

These derby racers really 'Zoom'

With 24 racers, their builders and pit crews, the basement of St. Robert Bellarmine Church would have surely been buzzing Saturday for the Pack 20 pinewood derby. But pandemic regulations don't look favorably on big turnouts. That doesn't mean, however, that a signature event for Cub Scouts must be canceled.

Cubmaster Mark Daponte and his crew wouldn't let that happen. Instead of congregating in the church basement, event registration went outside in the parking lot. As parents pulled in, they were greeted by a display of some unusual machines and Susan DeAthos, who manned a table where the derby racers were weighed and registered. On display were trophies and goodie bags for each contestant.

From the parking lot, the

racers were transported to the track in the basement where the action would take place and be Zoomed to those watching at home. Each of the racers were entered in a double elimination competition, with the five fastest cars being entered in the Pinewood Derby Race of Champions to be held at Camp Yawgoog on April 10.

Zooming into the winner's circle were Alex DaPonte, first place; Andre Slinko, second; Galvin Kleinburg, third; Jamison DeAthos, fourth; and Ryder Dieringer, fifth.

And not everything was based on speed. The best paint award went to Logan Cabral; Most Likely Built by a Scout, Jamison DeAthos; Most Cub Scout Pride, Andre Slinko; Most Original, Derryck Roberts Canham; and Most Humorous, Antonio Bressette.

Text and photo by John Howell



COLORFUL SPEEDSTER: Pemberley Reyes displays her racer before it is weighed – racers can't be more than 5 ounces – and then approved for the competition. For more photos from the derby, turn to page 8.



WILLING TO HELP: Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena said he would be willing to open the vaccination pod for other communities to use. (Sun Rise photo)

Polisena in favor of more regional vaccination pods

By JACOB MARROCCO

Mayor Joseph Polisena continued to voice his support for more regional COVID-19 vaccination pods during an interview with the Sun Rise on Monday, citing no issues in Johnston's first week and offering to open the recreation center to other towns.

Recommendations from Gov. Gina Raimondo and Department of Health Director Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott to reduce the number of vaccination centers around the state have met opposition from incoming Gov. Dan McKee and members of his COVID-19 advisory group. Both Polisena and Dr. John Stoukides, the co-chairs of the board, have

told the Sun Rise they are in favor of establishing more pods around the Ocean State for a more community-based approach. The counterargument centers on easier and more efficient dosage distribution at fewer sites.

"I'm a believer in the local pods, and they can work hand-in-hand with the regional pods," Polisena said. "Gov. McKee has some ideas what he wants to do. Not every city and town is going to have a local pod, and I understand that. I called the [Town] Council president from Scituate, and I said to her if she needs a location she can use our sports complex. I'd be willing to have other smaller communities use it also.

To send people from Johnston to Cranston or to Providence at the Dunkin' [Donuts] Center, especially some of the elderly people, that's very difficult."

McKee said during an advisory group meeting last Friday that he doesn't envision pods in all 39 cities and towns, but the total would be more than the RIDOH's proposed six or seven. Polisena said the Johnston pod is proof of concept – vaccinating hundreds of residents in a timely manner while potentially opening the door for neighboring communities to use it as well. The mayor said he has reached out Scituate officials offering the facility if they would like to use it.

"I think people feel a heck of a lot more comfortable – we are still getting calls today, people can't believe how smooth it was," Polisena said. "[McKee] saw first-hand how well it was. I've participated in regional pods, but with our pod what we did was we enhanced a lot of what the regional pods did. For instance, we had our firefighters walking through where [people] were waiting, talking to them, to make sure they were OK."

Polisena said Feb. 17's opening day for inoculations served as a sort of socially distanced reunion for some elderly people who haven't left their homes most of the

■ POD - PAGE 8

1000s get state forms to pay taxes on benefits they didn't receive

By JOHN HOWELL

Thousands of Rhode Islanders are being asked to pay federal and state taxes on money they never received.

Over the last month, taxpayers started receiving 1099-G forms from the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training reporting how much they were paid in unemployment compensation for 2020. That's fine for people who collected unemployment benefits, but the forms are also being sent to people who never filed a jobless claim.

What's more, the information has also been sent to the Internal Revenue Service, meaning Uncle Sam expects to get its share of the payments.

It's not that the payments were never made. It's that the money went to people who gained access to the identities of countless of Rhode Islanders and falsely filed for benefits on their behalf.

How many Rhode Islanders?

That's hard to pin down, but Major John C. Alfred, Detective Commander of the Rhode Island State Police, said last week his agency has received 45,000 reports of false claims for unemployment compensation or tax forms for compensation they neither sought nor were paid.

State Police saw a spike in reports following the shutdown in response to the pandemic, when the state's unemployment shot from 5 percent in March 2020 to 17.9 percent the following month. The Department of Labor and Training was flooded with claims for unemployment compensation. There were reports of people waiting on calls for hours just to start the process of filing for unemployment.

During the period when the federal government augmented weekly payments by \$600, many people who were employed received notices from DLT that they were approved for unemployment benefits even though they had not applied for them. Some people called DLT to report the notifications and that they were working.

■ TAXES - PAGE 8



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Watch Your MOUTH
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POLICE LOG

The Police Log is a digest of reports provided by the Johnston Police, Rhode Island State Police and other departments.

DUI

Patrolman Arthur Petteruti responded to 2320 Plainfield Pike on the morning of Jan. 31 in response to a motor vehicle accident.

Prior to his arrival, Petteruti said Scituate Police personnel were on scene and removed the operator out of the driver's seat. Upon arrival, he spoke with the driver, identified as Joseph Souza, 37, Aldelaide Ave., Warwick. The officer said Souza was traveling on Plainfield Pike and didn't recall the sequence of events leading up to the crash, and Petteruti noted that Souza's car crossed the double yellow lines into the eastbound travel lane, striking a guard rail and coming to rest in an embankment.

While speaking with Souza, Petteruti noted that his speech was slurred, mumbled and raspy, and that he was nodding in and out. When asked if he was taking any prescription medica-

tion or had any alcohol, he reportedly said, "I stopped drinking at approximately 0330 hours," with the rest of the quote redacted from the report.

Souza complied with standardized field sobriety tests, during which Petteruti observed his difficulty completing the walk-and-turn test as well as the one-leg stand. Souza did advise the officer of knee and hip pain from a previous incident.

Souza was arrested on charges of driving under the influence, second offense; refusal to submit to a chemical test, second offense; and operating under a foreign license, second offense. While at the station, Souza reportedly took a chemical breath test that read .000, but Petteruti determined that his actions were not consistent with a person who would show a clear BAC reading.

Souza was arraigned and released on \$10,000 personal recognizance, and he was issued a video appearance for Third Division District Court on Feb. 2.

SHOPLIFTING

Patrolwoman Ash-

ley Vanbemmelen wrote that Rhode Island State Police responded to JPD headquarters with Albert Rosario, 31, 218 Webster Ave., Providence, who was wanted on an active warrant stemming from two misdemeanor shoplifting counts.

Rosario's arrest stemmed from an alleged incident that occurred Jan. 25 when Detective Thomas Dwyer responded to the Home Depot at 100 Stone Hill Drive. Dwyer met with the loss prevention officer in reference to two reported shoplifting incidents. He advised that Rosario, whom he referred to as a known offender, entered the Home Depot along with an unknown female party four days earlier. The reporting party said that Rosario was wearing a Milwaukee brand mask, and that he has posed as an employee/representative from Milwaukee on several occasions at other Home Depot locations.

While both Rosario and the woman were walking around the store, both were witnessed selecting mul-

tiple Milwaukee power tools and remove them out of the boxes and conceal them inside the woman's bag and Rosario's hooded sweatshirt. Minutes later, both were observed exiting the store, walking past all points of purchase without making any attempt to purchase the items totaling \$1,285.

The second alleged incident occurred the next day, where they followed Rosario to the tool department and witnessed him conceal a Milwaukee drill valued at \$299 under his sweatshirt and exit the store.

After he was taken to JPD headquarters, Patrolman Derick Ofori wrote that he observed a large bulk inside his socks on his right foot while in the processing room. He asked Rosario to take a seat and upon removing his socks, Ofori saw a gold keychain pill holder. He said that inside he found nine pills later identified as oxycodone. Rosario was subsequently charged with felony possession.

COVID-19 group assigns subcommittees, McKee seeks strong community response

By JACOB MARROCCO

Mayor Joseph Polisena, co-chair of incoming Gov. Dan McKee's COVID-19 advisory group, announced during a meeting on Friday evening that the board would divide into three subcommittees to handle different aspects of pandemic response.

Shortly after Polisena broke that news to his fellow members, Dr. Hemi Tewarson - filling in as co-chair for the absent Dr. John Stoukides - said the three concentrations will include vaccine distribution, opening schools and colleges safely and opening businesses. Tewarson said vaccine messaging is going to be crucial in the weeks and months ahead, especially as the Johnson & Johnson shot is approved and hits the market.

"It is likely to be approved at the end of the month, it's a one-shot opportunity," Tewarson said. "It's going to be a helpful resource to get the vaccine to more people. The challenge there is that it's 72 percent effective and lower than Pfizer or Moderna. Nationally there's been some pushback around, 'Well, we don't want to have this vaccine because it's less effective than the ones authorized. Thinking about how to address that and explaining new variants is going to be a key

piece to all of that."

McKee led off the meeting with opening remarks addressing some friction between his approach and the recommendations from the Department of Health. Director Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott has favored a more centralized approach, with a handful of regional pods to make distribution easier. Polisena and Stoukides, however, have both told said they would like to see more vaccination centers spread across cities and towns for a more community-based approach.

"There are many people in the state working very, very hard to get this right," McKee said. "I don't want any of my comments meant to be [taken] somehow that those efforts are being discounted in any way at all. Yu do have a new governor and someone who brings a different perspective and I've been very public about speeding up the state's vaccine distribution. With the variants already here, we need to move as quickly as we can."

McKee said he and his administration are preparing for an increase in doses from the federal government, pledging that they would be "releasing some of our inventory in an aggressive way to get more shots in

the arms." Chief of Staff Tony Silva will be the point person for rollout, with McKee saying Silva "has got the skill set to logistically put things in place and complement what's going on right now."

McKee added that he wanted the communities come together to "create this 9/11 moment" to "rally around the enemy" and emerge from the pandemic.

"We're not talking about a vaccine site in all 39 cities and towns," McKee said. "[We have] surveys now to see what capacities look like. Many of our municipalities will be on reserve and I want them to be prepared. Those that are already active ... Johnston and Portsmouth, there's something very important with what's happening there. If you want to get commitment from people you have to get them involved ... a sense of community spirit there that I can't describe. Overbuild our capacity so we're ready when the vaccine comes."

National Education Association Rhode Island Executive Director Bob Walsh Jr. gave a dispatch from the schools community, saying there was an outbreak in East Greenwich shortly before break. He said NEARI is "at odds" with Gov.

Gina Raimondo and Alexander-Scott regarding vaccine priority for teachers. He said educators should be vaccinated "as a group," saying that the Johnson & Johnson vaccine approval could open a gateway to accomplishing that goal.

"We're already open, we're for the most part open and being pushed farther down the list," Walsh said, noting that President Joe Biden has advocated for accelerating the teacher vaccination timeline. "I'm not advocating for the full CDC [recommendation] which puts our folks ahead of the 65 and up group. Ages 65 and up, first responders, those with underlying medical conditions, the first people served should be the people at risk of death."

Tewarson said the next couple of months will be vital, as the state handles those who would like a vaccine but cannot get one as supplies could increase or vacillate.

"Experts think lots of supply in April, and the states haven't heard what they're going to get," Tewarson said. "Rhode Island is really planning for the next 30 to 60 days, people who want the vaccine but can't get it, prioritization issues, how do you manage that? Be ready for when you're going to have supplies."

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CNE, Lifespan agree to merge, partner with Brown for 'world-class' academic health system

By DANIEL KITTREDGE

After years of talks – and, at times, acrimony – the state’s two largest health care systems have reached agreement on a merger.

The new entity formed from the combination of Lifespan and Care New England would also bring Brown University into the fold to create a “world-class integrated academic health system,” according to a joint statement Tuesday announcing the signing of a “definitive agreement” on the merger plans.

The university has pledged at least \$125 million over the course of five years to support the development of the new system. Additionally, “Brown will participate on the governing board of the newly merged health system and play a key role in integrating medical education and research with clinical practice across the combined systems hospitals,” the statement reads.

“With co-investment from Lifespan, Care New England and Brown, we bring together the system’s premier teaching hospitals – Lifespan’s Rhode Island, Miriam, Hasbro, Newport and Bradley hospitals, and Care New England’s Women & Infants, Kent, and Butler hospitals – with Brown’s leading research and medical education from The Warren Alpert Medical School,” the statement continues. “This will create an integrated academic health system (AHS) that has the full array of complementary medical specialties required for excellence in health care, biomedical research to remain on the leading

edge of treatment and therapies, and the collaboration required to enable medical practitioners to effectively and efficiently provide health care to the community. This is a unique and valuable opportunity to bring together the expertise and capacity of three organizations to offer excellent, coordinated care to patients.”

The merger must clear a number of regulatory hurdles, including approvals from the state’s Department of Health, the attorney general’s office and the Federal Trade Commission.

It will also undoubtedly face antitrust concerns and questions regarding its impact on Rhode Island’s health care and economic landscapes, given the number of people treated and employed by the two existing systems.

In a statement Tuesday, Lynn Blais, president of United Nurses and Allied Professionals, said: “Any new entity that would combine two of Rhode Island’s largest healthcare providers and employers must be painstakingly scrutinized to ensure that it is in the best interest of patients and frontline health workers. Our priority is the protection of critical, local services and jobs at our community hospitals.”

She continues: “We look forward to continuing a thoughtful and productive dialogue with Lifespan and Care New England about this process, and while we see the potential in this proposed new entity, we remain skeptical without the assurance of a formal agreement on services and jobs.”

State leaders, meanwhile, have expressed support for the creation

of the new health system.

Gov. Gina Raimondo – who has been a proponent of the merger and in 2019 urged Lifespan, Care New England and Brown to engage in new talks after Massachusetts-based Partners stepped away from its bid to acquire Care New England – issued a statement Tuesday saying there “is no question that a local, integrated health care system is in the best interest of Rhode Islanders.”

“Today’s announcement will benefit patients by ensuring they have access to the highest quality of care and will spur economic growth by helping us attract top talent and solidify our position as a hub of innovation and scientific development,” continues the statement from the outgoing governor, who is poised to be confirmed as U.S. Secretary of Commerce as early as next week. “I want to thank the leadership teams of Lifespan, Care New England and Brown University for their collaboration in reaching this historic agreement.”

House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi and Senate President Dominick Ruggerio issued a joint statement after the merger agreement was announced.

“We are excited that the long-anticipated merger of Lifespan and Care New England, our two largest health care delivery systems, has advanced for public review by the Department of Health, the Health Services Council and the Attorney General’s office,” it reads. “We have seen in other regions the tremendous advantages that stem from a strong academic health system as an an-

chor tenant in a capital city. The legislature will be reviewing the details to ensure that patient care and the health care jobs are not adversely impacted by the merger.”

Tuesday’s statement lists a wide range of benefits that Lifespan, Care New England and Brown say the new arrangement will have for Rhode Island.

Most are focused on improvements in health care, including the “integration of medical innovation and world-class research to inform clinical care in such areas as cancer, women’s health, and brain diseases like Alzheimer’s and ALS by moving research from the laboratory bench into the hands of clinicians taking care of patients at the hospital bedside.”

The new health system will also be positioned to “address many of the underlying chronic health conditions of Rhode Island residents, including cancer, heart disease, neurological problems, children’s diseases and conditions, behavioral health/substance misuse, women’s health, and obesity,” and help to “encourage healthy environments in Rhode Island communities that lead to reductions in racial and ethnic disparities in health.”

Additionally, the health systems and Brown say the new system will “serve as an economic engine that attracts federal research funding, generates biomedical innovation, attracts and retains talent, attracts and creates new companies and collaborates with other Rhode Island academic, civic, and business organizations.”

“What I am most excited about

is the ability of our new, locally based, academic health system to compete at a national level, innovate, attract top talent, develop new scientific knowledge, improve the care we deliver and serve as an economic engine for Providence and the state,” Lifespan President and CEO Timothy J. Babineau, M.D., said in the joint statement. “This is an exciting moment-in-time, we cannot let it slip through our grasp yet again.”

James E. Fanale, M.D., president and CEO of Care New England, added: “The positive reaction that we’ve seen, really across the board, to the creation of this new system has been outstanding. Our partners across the region, especially our internal colleagues and physicians, really support this because it’s a very exciting proposition. Creating something new and visionary, but with concrete goals and true work plans, sets the integrated AHS up to achieve high quality care with local access for the people that we serve. It is something to be proud of.”

Christina Paxson, president of Brown University, said in the statement: “We’re committed to creating an integrated health system that increases access to excellent health care and by doing so, reduces health disparities. Great health care should be accessible to everyone, including people from communities that historically have experienced obstacles to accessing health care. The seamless integration of research and clinical care drives improvements in the health of patients by offering all Rhode Islanders access to state-of-the-art medicine.”




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Ranney, Nugent explore career paths, pandemic during science webinar

By JACOB MARROCCO

Drs. Megan Ranney and Nicole Nugent explored their work in the medical field and how the pandemic has affected their lives during the latest installment in the RI Bio Women in Science speaker series on Tuesday morning.

Ranney works as an ER doctor at Brown University Emergency Medicine and as the director of the Brown-Lifespan Center for Digital Health. Nugent serves as an associate professor in psychiatry and human behavior, pediatrics and emergency medicine at Brown's Warren Alpert Medical School. She is also a child clinical psychologist at Hasbro Children's Hospital. Cameron & Mittleman's Alyssa Boss moderated the conversation, which had more than 60 people in attendance via Zoom.

Nugent said the first time she discovered her "passion about social context" was when she volunteered at the Good Days and Special Times camp outside Rochester, New York, shortly before college. The camp hosts kids battling cancer, and Nugent said they would often arrive "nervous and really apprehensive." That all changed after they had some time to acclimate.

"All of a sudden by the end of the week, they were just fearless," Nugent said. "They were just so happy and you could just see the fact that social interaction, this time with friends, the fun with ropes course or whatever it was, was just changing the way they felt emotionally ... That kind of got stuck in my mind in terms of if I wanted to make a difference in the world."



NICOLE NUGENT

Ranney discussed two watershed moments in her life that led her down the path to pursuing medicine. She first majored in the history of science, a field she said she landed on by "happenstance," and she considered going into journalism, medicine and teaching after finishing undergrad. She would go on to serve a couple of years in the Peace Corps during the late 1990s, operating out of Ivory Coast in West Africa.



MEGAN RANNEY

Ranney said Ivory Coast at the time had one of the highest HIV/AIDS rates in the world, and the country didn't have access to retrovirals that could combat the disease.

"When you caught HIV it was basically a death sentence," Ranney said. "I spent a lot of time educating folks in my village about what HIV was, but at the end of the day no one cared because it was basically a death sentence."

She applied to medical school out of a desire to treat the villagers with whom she had worked, intending to venture back overseas to write about the situation. She said, "to study and write in medicine, you have to be a scientist," noting that her first paper concerned informed consent in Mali.

"Now here I am looking at how science and society intersect in different ways," Ranney said. "I absolutely adore my day job as an emergency physician, and at the end of the day what motivates me is what the drivers are of good and poor health."

Ranney said she "can't think of a way the pandemic hasn't affected my work or life" since coronavirus arrived in Rhode Island early last year. She noted that both she and Nugent have young children who are primarily learning from home — even giving a shout-out to her middle-school son in class over her shoulder.

"COVID has changed my clinical life tremendously," Ranney said. "The ER is a very different place than it was a year ago. It changed our research, we've been keeping our old research information side going while we have a pandemic of a lifetime. ... Also trying to make sure that the regular stuff doesn't get forgotten about. As women in medicine and science, it's just put so much more on our plate. I can't think of a space that it hasn't touched or changed."

She said she recently completed an analysis of 1,000 kids nationwide examining social media use during the pandemic, and she predicted some of the trends that may emerge once the virus has slowed its spread.

"[Social media usage] has increased, but where its effect has had on kids depends on who they are and why they're using it," Ranney said. "I want to wait until we're through the thick of COVID, that [I think] there will be this washout. We're living on adrenaline at home, so this will be something we'll have to account for when we look at the data three years from now."

She also alluded to a future joint study with Nugent that will surround "social media and social connection and violence."

Nugent said there will be a "massive societal adjustment" when life returns to normal, as those who have become comfortable with working from home and avoiding traffic during commutes return to their offices.

She said her daughter told her she prefers virtual learning to in-person, too.

She also said the pandemic has made career paths a bit more competitive.

"It is really tricky," Nugent said. "As [Megan] alluded to earlier, people who are at transition points in their careers — applying to grad school, applying for med, post-doc applications to faculty positions — it's really hard. I know that both Megan and I, we take that part of our careers really seriously. We both care a lot about the folks that we work with and want them to be successful."

Ranney advised women looking to enter a career in science to "be your whole self" and find "great people to work with." Nugent agreed, urging people to be open about help they may need.

"The other thing I'd be doing a disservice if I didn't admit was, I don't have all the answers. Just being open and honest and listening and collaborating. ... Find the other person who knows that stuff that I did not know, and it's probably Megan," she said with a laugh.

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The dance of two governors continues

TALKING POLITICS



by
IAN
DONNIS

There's little doubt that Gov. Gina Raimondo will be confirmed by the Senate as U.S. Commerce secretary. But when that happens is a big question.

For devotees of Rhode Island politics, the slow-motion transition between Raimondo and Lt. Gov. Dan McKee has become increasingly painful. The perception is one of awkwardness and it doesn't boost confidence in government. Nor is it the kind of thing for which Raimondo wants to be remembered.

McKee's transition spokesman, Mike Trainor, downplayed concerns about cooperation between the state's current and future governor, pointing to how McKee gets a daily briefing from state Health Director Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott and National Guard Adjutant Gen. Christopher Callahan. "He feels that in doing that he's speaking to the Raimondo administration," Trainor said.

As we noted recently, Raimondo has told reporters she remains focused on being governor, even while not wanting to draw the spotlight from McKee. But if "The Twilight Zone" was an apt metaphor two weeks ago, where are we now?

Perhaps everyday Rhode Islanders are busy with other things and chalk up the Raimondo/McKee storyline to why they view politics with distaste. Perhaps McKee will reap the political ben-

efits after taking office and presiding over increased vaccinations and heightened economic activity.

For now, though, the disinclination of the two leaders to repeatedly appear on the same stage together speaks for itself.

CVS and politics

CVS Health has temporarily suspended making political contributions in the aftermath of the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol.

"CVS Health fully supports our country's democratic process and recognizes the rightful election of President Joe Biden," CVS Health spokesman Michael J. DeAngelis tells me via email. "We strongly condemn false claims made about the election results, any related violence or other unlawful activity. We have temporarily suspended all political contributions while we review our giving strategy going forward."

DeAngelis responded after I asked about a \$100,000 digital campaign launched by the advocacy group End Citizens United. The goal is getting CVS and other corporations to not support Republicans "who voted to overturn the election and spread misinformation, helping to incite the riot at the U.S. Capitol on January 6." (According to End Citizens United, the CVS Health PAC has contributed \$76,000 to U.S. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy and U.S. Rep. Devin Nunes.)

"The CEO and high-level executives at CVS need to do some serious soul-searching," End Citizens United President Tiffany Muller said in a statement earlier this week. "They need to decide if funding anti-democracy politicians is more important than democracy itself. In this

defining moment, we urge these corporations to be part of the solution by heeding the calls for change."

Eyes on the prize

Lost in the shuffle over the Raimondo/McKee relationship: is McKee doing the stuff necessary to give his administration the best chance of success? More specifically, are McKee and members of his transition talking with experienced people outside their bubble who can warn of pratfalls, for example, in negotiating the state bureaucracy and legislative relations?

(Remember, too, that Steve Kavanagh, who worked as legislative director for three governors – Don Carcieri, Lincoln Chafee and Gina Raimondo – recently brought his ample institutional knowledge to a job as deputy chief of staff for House Speaker Joe Shekarchi.)

McKee transition spokesman Mike Trainor declined to name names, but he said McKee talks "almost daily with people outside his transition" to gain insight.

Zambarano concerns

Northern RI lawmakers Rep. David Place (R-Burrillville) and Sen. Jessica de la Cruz (R-North Smithfield) recently tweeted out concerns over the future of Zambarano Hospital. Burrillville Town Manager Michael C. Wood also weighed in with a letter to Raimondo, calling it "disconcerting that the Town Council has not been consulted or provided timely information about the short and long-term plans for this facility, which is an important part of our community and its citizenry."

While cost problems

with Eleanor Slater Hospital in Warwick have been well documented, precisely what was happening with Zambarano was less clear. By mid-day Friday, quite a few hours after I inquired, first with BHDHH and then with the governor's office, Raimondo spokeswoman Audrey Lucas provided this statement: "Governor Raimondo is committed to keeping Zambarano open. Last summer, the administration put forward a proposal to further invest in the campus and provide patients with the highest quality, most appropriate level of care. She hopes the General Assembly will move forward with these important investments in Zambarano. The hospital is currently going through a required process of discharging patients who no longer require hospital-level care."

The new rep from East Providence

State Rep. Brianna Henries (D-East Providence) calls her winning campaign last year a "happy accident."

When she was approached by the RI Political Cooperative, "I didn't realize how much of a need there was for new leadership, new voices, new perspective in the

government until we finally had the time to take a pause during COVID," Henries said on Political Roundtable last week, "and you start to recognize some of these things that are going on with your local government. And you're recognizing that there are these holes that need to be filled or these spaces that aren't being addressed."

Henries beat freshman incumbent Rep. Joe Serodio in the September 2020 primary, with almost 62 percent of the vote. While the House is larger and more ideologically variegated than the Senate – where leadership has moved to the left on a series of issues – Henries says the center of gravity is shifting there, too: "As you're starting to see more of this progressive flow and this more progressive wave, they're recognizing that the calls for people do kind of sit more in what's called the left."

Housing blues

The high median price for a house in Rhode Island – \$334,000 – underscores the difficulty of increasing the supply of affordable housing. But one difference between former House Speaker Nicholas Mattiello and current Speaker Joe

Shekarchi can be seen in how a bill banning housing discrimination based on income source – repeatedly blocked in the House – is now ticketed to pass the chamber.

Borrow much?

With various elected officials and interest groups advocating for voter approval on March 2 of seven bond questions representing \$400 million in borrowing, here's the view from Michael DiBiase, CEO of the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council (RIPEC): "The evidence suggests that the state can afford the bonds being presented to them during this special election. Bonds for higher education building, public recreation facilities, transportation, and the Davisville Port represent long-term public infrastructure investments. Housing and child-care facilities bonds are needed and worthwhile investments, however, state leaders must ensure that they are part of a larger strategy for investment and improvement."

Ian Donnis is the political reporter for The Public's Radio. He can be reached at idonnis@ripr.org. For more of his coverage, visit the-publicsradio.org and follow him on Twitter (@IanDon).



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Opinion

EDITORIAL

Learning lessons from a pandemic

Throughout the past year, there have been very few reasons to be optimistic regarding the state of affairs – whether locally or nationally or from a worldwide lens. 2020 was, after all, a year of prolonged suffering for millions of people, and the hope and promise brought on by 2021 has not yet mitigated the harsh realities that started close to one year ago from this moment (though we’re getting closer to it).

Therefore, there is no real way to put a “happy spin” on a global pandemic that has killed over 500,000 Americans and millions more throughout the rest of the world – the objective reality is one of pain and loss and emotional distress that continues to challenge us in difficult ways every day.

Through overcoming these challenges, however, we hope that there will emerge some lingering effects that positively impact our society – locally and abroad – in- definitely going forward,

• WHERE TO WRITE:
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whether those effects are felt in governance, education or simply the way we function as a community.

Responding to the threat of a communicable disease has made us get creative in figuring out ways to perform basic, day-to-day functions such as go to work, go to school and conduct public governmental meetings. Crowds at the office are no longer safe or allowable, so we have been forced to re-think what business needs to be done in-person. Schools can’t host 30 children and adults in the same room, so we must refocus efforts on creating a quality remote learning program and expanding access to technology. City Hall is closed, but anyone with an internet connection can join a virtual meeting, et cetera, et cetera.

The positive effects of these efforts – such as more flexibility for work to be done remotely, more technological resources being made available to students and more accessibility for residents to keep an eye on what’s happening at their local town and city halls – can hopefully contribute to the creation of a society that is less obsessed with the physical act of attendance and more concerned with the expansion of access to as many people as possible.

In terms of governance itself, the pandemic should dispel the notion that a strong federal government is not important. In fact, the lack of a unified and compassionate federal government during the most crucial moments of this crisis clearly exacerbated its effects and extended the timeline of our recovery greatly. Although it is hard to be optimistic about the harsh polarization of this nation’s political environment getting any better with the simple passage of time, hopefully seeing the very real damage caused by governmental inefficiency when responding to a real crisis will stick in peoples’ minds and cause them to demand more from those who represent their interests.

More abstractly, but just as importantly, we hope that the pandemic will serve as an ongoing reminder that we cannot simply wish to isolate ourselves from the rest of the world. This virus started thousands of miles away in one spot, and within a few short weeks it had crept into every corner of the globe. It started small in our communities and rapidly became a force that crippled our health care system and national economy.

Understanding the inherent connectivity of the world is only a part of this, however. The pandemic must serve as a reminder to all that we are responsible for one another’s safety, health and well being – just as we are responsible for our own. We cannot function without the contributions of our neighbors, and vice versa.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to adapt the ways in which we had become quite comfortable living, we can also hope that the lessons it has taught us will meaningfully and positively shape the way in which we will live going forward.



Proceeding with caution on major Johnston development

By EDWARD T. CARDILLO JR.

As the new representative in House District 42, I wanted to take this opportunity to address the proposal for a major land development on Hartford Avenue.

Many constituents have reached out to me with their concerns regarding this development, and I wanted to assure them that I will do everything in my power to address it and make certain that it is a good fit for the people of Johnston.

It has been reported that negotiations are under way that may result in the purchase of 100 acres near the intersection of

Routes 6 and 295, along with the building of a 1 million-square-foot warehouse. While economic growth is a positive that benefits all, and it’s fortuitous that Johnston has been chosen for this development, there are certain issues that have been brought up that I want to make sure get addressed by all parties involved.

First, I would like to see a plan for traffic flow. A project of this magnitude cannot be undertaken without having a major impact on the congestion and traffic patterns of the town. Specifically, I would like to know the number of vehicles expected, the number of heavy trucks, and an assessment of the

toll these heavy trucks will take on our roads, along with any expected noise or other potential disruptions.

Second, I would like to see the tax relief plan for the town of Johnston. It is the desire and goal of every municipality to broaden and diversify its tax base, and a capital investment of this size may very well have a large effect on the town’s finances. I would like to know what exactly that effect will be and how it will manifest itself over the long term.

Last, I want to make sure that whatever business occupies this major land development will pay a living wage to its employees. Again, every-

body benefits from economic development, and Johnston has a talented, educated and diverse workforce to offer any industry. For our part, we want to make sure any new jobs come with a living wage.

This proposal is still in the early stages of planning, but before it advances further, I plan to work with Commerce RI and the Department of Transportation to see that everyone’s interests are represented as we move forward with this project.

Edward T. Cardillo Jr., a Democrat, represents District 42 (Johnston, Cranston) in the Rhode Island House of Representatives.

LETTERS

Attack on Capitol was third rate

To the Editor:

In response to Mr. Morgan’s letter of Feb. 18, I would like to quote the late Senator Patrick Moynihan: “Everyone is entitled to his own opinion but not his own facts.”

“Massive election fraud” has not been documented and I challenge anyone to PROVE otherwise. It may be your opinion Mr. Morgan but there are no substantiating facts as dozens of unsuccessful lawsuits

have shown. Many stalwart Republican officials in states such as Georgia and Arizona have agreed the election was fair.

Your conclusion that we are a “third rate, third class, third world ‘banana republic’” is so far off the mark that it’s laughable. The only thing that was third rate was the attack on the Capitol.

Ron Winde
Warwick

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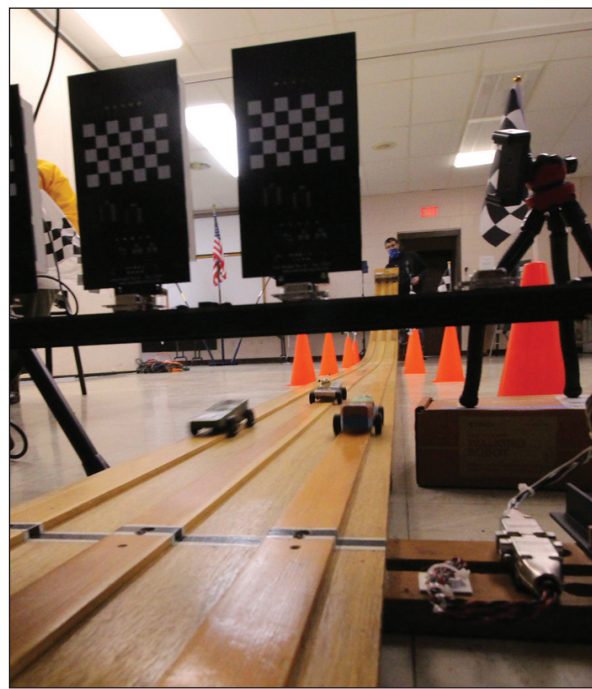


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REVVING UP A DERBY: While the pinewood derby track wasn't open for viewing at St. Robert Bellarmine Church for the Pack 20 races Saturday, the parking lot had some really cool vehicles and goodie bags for the kids thanks to Northeast Auto Body, Auto Zone, This Guy's Pizza and Coca-Cola. Here, David Slinko, charter representative to the pack, shows pack members around. (Sun Rise photos by John Howell)



WHERE ARE THE CROWDS? Races that usually are accompanied by plenty of cheering and excitement were eerily quiet.



LIKE A BIRD: Erenia Reyes appropriately named her racer "Birdie." Of course, there was a small plastic bird mounted on the hood.

■ Pods

(Continued from page 1)

past year.

"They haven't been out in a while, so they were getting to talk to their friends and neighbors that were there, so it became sort of social, even though we had social distancing and they all wore masks," Polisena said. "It became kind of a social event, and I'm not saying that's what it should be, but they've been locked up since last March. It's going to be a year soon, so I think the local pods play a very important role."

Polisena said Town Hall received upwards of 100 phone calls on Monday morning after the state sign-up website crashed. He added that of the 250 vaccination appointments scheduled for last Wednesday, the town was responsible for setting up about 75 percent of them.

There are no tweaks planned for the pod this week, the mayor said, and there were no adverse reactions and only a couple of people experienced some slight dizziness.

"We had a couple people have a couple of issues, but it wasn't because of the shot," Polisena said. "They hadn't been out in a long time and they walked from the outside to the inside so they maybe got a little dizzy, but there was nothing according to Dr. Stoukides that had to do with anything that if they felt a little weak or felt a little dizzy. We had the Police Explorers there, they were able to help the people in and out on wheelchairs, who needed wheelchair access."

The mayor praised Police Chief Joseph Razza, Johnston Police, Johnston Fire, the De-

partment of Public Works, town workers and the recreation department for the all-hands-on-deck effort. The community bond wasn't lost on McKee, either.

"He saw the way ours worked," Polisena said. "I walked him around and he was observing the way people were coming in and out and they were coming up to him saying, 'This was great.' And a lot of people were very happy, and there were no hiccups, and as I said, local pods give it that local flavor, so to speak, especially when you're dealing with the elderly ... If they say to us, do you want to be a regional pod for a few communities, we would look into that."

He added: "We just want to get rid of this enemy, the COVID, so I want to protect the people in Johnston of course, first and foremost, but I have no problem helping out the other communities because we're all in this together."

Polisena reiterated his desire to vaccinate residents at congregate settings like Cherry Hill Apartments and Simmons Village, among others, saying again that he would go in with some firefighters and administer shots himself.

"We'll go right on their scene, into their premises to get that done," Polisena said. "We're going to be looking for help from the people who manage these facilities to get these people registered because they need to do that. We're looking at that next, but they've got to give us the vaccine. ... We don't have enough product in, for whatever reason that is, if it's logistics, if it's the federal government, we don't know what it is, but we should be getting a lot more than we have."

■ Taxes

(Continued from page 1)

According to Judy (not her real name), she was told she would not be issued a check and to call the State Police. She went on the State Police website and filled out a stolen identity form on unemployment fraud. That was last April. She thought she was good until about two weeks ago, when she received another notice she had been approved for unemployment compensation. She repeated the process.

Others receiving approval notices saw no reason to notify the DLT since they were working and hadn't applied. Now, many of these people are receiving the 1099-G

forms.

In some cases the forms reflect payments of less than \$500.

Alfred speculated the amount reflects a single week payment and that the perpetrator either didn't file for successive weeks or was detected as a false claimant when they refilled.

He said payments are usually direct deposits to accounts that have been set up by the scammers. He wouldn't elaborate on the schemes used by scammers to get the money or how they obtained the identities in the first place, as this is an ongoing investigation with the FBI. He said banks have been cooperative in flagging accounts with suspicious activity and speculated personal information was

more likely obtained from a number of major cyber security breaches and "bought" by unscrupulous people.

"It's very widespread," he said.

According to DLT spokeswoman Margaux Fontaine, the DLT has paid out \$2.7 billion total in unemployment benefits in state and federal funds since the beginning of the pandemic (March 9).

"We have identified approximately \$30 million in fraudulent payments, which is 1 percent of what we've paid out in total," she said in an email. She said \$3.5 million has been recovered thanks to the department's efforts, but that she would not be able to provide specifics on the number of fraud-

ulent claims "because they're considered part of our pending investigations at this time."

The extent of unemployment compensation fraud reaches even greater proportions in larger states. According to a report in the Wall Street Journal, California Labor Secretary Julie Su reported that out of the \$120 billion paid in unemployment claims, \$11.4 billion went into the pockets of foreign cyber criminals, prison inmates and other scammers.

What's being done to stop the fraud?

"DLT has numerous measures in place to prevent, detect, and stop unemployment insurance fraud," Fontaine writes.

"Last spring, we began working with a cybersecurity vendor to develop advanced artificial intelligence models to recognize and stop fraudulent claims. All UI (unemployment insurance) claims go through a screening process, and our models are continuously updated to incorporate new data. We've worked hard to fulfill DLT's dual mission: to ensure our anti-fraud measures are as effective as possible, while making sure legitimate claimants can get the benefits they need during this economic crisis as quickly as possible," she said.

Alfred advised these people to go on the State Police website and fill out the form.

"No one will have to pay a cent in taxes on unemployment benefits that they didn't file for or receive. We have set up a form on our website for people to report receiving a fraud-related 1099-G to streamline the process of getting a corrected version to reflect that they did not receive unemployment benefits in 2020," Fontaine said.

The form can be found at dlt.ri.gov/1099-reportfraud.

According to a release issued in January by the IRS, "Taxpayers who receive an incorrect Form 1099-G for unemployment benefits they did not receive should contact the issuing state agency to request a revised Form 1099-G showing they did not receive these benefits. Taxpayers who are unable to obtain a timely, corrected form from states should still file an accurate tax return, reporting only the income they received. A corrected Form 1099-G showing zero unemployment benefits in cases of identity theft will help taxpayers avoid being hit with an unexpected federal tax bill for unreported income."

Last week, the Rhode Island Division of Taxa-

tion suggested steps to take if you have been a victim of identity theft. In a release, Rhode Island Tax Administrator Neena Savage described identity theft in general as when someone uses your Social Security number or other personal information without your knowledge to open new accounts, make purchases, or get a tax refund.

"Identity theft can also involve your taxes: Tax-related identity theft happens when someone steals your personal information to commit tax fraud. Your taxes can be affected if your Social Security number is used to file a fraudulent return or to claim a refund or credit," Savage said.

Savage recommended taking the following steps: Contact your local police department to file a police report; fill out the Internal Revenue Service's "Identity Theft Affidavit" (Form 14039), available at irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f14039.pdf; Let the Division of Taxation know, in writing, that you are a victim of identity theft, and attach a copy of the completed federal Form 14039 mentioned above. Send the letter to: Rhode Island Division of Taxation, Personal Income Tax - Identity Theft, One Capitol Hill, Providence, R.I. 02908.

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BATTLE OF THE BRAINS GOES VIRTUAL

10
 high school teams
 to vie for
 RI Academic
 Decathlon title



CHEERING TEAM: The 2020 Johnston Decathlon team fills a section of the CCRI Bobby Hackett Auditorium as members wait their turn to compete in the Super Quiz. (Beacon Communications photos)

By **ARDEN BASTIA**

"Anything is possible through Zoom," Rhode Island Academic Decathlon director Frank Lenox said.

Because of COVID restrictions, the annual competition will be held virtually this year – a task that is not without its challenges.

Among the changes to this year's competition is a new coach for Bishop Hendricken High School, ending over 25 years of coaching from Sister Carol Anne Murray and potentially Hendricken's 10-year winning streak.

According to Lenox, Rhode Island Academic Decathlon, or RIAD, has a large focus on socialization. "We really try to make it a social event," he explained. "In a typical year, we'd gather at CCRI. Students would be testing in rooms with students from other schools, so it was very much a social environment. Unfortunately, this year we're losing that."

The events will be held virtually on Sunday, March 7. Lenox explained that two events, speech and interview, will be taking place via Zoom. "Through using breakout rooms in Zoom, judges will be assigned, and as students join the Zoom meeting, they will be moved into the breakout rooms for a time window. For that window, they will present their prepared speech and do an impromptu speech, and then judges will score using a Google Form."

The other subject tests will be taking place through an online platform developed by the United State Academic Decathlon organization, explained Lenox. The software used during the competition is also used for practice tests, so it's familiar and reliable for students.

"Being an academic competition, people tend to think it's for smart or brainy kind of kids, but we distinguish between different divisions. We have three divisions based on GPA [grade point average], so students are competing against other students of similar abilities," Lenox said.

The 10 subject areas of the competition, all revolving around a central theme, are math, science, language and literature, social sciences, art, music, economics, written essay, speech and interview.

Cold War theme

The theme of this year's Academic Decathlon competition is the Cold War, a topic Toll Gate High School coach Steve Belanger says is "apropos" for the present day.

"This is something the students are studying right now, so it shouldn't be new to them," he said, sharing that students have expressed more interest and enthusiasm in this year's topic as compared to previous years. "During that time, even if you were not a political person, you couldn't ignore the political reality, even if you weren't inclined to think that way. That's where people find themselves today."

Approximately 100 students from 10 schools across the state will be participating, including Bishop Hendricken, Classical High School, East Greenwich High School, Johnston High School, La Salle Academy, North Providence High School, South Kingstown High School, Toll Gate High School, the Wheeler School and Westerly High School, plus nine additional students making up nine alternate teams. Fifty volunteers are needed for the event, and Lenox says while organizers are not there yet, they will hit the goal by the event.

The number of competing schools is about half of what it has been over the past decade. And with fewer schools, there's not the same demand for volunteers. Many volunteers are longtime volunteers from the community. "Once they judge a speech and/or interview event, they keep coming back year after year," Lenox said.



SUPER QUIZ: The Super Quiz that closes out the day-long competition won't be a part of this year's virtual decathlon. These Johnston students are pictured from the 2020 event held at CCRI.

Overcoming challenges

Steve Belanger has been an Academic Decathlon coach for 19 years, and hasn't seen a competition quite like this.

"It's a bit of a surreal coaching experience, and I'm happy with the ones who are on the team and they're trying their best. During the COVID times, that's all you can ask for," he said in an interview.

One of the hardest parts about this year, Belanger says, is the scheduling.

"This year is very different and more challenging, because kids used to come to meetings after school or to advisory periods. And now, it's more challenging to corral these kids, but things change all the time and you just have to roll with it," he said.

The virtual essay portion took place on Tuesday, Feb. 23,

where students were tasked with writing about a historical event from the Cold War or the significance of Kurt Vonnegut's book "Cat's Cradle."

Belanger is coaching a team of six students at Toll Gate High School this year. In years past, he coached two or three Decathlon teams at a time, and "normally I'd have nine, 18, or up to 33 kids," he explained. "I think I was the first coach in the state to do three teams in a year at Warwick Vets when it was still a high school."

While this year may not have the number of participants that Belanger has seen in the past, he is confident in their quality. "We had lots of medal winners last year, and many of them are coming back this year," he said. "These guys know what to do. Since they've won medals before, they know what to do to win again."

New coach for Hendricken

Last year, Bishop Hendricken High School won the Decathlon and represented Rhode Island at the national competition, where they placed second in their division. This was Hendricken's 10th consecutive state title.

However, this year, the Hendricken Academic Decathlon team has a new coach. Leeanne Soprano, who teaches Spanish at the high school, succeeds Sister Carol Anne Murray who led the team for over 25 years.

"I didn't expect to be doing this, but I just dove right in," Soprano said during an interview last week. "It sounds like I went in blind, which is half true, the other half is you have to live it to understand what everything is about."

Soprano has big shoes to fill.

"The expectation is that we can do it, although we are losing the GOAT (greatest of all time) of Academic Decathlon coaches," she said of replacing Sister Carol Anne. "It's the boys who take the tests and give the speeches, and my goal is to really showcase that it's them who are talented and deserve our applause and admiration. I want to prove that it's them; it's been them the whole time."

This is Soprano's first time as a Decathlon coach, and says the experience has already taught her "so much."

"As much as I'm the coach to the boys, they've been my coaches as well, which has been wonderful," she said of Hendricken's team, which has nine members this year. "I am so, so impressed by what it takes to be on the team and all the moving parts that make for a successful Academic Decathlon team. On the surface, it's already a huge undertaking; the content alone requires hours and hours of studying. My job is to make sure the guys are doing those hours and hours of studying."

DECATHLON - PAGE 16

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By JENNIFER COATES

There is something about a new year that gives one the motivation to dream big, to begin anew and to make obtainable resolutions (and some not-so-obtainable ones too!). As we finally put 2020 behind us and begin a new more hopeful season, there are goals to set, long-postponed special events to plan, and more targeted marketing objectives to establish for 2021. Now is the time to get the word out about your business with increased resolve and with attention to what will stay in the minds of potential customers.

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Picking up material for auction can sometimes be simple. You go carefully pack it up, carry it out, load it in a truck, and take it back to catalog, photograph and prepare it for sale. Occasionally there are items that take a little more thought and muscle.

A few weeks ago, I received a call about a 12-pound bronze cannon to pickup for auction. It was in a building that had no loading dock. How the heck to get it out? It was in an old 19th century National Guard armory inside a wooden case up against a wall. My body started to ache just thinking about how we could remove it from the wooden case and get it outside to transport back without killing myself or others. I couldn't wait to get the cannon back and start researching its history, but it seemed like it was going to be a tough process to even get to that point. We figured it weighed around 800 pounds or so and if we could get it outside onto a pallet, we could use a jack to load it onto a truck with a lift gate and strap it in for the ride



By Joel Bohy
Historic Arms & Militaria
Bruneau & Co. Auctioneers
Cranston, RI

back to the office. I spent some time festering over the whole process till it hit me. Call in the Guard!

The gun had belonged to the Massachusetts Army and Air National Guard Museum collection but as it didn't relate to their mission it was being deaccessioned to support other purchases that did meet their criteria. An email to a few of the officers provided the support needed. The date was set, and we headed to the armory in a box truck with a lift gate. I arrived to see a busy group of men and women in camouflage who were carefully disassembling the case and getting the heavy bronze cannon tube on a dolly and to a side door of the old armory. Once there, a

large crane also dressed in camouflage arrived and slung the cannon out of the building and onto a pallet. Once on the pallet they strapped it down and I walked over to look at it. I sat there thinking to myself that all my worrying and wasted time pondering the removal was all for nothing. I didn't raise a finger or break a sweat! At that point the pallet jack and lift gate did the rest of the heavy lifting and the bronze beauty was on the truck and ready for its journey to Rhode Island and eventually a new home.

A big "Thank you!" to the men and women in the National Guard all over the country that do so much for us when there are emergencies and even little projects like this one. Next time, the history of the cannon.



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Sports

Playoff ready



HITTING THEIR STRIDE: Thomas Zednik (0) celebrates with teammates. (Photos by Alex Sponseller)

Panthers stay hot heading into postseason

By ALEX SPONSELLER

The Johnston boys basketball team continued to cruise to close out its regular season, winning its

final three games on the schedule and taking a 6-3 record into the postseason.

The Panthers topped Wheeler 73-57 and had four players score

double figures. Hunter Remington finished with 21 points while Tom

PANTHERS - PAGE 13



STRONG FINISH: Sarah Bandoma against Coventry last week. (Photos by Alex Sponseller)

Lady Panthers turn things around

FROM STAFF REPORTS

After tough sledding for much of the regular season, the Johnston girls finally got into the win column with three straight victories to close things out.

The Lady Panthers earned their first victory in a 43-30 decision over Moses Brown. Tori Viau led the way with 16 points scored while Sarah Bandoma added 10 and Emily Iannuccilli eight. They then beat visiting Coventry 62-51 the

following day and were led by Bandoma with 15 points while Viau scored 14. Iannuccilli and Abby Clesas each added 11 while Ava Waterman scored nine.

The Lady Panthers wrapped up the regular season on Tuesday when they topped Chariho 59-50. Clesas had a big game scoring 19 points while Bandoma added 18 Waterman 10 and Viau nine.

For more photos of the action, check out page 14.

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BIG GAME: Johnston's Hunter Remington.



TOUGH DEFENSE: Johnston's Derek Salvatore defends a Lincoln player.

■ Panthers

(Continued from page 12)

Zednik scored 19, Derek Salvatore 17 and CJ Ragosta 12.

Johnston then topped Lincoln 60-49 in a state championship rematch on Saturday. The Lions beat Johnston last year in overtime of the Division III title game, however, the Panthers would get the better of the matchup this time around.

Johnston took a big lead into halftime and maintained it the rest of the second to secure the win.

"Anytime you go ahead early it helps, but we knew they had Octavio (Brito). But this was a game that these kids wanted, they have been looking forward to this game all season long. Last year Thomas fouled out in the state championship last year with six minutes left, so we wanted him in this game," said Johnston coach Mark Livingston.

Zednik led the way with 20 points while Remington added 16 and Salvatore 14.

"We are definitely hitting our stride. Our defense has been playing pretty good. My confidence has grown higher, earlier in the season I wasn't that confident, I wasn't scoring much. Derek has also taken some weight off of me, then with Thomas, no one can stop him, he's the biggest player in the state which has also made it easy for us," said Remington

after the win. "It's a good feeling, we lost a lot of seniors last year so for us to be stepping up is great. It's been great to take on that leadership role." The Panthers wrapped up their regular season on Monday with a 76-52 win over Hope.

Zednik led the Panthers with 26 points while Ragosta chipped in 15 and Salvatore 14.

Livingston has been pleased with the team's development and feels that it is playing its best basketball at the right time.

"I think there was a lack of practice at the beginning, but things are starting to click now. These kids are really starting to (improve), they have been playing together for a number of years, so we have good chemistry. We are moving the ball offensively, everyone is unselfish. Thomas is one of the best big men in the state, he doesn't complain about not getting the ball, if he's getting double teamed he'll just pass it," said Livingston.

In their first year in Division II, the Panthers are looking forward to the chance to establish themselves as a top club moving forward.

"This team cares, they really care and they want to leave an impression by winning a championship," Livingston said. "They want to prove that they belong in Division II and that is something that we spoke about before the season even started. We just need to make sure that we are making smart decisions at the end of the game, playing with our foot on the gas."

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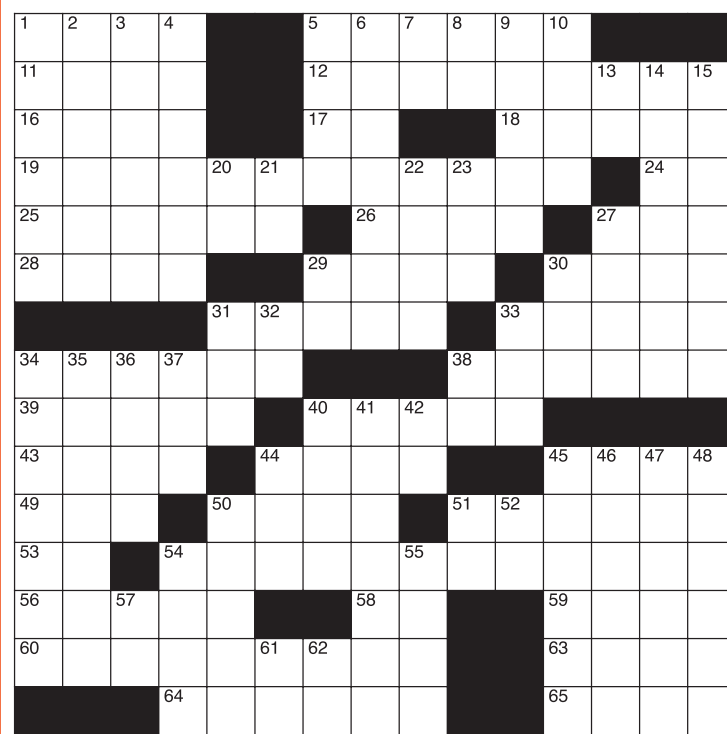
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5. Spindles
11. Stake
12. Retrain
16. Close by
17. Commercial
18. One who publicly announces
19. American ballplayer
24. Junior's father
25. Go up or climb
26. Concern
27. When you hope to get there
28. Iacocca and Oswald are two
29. Plant of the lily family
30. Male college organization
31. National capital
33. Raccoonlike animal
34. Symbols of fertility
38. Astronomy unit
39. Series of ridges in anatomy
40. Hebrew leader
43. A portent of good or evil
44. Supreme goddess
45. Gelatinous substance
49. Engage in a contest
50. Famed ballplayer Ruth
51. Pledge

CLUES DOWN

1. Shoe
2. Disquiet
3. Posture
4. Large nests
5. Soviet "Second Symphony" composer
6. Joins two pipes of different diameter
7. Exist
8. Overdose
9. Pleat of fabric
10. Predict the future
13. Burgeoning technology
14. Having made a valid will
15. Having no fixed course
20. ___ route
21. Lethal dose
22. Indian musical pattern of notes
23. Athlete
27. Geological times
29. Atomic #21
30. In support of
31. Brew
32. Certificate of insurance
33. Taxi
34. Type of saying
35. For cigars
36. Phil __, former CIA
37. Local area network
38. Gym class
40. Philippine Island
41. Not great or bad
42. Eastern part of NY state
44. Gov't lawyers
45. Constructions
46. Former British gold coin
47. Unkeyed
48. Rechristen
50. Threaten persistently
51. Southeast
52. Cools your home
54. Removes the leaves
55. Regretted
57. Thus
61. Relief organization (abbr.)
62. Exclamation of surprise

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IN THE WIN COLUMN: Johnston's Emily Iannuccilli (left) and Ava Waterman compete against Coventry last week to win their second of three games.

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Decathlon (Continued from page 9)

Soprano says despite the challenges of meeting virtually, the camaraderie between team members has been "inspirational."

"Meeting virtually isn't the worse thing in the world. There have been some really great moments when the seniors were teaching younger students. This is definitely harder to accomplish virtually; it's now become a lot of independent work."

State title for Johnston?

Debbie Smyth, Johnston High School co-coach, believes this might be the year Johnston beats Hendricken. Johnston came in third place in last year's competition, with several students winning individual awards. Smyth, a business teacher at the high school, coaches alongside Kerri Murphy, who teaches art.

"I don't know how, but Hendricken hand picks their kids," said Smyth in an interview

last week. "Carol Ann used to only pick kids who aren't involved in any other activity so they can just focus on Academic Decathlon. We can't do that in public school. Hendricken always won, and it's just expected. But this year we have a great chance. We may not have a big team, but I think we have some really, really good kids."

There are 11 students on Johnston's team this year, but Smyth says two years ago they had over 20 students. "We weren't able to really promote Academic Decathlon this year, and usually we do classroom presentations and meet with students."

What sets Johnston High School apart is Smyth and Murphy's immersive approach to Decathlon training. The coaches usually plan a trip that coincides with the competition's theme. For example, Smyth and Murphy took students to the John F. Kennedy Museum in Boston for hands-on learning about the 1960s. When the theme was Africa, Smyth and Murphy brought in a community member who emigrated from the Congo to work with students and serve as a primary resource. With the COVID restrictions, Smyth says they've found it difficult to give

students that extra level of coaching.

Even team bonding traditions aren't quite the same. Smyth explained one tradition the team has takes place on Friday before the competition. "The students are excused from class, so we spend all day in the library, all the members and us, practicing and quizzing. Everybody collaborates and works together. We get pizza and bring snacks, and it's honestly a team bonding thing."

While Smyth doesn't think the bonding events will happen in the same ways this year, she is confident in the chemistry and strengths of the team. "That's the misconception, it has to be all A students. It's not about that. You don't have to be an A student, you can be a B or C student. You can focus more on the areas you're better at and get a medal in those areas."

One key part of the RIAD is the awards ceremony, during which medals are given to the students who place highest in each category. While Lenox doesn't have an exact plan for the ceremony yet, he said it would most likely be a prerecorded video. "The hope is to have board members of RIAD and distinguished members of the community

presenting the awards," he said. The medals will be distributed to each school's coach, and then given to the students.

Lenox explained that seniors who win gold medals are considered for a \$500 scholarship award, and the winning team will be invited to compete at nationals. Typically, RIAD would cover the cost of travel for the winning team; however, the national Decathlon competition will also be held virtually this year.

"Last year we were very fortunate," Lenox said. "We conducted our competition on the 8th of March, and a week later the state was in lockdown. Had we been a week later, we would have lost the opportunity."

Lenox is thankful to be able to put on a competition this year, despite the circumstances. "We've had time to plan, and schools and students expressed interest in competing. In this year, when many student's extracurricular have been either curtailed in some manner or eliminated all together, I'm very pleased that the board members and the communities have come together to provide students with this opportunity."

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Make **Heart Health** Part of Your Self-Care Routine

Devoting a little time every day to care for yourself can go a long way toward protecting the health of your heart. Simple self-care, such as taking a moment to de-stress, giving yourself time to move more, preparing healthier meals and not cheating on sleep, can all benefit your heart.

Because heart disease is largely preventable, focusing on improving your heart health is important. Heart disease is a leading cause of death for women and men in the United States, and many Americans remain at risk, according to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI). People with poor cardiovascular health are also at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

“Studies show self-care routines, such as taking a daily walk and keeping doctor’s appointments, help us keep our blood pressure in the healthy range and reduce our risk of heart disease and stroke,” said David Goff, M.D., NHLBI’s director of cardiovascular sciences.

It may be easier than you think to “put your heart” into your daily routine. Each Sunday, look at your week’s schedule and carve out 30 minutes for heart-healthy practices. Take an online yoga class, prepare a heart-healthy recipe, schedule your bedtime to get at least seven hours of sleep or make a medication checklist. Then seek out support from others to help you stick to your goals.

Consider these self-care tips to try each day to make your heart a priority:

Self-Care Sunday

Find a moment of serenity every Sunday. Spend some quality time on yourself.

Mindful Monday

Be mindful about your health and regularly monitor your blood pressure or blood sugar if needed. Keep an eye on your weight to make sure it stays within or moves toward a healthy range.



Tasty Tuesday

Choose how you want to approach eating healthier. Start small by peppering your meals with a fresh herb or spice as a salt substitute. Get adventurous and prepare a simple, new, heart-healthy recipe. Or go big by trying a different way of eating, such as the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan, which is scientifically proven to lower blood pressure. DASH is flexible and balanced, and it includes plenty of fruits and vegetables, fish, poultry, lean meats, beans, nuts, whole grains and low-fat dairy products.

Wellness Wednesday

Don’t waffle on your wellness. Move more, eat a fruit or vegetable you’ve never tried, make a plan to quit smoking or vaping or learn the signs of a heart attack or stroke. You could be having a heart attack if you have chest and upper body pain or discomfort, shortness of breath, cold sweats, nausea or lightheadedness. You might be having a stroke if you experience numbness in the face, arm or leg; confusion; trouble talking or seeing; dizziness; or a severe headache.

Treat Yourself Thursday

Treats can be healthy. Try making a dessert with fresh fruit and yogurt. Then stretch your imagination beyond food. Host a family

dance party, take a few minutes to sit and meditate, go for a long walk or watch a funny show. Whatever you do, find a way to spend some quality time on yourself.

Follow Friday

Follow inspiring people and pages on social media, or text a friend to help you stick to your self-care goals. Remember to take care of your mental health, too. Two of the main hurdles to self-care are depression and a lack of confidence, according to a study published in the “Journal of the American Heart Association.” If your mental health is taking a toll, take action to show your heart some love. Reach out to family and friends for support, or talk to a qualified mental health provider.

Selfie Saturday

Inspire others to take care of their hearts. Talk about your self-care routine with loved ones or share a selfie on social media. Having social support and personal networks can make it easier to get regular physical activity, eat nutritious foods, reach a healthy weight and quit smoking.

Learn more about heart health and heart-healthy activities in your community, and see what others are doing for their heart health, at nhlbi.nih.gov/ourhearts or follow #OurHearts on social media.

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Signs of ATRIAL FIBRILLATION & how to treat it

Palpitations of the heart or uncomfortable sensations in the chest can be distressing. Thoughts of heart attack may come to mind, and that anxiety can only exacerbate the situation. While heart attack might be the first thing people think of when experiencing chest discomfort, atrial fibrillation may be to blame for such feelings.

Atrial fibrillation, also called AFib, is a quivering or irregular heartbeat that may lead to heart-related complications. The American Heart Association says that at least 2.7 million Americans are living with AFib. Although treatable, without proper diagnosis, AFib may lead to blood clots, stroke and even heart failure.

Many people with AFib experience no symptoms at all and are unaware they have it until it is discovered during a physical examination. For those who experience symptoms, The Mayo Clinic lists these as some of the more common:

- Palpitations, which can be sensations of a flip-flopping in the chest or even a racing feeling.
- Fatigue
- Reduced ability to exercise
- Lightheadedness
- Chest pain or shortness of breath
- Dizziness and weakness

When the heart is working normally, it contracts and relaxes in a beat. When a person has AFib, the upper chambers of the heart, called the atria, beat irregularly. They quiver and do not move the blood into the ventricles in an effective manner. This irregularity can cause pooling or clotting of blood. Should a clot break off and enter the bloodstream, particularly in an artery leading to the brain, stroke may occur.

A proper diagnosis from a physician is needed before treatment can begin. An examination may include an EKG or ECG, which will show the heart's electrical activity as line tracings on paper. The spikes and dips in the tracings are called waves. An EKG will determine if the heart is pumping correctly.

AFib is more common among people with clogged arteries or diabetes and may develop following valve surgery. AFib also is more common in people with coronary heart disease. As a person ages, his or her risk for AFib increases. Stress also can be a major factor in triggering AFib, according to StopAfib.org.

Once AFib is diagnosed, managing risk factors and restoring a heart to normal rhythm becomes the priority. Doctors use a variety of medications to control heart rate, which may include beta blockers and calcium channel blockers. Medications to prevent stroke also may be prescribed. Surgical intervention may be necessary if medications aren't working.

Atrial fibrillation is a serious condition that requires treatment. Episodes can be managed and treated to help people live healthier lives

February is American Heart Month



Heart Disease is the #1 cause of death in the US and worldwide.

85.6 million people in the US live with cardiovascular disease.



of heart disease can be prevented



1 in 3 women have some form of heart disease



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Heart Attack Survivor Bob Harper's Journey

(BPT) - A heart attack can happen to anyone, and Bob Harper is living proof. As a celebrity trainer, Harper dedicated his life to helping others live a healthier lifestyle, but even his devotion to fitness couldn't keep a heart attack from striking him.

Harper suffered his heart attack in February 2017. Harper was in the middle of a workout when he lay down on the ground and others ran to his aid. "I was so lucky that there was a doctor in the gym," he said. Harper fell into cardiac arrest, and they had to shock him three times. "I woke up in the hospital two days later, dumbfounded and confused. Once the realization set in, I spent an emotional and up-setting eight days in the hospital."

Surviving with heart

Since his heart attack, Harper has learned to adjust his lifestyle to help reduce his risk of suffering another heart attack, and he's doing all he can to help educate fellow survivors about what they can do to help reduce their risk in the future.

Harper partnered with AstraZeneca launched *Survivors Have Heart*. Survivors can describe their personal journey and connect with other survivors, including Harper. Together, AstraZeneca and Harper are teaming up to help people like him who have experienced a heart attack share their stories to educate and inspire others.

AstraZeneca created *Survivors Have Heart* to provide support for the survivor community and give voice to the emotional experience of life after a heart attack. You'll find heart attack survivors' stories, helpful information about recovery and caregiving, and additional resources from advocacy group websites.

For Harper, *Survivors Have Heart* gives him a chance to practice what he preaches. "Being a heart attack survivor adds you to a club you never want to join, but once you are a part of it, you feel bonded by the experience," he said. "As survivors, we carry each other and together we can make a meaningful difference in raising awareness on how to navigate this complex journey."

Harper hopes to share his commitment to living in the now. If you have suffered a recent heart attack, talk to your doctor today about treatment strategies that are right for you.

After Bob had his heart attack as part of his journey to recovery, he knew he had to adjust his lifestyle to help reduce his risk of having another heart attack. In addition, Harper followed his treatment regimen as his doctor prescribed. "I've been working to rebuild the relationship with my heart. Fortunately, I had complete trust in my doctors," he said.

As a health and fitness expert and a best-selling author, Harper has inspired audiences nationwide to get fit. He was the picture of health. Bob never considered that a heart attack could happen to him. But it did.

Today, Harper is passionate about another kind of training: emotional recovery. While changes to his diet and exercise routine are an important part of his physical recuperation, Bob credits further education with helping him evolve his mindset and believes this plays an equally important role.



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RETIREMENT SPARKS

by ELAINE M. DECKER

Stolen Years

Many adults think the reckless behavior of young people is a reflection of their assumption that they will live forever. When I was young, I was guilty of a fair amount of recklessness, but I don't remember ever thinking I was indestructible, that I'd live forever. Not even in an abstract sense, much less literal.

The disruption caused by COVID is robbing most of us of the social interactions that add richness to our lives. For young people, this will likely be a temporary interruption in their emotional development. Once the pandemic is behind us, life will go back to almost normal and their social growth will pick up where it left off. For older people, especially seniors, it may not be that easy.

After my sister's husband died, she and I decided to take a trip together each fall to places we selected together. The first year, we went to Puglia, Italy and enjoyed it immensely. The second year, we didn't go on a trip because my husband had knee replacement surgery. In addition to wanting to help him with his recovery, I had been counting on him to take care of our senior cats while I would be away. The third year, my sister and I went out West with a focus on visiting Sedona and several National Parks.

Year four was supposed to be Portugal. Instead, we got to sequester at home because of COVID. As it turned out, my husband and I developed health issues that would have complicated that trip. My sister, who is now 82, lamented that she wasn't sure how many more years she would have for us to make these trips together. I assured her that we'd have plenty of them; there's longevity in our family. It's not that I thought we were indestructible and would live forever. I just felt we had a lot of years ahead of us. "There's always next year" had been my mantra.

Recently I started to think about the trips my sister and I expect to make. I hope everyone is healthy enough for one by fall, but even with the COVID vaccine now a reality, I doubt we'd risk traveling this year. Perhaps in 2022.

I had a sudden realization that COVID was stealing years from those of us who don't have many years left to lose. Before COVID forced me to stay at home, I was here much of the time anyway, so it didn't feel like much of a sacrifice. I don't feel that way any more. It has dawned on me that every year that my sister and I can't travel together is a stolen one.

Our remaining years no longer spread out ahead of us like a magic carpet of travel time. We were never expecting to live forever. But we also weren't expecting to have the years we were counting on be taken away from us without warning and through no fault of our own.

This may sound like a simple realization of my own mortality, but it's something different than that. Recognizing your own mortality simply means that you know there's an end out there somewhere. Stolen years are different. Those are years that should have been there to be lived and enjoyed in your limited, mortal future, but are no longer there.

Young people have time to adjust, to recover from lost time. Seniors don't have that luxury. Once a year has been stolen from us, we can never get it back. My mantra is no longer "There's always next year." It's "I hope there will BE a next year." And not just for my sister and me, but for all of us. In the meantime, I've decided I will not dwell on the year or two that COVID will have stolen. I'm going to focus on reclaiming my life, one day, one week, and one month at a time. After all, days, weeks, months—that's what years are made of.

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Elaine M. Decker's newest book is *Retirement Downsizing—A Humorous Guide*. Her other books include *Retirement Sparks*, *Retirement Sparks Again*, *Retirement Sparks Redux* and *CANCER: A Coping Guide*. Her essays appear in the anthologies: *80 Things To Do When You Turn 80* and *70 Things To Do When You Turn 70*. All are available on Amazon.com. Contact her at: emdecker@ix.netcom.com



ACCORDING TO DON

by DON FOWLER

Bored? Try Some Board & Card Games

Remember the good old days? Before TV and computers?

The family would sit around the dining room table playing Monopoly or Go Fish or work together to do a thousand-piece puzzle.

Right about now we are bored with TV and our computer, and many of us are returning to those good old days, finding the Sorry game in the attic and a deck of cards in the desk drawer.

Board games have become a popular Christmas gift this year as home confinement finds us looking for ways to fill long hours.

Hasbro sale have continued to increase.

Board games are back.

And you know what? They are fun!

I remember my daughter's first game: Chutes and Ladders. Then we progressed to Candyland, and before I knew it we were playing Sorry, one of our family's favorite.

The kids eventually got into Battleship

and Clue and moved on to Trivial Pursuit.

Today, with the Pandemic wearing us down, families are rediscovering the old board games, dusting them off and finding substitutes for missing pieces.

Friends brought out their old Twister game and found new aches and pains.

A renewed interest in chess since Netflix's "The Queen's Gambit" has people playing it with friends and relatives over the internet. We never went any further than checkers.

A friend told me that his family was re-learning how to play pinochle and canasta.

Many of the old board games have been redesigned for television. Unfortunately, many of them are pretty dumb and filled with out of work "celebrities".

The premiere TV game, "Jeopardy" can be played at home, along with the show.

It is time to check out your attic and basement, dust of the old games, and plan a New Year's evening with family around the dining room table.

Jenkins Joins Saint Elizabeth Community



Eileen Jenkins, R.N., CHPN, has joined Saint Elizabeth Community as the Certified Nursing Assistant (C.N.A.) Clinical Coordinator. Jenkins will be holding CNA training classes this spring and interested candidates can email her at ejenkins@stelizabethcommunity.org.

A graduate of New England Baptist, Hospital School of Nursing and Emmanuel College, Eileen previously worked at VNA Care Network, MA, as a Hospice Educator, and most recently held the role of Clinical Coordinator for the C.N.A. Program at Crossroads RI. Eileen and her husband reside in Warwick.

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Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally & diagonally throughout the puzzle.

WORDS

- BAKING
- BEANS
- BITTERSWEET
- BLOOM
- BUTTER
- CACAO
- CHOCOLATE
- COCOA
- CONFECTION
- COUVEURE
- CREAM
- CUVEE
- DECADENT
- DESSERT
- DOUBLE BOILER
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- SUGAR
- TEMPERING
- THERMOMETER
- TRUFFLE
- VISCOSITY
- WHITE



SENIOR ISSUES

by LARRY GRIMALDI

A letter to my grandsons

PROLOGUE: Browsing the racks for Valentine’s Day cards, I was realized that I had written several letters over the past 17 years to my granddaughters Kailyn and Sophia, but I had never written to my grandsons Nicholas and Benjamin, Jr. Although they are 11 and two respectively, I hope that they (or their parents) will forgive me for this omission. The transgression was in unintentional.

Dear Nicholas and Benjamin, Jr.

I occasionally start or end a column, essay, or letter with a quote that adds texture to the subject at hand. While I found many quotes for grandfathers to granddaughters, and even more from grandmothers to grandsons, there were but a few that focused on grandfathers and grandsons. I can assure you that the bonds formed the first time we saw you are just as strong as those created at first glance of our granddaughters. The closest I came to describing this connection was the anonymous, but hilariously true observation, “Grandfathers are just antique little boys.”

Let’s start with a little family background. I urge to “fill in the blanks” of your family history as you get older. The search will link you to the culture, traditions, and history of your heritage.

FOR NICHOLAS: I, your grandfather Lawrence (aka Mampie), was born in Providence, Rhode Island to working class parents of Italian descent. Your grandmother, Katherine (La Voice) Grimaldi, (aka Mammie), is Irish and French, German, a bit English, and maybe a little Native America. She can actually trace her family ancestry British pilgrims who landed in Massachusetts after crossing the Atlantic Ocean on the Mayflower. She was born in Woodsville, New Hampshire and came to Rhode Island, living with her aunt and uncle, to attend school after her hometown school was destroyed in a fire. Your grandmother and I first met in the eight grade at Tyler School in Providence. Your Grandpa Ray and his wife, Elaine, your father’s parents, were both born in Providence. Unfortunately, you will never meet your grandmother Elaine because she passed away when your father was 13.

Over the years, it has been fascinating to watch you grow. Although you exhibited a streak of defiant independence during those first few years that you spent in our charge on Saturdays while your parents were working, you are now showing more maturity. I can’t believe that you are now taller than your grandmother.

You have spent many hours with Mammie playing games, riding bikes, and learning to cook. You make a great omelet. She also encouraged you to take golf lessons. You and I have spent countless hours playing knee hockey and pool in the basement (before the Great Basement Flood of 2019); playing Go Fish and War, building houses of cards, and talking about baseball, hockey, and football. I hope that you finally get the chance to try lacrosse after the COVID-19 pandemic is under control. We look forward to many more adventures together and watching you continue on your life journey.

FOR BENJAMIN JR.: Although you don’t know it yet, your life is about to change in August with the new addition to your family. Your parents Ben and Renee will no doubt see changes in THEIR lives also.

Your grandfather Matt (aka Baba) was born in the Bronx in New York City. The Bronx is home to the New York Yankees, my favorite baseball team. Your grandmother Maryann (aka Mimi) was born in Queens, New York, home of the New York Mets. Your baseball



loyalties may gravitate towards one of these hometown nines in the future.

I have no doubt that your current “terrible twos” phase of development will pass. But in the interim, please take it easy on your parents, Ben and Renee. Children do not come with an instruction manual, so they are learning along with you. If you follow my advice, periodic banishments into “time out” will be limited. But do not lose your curiosity or enthusiasm.

Although there is about 180 miles from our North Providence house to your New Jersey home, your grandmother and I always enjoy playing with you and reading to you (whenever you find time to sit still). Setting aside the need for us to take a refresher course in home child-proofing, we always look forward to being with you. We will, no doubt, create more memories and share more family times together in the coming years.

In truth, we need a little rest after each one of our visits. The collective sound deep breaths you hear as you pull out of our driveway for your trip home is, however, a joyous element in our “grandparents experience.” We realize that these moments pass with alarming speed and we must take care to carefully place them in our Grandparent Treasure Chest.

While it’s true, Nicholas and Benjamin, Jr., that years on the calendar of life may separate us, we share a common history that links us. In so many ways, you rekindle the youth, energy, and joy of our childhood, while reminding me of the importance of family in our lives. From my perspective, it’s not hard to understand because, after all, “Grandfathers are just antique little boys.”

Larry Grimaldi is a retired freelance writer living in North Providence. Comments can be e-mailed to lvgrimaldi49@gmail.com



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FAMILY FEATURES

Farm-fresh is what many families desire. Straight from the farm to your table is one of the best ways you can ensure you're delivering a nutritious and delicious meal for family or friends.

Wholesome meals can bring everyone together around the dinner table; even little ones can enjoy flaky, baked fish, a nutritious potato-based side dish and a trendy-twist on a farm-fresh beverage with these fun, flavorful recipes.

Find more farm-fresh recipes at Culinary.net.

DELIGHTFULLY BAKED FISH

When it comes to baking fish, flaky and fresh can make for a great combination. For a classic meal with a seasoned flare, try this delicious baked fish with lemon pepper seasoning and onions. Find more traditional, tasty recipes at USDA.gov.

Baked Fish

Recipe courtesy of the United States Department of Agriculture
Servings: 4

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 pound fish fillets (whitefish, trout or tilapia)
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1/4 teaspoon lemon pepper seasoning (optional)

Heat oven to 350 F.

Place 12-inch piece of foil on counter. Coat foil with nonstick cooking spray. Place fillets in middle of foil. If fillets have skin, place skin-side down.

Spread sliced onions, salt, pepper and oil on top of fillets. Add lemon pepper seasoning, if desired. Fold foil over fish.

Place foil pouch on baking sheet and place in oven. Bake fish 15-20 minutes until fish reaches a minimum internal temperature of 145 F on a food thermometer and is flaky when tested with fork.

Divide into four portions and serve.



Photo courtesy of Getty Images

SIMPLY Savory MEALS



A SENSATIONALLY SIMPLE SIDE DISH

When you're looking for a delicious and nutritious side dish to complement any meal, look no further than this Fingerling Potato Salad. Made with nutrient-rich Wisconsin Potatoes and topped with a lemon dressing, this simple potato side packs plenty of flavor. Find more potato recipes at eatwisconsinpotatoes.com.

Fingerling Potato Salad

Prep Time: 15 minutes
Cook Time: 15 minutes
Servings: 6

- 1 1/2 pounds mixed Wisconsin fingerling potatoes
- 2 large lemons, divided
- 2 cups water
- 2 tablespoons coarse kosher salt
- 3 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons whole cumin seeds
- 3/4 teaspoon whole coriander seeds

- pepper, to taste
- 4 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh dill
- salt, to taste
- 2 cups baby arugula

In large pot of boiling, salted water, cook potatoes until just tender when pierced with fork, about 15 minutes. Drain and cool slightly.

Slice one lemon into 1/8-inch-thick rounds. In small saucepan, combine sliced lemon, water and kosher salt; bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer until lemon slices are tender, about 10 minutes. Drain lemons then coarsely chop.

Cut remaining lemon in half and squeeze out 2 tablespoons juice. In small bowl, mix chopped lemons, lemon juice, white balsamic vinegar and oil. Coarsely crush cumin and coriander seeds using mortar and pestle. Mix seeds into lemon dressing. Season, to taste, with pepper.

Cut lukewarm potatoes in half lengthwise. Place in large, shallow bowl. Mix in green onions and dill. Pour lemon dressing over and toss to coat. Season, to taste, with salt and pepper. Add arugula and toss gently. Serve lukewarm or at room temperature.

Farm-Fresh Festivities

Themed parties can be challenging, especially when you want everything to be perfect for your guests. Make your party simple and festive with these tips for planning your own farm-to-table gathering.

Mason jars

A farm-to-table classic, mason jars can be used for drinks or even to fill with flowers to make a beautiful, seasonal centerpiece for the table. Mason jars are clean, cute and easy to wash when the gathering is over.

Rustic vibe

Adding some rustic decor can help spruce up your table or serve as an accessory for your farm-to-table dinner party. Also consider adding a bit of fall-flare with decorations such as pumpkins, squash and brightly colored leaves.

Seasonal fare

It's easy to get inspired with the variety of things you can find at your local farmers market. Ingredients like onions can be used in this Baked Fish recipe while a batch of locally sourced potatoes is the perfect foundation for a Fingerling Potato Salad.



FROM FARM TO GLASS

Many may be surprised to learn that milk is one of the original farm-to-table foods, typically arriving on grocery shelves in just two days (or 48 hours) from many family-owned and operated dairy farms. For a trendy twist on the farm-fresh beverage kids already love, try this DIY flavored milk recipe as a tasty start to the morning. To learn about milk's journey from farm to glass, visit MilkLife.com.

Chocolate Banana Milk

Servings: 1

- 8 ounces fat free milk
- 1/2 large banana
- 1 teaspoon unsweetened cocoa powder

Place 8 ounces milk, large banana and unsweetened cocoa powder in a blender and blend until just smooth. Enjoy!

Nutritional information per serving: 140 calories; 0 g fat; 0 g saturated fat; 5 mg cholesterol; 9 g protein; 29 g carbohydrates; 2 g fiber; 105 mg sodium; 306 mg calcium (30% of daily value).

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YOUR TAXES

by MEG CHEVALIER

Taxpayers beware of ghost preparers

As people begin to file their 2020 tax returns, taxpayers are reminded to avoid unethical ghost tax return preparers.

A ghost preparer is someone who doesn't sign tax returns they prepare. Unscrupulous ghost preparers often print the return and have the taxpayer to sign and mail it to the IRS. For e-filed returns, the ghost will prepare but refuse to digitally sign as the paid preparer.

By law, anyone who is paid to prepare or assists in preparing federal tax returns must have a valid Preparer Tax Identification Number. Paid preparers must sign and include their PTIN on the return. Not signing a return is a red flag that the paid preparer may be looking to make a quick profit by promising a big refund or charging fees based on the size of the refund.

Ghost tax return preparers may also:

- Require payment in cash only and not provide a receipt.
- Invent income to qualify their clients for tax credits.
- Claim fake deductions to boost the size of the refund.
- Direct refunds into their bank account, not the taxpayer's account.

It's important for taxpayers to choose their tax return preparer wisely. The Choosing a Tax Professional page on IRS.gov has information about tax preparer credentials and qualifications. The IRS Directory of Federal Tax Return Preparers with Credentials and Select Qualifications can help identify many preparers by type of credential or qualification.

No matter who prepares their return, taxpayers should review it carefully and ask questions about anything that's not clear before signing. They should verify their routing and bank account number on the completed tax return for any direct deposit refund. Taxpayers should watch out for ghost preparers putting their bank account information on the returns.

Taxpayers can report preparer misconduct to using IRS Form 14157, Complaint: Tax Return Preparer. If a taxpayer suspects a preparer filed or changed their tax return without their consent, they should file Form 14157-A, Tax Return Preparer Fraud or Misconduct Affidavit.

For additional information, please visit IRS.gov.

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Exercise GETTING STARTED



Exercise is an important component of a healthy lifestyle. Daily exercise can improve mood, promote an active lifestyle and reduce a person's risk for a host of ailments, including diabetes and heart disease.

Despite the importance of exercise, many people live sedentary lifestyles into their golden years. Seniors who want to embrace a healthier way of life and get more physically active should first consult with their physicians before beginning an exercise regimen. Certain medications may limit just how far seniors can push themselves, while preexisting conditions may make specific types of exercise off limits. After discussing their limitations with their physicians and developing a safe exercise routine, seniors can heed the following tips to avoid injury but still get healthy.

- **Start slowly.** Seniors who have not been physically active for some time should take a gradual approach to exercise. Instead of heading right for the treadmill, exercise bike or elliptical machine, start walking every day. When it rains, find a treadmill you can walk on. The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons recommends seniors begin by determining how many steps they can take in a day and then gradually working toward 10,000 to 15,000 steps per day. Utilize step counting apps on your smartphone to track your progress. Apply the same slow approach to strength training exercises, lifting only very light weights at first before gradually increasing weight as your body acclimates to the exercises.

- **Stretch.** Bodies that have been inactive for lengthy periods of time are inflexible, and lack of flexibility increases your risk for injury. The AAOS recommends that seniors warm up their bodies before stretching with five to 10 minutes of low-intensity activity such as walking. Then stretch gently, remembering to relax and breathe during each stretch.

- **Switch things up.** When strength training, do not work the same muscle group two days in a row. Muscles need time to recover. If you prefer circuit strength training where you exercise various muscle groups in one day, do not strength train on back-to-back days, leaving at least one day in between strength training sessions so muscles have ample time to recover. HM171742

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