

# Will Amazon deliver?

## The company promises to hire 1,500 workers in Johnston, but a firm date has yet to be set

By RORY SCHULER

While empty Amazon warehouses litter the nation, the online mega retailer insists their Johnston distribution center will open as planned. And the company plans to hire “more than 1,500” local job-seekers.

“We’re committed to launching our fulfillment center in Johnston and claims to the contrary are incorrect,” Amazon spokesperson Caitlin McLaughlin said Wednesday morning. “Construction is ongoing at this

facility, and we’ll provide a launch update once work is complete. We have great relationships with Governor McKee, Mayor Polisena, and local community organizations in Johnston, and will work together to hire more than 1,500 employees closer to opening.”

Construction wrapped on a giant blue and white building — just like the behemoth perched off Hartford Avenue overlooking Johnston — in Marriott-Slaterville, Utah, last year.



**POLITICAL ACCESS:** On March 17, Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena Jr. announced on Twitter that he had toured the Amazon construction site with US Sen. Jack Reed. He released four photos from the tour. (Photos courtesy Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena Jr.)

AMAZON - PAGE 5

# POLAR PANTHERS PLUNGE



**MARCH SHIVERS:** Johnston’s Special Olympics Polar Plunge raised more than \$6,000 for Special Olympics and Unified Sports last Saturday. For a story and more photos, turn to Page 9.

# Statewide meter replacement carries \$200M shock

By RORY SCHULER

## PUC: Rhode Island Energy’s advanced metering proposal ‘costs would be borne by (Ocean State) ratepayers’

Rhode Island Energy’s “advanced metering” proposal will cost the Ocean State nearly \$200 million and require the manual replacement of approximately 525,000 electric meters.

“If approved ... and this is still an ongoing docket ... the costs would be borne by ratepayers,” said Thomas F. Kogut, Associate Administrator Cable TV and Legislative Liaison for the Rhode Island Division of Public Utilities and Carriers (PUC).  
Following historic electric rate hikes immedi-

ately after PPL’s acquisition of the Narragansett Electric Company (forming Rhode Island Energy), the state’s new power-providing entity will be back before the PUC next week, requesting a total overhaul of the state’s electric metering system — a process known as “Advanced Metering.”

RI Energy testimony estimated the statewide meter replacement program at “\$188 million on a net present value (NPV) basis over the 20-year project life.”

However, Rhode Island Energy seeks \$199.6

METERS - PAGE 6



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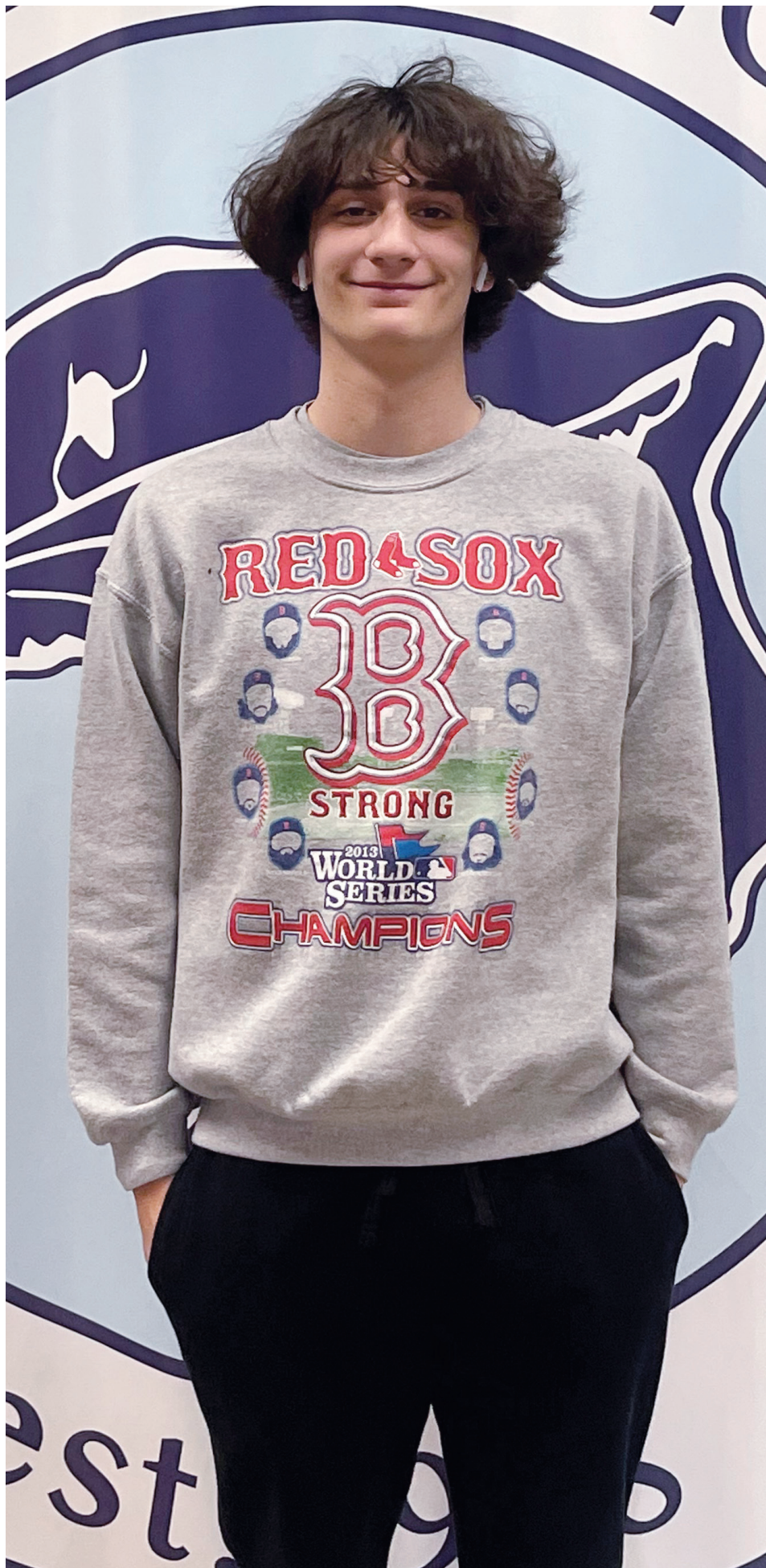
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# JHS Panther of the Week



**POTW:** This week's Panther of the Week is James Pastore. James is a junior and was nominated by Ms. Tia Forgetta. James can be seen in the Panther Pen getting the crowd pumped up for the sporting events. After high school, he would like to be involved in sports, and has expressed interest in being a sports commentator. Ms. Forgetta said "James has been putting in so much time and effort to bring up his math grade. I knew he was capable, he just needed the extra push to do so. His confidence in class is now inspiring!" (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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**MIGHTY MUSICIANS:** JHS Music Students who took part in the recent concert were Phoenix Russell, Ricas Soth, Willson El Hage, Samanta DiMaio, Josh Galeas, Fuji Kue and Dominic Whitten.

# Before they hit the road, JHS hosts pep rally concert

By PETE FONTAINE

Johnston High School’s Music Department held what Chairman Ronald Lamoureux called “a pep rally for our students as they embark on their various state and national competitions.”

Likewise, The Festival Concert that was held last Wednesday night and, as Lamoureux emphasized, represents the most challenging music for our students, received rave reviews that included statements like “the music here tonight sounded like it was being played by professionals.”

To which Lamoureux added: “Our scholar musicians have put in countless hours at home — and at school — preparing this program Matt (Gingras) and I were really pleased with the progress the kids have made on this competition music. They are really working hard to master their comprehensive music skills and explore more the songs in more details.”

The JHS band, which is directed by Lamoureux, opened with two absolute classics — “Flourish for Wind Band” by Ralph Vaughan Williams and “Air for Band” by Frank William Erickson. The closer for the band and the entire concert was “Into the Storm” by Robert W. Smith.

“The kids really enjoy the tune with its contrasting sections that highlight all instruments of the group,” Lamoureux said. “Commissioned in 1994, the piece has become incredibly popular with ensembles everywhere.”

Also, Lamoureux heaped words of praise upon the Gingras-directed JHS Chorus and Select Choir and praised the skills of the JHS vocalists, who continue to make progress as the department prepares for their trip to Hershey, Pennsylvania, to compete in the “Music in the Parks Festival” that features high schools from all over the country.

“This year our ensembles are striving to bring back ‘Superior’ rankings and ‘The ‘Esprit De Corps’ or ‘Spirit of the Group’ award that goes to only one traveling group per festival, and the one that best exhibits pride, spirit, enthusiasm, friendliness, camaraderie and unity of purpose.

The ambitious production was again bolstered by “the valuable volunteers of the Johnston School Music Association (JSMA) who volunteered as ushers and continue to help keep the performing arts alive in all Johnston schools,” Lamoureux said.

He issued heartfelt “thank yous” to School Superintendent Dr. Bernard DiLullo Jr. and Assistant Superintendent Julie-Ann Zarrella, and the building’s administration, for their support.

He said the department will hold many more concerts and their work is far from over.

The first order of business is this Saturday’s 6th Annual Mattress Sale, which will run from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the JHS cafeteria and feature brand names and bedding needs. Admission is free and the event is co-hosted by CFS (Custom Fundraising Solutions), a group that has helped the JHS Music Department raise money for their trip to Hershey for the national competition.



**TALENTED TROUPERS:** Among the JHS music students who helped make The Festival Concert a huge success were Hailee Joyal Weiss, Lauren Dixon and Katelyn Loffler. (Photos courtesy Melissa Loffler)

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# 'It's B-A-N-A-N-A-S'



**PROUD PANTHERS:** These Johnston High School students — Brandon Lang, Nicole Patenaude, Catrina Zinni, Alessandra Pesare, Gabriella Pascale and Lucas Anderson — were honored for having some of the best science fair projects in the state.

## Johnston student scientists compete in state finals

By PETE FONTAINE

There were many school science fairs at the high school and middle school levels during recent weeks with winners moving on to the coveted state finals at the Community of Rhode Island Knight Campus in Warwick.

After a three-fold competition, six Johnston High School students emerged

and competed versus the state's elite. Student Lucas Anderson was awarded "Best in the Fair" and placed in the Ocean State's Top 10.

That happened last Wednesday night when Anderson — like dozens of other students — presented their display boards and was invited back to present his project and participate in the prestigious judge's annual breakfast Sunday morning.

Anderson's project, which was titled "It's Bananas B-A-N-A-N-A-S," was among the Top 10 Best in the Fair and his impressive project captured a "First Grant" that JHS Science Department Chairman Greg Russo described as "two four-year renewable scholarships with a total value of \$4,000 each at the University of Rhode Island or Rhode Island College."

When asked about his project, Anderson explained he "tested if the ripeness of a banana affects the ability for it to be digested in addition to its sugar content."

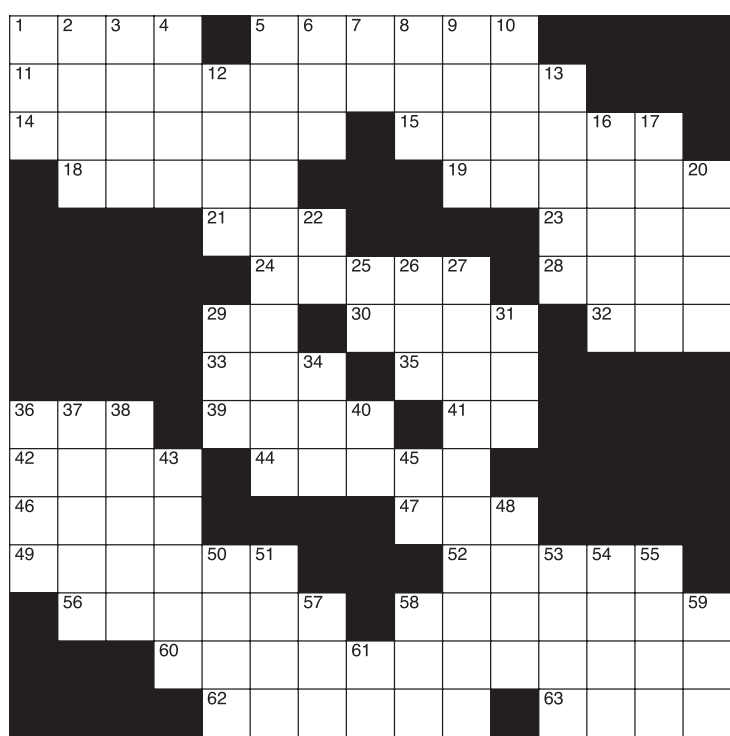
Each scholarship, Russo noted, is worth \$1,000 per year.

Russo, who has coordinated many highly successful Science Fairs during his storied tenure on Cherry Hill also announced that in addition to Anderson — who is president of the sophomore Class at JHS — Panthers Nicole Patenaude received an award from the Rhode Island Nuclear Science Center and Alessandra Pesare won the annual raffle for participants and was presented with a VISA gift card.

Anderson, Patenaude, Pesare, Brendan Lang, Catrina Zinni and Gabriella Pascale were all awarded prestigious third place grants and Science Fair 2023 Medals. Zinni is the only senior among the "super six," while Pesare is a junior and Lang, Patenaude, Pascale and Anderson are sophomores.

All six of the award-winning backboards are set up inside the Janice D. Mele Memorial Library for student and faculty viewing.

### CROSSWORD PUZZLE CORNER



#### CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Millisecond
- 5. Narcotic drug
- 11. Accident
- 14. Formal submissions
- 15. Popular 70s rock band
- 18. Discourage from doing
- 19. More socially elite
- 21. Arid
- 23. A way to look
- 24. Heroes
- 28. A surfer rides it
- 29. Potato state
- 30. Insect repellent
- 32. Cool!
- 33. Have already done
- 35. Collegiate women's fraternity
- 36. To the \_\_\_ degree
- 39. Gasteyer and de Armas are two
- 41. Blood type
- 42. Looked over
- 44. Language of Cameroon and Chad
- 46. Species of armadillo
- 47. Touch softly
- 49. Part of your upper body

#### CLUES DOWN

- 1. Woman (French)
- 2. Province of Pakistan
- 3. This (Spanish)
- 4. Transportation device
- 5. Greater in importance or priority
- 6. The human foot
- 7. Within
- 8. Consumed
- 9. Respectful Malaysian term
- 10. Therefore
- 12. Ceased to exist
- 13. Type of macaroni
- 16. English composer
- 17. Wooded tract
- 20. Tall, slender-leaved plant

- 22. 36 inches
- 25. Take too much (abbr.)
- 26. Allow
- 27. Individually
- 29. Journalist Tarbell
- 31. Bar bill
- 34. Hong Kong food stall: \_\_\_ pai dong
- 36. Not messy
- 37. Species that includes reedgrass
- 38. Former MLB catcher Ed
- 40. Northern U.S. state
- 43. Wilt
- 45. Commercial
- 48. Bolivian river
- 50. Nursemaid
- 51. A car needs four
- 53. Guns (slang)
- 54. American state
- 55. Clusters of fern fronds
- 57. Body part
- 58. A person's brother or sister
- 59. Breed of sheep native to Sweden
- 61. Of I



**PRIZE-WINNING PROJECT:** Lucas Anderson, who is president of the sophomore class at Johnston High School, stands beside his "It's Bananas B-A-N-A-N-A-S" project that was judged among the Top 10 best in the state at Sunday's Rhode Island Science Fair. (Submitted photos)

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## ■ Amazon

(Continued from page 1)

Following a plunge in profits post-pandemic, Amazon has yet to open the Utah facility, and it sits empty as locals await the creation of 500 promised jobs, according to a March 25 story in the city's local newspaper, the Standard-Examiner.

In September 2022, the Des Moines Register reported on two warehouses sitting idle, long past promised opening dates, in Council Bluffs, Iowa and Papillion, Nebraska. Both states are still waiting for 1,500 promised jobs. Over the summer, Amazon reportedly "told the Iowa city that the opening of the fulfillment center will be delayed until at least 2024."

That same month, Bloomberg News reported that "Amazon.com Inc., determined to reduce the size of its sprawling delivery operation amid slowing sales growth, has abandoned dozens of existing and planned facilities around the US, according to a closely watched consulting firm."

Amazon has erected buildings, but nixed openings, across the country and abroad.

"MWPVL International Inc., which tracks Amazon's real-estate footprint, estimates the company has either shuttered or killed plans to open 42 facilities totaling almost 25 million square feet of usable space," Bloomberg News reported. "The company has delayed opening an additional 21 locations, totaling nearly 28 million square feet, according to MWPVL."

For now, Johnston's mayor is optimistic Amazon will deliver on the promises made to the town in exchange for a tax deal.

"As to the other cities you reference, I don't know how their agreements are structured, but I wish them good luck and hope it all works out for them," Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena Jr. said Tuesday. "I remain intensely and solely focused on the future of my Town and its families."

Once finished, the Johnston Amazon facility

would be the largest building ever constructed in the Ocean State, according to Jeff Miller, executive vice president of investments for the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation (Miller made the statement in a September 2021 Commerce Corp. meeting where Johnston was awarded a \$1.5 million reimbursement after qualifying for Rhode Island's Tax Stabilization Incentive program).

Whether or not Johnston has received the \$1.5 million payment, and into which town fund it was (or will be) deposited, was unclear Wednesday afternoon as the Sun Rise went to print. The question was asked of Mayor Polisena Jr., but not answered before this week's print deadline.

Polisena Jr. served as Vice President of Johnston Town Council when the Community Partnership and Tax Stabilization agreements were signed between the town and Amazon.

He said the town is protected financially even if Amazon decided not to open the Johnston facility.

"The Tax Stabilization Agreement between the Town of Johnston and Amazon commences on Jan. 1, 2024," Polisena wrote via email Tuesday evening. "It is not contingent upon 'operating at substantial full capacity.' While there is absolutely no support for a hypothetical question about what happens if the Tax Stabilization Agreement did not commence on Jan. 1, 2024, please remember that the property owner will be responsible for paying taxes based on the full value of the property as opposed to a lesser stabilized amount."

Multiple planned payments to the town are attached to the Tax Stabilization Agreement (and should go into effect, whether the Amazon facility opens or not): \$582,500 per year to fund a Johnston High School Pathway Program (for 20 years, totaling \$11,650,000); \$400,000 toward starting up the Pathway Program; five payments to the state totaling \$1,250,000;

\$5,380,000 over 10 years toward public safety operations; \$2,750,000 toward the state's Small Business Assistance Program (SBAP).

"Pursuant to the Community Partnership Agreement (those) payments are mandated effective Jan. 21, 2024," Polisena said. "This means that the expected revenue from these agreements will be completely available to support the School Building Project for our Town's children and their families."

Can these funds be used toward school construction, rather than the specific programs described in the agreement? That follow-up question was asked, but remained unanswered at press-time.

Polisena and his father, former Mayor Joseph M. Polisena, both promised taxpayers that payments from the Tax Stabilization and Community Partnership agreements with Amazon would more than cover the bond payments funding a town-wide school facilities overhaul (voters passed a \$215 million bond referendum last year). That project has been plagued by soaring interest rates and construction costs (current estimates peg the total price tag for three of the previously proposed four school building projects at \$50 million over original estimates).

If those payments Amazon's payments were to falter, a domino-effect could lead to unfunded school bond payments (and ultimately, a tax increase). Both mayors Polisena promised the bond would not lead to a property tax increase for Johnston residents.

According to the current administration, whether the building opens for business or not, Johnston will receive a series of promised payments.

"This means that the Johnston High School Pathway Programs will have the benefit of a dedicated robust funding source so that Johnston High School students will have the opportunity to participate in the finest pathway programs offered in the State of Rhode Island," Polisena said.

Workers at the Hartford

Avenue site have shared worries that construction will wrap, but the building may sit idle, like numerous other Amazon warehouses.

"With respect to the hardworking men and women engaging in the construction of the project at the Amazon site, I am not sure they can speak for Amazon Corporate or have a full appreciation of the magnitude of the benefits that our schools, their students, and all taxpayers of the Town will experience from these agreements," Polisena wrote.

Some payments to the town do have stipulations attached, like "one year subsequent to the facility operating at substantially full capacity" and "one year subsequent to the commencement of full delivery operations within the facility," meaning that they are contingent upon opening the facility (a delay in opening may delay these payments): \$100,000 to the town for traffic mitigation study; the \$1,000,000 for traffic mitigation equipment and improvements; the three (minimum) hiring events and hiring of the promised 1,500 employees; \$50,000 to Johnston youth sports; \$100,000 to the Johnston Senior Center; \$250,000 to the Johnston Municipal Land Trust; \$100,000 toward Johnston Memorial Park.

Asked simply, "Will the opening of the Amazon facility be delayed?"

Polisena replied: "I cannot speak for a private company and their business decisions. I am here to assist, coordinate and expedite if help is needed, like I would for any other incoming business to Johnston."

So far, McLaughlin, Amazon's spokesperson, has only said the "completion date ... is scheduled for second half of 2023."

Prior to opening, Amazon has pledged to hold at least three hiring events to fill the 1,500 positions. No job fair dates have yet been set.

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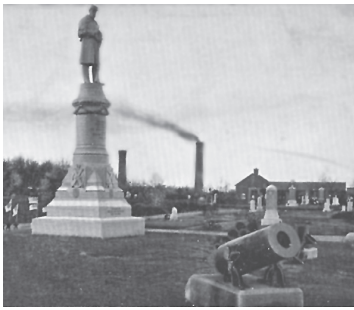
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**ANSWER TO THIS WEEK'S PUZZLE:**



**Meters**

(Continued from page 1)

million in additional revenues "to fund the incremental cost associated with the AMF through a separate factor outside the base distribution rates (AMF Factor) over eleven years, 2023 through 2033," according to the PUC's legal advertisement publicizing next week's public hearing.

The overall price tag "includes the meters and associated IT technology and installation," Kogut explained.

The public has the chance to comment on RI Energy's proposal at a 6 p.m. public hearing on Tuesday, April 4, in Hearing Room A at the PUC Office, 89 Jefferson Boulevard, Warwick.

"In this docket, Rhode Island Energy filed for approval of the Company's Advanced Metering Functionality (AMF) Business Case program proposal," according to legal advertising for the public hearing. "The proposal includes a full scale deployment of AMF across its electric service territory in Rhode Island intended to replace existing electric automated meter reading (AMR) meters. The proposal includes capital spending and recovery through rates for expenses associated with meters, software, communications and other operating expenses."

Kogut explained that the cost, per ratepayer, would be less than a dime per month.

"Cost factor in the company's transmittal, as proposed has, for illustrative purposes, a projected 7 cent/month residential

bill impact with a cumulative impact of \$246 in the fifth year of the cost recovery," Kogut said.

While PUC approval is not guaranteed, the state board ultimately approved the sale of the state's electric provider to the east coast utility powerhouse formerly known as Pennsylvania Power & Light (now PPL), and the subsequent rate hike.

Kogut warns, however, that no matter the PUC's decision, the state's aging meters are nearing obsolescence.

"One point to note, the AMR meters are nearing the end of their operational lives, and will need replacing," Kogut said.

According to the PUC, "The AMF factor would recover the actual incremental capital investments placed in service and the actual incremental operation and maintenance (O&M) costs incurred on a historical basis."

Kogut broke down the overall proposal. Approximately \$73 million will be spent on hardware. Meter install costs should run around \$19 million.

"These costs include both utility and vendor labor to physically install the meters and related equipment and facility costs to enable meter deployment," Kogut explained.

RI Energy spokesman Ted Kresse released a statement from the utility company.

"The Advanced Metering Functionality (AMF) Business Case ... we submitted to the (RI PUC) is an important step in modernizing the state's energy infrastructure for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders. Approximately

60% of our existing meters are nearing the end of their design life and need to be replaced."

The power provider insists the new technologies included in the AMF proposal will provide their "customers with greater control, choice, and convenience in managing their energy consumption."

"What's more, AMF technology will also help us meet evolving customer expectations by enhancing outage management capabilities and enabling more convenient remote service connections," RI Energy argues. "If approved, this proposal will also help deliver the clean energy network our customers and communities deserve and reflect a collaborative effort between Rhode Island Energy and key stakeholders to create a more efficient, resilient, responsive grid. And, while replacing Rhode Island's existing electric meters with advanced meters will require investment, we have put together a thoughtful, enduring proposal that we anticipate will result in minimal bill impacts to our customers."

Several months ago, RI Energy also filed its "Grid Modernization Plan," which "provides an outline of how the electric distribution system can evolve to handle the growth of distributed energy resources, including renewables and energy storage, and allow greater flexibility to enable a two-way exchange of energy and information — something today's grid was not designed to accomplish."

"Together, the Grid Modernization Plan and

AMF Business Case will enable significant customer benefits, including reduced energy use and improved reliability," according to RI Energy. "Importantly, they provide a more holistic long-term cost containment strategy for modernizing our infrastructure. As energy supply costs are at an all-time high, it's critically important that we look to implement smarter, more efficient technologies that can help decrease costs for our customers over time."

Kresse said the impact on most residential electric bills should be minimal.

"If approved, (the \$188 million) will be collected from RI customers with an average bill impact over the first 5 years of \$1.27 a month for a residential customer using 500 kWh of electricity," Kresse explained Tuesday. "Costs for the installation of the meters has been factored in to the \$188 million. We don't have an estimate of actual hours needed, but if approved, we anticipate full deployment of the meters to take approximately 18 months."

Tuesday's hearing will not be "an evidentiary hearing," said Kogut, "but a hearing for public comment."

The original public comment session was scheduled for Feb. 28, but canceled due to a winter storm. The hearing can be watched online, and the public can weigh in via Zoom link or in person. Details can be found at the PUC's website (ri.puc.gov).

Public hearings on the RI Energy proposal are expected to continue through the summer.

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# Opinion

EDITORIAL

## Implications of recession loom large

The weather may finally be heating up, but Rhode Islanders should be prepared for a freeze when it comes to the local and greater economy.

Although you can get any different number of projections out of economists regarding how severe and long-lasting the looming economic recession will truly be, there is already evidence to show that private developments and critical public infrastructure projects alike throughout our cities and towns are facing an equally uncertain future as the costs of labor, materials, and utilities continue to rise. Compared with rising interest rates deployed to strategically target inflation, there is ample reason to be somewhat concerned.

Locally, projects to build crucially-needed school buildings and developments to supply more housing will be affected, as the days of historically low interest rates are in the past, which will have ramifications years and decades down the line when calculating principal and interest payments for these expensive but vitally important endeavors.

This might not come as a surprise to everyday Rhode Islanders, the majority of which are counting dollars and budgeting everyday expenses to account for the increased cost of everything from a cup of coffee to a 30-year mortgage on a first home. With rents also on the rise throughout the nation, and wages staying flat, the added burden of additional taxpayer money needed to fund suddenly-not-so-affordable capital projects will seem like adding additional heaps of straw on the back of an already overburdened camel.

The frightening aspect of recessions and extended periods of economic downturn is how every element is intricately connected to one another. Builders are less likely to take on capital debt for new projects amid higher interest rates and the cost of materials and labor, resulting in less work for skilled laborers and more people out of work. Higher unemployment or underemployment leads to less spending overall within municipalities, leading to bad quarters for local businesses, layoffs for small business owners, and ultimately to shortfalls on anticipated revenues and budgetary problems down the line for municipalities.

In times of looming financial crisis, it is up to the financial experts within local, state, and federal governmental entities to try to safeguard outstanding investment and provide a backdrop of protection for those willing to invest in communities despite the uncertainty of the times. Protections against rampant rent hikes should also be explored to prevent frightened landlords from causing a wave of unnecessary homelessness, which would overburden already stressed social support networks.

Individually, although we are at the mercy of many forces beyond our control, it is important to exercise wise financial decisions whenever possible. If you have high-interest debt that has been hanging over your head, make the effort to put aside money each week to try and pay it off now, lest things get worse and that debt becomes even less wieldy down the line. Save what is possible, and consult with a financial advisor before making large investments.

We have seen recessions come and go, and while no two are the same, savvy forward thinking and refusal to panic will always go a long way towards lessening its impact.

## LAWMAKERS PASS BILL TO MAKE ASPHALT NEW OFFICIAL STATE ROCK!



(April Fools!)

LETTERS

## 'Is Johnston becoming cringe-worthy?'

One sunny, but chilly day in February, I decided it was time to tackle a few errands that I had been putting off. These errands were going to keep me close to home which, for me, is a Cape on Greenville Avenue that I have lived in all of my life. I never dreamed that this short trip was going to be such an eye opening experience.

I began my journey by hopping on to 295 from Greenville Avenue. As I peered to the right I saw a massive and unsightly housing complex. The once thick forest is gone and replaced with rocks, dirt, cars, and row upon row of identical structures. Not a tree is left standing. I shook my head and continued my travel on 295. As I peered straight ahead, the Amazon behemoth came into sight, with several giant rotating wind turbines keeping watch. What a sight to behold! It seems to tower over the town constantly reminding us of its presence. I then had to take the Hartford Avenue exit for my first errand where I witnessed the devastation of that once forested area. To the left bulldozers were clearing the way for the arrival of Amazon's fleet of trucks. To the right I noticed older structures were now memories as more of our forests succumbed to "progress."

After fighting the ongoing traffic on Hartford Avenue, I completed one of my missions and headed to my next destination. I picked up 295 once again and headed south which reminded me that I was now in landfill territory. In the summer months, with car windows down, there is no way to escape the fact that we have been the depository of the state's garbage for many

years now. We lost a lovely part of the town when that deal was signed so many years ago. After taking the Plainfield exit, I once again witnessed a changing landscape. Homes, yards, and trees were gone. Large pieces of machinery were chewing up the land in preparation for what was to come next. Much to my disappointment, I learned that more storage facilities will now adorn Plainfield Pike. A short ride up the Pike reveals more of this unpleasant transformation.

As I began to head home, I thought about taking a different route to avoid the cringeworthy sights I had seen that day. Sadly, I realized that most of Johnston was, unfortunately, "under construction." I realized that so much of the town I once knew and loved was gone. I realized that development was out of control. I realized that there was a lack of planning. I realized that there is little to no appreciation for what made Johnston an attractive place to call home. I realized that we now have very little land left to protect.

I am thankful that the Mathewson Estate continues to grace Greenville Avenue just as it did so many years ago. I am thankful that the historic Dame farm has been saved for our future generations. I am thankful that DiMeo Farm still has people working the land. I am thankful that I can still see cows grazing at Heywood Farm. I am thankful for the charm and tranquility I find when I detour through Winsor Avenue and Hopkins Avenue and Pine Hill Road. Unfortunately, even these areas are now under attack by solar companies wishing to destroy forests and animal habitats by placing

solar panels in quiet residential areas.

I am pleading with our leaders to slow down, and take the time to assess the state of our town. What is the vision we have for our future? Will we simply become another over developed, cringe worthy town that people will simply drive through to go south or north, or can we work at creating a balance between beneficial development and the quality of life desired by our residents? What is happening in the Land Trust building that sits idly on Greenville Avenue?

Let me conclude my thoughts by sharing an amazing experience I recently had. While traveling past the Mathewson pasture I looked for deer as I always do. Sadly, they are not seen grazing there as often as they used to. As I passed the intersection and made my way home, to my amazement, I saw several deer frantically running down Greenville Avenue. My excitement turned to fear when I realized what could happen to these beautiful creatures. Fortunately, they made their way down the street and safely crossed the road into my yard. I was not able to see what direction they headed, but I wondered where they would ultimately find shelter from the busy roads and developed neighborhoods. I worried all night about them. Their frantic and frenzied run down a heavily traveled street symbolizes the direction we are headed in this town. We are running out of time. We are running out of land.

Harriet Sukaska  
Greenville Avenue  
Johnston

## Don't be so down on another bank

It's called progress, with more large businesses moving to Johnston the banks recognize the amount of new employees who will have banking needs. I welcome the business people who make a commitment to our great town.

Arnie Vecchione  
Johnston

## 'Hundreds of birthday parties there'

I am heartbroken. I bowled there when I was 7 years old. I am almost 60 now. I lived in Johnston all my life and have gone to hundreds of birthday parties there. It truly is a shame to see it go.

Michelle Ricci  
Johnston



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# SUN RISE SCOOPS

## Sun Rise Staff Reports

### Easter Bunny

The Easter Bunny is coming to town! From 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. the Easter Bunny will visit the Johnston Senior Center, 1291 Hartford Ave., Johnston.

The event, hosted by the Johnston Recreation Department, will feature pastries and refreshments with the Easter Bunny. Organizers urge attendees to bring a camera, and put out a special thanks to Citizens Bank.

For more information, go to [johnstonrec.com](http://johnstonrec.com).

### Fishing Derby

The Johnston Recreation Department will host the 2023 Fishing Derby, for ages 4-12, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Saturday, April 22.

The derby will offer rewards for individual achievements in the derby. The derby is free to enter.

"Please remember this derby is meant for the kids," reminded derby organizers. "Please let the kids do all the fishing. You can help cast and release the fish if necessary. Most of all, have fun!"

Organizers say that participants can arrive anytime between 9 a.m. and noon. They put out a special thanks to The Johnston Community Center Association and Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM).

For more information, go to [johnstonrec.com](http://johnstonrec.com).

### Youth Track & Field

It's time to register for Johnston Youth Track & Field.

The Johnston Recreation Department is also looking for volunteer coaches and sponsors. Register your child and get involved in the community.

Anyone interested in signing up can stop by the Johnston Recreation Office from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The program costs \$65 per individual, and \$40 for each additional sibling. Checks and money orders are accepted (checks should be made payable to JYSA). The program is available to boys and girls currently in grades 1-8. For more information (including schedules, registration forms, and more) go to [johnstonrec.com](http://johnstonrec.com).

The season will run from Thursday, April 27 through Thursday, June 15.

### Amenity Aid Volunteers Needed

We are looking for volunteers that would like to help us plan and staff community events, organize hygiene product collection drives and raise funds for Amenity Aid. If you are interested in doing any of the above or would like to be a member of our Community Outreach Committee, please contact Stacey Silva, Community Outreach Chair at [Stacey@AmenityAid.org](mailto:Stacey@AmenityAid.org).

Amenity Aid's mission is to improve the health and wellbeing of vulnerable populations by creating access to essential hygiene products. Serving all of Rhode Island, we distribute toiletry necessities to those most vulnerable through our network of direct service agencies.

### AARP Day Trips

Lobster Bake & Foxwood Trip at Cap'n Jack's & Foxwoods Casino, Tuesday, April 18. Bus pickup from the Exit 19 Park & Ride on Hopkins Hill Road at 10 a.m., return time

is approximately 6 p.m. Cost is \$119/person. For more information call Maureen at 828-5188. Final payment is due by Thursday, April 6.

Bronx Zoo Trip, Tuesday, May 16. Bus pickup from the Exit 19 Park & Ride on Hopkins Hill Road at 7 a.m., return time is approximately 8:30 p.m. Cost is \$114/person. For more information call Maureen at 828-5188. Final payment is due by Tuesday, April 18.

Essex Steam Train & Riverboat Trip for Thursday, June 22. Bus pickup from Exit 19 Park & Ride on Hopkins Hill Road at 9 a.m., return time is approximately 5 p.m. Cost is \$119/person. For more information call Maureen at 828-5188. Final payment is due by Thursday, May 25.

### More at Mohr Library

On Thursdays at 3 p.m., the library will host Beginner's How to Draw classes for Adults.

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

Yoga is now open to all ages. The class is sponsored by Tri-County HEZ, and taught by a certified professional and is free. The yoga classes will be held at 2 p.m. on Mondays.

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. Sign language classes were cancelled for March 22 but have resumed. They will be held at 1 p.m. each second, third, fourth and fifth Wednesday (all Wednesdays 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 story time 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](mailto:info@mohrlibrary.org), or visit their website at [mohrlibrary.org](http://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](http://osdri.charityproud.org/EventRegistration). Register by March 23 to secure a T-shirt.

Reach out to [bele@friars.providence.edu](mailto:bele@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

#### Academy Scholarship Applications

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

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

### 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](mailto: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](mailto:info@johnstonri.gop).

### 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](http://www.rifoundation.org/funds/soul-of-1971-scholarship-fund).

### 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](http://namirhodeisland.org) or call 401-331-3060 or email [beth@namirhodeisland.org](mailto: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 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](http://WRWC.ORG/EVENTS).

### Neighborhood Watch

The 2022 season of Johnston's Neighborhood Watch has officially kicked off. This Neighborhood Watch brings together residents who want to make their neighborhood safer by working together with members of the police department. The program pairs residents with Johnston Police officers in an effort to open up communication, meet other neighbors and create partnerships that help build community resiliency.

**Editor's Note:** Send submissions to [roys@rhodybeat.com](mailto:roys@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.

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# Panthers take icy plunge for Special Olympics

By RORY SCHULER

Their big toes didn't go first. There was no timid, slow-halux-dip temperature taking.

Johnston's panthers plunged into the icy water, bobbing to the surface with more than \$6,000 raised for the Special Olympics and Unified Sports.

"The air was cold but the teams were full of energy and excited to take the plunge," said Johnston Public Schools Director of Special Services Edda Carmadello. "Over 100 students, families, staff, administrators, and community members joined the Ferri Middle School and Johnston High School teams on Saturday."

Together, on Saturday, March 25, the middle and high school teams raised a significant chunk of cash to help support Unified Special Olympics Champion Schools during the annual Special Olympics Polar Plunge at Roger Wheeler Beach in Narragansett.

Johnston's coaches, teachers, staff and students collectively held their breaths and braved southern Rhode Island's icy waters, raising money to support district-wide programs of inclusion.

Donna Vendetti, a Ferri Middle School special educator and Savannah Bissitt, a Johnston High School special educator, assisted with the organization and rallying of team members, according to Carmadello. And the High School girls basketball team showed up in force, and raised more than \$750 for the cause.

"Leading the charge into the water was the JHS girls basketball team," said Johnston Senior High School Assistant Principal Matt Velino.

"Between both schools, the district raised over \$6,000 for the Special Olympics and Unified Sports," Velino explained. "Over 50 staff members and students braved the cold and took the plunge ... Some of the staff members that went in the water were Mr. Freddie Skipworth, Mr. Jordan Musser, Mr. Jay Areson, Mrs. Amanda Areson, and Mrs. Sandy Nardolillo."

The celebration continued Wednesday, as Brown Avenue Elementary School planned to host their second annual Pay to Pour event. The Sarah Dyer Barnes Elementary school also plans to host its inaugural Pay to Pour event soon (the date has yet to be determined). Students collected donations for Special Olympics RI, and on the designated "Pay to Pour" day, they receive a cup of ice water to pour over faculty/staff volunteers of their choosing.

"There were so many teachers who participated in the plunge," Carmadello said. "I would hate to leave anyone out."

Organizers delivered a giant blanket "thank you" to those who have continually supported the district's Unified Special Olympics Champion Schools program — especially Saturday's plunging panthers who stood on the beach shivering.

**BLANKET THANK YOU:** Bobbi-Sue Trahan holds Kaylee Ponte following Saturday's Special Olympics Polar Plunge at Roger Wheeler Beach in Narragansett. (Photo courtesy Edda Carmadello)



**HOOPS AND HOPES:** The JSHS girls' basketball created its own team – shown here, from left to right, Riley Guenette, Aubree Allen, Steph Bruno, Officer Lou Cotoia, Ava Waternam, Hannah Lavergne – and raised over 750.00 for Special Olympics. (Photo courtesy Edda Carmadello)





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**HOOPS AND HOPES:** The JSHS girls' basketball created its own team and raised over 750.00 for Special Olympics. (Photo courtesy Edda Carmadello)

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**SHIVERING PANTHER:** Zachary Leach was one of the more than 100 students, faculty and family members who braved the icy waters off Roger Wheeler Beach in Narragansett for last Saturday's Special Olympics Polar Plunge. (Photo courtesy Edda Carmadello)



# JOHNSTON POLICE LOG

## DUI

Around 7:44 p.m., Feb. 21, Warwick Police backed up a fellow officer on a traffic stop at 555 Jefferson Boulevard.

Warwick Police Officer Derek J. Hagopian spotted an older model red Ford Ranger pickup truck stopped in the driveway of a business at the address.

"The front half of the pickup truck was pulled into the driveway," Hagopian wrote. "The rear half was protruding into the roadway, completely blocking the right lane of travel on Jefferson Blvd. southbound."

Warwick Police identified the driver of a vehicle on the scene as Stephen M. Graziano, 58, of 6 Patricia Drive, Johnston. Police were only able to ID the driver via a previous booking photo for an arrest on Dec. 9, 2021, since Graziano did not have a driver's license.

"I immediately noted Graziano to have bloodshot/watery eyes, and I detected a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage emanating from his breath as he spoke," Warwick Police Officer Robert S. Macera wrote in the arrest report. "As Graziano engaged in conversation with me, I noted him to have a slurred speech."

Police asked Graziano to submit to a series of standardized field sobriety

tests. Following the tests, Graziano was arrested and transported to Warwick Police Headquarters.

Police asked Graziano to consent to a chemical test, but he told police he would not be signing anything without a lawyer. After checking Graziano's criminal history, police charged him with DUI of Liquor (BAC unknown, first offense), Driving with Expired License or Without License (fourth offense), Refusal to Submit to a Chemical Test (first offense), Operating a Motor Vehicle with Cancelled Registration, Stopping on Traveled Portion of Open Highway, Parking or Stopping Prohibited (Public or Private Driveway) and No Insurance (first offense).

Graziano told police he had no sober adult to come pick him up, so he was transported to Kent County Memorial Hospital.

## LICENSE VIOLATION

Around 6 p.m., March 24, Johnston Patrolman Derrick Palazzo was monitoring a fixed position at the intersection of Downing Drive and Morgan Avenue, when he spotted a white Acura TSX travel through a stop sign.

He initiated a traffic stop and identified the driver as Elvis J. Lopez, of 107 Walnut St., Second Floor, Johnston. Lo-

pez received a traffic citation for Obedience to Stop Signs, but a background check revealed Lopez "has been summoned three other times for operating on a suspended license," according to the arrest report.

Lopez was taken into custody for Driving with a Suspended License (fourth offense) and transported to headquarters. He was processed and later released.

## SHOPLIFTING

Johnston police arrested a pair of shoplifters accused of pilfering fresh fish after a grocery store scuffle. One alleged shoplifter fled into the woods before police arrived.

Around 3 p.m., March 26, Johnston Police responded to a grocery store in town where a shoplifting incident had escalated into a fight (police redacted the name of the store in the publicly available report).

Store security told police that "a female shoplifter, whom he had just confronted, had fled on foot towards the southeast corner of the property, and into the wooded area behind the business.

Store employees also directed police to a burgundy colored vehicle with New Hampshire plates parked in the

south side of the parking lot, occupied by an "unknown female."

The car was registered to Christine Linda Hebert, of 57 Webster Ave., Providence. The woman inside the car, however, was identified as Stacie Gentile, of 200 King St., Apt. 10, Boscawen, New Hampshire.

Gentile told police that Hebert was the woman who fled into the woods.

Store security told police that the two women had been "sitting inside a vehicle together, acting suspicious," and one of them was spotted "picking up several receipts off the ground," according to the arrest report.

The pair then entered the store together.

Video surveillance allegedly shows Gentile "concealing fish ordered from the seafood department in her coat." Hebert allegedly took items from the shelves and put them in her purse.

Both passed all points of sale without attempting to pay for the merchandise, according to police.

A store employee ran after Hebert, and "a minor physical struggle ensued when he grabbed her by her purse," Johnston Patrolman Matthew V. Leveillee wrote in the arrest report. "This resulted in both he and

■ POLICE - PAGE 12



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COPAYS AND DEDUCTIBLES MAY APPLY

# RISP investigate school 'swatting' hoax phone calls in 14 RI towns

By RORY SCHULER

The Rhode Island State Fusion center received reports Monday morning from 14 "municipal police departments regarding hoax phone calls alleging that a school shooting had occurred," according to a press release from Rhode Island State Police (RISP).

State Police report the caller delivered "a similar message" to "at least 14 different municipalities" across the Ocean State.

"This kind of hoax is called 'swatting' and is meant to generate a large-scale police response, but the Fusion Center identified this as a hoax very quickly," said RISP Lt. Col. Robert Creamer. "Swatting hoaxes frequently originate from outside of the local area, but we take every threat seriously and want to assure the public that our schools are secure."

Monday's calls were received from the same phone number and the same person, according to RISP.

"All municipal police departments responded and cleared the affected schools," RISP announced. "All were deemed safe."

Johnston schools did not receive "swatting" threats on Monday.

"We have not received any of these threats in Johnston," according to Johnston Superintendent Dr. Bernard DiLullo Jr. "I am aware of the districts that have received them as we received the email from the State Fusion Center. We will always take any threat seriously and respond with our safety protocol by locking down the building and notifying law enforcement as well as keeping parents updated when such a situation occurs."

That same day, six people —three children and three adults — were killed in a mass shooting at a school in Nashville, Tennessee. The shooter was shot and killed by Metro Nashville Police.

**SEIZED BY POLICE:** Police seized "more than 20 ghost guns, 5 other illegal firearms, ghost gun parts, 30 grams of fentanyl, 12 grams of cocaine, drug sales paraphernalia and \$7,621," following the search of a Pawtucket home on Tuesday. (Photo courtesy RISP)



## Task Force seizes 20 ghost guns

A Pawtucket man has been arrested on 163 weapon and drug charges.

On Wednesday afternoon, Rhode Island State Police (RISP) announced that its HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) Task Force arrested Ferdinando Lombardi, 56, of 174 Windmill St., Second Floor, Pawtucket on weapons and drug charges following "an extensive investigation."

The sting yielded "more than 20 complete ghost guns and other weapons, including large capacity feeding devices," according to a RISP press release.

"Any day we can take this many illegal weapons off the street is a great day for public safety in Rhode Island," said RISP Col. Darnell S. Weaver, Superintendent of the Rhode Island State Police and Director of the Department of Public Safety. "I am thankful for the hard work of our detectives and grateful for the collaboration we enjoy with the other law enforcement agencies that work on our HIDTA task force."

The HIDTA Task Force started its investigation into Lombardi and developed "information that this individual may also be in possession of privately made firearms, otherwise known as 'ghost guns,'" according to state police.

The task force executed a search war-

rant at Lombardi's Pawtucket residence on Tuesday, March 28. Police seized "more than 20 ghost guns, 5 other illegal firearms, ghost gun parts, 30 grams of fentanyl, 12 grams of cocaine, drug sales paraphernalia and \$7,621."

Lombardi was charged with Possession of a Controlled Substance with Intent to Deliver (for cocaine and fentanyl). He also faces the following weapons charges: Possession of a Firearm by Certain Persons Prohibited (43 Counts); Possession of a Firearm When Committing a Controlled Substance Violation (43 Counts); Large Capacity Feeding Device(s) Prohibited (38 Counts); and Possession of a Ghost Gun (39 counts).

Lombardi was arrested on Tuesday, March 28, and arraigned at the Lincoln Woods Barracks by a Justice of Peace and held without bail at the Adult Correctional Institution (ACI). He was expected to be arraigned at 6th Division District Court on Wednesday.

The HIDTA Task Force is comprised of members from the RISP, DEA Providence District Office, the Rhode Island National Guard Counterdrug Program, and municipal police departments from Providence, North Providence, Lincoln, Middletown, Bristol and Narragansett.

### Police

(Continued from page 11)

Mrs. Hebert falling to the ground, her dropping her purse and the contents being strewn onto the floor. He followed outside as she ran into the wooded area behind the store."

Store security provided police with photographs of the suspects. Police said they later discovered the "two had made several trips in and out of the store, and the exact amount of product taken is unknown."

Gentile was arrested and charged with Shoplifting and Conspiracy,

both misdemeanors.

A background check revealed a "No-Extradition (Instate Pickup Only) warrant" out of the Lacombe New Hampshire Sheriff's Office, for Operating a Motor Vehicle After Being Deemed Habitual and Possession of Methamphetamine, according to Johnston Police.

The vehicle was searched, and police discovered the stolen fish in the back seat. They also found ID and possessions belonging to Hebert.

"Procedural checks for Mrs. Hebert revealed several aliases and former names," Leveillee wrote.

Police called for a tow

truck, which arrived on the scene. As they started to tow the vehicle, Hebert emerged from the woods and ran toward the vehicle.

"I intercepted her and she was taken into custody without incident," Leveillee wrote.

Hebert was arrested and charged with Shoplifting and Conspiracy.

The pair was held for arraignment. Both Hebert and Gentile were arraigned and released on \$2,000 personal recognizance, with Third District Court summons to appear on April 14.





**SUPER SIX:** Winsor Hill School students Hannah Henderson and Ella Waters (front) and Ryleigh Cole, Kyla Cook, Jordan Baccaire and Sophia Ardito (top), are decked out in special shirts and hold their Wiz Kids awards during a recent assembly. (Submitted photo)

# Wiz Kids follow Winsor Hill's Wizard Way

By PETE FONTAINE

The students at Winsor Hill Elementary School are learning their ABC's as well as the impressive Wizard Way Pledge.

It's all part of a unique program that resulted after Principal Kelly Montalbano and Health/Physical Education Teacher Susan Parillo had a meeting about recognizing students who are role models at the Johnston school.

Likewise, Montalbano and Parillo collaborated with School Counselor Beth Moretti and Behavior Specialist Brianna Bielecki — and the "Wizard Way" was born.

"The Wizard Way is a program designed to teach students about their character and actions," Parillo said. "The Wizard Way is our guiding principle at Winsor Hill School. Every day, students are reminded by teachers, staff and peers the importance of being kind, being safe, being responsible and being respectful."

To which Moretti added: "Those are the four qualities that we aspire all students to embrace in their daily lives. The program also connects to the Be Your Best Self program here at Winsor Hill."

Students begin each morning taking the Wiz Kid Pledge.

That pledge reads like this: "As a member of the Winsor Hill family, I pledge to live the Wizard Way, every day, being kind, being safe, being respectful, being responsible. I choose to be a Wiz Kid by being my best self."

All Winsor Hill students receive a "Be A Wiz Kid" T-shirt to wear on Wizard Wednesdays, and they can also be nominated by their teachers and school staff for going above and beyond, along with exhibiting the qualities of being a Wiz Kid.

There's also an "I Am A Wiz Kid Award" that Parillo explained, "recognizes those students who demonstrate leadership and character through embodying those core Wizard Way Values as a student in the school and community."

Although groups of students were recognized earlier this year, they were officially awarded their certificates and special shirts at a recent assembly held in the school gymnasium filled with cheers. The event included Wiz Kids Kyla Cook, Jordan Baccaire, Ella Waters and Sophia Ardito, who were recognized for organizing a school and community animal shelter donation drive, while Ryleigh Cole was honored for her generous donations of art supplies to a local school.

Hannah Henderson, who Parillo said is the school's latest Wiz Kid, was recognized for packing bags for the homeless along with her family.

There's also another side to the Wiz Kids Program that involves teachers, staff and administration rewarding students who are demonstrating those core educational values through the school day with a ticket, or tickets, they can use to redeem prizes in the Wiz Kids Store, which is only open the last Friday of the month.

"It's fun!" Moretti said with excitement ringing in her voice. "There are prizes anywhere from one ticket for an eraser or pencil and up to 20 to 30 tickets that could result in 'Lunch with the Principal.'" The program is all part of Winsor Hill's PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support) program that focuses on being kind, being safe, being respectful and being responsible — and most of all — being a good "Wiz Kid."

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By JENNIFER COATES

When a family-owned business has grown from its original site to three locations in three major cities in less than ten years, you can safely assume that this business is doing something right, something that brings customers back time and time again.

This is the success story of Broadway Tire & Auto Repair, a repair shop which first opened its doors nearly eight decades ago. The Hallenbeck family purchased this long-standing business in 2014, retaining its brand name and pouring all the time, expertise, experience, and energy they had into it to make it the well-established business it remains to this day. At that time, Broadway Tire existed only at its 588 Broadway location in Pawtucket. Some years later, the second repair shop was opened in Warwick, and today, the Hallenbecks proudly announce that they have expanded yet again!

The residents of Johnston officially welcomed Broadway Tire & Auto Repair to their city in 2022!

The reputation of Broadway Tire has grown over time largely because of this promise: "Our goal is to become the premier tire and auto repair facility in the state with state-of-the-art facilities. We are dedicated to giving you the very best auto repair and tire service, with a focus on upfront and honest quotes, timely responses to issues, and quality parts and products." These guiding principles are what have kept this business growing and prospering.

The success of all three Broadway Tires begins with their technicians, all of whom were hand-selected for their skill, their talent, their commitment to their work and their trustworthiness. In addition to these key team members, the Broadway Tire "extended family" includes some employees who have been with the company for over 30 years, office



The city of Johnston is proud to feature Broadway Tire & Auto Repair, the third installation of this growing family-run business! Give them a call today at 401-725-3535 for all your tire and auto repair needs.

manager Louise who has worked for Broadway Tire for 31 years and Dale, another manager, who has been with them since 1978. Their collective knowledge has contributed greatly to the longevity of a family-run company that has endured the test of time.

Today, Broadway Tire & Auto Repair is a one-stop destination for all your auto repair work, from tire rotations and installations to oil changes, brake repairs, wheel alignments, batteries, heating and A/C, belts & hoses, air filters ~ the list goes on and on. If you need a basic tune-up or to purchase new tires, you are all set! Vehicles of every make and model

are serviced here.

Broadway Tire & Auto Repair is the former home of Midas Brakes on 1307 Hartford Avenue. To learn more, to get a quote, to check out their inventory of tires, to get helpful car care tips, and to schedule an appointment, visit them at their informative website [www.broadwaytireri.com](http://www.broadwaytireri.com). Call them at 401-450-0122. Hours are 7:30am ~ 5:00pm, Monday - Friday; 7:30am ~ 1:00pm on Saturdays.

If you live in Pawtucket, you can find them at 588 Broadway (401-725-3535) or if you live in Warwick, visit them at 1184 Warwick Avenue (401-884-2211).

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**RETIRES REUNION:** Former Department of Corrections staffers Robert DelFino, Joe DiNitto, Don Oliva and Peter Mancini were on hand for last week's JSC St. Joseph's Day celebration along with Town Councilwoman Linda Folcarelli and her sister Donna. (Submitted photos)

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## Johnston Senior Center hosts St. Joseph's Day Luncheon

By **PETE FONTAINE**

Last week's St. Joseph's Day Luncheon at the Johnston Senior Center drew crowd eager for Spring.

People were decked out in a variety of red garb and enjoyed the morning coffee and muffins, lunch, singing from students by Johnston High School as well as a delicious dessert — the ever-popular and homemade Italian zeppole — donated by D. Palmieri's Bakery of Killingly Street and The Original Italian Bakery on Atwood Avenue.

Retirees from the Rhode Island Department of Corrections came especially to see their former co-worker, JSC Executive Director Richard J. DelFino Jr.

"If you're a senior citizen this is THE place to be!" Said Johnston Town Councilwoman Linda Folcarelli,

who has attended recent JSC events.

Folcarelli, who represents District 1, and her sister Donna, who doubles as secretary of the Rhode Island Italian-American Club, enjoyed the festivities that included the talented voices of the four JHS students and they were seated at a table with Robert DelFino, Joe DiNitto, Don Oliva and Peter Mancini.

In keeping with the JSC's daily routine, valuable volunteers serve everything from water to lunch with unmatched hospitality. Their efforts further enhanced the annual celebration.

"This is exactly what we want this place to be," DelFino offered. "We want this to be a second home for all our senior citizens."

DelFino, who has worn many hats in Johnston and around

the state including serving as clerk of the town's Municipal Court, also issued a reminder and date of the second Blood Pressure Screening that's a collaborative with the JSC and Johnston Fire Department.

On Thursday, April 13, members of the JFD will be back at the Center beginning at 9:30 a.m. and staying until 12:30 p.m. offering free blood pressure screenings, oxygen level testing and a free emergency card, courtesy of Local 1950, in case an urgent need arises.

"This is a free event," DelFino emphasized. "It is our goal to collaborate with town entities that will further benefit all our senior citizens."

He explained that another initiative involves senior technology assistance as well as programs at the Marian

J. Mohr Memorial Library.

"We'll be working with Verizon to educate seniors on phone technology as well as how to text, how to use the internet and arrange other services to assist seniors," he went on. "Please call about our many programs; they range from lunch to trips and interesting programs. We welcome your call (401-944-3343) and becoming part of our JSC family."




**Watch Your MOUTH**  
by Rochelle Rhodes, D.M.D. and David McFarland, D.D.S.

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## Never too big to hunt eggs

By **JARED LEE**  
Special to the Sun Rise

On Wednesday, April 5, Johnston High School's Student Council will host its annual Easter Egg hunt.

This event serves as a wide-scale community engagement activity for students throughout the early spring season here at JHS.

During the personalization period, designed to engage students in different activities to help enrich their experience, held on Wednesdays, students who paid to either attend or participate, will report to the football field.

Once the start of the race is announced, students will go head-to-

head to get the most eggs, and win the biggest prizes.

Easter eggs could include gift cards for popular services like Apple, Spotify, and PlayStation. Other eggs could contain candies, and Easter baskets. Students could also go home with nothing in their eggs. This is one JHS event that you do not want to miss out on!

**Editor's Note:** This JHS dispatch was written by Jared Lee, Sophomore Representative serving on the Johnston High School Student Council. The Johnston Sun Rise regularly publishes stories submitted by members of the JHS Student Council.

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# Sports

## Corsinetti cousins add to family legacy

### Antonia, Anthony take home titles as seniors

By ALEX SPONSELLER

Corsinetti is one of the most recognizable basketball names in Rhode Island, and this past winter, it grew even more.

Rhode Island College senior Antonia Corsinetti was a key piece to the Anchorwomen club that won its third consecutive Little East Conference Championship and advanced all the way to the Division III Final Four showdown. Her cousin, Anthony, was an All-Division standout as a senior for the Johnston High School team that won its first championship in 27 years.

For Antonia, she was thrilled to pull off the three-peat, beat the odds and see her team advance all the way to the Final Four despite garnering just one vote in the rankings.

"It was incredibly special, a lot of people counted us out, we weren't even ranked. The journey was an unbelievable experience, once in a lifetime. This team worked so hard to get there, we all believed in each other. We knew we could do it," said Antonia. "I'm very grateful. We lost in the conference final my freshmen year, then won three conference titles in a row, then made it to the Final Four. It just shows the commitment that the five seniors have given throughout our four years. It was so



BASKETBALL FAMILY: Antonia Corsinetti (Photo courtesy of RIC) and Anthony Corsinetti. (Photo by Alex Sponseller)

CORSINETTI - PAGE 19



### Unified season tips off

The unified basketball season is underway and Johnston had fun on its opening day last week. Pictured are Heber Munoz Lopez putting up a shot (left) and David Collins, Ava Waterman and Chris Civetti working together to make a play (right). For more photos of the action, check out page 17. (Photos by Leo van Dijk/rhodyphoto.zenfolio.com)

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CHEERING THEM ON: Katie Rodriguez cheers on the Panthers last week.



UP THE COURT: Lucio La Terra Bellina, Cam Vanstone and Kaylee Vanstone bring the ball up the court.

# Knights return for season

## FROM STAFF REPORTS

The Community College of Rhode Island baseball team hosts Quincy College this Thursday, March 23 in its 2023 home opener following an encouraging week-long trip to Myrtle Beach for Spring Break.

The Knights played nine games in five days and finished 2-7 on the trip, which included games against Division II schools SUNY Sullivan, Sussex County, and County College of Morris. First pitch Thursday in Warwick is 3:30 pm; the Knights then travel to Quincy for a Saturday doubleheader beginning at noon.

Several players stood out during the first week of play in Myrtle Beach. Sophomore outfielder Sam Laurie (Narragansett) batted .533 in five games with three RBIs and five stolen bases while fellow sophomore outfielder Dylan Barlow (Warwick) batted .500, scored three times and reached base

five times in four games. Sophomore infielder Caleb Harris (Cranston) drove in a team-best four runs in five games and freshman infielder Zak Thomas (North Providence) scored four runs and batted .438 over five games.

Sophomore pitcher Brock Bruneau (Ontario, Canada) earned a win during the road trip, allowing one earned run over four innings in the Knights' 18-8 victory over Montgomery County on March 15. Harris and Laurie combined for seven RBI in the win while freshman third baseman Noah Cook (Cranston) scored three runs and drew four walks.

In his second season as head coach, Joe Hopkins is looking to build off the late-season success of the 2022 team. The Knights finished 10-21 last year, but advanced to the finals of the NJCAA Division III Region XXI Championships against Northern Essex after sweeping a consolation bracket doubleheader against rivals Quinsigamond and Massachusetts.

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# West Bay Anglers donate \$21,000 to three RI nonprofits

By CAPT. DAVE MONTI

The West Bay Anglers, a fishing club in Warwick, contributed \$7,000 to each of three Rhode Island non-profit organizations including Veteran Angler Charters of Bristol with other locations coast-wide, Impossible Dream of Warwick and the Dare to Dream Ranch in Foster, Rhode Island.

Pam Tameo, lobster raffle chairperson and past president of the West Bay Anglers said, "We raised \$21,000 this year, the second highest amount ever, thanks to the 100 percent commitment from our volunteers to run the Meat & Lobster Raffles and the hundreds of donors who contribute each week."

Pam, her husband Frank Tameo and a host of other West Bay Anglers have been actively raising funds for Rhode Island charities for 24 years.

For 18 Saturdays the West Bay Anglers raffled off tables of meat, lobster and other food items, consumer electronics, fishing gear and a host of other items. Each Saturday event would last over two hours at the Warwick Fire Fighters Hall on Warwick Avenue.

Tameo said, "It was great to see the expression on the faces of the executive directors of the three charities once they learned the amount of donations."

Capt. Randy Bagwell of River Rebel Charters, Bristol, who takes wounded veterans fishing on his charter boat on behalf of Veteran Anglers Charters, said, "This is the tenth year we received a major donation from the West Bay Anglers. They are committed to veterans in many ways and thank them for helping us to take members of the military fishing."

Veteran Angler Charters' Board, who was represented by Capt. Kathy Granfield, said, "The organization offers free, small group charter fishing trips to injured and recovering veterans. Our mission is to provide veterans with recreational rehabilitation and therapeutic support."

The second charity receiving a \$7,000 donation was IMPOSSIBLE Dream of Warwick. Executive Director Diane Penza, co-founded the organization 40 years ago with her father, John Florio. The IMPOSSIBLE DREAM Playground was Rhode Island's first integrated playground, offering an environment that is play friendly for children of all physical abilities in a clean and safe environment.



READY TO FISH: Veterans aboard River Rebel Charters fish for free as part of the Veteran Angler Charters program. (Submitted photo)

The Third charity to receive \$7,000 award was Dare to Dream Ranch, Foster, RI. "This is the third year they received an award," said Pam Tameo. The organization, represented by executive director Karen Dalton at the event, offers alternative therapy programs for service members, veterans and their families.

Special recognition by the West Bay Anglers was given to Bobby Baggerson. Tameo said, "Bobby was one of our longest and most dedicated volunteers for the Raffle who passed away this year."

Tameo said, "If you are interested in attending this fall our 25th year starts with the first Meat & Lobster Raffle on Saturday, Nov. 4, 2023, at the Warwick Fire Fighters Association, 750 Warwick Avenue, Warwick."

### Trout fishing is the ticket this month

Rhode Island lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams designated as trout-stocked waters are currently closed for fishing. However, the season opens Saturday, April 8, 2023 and runs through Feb. 29, 2024. More to come next week on Opening Day in Rhode Island.

For licenses and trout/salmon waterway stocking information in Rhode Island visit [www.dem.ri.gov/fishing](http://www.dem.ri.gov/fishing), and in Massachusetts [www.mass.gov/service-details/trout](http://www.mass.gov/service-details/trout)

stocking-report .

### RI Marine Fisheries Council meets to consider regulations

The Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Council will meet to consider 2023 recreational and many commercial regulations at an in-person and online hybrid meeting 6:00 p.m., Monday, April 3, 2023, at the URI Graduate School of Oceanography Bay Campus, Coreless Auditorium, 215 South Ferry Road, Narragansett.

The Council makes fishing regulation recommendations to DEM, with Terrance Gray, DEM Director, generally approving 95 percent of the Council's regulation recommendations.

Issues before the Council on April 3 that impact recreational anglers include regulations for black sea bass and scup as well as commercial Atlantic menhaden measures in the Bay. Although the RI special management are in the Bay has been a model for such national programs. The program includes weekly (sometimes daily) aerial stock assessments to determine weather the Bay is open or closed to commercial fishing. There are a number of commercial fishing industry proposals being considered at the Council meeting that would in effect dismantle the program to allow more Atlantic menhaden to be taken in the Bay.

For years anglers have advocated for eco-system-based management for the species to provide enough bio bass in the Bay not only to sustain the fishery but to serve the ecological needs of fish and birds such as striped bass, bluefish, whales, osprey, etc.

The meeting can be joined in person or by Zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83805326029?pwd=eFFTem12NUVveVBD.dGhiTys-3cUFRUT09> . Meeting ID: 838 0532 6029. Passcode: 282613. Dial-in 1-929-205-6099

For agenda details with support documents on the meeting visit <https://dem.ri.gov/natural-resources-bureau/marine-fisheries/calendar> .

### Where's the bite?

Freshwater. Connor Swartz of Red Top Sporting Goods, Buzzards Bay, said, "Freshwater fishing is picking up at ponds that have been stocked with trout. Long Pond in Plymouth is producing well for anglers." Tom Giddings of the Tackle Box, Warwick, said, "Fishing in Warwick Pond and Gorton Pond is spotty, but they are producing large-mouth bass for customers. The white perch bite has been very good. Everyone is getting ready for Opening Day. We are fully stocked and will open Friday, April 7 at 5 a.m. and stay open all night until Saturday, April 8 at 7 p.m."

For licenses and trout/salmon waterway stocking information in Rhode Island visit [www.dem.ri.gov/fishing](http://www.dem.ri.gov/fishing), and in Massachusetts [www.mass.gov/service-details/trout-stocking-report](http://www.mass.gov/service-details/trout-stocking-report) .

"Striped bass holdovers are being caught in the upper Providence River. We have also received reports of herring starting to appear in our waterways early as it is warm. The bass season this year should be strong and early," said Giddings.

John Littlefield of Archie's Bait & Tackle of Riverside, RI, said, "Anglers fishing the upper Seekonk River in downtown Pawtucket this weekend found the River loaded with 3 to 5 inch pogies (Atlantic menhaden). They were fishing for school bass but couldn't make a cast without snagging a pogie. These fish wintered here and once they are joined with new arrivals the upper Bay and Rivers should be loaded with Atlantic menhaden and striped bass."

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](mailto:dmontifish@verizon.net) or visit [www.noflukefishing.com](http://www.noflukefishing.com).

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# Looking forward to a busy April

Each year, I go on a spiel about how April is the best month on the sports calendar, and I will do it once again.

April will once again deliver in 2023, starting with what should be an epic conclusion to the March Madness NCAA tournament. This Saturday will be the Final Four showdowns followed by the actual championship on Monday.

Admittedly, I am not an avid college hoops guy. I pay attention to the teams in our region that advance, so this year it has been UConn, but overall, there are just too many teams and moving pieces for me to keep up with.

However, once the tournament reaches the Elite 8, that is when I lock in a bit more. The talk of UConn for the past 20 years has been on the women's side. Of course, because that program was on the most dominant run in college sports history. The men's team to this point has been a dark horse and has overcome the odds to reach this point. It's a tough, resilient team that now has everyone's attention.

What has also been fun about this tournament is that so many unusual teams have advanced. Not sure if anyone would have guessed that any of these clubs would reach the Final Four. It's a nice mix up, and I'm not even going to begin to try to make a prediction. I'm pulling for the Huskies, though.

Then of course, baseball. Our high schools began scrimmaging this week and will be getting the regular season started next week. The pros begin this week as well and Little League will be getting ramped up later in the month.

There is a charm about baseball that hits home every April. It always feels like opening day truly marks the end of winter. Sure, there are plenty of cold early season games, but overall, baseball means spring,

## My pitch



by  
**ALEX SPENSSELLER**  
SPORTS EDITOR  
ALEXS@RHODYBEAT.COM

nice weather, brighter days.

For our high schools, I'm always intrigued to see if Hendricken can pull it off as perennial favorites. I also look forward to the Cranston East-West rivalry as well as Pilgrim and Toll Gate. Johnston is also coming off a playoff appearance, so that will be fun to watch.

Then our Little Leagues. Rhode Island has some of the country's best youth baseball and that's not hyperbole. Look at the year-by-year New England winners in the Little League World Series. The Ocean State dominates. It's exciting to see if one of our Little Leagues can get it done, and even if it's another Rhode Island team, it's always fun to watch the team that could be the one playing on ESPN in Williamsport.

As for the Red Sox. Sigh.

Like most Sox observers, this entire offseason perplexed me. The Sox are one of the richest teams in the world, had plenty of money to spend and loads of talent that needed to be re-signed. Instead, the team elected to let Xander Bogaerts, JD Martinez and Nathan Eovaldi walk right out the door and did little to replace them.

They had a nice spring training, so maybe they will avoid another last place season. To have our sights set on "not last place," though, is frustrating considering the substantial advantages the club has.

Football is my favorite sport across all levels,

and although kick off is months away, April is home to the annual NFL Draft.

This is another one of those "kick off the spring" events that I have circled on my calendar every April. The NFL is the world's biggest sports organization and we get to see the latest crop of imports join the party. Rhode Island has been represented recently with Hendricken's Kwity Paye hearing his name called and Xavier Truss will probably be taking the stage in next year's draft.

Either way, it's always a great event that gives you a glimpse into the future. It's also a massive opportunity for teams to beef up their lineups. For the Patriots, they desperately, and I mean desperately, need to nail this year's draft. They have the 14th overall pick, grab a stud.

I do not follow softball beyond the high school level, but we also have elite softball right in our backyard. Each year, we see plenty of players from Rhode Island reach the next level.

I love the Division I playoffs, especially. It's always a dogfight and no team ever seems to have the title secure. It really is who plays the best the day of.

Pilgrim, Coventry, La Salle, Bay View, St. Ray's, Cranston West. It's always a blast to cover these tournaments and these races all spring and I'm expecting another wild finish.

Then some of the other sports like lacrosse, outdoor track, boys volleyball, tennis. There is just so much to look forward to in this month. Road races, sailing events. April really feels like a month of hope, as cheesy as that sounds. March is an extension of winter, April is when we actually break through.

Happy April to everyone. I am thrilled to be getting back outside and enjoying the fresh air. Looking forward to catching up with you.

program to being one of the state's best during his tenure, and has been a big part in developing both Anthony and Antonia, who were also neighbors growing up.

Anthony was honored to add to his family's legacy in the town and state with the win, and to do it alongside his cousin.

"It was great to see her succeed, I'm proud of her. It's a great representation of the hard work that we put in. I feel that no one works harder than we do, and if you put the time in, the results follow. I am proud of her and I'm proud of myself. We made history."

Antonia added: "It was very special, especially since we won on the same weekend and he won the title on my home court. It was pretty fun to watch. He worked really hard. He and I grew up together and always pushed each other. We always wanted to bring a championship home to our schools. He brought one home to our town and I made the state proud by winning in a public school (at RIC). It was a lot of fun."

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## ■ Corsinetti

(Continued from page 16)

special and we were grateful to do it with one another."

Anthony transferred back to Johnston prior to his junior campaign and quickly became one of the most productive players in program history for the Panthers. After a down junior year, Anthony was proud to see he and his teammates turn things around and go on a legendary run to the title.

"It was great. I transferred back before my junior year so it was great to bring it back home to the community. I'm proud of my teammates, it's something to remember. It feels great especially with what my dad has done here as a coach. It's great to add to that history. I did it for my teammates. We expected more of ourselves last year but went 9-9. We used those nine losses as nine lessons," said Anthony.

His father, Chris, is a former coach for the Lady Panthers and played during his high school days. Chris helped guide the

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## Tales of a Trek-brarian



**AT SEA AND ON LAND:** Warwick Librarian Aaron Coutu with one of the characters he encountered on the recent cruise for Trekkies and with the Christmas tree, which he still lights in his office and decorated with Star War figures and ships.



By **DANIAL J. HOLMES**

Tucked away in the office of the Warwick Public Library's new director is a "special collection" which is truly out-of-this-world.

"I have *Star Trek* posters and comic books signed by the cast, memorabilia from all the different series, illuminated blueprints of the Starship Enterprise, life-size cutouts of Captains Kirk and Picard... and then there's my tree," said Aaron Coutu, standing beside an artificial spruce with boughs sagging under the weight of tiny Starfleet, Federation, and Romulan ships.

Coutu recently disembarked from a much larger ship – Royal Caribbean's thousand foot Navigator of the Seas. The vessel hosted the sixth installment of *Star Trek: The Cruise* at the end of February.

"This was the second *Star Trek* cruise I've attended," he said. "The whole week is an amazing experience, and I'm definitely looking forward to next year."

A native of Coventry, Coutu was named library director back in July, having previously served as the Assistant Director of the Cumberland Public Library. He remains involved with the Other Worlds Book Club which he started there.

"We alternate every week between science-fiction and fantasy novels," he explained. "I'm interested in getting something similar started here, but we already have so many reading groups in Warwick that it's tough to schedule a new one without creating conflicts. Our Cumberland group is open to anyone interested, however."

■ TREK - PAGE 24

*Science fiction, by its nature, gives readers a unique way to reflect on our own society.*

— Aaron Coutu fresh from a Star Trek cruise... on *Navigator of the Seas*

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# ANIMAL TALK

By Karen Kalunian

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# Trudeau Center rings in release new Donald Torres album

By ROB DUGUAY

Since the 1960s, the J. Arthur Trudeau Memorial Center located on 3445 Post Road in Warwick has been Southern New England's premier provider of services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. With clients ranging from children to adults, it's one of the few organizations of its specialty that serves individuals in all stages of life. They currently work with over 3,000 people all over Rhode Island and the surrounding areas of Connecticut and Massachusetts with their mission being to enhance the quality of living of these folks. One of the ways the Trudeau Center pursues this is by intertwining the local music scene with the people they work with, which often results in some enjoyable projects and activities for all involved. An example of this is a free record release & dance party that's happening at the center on March 31 from 6-9 p.m.

It's all going down to celebrate the release of the hip hop album from Donald Torres, also known as MC DT, titled "The Man, The Myth, The Legend". He collaborated with Ian Campopiano from the Providence experimental rap rock act Ontologies on it, who has also been working at the Trudeau Center for the past 18 years as a Direct Support Professional.

"My favorite music is hip hop," Torres says about the making of the al-



DON TORRES

bum. "I recorded songs before, but this time I wanted to release a full album. Ian helped me with this big accomplishment and goal, and making it was so much fun. I wanted to make music to share with my friends, family, [the] Trudeau [Center] and even Drake. I can't wait for my record release party and I know I will see a lot of people and have a lot of fun. There's going to be a DJ and everything."

"We recorded the album at my home studio over the course of a year from the fall of 2021 to the fall of 2022," Campopiano adds. "We tried to express something unique and fun while creating good memories that last a lifetime through sound. Each song has a different theme that Donald brought forth through his vivid imagination. I've written and produced songs with clients from Trudeau over the years, and it's always

a great experience. Donald has already started working on his follow up record titled 'Dream Big'."

While working with Campopiano on "The Man, The Myth, The Legend", Torres wrote all the songs for it himself as well as doing all the vocals. Tracks such as "Get Money", "Giddy Up (Cowboy Kid)", "Hands Up", "Hit The Dance Floor" and "Summer Time" highlight a one-of-a-kind album that has really interesting beats and rhymes. The structure that's present is its own peculiar thing while being a bit abstract and with Torres' upbeat lyrics. Overall, the music is a product of how this creative outlet can be something fun for anyone to have an experience with. Make sure to check out the album on the MC DT Youtube channel or grab a copy at the Trudeau Center this Friday night during what should be a real cool time.

## State Ballet presents "Alice's Adventures In Wonderland" at The Park

By DON FOWLER



The State Ballet of Rhode Island returns to Cranston's Park Theatre for two performances of "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" on Saturday, April 1 at 1:30 and 5:30 p.m.

Performed to the music of Joseph Horowitz, the colorful story is told in two acts, introducing several peculiar creature from the famous story.

Alice escapes in her dreams to the exciting Wonderland, where she meets the White Rabbit, Mad Hatter, Grumpy Caterpillar, Queen of Hearts, and Cheshire Cat.

Tickets at \$42 are still available for both showings by visiting the box office or going on line at [theparkri.com](http://theparkri.com). Free parking is available behind Cranston City Hall

Photo courtesy of stateballet.com



# Rhody TREASURES

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## Tips for Completing Your COLLECTION



Last week I was enjoying a to-go dinner with the Bruneau Crew before one of our auctions and we started talking about the types of essential pieces everyone should have in their personal collections. Since we have so many and specialties and interests here, it became a well-rounded list. I got to thinking that advice from the pros here at Bruneau & Co would be an interesting topic to write about and share with you, so here it is!

**1. Something Nostalgic:** I will start with myself and perhaps this is obvious if you follow my work, but including something you love from your childhood is a must for any collector. Nothing beats having a favorite toy or comic from your youth displayed in your adulthood home – the only problem is you have to resist playing with them!

**2. Something Historic:** Maybe it is because military history is his specialty, but Joel advocates everyone have something in their collection with a past – even if it is not militaria related. Bonus points if it has a provenance proving the item was in an important place at an important time!

**3. Something Functional:** This is my wife, Ashle's, suggestion because I fill our house up with so many toys and comics. She really enjoys when we acquire something for our collection that actually serves a purpose. Perhaps it is a vase or a



**By Travis Landry**  
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piece of furniture, so long as it doesn't just sit around collecting dust!

**4. Something Mechanical:** Kevin is obviously biased because he is an avid car collector, but he has always had an ad-

miration for mechanisms. Whether it be BMWs, vintage steam engines, or antique clocks, he believes anything that moves and was manufactured before all this modern technology is cool to have in your collection.

**5. Something Inherited:** It might not be the most valuable item in your collection, but Joel's assistant Jon believes it is absolutely important to keep something passed down through the generations in your family. Does that mean you have to keep all your grandparents' Hummels? No.... but maybe you should keep their favorite one around to honor their memory.

**6. Something Unique:** Becca suggests everyone find something one-of-a-kind for their collections. If it is hand-made, a little imperfect, quirky, fun to look at, or all of the above and it speaks to you – make it yours! She says it doesn't really matter what it is: art, jewelry, furniture – as long as it is the only one like it in the world!

**7. Something Fancy:** According to Mary, everyone should splurge on themselves now and again, so acquiring a nice piece of jewelry, a designer handbag, or another couture accessory is a must. Having items like that in your collection to bring out for special occasions will always bring you joy – and they will probably be good investments, too!



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**Trek**  
(Continued from page 21)

Coutu – who goes by “Trekbrarian” on Twitter – says that fantastic literature is not merely a means of escapism. “Science fiction, by its nature, gives readers a unique way to reflect on our own society,” he said. “It lets readers explore problems that exist in our own world, but in a context that often makes them feel less threatening. *Star Trek* itself has always had a reputation for promoting diversity, especially through the relationships depicted onscreen.”

For recent sci-fi reads available at the Warwick Public Library, Coutu recommends NK Jemison’s *The City We Became*, which offers a modern spin on the Roman mythological concept of the genius loci (guardian spirits of a particular city or village). “It’s set in a

New York in which each of the boroughs is represented by a protective ‘avatar.’ It’s a really engaging concept that really digs into the city’s culture. Another really exciting modern author in the genre is Rebecca Roanhorse, who blends together indigenous and science fiction themes. It can be really fascinating to watch the way she combines them, because so many tales of space exploration are necessarily also stories of colonization.”

**Community of Trekkies**

For younger readers, Coutu suggests *Interstellar Pig* by William Sleator.

Coutu’s own interest in the genre started around the age of 11, around the time of the release of *Star Trek: The Voyage Home*. He quickly discovered the close knit community of “Trekkies” that have formed around the franchise, cementing his interests.

“In those days, *Star Trek* was just starting to develop an online presence,” he said. “There were a number of ‘play-by-email’ games in which Trekkies across the country would play as their favorite characters.”

That community is a key feature of outings like the cruise.

“It’s a lot of the same kind of fun you’d find at a convention, but you get more of a chance to interact with people,” he said. “You’re staying right next to them, eating in the same restaurants, going to the same events, activities, and shore outings - and that includes the cast members and celebrity guests. It’s really a unique experience to get to see just how normal these people are.”

One such celebrity interaction made quite an impression on Coutu’s travel companion.

“My partner, Jeff, isn’t a huge fan of the show himself,” Coutu says, jokingly

referring to him as a member of SPOT - “Spouses and Partners Of Trekkies.” Nevertheless, one chance encounter on deck proved especially memorable. “He stepped out from a party one night and chanced into Anthony Rapp,” Coutu said. Rapp played Commander Stamets in *Star Trek: Discovery*. “Jeff was absolutely thrilled because he remembered Rapp from Rent, so they spent a long time chatting about that.”

Coutu has had quite a few celebrity experiences of his own, including Johnathon Frakes (another actor with a cardboard cutout in the library director’s office).

“I’ve been working on getting the signatures for my Next Generation poster over the course of these cruises,” he said, holding up an almost completed poster. “Although there are a few that I don’t expect I’ll ever collect, like Sir Patrick Stewart or Whoopi Goldberg.”

In the off chance that the stars are loyal Warwick Beacon readers, we’ll be happy to pass the request along.

**Explore the final frontier**

Coutu himself is ready to ‘boldly go’ on next year’s *Star Trek* cruise, scheduled to visit Aruba and Cabo, among other destinations. For those looking to explore the final frontier on their own, Coutu recommends checking a telescope out of the library.

“Science has a unique attraction to all of use, regardless of age,” he said. “Everyone is curious about how things work, everyone is curious about where we are in the universe. We’re excited to offer telescope rentals to try to get kids excited about space, and we’ll have a few suggestions for astronomic events and good times for stargazing coming up.”



**OFFICE COMPANY:** Warwick Librarian Aaron Coutu always has plenty of company from the characters that line his shelves to the cutouts looking across the room to his desk. (Beacon Communications photos)



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