

Soaring costs haunt new school plans

Estimated project expenses overshoot bond by \$50M

By RORY SCHULER

Soaring building costs and interest rates have thrown school planners a curve ball. According to updated projections, four school projects estimated at \$215 million last spring could now cost \$265 million.

The town's new school building projects may change significantly before the first shovels break ground.

Architects are also trying to work around wetlands found on three sides of the proposed new elementary school site, which has been forcing them to shrink the overall building footprint and build vertically instead.

Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena Jr. recently announced a more than \$20 million overage in bond and interest fees, and last night revealed more than \$30 million in estimated additional construction and materials costs.

"I don't know if you read me saying before, the difference in interest on this bond, from where we started the project ... \$20 million," Polisena told the 26-member Johnston School Building Committee during its meeting Tuesday

evening. "So that is \$20 million that we couldn't really anticipate for. And, in all candor, there are overages in the projects themselves."

Fluctuating Estimates

Polisena threw out some numbers.

"The Elementary School, I believe, is \$14 million over what we thought it would be," Polisena told the committee. "I don't know the numbers off the top of my head ... the ECC (Early Childhood Center), that's over by let's say \$4 million, the renovation for the High School, might be over \$6-8 million, and it's the same for the renovation here (Ferri Middle School)."

After the meeting, Holly Demers Sawyer, associate director of project management for Colliers, provided the known cost overruns.

The new elementary center is facing a \$10,280,832 construction cost overrun; the ECC, \$7,255,000; and the High School renovation, \$11,411,200. Sawyer said numbers were not available for the Ferri Middle School renovation project.

■ SCHOOLS - PAGE 7

BEYOND CONCEPTUAL: Mark Rhoades, Principal at the SLAM Collaborative, updates Johnston's School Building Committee on elementary school project plans. In the foreground, new committee member Helena Buonanno Foulkes listens with JSBC Chairman Joseph Rotella and Mayor Joseph Polisena Jr. (Sun Rise photo by Rory Schuler)



WE ARE ALL IN

The Special Olympics visited Ferri Middle School last week and the entire student body wore "Choose to Include" T-shirts to show their support. For more photos from the district-wide event, turn to pages 14 & 15.

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JHS Panther of the Week



POTW: This week's Panther of the Week is McKayla Osinger. McKayla is a senior and captain of the Football Cheerleading Team. She is also involved in SADD and Panther Cubs. She was nominated by her coaches, Ms. Dina Melisa and Ms. Dionna Gajdowski. They said, "McKayla has been a dedicated cheerleader since the recreation league in second grade. She is not only respectful to her teachers, administrators, and coaches, but also shows the utmost respect to her teammates. All voices matter and she makes sure they are all heard. McKayla has a fire and passion for cheer that she brings to every practice and game! She continued to encourage and cheer on her team, even through injury. All of this resulted in McKayla being awarded the Spirit Award at the RICCA competition on March 4th. In addition to the Spirit Award, she also received the first annual Jane Bernier Scholarship Award. This award is given to a recipient that exemplifies qualities of dedication, respect, responsibility, and team spirit." (Photos submitted by Matt Velino, Johnston High School Assistant Principal)

Editor's Note: This is the newest installment of an ongoing weekly series highlighting Johnston's amazing students. Staff at Johnston High School will be nominating students and submitting a caption and a photo for publication. You'll find each week's winning Panther on Page 2 of the Johnston Sun Rise.

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COPAYS AND DEDUCTIBLES MAY APPLY

Say you saw it in the Johnston SunRise

New Johnston AD recognized as 'Visionary'

Erickson nominated Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's 'Visionary of the Year'

By PAM SCHIFF

Justin Erickson, a Cranston native and the former assistant athletic director for Cranston schools is a man of many interests, activities and projects.

Currently the Athletic Director for the Johnston School Department, Erickson Started his athletic career with Little League Baseball before continuing on to play CLCF football, wrestle at Western Hills and West, and participate in football, lacrosse and indoor track at West.

Born and raised in Cranston, he attended George J. Peters Elementary School, Western Hills Middle School and graduated from Cranston West in 2002. He received a degree in general business studies and a minor in education from CCRI.

"I was always an active kid. Lots of sports and school activities," Erickson said.

Today, he volunteers his time as President of both The Cranston West Alumni Association and of Cranston Cares. He is a founding partner of the Dig In Dining Group, serves on the Executive Board of The Cranston Hall of Fame, is a Board member of CLCF, and serves on the Board of The Cranston Athletic Hall of Fame. Not enough for you? Erickson is also active in the St. Mary's Feast Society, the Rhode Island Principal's Committee of Athletics and the Rhode Island Interscholastic League.

Most recently, Erickson has been nominated for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's (LLS) Visionary of the Year.

"I was nominated by Lesondra Pontarelli who won Woman of the Year for 2022. We will be raising funds from March 9 through May 19 with a final celebration night at Harbor Lights in Warwick," Erickson said.

The 2023 campaign kickoff was held at 39 West several weeks ago. Erickson met Amelia Bernard, a four year old, who has leukemia as well as all the other candidates.

Kim Denice, Campaign Development Manager for Rhode Island Visionaries of the Year, explained some of the changes for this year's LLS fundraising challenge.

"With the goal to evolve and expand our campaigns to move the needle forward for patients, LLS is embarking on this exciting opportunity to ensure that the campaign fully embraces the collective leadership that the entire class is having in the fight against blood cancers," Denice said. "This is so much more than a name change, we are expanding and transforming the landscape of



FAMILY FIRST: Justin, his wife Gina and son Colt are all smiles at a family gathering. (Photo courtesy of Justin Erickson)

blood cancer care and support for patients."

Each year, the global leader in the fight against blood cancer, LLS, continues to reach new heights in enhancing its philanthropic campaigns. The organization announced the evolution of its signature campaigns, Man & Woman of the Year and Students of the Year. Focused on innovating participant experiences and embracing the unified resolve to create a better world, one without blood cancers, Man & Woman of the Year and Students of the Year are transitioning to LLS Visionaries of the Year and LLS Student Visionaries of the Year.

Over the past three decades, the campaigns have proven to be about much more than individuals and teams winning a competition; it is

about incredible leaders from diverse experiences and backgrounds stepping up and leading others to raise critical funds to end blood cancer.

The funds raised through LLS's Visionaries of the Year campaigns are used for the following: research to advance lifesaving therapies like immunotherapy, genomics and personalized medicine, which are saving lives today; free blood cancer information, education and support for patients and families; national and local advocacy efforts driving policies that safely accelerate new treatments and ensure patients have access to care so that they can live longer, healthier lives.

"Justin is a strong community advocate, loves

VISIONARY - PAGE 6



JUSTIN CARES: Justin, business partner Ed Brady and Fallon Davis part of the Dig In Dining team, help pass out 222 turkeys to Veterans and their families at the Veteran's Day Parade in Cranston, November 2022. (Photo courtesy of Justin Erickson)

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RI veterans treated to Saint Patrick's Day feast

By RORY SCHULER

Donald Pelletier sniffed the corned beef flavored air. He was thirsty.

A woman leaned over his left shoulder and asked, "You gonna have beer or wine today?"

"I'm gonna have both," declared Pelletier, 92, formerly of Providence, a retired Army veteran and ex-corporal — one of 47 residents of the Rhode Island Veterans Home (RIVH) in Bristol who were driven to the Warwick Avenue Knights of Columbus Hall for a St. Patrick's Day boiled dinner and a drink last week.

In the Army, Pelletier packed the ammunition. "We gave 'em hell, the North Koreans," Pelletier said while waiting for his beer and wine. "I handled the ordinance — the shells for the artillery. I had a good job."

Robert Clark, 80, formerly of Johnston, sat to Pelletier's left. His eyes were fixed on a pair of plates full of meat and cabbage floating toward the table, balanced on the palms of Mike Bromage Jr., President of the Knights of Columbus Council 2295.

"I'm really proud of all the comradery in this room," Bromage said after leaving the plates in front of a pair of hungry former servicemen. He stepped into the hall for a second; the din of clinking glasses and knives hacking at slabs of corned beef was booming and getting louder. "These veterans are near and dear to our hearts."

Staff from the home dodged corned beef and cabbage shrapnel to bring beverages to the men; dropping off Budweisers and pale white wines.

"They get excited for dinners like this," said Tara Van Gyzen, supervising activities therapist at the RIVH. She rode with the veterans from Bristol, an epic excursion by Ocean State scale. "They absolutely love these outings."

Bill Duba, 96, a former U.S. Army colonel, smiled from his wheelchair, soaking in the surrounding sounds of laughter, toasts and nostalgic conversation.

"I'm also having a beer and a wine," Duba said. "I'm not driving. I'm just happy to be here. This whole group's so happy to be here."

Duba served in the Army for 31 years, through three major armed conflicts — World War II, the Korean War and Vietnam.



CHEERS: Ernie Cafolla, 97, at right, lifts his glass to toast his table-mates — Joe Mullen, 90, a Seekonk native and ex-Army first lieutenant; Donald LaBelle, 91, formerly of Charlestown, a former Air Force airman first class — who all lifted their bottles and goblets. (Sun Rise photos by Rory Schuler)

SERVING KNIGHTS: The Knights of Columbus Council 2295 in Warwick hosted a Saint Patrick's Day dinner for veterans from the Rhode Island Veterans Home in Bristol.



VETERANS - PAGE 11

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HELPING HANDS: These are the volunteers who helped make up 60 rescue kits containing 19 items each for people in need: The group includes Jerry Allore, Lou Massemimi, John Riedman, Donald Oliver, Steve Aubee, Bob Piscione, Joe Morenzi, Maria Teotonia, Denise Farias, John D'Errico, Frank DiMaio and Lou Spremulli. (Sun Rise photos by Pete Fontaine)

Volunteers pack up Spirit of Hope rescue kits

By PETE FONTAINE

There was a special show of heart-warming helping hands — at the highest level — last Friday morning inside the Johnston Senior Center.

At approximately 8:45, a total of 12 men and women filed into the JSC's spacious Board Room to volunteer putting what Spirit of Hope President Lou Spremulli called Rescue Kits that will help the homeless and other people in need.

The first order of business though was JSC Executive Director Richard J. DeFino Jr. treating the volunteers to coffee, donuts and muffins before they began forming an assembly line to fill stylish and colorful nylon bags with 19 items ranging from gloves, hats, scarfs, dental items and Mylar blankets, just to name a few.

By 9:54 or thereabouts, the bags were well-stocked and placed in large cardboard boxes for Spremulli, Frank DiMaio and other Spirit of Hope members to deliver to local churches, the Providence Rescue Mission, McCauley House, John Hope Center and other charitable facilities.

"This is very impressive," DeFino offered of the Spirit of Hope's second such success story in less than eight days. "This is what we are here for; to partner with community groups and make a difference in the lives of people who are less fortunate than others."

Moreover, as DeFino pointed out "our goal and mission is to make the center a second home for Johnston's senior citizens."

"I've never seen so many hand sanitizer containers;

there must be 1,000 on this table," said Rob Piscioni. "We need more groups and people who make up the Spirit of Hope."

The JSC's long board room table was topped with journals, pens, deodorants, wash clothes, soap, razors, shaving cream, toothbrushes, combs, prayer books, shampoo, Mylar blankets food bars, sanitizers, religious cards and more.

"The Spirit of Hope as well as donations and sponsorships from local businesses," Spremulli said. "Today we received a \$5,000 grant from the Rhode Island Foundation that will be added to Diamond and Gold Sponsorships and will go a long way so can and help those people in need."

Spremlulli, who founded the spirit of Hope with his own money in 2020 when the COVID-19 Crisis was at its height, went on: "We only had about 10 people that turned into a religious group and has been well received as evidenced by the 120 people who came to our recent Community Membership-Appreciation Breakfast at Chelo's Restaurant in Warwick."

To which Vice President Paul Orlando, who showed up last Friday morning with the \$5,000 check from the RI Foundation, added: "We will continue our mission to serve those in need physically, psychologically and spiritually following the word of God."

As Spremulli said while thanking the volunteers and DeFino for the JSC's valuable help: "We do this because it makes us feel good and that's what God wants us to do. Please, join us and help make a difference in the lives of people in need."

SPECIAL SUPPLIES: Pack rescue kits with 19 items. The special nylon bags will be delivered to facilities who help people in need.



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Sun Rise Staff Reports

Polar Plunge

On March 25th, Johnston schools will host its Special Olympics Polar Plunge.

Show your support by joining Johnston coaches, teachers, staff, and students as they unite and participate in the Annual Unified Champion Schools Plunge on Saturday, March 25, at Roger Wheeler Beach in Narragansett.

Pay to Pour

The Second Annual Brown Avenue Elementary School will host its Pay to Pour event on March 29, and the Sarah Dyer Barnes Elementary school will host its inaugural Pay to Pour event soon (date to be determined).

The students will collect donations for Special Olym-

pics RI and on the day of the event and receive a cup of ice water to pour over faculty/staff volunteers of their choosing.

Help by sponsoring a student from one of these two schools.

More at Mohr Library

The library will host a beginner's "How to Draw, for Adults," event at 3p.m. on Thursday, March 9.

Art-Smart classes for ages 5 to 8 and for 8 to 12 are full. Please let the library know if you are interested in these classes in case they can make more spots available.

For High School Students, the library will host a Yoga class, sponsored by Tri-County HEZ, at 2 p.m. on Mondays.

West Bay RI is providing beginning American Sign Language classes at Mohr Library starting Wednesday, March 8 at 1 p.m. The classes will continue each Wednesday, except the first Wednesdays of the month. The instructor will cover letters, numbers and simple phrases. All are welcome to this free class.

Mohr Library will participate in this year's "Read Across Rhode Island" programming to read and discuss "True Biz," a bestselling book which the publisher calls "an unforgettable journey into the Deaf community and a universal celebration of human connection." Upcoming dates are to be decided. Let the library

know of your interest and request the book soon!

The library will host a 3-part book discussion of Prince Harry's popular memoir, "Spare," on Thursday nights at 6:30 p.m., on April 6th, 13th and 27th.

Regular storytime for preschoolers will be offered later in March, at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesdays. Contact the library for more information.

There are afterschool activities nearly every day, including varied programs for middle and high-school age kids and crafts for younger kids.

For adults, the crochet group continues to meet Fridays at 10 a.m.

The Library is located at 1 Memorial Ave. in Johnston. Call 401-231-4980, email info@mohrlibrary.org, or visit their website at mohrlibrary.org.

Steps for Vets

Operation Stand Down Rhode Island will help host the Steps for Vets Walk-a-Thon in Warwick.

Join them for a walk full of fun, food trucks and music to support our local homeless veterans and their families from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, April 15 (rain date April 22).

Registration begins at 10:30 a.m. at the Warwick City Park Beachfront. All are invited to attend. Walkers can register at osdri.charityproud.org/EventRegistration. Register by March 23 to secure a T-shirt.

Reach out to beley@friars.providence.edu with any questions. The cost is \$25 per person, and includes drinks/snacks and a T-shirt. Children under 10 are free.

St. Francis Xavier Scholarships

The St. Francis Xavier Academy Alumnae Association is accepting scholarship applications from Jan. 1, until July 31.

Forms are available on our two Facebook pages, by mail at SXA, P.O. Box 20452, Cranston, 02920, or contact a board member.

RIDDCC Self Employment Classes

Business Development Classes, webinars, and programs abound throughout Rhode Island and, in fact, every state. However, the RI Developmental Disabilities Council's (RIDDCC) Self Employment Project is unique and noteworthy due to its extensive, multi-faceted approach with ongoing support for its participants.

Started in 2018, The RI Self Employment Business Incubator Project, funded by the RI Department of Labor and Training (DLT), includes not only business professional instructors and individual mentors to provide essential information on business basics but also assigns professional experts in various specialties - such as marketing and finance - to provide technical assistance to each

■ SCOOPS - PAGE 10

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SUN RISE SCOOPS

■ Visionary

(Continued from page 3)

dedicating his life to the betterment of sports and enriching kids' lives both on and off the field. Justin loves his son and is continuously looking for ways to play and have fun with him while teaching him to be a better version of himself. He's a dedicated husband and friend and would do anything for anyone. He should win because he's a stand up, loving, caring guy who always wants to help, volunteers, and never stops strategizing ways to raise money and continuing to help more people," said Gina Erickson, his wife of nine years and mother of their son, Colt.

Erickson, who considers himself a "go big or go home" kind of person, originally set a fundraising goal for his team of \$50,000 but several members of his team and supporters suggested he shoot for the moon, and challenged him and themselves to raise \$100,000.

One member of Erickson's team is former colleague and friend, John Fontaine, Principal at Cranston West.

"Justin Erickson is a completely selfless person who cares about everyone and everything before himself. Justin is someone that always says 'yes' to help with anything and always willing to solve any problem, both large and small. No matter the day, time of year, or how hectic his own schedule is, Justin is always there for everyone. There is no better person around to be considered for the Visionary of the Year campaign," said Fontaine.

Beyond his support and interest in sports, Erickson gives back to the Cranston community at large by being the President and a founding member of Cranston Cares, a 501(c)3 nonprofit that provides equitable improvements throughout the Cranston Community.

"Justin has always been one of the hardest working people that I know. He genuinely cares about his work and the people he helps. I'm proud to call him one of my closest friends. I've know him forever and he has always been the same great person," said Ryan Nardolillo, Vice President of Cranston Cares.

For the people who know Erickson, the word "no" is truly not in his vocabulary. He has the ability to make things happen, get

things done and connect people who can help with problems.

"Justin is everywhere and involved. I'm not sure where and when he finds the time in the day but he gets things done. Thank you Justin for making a difference in our schools and being an asset to our community," said Tom Barbieri, Principal of Cranston East.

As a native Cranstonian, Erickson has made friendships that have lasted almost his full lifetime.

"I have known Justin since I was fortunate enough to meet him on the Little League field when we were just little kids. I know one thing for sure there certainly are not many Justin Ericksons in this world, and I'm thankful to call him one of my best friends. We have shared so many incredible moments in time together and through the highs and the lows he has always been an unconditional friend. He has a passionate, caring and forgiving heart and he always sees the best in people while trying to bring people together," said business partner and friend, Ed Brady.

Brady offers high praise for Erickson's devotion to and sacrifices for the city and community he loves.

"I have watched Justin dedicate his life helping others and I can honestly say he is passionately driven by the building a better Rhode Island and investing in opportunities for the future of our communities. He lives his life investing in the 'little things' that add up to being honored as this opportunity that he deserved as a potential Visionary of the Year. I am beyond proud of the father, husband, coach, business partner, leader, athletic director and community activist he has evolved into and I know the work it has taken him to get here day in and day out," Brady said.

For Erickson, it is not about being popular and winning a contest.

"Once we get everyone to help out and involved, at the end of the day it is not about raising the money but where the money goes. It's a great way for our community from everyone to join together, young to old to help find a cure," he said.

Erickson's grandmother unfortunately passed away from leukemia, so he said he is doing this work as a tribute to her.

To learn how to support Erickson and his team, check out his web link at justincredibles.org.

Schools

(Continued from page 1)

That's a total of \$28,947,032 in additional, unexpected construction costs for just three of four building projects. Add \$20 million in additional interest rates, and the \$215 project is already nearly \$50 million in the hole.

Polisena Jr. promised voters there would not be a property tax increase. He announced a plan last month to withdraw the interest rate overage from the town's rainy day fund.

"No, there will be no tax increase," Polisena said in February. "Instead of cutting \$20 million in construction costs to cover this massive increase in interest rates, my team and I have decided to propose incrementally drawing down from the \$41 million surplus to cover the difference. It doesn't make sense to support a tax increase or massive cuts to the project when the town is sitting on this amount of money in reserve."

Slow Down

Now, to cover the massive construction cost overruns, the number of projects on the table may change. The mayor told the committee that he would formulate a new plan before the start of the next school year.

"This is not a project that I want to rush," Polisena said Tuesday. "These buildings are going to outlast all of us. This is not a project that needs to be rushed along."

On Sept. 29, 2022, the Rhode Island Health and Educational Building Corporation (RIHEBC) closed on an \$85 million bond issue for the town. Johnston will have \$130 million remaining from the \$215 million bond referendum overwhelmingly approved by voters last year.

On Tuesday, Polisena Jr. pitched his plan to formulate a plan.

"As far as a timetable ... We will know by August what we're going to do with the second half," Polisena said. "We have different proposals that we've floated. We have not confirmed any of them yet. SLAM is working very hard to figure out the architectural work, and whether or not we can make the map work. I ask you just to be patient on the second half. It will be used. I'm not just going to do the original project and slash everything ... that's not going to work for anybody. I'd rather go in with a new plan that can better allocate that money. And I will have that plan for you by August. I will submit that to Council and to School Committee and you will all see it here."

Last month, on the date of a planned, but canceled School Building Committee meeting, Polisena appointed unsuccessful gubernatorial candidate Helena Buonanno Foulkes to Johnston's School Building Committee (JSBC).

On Tuesday, she joined the committee and sat at the main table next to Polisena Jr. She listened throughout the meeting but made no comments, nor asked any questions.

In a February press release announcing Foulkes addition to the committee, Polisena Jr. said that planners "began this process nearly two years ago, (when) interest rates were at less than 2.5%."

"Now, we are facing interest rates approximately double that amount," the mayor warned. "To make matters worse, shifting money away from construction costs to pay for historically high rates significantly affects our reimbursement from the state, which puts us at an even further financial loss to construction costs funded by the state."

Growing Committee

The JSBC has grown to 26 members — composed of School Committee, Town Council, faculty, school administrators and community leaders — and requires 14 members for a quorum. On Tuesday night, 20 committee members attended the meeting.



NEW BLOOD: New committee member Helena Buonanno Foulkes sat next to Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena Jr. at Tuesday night's Johnston School Building Committee. (Sun Rise photo by Rory Schuler)

Polisena took the opportunity Tuesday to bring the large body up-to-speed on the massive project, which he helped conceive as vice-president of Town Council while his father, Joseph M. Polisena, was mayor.

"I wanted to speak to you all, to give you kind of an update in regards to what is going on," he began. "So I will tell you first what we do know. Second, what we don't know."

He delivered good news for the proposed new elementary center, which would replace the town's four aging elementary school buildings and move all of the town's elementary-aged students under one roof.

"So, what we do know, is that we're full speed ahead on the elementary school," Polisena said. "The date that shovels are going to be in the ground is December (2023). So that got pushed back a little bit, but we're hoping for this December. And I believe we're still on track for students to be in August of 2026."

Polisena Jr. received an email Tuesday from the state's Department of Environmental Management (DEM), informing him "that the permitting was filed."

"They received it," Polisena Jr. said. "That's a big hurdle that we have to go through. It may take a few months. But after that, we're really going to be full steam ahead."

Planners estimate DEM permitting will take around 6 to 8 months.

Polisena Jr. has set the elementary school as the overall project's top priority, "not only for its importance to the children, but also because it's a facilities issue."

"With our other elementary schools really deteriorating, anywhere between 80 and 102 years old ... That's a priority," he explained. "The second part is what we don't know ... the other half of the bond and what we're going to do with it. So as you all know, the original plan was to

have a new Early Childhood Center, a new Elementary School, and then to refurbish Ferri and refurbish Johnston High School."

New Timetable

The plan may change. No one mentioned dropping the Ferri Middle School renovation project, but the project manager had no estimates for cost overruns on that portion of the school overhauls.

"When we did this project, it was not in a post-COVID world, where the materials and interest rates ... and the squeeze that you all feel each day, is the same squeeze that we feel," Polisena Jr. told the committee. "We're particularly affected borrowing money — especially in an amount as large as this."

One option would be to shrink all the projects to reduce costs.

"So, the easy thing to do would be, OK, we're going to do the same project; you just cut what you're overages are and figure out what to do; you go back to your original amount," Polisena Jr. said. "I don't think that's a good idea. I think that's a lazy idea. So, what my administration is doing ... we're working in conjunction with (Superintendent Bernard DiLullo Jr.)... many meetings over the past few months. We're trying to formulate a new plan for the second (portion) of the bond. I don't want to just go in and cut what we're over by. I don't think that's a very good plan."

The mayor tried to find a silver lining. "The good thing, on that second half (of the bond) we're talking about, we don't have the facilities issues with those schools like we do with our elementary schools," he explained.



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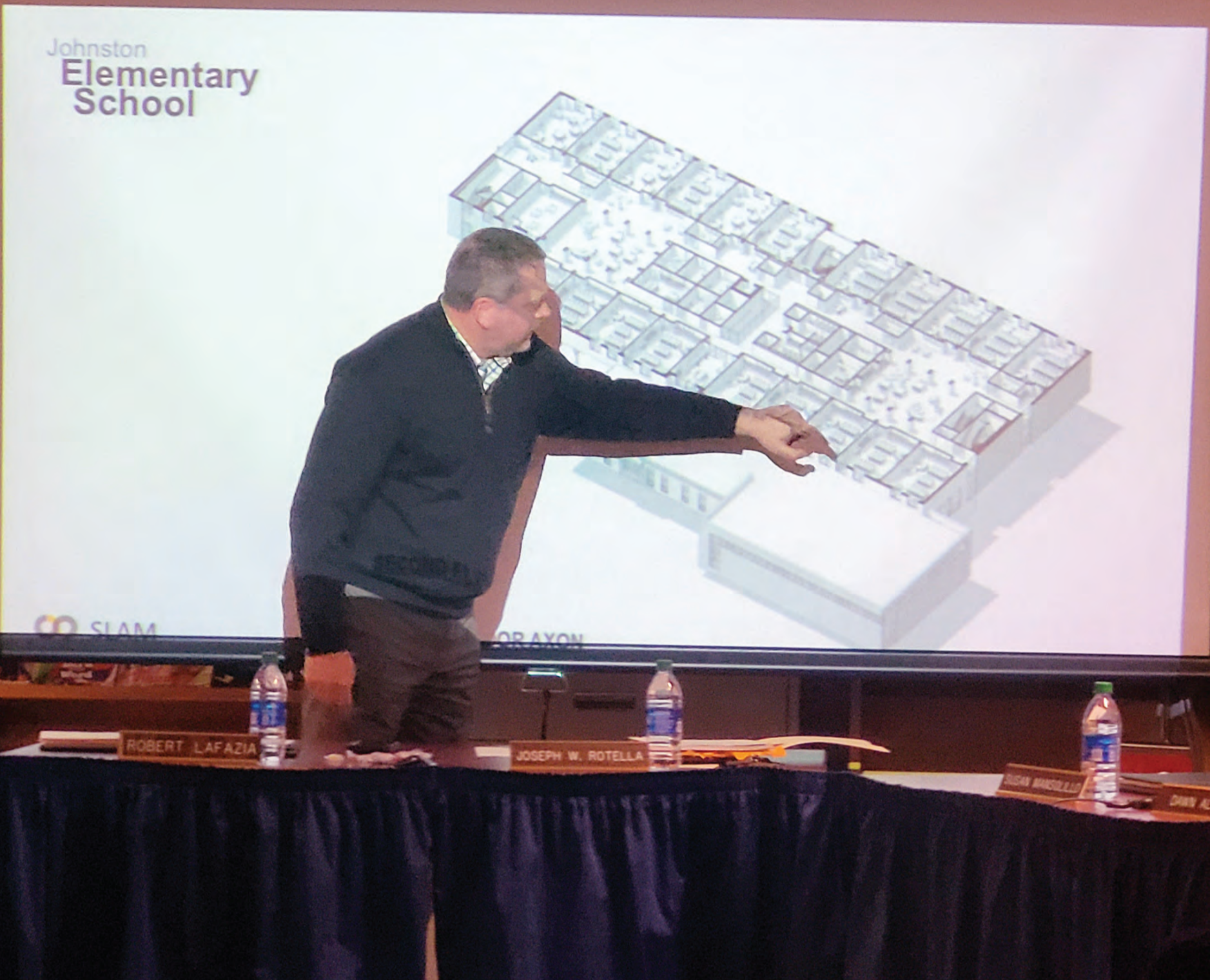


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SOARING COSTS: Mark Rhoades, Principal at the SLAM Collaborative, updates Johnston's School Building Committee on elementary school project plans. The entire project – renovations at the High School, Middle School, a new town Elementary center and a new ECC building – has overshot the voter-approved \$215 million bond by an estimated, combined \$50 million in interest fees and construction costs. (Sun Rise photo by Rory Schuler)

LEGAL NOTICES

NEWSPAPER NOTICE

Pursuant to guidelines promulgated by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Office of Land Revitalization and Sustainable Materials Management, a public hearing will be conducted on March 22, 2023 at 4:00pm at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5211383116?pwd=dHR5UGZYL3VHUXRwSDJtVEM2ZGttUT09> Meeting ID: 521 138 3116 Passcode: 5BMHfv to allow public participation and comment with respect to the beneficial use determination (BUD) application, dated **January 11, 2023**, of Hoffman Engineering Inc. at 0 Colvintown Road, Coventry RI to LRSMM for BUD approval of RIDEM variance to allow beneficial reuse of solid waste (e.g., glass) intermixed with soil to be excavated and processed from the Colvintown Road property then transported to the Central Pike, Johnston property for use as construction road base as part of a solar array. Please email nathan.arruda@dem.ri.gov or visit <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/wastemanagement/facilities/beneficial-use-determination.php> with any questions.

3/9/23

Schools

(Continued from page 7)

Conflicting Meetings

At the same time as the JSBC meeting, the Johnston Planning Board held its regular monthly meeting (the agenda included an update on the town-wide comprehensive plan and a public hearing on a large solar farm pitched for a residential neighborhood).

"Unfortunately I need to get some of the details that were discussed (at the building committee meeting)," Town Council member Robert J. Civetti said late Tuesday night. "(There were) conflicting meetings tonight ... I know there are some other members that are on the school building committee that also sit on the planning board who are unable to attend the school building committee."

The simultaneous scheduling presents a challenge both to members of the board and committee, but also forces residents to choose which meeting to attend.

"I think we need to look at each of the projects and make sure we are doing what we need to do to ensure the safety and enhance the educational environment for the students," Civetti said Tuesday night. "Hopefully we can stay on track and fulfill the promises that we (made to) the taxpayers about touching every school and every child that attends a public school in the

town of Johnston."

Both Civetti and Polisena Jr. agree that planners will need to make project cuts with a scalpel; carefully considering many options.

"We also need to make sure that we are (not) cutting back so much on these projects that in another couple years we will have outgrown the facilities and need more additions," Civetti said. "This is a time when we should be making the investment into the buildings and the students so that we can realize the significant state match that is being offered."

Shortly after the interest rate increase was announced, Town Council President Robert V. Russo said he "wouldn't use the term 'bleak'" to describe the school project outlook; it's "just a change in economy," he argued.

"Obviously a project of this size gets affected exponentially by any increase in interest rates as well as labor and materials," Russo explained. "The project is still going forward — there may be some alterations but the mayor is crafting a plan that I think will minimize the effects of the higher interest rates. Depending on the results of further meetings study the project may actually increase in size."

DiLullo also weighed in last month, assuring residents that the building process was progressing.

"There are no plans at this time to downsize," DiLullo said. "I know Mayor Polisena and the school committee along with the Johnston school community continue to be committed to the school facility project."

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Opinion

EDITORIAL

In regards to housing, something has to give

While the ink is barely dry on the package of 14 bills proposed last week as part of a widespread affordable housing strategy endorsed by House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi, it is worth taking a moment ahead of the vast amount of discussion these bills are sure to generate in order to set the groundwork for why they were proposed in the first place.

Rhode Island, like much of America, does not have enough housing that working-class people can afford to live in — and whatever the state is doing currently, clearly it is not addressing that problem.

According to Shekarchi, Rhode Island is dead last in the country in the number of new single family building permits being issued, another indication that something is wrong in the Xs and Os of how the state and its individual municipalities handle proposed developments within their borders.

• WHERE TO WRITE:
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Some of that comes down to procedural red

tape, which is a large pain point that legislation within the bill package attempts to remedy.

One bill introduced by Shekarchi would streamline the process for developments brought forth under the comprehensive permit, from three major steps developers must undergo before the local approving authority (be it a planning board, zoning board, town council, etc.) to just two steps, with a pre-application review able to be exercised by the municipality as well. Public input would remain a part of the preliminary approval process before moving to final approval. The new bill also places a more stringent deadline in place for municipalities to respond to, deliberate, and decide on developments.

Another bill in the package, also brought forth by Shekarchi, would do away with the state board responsible for handling denial appeals from developers (the State Housing Appeals Board, or SHAB), and place all appeals — whether by a developer who feels their project was shot down without merit, or a municipality who feels a denied development was improperly overturned by the SHAB — to the Superior Courts. This thinking makes good sense, since according to Shekarchi, 90% of land development cases wind up in that court system anyways, so it should simply save time and legal hours for all involved.

Other portions of the package relate to finding creative ways to create more housing by-right, including the building of accessory dwelling units of a certain size onto existing residences without the need for local planning approval, and removing zone change requirements for refitting buildings such as hospitals, schools, and industrial buildings into housing developments.

With these bills gaining bipartisan support, there is little doubt that, in theory, they should indeed make the process easier for developers to navigate and, in theory, build more developments throughout the state. However, we are yet to be convinced that the ultimate result will actually be more affordable housing throughout the state.

As the state's affordable housing law currently dictates, developers need only include a minimum of 25% of units as "affordable," which really means the federal HUD standard that amounts to 80% of area median income. How this results, in practice, is that "affordable" units produced are still often priced far above and beyond what someone earning \$50,000 a year or less can realistically afford without being house burdened (meaning spending 30% or more of their income on housing alone).

That semantic argument aside, the minimum requirement of 25% affordable units means the math will never work out to actually bring any municipality closer to the 10% overall affordable housing stock threshold targeted by the state, either. If a development builds 20 units, but only includes the minimum 5 affordable units, that community has still gone backwards by 15 units towards that goal. After all, why should a private developer, understandably looking to maximize their profit for their investment, be coerced to do more than the minimum 25%? The ideal solution will include a mix of private, for-profit developments that go above the minimum affordable threshold, with more developments from public housing groups that focus solely on building truly affordable units.

Locally, these bills are sure to draw out the NIMBY crowd as well. Those arguments, we have found, are more emotional than substantive in many cases. Something has to give when it comes to addressing our state's housing problem. Speaker Shekarchi and the group of legislators who worked on these bills have taken an important step towards doing so — and they admit the work is not done.

We agree, as there are issues that remain tantamount to address.

THE FRENZY FOR DAVID CICILLINE'S SEAT CONTINUES



Amore: 'False election information greater threat than inflation'

TALKING POLITICS



by
IAN
DONNIS

STORY OF THE WEEK: Election denialism is no longer shocking or even surprising. Some contemporary conspiracy theories are so ludicrous that they induce laughter, even if the underlying facts involve matters of life and death. And while American voters repudiated election deniers running for office in many states last November — in some cases by narrow margins — Donald Trump's latest campaign makes the issue of election denialism more relevant. In the aftermath of 2020, some polls showed a large percentage of Republicans buying into Trump's false narrative of a stolen election (although some people called the findings inflated). My inquiry into the extent of election denialism in Rhode Island found that it isn't widespread, although an online rabbit hole is populated by people including a guy who calls himself the Lone Raccoon and MyPillow Mike Lindell, whose Missouri summits asserting widespread election fraud have attracted attendees from the Ocean State. Secretary of State Gregg Amore is among those touting the quality and transparency of elections in Rhode

Island. Amore told me he considers Trump's repetition of false information about the 2020 election the most serious threat to the nation — more than China, inflation or terrorism.

CD1: The initial frenzy following U.S. Rep. David Cicilline's blockbuster news that he will be leaving Congress has subsided, resulting in a quieter phase, with House Speaker Joe Shekarchi, Helena Foulkes, Lt. Gov. Sabina Matos, and White House staffer Gabe Amo as some of the biggest names considering a run. "These opportunities don't come up every day, and I think I owe it to myself to look at it," Shekarchi said last week, adding that his timeline is "maybe a month" and the decision is "much more personal than it is political." While the speakership is often considered the most powerful post in Rhode Island, Shekarchi's comments make clear how seriously he is weighing a CD1 run. The race offers a way for Foulkes, a potential candidate for governor in 2026, to raise her profile. Matos also appears to be actively weighing a congressional campaign, although various factors, including her modest campaign balance of \$488, lead some observers to suspect she will not run.

MEDIA NEWS I: States Newsroom, the national nonprofit set to launch an online news outlet focused on state government in Rhode Island, has fleshed out its hiring, snapping up Nancy Lavin — who has done a lot of excellent work at PBN — along with former ProJo

scribe Kevin Andrade, Chris Shea from Dartmouth Week, and of course, fearless leader Janine Weisman. More details — including a possible launch date — are expected next week. An office in Olneyville and an official mascot are already in place.

MEDIA NEWS II: Ocean State Stories, the new long-form journalism initiative from the Pell Center at Salve Regina University, can now be found online. The project is led by longtime former ProJo stalwart and author G. Wayne Miller. Here's more detail via a recent news release: An ad-free non-profit media outlet, oceantatestories.org is devoted to issues that matter to all of Rhode Island. Content is being pub-

lished in English and Spanish—and by the platform's print newspaper partners, including the Warwick Beacon, the Cranston Herald, and the Johnston SunRise, which will bring Ocean State Stories reporting to an even broader audience. "I'm thrilled that this platform will allow for a deeper dive into issues I have explored as a journalist for four decades in Rhode Island," said Miller, who along with local freelancers will report and write the stories. "I'm really looking forward to showcasing the work of local freelance journalists as we expand this initiative in the weeks and months to come."

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■ Scoops

(Continued from page 6)

participant. Each student also completes a Business Portfolio, which includes their business plan, elevator pitch, marketing ideas, financial projections, and other information essential to their business.

While many programs end with a certificate and well-wishes, the completion of RIDDC's eight-week self-employment series – which kicked off in 2016 after RIDDC community members had difficulty finding classes and resources that catered to their needs – is only the beginning. Sue Babin, Special Projects Director at RIDDC said, "We found that we needed to create a unique program for people with disabilities interested in entrepreneurship, so we re-dedicated our efforts to enhance the program in ways we knew would help aspiring small business owners."

Once they've completed the course, each participant is invited to attend weekly networking meetings and continuing education via Zoom, receive direct sales through vendor marketplace opportunities, and has the opportunity to apply for mini-grants. The mini-grants, which are awards of up to \$1500.00, can be used toward any business-related expenses, including raw materials, supplies, printing, computer software, or even a computer itself, to participants who have completed homework assignments, including a business plan.

Additionally, the RIDDC recognizes that the participants of their classes may be extremely motivated and have creative, inspiring ideas they likely need assistance with some of the more mundane – but imperative – tasks of running a business. The program leaders, therefore, provide assistance with things like getting business cards printed, creating social media pages, and connecting program participants and/or their support person with industry professionals who may be able to provide further assistance.

The program originally evolved from the nationally cel-

ebrated annual Small Business Saturday event. In 2017, RIDDC launched Small Business Saturday Shop RI (SBSS-HOPRI), the first one-day, all-under-one-roof, pop-up shopping mall venue. Designed to help entrepreneurs with disabilities sell their products, the event also includes a wider range of small business owners, especially women, veterans, and minorities.

To date, the RIDDC Self Employment Project has seen roughly 140 graduates complete its program and welcomes a steady flow of new participants each year. Meanwhile, SBSSHOPRI has welcomed thousands of shoppers and up to one-hundred and fifty vendors each year. Together, both programs work to provide a much-needed boost to Rhode Island's small business community while taking special care to encourage and support minority and underrepresented business owners.

JFD Blood Pressure Screening Event

The Johnston Fire Department will help host a Blood Pressure Screening Event beginning on March 9 (and every second Thursday of the month, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Johnston Senior Center).

The event will include a free blood pressure screening, a free SpO2 screening, a free emergency pocket card and a free emergency refrigerator card.

Coed Middle School Volleyball

Johnston students currently in sixth, seventh and eighth grade are eligible to play Coed Middle School Volleyball in this year's spring season. Students can register now. Space is limited. The fee is \$70 per individual (\$35 for each additional sibling). Checks and money orders should be made payable to JYSA. (Refunds will not be issued without a doctor's note and are subject to a partial refund.)

The dates for 12 sessions of volleyball: April 3, 5, 17, 18, 24, 25, 26, and May 4, 5, 8, 9, 10 (from 2:15-3:45 p.m. at the Johnston Indoor Recreation Center).

Students can register at the Johnston Recreation Office, 1583 Hartford Ave., Johnston, between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. For more information call 401-272-3460 or email johnstonrec.com.

JRTC Fundraiser

The Johnston Republican Town Committee (JRTC) will hold a fundraiser at 6 p.m. on Sunday, May 7, at the Kelley Gazzoer VFW Post 2812, 1418 Plainfield Pike, Cranston.

"Join us for laughs, silent auction, cash bar and a good time," according to the JRTC. "Please bring your own food/snacks."

Tickets must be purchased online in advance (\$35 each). Silent auction winners must pay with a credit card. Tickets are non-refundable. The show is for adults 18 and over. For more information email info@johnstonri.gop.

Coat Exchange

The Buy Nothing Day Coat Exchange, Rhode Island's largest statewide coat drive, is hosting its third annual Spare a Pair Sock and Underwear Drive through April 1.

Those looking to donate can either drop off items at the Coat Exchange's Cranston, East Greenwich or Providence locations, or you can order items online and have them shipped to Cranston or East Greenwich. Collection site addresses can be found at RICoatExchange.org. Contributions are also welcomed via the nonprofit's GoFundMe fundraiser. Collection site addresses and GoFundMe information can be found at RICoatExchange.org.

In addition to collecting brand new, unopened socks and underwear for adults of all sizes and genders, the Coat Exchange is partnering with local nonprofit Red.Lined.Period to collect menstrual products.

Founded in 2020, Red.Lined.Period increases access to menstrual hygiene supplies in Rhode Island's most vulnerable communities, where cost, availability, and portability are an increasing issue. All menstrual products collected by the Coat Exchange between now and April 1 will be donated directly to Red.Lined.Period, which will assemble and distribute kits throughout the state to help end period insecurity and period poverty in Rhode Island.

According to the RI Coalition to End Homelessness, more than 350 Rhode Islanders were living outdoors as of December 2023 with an additional 750 living in shelters, further emphasizing the need for sock and underwear donations; these items are among the most requested by those either living unhoused or in shelters. Every pair of socks or underwear collected through the Spare a Pair drive will be distributed directly to individuals in need by members of the Coat Exchange and its trusted network of community partners.

Donors are also welcome to host their own collection site at their business, workplace, or school by emailing ricoatdrive@gmail.com or registering via the contact form at RICoatExchange.org. Collection will end on April 1, with organizers distributing donations on a rolling basis as they are collected directly to people experiencing homelessness and to local nonprofits who assist Rhode Islanders in need.

Items to donate include: brand new, unopened socks or underwear for adults of all sizes and genders (sizes small through 5X); menstrual products such as pads, tampons, and panty liners, which can be donated in bulk packaging (a box of 24 or more) provided they remain individually wrapped within the packaging; or new cosmetic pouches, which are used to build the kits Red.Lined.Period donates to schools and community locations.

Johnston Senior Center highlights

The Johnston Senior Center is better than ever. Offering more exercise programs and trips every week; Hi Lo Jack, Monday & Wednesday and Poker on Wednesday. Arts &

Crafts, on Monday, Mar Jong on Thursday & Quilting on Wednesday, Tia Chi on Tuesday. The Senior Center also has a book Club the last Tuesday once a month.

There is no charge for Senior Center activities. They offer Bingo on Thursday and Friday. Lunch is served daily at 12 p.m. (with a suggested donation of \$3).

A Social worker/Medicare Counselor is also provided 5 days a week. Contact Madeline Ravenelle at 944-3343.

Feel free to come in for a tour of the facility at 1291 Hartford Ave.

Soul of '71 Scholarship Fund

The Johnston High School Class of 1971 is raising donations for The Soul of '71 Scholarship Fund at the Rhode Island Foundation. A generous donor has offered a \$4,000 challenge! The donor will match all gifts to the Fund up to a total of \$4,000. The Class of 1971 initiated the fund on the occasion of its 50th reunion in 2021. Each year a scholarship will be awarded to a Johnston High School Senior planning to attend a college, university, trade or technical school. Donations are tax according to your filing status. To donate, go to the following website: www.rifoundation.org/funds/soul-of-1971-scholarship-fund.

RIDE accepting Summer Meals Program applications

The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) is now accepting applications for organizations interested in participating in the 2023 Summer Food Service Program for children. The program, financed through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service, provides free meals to children from targeted communities and is designed to maintain and expand nonprofit food programs for children during the summer months.

To participate in the summer program, sponsors must be public or private nonprofit school food authorities, organizations, residential summer camps, nonresidential day camps, or units of local or state governments. To be approved, a site must serve an area with at least 50 percent of the children eligible for free or reduced-price meals, or qualify as a residential camp or a nonresidential day camp. Meals must be made available to all children enrolled in the program without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age.

For more information on the program, call the Rhode Island Department of Education, Office of Statewide Efficiencies, at 401-222-8701. Applications for participation during the 2023 summer season must be completed and approved prior to June 15, 2023; interested organizations should reach out to RIDE no later than May 1, 2023 to start the application process.

NAMI-RI: Registration open for Family-to-Family course

The Rhode Island chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness is now accepting registration for our next virtual Family-to-Family course which begins Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023. This is a free, 8-session educational program for families, significant others and friends of people with mental health conditions. It is a designated evidenced-based program, which means that research shows that the program significantly improves the coping and problem-solving abilities of the people closest to a person with a mental health condition. NAMI-Rhode Island's Family-to-Family course is taught by trained family members who have lived experience with a loved one, and includes presentations, discussions and interactive exercises. For more information on the Family-to-Family curriculum and registration requirements, visit namirhodeisland.org or call 401-331-3060 or email beth@namirhodeisland.org.

Explore the 'Woony'

You can "Join the Woony Team!" "Please donate to the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council to help us continue to restore the Woonasquatucket River and Greenway," the organization asks. "Your donations also provide cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities for youth, adults, and families. Thank you!"

Pre-registration is required for Woony hikes. The Explore the Woonasquatucket Recreation Series is made possible with support from REI Co-op.

More hikes have been planned for future dates: Hike Heritage Park Conservation Area at 10 a.m., Saturday, March 18: This is a lovely, wide path with rolling hills. On the walk through this section of the Gloucester Land Trust's 447 acre property, the group will amble through beautiful forest land, pass majestic rock ledges and loop up and around Steere Hill before heading back.

Hike Connors Farm Conservation Area at 10 a.m., Saturday, April 1. Located in Smithfield, Connors Farm is a 2.9 mile loop trail that passes by cranberry bogs, small brooks and ponds and features a picnic area at the top of a look-out spot. It's a beautiful rocky terrain, with ups and downs — there will be some uphill traversing on rocks.

For more details and to register, visit WRWC.ORG/EVENTS.

Editor's Note: Send submissions to rorys@rhodybeat.com. Photos in jpg format are accepted and news can include community events, promotions, academic news and nonprofit events. Email today and see your news in our column in the Johnston Sun Rise. Please include a daytime telephone number in case we require any further information.

ANIMAL TALK

By Karen Kalunian

Local  Adoptable  Loveable



Photo credit: Exeter Animal Shelter

Bailey

Bailey will light up your life with her exuberant temperament! She's young, athletic and a true beauty! Her gorgeous black shiny coat is accented by her sparkling chocolate brown eyes and her white tipped toes! Bailey is a Shepherd mix and will need a secure fenced in yard so she can run and play! Bailey also needs to be your one and only princess but she so wants to be part of your family! She loves kids! Please contact Exeter Animal Shelter for more information to see if you are Bailey's perfect match at 401-294-2754 and please help Bailey by telling your family and friends about her too!

If you have been looking to adopt or know of an animal in need, please contact Karen directly at

animaltalk1920@gmail.com





SUPERQUIZ PANTHERS: Jonas Littlefield, Isabella Ribezzo (Johnston's team captain) and Autumn McIntyre. (Sun Rise photos by John Howell)

'Heavy medal' music to Academic Decathlon competitors' ears

By JOHN HOWELL

There was a lot of heavy metal at Bryant University Sunday at the 40th annual Rhode Island Academic Decathlon. It was the kind of music high school students love.

This was not ear drum-splitting music. In fact, it took concentration to hear the ting of metal hitting metal.

That was the harmony of gold, silver and bronze medals as they bounced from around the necks of scores of students.

"We've got a lot of ties, hopefully we've got the medals," Decathlon executive director Frank Lenox said as the awards ceremony of the day-long program started shortly after 6 p.m. As a precaution to such situations, the RI Academic Decathlon that conducted its first statewide competition in December 1983 at the Knight Campus of CCRI, had ordered a large quantity of undated medals. The reserve was nearly depleted as the evening reached the climax of the announcement of the top ten schools.

The East Greenwich team took the honors and will go on to compete in the United States Academic Decathlon to be held April 27-29 in Frisco, Texas with a team score of more than 30,000 points. The top scoring teams were all within 6,500 points of East Greenwich, making for a hard fought competition said Lenox. South Kingstown came in second followed by Cranston West. Toll Gate edged out Pilgrim 78 points for fourth and Bishop Hendricken placed sixth.

In the closing event of the competition, the Super Quiz held before an audience of cheering students and parents, South Kingstown High placed first followed by Hendricken that took home the second place plaque and the Johnston team that placed third.

Students compete in ten subject areas, hence decathlon, that range from math and essay to speech and interview. Students are also in divisions based on their grade point averages thereby enabling team members to win individual medals within their division while contributing to the overall team score.

Prepared and impromptu speeches are often the most nerve racking components of the competition for students.

It has become a tradition for one of the gold medalists in the three divisions to deliver their speech at the awards ceremony. Toll Gate's Ahmainy Garcia, a soft-spoken young woman with poise, held the audience's attention as she talked about the importance of things remembered.

Students winning metals from the coverage areas of Beacon Communications publications and their schools are as follows: From Cranston West High School, Sophie Appel won a gold medal in Speech. Olivia Tedeschi-Man won gold in Essay and bronze in Literature. Liam Rafferty won bronze in Essay and silver in Literature. Henry Cheng won in Social Science and gold in Economics. Olivia Clark won bronze in Social Science and silver in Art. Ethan White won a silver medal in



JOHNSTON'S MINUTE MEN: The Johnston team and their coaches Kerry Murphy and Debra Smyth joined for a group photo during a break in Sunday's RI Academic Decathlon held at Bryant University. Johnston's team this year included students Cameron Ferrara, Neko Mahony, Caroline Pesenecker, Sofia China, Susan Nassi, Isabella Ribezzo, Autumn McIntyre, Jonas Littlefield, Emily Anderson and Ryan Pistocco.

Economics. Dylan Kumes won a bronze medal in Literature and Ryan Sharma won a silver medal in Music.

From Bishop Hendricken High School, Aidan Weiss won gold in Essay, silver in Literature, silver in Music and silver in Art. Julian Burke won a bronze medal in Social Science. Richard Vigliotti won gold in Science, silver in Music and silver in Math.

From Johnston High School, Caroline Pesenecker won a bronze in Economics and Isabella Ribezzo won a silver medal in Art.

From Pilgrim High School, Jordan Garcia won silver in Math and bronze in Music. Sean Hoyle won silver in

Speech, silver in Literature and gold in Math. Elizabeth Cavanaugh won a silver in Essay. Noah Ramsey won a bronze in Essay. Liam Holmes won a bronze medal in Social Science. Christopher Cook won a bronze in Music. Noah Ramsey, a gold in interview and Griffin Taylor a bronze in essay.

From Toll Gate High School, McKenzie Anderson won a bronze in Speech and a bronze in Economics. Jaylene Le won bronze in Speech, gold in Literature and a bronze in Art. Ahmainy Garcia won gold in Speech. Daemon Rigollet won a bronze in Music. Cooper Payne won a gold in Math.

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PENPED UP: Don't get too close to Johnston's 'Panther Pen.' They're ferocious with school pride. (Submitted photo)

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Don't poke your fingers into Johnston's 'Panther Pen' (you might lose them)

By **MATT CLEMENTS**
Special to the Sun Rise

Johnston students accompanied the 2022-23 JHS Boys Basketball Team's magical championship run with school pride.

The "Panther Pen" is the name of the student section at JHS, that has grown over the past year into a batch of students that come out and support the school's sports teams.

These students participate in themes every game, that vary from white out, to construction, to tropical.

Every home basketball game gave the Panthers a true advantage as the Panther Pen was chanting "defense" and "let's go Johnston" throughout the duration of games.

The students showed their true strength toward the latter part of the season, as the team was getting hot, and of course the playoffs.

Even at away games like Cranston West or Tollgate, the students traveled to support the team and make a difference in the atmosphere.

On Feb. 26, the day of the DII State Championship game, the Panther Pen accumulated hundreds of students and town locals to come out to watch the 59-52 win.

These students, their attendance and support, truly gave the state Champion Panthers a reason to play their hearts out every game.

Editor's Note: Matt Clements serves as Sophomore Representative on the Johnston High School Student Council. The Johnston Sun Rise regularly publishes submissions from the JHS Student Council.

johnstonsunrise.net



COOKING FOR 50: The Warwick Knights of Columbus cooked for 50 veterans last week. Ray Lang, Kenny Caden, Eddie Strac, Bernie Lane, Gary Pelliccio and Mike Cronin formed a small assembly line in the kitchen, manufacturing boiled Irish offerings and shipping them promptly through the door and into the dining room. (Sun Rise photos by Rory Schuler)

Veterans

(Continued from page 4)

The Newport native belonged to his local Knights of Columbus Council. He said his years as a member were the best of his life, and he thanked the Warwick knights who cooked and served the boiled dinner.

Across the table sat fellow former Newport resident James Robinson, a 101-year-old ex-Navy sailor. He had already finished his first beer. He said he was ready for another.

Both he and Duba have lost their sight, so the feast of smells and sounds in the dining room were welcome quilts of comfort.

"I don't even know what kind of vehicle brought me here," Duba laughed (he arrived in a large white transport van). "It sounded like a freight train."

A few seats away, Steve Schiffman, 77, an Army veteran and former Cranston resident, laughed and considered a refill.

Ernie Cafolla, 97, originally from Wakefield, served as an Army staff sergeant in World War II. He lifted his almost empty glass of wine and proposed a toast.

Caffola's table-mates — Joe Mullen, 90, a Seekonk native and ex-Army first lieutenant; Donald LaBelle, 91, formerly of Charlestown, a former Air Force airman first class; and Ray Houle, 79, a Pawtucket native and retired Army E-5 — all lifted their bottles and goblets.

"Here's to it and to it again," Caffola announced. "If you don't get to it, you may never get to do it again."

His buddies laughed and clinked.

In the kitchen, a cadre of Knights carved massive slabs of corned beef and hunks of cabbage. They cooked for at least 50. Ray Lang, Kenny Caden, Eddie Strac, Bernie Lane, Gary Pelliccio and Mike Cronin formed a small assembly line, manufacturing boiled Irish offerings and shipping them

promptly through the door and into the dining room.

A few Knights who also served in the military took seats in the hall and dined with the slightly elder veterans.

Frank DeLuca, 74, Frank Mitchell, 75, and David Bastien, 75, all of Warwick, each had a drink and a steaming plate. DeLuca, a former first class rudderman, and Mitchell, a boatswain's mate, both served in the U.S. Navy. Bastien was a Marine corporal.

They sat with Jerry Eastwood, 93, a Central Falls native and former Navy third class boatswain's mate.

Barely any gap existed between the greatest generations gathered off Old Warwick Avenue last Thursday. All the men had so much in common. They had all served their country and now they were patiently living out their retirements.

Bromage said the event was partially sponsored by his father (also Mike) and his local retail insurance business, Cormack Routhier Agency, Inc.

"As Knights, our first thing is charity," Bromage said, standing in the quiet hallway outside the humming St. Patrick's Day celebration chaos. "We started figuring out ways we could give back. It started with this idea, of providing these men a holiday dinner."

The Knights also host charity drives throughout the year and hang flags commemorating patriotic holidays.

"We had food and transportation for 50," Bromage said. "At last count, there were 47 veterans here. If their diet allows, they can have a beer or a wine."

Following the boiled dinner, the Knights served coffee and dessert.

The veterans all arrived thirsty and hungry and left quenched and full. They entered silent and lonely, but went home reinvigorated, supercharged.

"I think this is the most beautiful thing I've ever experienced," Duba said. "How wonderful."



CHOWING DOWN: Veterans from their early 70s to over 100 years old dined on corned beef and cabbage last week at the Knights of Columbus Council 2295 in Warwick, which hosted a Saint Patrick's Day dinner. Robert Clark, 80, formerly of Johnston, top right, was one of 47 veterans to make the trip and leave with a full belly.

ANSWER TO THIS WEEK'S PUZZLE:

T	R	A	N	C	E	S		E	E	R	I	E		
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PANTHER PRIDE: Around 575 Ferri Middle School students showed their support for Special Olympics last Friday. They purchased and wore special Panther Pride T-shirts for the event. Look for more photos in next week's edition.

THE PLEDGE

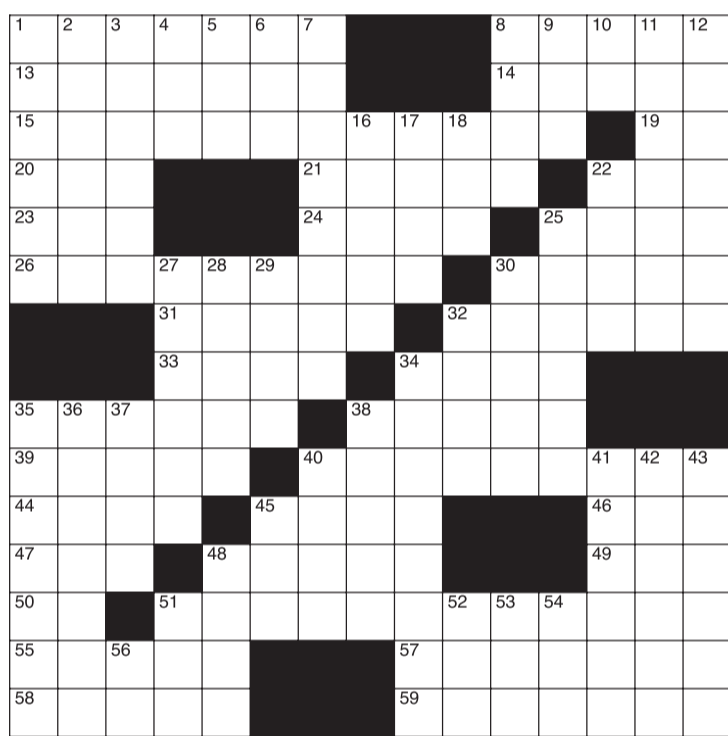
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(Pre-K through 12th grade)

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Sit next to someone alone at lunch. Say hello to someone in the hallway.
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Join us to make inclusion a reality.



SPIRIT OF INCLUSION: Bryce Gervais, a Ferri Middle School student, joined in on the school spirit last Friday.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE CORNER



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Half-conscious states
- 8. Unnatural
- 13. Deep regret
- 14. Rogue
- 15. Taken without permission
- 19. An alternative
- 20. After B
- 21. Partner to flowed
- 22. Weekday
- 23. Body part
- 24. World's longest river
- 25. One of the Greats
- 26. Make clean
- 30. C. Canada indigenous peoples
- 31. Japanese seaport
- 32. Most unclothed
- 33. Small grouper fish
- 34. Soluble ribonucleic acid
- 35. Distinguishing sound
- 38. French realist painter
- 39. Popular beer brand
- 40. Views
- 44. God depicted as a bull
- 45. Relieve
- 46. Residue after burning

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Clues
- 2. Do again
- 3. Current unit
- 4. Neither
- 5. Corporate exec (abbr.)
- 6. Second sight
- 7. The absence of mental stress
- 8. Supplemented with difficulty
- 9. Stop for good
- 10. College dorm worker
- 11. Bones
- 12. Most supernatural
- 16. Spanish island
- 17. Unlimited
- 18. Where golfers begin

- 22. No charge
- 25. Print errors
- 27. Professional drivers
- 28. Kiss box set
- 29. Short, fine fibers
- 30. Administers punishment
- 32. Czech city
- 34. Normal or sound powers of mind
- 35. The academic world
- 36. Crustacean
- 37. Currency
- 38. Pastoral people of Tanzania or Kenya
- 40. Cloth spread over a coffin
- 41. Grouped together
- 42. On land
- 43. Glistened
- 45. A type of extension
- 48. One who assists
- 51. College sports conference
- 52. Zero
- 53. Midway between northeast and east
- 54. Type of screen
- 56. The 13th letter of the Greek alphabet

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Panthers 'Choose to Include'

By RORY SCHULER

Everyone belongs. That's the message spreading throughout Johnston Schools.

No matter our differences, each individual has something to offer.

To prove it, students at the Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School purchased 575 "Panther Pride" T-shirts and proudly wore them last Friday for a "Dress Down Day" to support Rhode Island Special Olympics.

The district-wide "We are ALL in" initiative celebrates inclusion and has focused on spreading awareness throughout the school system.

Johnston Public Schools Director of Special Services Edda Carmadello has helped to lead the effort.

"The whole district is celebrating inclusion today," she said.

Last week, Carmadello joined Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School Assistant Principal Lisa Hunt to welcome RI Special Olympics' Ally Graves, Unified Champion Schools (UCS) consultant, and Tanya Creamer, manager of UCS and youth development.

Graves and Creamer brought Remy, a service dog and therapy dog in-training, for the "Dress Down Day."

More events are planned for later this month.

On Saturday, March 25, Johnston schools will host its Special Olympics Polar Plunge. The community can show its support by joining Johnston coaches, teachers, staff, and students as they unite and participate in the annual UCS Plunge at Roger Wheeler Beach in Narragansett.

Brown Avenue Elementary School will host its second annual Pay to Pour event on March 29, and the Sarah Dyer Barnes Elementary school will host an inaugural Pay to Pour event soon (the date has yet to be determined).

The students will collect donations for Special Olympics RI and on the day of the event and receive a cup of ice water to pour over faculty/staff volunteers of their choosing. Johnston residents can help by sponsoring a student from one of these two schools.



ALL IN: Ferri Middle School students helped spread the message of inclusion. (Photos courtesy Edda Carmadello, Johnston Public Schools Director of Special Services)



DRESSED DOWN: Johnston Senior High School students collected money for Dress Down Day to benefit the district's Special Olympics Unified team.



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By JENNIFER COATES



Meet Sripal Jain, owner of Jain's Laundry. Sripal and his wife Kaushal take great pride in this family-run business and invite you to come here for all your wash/dry/fold laundry needs and for self-service washing & drying machines.

There is going to come a time when you can no longer avoid it. That pile of laundry in the corner, growing every day while you find excuses to ignore it. But it is not going away, and eventually, it will overtake your room or leave you without a single clean garment to wear. Laundry is like that – it is never-ending. Now, there is a possibility for escape! Why labor ONE MORE MINUTE this winter tackling the inevitable chore of endless laundry when you have the willing and able hands of Kaushal Jain of Jain's Laundry to rescue you?

For an incredible .69/pound, Kaushal will wash, soften, dry, and even fold your laundry – all in one day – all at this user-friendly, clean and efficient laundromat in Johnston. Besides the convenience of this great service, this recession-busting price also covers the cost of the softener, bleach, soap and hangers! The math is simple enough – ten pounds of dirty clothes, dropped off in the morning and ready to go by day's end – all for less than \$7.00. Fifteen pounds of dirty clothes dropped off on the way to work and ready to go by dinner – all for under \$11.00. What a bargain!

For the most competitive prices in the area, you will find both the wash-fold, same-day service offered by Kaushal here at Jain's Laundry as well as a room full of coin-operated washers and dryers for the "do-it-yourselfers". If you don't have enough quarters, no worries ~ there is a change machine that accepts up to a \$20.00 bill available here.

There are large capacity machines available for all size loads, from 25 pounds to 65 pounds. The top loading machines are available here for only \$2.00 per load

compared to \$2.50 in most other places. New state-of-the-art dryers are installed which are incredibly efficient, rotating both clockwise and counter-clockwise to prevent the bunching and twisting that can make drying uneven in conventional dryers.

Vending machines are also on-site if you need to restock your supply of detergent, softener or laundry bags. There is never a need to wait because there are rows and rows of machines ready to go at any given time. Everything you need is right here at Jain's Laundry.

There is plenty of parking and a friendly, helpful staff

here, ready to meet the needs of both residential and commercial customers. You can stay in their clean waiting area between cycles or leave and return between loads. There is always someone there to keep an eye on your clothes or help you as needed.

Jain's Laundry is found in the Plaza 44 shopping plaza on 39 Putnam Pike. It is open seven days each week - from 8 am to 9 pm, Monday through Friday, and 7 am to 8 pm on Saturday and Sunday. For more information about their services, call 401-231-7019.

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By
**EDWARD
KDONIAN**

We've all heard of the classic pairing that is wine and cheese, but have you ever considered attending a full fledged exploration of fancy cheeses from around the world paired with local craft beers instead of wine?

"What's interesting is that beer is actually better at pairing with food than wine," says Buttonwoods Brewery Co-owner Morgan Snyder Jr. "It just so happens, coincidentally, that the French being the primary producers of cheese also are the primary producers of wine. So they pushed wine and cheese, but beer with its carbonation and variety of textures can actually pair better."

Buttonwoods Brewery, on Wellington Ave, has paired up with fellow Cranston business, Edgewood Cheese Shop, located on Broad Street, to combine a selection of the brewery's locally crafted beers with carefully selected cheese pairing meant to bring out the best in both.

ENJOYING THE NIGHT: Laine Hodgkinson, DJ Johnson, Katie Truchon and James Freeman (left to right) take their time discussing and making notes while enjoying the tasting. Doug Metivier (top photo) looks in awe at the large tasting room as he prepares for his first beer and cheese tasting. (Beacon Communications photos)

Sports

Panthers wrap up historic season

By ALEX SPONSELLER

The Johnston boys basketball team dropped a 64-63 heartbreaker to Smithfield in the Sweet 16 round of the open state tournament last week to see its season come to a close.

Johnston held a five-point lead late in the fourth quarter, but Smithfield would battle back in the final two minutes and sink a buzzer-beating 3-pointer to advance to the Elite 8.

Despite the tough loss, it was a historic season for the Panthers, who took home the Division II Championship to claim their first title since the 1996 season.

"It was a tough way to end the season, especially coming off such a high from (the Division II Championship). It took the wind out of our sails, but the kids recovered by



CHAMPIONSHIP RUN: Johnston senior captain Derek Salvatore at the Division II Championship. (Photos by Alex Sponseller)

WRAP - PAGE 23



MAKING A SPLASH: Johnston's James Guilmette last week. (Photo by Leo van Dijk/Irhodyphoto.zenfolio.com)

Guilmette shines at swim states

By ALEX SPONSELLER

The Barrington boys swim team took home its second straight title at the Rhode Island Interscholastic League Swimming State Championships last weekend, edging out second-place Bishop Hendricken by just 12 points. It was the second year in a row that the Eagles and Hawks finished first and second, respectively.

The Barrington girls later won on the girls side, rolling to the championship by outsourcing second-place

SWIM - PAGE 19

Johnston Youth Basketball having fun on court

By PETE FONTAINE

It is Saturday morning and there's a flurry of activity going on inside the Daniel E. Mazzulla Jr. Indoor Recreation Center at 1741 Atwood Avenue in Johnston.

Every space of the well-maintained 26,000 square foot artificial surface was covered with upwards of 300-plus young boys and girls who were showing their upstart athletic skills to their smiling parents - and in some cases grandparents - who watched and cheered their every move.

Welcome to the Johnston Recreation Department Youth Basketball Program that features 35 boys and girls teams whose rosters are made up of children in grades 1-9 and are supported by local businesses in and around Johnston.

Each team also has a name of a college or pro squad. "We have 35 generous sponsors," said Nicole Cournoyer, the popular assistant director of recreation in Johnston. "We also have 65 wonderful coaches who volunteer their time every week during games played on three regulation basketball

FUN - PAGE 21



FRIAR FORCE: The Northeast Auto Body sponsored PC Friars roster includes Gianni Mandarelli, Jordan Franco, Cole Buscemi, Thomas Laughter, Wyatt Cole, Brody Amaral and Lachlan Kalnietis. Coaches are Steve Mandarelli, Carson Laughter and Robert Mandarelli. (Sun Rise photos by Pete Fontaine)

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Upcoming hockey matchup could be historic

This Sunday will be one of the biggest sporting events of the season for Warwick, as the Warwick co-op boys hockey team will square off against defending champion Bishop Hendricken in the Division I Semifinals with a chance at reaching the championship on the line.

In my opinion, this is a massive game for the city for a number of reasons. Let's dive in.

First off, the obvious. We get the city's public schools taking on the private school.

There is always that rivalry and that storyline and now we get to enjoy it in a playoff atmosphere. Considering school sizes, we rarely get to see Pilgrim or Toll Gate square off against Hendricken. We get the occasional scrimmage or non-league event, so this is going to be fun.

Then, of course, the significance of the game.

Hendricken finished the season in first place in its pursuit to become back to back champions. Warwick on the other hand is in the middle of a huge bounce back season. Last winter, the co-op won just one game and was bounced early in the playoffs. This year, the Militia, as it is now referring to itself as, finished in fourth place and has been competitive with every team it has faced. It has a real shot at this thing.

The most important aspect of this whole matchup is, without a doubt, the fact that this could serve as a test run for future co-ops in the city.

I have spoken on this

time and time again, but I am totally for co-ops in the city of Warwick. Some teams are in no need, but others have been struggling with numbers in the past few seasons. Regardless of the two new high schools or building just one, I am a big fan of co-ops when they make sense.

One of the biggest appeals of co-ops in Warwick is the possibility of the rivalries it would create with Hendricken. Between and Pilgrim and Toll Gate, most, if not all of their boys teams would be in Division I like the Militia is. Imagine how much buzz there would be when these events took place, similar to the game we're about to get this Sunday?

Playoff hockey, Thanksgiving football, the possibilities are endless and this weekend will give us a taste of it.

If you don't recall, earlier in the regular season, the Militia dealt the Hawks a 5-2 loss in a big upset, which was Warwick's breakout performance this winter. It was Hendricken's only loss of the season to this point.

That was a massive story and it was only an early regular season matchup. Imagine if the Militia pulls off a playoff upset? That would be one of the biggest stories in Warwick sports history. That is what is on the line here this weekend.

From my perspective, there is no losing here. If Hendricken takes care of business then it will continue to fight for another title. Consecutive championships are always a good story.

My pitch



by
ALEX
SPONSELLER
SPORTS EDITOR
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If the Militia pulls off the upset, then see above.

If you are a Warwick sports fan, you should absolutely be locked into this playoff race and watch this weekend's game, whether it is live or via stream. So much is on the line both on the ice and off it. Again, I am not saying that Pilgrim and Toll Gate should just join forces willy nilly, but for teams that are struggling to maintain numbers, I suggest paying attention to this team and keeping an open mind. Warwick public versus Warwick private could be the state's best rivalry.

Speaking of hockey, I was covering the playoffs this past weekend at Thayer and was eavesdropping on a couple of gentlemen chatting it up in the stands.

One of them made a point that I loved hearing. He was saying that high school hockey is underrated and underappreciated. He was saying that it is a 5 dollar ticket, free parking and cheap concessions. He's totally right, and it's something that I think about often.

Sure, it is always fun seeing the pros play or high level college teams go at it. That big arena

atmosphere can't be replicated and it is always fun to see the guys on TV live, right in front of you.

But if you are looking for a cheap, easy night out. Why not head down the street to watch the game?

Especially during the playoffs. It's the best teams, best players in the state going at it. It is much different than watching a youth hockey game where the kids are still learning to skate.

Admission, a snack and drink, all for 10-15 bucks? How can you beat that? I say that to myself all the time. I was thrilled to see that

others share that view and support our local athletics.

Lastly, I would like to give one last shout out to two of our teams that wrapped up their seasons this past week.

The Cranston boys hockey team dropped its playoff series over the weekend. The Falcons had a very young roster, made up almost entirely of underclassmen. Well, they reached the playoffs and earned a preliminary round win. Although the kids were probably sad to see things end this weekend, it is a huge step in the right direction and Cranston will be right in the thick of

things for the next two or three years.

Then, there is the Johnston boys basketball team, which fell in the Sweet 16 round of the open tournament to Smithfield.

The Panthers claimed their first title since 1996 when they won the Division II Championship. The Panthers were the favorites heading into the opening round of the open tournament, so it was a disappointing end, but there is no taking away from what they already accomplished. Johnston was one of the best teams in the state and the kids are champions. It was a fun ride to cover.

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Swim

(Continued from page 18)

Prout by 55 points.

Here are some of the results from the day:

BOYS

Johnston's James Guilmette finished fourth in the breaststroke and seventh in the individual medley.

Cranston West's relay team of Trenton Kierman, Joseph Lannitti, Logan D'Arezzo and Alexander Tremblay finished 10th in the 400 free.

Hendricken's Nick Andrews placed first in the 200 freestyle and the 100 freestyle. Hendricken's relay team of Damon Buchanon, Matt Walden, Ryan Kornacki and Nick Andrews won the 400 free relay.

The Hendricken relay team of Walden, Tim Andrews, Aidan Curry and Tristan Jordan took second in the 200 medley. Walden later finished second in the individual medley, while Tim Andrews placed second in the butterfly.

Jordan, Nick Andrews, Tim Andrews and Curry later combined to take second in the 200 free relay.

Walden finished second in the backstroke.

Tim Andrews took third in the 50 free while Kornacki took third in the 500 free for the Hawks.

Jordan placed fourth in the 100 free for the Hawks, while Buchanon took fourth in the 500 free. Curry placed fifth in the breaststroke for Hendricken.

Buchanon finished sixth in the 200 free for Hendricken, while Kornacki took sixth in the individual medley. Jordan later finished sixth in the 50 free.

Alex Sulyma finished eighth in the 200 free and the backstroke for Hendricken, while teammate Ryan Viccio took eighth in the butterfly. Viccio also finished ninth in the 500 free.

Curry finished 10th in the 100 free for Hendricken.

GIRLS

Toll Gate's Oce Lowe finished fifth in the 500 free and 10th in the individual medley.

Cranston West was led by Bianca Ascencio, who finished 13th in the individual medley. Cranston East's team of Ruby Houle, Madeline Baxter, Elaine Wu and Samaira Sierra took 11th in the 500 free relay.

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Fishing show this week is already a record breaker

By CAPT. DAVE MONTI

At press time, the New England Saltwater Fishing Show being held this week from March 10-12 at the Rhode Island Convention Center is already a record breaker with booth sales revenue the highest it has ever been. The show is the largest saltwater fishing show of its type in the Northeast, featuring tackle, rods, reels, lures, electronics, charter guides, boats, motors, accessories, clothes and much more. "We have over 300 booths sold at this point and have experienced an increase in large displays for boats too," said Greg Vespe, Executive director of the Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association (Show sponsors). "You can feel it in the air. Exhibitors are excited and stepping up with some great Show Specials and anglers can't wait to get ready for a great season of fishing with the latest products and some new fishing strategies and tactics they learn from show seminars."

Seminar topics will include everything from offshore Canyon tactics to inshore tips and tricks for black sea bass. Speakers will cover locations from Boston Harbor to the Connecticut River and everywhere in between. Accomplished charter captains, authors and local sharpies are all pitching in to cover topics of interest.

Visit www.nesaltwatershow.com or RISAA's Facebook page for updates on seminar topics and speakers. By taking a little time to plan your show visit you can make sure you are at the show for the presentations you want to see and visit the booths that have products you want to check out and buy.

The New England Saltwater Fishing Show is being held at the Rhode Island Convention Center Friday, March 10, 1 p.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturday, March 11, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.; and Sunday, March 12, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Children 11 and under admitted free and on Sunday, March 12, Family Day, all women are admitted free. Visit the Kids Casting Area on Saturday and Sunday for casting and other games.

All adults who enter the show can register to win a Free Fishing Charter Trip with Archangel Fishing Charters with Capt. Mike Littlefield. Tickets in advance at www.ticketmaster.com or at the door for \$12. Friday is Military Appreciation Day. In conjunction with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the first 200 Veterans and Active Duty personnel that arrive on Friday will be admitted free.

Parking is available at the Convention Center Parking Garage and at Providence Place Mall.

Scup/black sea bass to get 10 percent cut, MA anglers asked to weigh-in

Rhode Island held their public hearing on black sea bass, scup and other recreational specie regulations on Monday night. However, in Massachusetts the Division of Marine Fisheries is holding a virtual public scoping meeting regarding the setting of 2023 recreational measures for scup and black sea bass on Monday, March 13, 2023, 6:30 p.m. online via Zoom at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/91111111111>

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) recently voted to implement coast-wide changes in recreational regulations for scup and black sea

bass in 2023. Both species are subject to mandatory 10 percent recreational harvest reductions. The states of Massachusetts through North Carolina are following ASMFC regional management processes to develop state regulatory options to achieve the coastwide harvest reductions.

On March 13, DMF will collect public input on the ASMFC-approved range of options developed for Massachusetts' recreational scup and black sea bass fisheries to meet the required reductions. (Written comment may also be provided through March 15, as described below.) The Massachusetts Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission will provide DMF with feedback regarding a preferred management approach at its next business meeting on March 21. It is expected that DMF will be able to announce the anticipated rules shortly thereafter, which will be implemented by emergency rulemaking given the short timeline for state compliance for the 2023 fishing season.

Directions for Providing Public Input

You must register online in advance to attend the virtual meeting on March 13; after registering, you will receive a confirmation e-mail containing information to join the meeting. Register online at <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/91111111111>

Those unable to attend the meeting or preferring to submit written input can e-mail Director Daniel McKiernan at marine.fish@mass.gov. Such e-mail must be received by Wednesday, March 15 to be considered by DMF in selecting the preferred management approach.

For more information, please contact Nichola Meserve at nichola.meserve@mass.gov.

Where's the bite?

Striped bass. Todd Corayer, expert kayak angler and fishing writer, said, "I continue to catch keeper size striped bass in South County salt ponds and estuaries as the water is still fairly warm (39 to 41 degrees) with a good amount of bait still present."

East End Eddie Doherty, said, "Herring showed up in the Taunton River in Middleboro last week so I received a lot of texts and calls from excited anglers who were taking it to be the first sign of spring, hoping the striped bass would follow suit early and chase the bait. Who knows - maybe slots plus in April!"

Cod fishing south of Cape Cod is still open. Party boats fishing for cod this winter include the Frances Fleet at www.francesfleet.com and the Island Current at www.islandcurrent.com.

Freshwater fishing has been good as not many have fished ponds in Rhode Island and Massachusetts that were stocked in fall and early winter. For licenses and trout/salmon waterway stocking information in Rhode Island visit www.dem.ri.gov/fishing, and in Massachusetts www.mass.gov/service-details/trout-stocking-report.

Dave Monti holds a captain's master license and charter fishing license. He serves on a variety of boards and commissions and has a consulting business focusing on clean oceans, habitat preservation, conservation, renewable energy, and fisheries related issues and clients. Forward fishing news and photos to dmontifish@verizon.net or visit www.noflukefishing.com.



FISHING SHOW: The New England Saltwater Fishing Show, March 10-12 at the Rhode Island Convention Center is already a record breaker with over 300 booths and free seminars.



STRIPED BASS: Warming water has allowed fishing writer Todd Corayer to catch striped bass throughout the past three winters in Rhode Island's salt ponds. (Submitted photos)

Town recreation center remains gold standard in RI

By PETE FONTAINE

What was once a vision - perhaps even a dream - has since become the Town of Johnston's second such "JEWEL" and ranks among the best indoor recreation facilities in the state.

It actually began back in 1995, as then Recreation Director Vin La Fazia related, "the Johnston Community Center Association gave the town \$65,000 to purchase the land at 1741 Atwood Avenue."

Now, there's an impressive soccer complex and the Daniel E. Mazzulla Jr. Indoor Recreation Center was built at no cost to the taxpayers when Johnston won a settlement vs. Resource Recovery and Broadrock Energy.

After which then Mayor Joseph Polisena enlisted an engineering firm that led to development of the massive structure - which was officially dedicated in May of 2017 - with input from a number of residents in town most notably the late Daniel E. Mazzulla Jr. who served as recreation director and is the father famed Boston Celtics head Coach Joe Mazzulla.

Thus, the town had a second gem, the first being War Memorial Park that Polisena said time and again is "The Crown Jewel of Johnston."

Now, the 26,000 square foot indoor facility is the envy of the state and as Center Manager Patty DiMascio related, "is open seven days a week our main goal is to keep our youth active and safe."

She also noted "although basketball is our main sport played at the Indoor Center, we have hosted a variety of tournaments such as volleyball, grappling, wrestling and gymnastics."

More impressively as former DPW Director Arnie Vecchione noted when Polisena and the JPD held COVID-19 Vaccination PODS there: "This is another example of just how valuable the Center is for our town."

Even in the winter months there's lots of activity, especially on the far court, that's converted into a huge batting cage and is used by pre-teen and teenage baseball players.

"This is the hub," several people noted while watching three youth basketball games being played simultaneously. "Danny would be proud of what the Center has become and continues to be."

It's appropriate that back in September, 2022 the building was officially dedicated and named the Daniel E. Mazzulla Jr. Indoor Recreation Center in honor of a legend who followed in the footsteps of his late father Daniel E. Mazzulla and is remembered for his countless contributions to sports and recreation in Johnston and the state, in general.



HAPPY HOOPSTERS: The Extremely Auto Body Jayhawks are one of 35 teams that make up the Johnston Recreation Department's Basketball Program that has 300 players, 35 teams 65 generous sponsors. The team includes Luca Delfino, George Thomas, Nolan Serpa, Pete Olobri, Jamie Gartomah, Michael Dirocco, Richard Delfkino, Nolan Rego and Randy Hopkins. Coaches are Richard Delfino and Jake Olobri. (Sun Rise photo by Pete Fontaine)

SLOAN'S SQUAD: The Bryant Bulldogs are sponsored by Dog House Powerlifting whose players are Luca Orsini, Enzo Lazzarreschi, Benjamin Sanchez, Marvellous Olofinlade, Antonio Velasquez, Omari Vega and Davenley Sainterlien. They are coached by Shane Lazzarreschi.



Fun

(Continued from page 18)

courts from early morning until mid-afternoon."

Those coaches, as Cournoyer pointed out, teach the youth players the fundamental parts of the game during one practice and one game each week.

"The season began back in the second week of November and will run through the third week of this month," Cournoyer explained. "All the practices - as well as the fun filled games are played here at the Mazzulla Indoor Recreation Center) and are filled with fun from start to finish."

Just ask Steven Mandarelli, who coaches the Providence College Friars that are sponsored by the Northeast Auto Body, which is owned and operated by long-time Johnston youth sports sponsors who several years ago, donated one of the three electronic boards that offer a big-time atmosphere to the facility.

Moreover, as Cournoyer explained: "Our boys and girls leagues are subdivided into eight different divisions. For example, the boys division is made up of one team for first and second graders, another for kids in grades three and along with one for kids in grades 5 and 6. The fourth features boys in grades 7 and 8."

She said the girls league is for players in the same grades as the boys' side that will for some will lead to playing for Ferri Middle Schools' Jaguars and eventually Johnston High School's recently crowned 2023 state champion basketball Panthers who are coached by Michael Bedrosian, the town's recreation director.

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SENIOR LEADER: Anthony Corsinetti in the regular season.

■ Wrap

(Continued from page 18)

the next day and really focused on what we accomplished this year," said Johnston coach Mike Bedrosian.

The Panthers did, indeed, accomplish a lot. Johnston finished the season with just two league losses and took first place into the post-season. It then rolled past St. Ray's in the semifinals, avenging one of those two defeats.

Senior captain Derek Salvatore also enjoyed one of the best seasons in program history, putting on an epic 24-point performance in the DII title game while also hitting his 1,000th point in the regular season. Other seniors like Anthony Corsinetti and Camani Batista also en-

joyed big years as well.

"This was a special group. For these seniors to finish their careers out on top with me leading them, it was a very special year and a great group. This junior class, too, now they have one under their belt as well. Now they know how it feels to be on top and it will give them even more motivation next year," said Bedrosian. "It was special for Derek to be able to come back after losing his freshman year and to win it. Anthony and Camani both transferred to Johnston for a reason, to help bring a championship to their hometown, so it was special to them as well."

Although the Panthers will be graduating a significant core, they should be back in the mix next season as they return a group of impact juniors including Neari Vasquez and Cam Walker. Other returners

will be Jayden Testa, Brandon Testa, Armani Arias and Michael Carlino.

"There were leaders everywhere. Even juniors like Neari and Cam, we got leadership from everyone, and everyone had their role. If one person didn't have the game that they were supposed to have, then somebody else would step up. We did that in the championship and throughout the season," said Bedrosian.

Bedrosian is hoping that this year's championship run will pay dividends next season.

"These kids will be used to playing in front of crazy crowds. Next year, there will not be a game where they are not comfortable playing in," Bedrosian said. "That's the biggest thing that they'll take away. That and that motivation to have that feeling again."



KEY RETURNER: Junior Michael Carlino, who will be a big piece to next year's club as well.

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■ Cheese

(Continued from page 17)

"This is our third or fourth event here, and it's different every time because we switch up the beers and we pair different cheeses," said Edgewood Cheese Shop Owner Adrienne D'Arconte. "People seem to really enjoy it. Everyone thinks of wine and cheese but we're so lucky here in Rhode Island with so many wonderful craft breweries like Buttonwoods. It's really the same concepts that you're trying to pair things with. There is so much variety and great quality of beer that it seems like a really natural process to either match or contrast those flavors."

Buttonwoods Brewery and Edgewood Cheese shop have teamed up together for events such as this several times in the past and according to both the events have proven a success in multiple ways. By working together to showcase their products and demonstrate a new way of thinking about the pairing of beer and cheese, customers can find an entirely new way to enjoy both.

"I go to Edgewood Cheese Shop," Lori Cutter said as she excitedly waited for the first pairing. "We've been to a few events like this and they've been fun. I'll drink anything you pair with cheese."

Champagne and brie, port wine and stilton and other staples of wine and cheese pairings find some serious competition when compared to this new style of tasting that Edgewood Cheese Shop and Buttonwoods Brewery have put on together.

Despite your feelings on the standard wine and cheese combination, the interesting pairings of flavor between beer and cheese had a life and value all their own. A sherry grey, a double-cream vegetable ash-ripened soft-rinded cheese, paired delightfully with Undeclared Major, a dry hopped lager brewed on site.

"We're tasting things a little differently than when you eat cheese at home," D'Arconte explained. "We're really going to try to experience it more and use all of our senses. We're going to look at the cheese, smell the cheese and then look at the beer and smell the beer. We're going to taste them alone, together, and we're going to taste and feel how it feels in our mouth."

The pairing of businesses were clearly working to create a pairing focused on bring out the best in both their beer and cheese, and themselves. While each cheese and beer were chosen carefully to go together as would be the case in any fine wine and cheese tasting, the lighthearted energy and fun-loving spirits of the two businesses was just as much a focus as the tantalizing flavors dazzling the tongues of those in attendance.

"It's actually named after a misheard song lyric," Snyder Jr. said about his Serenade Silence IPA. "It was from 'The Girl was a Straight up Hustler', by... I can't even remember the name of the band. It was a stupid combination of words and I can't even remember what the actual words are but they stuck with me."

Paired with a sweet and salty white Stilton dotted with bits of dried mango and candied ginger throughout, you didn't need to be a fan of IPAs or crumbly English cheeses to see why they went so well together. Bitter hoppy notes from the beer were perfectly balanced against the sweet fruity notes of the mango and the light spicy flavor of the ginger.

Those looking to host their own tasting night are in luck. Edgewood cheese shop is particularly keen on helping those looking to host their own cheese pairings with both advice and patience for those who swing by their shop. Crafted and pre-made cheese boards, charcuterie boards and a wealth of knowledge, passion and experience in the world of cheese are waiting for any customer ready to make the plunge into a world of dairy far more exciting than the selection of cheeses you'll find at your local grocery store.

"We get new cheeses every week, so there is always something new to find and discover," D'Arconte said. "We want you to go home with things you love. One of our favorite things we have is the gift of cheese. You buy a card for someone and they can come each month and pick out a half-pound of whatever they like. I can always tell when someone with the card walks in the door because their eyes just light up."

Cheese and beer pairings aren't the only events you can find at Buttonwoods Brewery. The brewery often hosts local food trucks, has trivia nights hosted by bartender Sean Fitts and will even be hosting a drag brunch on Sunday, March 12 from 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Tickets to the brunch can be purchased on the brewery's website, www.buttonwoodsbrewery.com, or in person on the day of the event for just \$10 and each ticket includes your first beer or "beermosa."



HANDING OUT THE GOOD STUFF: Tasting Room Manager Jennie Paquin passes out glasses of Buttonwoods' New Fashioned, a slightly sour cherry, orange and oak beer, to pair with a sheep's milk Manchego from Spain.



A PLATE OF TEMPTATION: Plates of cheese along with pens and papers listing the pairings await guests of the event as they take their seats



POSING WITH PRIDE: Tasting Room Manager Jennie Paquin, Brewer Morgan Snyder Jr, Cheese Shop Owner Adrienne D'Arconte and Bartender Sean Fitts Celebrate another successful beer and cheese tasting.

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K-9 Veteran's Day



With K-9 Veteran's Day approaching on March 13th, I was thinking about the role of our furry friends in conjunction with the military over the years. While I can't even get my dogs to go out and do their business when it's cold or rainy, some served through many hardships as companions or fellow comrades over the generations, and today there is certainly a collectible market for "War Dog" material.

There wasn't an "official" K-9 corps in the U.S. Army until 1942, but many dogs served as mascots within units. One of the very interesting items in the collection of famed military artist Don Troiani is a brass dog collar for a smaller-sized dog with a purported Bunker Hill provenance. It's engraved "Daniel Munroe, Soldier, 43rd Regt. 1773." A search of the muster rolls of this British regiment confirm that Daniel Munroe was with the 43rd regiment at Boston in 1773 and died in late-1774, a year before the famous battle in Charlestown, Massachusetts. According to family lore, it was captured by a soldier from Connecticut during the fight. Maybe the dog ran into Provincial lines, who knows, but it's a



By Joel Bohy
Historic Arms & Militaria
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very cool reminder of a dog's time with the military just prior to the outbreak of the American Revolution.

By the Civil War, many units had canine mascots. One of the most famous was Sallie, a brindle-coated terrier who joined the 11th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment at the start of the war as a puppy. She would be with the unit through some of the most tumultuous battles of the war. On July 1, 1863, during the fighting of the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg, the unit had heavy casualties who were left behind Confederate lines. Sallie stayed with the dead and wounded of the regiment until the Confederates had retreated. She was wounded during the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House but was nursed back to health by the soldiers in her unit. In February 1865, Sallie was killed during the Battle of Hatcher's Run. She was so important to the unit that in 1890 when their monument was placed at Gettysburg, a life-sized bronze sculpture of Sallie was included as a part of the monument. There are other monuments on Civil War battlefields that include canine mascots.

During World War I, a stray was snuck into the 102nd Infantry

Regiment of the 26th Infantry Division. "Stubby" as he was called, went to France, and served in 17 battles with his unit and was given the rank of sergeant. A great picture of Stubby survives wearing a jacket with his Yankee Division patch, rank insignia, and medals. He survived the war and came home a hero. When he died in his sleep years later, his remains were sent to a taxidermist; You can still see him on display at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

It wasn't until March 13, 1942, a year after the start of World War II, that the U.S. Army K-9 Corps was formed, with dogs with handlers in battles all over the Pacific and European theaters of the war. During this time, gear was made by the military for the dogs and has become collectible on the market today.

Our dogs are like kids to us. They play and sit on the couch and watch TV, but there were and are many dogs over the years that were out fighting with service men and women helping to protect our country. This K-9 Veterans Day take a moment to honor and remember them!

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Movies

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*** 1/2

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We've seen enough boxing movies to last a lifetime, but this one has good acting, a bit of compassion, and a few twists and turns that make it better than most.

One thing you can always count on: It comes down to the BIG FIGHT at the end.

Michael B. Jordan plays Adonis Creed, son of Apollo Creed, and retired heavyweight champion of the world.

Creed's life has turned out quite well for him. He lives in a Los Angeles mansion with his record producer wife and young deaf daughter, and serves as a mentor for up and coming boxers.

A down and out friend from his past (Jonathon Majors) shows up at his door one day looking for a job.

Damian Anderson and Apollo have a big secret in their past which is slowly revealed, affecting their future. There are scattered flashbacks to reveal their strained relationship.

Damian has spent 20 years in prison while Apollo has lived the good life. Guilt leads Apollo to help Damian, which sets the scene for Apollo returning to the ring for the BIG FIGHT.

Rocky doesn't make an appearance in this one, but Sylvester Stallone is listed as the producer.



Michael B. Jordan (left) directed as well as stars in "Creed III," in which he squares off with Jonathan Majors (right). (Courtesy of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures)



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Authentic Peruvian cuisine at Sharks

Restaurant Review
By DON FOWLER

No more do people make fun of Central Falls.

The tiny mile-square city is now famous for Viola Davis, one of the world's greatest actresses and benefactors.

It is quickly becoming the destination for Rhode Island's finest ethnic restaurant-Sharks.

Located at 1420 Broad St. in the center of the city, Sharks occupies a renovated mill building along the Blackstone River.

When the weather gets warmer, diners will enjoy their Peruvian cuisine sitting outside along the river.

Peruvian food is unique, as we discovered on our visit to the friendly, colorful country. Famous for the spices and flavors added to their seafood, steaks and chicken, Peruvian chefs love to invent interesting combinations of foods and flavors.

The only item we didn't find of the extensive Sharks menu was guinea pig, the bony little animal found in most lower income homes. (Tastes like chicken).

We were overwhelmed by the menu, but our waiter had an excellent suggestion-The "Exquisite Gourmet (sic)" selections, offered at market price (\$50 for two last week) and enough to satisfy us and

enjoy leftovers the following day.

The meal comes in a large tray with a whole fish in the center. We enjoyed making eye contact and picked away at the sweet meat until all that was left was the head and bones.

Surrounding the fish was the tenderest tiny squid, steeped in delicious sauce.

Piled high on top were shrimps, mussels, octopus, clams, scallops, sweet potato, corn, white potato a vegetable we couldn't identify, plus seasonings that brought out exquisite tastes.

It was, by far, one of the most interesting and satisfying meals we have ever eaten.

We wisely skipped the appetizers and desserts, saving them for another day when we order one of the dozens of seafood, meat and chicken dinners, all around \$22. The Paella looked to be popular and is on our list, along with one of the many shrimp dishes.

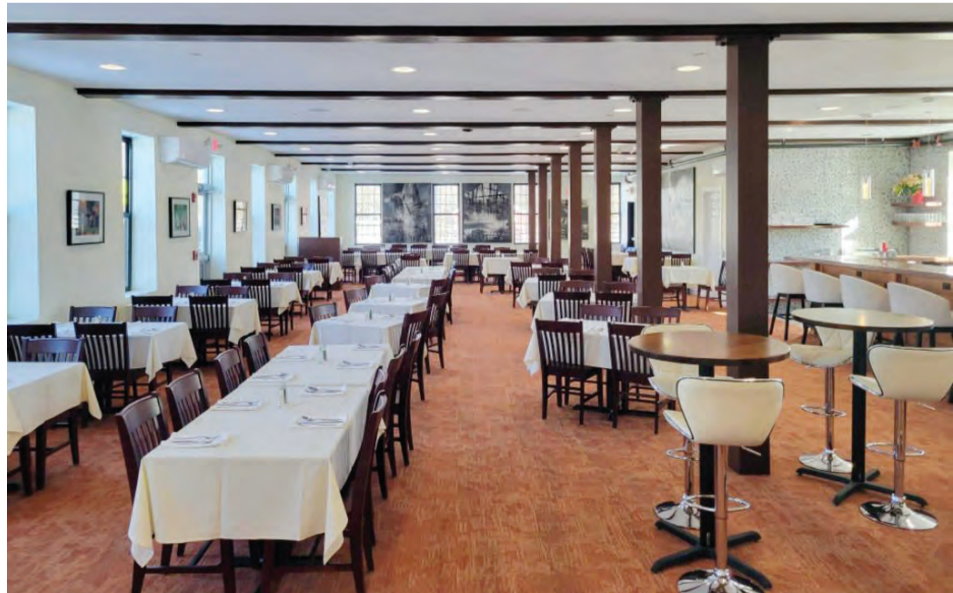
There are several large tables, a small private dining area, and on the second floor, a banquet room.

Despite its large dining area, the restaurant has an intimate feeling.

If you want fine dining at reasonable prices, check out Sharks.

Be adventurous. The fish won't bite you.

For reservations, call 599-5038.



The spacious dining room at Sharks is bright and inviting. (Photo from sharksperuviancuisine.com)

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Tricks to trim your utility bill

METRO
A rapid rise in the cost of living will undoubtedly prove to be one of the major stories of the past year. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, energy prices rose by 41.6 percent in the 12-month period that ended in June 2022, marking the highest 12-month increase since April 1980.

The significant spike in energy costs is somewhat misleading, as the BLS considers motor fuel prices, which rose more than 60 percent in the 12-month period ending in June 2022, part of the energy category. However, during that same period, electricity prices rose by nearly 14 percent while natural gas prices increased by 38 percent. Both of those increases were more significant than the more publicized rise in food prices, which rose by right around 10 percent.

Families need to eat and many professionals now must return to in-person work after years of pandemic-related remote working, which means they must confront higher fuel costs. That leaves little room to save money in those areas. However, there are ways for families to reduce home energy costs without adversely affecting their quality of life.

• **Run appliances during off-peak hours.** According to the United States Department of Energy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the best time to use appliances in a home is when overall electricity use is low. Though this time changes depending on the season and can vary based on geography, the DOE and the EPA both note that after 9 p.m. and before 9 a.m.



Strategic use of appliances in a home can help consumers reduce their energy bills by a significant amount.

are generally the off-peak hours in most areas.

• **Strategically use your shades and blinds.** The energy providers at ConEd estimate that about 40 percent of unwanted heat comes through windows. Strategic use of curtains, shades and blinds can keep heat out on hot days, thus allowing homeowners to turn the thermostat up on their air conditioning units in summer. Opening curtains, blinds and shades on winter mornings and afternoons will allow more sunlight in, allowing homeowners to control heating costs more effectively.

• **Reorganize your refrigerator.** There are plenty of contradictory strategies regarding how best to store foods in a refrigerator so the unit consumes as little energy as possible while still keeping foods fresh and chilled. But various energy providers, including ConEd, recommend that consumers avoid packing a fridge too tightly. By allowing cold air to circulate within the refrigerator, the refrigerator won't need to work as hard, and thus consume as much energy, to keep foods cool. It's important to note that the opposite should govern how the freezer is packed. Packing frozen

items tightly in the freezer will help the refrigerator work a little less hard.

• **Turn off the lights.** Estimates from the U.S. Energy Information Administration indicate that electricity for lighting accounts for around 10 percent of electricity consumption in homes. A concerted effort to turn off lights in rooms that aren't being used can help consumers save money.

Rising utility bills are compelling millions of people to seek ways to trim their energy consumption. Thankfully, there are many ways to do that without upsetting daily routines.

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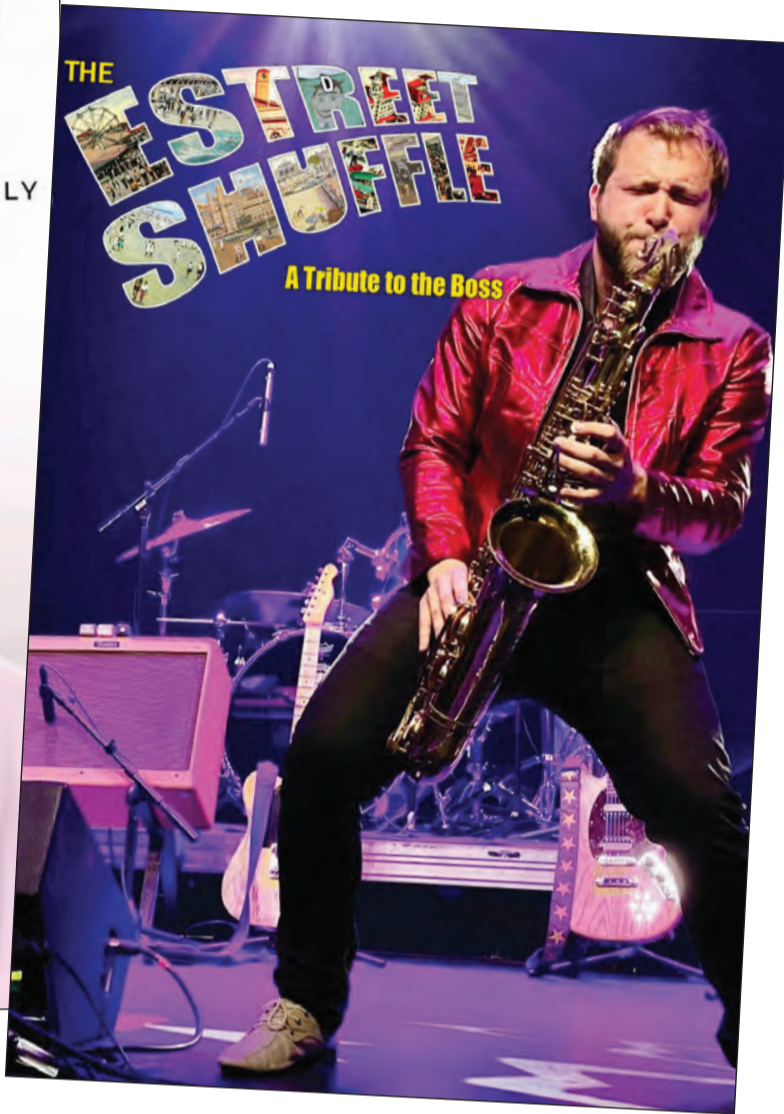
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Comedy & The Boss at the Park this weekend

By DON FOWLER

GERALD KELLY

FT. LIL' HUNTER KELLY & JOSHUA KELLY



Gerald Kennedy, one of the leading comics on the circuit makes a stop at The Park's Comedy venue this Friday evening, March 10 from 8:00-10:00 p.m.

The intimate room is also home to the Rhode Island Comedy Hall of Fame.

Kennedy is a TV and movie actor who has also served as a host of radio shows in New York City and Hartford, Connecticut.

He has been referred to as the reigning NYC King of Comedy, with sold out shows in the Big Apple and around the world.

He has appeared on America's Got Talent, Last Comic Standing, HBO's Def Comedy Jam and BET's Comic Jam.

Tickets are \$30.

Tribute To the Boss

The East Street Shuffle will rock the Park Theatre Saturday night, March 11, from 10-10 p.m.

The Bruce Springsteen Tribute Band from Asbury Park, New Jersey, has been described as "the most musically authentic tribute band as humanly possible."

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