is funded through various federal, state, town and private sources. EASTCONN, in partnership with New London Youth Affairs and Norwich Human Services, conducts this

program in the 44 towns of Eastern Connecticut.

“EWIB is proud to partner with funders and youth service agencies who deliver the CYEP, which this summer provided over 634 youth with work experience, a paycheck, and the work-readiness skills employers want,” said Michael Nogelo, President/CEO of the Eastern Workforce Investment Board (EWIB).

Participants aged 14-24 earn minimum wage for approximately 95 hours of work while also receiving training in essential workplace skills, career

planning guidance, and exposure to in-demand industries like manufacturing, healthcare, information technology, and environmental sciences.

“It’s so important for the youth because they’re the future, and they have to find their passions, their career pathways,” said Kelsie Rivera, EASTCONN program facilitator. “What better way to do that than by getting paid to try different things and help others?”

More than 135 worksites were developed across eastern Connecticut.

Turn To **CT YOUTH** page **A10**

Access to host ribbon-cutting event for new mobile food pantry truck

WILLIMANTIC — Access Community Action Agency is excited to announce the ribbon-cutting event for the brand-new Access Mobile Food Pantry truck on Sept. 27 at 11 a.m.

This event marks a significant milestone in our ongoing mission to combat food insecurity in northeastern Connecticut. The new Mobile Food Pantry truck will increase Access's capacity to serve our communities, allowing us to reach even more residents in need. In the past year alone, the mobile food program has served nearly 4,000 people. Currently, the Access Mobile Food Pantry visits 15 locations across the 28 towns in the northeast corner of Connecticut.

Access was awarded a \$141,000 Community Impact Grant last year to purchase a Mobile Market Truck as part of Connecticut Foodshare's \$1.4 million investment in partner food pantries and meal programs across the state.

Equipped with refrigeration systems and drop-down storage bins, the truck allows the Access Mobile Food Pantry to safely transport and distribute meats, fresh produce, and dry goods to those who need it most. The innovative design also supports a dignified "shopper's choice" experience, where individuals can select the food they want and use, enhancing their sense of autonomy and respect. Additionally, a grant from Eversource will help power the truck by providing funding for fuel, ensuring our reach is as extensive as possible. The truck's vibrant exterior, wrapped by Gagnon Sign in Danielson, will stand as a recognizable symbol of hope and support to the people Access serves.

This event will take place rain or shine. We invite community members, partners, and media to join us in celebrating this critical expansion of our services.

Access Community Action Agency is designated by the federal and state government as the anti-poverty agency for northeastern Connecticut. We are committed to providing food, affordable housing, job readiness services, and other pathways to economic self-reliance for vulnerable limited-income families and individuals throughout the region.

Woodstock's Ava Hovestadt enrolls at College of the Holy Cross

WORCESTER, Mass. — The College of the Holy Cross is excited to welcome Ava Hovestadt of Woodstock as a member of the College's Class of 2028.

At 835 students, the Class of 2028 includes students from 507 different high schools, 41 U.S. states and territories, 13 different countries, and 33 different languages spoken. This incoming class represents one of the most diverse and academically accomplished classes in the College's history.

Admission to the Class of 2028 was more competitive than ever with a 10 percent increase in the number of applications submitted, and the lowest-ever proportion of applicants admitted - 17.6 percent.

The new Crusaders have distinguished themselves through community service, leadership roles, and diverse participation in areas like the arts, music and athletics. They arrived on campus and moved into the residence halls on Wednesday, Aug. 21, where they were welcomed to Mount St. James by an enthusiastic purple crew of current students, staff, faculty and alumni. Fall classes began on Tuesday, Aug. 27.

"Welcome, Class of 2028!" College President Vincent D. Rougeau told the class during Mass of the Holy Spirit. "You chose Holy Cross, where classes are small and the community is vibrant and ready for your contributions. Here, you will be encouraged to speak up and engage. When, how, and with whom are up to you. You will have your certainties challenged and perspectives broadened. And trust me, you will thrive."

About Holy Cross
The College of the Holy Cross, in Worcester, Mass., is among the nation's leading liberal arts institutions. A highly selective, four-year, exclusively undergraduate college of 3,200 students, Holy Cross is renowned for offering a rigorous, personalized education in the Jesuit, Catholic tradition. Since its founding in 1843, Holy Cross has made a positive impact in society by graduating students who distinguish themselves as thoughtful leaders in business, professional and civic life.

Jillson House Museum refurbishes garden



WILLIMANTIC — With the generous support of the Last Green Valley, Jillson House Museum and their dedicated volunteers completed a complete renovation of the garden adjacent to their historic home. The museum applied for a grant to clean up the overgrown area and plant it with a combination of pollinating plants, herbs, flowers and greenery.

"Without the support of the LGV this area would have continued to be an eye sore for all of our visitors. We are now an official visitor center for the East Coast Greenway and we wanted our guests to have a good impression of not only the museum but also our community. This grant made such a difference for us," said Rachel Valliere, President of the Jillson House Museum and Windham Historical Society.

Amazing volunteers did all the work. They included our Hospitality Representative, David Fenn, Nathan Jackson, Jean Desmet, Erin Malgioglio, Devin Reese and Lisa Novack. The area had to be dug out, weeds and vines removed, landscape fabric and mulch laid and then new plants planted. The garden will be the center of some of the museum's programming including one on herbal remedies.

Please stop by to see the new garden and take a free tour of the museum and our current exhibit, "Made in Windham, Patents and Inventions that Changed the World." The museum is open on Saturdays from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. For more information please email windhamhistoricalsocietyct@gmail.com.

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Town of Pomfret Road Foreman Closing Date: Until filled

The Town of Pomfret seeks a proven leader to direct the operations of its Public Works Department. The successful candidate will perform complex supervisory, administrative and professional work in planning, coordinating, and supervising the operations of the Department of Public Works. This role includes construction, maintenance and repair of town roads, drains, and related infrastructure; snow plowing, vehicle and equipment repair; budget preparation and estimating capital improvement requests; general building maintenance, and tree warden responsibilities. Works with school district, fire department, and reports to the First Selectman.

SPECIAL NECESSARY REQUIREMENTS: Valid Driver's License with a minimum Class B CDL License required. Must be available for emergency and around the clock operations to assure public safety as it relates to town infrastructure. We seek a candidate with a minimum of five years supervisory experience. Starting salary commensurate with ability and experience. Benefits. Vacancy is posted as open until filled. Additional information and applications are available at: www.pomfretct.gov/first-selectmans-office.gov Submit letter of interest, application and 3 letters of reference to Selectman's Office, 5 Haven Road, Pomfret Center, CT 06259. Position open until filled. EOE/AA

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FRANK G. CHILINSKI
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BRENDAN BERUBE
EDITOR

Sanity over chaos

In the current political climate, the line between reality and fringe conspiracy has been blurred far too often. While it's normal—and even healthy—to have political differences, there should be an undeniable baseline requirement for sanity, fact-based reasoning, and a genuine understanding of how government works. Candidates who peddle unfounded conspiracy theories are not fit to hold positions of power; regardless of what side of the aisle they come from.

The growing trend of electing individuals who not only embrace, but champion, these theories is a dangerous one. Governance requires a deep understanding of lawmaking, negotiation, and, most importantly, the ability to work across the aisle. Yet, when a candidate's platform is rooted in falsehoods and divisiveness, they bring chaos to a process that already struggles with enough challenges.

There are candidates who may not align perfectly with your personal political views but have proven track records of compromise and effectiveness. These candidates understand the complexity of government—they know that progress doesn't come from shouting in an echo chamber or fabricating scapegoats, but from sitting down with opponents and finding common ground. These are the individuals who can work across the aisle, who understand that our government was designed to be slow and methodical for a reason, and who seek to improve it, rather than burn it down.

On the other hand, there are those who have built their careers on conspiracy theories and fearmongering. These individuals sow distrust in our institutions and promote divisiveness, making it impossible to work toward meaningful solutions. Their goals often center around self-promotion and power accumulation, rather than serving the people or the greater good. They reject the idea of compromise, not out of principle, but out of a need to perpetuate chaos and misinformation.

Before casting your vote, it's crucial to do your research. Look into how the government actually works—how bills are passed, how compromises are made, and how policies are enacted. Examine what each candidate has done and said in the past. Have they demonstrated a willingness to work with those they disagree with? Have they proposed realistic solutions to real problems, or are they offering easy answers to complex issues, based on theories that don't hold up to scrutiny?

Sanity must win in these decisions. Even if you don't fully agree with a candidate's policies, electing someone grounded in reality is far better than someone whose platform rests on distortion and delusion. A healthy democracy is built on debate and diversity of thought, but it must also be built on truth. We need leaders who are serious about solving the problems facing our country—leaders who understand that working across the aisle isn't a betrayal, but a necessity.

In the end, casting a vote for a candidate who can cooperate with others—even those they may disagree with—ensures that government can function. Voting for those who traffic in conspiracy theories only ensures that we continue to spiral into chaos, and that's a risk we simply cannot afford to take.

Letter submission policy

Letters to the Editor must include the author's name, address, and a daytime phone number for purposes of verification in order to be considered for publication. Only the author's name and the town in which they reside will be published. Letters submitted without all of the required information will not be accepted.

It is the sole prerogative of the Editor to determine whether a submission satisfies our requirements and decency standards, and any submission may be rejected at any time for any reason he or she might deem appropriate.

OPINION

Opinion and commentary from the Quiet Corner

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Voting is serious business, especially this year

To the Editor:

When I registered to vote at the town hall in Woodstock in 1975, I was 30 years old. I remember the day clearly. I had expected the registration process to be routine. But when we had completed the paperwork the Town Clerk (at the time Veronica Hibbard) asked me to stand in front of her and raise my right hand. She was all business. And to her it was very serious business. While I hadn't expected this she looked me directly in the eye and proceeded to administer the elector's oath from memory: "Do you solemnly swear that you will be true and faithful to the constitutions and governments of the State of Connecticut and the United States of America; that the statements made in your application for admission as an elector are true and complete; and that your privileges as an elector are not forfeited by reason of conviction of a felony; so help you God."

So every time I go into a voting booth, I remember Veronica administering that oath to me and the conviction with which she did it. And I will remember that especially this year in what I believe will be the most consequential presidential election in my lifetime. Will the American people elect a candidate who calls on us to listen to "the better angels of our nature" (as Lincoln might counsel us), encouraging us to recognize the strength and beauty of our increasingly diverse nation, and call Americans to strive toward actualizing the founding principle of our nation that all are created equal? Or will we elect one who is a convicted felon, financial fraudster, sexual predator, and a habitual serial liar

who promotes fear and hatred? I know that in the past some have justified their support of Trump by telling themselves and others that while it is obvious his character makes him unfit to be president, his support of tax cuts for the very wealthy (hoping that "trickle-down" economic theory really works, which it doesn't), and promise to appoint anti-Roe justices to the Supreme Court made it an unfortunate necessity (if that was your priority). I find that line of reasoning intellectually and ethically dishonest. It doesn't work for me.

Therefore, for me the choice before us on Nov. 5 is an obvious one. I will be voting for Kamala Harris. By his example Donald Trump gave a large number of our fellow citizens permission to hate and unleashed the demons of malice, racism, and fear that infect our nation's blood stream today. Putting those evil spirits back into the dark crevices of our nation's history where they belong will not be an easy task. It will also be an unending struggle. And it's going to take an overwhelming majority of American of good will to accomplish that assignment. While being convicted of a felony no longer automatically disenfranchises a person as a voter in Connecticut, I believe exercising our right to vote is a public responsibility—a civic duty. And as Veronica Hibbard would remind us, voting is serious business. It's especially serious this year. So, I hope you will join me in exercising your right to vote by casting your ballot for Kamala Harris.

JAMIE HARRISON
WOODSTOCK

Turn the page

To the Editor:

By now the contrasts in the big debate have been well documented by the talking heads. Trump's mug shot stare, Kamala's reactions to his nonsense, from dogs and cats for supper to Trump saying the Democrats will endorse executing newborns at birth, and on and on.

Someone who understands Trump in a very deep and personal way; somebody who knows what makes him tick, is his very own niece, clinical psychologist Mary Trump. Her take on the debate:

"Kamala came across as an empathetic, kind human being who listens. The kind of leader most of us have been craving for the last nine years. She showed Donald to be a broken human being...a human being, but just not a successful one. Think about it this way: for his entire life Donald has existed on a very narrow band of the continuum of human motion. He is trapped in grievance, rage, and fear of humiliation, and for almost nine years he's forced most of us to exist there with him. She opened the door to the dungeon and showed us we can exist in the sunshine again, and that was one of the most powerful things I have ever experienced."

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, another Republican who spoke at the Democratic National Convention, said that a Republican voting for Kamala Harris does not make one a Democrat. It makes you an American.

RICK ROCHELEAU
DANIELSON

A veteran speaks...

To the Editor:

I served our nation during the Cold War and Vietnam eras (late 1960s - early 1970s). To this day, I still feel it was an honor to have done so, and I remember wearing my uniform proudly.

When I read that Donald Trump, while visiting a military cemetery in France, called our fallen heroes from World War I "losers" and our POW's "suckers," I was more than just insulted. I suspect that many of you felt the same.

And for those deniers, I fact-checked this. Trump said it. Not just once, but repeatedly, starting in 2018. This was confirmed by his former White House Chief of Staff Gen. John Kelly (USMC-retired) in an interview in The Atlantic magazine in 2020. It was again confirmed by CNN in 2023. Trump said it. That's what he thinks of us.

And this is the same Donald Trump who got out of the draft back in the 1960s. He used his father's influence to secure a medical deferment that Donald had a bone spur. So he didn't serve but he still insults and disparages our veterans!

Greg Kline
Woodstock

Keep traveling

I am a small person, who ought to be able to sleep on a plane, but I cannot. I've bought neck pillows, folding satin puffs, balled up winter parkas, but to no avail. As I zipped through the dark night on Swiss Air listening to the soft breathing of my friends and the stranger across the aisle, I thought about us confined in a bubble of metal and speed, wending our way back to Boston. My husband would be waiting at the gate. I was ready to squeeze him and go home. I love to travel and I love to return.

I hike with friends for a week or so almost every year. We began with the Grand Canyon and continued with southern France, the Pembrokeshire Coast in Wales and this year, the Bernese Oberland in Switzerland. I'm the oldest with my best friend from college trailing me in age by a mere month. The others are a few years younger. Every trip I wonder if this will be the last or if by sheer will and staying fit I will keep on going. The larger question is why travel at all? We won't discover the Ice Man frozen in the Alps or decipher the Swiss banking system.

We test our resourcefulness and our independence.

We take trains, buses and even gondolas to see beautiful sights and stay in charming places, but mostly we put one foot in front of the other, over and over again, until we cover all the miles outlined on our itinerary. On every trip we know that at some point each of us will fall. We may tumble abruptly or more likely, slide onto our backsides. In Switzerland cows are everywhere including on the walking paths and their leave plenty of slippery messes. One cool afternoon as I felt myself toppling down a steep side hill, I put out my right hand to stop myself, cursed my clumsiness and hoped I didn't hurt my wrist. Not this time, thank goodness. There will be other tumbles.

In my elementary school, I liked to spin a globe around and around, then jab it with my finger to stop it and say that's where I planned to travel. Those childhood declarations led to a drive to see the world in my own modest way as my life unfolded. My Social Studies teacher, a remarkable man named Bob Glenn, encouraged all of us country mice to think a little bigger and want a little more. I loved the text books that showed the mountain ranges and traced my chewed pencils along the complex lines of the alps many times. Once I had the chance to hike in them, exhilaration mixed with gratitude. I'd skied there once in college, but time and experience made me look at the vistas now with clearer eyes and wish I could tell Mr. Glenn, that yes, I'd made it there.

There's pleasure in using specialized gear that reveals an unexpected loop on the backpack just where it is needed. There's joy in lacing up a broken in pair of hiking boots that have covered as much ground as an old friend. There's satisfaction in reading a map with accuracy and then checking it against the route proposed by All Trails.

There's the moment when the group is all you have and together you must figure it out or miss getting to the hotel by dark.

And then it is over, and in the plane, surrounded by sleeping strangers, there is the question and the answer; at least for now — Yes. Yes. Travel. Keep traveling.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

What are these investigations costing us?

To the Editor:

Has anybody ever wondered what these investigations have cost us taxpayers? For example, the Biden DOJ and Smith have spent \$35.7 million in taxpayer dollars prosecuting Donald Trump, vastly outspending previous special counsels. (This figure covers the period from November 2022 to March 31, 2024.) Smith's office spent \$19.4 million, while the corrupt DOJ, in going after a political opponent in the name/guise of democracy, allocated an additional \$16.3 million in resources. The \$19.4 million includes \$11.6 million for Smith's salaries, benefits and security detail.

And besides raking in the bucks, how's things been going for Smith as of late? I'll say other than aging his face, not well, but that's the price you pay for being a pawn. A while ago, it was felt here that people like Smith, James, Willis, Bragg and the other servants involved were going to be the ones to stop Donald Trump. Things haven't been going well for them as well, but maybe they all should have considered that possibility before seeking to make a name for themselves? Smith by far out did the \$9.8 million cost of investigating the democrats "Big Lie" that was the Trump-Russia collusion hoax. But what that accomplished was it exposed the democrats, and yes, their "lame stream media" for being a bunch of mindless little dupes and constant liars. However, our politicians don't care as long as somebody else is footing the bill, but then nor do we as long as it's against that other side, right?

Walz is now in trouble when Republicans issued subpoenas to gather documents to investigate millions of dollars in fraud related to Covid-relief funds that happened on his watch. But of course Walz and his top staffers, who were in charge of the oversight, are attempting to deflect away the blame for something that happened right under their noses. So imagine having convicted felons in both Presidential tickets? No, it won't get that far, but if Donald Trump was even rumored to have rang Pelosi's doorbell and ran, the democrats would immediately have released their attack dogs armed with every available resource.

Did you see the picture of President Biden wearing a MAGA hat? Did he

do this at the request of a Trump supporter, who as a result got handed a truly special souvenir, or did he do it to thumb his nose at those who abandoned him? Either way, Mr. President, you have my respect. On his planned visit to California, relatives of Gavin Newsom's wife will be hosting a Bay area fundraiser for Trump. Imagine that, in addition to the democrats being the great dividers, they're now dividing families as well. Harris made a campaign stop at Penzeys Spices, a shop known for hating and slamming Republicans, where she called for an end to political division. That was a good place to do that because Penzeys Spices has an entire "About republicans" page on their website with a lengthy essay bashing that political party, however these hypocrites admitted they'd gladly take their money. Dick Cheney, once one of the democrats most hated people, has endorsed Harris, but now the hypocrites are praising him as a great leader. And of course, it's no surprise that RINO Liz, who claimed the republican party was no longer her daddy's republican party, did as well. But who would know better about what the democratic party has become than RFK, Jr., who has now endorsed Trump? I think it was those bobble-heads on The View that joked about Hulk Hogan endorsing Trump, but they probably fawned over the fact that Jesse Ventura, another former pro-wrestler, endorsed Harris. But if you consider "The View" - which should be renamed "Their View" - to be a reliable news source, I'll say that you're a fool. Barack Obama's half-brother, Malik has endorsed Trump, and is it true that Mark Zuckerberg said "there's no way I can vote for a democrat in this election?" Another long time democrat Alan Dershowitz has joined the ranks of those leaving the democratic party, but he's yet to make up his mind who he'll be endorsing. Taylor Swift, a woman who made a career singing about bad choices, endorsed Harris. "MALA" for sure. And though he will be voting for her, Bernie Sanders admitted that Harris "flip-flops" on key issues and that she'll say anything to get elected.

Ed DeLuca
North Grosvenordale

To the Editor:

The 2024 presidential campaign now has its Han Shot First moment. The Secret Service shot first. The guy who wanted to shoot Trump this time around never even got a shot off. He played peekaboo with his AK rifle, the Secret Service spotted him and fired at him, and he wimped out, dropped his rifle, and ran away.

Much like the infamous Han Shot First thing where the story was changed after the fact in the "Star Wars" Original

Trilogy, keep an eye on right wing news to see how much of this they ignore to tell their own version of the story that didn't actually happen.

Bottom line – we got him alive. Let's throw the book at him.

I never thought I'd be making this kind of comparison, but here we are.

Skip the nonsense. Vote Blue.

JAY GERHART
PUTNAM

But what?

To the Editor:

The presidential debate — the perfect venue to showcase Donald Trump as a pathological liar. It only took a few pokes at his fragile ego to send him spiraling down into several psychotic rants. His weakness as a thin-skinned narcissist makes him vulnerable (especially to foreign adversaries), and his mental competence becomes more questionable every day. As he constantly spews hateful, divisive rhetoric and praises violent extremists, it makes sense that all that darkness could come full circle back to him --- and it has. It's called Karma.

I'm baffled when Trump supporters

say things like "I don't agree with what he says and how he acts, but..." or "I don't like his personality, but..." But what? When choosing a leader for our great nation, nothing is more important than having good moral character and a history as an honest decent person. Trump is the exact opposite of that. His life long legacy as a "bottom feeder" who's only focus is himself should disqualify him from any position of power. He's a dangerous threat to our country and everything it stands for.

TODD PATRIE
POMFRET CENTER

Vance is a frightening thought

To the Editor:

As if there are not enough reasons to be afraid of Trump's re-election, consider the possibility of his not finishing the four years in office. If Trump dies, resigns or is removed by the 25th Amendment for becoming incapacitated, we would be stuck with Vance as President. Even worse than McCain's selection of Sarah Palin, Vance is woefully incapable of being President. He has virtually no governmental or leadership experience. Every day, he makes a fool of himself. For example, he has admitted that lying is OK. What a wonderful trait for a President to have but it would, at least, just be a consistent characteristic. Vance as President is an incredibly frightening thought.

And Trump not finishing his term is a real possibility. While there are no apparent significant physical health issues with him right now, the odds of disease issues are quite against him just because of his age. What we do know is his showing significant cognitive decline every day.

Richard Friedman, Director of the Psychopharmacogy Clinic at Weill Cornell Medical College, asserts that Trump is exhibiting signs of dementia.

Friedman said that during the debate, "He displayed some striking, if familiar, patterns that are commonly seen among people in cognitive decline." He also said, "If a patient presented to me with the verbal incoherence, tangential thinking, and repetitive speech that Trump now regularly demonstrates, I would almost certainly refer them for a rigorous neuropsychiatric evaluation to rule out a cognitive illness." Enough said.

Trump has canceled any other debate, and I'm glad. I will not watch another for a number of reasons. Harris has proven herself to be intelligent, competent, knowledgeable, quick-witted and articulate. I'm sold. I don't need to hear Trump again. He said nothing new and I'm tired of hearing his lies and rants. I don't need to spend another 90 minutes of my life hearing it all over again. Trump has once again proven that he is mentally incompetent, deranged and over the hill. He has only proven that his criticism of Biden being too old for the office applies to him.

STEPHEN ETZEL
PUTNAM

Auction news

To the Editor:

According to conventional wisdom, American voters don't pay much attention to presidential electoral politics until after Labor Day every four years. In addition, pundits tell us that average citizens are too busy earning a living and dealing with other aspects of day-to-day life to immerse themselves in the news. And too many are poorly informed and misinformed by so-called news media that have been proven to lie, crazy social media posts, and influencers paid by Russia.

them and only make inequality worse?

Will we vote for the former president who sabotaged a bipartisan immigration bill that would have improved border security and given law enforcement more tools to intercept illegal drugs just so he could preserve an issue to campaign on? Or will we support the candidate who has pledged to sign that bill? Or perhaps we vote for the candidate who proposes tax cuts for the middle class and tax credits for families with children and entrepreneurs who want to start small businesses?

But now it's time for voters to engage. Will Americans succumb to the avalanche of hate and lies spewed daily by Donald Trump and his supporters, some of whom regularly contribute to your Opinion page? Will they firmly reject the dangerous, false, and ridiculous demonization of Haitian and other immigrants or will they validate it and give permission for the increasing violence against "the other" that Trump's and J.D. Vance's rhetoric inflames? Will voters embrace a felonious candidate who regularly jokes about the brutal attack on former Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband or the candidate who quickly and unambiguously condemned attempts to kill Trump?

Will the Trump pledge to have a "bloody" deportation of tens of millions of immigrants and build massive concentration camps appeal to our baser instincts or will our better angels reject them? How will people react when such a mass deportation devastates our economy?

Maybe voters prefer the former president who venerates ruthless dictators, like Putin, Xi, and Kim who subjugate billions of their own citizens, because they are "strong" and "geniuses," and one who is easily manipulated by flattery and the promise of personal enrichment. Or perhaps a former prosecutor and state attorney general with decency and integrity who stood up to drug cartels and human traffickers and will strongly represent the interests of the United States when dealing with foreign leaders rather than her own personal interests?

Will the collective wisdom and decency of the American people endorse a candidate who bragged about taking away a woman's right to make her own decisions about her body, forcing 11-year-old girls to bear the offspring of their rapists, and making women bleed out in parking lots because physicians are fearful of prosecution and imprisonment? Or will it choose to treat women as deserving the freedom to, and capable of, making their own decisions?

Do voters decide to take their chances with the candidate who pledged to become a dictator "on day one," imprison his perceived enemies after military tribunals, and wants to "suspend" parts of the Constitution? The same candidate who has repeatedly denigrated our fallen soldiers as "losers and suckers" and dislikes POWs such as John McCain because they got caught?

Do Americans vote for a candidate who supports overwhelmingly popular gun safety laws or a Republican Party and candidate who says we just "have to get over" the gunning down our children and grandchildren in their schools rather than to do anything about it?

Or just maybe voters take to heart the advice of an unprecedented number of former Trump administration officials who witnessed him up close and fear what he would do if elected again, or dozens of retired military leaders who have warned us, or Republicans like former vice president Dick Cheney who will vote for the Democratic candidate.

Do voters ignore history and common sense and let Russia do, "whatever the hell they want" to our NATO allies and abandon Ukraine to Putin's brutal invasion? Or do we continue to aid Ukraine's defense as Vice President Kamala Harris intends to do?

Perhaps many believe the Trump characterization of our country as a "third-world nation" with an even more dystopian future without him. But perhaps more see an America as "the shining city on a hill," as Ronald Reagan once said, and Kamala Harris believes.

Will Americans finally understand that Trump's promise to enact tariffs on all goods entering the country is a tax that will cost them thousands of dollars per year in higher prices and will do nothing to fight inflation and lower prices of the essentials they consume? Do they finally acknowledge that Trump's massive tax cuts for the extremely wealthy and corporations don't trickle down to

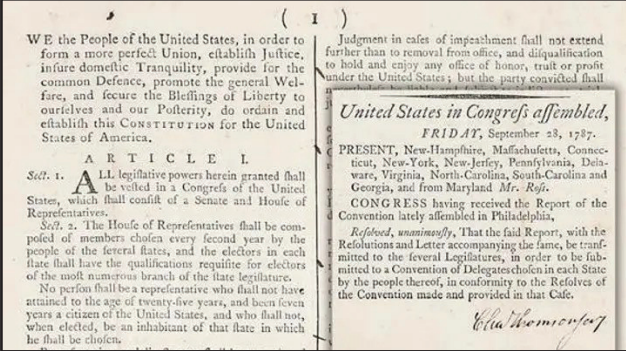
Unquestionably, it's a major test for the nation.

BILLY G. TAYLOR
KILLINGLY

I hope those of you who attended the September Brimfield Antique Show made some great finds or did well selling your wares.

It's been nearly a month since my last antiques and collectibles auction update and there's a lot of news to share with you. We'll start with a very old auction item, a 14th century Hebrew Bible, that brought a high figure at auction this month. The Shem Tov Bible was illustrated in multiple colors of ink and gold leaf and was created by Rabbi Shem Tov Ibn Gaon in 1312 Spain. The rare Bible features blended Jewish, Christian, and Islamic artistic traditions. The "800-page Bible's mix of profound scholarship, mystical lettering, and inter-cultural artistic influences made it unique," according to the Guardian. The spokesperson for the auction house said that this Bible escaped massacres, riots, upheavals, and wars over hundreds of years. It sold for \$6.9 million and will now be on public display after being in a private collection since the 1910s.

Moving centuries forward, an original copy of the Declaration of Independence was found in a filing cabinet in a North Carolina estate. An auction house representative discovered it when they were called in to sell the contents of a former plantation that had been sold to the state for pres-



ervation. The document was signed by Secretary of Congress Charles Thomson. He signed only a fraction "of the 100 copies he ordered to be printed for sending to the legislatures of the 13 original states," according to Axios. It is only one of eight signed copies known to exist. Bidding ends on Sept. 28, and someone has already placed the \$1 million minimum bid.

Once again jumping ahead in time now to the late 20th century, a less than 30-year-old trading card

is estimated to bring a large sum. I've mentioned in past columns that the popularity of collectibles typically rises when collectors are middle aged and have the disposable income and desire to collect toys and games from their childhood. 1990s collectibles are popular right now and a 1995 Pokémon is an example of this. A Japanese Alpha Prototype card was developed to illustrate the idea of Pokémon to company executives. It's estimated to sell for between

\$300,000 and \$500,000. I'm often asked what would be a good antique or collectible to invest in. Who would think in 1995 that Pokémon cards would be selling for half a million dollars three decades later.

Our next online auction is getting underway now. We have a wide variety of items including gold jewelry, sterling silver, art, coins, and historical items. We are currently accepting quality consignments of antiques and collectibles for future auctions. I'll be appraising items for the public at the Scandinavian Culture Center in Newton from 1 to 3 p.m. on Sept. 21. I will also be appraising items for the public at the Holden Senior Center on Sept. 30 at 1 p.m. There is a \$15 fee for two items, and appraisals are limited to the first 60 people for the Holden event. Please visit our Web site <https://centralmassauctions.com> for links to upcoming events.

Contact us to consign items or for auction information at: Wayne Tuiskula Auctioneer/Appraiser Central Mass Auctions for Antique, Collectibles Auctions and Appraisal Services info@centralmassauctions.com or (508-612-6111).



“In the Studio” features artists from the Quiet Corner—home to many artists and makers, some of whom have national or international recognition for their work in

fine art, handcraft, performing art, art education, and graphic art. In this series, we’ll talk with our artist neighbors and learn about their careers, current projects, and con-



nections to our towns. We’ll also learn some “artspeak” terms in our conversations, demystifying some of those “artist words”. In this interview, we’re meeting with

painter Al Mathes of Killingly. I recently caught up with Al at his “Landscape Journeys” solo show at the Thompson Public Library, which will be up until September 30th.

Hello, Al, and thank you for taking time to speak with me about your paintings and the path you’ve taken as an artist. This show at the Library features your traditional and abstract landscapes, as well as both styles combined in single pieces. It really tells us about your versatility as a painter. [L oil on canvas with ink



on mylar; R oil on canvas]

Did you study art formally?

Yes, I did. I have a Master’s degree of Fine Art in painting and sculpture from the University of South Florida. You could say I’ve always been a painter, though, starting as a 13-year-old playing with sketches and paints on small canvases. I loved the cityscapes of French artist Maurice Utrillo, and created my own versions of them.

I am still interested in cityscapes of sorts. Many of my pieces speak to the relationship between nature and the manmade, such as in this piece titled “Heartland.” It is a big piece, using paint and ink on mylar. The left side (black ink) represents that made by man, and the right (red paint) speaks of man and what’s from the heart.

Whether realistic or abstract, your relationship to the scenery and terrain comes through. I understand that you worked as a professional landscaper, correct?

Yes. I had a landscaping company for many years. When I moved to New England from Florida, I taught art for a while before I went into landscape work. I’ve done plantings and stonework for numerous sites in Northeastern Connecticut, ranging from residential to large commercial sites.

It does come through in my artwork in a num-

ber of ways. I’m inspired by aerial views from jet planes, as well as plein air painting. Sometimes I will suspend an expanse of mylar literally between trees to rough out a painting, then finish it in the studio.

Readers are often interested in artist studios. How would you describe yours?

It’s a spacious studio above my garage. I have a 20-foot wall to accommodate large canvases, with room for supplies and finished work. What I do is a lot of work. It’s messy. It’s ongoing. I’m continuing to pursue the elusive in my painting. My work progresses but current pieces contain elements of earlier efforts.

So, it’s a continuum of your artistry. Any advice for new collectors? Aspiring artists?

In collecting, find something you like. Talk to the artist. Go to shows and galleries. There is so much good, original, affordable work locally. My advice for young artists is to, go at it! Both my son (cinematographer) and daughter (music librarian and vocalist) have made careers in the arts and I couldn’t be prouder.

Thank you so much for your time, your inspiration, and your enthusiasm for artistic expression. Readers can see the Landscape Journeys show during normal Thompson Public Library hours (860-923-9779 tel.)

You can also see more about Al and his work by viewing pinterest.com/al4952/paintings-by-al-mathes/

Word of the day:

Mylar—a translucent polyester film of various thicknesses, it has numerous uses including support for artwork.

About the writer: Cynthia Saari (Woodstock) is a nationally recognized flamework glass artist. She has exhibited her work & taught for over 20 years; her glass beads have been included in numerous publications & invitations. Significant projects include costume work for the Santa Fe Opera, and flamework demonstrator at the Peabody Essex Museum. Cynthia offers talks & workshops in the Quiet Corner; she is an adjunct professor of art at a local college.

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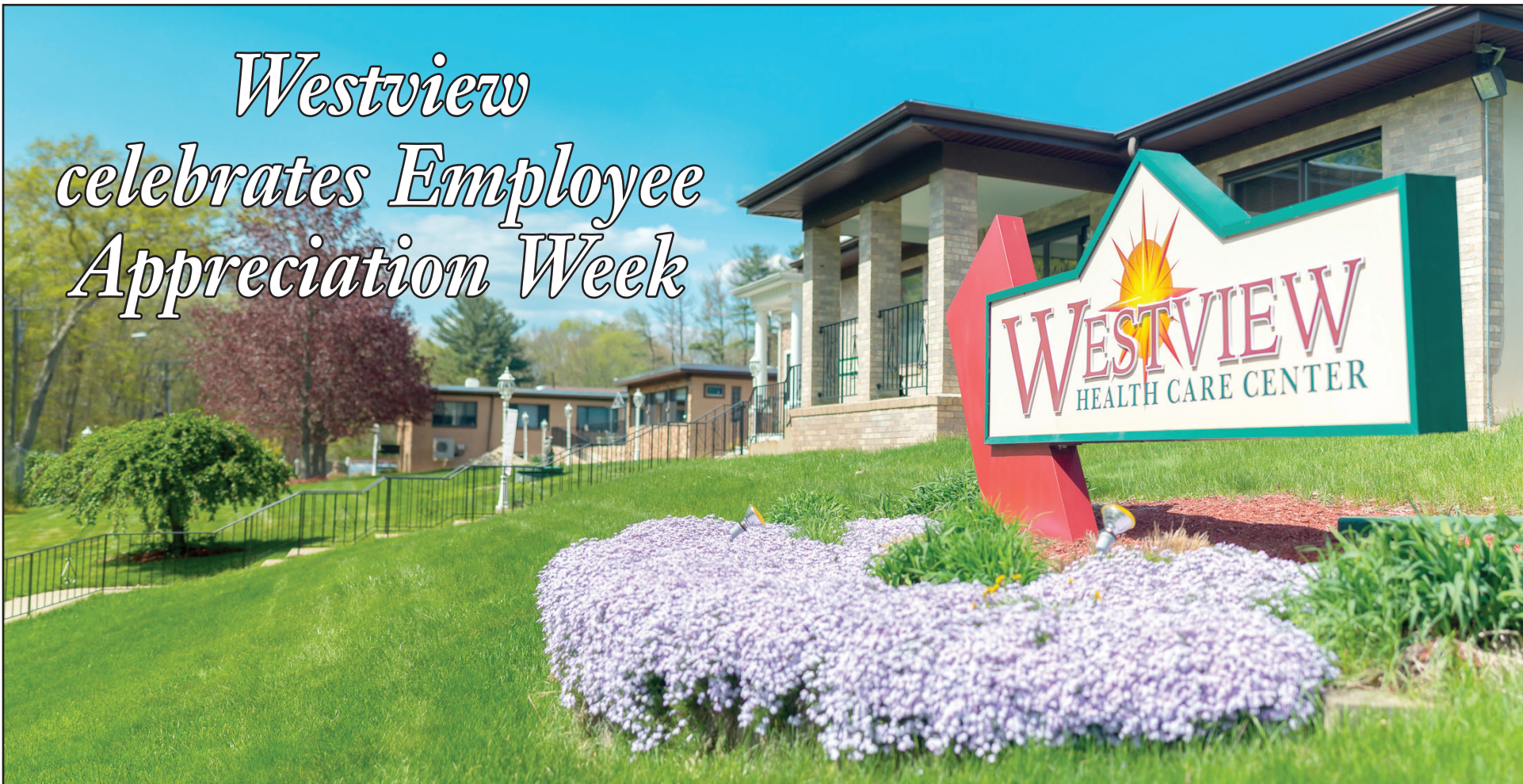
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Westview celebrates Employee Appreciation Week

DAYVILLE — The team of talented personnel at Westview succeeds with aplomb by celebrating their roles and responsibilities constantly. Thusly, the Westview organization is sure to dedicate a full week to applaud their victories and pay homage to their challenges every year—known to Westview staff as Employee Appreciation Week.

Between Monday, Aug. 26 and Friday, Aug. 30, gratuities were paid, swag was given, and smiles shone abundantly throughout Westview’s Dayville campus. During this year’s celebration, equal honors rested upon the sturdy shoulders of Westview Health Care Center; Westview Outpatient and Aquatic Therapy, Westview Sports Medicine, Country Living at Westview Commons, and Westview Child Care Center. Today, Westview is proud to have more than 315 teammates across all of these rosters. Westview Executive Vice President David T. Panteleakos wanted to be certain that every soul that wears a Westview badge felt the gratitude of every colleague, vendor, resident, patient, and family member connected with the facilities.

Praising the entire Westview family, David T. Panteleakos commented about his joy in working alongside the individual contributors and the entire community that forms their team.

“I am so proud of our group of graceful, generous, and dedicated individuals that make up this amazing brigade of Westview personnel,” Panteleakos said. “It is very important to me that we take the time to showcase our successes and thank our most valuable assets: our astonishing staff! Even during the most trying times, this cadre of professional providers bestow their best care and contributions to our patients, residents, clients, and friends. We greatly appreciate their hard work and honest efforts that lead to the patient population entrusted to our care. Congratulations to all of our honorees, and cheers to the future triumphs in the coming years!”

Westview Health Care Center is a 103-bed inpatient skilled nursing facility, which includes a distinct and self-contained 28-bed sub-acute short term rehabilitation unit and outpatient physical, occupational and speech therapies. These therapeutic modalities include adolescent/pediatric and adult therapy, an aquatic outpatient center, and sports medicine. Each of these health care offerings is devoted to providing outstanding quality health care services for their given demographic. The Dayville, Connecticut facility is consistently ranked among the top nursing facilities in the nation, according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services as well as U.S. News and World Report—and has been consecutively for the past 15 years. Westview opened in 1954; marking this year’s employee celebration as the organization’s 70th anniversary. Throughout those years, Westview Health Care Center’s contingent of caregivers, companions, cohesive coordinators, and support staff have brought outstanding care to their patients and residents and have shared countless successes and smiles among each other.

Country Living at Westview Commons is a 75-unit independent and assisted living community conveniently located in picturesque Northeastern Connecticut. Westview Commons is a 115,000 square foot catered living facility dedicated to providing a genuine 5-star experience including outstanding service, culinary expertise, and professional in-house entertainment. Located directly across Route 21 from Westview Health Care Center, Westview Commons combines convenience, tranquility and comfort; providing a lifestyle that seniors deserve. Since opening in the fall of 2020, Westview Commons has garnered a strong reputation for the facility’s living experience and their charming, considerate staff. Their compliment of staff includes thoughtful administrative professionals, thorough

housekeepers and support services, enthusiastic recreational activity providers, a stellar dietary department, and nurturing nurses as a part of their assisted living offerings.

Westview Child Care Center is the newest member of the Westview family, having opened in the fall of 2023. This 7,000 square foot child care center is dedicated to children of its valued employees as well as the community at large. Westview Child Care Center is located across Ware Road from Westview Health Care Center; making for easy access to Westview families. Westview Child Care Center vertically integrates solutions for family needs—a unique convenience for Westview employees. The facility is dedicated to helping young minds “learn through play” and cares for children from the ages of six months to 12 years old. Their team of teachers have beautifully bonded with the young students entrusted to their care. This was especially evident when Westview Child Care Center held their first “graduation ceremony” for the children moving on from their pre-kindergarten program to a school setting. Elated emotions flowed and a few happy tears appeared as the teachers said their farewell to this first group of graduates.

Westview’s week-long Employee Appreciation Week held specific days for each of the entities in their care family. Monday celebrated all departments at Westview Health Care Center; Tuesday honored the staff of Country Living at Westview Commons, and Wednesday lauded the teachers at Westview Child Care Center. Upon their designated day, the staff of each facility received an employee bonus, free lunch, raffles, and the annual apparel offering of a themed T-shirt for the year. This year’s shirt design centered around the concept of the delightfully decorative structure on the campus of Westview Child Care Center: Imagination Castle. Emblazoned on the front is the text “WESTVIEW MMXIV” to signify the year’s annotation, and centered on the back is a graphic representation of Imagination Castle sitting upon a cloud. Within the cloud the text reads “Imagination is the Destination!” When approaching any situation—whether it is providing care, facility growth, or navigating daily responsibilities—all members of the Westview team imagine the best possible outcome and work diligently with their colleagues to make it a reality.

On Thursday night, Aug. 29, Westview hosted an employee recognition dinner at the grand event space of Connecticut National Golf Course. Westview staff gathered together in their most dashing apparel and socialized with each other before being seated for a gourmet meal. As desert was served, Westview Executive Vice President David T. Panteleakos and Westview Human Resources Director Ruth Bentley took to the front of the room to give individual salutations to the invited guests. All in attendance followed along with copies of the event’s program—a precisely designed tri-fold document carefully and creatively curated by Westview Administrative Assistant Christine Zadora. The names called in celebration included employees with perfect attendance for the previous year; staff members with incremental years-of-service anniversaries (some with as many as 35 years with Westview!), Employees of the Month from the last calendar year; and the presentation of the chosen Employee of the Year.

Thursday’s awards gala resumed what was an annual tradition that needed to be paused over the last few years due to pandemic precautions. With multiple years’ worth of recipients present, the gathered guests at Westview’s awards dinner showcased their shared amicability and accolades as the designations were delivered.

Westview Executive Vice President

Turn To **WESTVIEW** page **A8**

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Your Local Health Department

This program is supported by a Preventive Health & Health Services Block Grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Are you an executive? What you should know about navigating tax laws and retirement planning

High-level executives face unique challenges in tax planning and retirement preparation. Your compensation package, with its stock options, deferred compensation, and other benefits, requires careful management to maximize wealth and minimize taxes. Let's explore key strategies to help you navigate these financial waters.

Optimizing your compensation package

Your compensation package offers several tax-saving opportunities:

Defer income: Push bonuses into future years when you might be in a lower tax bracket.

Time your stock options: Exercise options strategically to manage tax liability.

Leverage restricted stock units (RSUs): These can offer tax deferral benefits compared to standard stock compensation.

Explore nonqualified deferred compensation plans: Defer large portions of compensation on a pre-tax basis, but understand the risks and rules.



FINANCIAL
FOCUS
.....
JIM ZAHANSKY
INVESTMENT
ADVISER

The impacts of optimizing your compensation package for maximum returns and tax efficiency can be huge. For example, one of our clients, Bill, has worked as an executive in the pharmaceuticals industry for years. I was thrilled when he shared with us the impact that our financial strategy is having for him:

“WHZ has guided me in making my employee stock purchase plan and restricted stock units as tax-efficient as possible. I'm continually impressed with the financial acumen at WHZ and how they anticipate issues or opportunities I may not have considered,” Bill said.*

Maximizing tax-ad-

vantaged retirement accounts

Beyond the basic 401(k), consider these options:

Backdoor Roth IRA: Use this strategy to convert traditional IRA contributions, even with high income.

Mega backdoor Roth: If your 401(k) allows after-tax contributions, you could potentially contribute up to \$69,000 total in 2024 (plus an additional \$7,500 catch-up contribution if you are 50 or older).

Cash Balance Pension Plan: For those nearing retirement, this allows large tax-deductible contributions.

Health Savings Account (HSA): A triple-tax-advantaged account that can serve as additional retirement savings.

Navigating equity compensation

Stock-based compensation significantly impacts your taxes and retirement planning:

Consider an 83(b) election for restricted stock to potentially save on taxes if stock value increases.

Be aware of alternative minimum tax (AMT) implications for incentive stock options (ISOs).

Develop a plan to diversify company stock holdings over time to reduce concentration risk.

Managing tax bracket transitions

Be strategic about managing your tax bracket as you approach retirement:

During peak earning years, focus on tax-deferred savings to lower your current tax bill.

In early retirement, consider Roth conversions to take advantage of lower tax brackets.

Time withdrawals from various retirement accounts to smooth out tax liability.

Charitable giving strategies

Philanthropy can be good for both society and your tax bill:

Donate appreciated stock instead of cash to avoid capital gains taxes.

Consider donor-advised funds to front-load charitable deductions.

If over 70 and a half, use qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) from IRAs to satisfy required minimum distributions without increasing taxable income.

Estate planning considerations

Align your estate plan

with your retirement and tax planning:

Leverage your lifetime gift tax exemption (\$13.61 million for an individual or \$27.22 million for couples filing jointly in 2024) to transfer wealth tax-free.

Consider an irrevocable life insurance trust (ILIT) for estate tax liquidity.

Explore strategies like grantor retained annuity trusts (GRATs) or intentionally defective grantor trusts (IDGTs) for efficient wealth transfer.

Charting your course: The bottom line

At WHZ, we understand the complex challenges executives face in tax planning and retirement preparation. You need more than just financial advice – you need a partner dedicated to your long-term success. That's why we're committed to providing each of our clients with “Absolute Confidence. Unwavering Partnership. For Life.” Contact us at (860) 928-2341 or schedule a complimentary consultation on our website at whzwealth.com to see how we can help you chart a course towards a more prosperous and secure financial future.

provided Feb. 29 by Bill Eicholzer who is a client. This statement may not be representative of the experience of others and is not a guarantee of future performance or success. For additional reviews, search us wherever local businesses are reviewed.

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* This statement was

Paws to host annual blessing of the animals Oct. 6

PUTNAM — Paws Cat Shelter is hosting its Sixth Annual Blessing of the Animals on Sunday, Oct. 6 from 1 – 3 p.m. at the shelter, located at 74 School St., Putnam. Officiating is Reverend Jane Emma Newall.

All pets must be secured by leash or carrier. Pets are not allowed inside the shelter but the shelter will be open for visitors during this time.

There will be a bake sale and pet food donations are welcome.

Paws is a non-profit, all volunteer organization caring for the cats of our communities. For more info or how you can donate, contact Paws at 860-315-1228.

Woodstock Legion post hosting open house

WOODSTOCK — The Benson-Flugel Post 111 American Legion, Inc. invites the public to our free open house and breakfast on Sept. 28 from 8-10 a.m. Come to our post, located at 22 Stone Bridge Rd., Woodstock, to see what we do for our veterans and the community and see our newly renovated post home.

We are always looking for new members and due to the LEGION Act of 2019 all veterans who have served since Dec. 7, 1941 are eligible to join.

WESTVIEW

continued from page A1

David T. Panteleakos further expressed his elation regarding Thursday evening's event: “Taking the time on a night like that to celebrate our united understanding and our staff's unique talents represents just a token of our gratitude for our faithful Westview family. I am happy to see all of us gather together once more for this yearly acknowledgement, and to share in the salutations among all of our colleagues. Congratulations to all of our award winners!”

As the sun set and day turned to night, the guests at this gala expressed gratitude for their colleagues at Westview upon whom the sun never sets. Ensuring the constant continuum of care concurrent to the event on Thursday night, their coworkers back at Westview made sure that patients and residents experienced the best quality of care possible.

For Friday's tribute to Westview Staff, the facilities hosted a “Family Fun Day” with various activities and attractions for employees and their families to enjoy. Several sporting competitions offered open-entry opportunities for staff members to try their hand at certain skills—like a soccer shootout on Westview

Child Care Center's turf field, a putting contest on Westview Outpatient Therapy's outdoor green, a long drive competition utilizing Westview Sports Medicine's multi-sport simulator screen, and a billiards tournament hosted by Westview Commons. For each of these spirited challenges, prizes such as gift cards and additional bonus checks went to the highest placing finishers. Carly Tusia and her farmland friends from Carly's Critters, LLC dropped in to have a little playtime with Westview personnel and their family members in the afternoon. Their mobile petting zoo featured goats, cows, llamas, sheep, miniature horses, turtles, and little ducklings frolicking about in their portable pens on the Westview Campus. A large inflatable moon bounce sat squarely in Westview Sports Medicine's main parking lot and proved to be quite a hit with many children and a few brave parents. The Sports Medicine lot also contained a portable pickleball net and cornhole boards for some leisurely competition among colleagues and friends. Westview's Dietary Department put forth a gourmet spread of custom cuisine to serve all three shifts; allocating portions of delicious barbeque, summer salads, and scrumptious side dishes for the first,

second, and third waves of Westview's daily devotees. And of course, no celebration at Westview would be complete without a visit from longtime friend Mr. Softee and his ice cream truck.

The abundance of sunshine throughout Westview's Employee Appreciation Week lent itself to even warmer moments shared between the hearts, minds, and souls of Westview staff. Yet even on stormy days, even during dimmer times, Westview staff shine a light from within to illuminate the way for patients, residents, and fellow teammates.

Westview Health Care Center is a 103-bed inpatient skilled nursing facility, which includes a distinct and self-contained 28-bed sub-acute short term rehabilitation unit and outpatient physical, occupational and speech therapies including: Sports Medicine, Adolescent/Pediatric, Adult, and Aquatic Outpatient Centers, all dedicated to providing outstanding quality health care services. The Dayville, Connecticut facility is consistently ranked among the top nursing facilities in the nation, according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services as well as U.S. News and World Report, consecutively for the past 15 years.



SPORTS FACT:

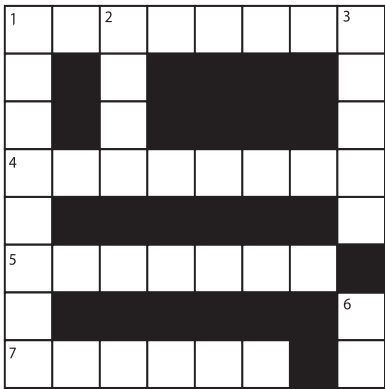
This sport is the leading cause of eye injuries in children.

Answer: Basketball

How they say that in...

English: Run
Spanish: Correr
Italian: Correre
French: Courir
German: Laufen

Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

1. A thing a person does
4. Connective tissue
5. Grabs and stops a person
7. Competitive activities

DOWN

1. Sports participants
2. Aggressive person
3. Someone who is young
6. Extra time in a game (abbr.)

1. Athletes 2. Thug 3. Youth 6. OT
Down
1. Activity 4. Ligation 5. Tackles 7. Sports

Answer:

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

SEPTEMBER
21

1933: Salvador Lutteroth establishes Mexican professional wrestling.

1964: Malta gains independence from the United Kingdom.

2001: “America, A Tribute to Heroes” is broadcast by more than 36 television channels, raising more than \$200 million for 9-11 attack victims.

NEW WORD

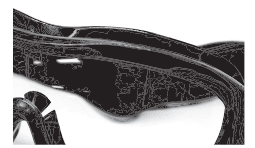
PENALTY

a disadvantage imposed on a team for breaking a rule

Did You Know?

Protective equipment and padding helps to reduce the risk of injury when athletes play football.

Get the PICTURE?



Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

Answer: Safety goggles

CRYPTO FUN

Solve the code to discover words related to sewing. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 24 = T)

A. 17 26 26 14 6 26

Clue: Sharp instrument

B. 24 22 11 26 18 14

Clue: String or floss

C. 12 24 9 24 13 22

Clue: Make, mend or join together

D. 18 24 24 18 13 22

Clue: Fasten or join

Answers: A. needle B. thread C. stitch D. attach

SUDOKU

8	7						
2	9	1	3				
						1	
8			5	4			
	3				5		
9			1		8	2	
		7			9	1	
4		6			7		
				9			4

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

4	2	9	6	8	9	1	7	8
8	9	7	1	2	9	8	7	6
1	8	6	3	4	7	8	5	2
2	7	8	9	1	3	9	6	7
6	7	8	5	7	2	7	8	1
9	3	1	4	4	5	6	2	7
7	1	2	5	6	8	6	2	7
8	9	6	2	1	3	7	7	4
8	6	9	3	2	3	2	3	8

ANSWER:

Miss Leach’s Nursery School

NEW BOOK FOR SALE: Have you heard of the Nipmuck Fires? Lights in the Sky? The Killingly Historical and Genealogical Society now has Ghosts of King Philip’s War by Thomas D’Agostino and Arlene Nicholson for sale for \$20. It includes this and other tales from our region... Please add \$5 if you wish to have a copy mailed. The books are available at the Killingly Historical Center during regular Wednesday or Saturday hours (10 a.m.-4 p.m.) or may be purchased by mail. Please send a check to P.O. Box 265, Danielson, CT 06239.

While looking for information on the Tucker District School for last week’s column, I came across wonderful photos and write-ups about Miss Leach’s Nursery School. Perhaps you remember hearing of this preschool or even went there yourself. It furnished a unique resource long before we had formal kindergartens and preschools operated by the towns. A summary of the school, dated April 1996 is located in Photo Box 27 at the Killingly Historical & Genealogical Center..

“The Fairlawn Country Day School was opened in the early 1950’s at the home of Miss Helen Atwood in Wauregan by Miss Atwood and Miss Mildred L. Leach. Miss

Leach graduated from Boston University with a major in Physical Education. She taught at Beaver Country Day School for eight years. For approximately 20 years she was a staff member at Camp Adeawonda in West Ossipee, New Hampshire, a summer camp run by Miss Atwood.

“Fairlawn was open during the school year as a nursery school and kindergarten, and for several years as a summer day camp for older children as well. Later the school was removed to 3 Hawkins Street in Danielson and after a year to the old whip factory, midway up the south side of Hawkins St.

“Over the years different people worked with Miss Leach and Miss Atwood; the main contributor being Mrs. Evelyn Rees Jones of Danielson. Also included were Mrs. Lorraine Paquin and Mrs. Violet Cardinal of Danielson, Mrs. Madelin Surdam of Wauregan, and Mrs. Marion Kenyon of Moosup.

“Miss Leach arranged weekly trip days, which were greeted with excitement by the children...A short list of some of the trips they made: Budd car train trip from Plainfield



KILLINGLY AT 300
.....
MARGARET WEAVER

Academy. Miss Leach presented the music program, and directed the physical education activities, and as she says from her pleasant room at Pierce Memorial Baptist Home in Brooklyn ‘tried to stay one step ahead of the children and their question.’

“Mrs. Jones prepared the ‘readiness’ work for the children, helping to get them ready for kindergarten or first grade. She was also the story teller, using books or flannel graph. Once a year to the delight of all, she had a ‘magic’ show in which she turned paper gingerbread boys made by her class into real gingerbread cookies.

“It is believed that Miss Leach’s Nursery School was the only one of its kind in the Danielson area. The school was transferred to the former LaChance’s Market building on Carter Street at a later

date and remained there until its sale at the time of Miss Leach’s retirement.”

A letter from co-director Helen E. Atwood dated May 3, 1955 in the photo box described the “‘Kindercamp’ for small children, ages 4-6 years and 6-9 years. The ‘Kindercamp’ will operate as an official Day Camp on the school property, Monday through Friday from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. Beginning June 20th. The program... will be under the direction of Mildred E. Leach (who will be assisted by a capable and experienced staff). Special equipment for play activities, pony rides, water play, boating, campcraft, outdoor cooking...puppets, junior archery; music and trips will be available. Featuring the program of regular summer activities will be the Pony department, where each child will not only have the opportunity to ride every day, but will assist according to his or her own ability, in the care, feeding and watering of the ponies... If you attended this Kindercamp, or had a child who attended, please consider sharing your memories.

A most intriguing newspaper article dated Aug. 5, 1974 bore the headline, “Parents Try To Save the ‘Chocolate School’...” “Miss Leach and her school, a brown building on Hawkins St.,

were faced with an early retirement this fall after a fire marshal’s inspection revealed several safety problems and resulted in repair orders amounting to almost \$5,000. The house, built in 1855 and used for many years as a factory for the production of whipsockets in Wauregan and Danielson for 21 years, hopes money for the repairs can be raised, and the house sold to someone who can continue the rental agreement which the school has had for 18yrs., or else will have to close.” (article handwritten date 8/5/1974; paper not given). A second article in the collection was titled, “Miss Leach’s School to Reopen at New Site will move to 2 Carter St. “‘The Chocolate School’ now becomes the “Little Brick School.” (article dated Sept. 25, 1974; paper not given). Again, please share memories if you recall these events and the move to Carter Street.

There are many photos of Miss Leach’s School in the Killingly Historical Society collection. Do stop in and see them. You’ll be pleasantly surprised at the variety. Perhaps you even have a photo that can be copied and added to the collection.

Support an Historic

KILLINGLY CHRONICLES SEPT. 23 – SEPT. 28

TOWN HALL MEETINGS (agendas and minutes at www.killingly.org)
Monday the 23rd
Board of Recreation Meeting (Killingly Community Center) 6 p.m.
Republican Town Committee Meeting (Room 102 – Town Hall) 7 p.m.
Tuesday the 24th
Democratic Town Committee Meeting (Room 102 – Town Hall) 6 p.m.
Thursday the 26th
Coffee with the Council (Chubby Dog Coffee and Gaming Bar) 6 to 7 p.m.
Open Space Land Acquisition Meeting (Room 102 – Town Hall) 6:30 p.m.

COMMUNITY EVENTS
Monday the 23rd
KPL Lit Talks (Library) All Day
Create Our Bookmark (Library) All Day
An Epic Book Quest (Ages 13-18) (Library) All Day
Wonderful Ones and Twos (Library) 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.
Monday Mystery Matinee (Ages 18+) (Library) 1 to 3 p.m.
Tuesday the 24th
Moving & Grooving (Ages 1-5) (Library) 9:30 to 10 a.m.
Can’t Put It Down Book Club (Ages 50+) (Library) 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.
Belfast Movie (PG-13) (Library) 4 to 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday the 25th
Little Listeners (Ages 2-5) (Library) 11 to 11:45 a.m.
Virtual Story Time (Ages three and up) (Library) 10 a.m.
Thursday the 26th
Story Craft (Ages 2-6) (Library) 10 to 10:45 a.m.
Friday the 27th
Block Party (All Ages) (Library) 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.
Saturday the 28th
Photography Contest (Ages 18 and up) (Library) All Day

KILLINGLY PARKS & RECREATION PROGRAMS/ EVENTS COMING UP...
Beginner Rhythm Ballroom Dancing – Nov. 18 through Dec. 2 (Mondays) (Killingly Community Center)
Tuesday Pound for Adults with Chris – Session 1 – Sept. 17 through Oct. 22 (Killingly Community Center)
Pre-Season Basketball Skills Clinic – Nov. 4 through Nov. 7 (Monday, Wednesday and Thursday) (Killingly Community Center)
Tuesday Art Club Classes with Tunk City – Sept. 10 through Dec. 17 (Tuesdays) (Killingly Community Center)
Virtual High Five 2024 (Killingly Community Center) (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday)
River Trail Wake-Up Workout with CV/Fitness – Sept. 9 through Oct. 14 (Mondays)
Thursday Yoga with Mary (Session 1) – Sept. 12 through Oct. 3 (Killingly Community Center)
Zumba with Movement Magic – Sept. 16 through Sept. 30 (Killingly Community Center) (Mondays)
Getting in Line – Beginner Line Dancing with Mary – Sept. 11 through Oct. 2 (Killingly Community Center) (Wednesdays)
Relaxation and Guided Meditation – Sept. 24 through Oct. 29 (Killingly Community Center) (Tuesdays)
The Big E – Sept. 24
Stew and Story – Oct. 17 (Killingly Community Center)
Spooktacular Parade – Oct. 26 (Davis Park and Main Street)
Youthoop Girls and Boys – Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8
Youthoop Instructional - Grades 1 and 2 – Dec. 21 through Feb. 8
Check out the Killingly Parks and Recreation website for more daily class schedules, camps, trips and events!
For updates and changes, please visit the calendar on the Town of Killingly Web site at www.killingly.org.

Fall planting provides months of continuous spring color

Welcome spring and create continuous color for several months with a collection of spring-flowering bulbs. After planting in the fall, you’ll enjoy an array of flower colors that combine nicely with other spring-flowering trees, shrubs, and flowers.

Start the season with early blooming snowdrops. As winter fades watch for the dangling white flowers on six- to ten-inch-tall plants. Include these small flowers in rock gardens, mixed borders, and informal landscapes in sunny and part-shade locations.

Include a tapestry of colors with white, purple, lavender, and yellow crocus. Large Flowering Pickwick crocus offers unique blooms of white flowers with purple pin-stripes. Its striped petals surround the red-orange stamens making this a standout in any planting. Crocus are a favorite of critters as well as gardeners so consider protecting them with a repellent as the leaves emerge in spring.

Look to early, mid, and late spring blooming tulips and daffodil varieties to maximize the color in your landscape throughout the spring. Check catalog descriptions and package labels to help you select an array of bloom times. Longfield Gardens’ Bloom Times Guide to Spring and Summer Bulbs (Longfield-Gardens.com) can also help you plan for three months of color in your

landscape.

Look to Emperor, Kaufmanniana, and Greigii tulips for a bit of early spring color. Add some fragrance and showy, peony-like flowers with Double Early Foxtrot. This award-winning tulip has sturdy, weatherproof stems that support its loosely cupped flowers. Its petals contain a range of pink shades from white to deep rose.

Plant some Darwin Hybrid and Triumph tulips for mid-spring color in the garden. The two-toned flowers on Apricot Impression seem to glow and as a Darwin hybrid, they will have a



GARDEN MOMENTS
.....
MELINDA MYERS

long-lasting presence in your garden. Finish the spring season with fancy ruffled parrot tulips, fringed and lily tulips, and more single and double late bloomers. You’ll enjoy the extended show and late spring flowers to enjoy in arrangements.

Don’t overlook daffodils. You’ll find a variety of flowers with long, short, large, and split trumpets. Daffodil flowers may be one color, or the trumpet may be a different color than the color of the surrounding petals. Double variet-



Courtesy — Longfield-Gardens.com

The late spring blooming bulb Purple Sensation allium has four-inch round purple flowers and is critter-resistant.

ies add a unique look to any garden. The early- to mid-spring blooming Cyclamineus Tete-a-Tete daffodil may be small in stature at seven inches but the bright yellow flowers and three blossoms per stem make it visible from a distance.

Combine some Armenian grape hyacinths with mid-spring blooming tulips, daffodils, and perennials. Their small, cobalt-blue, fragrant flowers last weeks and look good wherever they are planted.

Bridge spring and summer flower seasons in your garden with Purple Sensation allium. This late spring blooming bulb has four-inch round purple flowers high atop 24-to-30-inch stems. These reliable bloomers are critter-resistant like daffodils and grape hyacinths. Enjoy them in your garden, fresh bouquets, and dried flower arrange-

ments.

Make this the year you select and do some fall planting of various early, mid, and late spring flowering bulbs. You’ll be rewarded with a burst of early spring color and sustained beauty from a mix of spring flowering bulbs.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including the recently released Midwest Gardener’s Handbook, 2nd Edition and Small Space Gardening. She hosts The Great Courses “How to Grow Anything” DVD instant video series and the nationally syndicated Melinda’s Garden Moment TV & radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine and was commissioned by Longfield Gardens for her expertise to write this article. Her Web site is www.MelindaMyers.com.

Voters invited to “grill” local candidates at Woodstock Dems’ Political Cookout

WOODSTOCK — Woodstock voters: your best chance to “grill” political candidates with questions on matters “dogging” town residents is coming — it’s the annual Candidate Cookout on Saturday, Oct. 5, at Roseland Park. Free hot dogs (meat and vegan) plus soft drinks and chips will be served from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Hosted by the Woodstock Democratic Town Committee, the Cookout features candidates running for offices representing Woodstock. The Candidate Cookout has become a highlight of recent election campaigns in Woodstock.

Candidates invited are incumbent U.S. Sen. Chris Murphy, incumbent Congressman Joe Courtney (2nd district), and incumbent State Rep. Pat Boyd (50th district). Also, Merry C. Garrett, candidate for State Senate (35th district), and Woodstock’s own Ethan Werstler, State Representative candidate (52nd district). Both Garrett and Werstler are making their first runs for political office.

“Candidates will respond to questions and concerns raised by voters,” said Suzanne Woodward, one of the event coordinators for WDTC. “Come early! The grills will be smokin’ until the voters have spoken!”

The WDTC invites all voters to join us for hot dogs at Roseland Park on Oct. 5 to meet the candidates.

FOOD DRIVE

continued from page A1

to be a perfect spot as both Chubby Dog Coffee Company and their neighbor Wonderland Comics are well-known for their embrace of nostalgia and pop culture. O'Connor said the support for their cause spreads beyond the "Star Trek" community as they often meet and embrace fans of many other genre properties as well.

"We love our 'Star Wars' friends and promote their organizations and we believe in everyone, every fandom whether it's 'Star Wars' or 'Back to the Future' or 'Star Trek,' you name it. We believe everyone can work together across all franchises and we love all things nerd, but what makes 'Star Trek' last is that the franchise keeps reinventing itself and each property is geared towards teaching moral lessons from the start. The shows on TV today are teaching the same lessons about why it's good to be a good person," said O'Connor.

The Fill a Shuttle Craft Campaign proved to be a great success bringing in more than 40 pounds of food and products split between Daily Bread and the Humane Society. This is in addition to more than \$500 that the USS Charter Oak raised during a previous month-long campaign to assist the Humane Society with their programs.

YOUTH

continued from page A1

Participating businesses ranged from cultural institutions like the Lyman Allyn Museum and Mystic Seaport to social service organizations such as FRESH New London and local municipal offices across the region.

This diverse range of worksites highlights the program's extensive reach and impact. "The substantial collaboration between the Connecticut Youth Employment Program and institutions such as Mystic Seaport Museum, The Garde Arts Center, and NSA Supermarket benefits our communities by bridging present and future employment in young people's lives," said Cindy Alvarez, Teen Development and Employment Program Coordinator at New London Youth Affairs.

Participants also attended workshops on topics including financial literacy, labor market information, youth labor laws, career decision-making, equity, mental health and wellness, interpersonal skills, problem-solving, time management, entrepreneurial education, and driver's education preparation.

This comprehensive

approach, Rivera said, leads to increased confidence and a sense of purpose. "I see hopefulness," she said. "I see growth. I see responsibility. I see them evolve from where they start, becoming more vocal, advocating for themselves... Youth needs to be successful at something. I find that so rewarding, and it just changes me."

EASTCONN continues to offer support throughout the calendar year, but on a smaller scale.

"We do have a number of youths in our programs during the year – around 40 – and they might come in different increments," Rivera said. "But it's so good, because a lot of these kids: their parents might not have the tools to guide them to things like this or help them get jobs."

For many young workers in the Willimantic area, the CT Youth Employment and Training Program offered a first glimpse into the world of employment and an opportunity to make a difference in their communities.

Isaac B., 15, from Mansfield, spent the summer working at Covenant Soup Kitchen in Willimantic. The experience, he said, changed the way he looked at unhoused and itinerant individuals and families.

"My perception was a very negative one when I first got here," he said, "but I've met some very interesting people this summer."

A shift in perspective was a common theme among the youth workers. "It's been good, I've seen different things," said Daelen C., 15, who worked at the Access Community Agency food pantry in Willimantic. "A lot of people don't have the resources that we have, so it's very sad. But I'm glad to help out people who don't have a lot of stuff... It's good to work with people who are unfortunate and don't have a lot of resources. It's a different outlook on things."

"It feels great, helping the community out, making sure that they have great food as opposed to bad food, giving them seconds if they want them," said Gustavo V., 18, from Willimantic, who worked at Covenant Soup Kitchen. "I've gotten to know some of the people in the community. It feels really great."

Madison L., a 15-year-old from Windham, said she made valuable friendships working at the Covenant Soup Kitchen in Willimantic – including "new best friend" Keyana M., 17, who replied: "[Madison is] probably the person I trust the most."

The program also addresses a critical demand for labor in local communities.

Maria Rodriguez, Food Pantry Supervisor at Access Community Action Agency, said her nonprofit organization is nearly always understaffed. "On Mondays and Tuesdays we get shipments of supplies in Willimantic and Danielson from Connecticut Foodshare," she said. "If I didn't have these [youth workers], I couldn't make it happen."

Beyond the immediate impact on participants and communities, the CT Youth Employment and Training Program strives to address broader challenges facing youth in eastern Connecticut.

A recent report by Dalio Education and the Boston Consulting Group titled "Connecticut's Unspoken Crisis" highlighted alarming rates of youth disconnection in the region, with some towns seeing 30-40% of young people neither working nor in school.

The Youth Employment and Training Program serves as one crucial intervention in this landscape. "These kids are really excited about building essential life skills," said EASTCONN program facilitator Kevin Segar. "If you see

the interaction with the adults, they're really building a rapport with other people, and they're really enjoying it. I think having this kind of job makes them feel important."

As eastern Connecticut grapples with the challenges of youth disconnection and workforce development, the CT Youth Employment and Training Program offers a beacon of hope. By providing meaningful work experiences, skill development, and community engagement opportunities, the initiative is helping to shape the region's future workforce while addressing immediate community needs.

For the young people who participated this summer, the program has been more than just a job – it's been a stepping stone towards a brighter future.

"I learned more about communicating with people and helping people more," 15-year-old Gennadi F. "It feels exciting. I feel happy when I help people and I see that people are happy. I think it's really going to help me in my future."

To learn more about the CT Youth Employment and Training Program, please visit www.eastconn.org/youth-employment.

FIRE

continued from page A1

Volunteer Fire Department, West Thompson Fire Department, East Putnam Fire Department, Attawaugan Fire Department, Putnam EMS, Woodstock Volunteer Fire Association, Pascoag Fire Department of Rhode Island and the Webster Fire Department and Douglas Fire Departments in Massachusetts all assisted on the scene. Tanker trucks were deployed to move around 52,000 gallons of water from Quaddick Lake to battle the fire. All structures were considered total losses in the blaze. The fire was knocked down within one and a half hours according to emergency officials, but crews remained on the scene for 18 hours to ensure the fire wouldn't reignite and to investigate a cause.

In the early morning hours two victims were located on scene. According to a report from the Connecticut State Police confirmed by

the East Thompson Fire Department an unidentified male was found 200 feet from the property in the nearby woods suffering extensive burns injuries. The individual was transported by Life Flight to Mass General Hospital in Boston in critical condition. Police later confirmed that a second adult victim was found deceased in the rubble of the collapsed home. The Stonebridge Press has confirmed with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner that the deceased victim was Diane Johnson, who co-owned the home with James Johnson. The second victim was not identified in time for this report.

The Thompson Fire Marshal's Office, Connecticut State Police Fire & Explosives Unit, and Detectives from the Eastern District Major Crime Squad are leading the investigation into the blaze. As of this writing, no cause or confirmation of foul play had been issued by law enforcement and the fire is simply deemed "suspicious" in nature.

WPCA

continued from page A1

the town has already confirmed, while a design will create a hard copy plan for implementation. The overall plan would be to greatly increase the capacity of the plant to serve both Killingly and Brooklyn for several

decades.

With Brooklyn also being a stakeholder in the project, the Town Council asked if Killingly would engage in cost sharing with their neighbor town. However, Calorio indicated that Brooklyn is not in the position to make that kind of investment.

"We have not asked Brooklyn for design fund-

ing. Brooklyn's WPCA hasn't had capacity. Their financial reserves have dwindled significantly," said Calorio. "I think they're willing to be a team player in this in the long haul, but up front it's not necessarily a viable option and that's been my discussions with Brooklyn. They want to be a partner, they're

okay with paying, but the resources are not the same. It's a different matter for them at the moment."

The Town Council approved the design funding unanimously. The project is expected to go out to bid later this year with the bids not to exceed \$2 million.

The griper

Some people gripe with just cause, and others gripe.

Larry visited the same café every morning and, without fail, grumbled, griped, and complained about everything. "Why are the napkins folded this way? They're too neat!" "The muffins are too... muffiny." One day, he grumbled, "This sunlight coming through the window? Too bright. Can't someone turn it down?" At first, the other customers tried to ignore him, but soon, one by one, they started to leave in the most exaggerated ways. One woman put down her coffee, sighed dramatically, and crawled out the door on all fours like escaping a war zone. Another man threw his hands in the air, yelled, "I can't take this anymore!" and moonwalked out, never breaking eye contact with Larry. Finally, the barista, tired of it all, slowly slid out from behind the counter, tiptoed to the door, and quietly locked it behind her as she left.

If you must gripe to be happy, for

goodness sake, do it quietly so as not to disturb others!

Once, Larry Longsigh was in his driveway, determined to assemble an exercise bike he'd ordered online. The moment he opened the box, disaster struck. "Why are there so many parts? I'm building a bike, not a space shuttle!" He groaned at the manual, which he claimed was "written in hieroglyphics," and tossed aside the tiny wrench. "What is this, a toy? I need real tools!"

Larry attacked the bike with a power drill as if he were about to build a skyscraper. The handlebars went on crooked. "Great, now I'll steer straight into traffic!" He twisted them violently—SNAP! A piece flew off, nearly taking out a bird. "Perfect. Now it's broken, and I'm still fat."

Still, Larry pressed on, jamming parts together until the bike almost looked functional. He hopped on, pedaled once, twice, and then—CRUNCH! The entire thing collapsed under him, sending him sprawling in a mess of bolts, handlebars, and shame.

Don't be too hard on the person who always gripes—they're making life hard enough on their own.

Larry Longsigh didn't limit his complaints to the café or his driveway—his favorite spot to grumble was the neighborhood Christmas party. One year, he started strong. "Tinsel on the tree? Choking hazard," he muttered, tugging at a strand. At the snack table, he eyed the eggnog. "Who drinks this? It's liquid regret!"

But the real show came during the Secret Santa gift exchange. "Gift exchanges? Great, more junk," Larry groaned. When his turn came, he opened a scarf. "A scarf? What am I supposed to do with this? Hang myself?"

In typical Larry fashion, he tied the scarf dramatically, pulling too hard and accidentally hooking himself on a nearby coat rack. His legs flailed as the room fell silent, then burst into laughter. "This is exactly what I get for showing up," Larry sighed, still dangling.

Give a griper plenty of rope, and they will hang themselves.

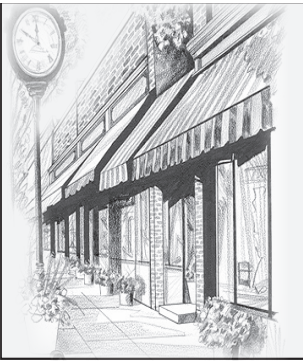
And so, we come full circle, back to the art of pointless moaning—gripe-ology at its finest.

In the end, though, constant complaining is a trap. Life keeps moving, whether you're enjoying it or not. So, the real question is: will you spend it griping, or will you find a reason to smile?

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