

Home buyouts 'only feasible path forward'?

As the town seeks funding for flood mitigation, the severe weather events keep on coming

By RORY SCHULER

Residents on Belfield Drive in Johnston held a yardstick in the middle of the street to measure the rising water on Dec. 18. More than a week later, they're still drying out.

"The water is still high but I am so grateful to the Johnston Fire Department, the mayor and the Police Department," Cynthia Nova said two days later, on Dec. 20. "They have been so helpful. Someone came in a Humvee and took my Mom to the market so she could buy food and water."

Many Johnston property owners have had a soggy, destructive year and home buyouts may be in store for some residents on Belfield Drive, Salina Avenue, Rotary Drive and River Avenue.

Report Your Losses

Following severe weather events this year — like the tornado in August and the most recent flooding event last Monday — the town has urged residents to report losses to Johnston's Emergency Management director, Police Chief Mark A. Vieira.

"We haven't heard back on either of these requests from the federal government yet," Johnston Mayor Joseph M. Polisenia Jr. responded via email on Nov. 29. "I am more optimistic about the flooding declaration than I am about the tornado."

A month later, Polisenia's predictions have proven correct.

"As far as the disaster declaration, it is my understanding the \$2.8 million threshold for Providence County was not met for the brief tornado event," Polisenia wrote in response to follow-up questions on Dec. 27. "It was met for the Sept. 11 flooding, so now that must be submitted by the Governor and either approved or denied by President Biden."

Last week, Polisenia's administration posted another request for flood damage estimates from homeowners in town. The town's "currently working with the State of Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) to assess the extent of damage and costs resulting from the rain/flood event that occurred on (Dec. 18)."

"Johnston homeowners and businesses affected by the rain event" should e-mail any incurred damage/costs to Vieira, Johnston EMA director, at EMA@johnstonpd.com, according to the town's message.

"I think the issue is a combination of houses being built in areas they shouldn't, aging infrastructure and increasing severity and frequency of extreme weather events," Polisenia said. "With the most recent rainstorm, this is now our third disaster declaration in four months, which is just unreal. I am hopeful this will meet the \$2.8 million threshold for Providence County and Governor McKee will submit it to President Biden to approve it."



RISING WATERS: Cynthia Nova, of Belfield Drive in Johnston, provided video of rising floodwaters on her street following the Dec. 18 storm. (Screenshot)

FLOODS - PAGE 4

Breakfast with Shekarchi



House Speaker: 'No more gravy train;' provides glimpse of 2024

By RORY SCHULER

The Speaker of the Rhode Island House of Representatives set his eyes on the biscuits slathered in sausage gravy across the table.

"There's no more ... gravy train coming from the federal government," said state Rep. K. Joseph Shekarchi. "Somehow people think that the state has unlimited money. Which we don't."

Shekarchi offered a sobering forecast of next year's state finances: "We're going to have to prioritize and live within our budget."

The Warwick Democrat met Beacon Communications' trio of writing editors (John Howell, *Warwick Beacon*; Kevin Fitzpatrick, *Cranston Herald*; and Rory Schuler, *the Johnston Sun Rise*) for breakfast at Gel's Kitchen 2, 3003 West Shore Road in Warwick, for a working breakfast early Friday morning.

NO MORE GRAVY TRAIN: Speaker of the Rhode Island House of Representatives, Warwick state Rep. K. Joseph Shekarchi, and his Director of Communications, Larry Berman, joined Beacon Communications editors for breakfast on Friday morning. (Sun Rise photo by John Howell)

SPEAKER - PAGE 6



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JHS Panther of the Week



POTW: This week's Panther of the Week is Ryan Capraro. Ryan is a sophomore at Johnston High School and was nominated by his class advisors, Ms. Tia Forgetta and Ms. Erin Ferraro. Ms. Forgetta and Ms. Ferraro said, "Ryan was an integral part of the sophomore class float development this year. In addition to attending most meetings, he took work home without needing to be asked. Ryan is a team player, helping with the completion of float and motivating others to do the same. It is certain worth mentioning, Ryan also spends his time as a member of the schools' cross country team, all while being able to maintain his grades in his honors classes. Ryan exemplifies a well rounded student and a self-disciplined young man." (Photo submitted by Matt Velino, Johnston High School 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 within the pages of the Johnston Sun Rise.

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Advising the Center

By RICHARD J. DELFINO JR.
Special to the Sun Rise

The Johnston Senior Center Spotlight this week shines on the newly appointed Center Advisory Board.

The seven member board is appointed by each Town Council representative and two members are appointed by the Mayor.

The board serves in an advisory capacity to the Executive Director, who shares with the board, programs and procedures, which ensure a smooth, transparent, delivery of services to our senior population.

The board elected Robert Piscione as its Chairman. Bob spent over 45 years in banking, as a vice president, servicing business. Vice-Chairman is Arnie Vecchione, well known in the community, who recently served as the Johnston Highway Director.

Secretary of the group is Jacqueline Grasso, a practicing attorney for the past 30 years, who has a law practice here in town. Also on the board are Johnston businessman Stephen Mallane, social service administrative aide Barbara Vachon, and lifelong Johnston residents Donna Folcarelli and Joyce Carnevale.

The board represents a diverse group of individuals who care about our community, and who are committed to seeing all eligible residents take advantage of the opportunities available here at the Johnston Senior Center. We are all looking forward to making 2024 the Johnston Senior Center's greatest year.

Editor's Note: Richard J. DelFino Jr. serves as Executive Director of the Johnston Senior Center, at 1291 Hartford Ave., Johnston. The Johnston Sun Rise regularly publishes a senior profile, called "Senior Spotlight," submitted by the senior center.



JSCAB: Members of the Johnston Senior Center Advisory Board (JSCAB) include, from left to right: (standing) Stephen Mallane, Barbara Vachon, Donna Folcarelli, Jacqueline Grasso; (seated) Joyce Carnevale, Robert Piscione, and Arnie Vecchione. (Photo courtesy Richard J. DelFino Jr.)

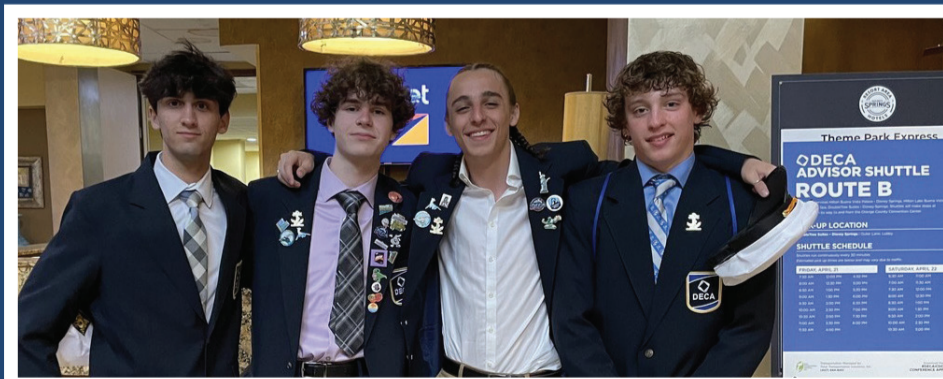
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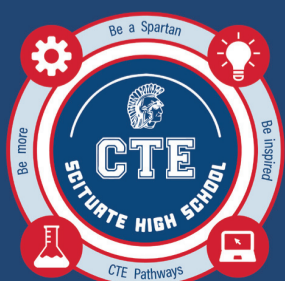
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Happy New Year!



JOHNSTON Sun Rise

Floods

(Continued from page 1)

Residents are asked to include their property address, contact information, and a description of “incurred damage or costs directly related to (the Dec. 18) weather event,” and photographs, in the email.

“This damage assessment is necessary in order to explore the possibility of a Small Business Administration disaster declaration which would potentially involve homeowners and businesses,” according to the town’s post. “If you are unable to e-mail your damage assessment, please contact Chief Mark A. Vieira at 401-757-3116 in order to make arrangements to submit your documentation.”

Flawed Flow of Flood Relief

Polisena sees serious flaws throughout the disaster declaration process.

“I think the current process, like many things with the federal government, is archaic and broken,” Polisena argued. “The Stafford Act passed in 1988, has only had one significant update, being the DMA (Disaster Mitigation Act) of 2000, which focused on preparedness rather than relief.”

Johnston sustained significant tornado damage in August, and then flash-flooding closed sections of Atwood Avenue in mid-September.

“The current threshold, which is \$2,933,691 for Providence County, is too arbitrary and exclusionary,” Polisena wrote. “And more problematic, the relief is predicated on residents submitting receipts for damage to the local EMA Director. This presents issues because many people are so busy with trying to recover after the damage, they’re totally unaware of the reimbursement.”

Following the most recent, pre-Christmas flood event of Dec. 18, the town was forced to close the walking path at Cricket Field (near the boat launch and deck) “until further notice.”

“There has been significant water damage in the area due to flooding,” the town reported on its social media accounts.

Polisena argues for more local control.

“The only solution I can currently think of is to give more power to local and state officials, who know their communities better than the federal government, to access funds,” he wrote. “Additionally, maybe it’s time for states to start their own disaster relief fund where local municipal leaders and councils could petition their own state for relief. Municipalities are too small to do it themselves. Johnston’s budget is \$130 million; the state’s budget is \$14 billion.”

The Mayor’s Boat

Flood issues have lingered along Belfield Drive for years.

In 2021, former Johnston Mayor Joseph M. Polisena (the current mayor’s father) celebrated federal flood mitigation efforts with U.S. Sen. Jack Reed and U.S. Rep. James Langevin in a ceremony on the street.

Town officials shut the street down with a ribbon. Years earlier, they had launched a cooperative project in response to severe water events on Belfield Drive in 2010 and again in 2018 that completely cut residents off from civilization. The previous flood events forced the former mayor to reach some of his constituents by water via rowboat.

Local, state and federal officials gathered near the empty space that was once 68 Belfield Drive, to celebrate the completion of a floodplain restoration project, which was aimed at eliminating future flooding.

Former Mayor Polisena described past flood events as “horrific public safety disasters.” He helped secure federal funding for the Belfield Drive project through the USDA Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program. The EWP authorized the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to purchase permanent easements on eligible lands. Their goal was to “restore the floodplain functions in the easement area to their natural conditions.”

The “NRCS entered into an agreement with the Rhode Island Association of

Conservation Districts (RIACD), which accepted applications from eligible landowners, secured appraisals and acquired land,” according to the USDA. The house that once stood at 68 Belfield Drive was purchased and demolished. Anti-flood structure construction commenced but did little to hold back the Dec. 18 storm.

“Insurance should be for incidents like an accidental fire, a broken pipe, etc., not for damage sustained from a storm where we received 10 inches of rain in six hours,” Polisena said in November. “No amount of preparedness can mitigate that. People should not be forced to pay deductibles and be subjected to higher premiums due to disastrous acts of nature, which are becoming more frequent and severe as time goes on.”

Belfield Buyouts on the Horizon

“Specifically regarding Belfield Drive, I am also in talks with the federal government (again, Senator Reed) to reissue home buyouts to those residents and very hopeful they will take them this time,” Polisena wrote Wednesday. “The pump is still operating 24/7 to get the water out of there, but it’s going to take some time to recede. Belfield Drive acts like a basin from the three branches of the Pocasset that flow downhill through it.”

Last week’s water event made a real impression on Polisena.

“(When) I went through, it’s like I was looking at a lake,” he said. “There was just water as far as the eye can see. What’s very alarming is that’s not a lake, it’s supposed to be dry land.”

Some property owners are facing nightmarish scenarios.

Polisena saw some evidence that previous flood mitigation efforts on Belfield Drive helped a little.

“Last time the water was 5 feet, this time it was a little over 2-3 feet, depending on the spot,” Polisena said Wednesday morning. “The Northern RI Conservation District, who spearheaded the project, informed me the original plan was to make a multi-acreage detention pond. However, only one homeowner participated in the buyout, so the current detention pond is a little under an acre. With that being said, I had a brief conversation with the engineer last week and we discussed with that amount of water, we may be beyond the point of further construction improvements and may focus on buyouts to put the land back in its natural state. I will know more when I meet with them next week.”

More Buyouts on Salina, River and Rotary

Meanwhile, the increased frequency of flooding in Johnston has Polisena looking forward and searching for solutions.

“Regarding what to do about the current flooding issues for residents, the only feasible path forward seems to be home buyouts,” Polisena wrote. “We are in the process of using federal funds to purchase two homes on Salina Avenue.”

As in the Belfield Drive case, the homes will likely be razed and replaced with flood mitigation structures.

“Our plan is to demolish the homes, create detention ponds and reroute the water in those ponds,” Polisena explained. “There is also another federal program, with federal funding secured by Senator Reed, for home buyouts on Rotary Drive and River (Avenue), which will start sometime next year.”

Polisena said the town has \$2 million from Reed in federal funds “for planning/construction to fix the flooding” along Atwood Avenue (Route 5, a state road).

“We also have an additional \$2 million request in with the state as well,” Polisena explained. “I’m very frustrated, as Atwood (Avenue) is a state road and has flooded for years. The state doesn’t seem to want to do anything about it so I’m going to at least try and do it ourselves. It’s a massive project that will take a lot of time and resources. I’m hopeful to have at least a construction plan in place with all of the funding secured by the time I am out of office. A huge thank you to Senator Reed for securing all this funding and being with Johnston and its residents every step of the way.”

Opinion

EDITORIAL

The vacationing Independent Man and a friend from Johnston showing vital support...

Verdict is out on ferry service

If taking a 40-minute ferry ride in the middle of winter to get from Providence to Bristol wasn't on your Christmas list — it seems like you have lots of company.

This past Thursday, the state officially launched its emergency ferry service between India Point in Providence and downtown Bristol as a means to hopefully alleviate traffic going through the I-195 corridor and the beleaguered Washington Bridge, and to provide another option for people who commute to and from the West to the East Bay.

While we can praise the Rhode Island Department of Transportation for their willingness to think outside the box when handling the ongoing disruption caused by the bridge closure, the verdict has been pretty clear even in just this short sample size that the service is not

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going to be utilized in any meaningful way, as the boats have been essentially empty during their runs, with

some even reporting their scheduled trips were canceled when they arrived due to a lack of passengers.

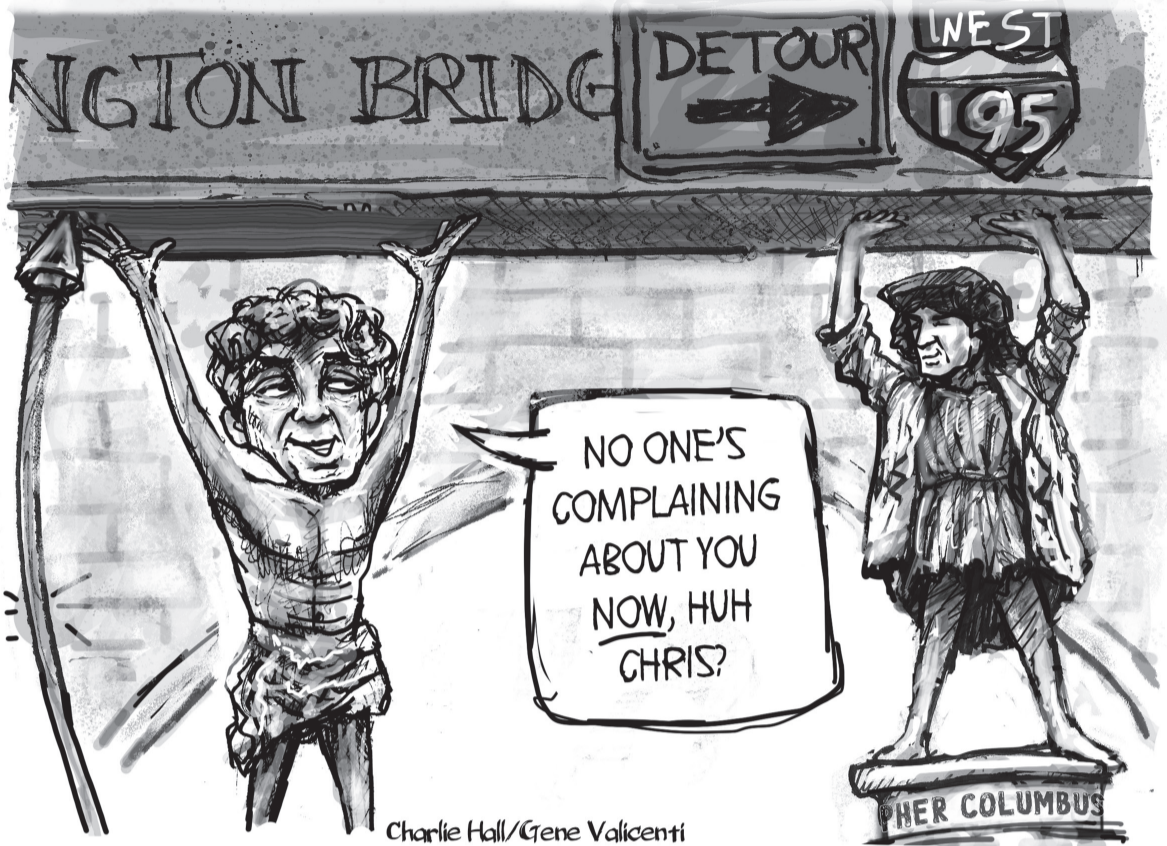
The state entered into three contracts with three ferry providers without a bidding process, which to be fair was done to save time and get the service up and running at a time when it seemed like it might be crucial to do so. However, as the details of those contracts have come out, it is clear that this experiment is not worth the cost; which could be as high as \$5 million if these boats run each day through March.

Thankfully, included within the contracts is a clause that the state can end its service with the ferry providers at any time with two weeks notice. We think they should put that notice in immediately, if they haven't already done so.

The primary reason for this stance is that this alternative means of travel isn't really saving anyone much time. DOT is suffering from their own success, ironically enough, given that the bypass that was opened about a week after the initial bridge closing has actually done tremendously well at funneling people through the area. Sure, there is some increased traffic going east as lanes merge beyond the bridge, but it's manageable. Meanwhile, traffic westward into Providence (even at rush hour) isn't even drastically different than before the bridge closed.

As a result, it hardly makes sense for someone to drive into India Point, or to Colt State Park in Bristol, just to take a bus to a ferry, only to land in a place where they likely don't have a familiar means of transportation to get to where they ultimately need to go. Unlike larger cities like Boston and New York, with their sprawling subways and well established bus routes, Rhode Island is not set up for this kind of simple, point-to-point public transportation.

There is no need to spend further taxpayer money on the ferry idea given the results thus far. Unless there is an appetite to try and utilize one ferry as a potential tourism driver between the East Bay and Providence in the summer time, we think this is one where DOT would be better off cutting its losses and moving on.



Wishing for a Happy and Peaceful 2024



Charlie Hall

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Charlie Hall

JOHNSTON Sun Rise

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Speaker

(Continued from page 1)

"Unlike Washington, you know, Rhode Island has a beautiful State House, but we don't have any printing presses in the basement here," Shekarchi said. "We can't run a deficit like the federal government does. They just print more money. We can't. We have to draft a budget that's balanced, under our Constitution. We take that obligation very seriously."

Shekarchi arrived shortly after his right-hand-man Larry Berman, an Ocean State newspaper veteran himself.

The short-order breakfast business was bouncing that morning, the last day of the work week approaching Christmas weekend. Shekarchi has been making the media rounds—television, print and radio—answering questions and providing a forecast of next year's General Assembly priorities.

The group of five needed a large table and the diner was packed.

Howell and Shekarchi bounced between tables and exiting customers. Anyone else would feel in the way, but they knew practically everyone—anonymity's impossible for that pair, out to eat, in the city they know as well as anyone.

Hot Tea & Tight Belts

The Speaker ordered hot tea. He sipped it from a soup spoon until it cooled to the right temperature. He drank from a "Joe Shekarchi" mug (kept in reserve by Gel's proprietor Michael Penta, who was hard at work behind the grill; stone-faced with friendly eyes).

"Here's a news flash," Shekarchi said. "It's tough for everybody. Including the state. The same problems that Warwick is having, or any community's having, the state's having. We have a billion dollars of projects that are all coming in over budget. All coming in, the same thing."

Last year, the state's \$14 billion budget spawned a modest \$12 million surplus.

According to Shekarchi, the windfall was "split two ways" and transferred in September.

"Six million went into the governor's rainy day fund to help improve the state's bonding rating ... stronger rainy day fund, we get a better rating when we borrow bonds," he explained. "And \$6 million went into help the state retirement system, the COLAs (Cost of Living Adjustments), to get closer to that 80 percent mark."

Shekarchi was first elected House Speaker in January 2021 and re-elected to the post in January of this year.

He ordered a bacon egg and cheese sandwich on a toasted English muffin.

"Well done," he told the waitress. "Everything well done."

Bridges Too Far

The meal's first course of discussion wrapped around Rhode Island's transportation woes—from Providence's Washington Bridge debacle to the small Greystone Bridge closure (and less inevitable replacement) on the border of Johnston and North Providence.

Since the Washington Bridge crisis last week, smaller projects like the Greystone Bridge have now likely slipped far down the priority list. Despite that, Shekarchi knew of a few basic Greystone neighborhood constituent concerns. Several of his fellow house members met recently to discuss strategies to reopen the bridge.

Then Interstate 195 traffic snarled as the Washington Bridge suddenly slashed capacity by half after the Rhode Island Department of Transportation shut down the west-bound side.

"I had a project on Route 44 in my private capacity that they abandoned because (Johnston) would not permit the project because of the traffic there until that bridge opened up," Shekarchi recalled of a local car wash proprietor whose business failed before it opened. "And my client couldn't wait so they walked away from the project."

The Greystone Bridge closing several years ago has become a tightening noose around the necks of local businesses throughout the Route 44 corridor in Johnston and into North Providence.

"They were two-thirds through the approval process and it became clear that we weren't going to get the final approval until the bridge opened, and we couldn't hang around and wait for a bridge to open," Shekarchi said. He switched gears back to Providence and the bridge that will be stealing the attention of state officials and construction crews.

Oversight Imminent

"The Washington Bridge affects 100,000 people a day," Shekarchi said. "It's serious."

Shekarchi promised an investigation led by the General Assembly.

"The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has initiated a review; an oversight review, a review of everything," Shekarchi pledged. "The Governor is gonna do a review and I'm very confident that the House will have oversight of those hearings in the early New Year. I don't know when, because I'm going to talk to my counterpart in the Senate and possibly do a joint-oversight ... if he wants to do one."

While finding out what went wrong underneath the Washington Bridge will undoubtedly involve varying degrees of political intrigue, a smaller bridge like the Greystone, according to Shekarchi, is a public safety issue.

"The reality, this really isn't a political issue," he explained. "Local reps respond to their constituents. And we're gonna certainly try to get some answers from DOT. But we can't legislate to open a bridge or not open a bridge ... Ultimately, if DOT says it's unsafe, I'm not going to pass a bill that says 'open up an unsafe bridge.' No legislature would do that."

The expense of a replacement of the Greystone Bridge has been cited as a key reason not to replace the bridge (one of many failing crossings in the Ocean State).

"I will tell you that DOT has a lot of money; they have a lot of federal money," Shekarchi said. "We have more than adequately funded them since I've been speaker. They've had three very robust years of receiving state money as a match. We give them 20 percent and they get 80 percent from the federal government. And they also had access to all kinds of infrastructure money ... So if money is an issue, it's certainly something we would look at and review. But I don't know. I don't know what the structural issue is or the safety issues are."

Next Stop, Warwick

They built it. Will the trains come?

"I have been a strong proponent of having Amtrak stop at Warwick Station," Shekarchi said about the interlink to Warwick's T.F. Green International Airport. "I feel it's a beautifully new station, it has more than adequate parking. It would be a great economic benefit to the city and the airport. And I've been a big proponent for it."

If Amtrak stopped in Warwick, Shekarchi argues, every realm of local commerce would benefit.

"We built a beautiful train station," he repeated as a baby wailed at another table. "It's underuti-

lized; it's under-parked. If it wasn't for the car rental agencies, it would be really really under-utilized."

It's hard to argue against mass-transit improvements, especially following the chaos that followed the Washington Bridge closing.

"Absolutely, 100 percent in favor," Shekarchi insisted regarding the Warwick Amtrak stop. "Less traffic for the roads; good for the environment. There are so many advantages to well done mass transit ... It's a wonderful way to travel." An Amtrak stop that would require another platform is the subject of a two-year study that is expected to be completed by the first of the New Year.

Post-Post Road Redevelopment

"A lot of the re-development that's going on in that Post Road area, in and around the airport, is encouraging because it's been 30 years in the making," Shekarchi recalled.

He noted the walking path to the train station and an influx of major projects along the airport adjacent state roadway.

"There's been a lot of development near that area," Shekarchi said. "Nothing ever got built or done. Now we're finally seeing hotels on the drawing board, apartments being permitted, hotels being converted into apartments, new construction going on, re-development of Ann & Hope. We see a lot of good development going on on Airport Road."

For now, Post Road has visible scars, with many longtime businesses (restaurants and retail) that have shut down since the pandemic. Shekarchi forecasts better days ahead.

"I think you're going to see a boom in the next two years of ... good, prudent development in and around the airport," he said. "And the transportation—the train station, and the bus stations that all service that area—I think it's good for the restaurants, it's good for our local economies, it's good for our local hotels ... all of the above."

School Projects Due

Many ocean state municipalities have embarked on ambitious school renovation and building projects.

Johnston voters approved a \$215 million bond for a total overhaul of its entire school system. However, following extreme volatility in the building materials markets and construction overall, school planners have been forced to drastically shrink the scope (from a project that once promised to touch each age-level of Johnston public school students, to a new elementary center and some other possible renovations at the high school).

When does a bonded public school project change so drastically it no longer resembles the promise they approved at the ballot box?

"You'd have to ask bond counsel," Shekarchi answered. "When they go out to bond, it's the contract, it's a legally binding document that investors buy and they're very specific and detailed as to what it covers and doesn't cover."

Warwick voters approved a \$350 million bond issue November 2022. They are planning to build two new high schools. Falling behind in the process, the city asked Shekarchi for more time and money.

"This is not a new issue," Shekarchi recalled. "Last year, the City of Warwick in particular (and other municipalities) requested more money from the state. They thought that me being speaker, I could just give Warwick more money. It doesn't work that way. And they also requested more time."

Cities and towns have to follow strict timetables to ensure robust reimbursement amounts from the state.

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Speaker

(Continued from page 6)

"Because you have to start these projects in a certain amount of time and you have to finish these projects for those reasons," Shekarchi explained. "And Warwick had delays with due diligence. I know the Council, the Mayor did some outside research because the numbers were rising; interest rates were going up ... Last year was a good budget year. When the revenue numbers came in in May, we had strong revenue numbers that afforded me the ability to extend the time by one year, that Warwick can build a new school or schools."

The state — the General Assembly and the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) — assess major school building projects on a case-by-case basis.

"The size and the scope of the school projects have to be decided by the local community," Shekarchi said. "And they have to learn to live within a budget. But additionally to that, I gave the City of Warwick \$750,000 additional in building, in a higher reimbursement rate (which extended to other communities as well)."

What worked for Warwick also benefited the rest of the Ocean State's schools seeking state funds for building projects.

"I couldn't pass it for one," Shekarchi said. "I had to pass it statewide. It was millions and millions of dollars more the state paid for new construction."

That's it though. Time's up.

"No more extensions," Shekarchi warned. "It's not a deadline to build, per say. What people fail to understand is, the way the program is set up, includes incentives ... The costs are astronomically high, that even with the incentives, they're well over budget. So they have to prioritize."

Growing Wish Lists

Shekarchi refused a guess at the overall size of next year's budget, but he's been receiving long wish lists from state agencies and department heads.

"This is going to be a very difficult budget year," he warned. "I have requests well above \$700 million — we're approaching a billion dollars — that are not accounted for in the budget. And I can guarantee you we will not have the \$700 million in surplus funds in the May revenue numbers."

The federal pandemic response well has run dry.

"So people ... advocacy groups, cities and towns, constituencies and legislators, have to realize that we don't have any CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act money from the federal government. We don't have any more ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) money. And there's no more infrastructure money. The state, like every other entity or family of Rhode Island, has to learn to live within its means. Our budget will come down."

Shekarchi says last year's \$14 billion was artificially high, inflated full of federal funds that won't be delivered in 2024.

The House will know more after it examines "numbers from March 15 business tax returns, and April 15 individual tax returns," Shekarchi said. "We'll have very accurate numbers of ... how much revenue the state is taking in. And then we'll set our budget."

According to Shekarchi, the biggest unbudgeted requests include: \$100 million by Rhode Island Secretary of State Gregg M. Amore, for new state archives; the RI Black Business Association (RIBBA) asked for \$100 million; a possible (though now seemingly unlikely) \$400 million for relocation of a courthouse from Providence to Cranston; and the re-initiation of COLAs for state workers may cost \$200 to 300 million range.

"We're waiting for the study commission to report back," Shekarchi said. "Our budget has to be based on the revenue we have. So I don't know where the \$700 million plus is coming in."

What's Shekarchi's top fiscal goal in 2024?

"I don't have a funding priority," he said. "I just want to pass a balanced budget. I want to listen to my members. I want a very open, transparent process. I'll give everyone the chance to make their case before the House Finance Committee."

The House is deep into a review of pension reform. "What's working what isn't working," according to the Speaker.

"There's no new money coming in from the federal government," Berman added to the conversation. "It's all been allocated."

The schools will also have to adjust to leaner times, following the past few years of federal financial injections in the form of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Programs.

"Where'd they spend it?" Shekarchi asked. "Where'd it go?"

LEOBOR Pains

Shekarchi expects an agreement on Rhode Island's Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights (LEOBOR) in the New Year.

"I think that we worked very hard on that all summer long," he said. "We've been ... meeting with all the stakeholders. And I think you'll see LEOBOR pass early this session."

Shekarchi says the amended police bill of rights will be very different than it exists today, but he wouldn't provide a preview of its contents.

"I have legislators working on it," Shekarchi said. "It's still a work in progress."

Shekarchi did reveal, however, that "everyone" he's spoken to seems to be leaning toward "reform and not repeal."

"A lot of moving parts," Shekarchi said. "A lot of stakeholders ... and they don't always see eye-to-eye."

Constitutional Convention?

Will the state hold a Constitutional Convention in the near future? Does Shekarchi think another convention — it's three-and-a-half decades since Rhode Island's last — is necessary?

"It doesn't matter whether I see a need ... the Constitution requires us to put it before the voters once every 10 years," Shekarchi said. "And if we don't act in the General Assembly, then the Secretary of State will act."

"Do I support or want a Constitutional Convention?" Shekarchi asked. "No. And I don't want it because I fear a lot of that dark money. With Citizens United, and a lot of these Supreme Court cases, they can try to influence elections and constitutional issues without disclosure."

Shekarchi warned of "radical groups on the far right, and on the far left" aiming to alter the soul of state government through its heart, the Rhode Island State Constitution.

No Such Thing as a Free School Lunch

The State House has not surrendered the battle for free school lunches.

"We have a group of people in the House ... working to have free school lunches, which aren't free," Shekarchi said. "They're free for the people who get it, but it's not free to the state. And that's anywhere from \$20-40 million also. That's another issue, in terms ... of money, whether it's in the budget or not in the budget."

Including a possible state-wide school lunch program, Shekarchi said he "would not be shocked" to receive "close to a billion dollars in asks outside of the budget."

"That's a lot of millions," Shekarchi said. "A thousand millions is a billion."

Free school lunch is an easy initiative to back, but tough to fund.

"I support it, but there's so many different variables to that," Shekarchi explained. "Some people want school lunch free. Some people want school breakfast and lunch. Some people want it based on need. Some people want it for everybody — so the very very wealthy families who really don't need to have the middle class and the rest of us subsidize their child's lunch, will get it. And then you have some parents, who automatically today, qualify for it, but are just absent in filling out the proper paperwork ... Not as clear cut an issue as just do it."

How 'bout a 'Thank you'?

Asked about his state's struggling working class, Shekarchi reflected on a handful of recent past achievements.

"We have made strategic investments and strategic tax cuts to help the middle class since I've become speaker," he recalled. "We eliminated the car tax, and we did it a year earlier."

Shekarchi gave a wink toward critics who "called it a farce; an election year gimmick." He joked that those critics have yet to call and say "thank you."

He also touted a few other tax tweaks aimed at helping the struggling sectors of his constituency.

"Social Security in Rhode Island is taxed," Shekarchi explained. "It's the first \$20,000 that is exempt. We raised that to the first \$30,000. So if you're getting \$35,000 in Social Security, you're only paying taxes on \$5,000; the first 30 of it's free. And we eliminated the tax 100% on military pensions. So that people who served our country, who decide to retire here, who live here and get a military pension don't have to pay taxes on that military pension."

Hospitals, Doctors, Dentists (or Lack Thereof)

The state may be approaching a healthcare crisis — overflowing emergency rooms at aging hospitals, dwindling numbers of primary care providers, and disturbing deficits in pediatric dental care options.

"The hospital system is a great concern," Shekarchi

said. "Not only to me, but the attorney general. I've been meeting with him ..."

Ward 3 Warwick City Councilman Timothy Howe stopped by the table to shake hands.

"Happy Holidays to you and your family ..." Shekarchi said, taking a break from his explanation, but returning quickly back to his speeding train of thought.

He promises that "at the moment, the (state's two primary hospital operators) are stable, and they will be for a year or two."

"They're in the black because they're deferring maintenance," Shekarchi warned. "And that's not a good thing. We need to have the latest and greatest technology and machines and equipment ... it's concerning. So what are we doing about it? We're working with the Rhode Island Foundation that is conducting a big study about reimbursement rates ..."

Some state officials hypothesize the state's health-care concerns stem from insurance carriers giving Rhode Island short shrift.

"Our premiums in Rhode Island are roughly the same premiums that they're paying in Massachusetts," Shekarchi said. "But our reimbursements to the hospitals, and to doctors by the way, are much lower than Massachusetts. You can do an operation in Rhode Island for \$2,500. You go, the same operation in Seekonk, you're gonna get \$4,300 ... So if you're a doctor, who's come out of medical school and you have debt, where do you want to open up your practice? In Attleboro? In Seekonk? Or in Warwick?"

"We're working on that," he promised.

Shekarchi says the state's been pouring money into Rhode Island's medical centers.

"In the last three years, we have been very generous to the hospitals," he explained. "They got a big chunk of money — of CARES Act money, of ARPA money. We've worked with the Hospital Association to change the licensing fee to give them money two years in a row. And we've done the same thing with nursing homes."

Colorado's Rocky

Following the Colorado Supreme Court's ruling to keep former U.S. President Donald J. Trump off next year's Primary Ballot (for his role in the Jan. 6 insurrection in the nation's capital), Shekarchi weighed in on the strategy (similar efforts are also pending in a dozen other states).

"It's wrong," he said. "I do not support that at all. I think it has the opposite affect of what they're intending. And I just philosophically think it's wrong. I think the voters need to decide. I may not like Donald Trump for a whole host of reasons ... but that's my opinion. And I should exercise my opinion when I go vote."

The issue stirred something in Shekarchi. He minced no words.

"I shouldn't take that right away from those people," he said. "I don't think any court should take that right away. And keep in mind, at this juncture, he has not been convicted of anything yet."

But, what if Jan. 6 happened in Providence and it was the Rhode Island State House (rather than the U.S. Capital) under attack?

"Not one chance of that changing my opinion," Shekarchi insists. "I feel very strongly about that."

Hats in Rings & Promised Announcements

What's the election outlook for next year? "Obviously I will have an election," Shekarchi forecasts. "And I'm sure it will be tough."

Up and down the rest of the ballot? "There's not going to be statewide races," the Speaker explained. "There'll be legislative races. And we'll have a U.S. Senate race."

And the Speaker's future? He offered an "on the record answer" (and maybe an "off the record" answer, but that's off the record).

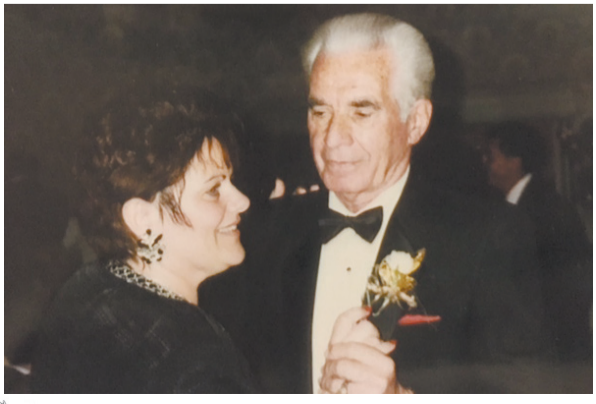
"On the record, I'm going to announce in the first quarter of 2024 my political intentions," Shekarchi said. "But I'm not prepared to announce them today."

Gel's owner and grill master approached the table, wiping his hands on his apron. He smiled at his state rep and his local newspaper editor.

Shekarchi insisted on paying the check. Full disclosure: we let him.

Denise P. Valletta
5th Anniversary

Ralph R. aRusso
24th Anniversary



Always in my heart – Love, Diana

Obituaries

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– Thank you

PANNESE SOCIETY OF RI

'A resounding celebration with our families and friends'

By PETE FONTAINE

Pannese pride!
That was everywhere on a recent Saturday night inside the famed Santa Maria Di Prata Society in Cranston where the Pannese Society of Rhode Island — which was founded in 1909 — enhanced its already storied Italian heritage with a gala Christmas Party that included, as the old adage goes, “everything from soup to nuts.”

More than 100 people, whose families have ties to the village of Panni in Foggia Italy, enjoyed what Society President David Venditelli called “a resounding celebration with our families and friends featuring extraordinary food from Ralph’s Catering.”

The menu included salad, soup, pasta as well as a choice of chicken Francaise, baked scrod or prime rib, and for desert was Spumoni ice cream and those Italian favorites known as crispy wandi (gloves).

“We also had an extensive gift table,” said Venditelli, who praised the staff of Ralph’s Catering for the superb food and service as well as the many members and area businesses that made donations. “The table included bottles of Italian prosecco, gift cards to restaurants and food markets.”

Likewise, the gift table included money trees and multiple Italian themed and holiday gift baskets that many Pannese members made up and donated.

The night’s highlight was twofold; the highly acclaimed Italian musical group known as Ambrosiani and a special guest appearance by Christine Parente, Miss Rhode Island for 2023, who will compete for the prestigious Miss America title on Jan. 14.

Parente also dazzled the audience when she joined Ambrosiani and sang John Lennon’s famed hit “Imagine.” Venditelli also presented Parente with a special plaque in recognition of her winning Miss Rhode Island and hard work in the community.



GRAND GUEST: Christine Parente, Miss Rhode Island 2023, holds the plaque she received at the Pannese Society Christmas Party. She's joined by club officials Stephen Russo Jr., Barbara Longo Ferreira, President David Venditelli, Lou Mansolillo, Jason Parenteau and Lou Spremulli. (Courtesy photos)



PANNI PEOPLE: These proud members of the Pannese Society, which was founded in Providence back in 1909, are all smiles during the recent Christmas Party.



SPECIAL SONG: Christine Parente, joins the famed Italian musical group Ambrosiani and sang John Lennon’s famed hit “Imagine” during the Pannese Society Christmas Party.

Firefighters help feed hungry local families

By PETE FONTAINE

Andy Williams’ famed Christmas Classic “It’s the most wonderful time of year” could well be the holiday theme song for the Johnston Firefighters Local 1950.

For the 20th time in the past two decades, the Johnston Firefighters held their impressive and interesting Adopt-A-Family Program that this year will enable more than 10 families in Johnston to have a very Merry Christmas.

In fact, the Johnston Firefighters began their annual season of giving at Thanksgiving by passing out 44 families’ baskets of food — as well as a turkey for the 20th time in as many years.

“For Christmas we again adopted families in need and gave them gifts cards and toys,” said Richard Boehm, the Assistant Fire Chief in Johnston. “We love helping people celebrate the holidays and this year we had \$2,250 in gift cards that was made possible by contributions from each and every member of the Johnston Fire Department.”

After pausing, Boehm said with a special smile on his face: “We love helping the community in any way we can, and Thanksgiving and Christmas are our favorite times to help. We truly believe in helping the community we protect.”

Moreover, as Boehm went on: “We especially help Thornton and Winsor Hill Schools. We have a great relationship with Dina Needham at Winsor Hill and Selene Clark, social worker at Thornton. They are both amazing in what they do to help get the gift cards to the families in need for Christmas.”



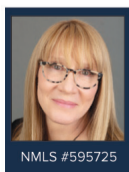
GRAND GIVERS: Dina Needham (second left), a teacher at Winsor Hill School, is joined by JFD Rescue Lt. Jacob Podmaska, Assistant Chief Richard Boehm and Firefight Thylar McNulty at JFD headquarters during the presentation of gift cards for needy families.



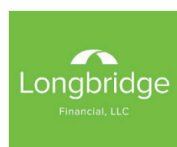
HELPING HANDS: Among the people who helped in the JFD’s Adopt a Family program are Firefighters Anthony aRusso, Scott Mooney, Lt. David Pingitore, Assistant Chief Richard Boehm, Social Worker Selene Clarke and school nurse Michele Vento. (Submitted photos)

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JOHNSTON POLICE LOG

BREAKING & ENTERING

Around 11 a.m., Dec. 15, Johnston Police responded to an address in town (redacted by police) to investigate a reported breaking and entering that had occurred two days later at 12:30 a.m. and again that same day around 10:30 p.m.

A "facility staff member" noticed damage to the gate surrounding the facility's dumpster and "various items in and around the dumpster that were not there when she left the day prior," according to the police incident report.

A review of security footage revealed a man and a woman enter the building after the business was closed, placing a "snow stick" in between the sliding glass doors and prying the doors open.

The man was wearing a hooded jacket, orange T-shirt and Boston Red Sox fitted hat. The woman was wearing a black jacket with gray pants. Both suspects were white, according to police.

They arrived at the business in a silver Volkswagen sedan. Police ran the vehicle's plate, but the registration was canceled and last registered to a different vehicle.

Video surveillance shows the pair enter the building with no items around 12:30 a.m. Dec. 13 and taking the elevator to the second floor. They walked the hallways, and moments later are seen with "numerous items on a cart wheeling it out of (the) building placing some of the items in their vehicle," according to the report.

The rest of the items were placed in and around the dumpster.

Later that same day, around 10:30 p.m., the same suspects were seen arriving in the same vehicle, entering the building using the same method, but holding the door open with a different tool. Once again, they left the building with numerous items, according to police.

The case was forwarded to the Detective Bureau for further investigation.

Around 4:30 p.m., Dec. 16, Johnston Police Patrolman Bryan Yepes was traveling south on Atwood Avenue when he spotted a silver Volkswagen turning left from Route 6. He positively identified the vehicle as the suspect vehicle in the Dec. 13 break-ins.

Yepes initiated a motor vehicle stop. When he approached the vehicle he identified the driver as Jarred Prete (the defendant's age and address were redacted from the report), the man linked to the image on the surveillance video.

Police also identified the passenger as Asia Bleu R. Fontaine, 31, of 44 Maple Ave., Apt. 2, Johnston.

The pair "positively matched the suspects from the security camera footage obtain(ed) from the B&E which occurred (at redacted address)," according to the arrest report.

Police noted that Prete was wearing the same hat and had the same set of keys as the man in the video footage. They were both taken into custody and searched.

Police say they found several items and seized them as evidence: a collapsible baton (ASP), Gerber Folding Knife (over three inches), a glass breaker and a set of car keys. The vehicle was towed from the scene.

According to police, both Prete and Fontaine were both charged with two counts of Breaking and Entering, two counts of Conspiracy, one count of Possession of Burglary Tools and two counts of Weapons Other than Firearms.

Prete was also cited for Operation of Vehicle When Registration is Cancelled, Improper Use of Evidence of Registration and Driving Without a License.

BENCH WARRANT

Around 6 p.m., Nov. 27, Johnston Police Patrolman Nicholas A. Crowe was on a fixed traffic post at 926 Atwood Ave. when he spotted a gray 2000 Toyota Avalon pass him traveling north, and the driver was allegedly not wearing a seatbelt.

Crowe initiated a traffic stop and identified the driver as Brandon R. Du-

clos, 35, of 47 Maple St., Cranston. A check with the Rhode Island Law Enforcement Telecommunications System revealed Duclos had an active Providence Police Department warrant for disorderly conduct.

He was arrested and transferred to Providence Police. His vehicle was towed from the scene.

BENCH WARRANT

Around 8:30 p.m., Nov. 17, Johnston Police responded to an address in town (redacted by police) "in an attempt to locate Steven Lavallee, 57, of 38 Buell Ave., North Smithfield.

According to police, Lavallee had an active Third District Court Bench Warrant for failure to appear in court in response to a Domestic Violence charge.

Police found Lavallee in an upstairs bedroom. They took him into custody, placed him in handcuffs, searched and placed in the rear of a cruiser. He was booked, processed and transported to the Men's ACI Intake Facility pending arraignment.

DUI

Around 1:07 a.m., Nov. 13, Warwick Police Officer Connor R. Bemis was traveling east on Airport Road near Commerce Drive in Warwick when he spotted a black BMW traveling west at "an extremely high rate of speed," according to the arrest report.

Bemis estimated the vehicle was traveling nearly twice the posted speed limit (60 mph in a 35 mph zone). Bemis also noted the vehicle was swerving and took a sharp right turn onto Post Road without a turn signal.

Bemis accelerated to catch up to the vehicle to conduct a traffic stop.

"The suspect vehicle continued to rapidly accelerate on Post Road northbound in the right lane," Bemis wrote in the report. "The vehicle then sharply turned onto Route 37 West in the area of Lincoln Avenue at a high rate of speed with no turn signal."

He estimated the vehicle's speed around 50 mph in a 25 mph zone on the Route 37 West ramp from Post Road.

"It should also be noted that there is a large amount of construction cones and construction equipment in this area due to the bridge construction on Route 37 West," Bemis wrote. "The vehicle continued to rapidly accelerate through the on ramp ... As I continued to try to safely position my cruiser behind the suspect vehicle to conduct a traffic stop, I observed the vehicle to be in the left lane in the area of the on ramp to Route 95 North."

According to police, the vehicle approached a red sedan and "had to rapidly apply the brakes to avoid a rear end collision." Bemis initiated a traffic stop, and the suspect sped away.

"At this time, the suspect vehicle rapidly accelerated away from my cruiser in a manner consistent with a motor vehicle pursuit," Bemis wrote. "It should be noted that the vehicle failed to stop for my emergency lights and siren for approximately 20 seconds."

The driver eventually put on his right turn signal and the vehicle then "suddenly came to a complete stop on Route 37 West in the area of exit 1D. Police identified the driver as Scott E. Miracle, 52, of 33 Hill Drive, Johnston.

"I detected the strong odor of an alcoholic beverage emanating from his breath," Bemis wrote. "Miracle spoke with heavily slurred speech and I observed his eyes to be bloodshot and watery."

Police asked Miracle to consent to a series of standardized field sobriety tests. He consented. Following the tests, he was arrested and charged with DUI of Liquor (BAC unknown, first offense) and Reckless Driving and Other Offenses Against Public Safety (both misdemeanors). He was also cited for Refusal to Submit to Chemical Test (first offense), Speeding 11+ mph in Excess of Posted Speed Limit, Laned Roadway Violations (two counts), Turn Signal Required, Reasonable and Prudent Speeds, and Intervals Between Vehicles.

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By JENNIFER COATES

There is nothing in the world quite as wonderful as the Downy-fresh smell of clean clothes and clean linens. This familiar aroma evokes images of newly-washed clothes, hung on a clothesline to billow in the wind and dry in the warm summer sun.

While there are no clotheslines hanging in Jain's Laundry, it is a common, daily experience to have your clothes and linens smell just as Downy-fresh as this sensory memory, every time you bring them home from this tidy laundromat on Putnam Pike.

Jain's Laundry is a family-run laundromat in Johnston that has been in continuous operation since it was first opened by the Jain family in 1993. It is a place that has earned a reputation for cleanliness, trustworthiness, affordability, consistency, and friendly customer service. It is a place that provides an invaluable service for today's modern family ~ both as a place where one can

do all their wash in "one fell swoop" or take advantage of their convenient, same-day, wash-dry-fold service.

Cleaning your clothes and household linens is "essential work" but it does not have to be drudgery! If time is your most precious commodity, then why not bring your laundry to Jain's Laundry for their drop-off service? Why not spend your time doing the things you love this fall and let Kaushal Jain help you carry the load?

For an incredible .89/pound, Kaushal will wash, soften, dry, and even fold your laundry - all in one day. Besides the convenience of this great service, this price also covers the cost of the softener, bleach, soap and hangers! What a bargain!

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

There are large capacity machines available for all size loads, from 25 pounds to 65 pounds. The top loading machines are available here for only \$2.25 per load. Vending machines are on-site if you need to re-stock your supply of detergent, softener or laundry bags.

There is plenty of parking and a friendly, helpful staff here, ready to meet the needs of both residential and commercial customers.

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

More at Mohr Library

Mohr Library is offering extended programs for elementary-age kids afterschool.

STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) is an opportunity for children to "experiment, explore and build" with Ms. Melyssa.

Registration begins Jan. 3 for the following elementary-school-age programs with Ms. Melyssa:

Thursdays at 5 p.m., Jan. 11 through Feb. 1, Children ages 6 to 9 are invited to experiment, explore and build.

Wednesdays from 4 to 5:30 p.m., Jan. 10 to Feb. 7, Art Smart for Ages 8 to 12. Have fun exploring different art styles and techniques.

Saturdays from 2 to 3 p.m., Jan. 13 to Feb. 10, Art Smart Jr. for Ages 5 to 7.

See mohrlibrary.org or call 401-231-4980 to register.

Registration is ongoing for a variety of programs and events at the Mohr Library, 1 Memorial Ave, Johnston.

The Library offers help with technology, information, and finding books and media. They have fax service, self-service copying and public computers, and a Notary Public most evenings (call ahead to confirm). You can reserve quiet rooms and meeting space.

Drawing for adults will be held at 3 p.m. on Thursdays.

The Knitting and Crochet Group meets Fridays at 10 a.m.

Activities for middle-school and high-school age kids will be offered many afternoons. Kids should talk with our Young Adult Librarian, Marissa, for more information.

The Children's Library always has drop-in, self-directed activities for kids and families like crafts and scavenger hunts.

There is an ongoing book sale in the lower level, whenever we are open.

Programs for school vacation week, for ages 3 and up with a caregiver, include New Year's Crafts on Wednesday, Dec. 27 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Yoga for school-age students ages 5 and up with a caregiver, Thursday, Dec. 28 at 10:30 a.m. (bring a mat and towel). Ages 5 and up with a caregiver can drop in to do a science project on Thursday, Dec. 28 from 5 to 6 p.m., and an art project on Friday, Dec. 29 from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. I-Spy boards and Scavenger Hunts are available for children whenever the library is open.

The library will be closed Jan. 1.

Library hours are Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., Friday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Johnston Senior Center Highlights

From the Staff

Our Senior Center gives our all to make our members feel welcome and enjoy the time they spend here.

Along with the activities, Lunch is served daily. Bingo is every Thursday and Friday at 2 p.m.

We recently held a Christmas Party at Bar 101 for staff and volunteers. It was a wonderful celebration with great food. Thank You! Last Thursday was our members Christmas Party. Music and Lunch, with many raffles donated by many of our community business. A great big "Thank You" to Elaine at Morgan Health, Lorraine, From Cherry Hill Manor and Michael at The Bridge.

The LaSalette Shrine was such a hit we sent two buses, and everyone enjoyed the festivities, dinner, hot cider and hot chocolate.

Weekly Events

- Monday — Arts and Crafts
- Monday & Wednesday — Hi Lo Jack
- Tuesday — Quilting
- Wednesday — Poker
- Thursday — Mar Jong
- Thursday & Friday — Bingo

Upcoming Trips

- Monday, Jan. 8, 10 a.m., Newport shopping & lunch (\$5 per person)
- Wednesday, Jan. 16, 11 a.m., Movie & Lunch, (\$10 per person TBA)
- Wednesday, Jan. 31, 11:30 a.m., Mystery Lunch, (\$10 per person)
- Monday, Feb. 5, Lunch & Shopping at Warwick Mall, 11 a.m.
- Tuesday, Feb. 13, Decorating for Valentines Day, 10 a.m.
- Wednesday, Feb. 14, Valentines Day Lunch & Party, 11:15 a.m.

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Sports



HITTING THE MAT: Johnston's Gino DeSimone battles his opponent in the team's dual match last week at home. (Photos by Leo van Dijk/rhodyphoto.zenfolio.com)

Panthers split dual match

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The Johnston wrestling team split its matchup against Davies and Cranston East last week, going 1-1. The Panthers beat Davies 48-24. Luke Sharpless got a win at 157 pounds for the Panthers, pinning

his opponent. Landon Faucher later pinned his opponent to win at 190 pounds.

Janeudy Cardella wrapped up Johnston's win by getting a win by fall at 215 pounds.

Cranston East picked up a 56-24 win over the Panthers on the night.

Logan Martins pinned his opponent at 126 pounds while Sharpless earned another win by fall as well. Joe Benoit got into the win column for Johnston when he pinned his opponent at 165 pounds.

For more photos, check out page 12.

What a year in sports

As we wrap up 2023, there were plenty of special moments to celebrate and remember from the sports calendar. Many of our teams enjoyed the highs of championships and endured the lows of winless seasons, and everything in between.

Here are a few of my favorite moments of 2023:

The Division I boys hockey semifinal between the Warwick co-op and Hendricken Hawks was one of the best games of the year and made the hockey postseason one to remember.

The Pilgrim-Toll Gate union finally peaked last season when the Militia emerged as one of the best teams in the state. The public school kids pulled off a 5-2 regular season upset early in the regular season and then would go toe to toe with the eventual champs in the playoffs.

Although Hendricken would enjoy a thrilling comeback win, this game was a wild back and forth that really, in my opinion, cemented the argument for co-ops in the city. The Militia was split up this season which ended one of the great stories we've been enjoying the past few seasons. What a battle that was.

The Hendricken-La

My pitch



by
ALEX
SPANSELLER
SPORTS EDITOR
ALEXS@
RHODYBEAT.COM

Salle rivalry was at full force in the basketball finals as well. The Rams would win at the buzzer to beat the Hawks for the Division I title, but Hendricken picked up a decisive victory at states just two weeks later.

The Hawks and Rams were even all season long which set up for a big battle at the Ryan Center. What was most memorable about that final game, though, was how point guard Mike Paquette led the Hawks to the win to eventually grab MVP honors. Eze Wali and Azmar Abdullah were the best 1-2 punch in the state, but Paquette's masterpiece showed that basketball truly is a team sport.

Speaking of basketball masterpieces, **Derek Salvatore put on a clinic in the Division II State Championship** to lead

■ PITCH - PAGE 12

Polar golf outing returns for 8th-annual go-around

By PETE FONTAINE

How'd you like to start the New Year by helping children who have been stricken with cancer?

If you would, please contact Judi Graham and sign up for one of Rhode Island's most unique and unusual golf tournaments.

For the eighth time in as many years, historic Gloucester Country Club will host what is believed to be the first official golf tournament of 2024 with proceeds benefiting the Hematology and Oncology units at Hasbro Children's Hospital in Providence.

With that, Graham, who is well known for her charitable work with the Johnston Memorial Cancer Events, issued an invitation for people to sign up and play in Monday's New Year's Day Polar Golf Tournament.

In keeping with the event's tradition, players can only use three clubs and play just three holes after what promises to be a fun-filled reunion-like welcome inside the GCC clubhouse located at 121 Wentworth Avenue in



FUN-FILLED FIELD: This is the group from last year's Polar Golf Tourney. (Sun Rise photos by Pete Fontaine)

■ POLAR - PAGE 12

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■ Pitch
(Continued from page 11)

Johnston to its first title since 1996. Salvatore took that game over in what was perhaps the most impressive single performance of the year 2023 for our teams.

The Pilgrim girls also took home a championship in basketball after coming so close not that long ago. Seeing Faith Meade and Gianna Ramos finally get a ring was special, as they were such staples for that program for four years.

When it comes to significance, perhaps the biggest story of the year came when Hendricken ace Alex Clemmey was selected by the Cleveland Guardians in the second round of the MLB Draft.

I remember the first time I covered Clemmey last spring was in an early game against Lincoln. Although I knew he was being scouted, although I knew that he was likely to be drafted, I had no idea what I was in for each time he took the mound.

Each start hosted numerous MLB scouts and various members of the media. He always generated big time buzz and for good reason ... his stuff was electric. You could hear the ball whip out of his hands and pop when it hit the catcher's mitt. The speed, velocity, precision. It was impressive.

The Cranston East softball team was a fun club to watch in the spring. After enduring multiple down seasons, including a winless 2022, the Bolts would bounce back and reach the playoffs in 2023.

It was also thrilling to see the Pilgrim and Toll Gate boys lacrosse teams revamp their

rivalry as the Pats moved up to Division II and made the championship game while the Titans took a massive step forward as a program and reached the playoffs.

We'll see how these teams look in 2024, but with many of the same players returning, I am excited to say that the rivalry is alive and well. Pilgrim will be a title favorite with Braxton Bragg and Ryan Barlow back in the mix.

The story of the fall was Hendricken getting back on top in football. Sure, the Hawks are always the favorite and have won 11 of the past 13 state championships, but the way they did it this year was remarkable, even for a private school team.

Sure, Central and North Kingstown pushed Hendricken in their meetings. However, it just never really felt like the Hawks were going to fall short. From start to finish, they dominated.

Even after losing starting quarterback Jayden Falcone to injury, the offense rolled with Dylan Lynch, Ronjai Francis and Oscar Weah. Rushaune Vilane proved to be a true Division I prospect with another stellar year on the defensive side.

The state championship game against the Skippers was close on paper until the fourth quarter, but again, it sort of encapsulated the season in that the game never felt in doubt despite the ups and downs.

There were far too many moments, teams, coaches and athletes to celebrate in one column, so, that being said, I am also announcing that our annual awards will return for their second year in next week's editions across our three papers. Stay tuned.



WRESTLING UP: Johnston's Anthony Daya looks to get back on his feet.



LOOKING FOR A TAKEDOWN: Johnston's Christopher Garcia.



WIN BY PIN: Landon Faucher gets set to pin his opponent versus Davies.

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■ Polar
(Continued from page 11)

Chepachet. Tee off is set for 10 a.m. and if past Polar Golf Tournaments offer any measuring stick, Monday's playing field will feature men and women players dressed in a variety of garb depending upon the weather. The event has been called several things such as Freezing for a Reason because the New Year's Day weather for previous tournaments has included everything from snow, a

light drizzle of rain as well as unseasonably warm temperatures. Perhaps the most important part of the Polar Golf Tournament is that entrance fee is only \$25 per player and that entire amount will benefit children who are battling cancer. Even if you're not a golfer, please consider stopping at GCC to make a donation and enjoy the GCC's classic camaraderie on New Year's Day 2024. Thus, the membership at Gloucester Country Club has designated Hasbro Children's Hospital as its official charity and that

even holds true for the highly popular Co-Ed Memorial Golf Tournament that's held in September. In addition to hosting the 8th Annual Polar Golf Tournament, that last year raised \$1,000 that committee officials are hoping to surpass Monday, Gloucester Country Club is now accepting memberships for the 2024 golf season. For more details contact Memberships@Glocester-cc.com. People who'd like to register for the Polar Golf Tournament should contact judi-grahambuilders.com.

Top fishing stories of 2023

By CAPT. DAVE MONTI

Fishing in 2023 was a mixed bag. Everything seemed to be delayed and/or extended this year due to warm water. In the spring, summer and fall the striped bass fishing was good, but the fish in shore were smaller than usual. The summer flounder (fluke) season was sporadic with larger fish being caught and tautog fishing continued to be stellar.

Here are my top three fishing stories for 2023.

Big animals close to shore

Last year when participating in the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography Baird Symposium on Climate Change Impacts of Recreational Fishing, scientists and anglers alike related the impacts climate was having on the recreational fishing community.

For the past three years, we have seen a change in bait profiles in our region which has changed the fish we have in our area, many closer to shore than ever before. Exotic fish such as wahoo, enhance mahi, cobia, even a tarpon caught off Cape Cod this summer. And the larger animals such as sharks, porpoise, yellow and bluefin school tuna as well as giant bluefin tuna, sharks and whales are all here dining close to shore.

In early September, the top three fish in the Boston Bluefin Classic tournament came from Rhode Island with fish caught one to three miles off Scarborough Beach, Narraganset. The winning giant bluefin was 788 pounds.

Whale strikes were more frequent this year too. Many believe because the forage they like to eat is close to shore bringing whales and humans (ships/boats) in the same area more than ever before.

Another example of large animals close are sharks of all types. "When the thresher shark surfaced, its tail slapped the water into a froth a few times," said Greg Vespe, former Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association executive director, who is in awe of thresher sharks and caught three this year on his 19 foot center console.

Vespe, of Tiverton, caught a couple of threshers last year also — one was 325 pounds and 11 feet, 4 inches long. "These fish are majestic," he said. "Just so beautiful. They do not normally come up to your boat like other sharks do when fishing. So, to see them up close, you have to catch one. And each one is different. The fish we caught this week was down deep and it stayed down for the first 15 minutes. Then it leaped into the air clear out of the water."

All of the thresher sharks caught by Vespe came from the same general location — Southeast of Newport and the mouth of the Sakonnet River in sight of land.

Striper fishing hot, but they are in trouble

Striped bass fishing was hot in Narragansett Bay, Buzzards Bay and the Cape Cod Canal this year but the fish have been a bit smaller than usual. Anglers caught keepers (28" to less than 31") in our bays, estuaries, salt ponds, and out in front from Watch Hill to the Sakonnet River. Block Island lite up too, but it was hard to catch a keeper there as most fish were over 31 inches.

Anglers caught them with swimming and surface lures of all types, Atlantic menhaden chunks or live lining them, trolling tube & worm or umbrella rigs and the craze this year flutter spoons that drop through the water column to the bottom much like

an injured fish.

So, in spite of all this catching going on, the striped bass stock is not healthy. They are overfished and re subject to overfishing.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and their marine coastal states from Maine to Virginia closed the public comment period of December 22 on Draft Addendum II to Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass. Addendum II considers management measures designed to support stock rebuilding by reducing fishing mortality to the target level in 2024.

A copy of Addendum II can be found at Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (asmfc.org). Tony Friedrich, vice president and national policy director, American Saltwater Guides Association (ASGA) said, "While we strongly supported the initiation of Addendum II, we believe that the potential outcomes of this action are not enough to ensure long-term striped bass sustainability and abundance. Five consecutive years of poor spawns out of the Chesapeake Bay should be on everyone's minds as we consider Draft Addendum II and the future of this fishery."

New recreational fishing policy and implementation plan

This year NOAA Fisheries released a new recreational fishing policy nationally with regional implementation plans. A center piece of the policy and regional plan is data modernization for recreational fishing.

Anglers in the Northeast are working with NOAA's regional office, the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO), to work on data modernization plans which play a significant role in the agency's new policy and regional plan. Other additions to this implementation plan include climate ready fisheries provisions, social environmental justice, data modernization as well as continuing to make fisheries sustainable in light of difficult climate impacts including shifting stocks, sea level rise, warming water and a host of others.

More to come on the data modernization effort and the new recreational implementation plan as it rolls out with angler input opportunities in the region.

Where's the bite?

Freshwater fishing in stocked ponds for trout and salmon is pretty good with a fairly decent largemouth and smallmouth bass bite. For a complete list of trout stocked ponds in Massachusetts visit Mass Wildlife at Trout stocking report | Mass.gov and in Rhode Island visit www.dem.ri.gov/fishing, or call 401-789-0281 or 401-539-0019 for more information on trout stocking.

Saltwater. Tautog, cod and black sea bass are being caught by anglers. Call ahead to make a party boat reservation for tautog and cod fishing, vessels generally sail between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m. and return in the afternoon. Visit www.islandcurrent.com, www.francesfleet.com and www.sevenbs.com. Full day rates for vessels are generally \$130 to \$135 per adult and around \$80 for those under 12 years old.

Dave Monti holds a captain's 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@verison.net or visit www.noflukesfishing.com.



STRIPER BITE STRONG: Angler Bob Donald of North Kingstown caught bass to 33-inch trolling tube & worm north of Conimicut Light. (Submitted photos)

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Investigative reporting and big stories of 2023

By G. WAYNE MILLER

You are the Target 12 investigative reporter and managing editor. Give us an overview of your responsibilities.

I wear two hats at WPRI. As an investigative reporter my role is to bring things to light that the people of Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts need to know about. My primary beats are the criminal justice system, government, public corruption and politics, plus whatever the daily news cycle brings our way. (I've learned a lot about bridge maintenance this month.) I also have been moderating debates since 2010, along with my colleague Ted Nesi.

As managing editor, I run the nine-member Target 12 unit, which is the easiest job on the planet because of the amazing people in that office. I essentially manage the robust collaboration that goes on every day with the entire team. In the end, though, I'm responsible for the content that comes out of Target 12, making the final call on how we allocate our bandwidth, then reviewing copy for online and on-air. But the mission for both positions is really the same: to act as a watchdog, as the eyes and ears for the community in which we report.



Photo courtesy of WPRI



Your own reporting has won five New England Emmy Awards and six regional Edward R. Murrow Awards. Truly impressive! Can you give us a summary of the stories that brought these honors?

No award is the result of a solo effort, and I've been truly lucky to work with the highest caliber professionals in the business. The stories that won awards generally all have the same theme: holding powerful people accountable. There was the investigation that exposed a state representative who didn't live where he told voters he did (eventually resulting in a criminal conviction), another on leadership woes at the Fall River Police Department (the chief stepped down), one that exposed government waste in the Providence DPW and an investigation which shed light on the city's troubled pension plan.

Eli Sherman and I worked on a series of reports that led to a former high school basketball coach getting charged in a sexual assault case, and separately a state lawmaker who had borrowed a lot of money – including from his own constituents – but repeatedly failed to pay people back. (He is no longer in office as a result of that report.) Our team also received a Murrow for a short documentary we did on an infamous Mafia induction ceremony. I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that every award I have received in my 17 years at WPRI came as a result of work with chief videographer John Vilella. It's hard to describe what an incredible photojournalist he is, and how much I have benefitted from that.

Let's come to the present. What are some of your top investigative pieces for the year 2023?

It was a busy year... but I suppose when isn't it in the Rhode Island news cycle? The surprise congressional race over the summer spurred a few investigations for our team, including the signature scandal that rocked Lt. Gov. Sabina Matos' campaign and an examination of why another candidate was told to stop teaching at Williams College. We also revealed an FBI investigation into the Providence Police Department after the colonel's nephew was swept up in a drug investigation. One of the bigger headaches for the State House set came after we were able to pry loose a controversial email that revealed details about that now-infamous trip two state officials took to Philadelphia. That has also spurred multiple ethics investigation involving the McKee administration. While it wasn't an investigation, my sit-down interview with Judge Richard Licht following a near-fatal pedestrian accident in February was memorable, and I'm grateful he shared his journey on the road to recovery with me. Of course, we ended the year with the abrupt closure of the Washington Bridge – looking into what happened behind the scenes with that major event will keep our office busy into the new year.

As if your investigative work was not enough, you are also executive producer and host of WPRI 12's weekly Newsmakers show. Who were some of the guests this year?

David Cicilline's surprise announcement that he was leaving Congress had a significant impact on News-makers. We spent months interviewing candidates, moderating debates, and breaking it all down with multiple political roundtables. (Digesting the ups and downs of the campaign cycle with Ted Nesi, Joe Fleming and other analysts tend to be my favorite episodes.) We've repeatedly had on every member of Rhode Island's federal delegation as well as political leaders in Massachusetts. As we do every year, we make sure we have the state's leaders on regularly: the House speaker, Senate president, attorney general, etc.

I started hosting Newsmakers full time in 2008 (Ted Nesi joined me as co-host in 2012), and it's one of the best parts of my job. I think there is so much value in long-form interviews that allow breathing room to explore big topics at length. I'm also proud that we are carrying on a long tradition; Newsmakers has been on the air since 1979, and my father Jack was a previous host.

OK, now some of your background. Where did you grow up and what college did you graduate from, with what degree?

I was born in Newport, but when I was just a wee lad, we moved to Massachusetts. I grew up on Cape Cod, in Barnstable, where my mom Beth still lives. I graduated from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in 1996 with a B.A. in communications.

**Q & A
with
Tim White**

Head injuries plagued Johnston man

Looking back at the life of Francesco "Frank" Torelli of Johnston, it seemed he was destined to eventually succumb to a fatal head injury. Born in Italy in 1868, Frank was involved in what became known as the "Spruce Street Row" during the summer of 1893. He and a neighbor, Giuseppe DiNardo, had met up on Spruce Street and engaged in an argument. As Frank screamed out curses in Italian, he pulled a razor from his pocket and made a violent slash across Giuseppe's face, cutting his chin so badly that his jawbone was exposed. As blood poured from Giuseppe's face, Frank made an attempt to grab the watch off his wrist. Giuseppe responded by pulling out a knife and lunging at Frank. By this time a crowd had gathered. In an attempt to disarm Frank, one of the bystanders picked up a paving stone from the ground and heaved it at him. Luckily, he was knocked from the path of Giuseppe's knife as he fell to the ground. But the stone struck his head so hard, he endured a serious scalp wound. Three years later, just a couple of weeks into January, Frank was with his brother John at Rossi's Saloon on Lily Street when the siblings began

to argue. They decided to take the matter out into the street where they had the room to get physical. Almost immediately, John pulled out a razor and swiped it at his brother. Frank quickly escaped but did so with a very deep scalp laceration over his left ear. John was arrested and charged with assault with a dangerous weapon. On May 29, 1910, at about 4:30 in the afternoon, Frank was walking his dog down Binghampton Avenue not far from his home. A neighbor, Antonio Francescone, was walking his dog at the same time. When the animals set their sights on each other, all hell broke loose. The two dogs began fighting as the two men began arguing about whose dog was at fault. An individual who was standing about 100 feet away at the time, Bassi Cambio, later testified that as Antonio attempted to stop the dogs from fighting, Frank stepped up to him, grabbed his hat off his head in a threatening manner and threw it on the ground. Another witness described how Frank was in the process of physically assaulting Antonio when a small boy passed by carrying a baseball bat. Antonio grabbed the bat and hit Frank in the

Back in the Day



by KELLY SULLIVAN

head with it twice before Frank fell to the ground. Neighbors carried Frank into his house and Antonio left. Antonio, a 40-year-old odd job laborer had a wife and six children living at home, the youngest of whom was six years old. Frank, who was also an odd job laborer, had a wife and five children living at home, the youngest being 13. No one contacted police until the following morning when it was determined that Frank's injuries were more serious than previously thought. A doctor came to examine him and noticed a deep depression in the top of the head and a scalp laceration. Although Frank was semi-conscious, the doctor believed

he would recover. When several days passed and there was no progress, the doctor ordered him taken to Rhode Island Hospital where it was determined that he had a skull fracture at the base of the brain. An operation was performed to relieve pressure in the brain and Frank lingered between life and death for ten days before passing away due to his injuries and septic meningitis on June 19, 1910. He was buried at Saint Ann Cemetery in Cranston. Police had been searching for Antonio, who had no criminal history, since the day after the attack. Johnston residents claimed not to have seen him since minutes after Frank was removed from the street. On July 25, he was located and charged with manslaughter which the grand jury wanted changed to a charge of murder. The jury which heard the case took three hours and 37 minutes to return with a verdict of not guilty. Shortly after his release, the local newspapers reported on the big shindig which had been put on in Johnston to celebrate Antonio's acquittal. "Banquet given for man acquitted of manslaughter" the reports read. "Friends of Antonio dis-

play friendship and esteem - entertainment held at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament." Antonio's lawyers were very quick to respond to these reports of celebratory dinner and dancing in the wake of a man's death. 31-year-old Antonio Alfredo Capotosto, the first Italian attorney to pass the RI bar exam, and 46-year-old John Fox made a public statement assuring the community that the banquet was a private event and that Antonio was not even present. According to the attorneys, the event was hosted by 46-year-old local saloon owner Vincenzo Jacovone and 36-year-old hardware and variety store owner John Votolato to show gratitude to Capotosto and Fox for all the hard work they did in the community. A little over a year later, Frank's 43-year-old wife Concetta (Spetrino) was run over by an electric car on Greenville Avenue one afternoon and died from the shock caused by multiple injuries. Antonio died during the winter of 1925 at RI Hospital from the effects of diabetes.

Kelly Sullivan is a Rhode Island columnist, lecturer and author.

ANIMAL TALK

By Karen Kalunian

Local Adoptable Loveable

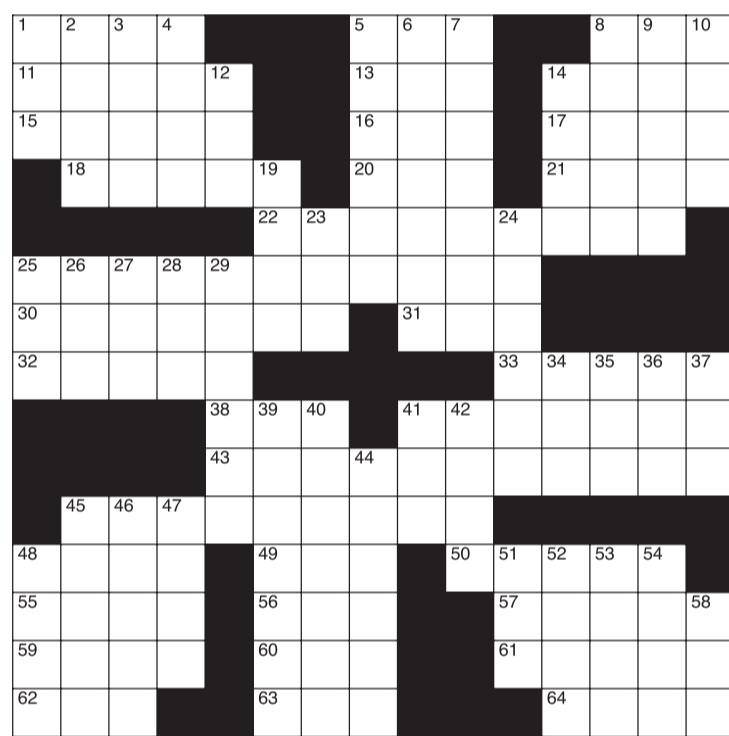


Photo credit: Karen Kalunian

Nebula will captivate you with her ethereal beauty as indicated by her name! She is a two year old Tabby with a gorgeous striped coat of gray and chocolate brown. Her eyes speak for themselves, they are simply out of this world! Nebula's best home would be an adult home filled with lots of love, time and patience...oh and treats, lots of yummy treats! She does long for attention but at her own pace. You can tell that once she's comfortable she's a very special girl! If you'd like to meet this beautiful star please go to www.scruffypawsanimalrescue.org and fill out an application. Then the rescue will email you with more information about how you can meet Nebula and maybe even make your home her permanent galaxy!

If you have been thinking of adopting or know of an animal in need, please contact Karen directly at animaltalk1920@gmail.com

CROSSWORD PUZZLE CORNER



CLUES ACROSS

1. A way to injure
5. Mutual savings bank
8. Rock TV channel
11. Large number of fish swimming together
13. Military mailbox
14. Female of a horse
15. Category
16. City
17. Breezed through
18. Officer who bears a mace
20. Tax collector
21. "Cheers" actress Perlman
22. Pauses before acting
25. Extracted information from a wave
30. Tendency to revert to something ancestral
31. No seats available
32. Nocturnal rodents
33. Moves gently to and fro
38. Not good
41. A way to ready
43. One who makes something better
45. Things associated with American history
48. Ancient Phoenician fertility god

49. A continuous portion of a circle
50. Volcanic craters
55. Units of electrical resistance
56. Gamble on
57. Ethiopian town
59. One point east of northeast
60. Polynesian garland of flowers
61. Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation
62. State of fuss
63. Keyboard key
64. Partner to relaxation

CLUES DOWN

1. "The world's most famous arena"
2. Polite interruption sound
3. Private school in New York
4. Refuse of grapes
5. ___ Tomei, actress
6. Adult beverages
7. Supporter
8. Papier-___, art material
9. Forests have them
10. Most ancient Hindu scriptures
12. Downwind
14. Marketplace
19. Flowering plant genus
23. Street where nightmares happen
24. Admirer
25. Dip lightly into water
26. When you hope to get there
27. Partner to cheese
28. Egg
29. A way to disqualify
34. South American plant
35. Fold-away bed
36. Debbie Harry album "___ Koo"
37. Swedish krona
39. Displaying warmth and friendliness
40. Official orders
41. Bowling alley necessity
42. Stray
44. About milk
45. Expressed pleasure
46. Caribbean dance
47. If not
48. ___ fide (Latin)
51. Swiss river
52. Hebrew calendar month
53. One easily swindled
54. Point that is one point south of southwest
58. Small island (British)

Spread Kindness

cherry hill manor nursing & rehabilitation center

Real Estate Transactions

Coventry

ADDRESS	SELLERS	BUYERS	DATE	PRICE
9 Doris St	Rhode Is Hsng & Mtg Fin C	Corbin, Gerald F	12/6	\$1
90 Wisteria Dr	Starosciak, Michael W and Starosciak, Marion R	Larocque, Brian and Loven, Shannan M	12/8	\$430,000
123 Hammet Rd	Collard, Normand G and Collard, Kathleen A	Berard, Clarissa and Berard, Daniel	12/8	\$430,000
142 Harley St	Ratte Craig G Est and Ratte, Jason	Amc Properties LLC	12/5	\$225,000
1780 Nooseneck Hill Rd Lot 22	Reeves, Marjorie M	Sylvester, Dillia	12/6	\$325,000

Cranston

ADDRESS	SELLERS	BUYERS	DATE	PRICE
9-11 Barnsdale Rd Lot 2732	Cirillo, Joan T	Ri Prop Grp LLC	12/4	\$8,000
13 Weaver St	Capuano Rlty LLC	Domain Rlty LLC	12/5	\$200,000
15-17 Barnsdale Rd Lot 728	Cirillo, Joan T	Ri Prop Grp LLC	12/4	\$8,000
16 Grace St	Davis, William G and Davis, Roxann	L G C Home Improvement &	12/4	\$321,500
20-22 Mathewson St Lot 4	Cirillo, Joan T	Ri Prop Grp LLC	12/4	\$390,000
20-22 Mathewson St Lot 1	Cirillo, Joan T	Ri Prop Grp LLC	12/4	\$390,000
20-22 Mathewson St Lot 3	Cirillo, Joan T	Ri Prop Grp LLC	12/4	\$390,000
20-22 Mathewson St Lot 2	Cirillo, Joan T	Ri Prop Grp LLC	12/4	\$390,000
24-26 Mathewson St Lot 7	Cirillo, Joan T	Ri Prop Grp LLC	12/4	\$387,000
24-26 Mathewson St Lot 6	Cirillo, Joan T	Ri Prop Grp LLC	12/4	\$387,000
24-26 Mathewson St Lot 8	Cirillo, Joan T	Ri Prop Grp LLC	12/4	\$387,000
24-26 Mathewson St Lot 5	Cirillo, Joan T	Ri Prop Grp LLC	12/4	\$387,000
33 Fyffe Ave Lot 10	Harrington, Mark and Carl, Anthony	Liberatore, Anthony D and Liberatore, Kristina L	12/8	\$380,000
33 Fyffe Ave Lot 9	Harrington, Mark and Carl, Anthony	Liberatore, Anthony D and Liberatore, Kristina L	12/8	\$380,000
33 Laura Cir	Thompson, Zachary	Wood, Megan L and Wood, Lawrence A	12/8	\$525,000
45 Allard St	Quigley, Timothy	Giarrusso, Jaimie L and Souza, Darrien J	12/8	\$300,000
46 Mauran St	Barbara L Arnold T and Arnold, Joan	Behning, Janet K	12/8	\$375,000
59 Fountain Ave Lot 14	Sabatina, Richard and Sabatina, Donna	Amore, Andrea R	12/7	\$410,000
59 Fountain Ave Lot 15	Sabatina, Richard and Sabatina, Donna	Amore, Andrea R	12/7	\$410,000
59 Orchard Dr	Radoccia, Robert and Radoccia, Melissa M	Wise 3rd, Donald K	12/6	\$1,425,000
77 Albert Ave	Hughes-Pucci, Katherine T and Pucci, Joseph V	Defruscio, Nicolas G	12/8	\$725,000
109 Mason Ave	Persico, John J	Michel P Grossi Irt and Grossi, Lorraine M	12/5	\$450,000
118 Boylston Dr Lot 118	Diraimo, Lorrie A	Janigian, Ara A	12/6	\$470,000
135 Frankfort St Lot 851	Cirillo, Joan T	Ri Prop Grp LLC	12/4	\$8,000
142 Norwood Ave Lot 22	Dercole, Lawrence	Burns, Fabiola	12/6	\$390,000
142 Norwood Ave Lot 21	Dercole, Lawrence	Burns, Fabiola	12/6	\$390,000
164 Pomham St Lot 927	Cirillo, Joan T	Ri Prop Grp LLC	12/4	\$380,000
243 Ausdale Rd	Donna L Raviele Relt and Raviele, Andrea M	Blackwood Prop Solutions	12/8	\$58,774
243 Ausdale Rd	Disantis, David	Blackwood Prop Solutions	12/8	\$117,725
305 Heather St Lot 331	Gozzi, Vincenzo	Smith, Dirla	12/8	\$420,000
305 Heather St Lot 330	Gozzi, Vincenzo	Smith, Dirla	12/8	\$420,000
347 Northup St Lot 161	Mccormick Frances L Est and Lassiter, Melissa	Charlie Chan Invest Inc	12/4	\$195,000
347 Northup St Lot 160	Mccormick Frances L Est and Lassiter, Melissa	Charlie Chan Invest Inc	12/4	\$195,000
691 Pontiac Ave	Downes Margaret Alberta C and Fortune, Hilary D	Fortune, Hilary D and Downes, Alane M	12/7	\$142,500

East Greenwich

ADDRESS	SELLERS	BUYERS	DATE	PRICE
25 Water St Lot 308	Tocci, Kelly C	Fortner, Justin H	12/4	\$325,000
55 Downing St	Soundview Home Loan T and Deutsche Bk Natl TCo	Soundview Home Loan T and Deutsche Bk Natl TCo	12/5	\$594,780
911 Frenchtown Rd	Reilly, Vincent and Musso, Nancy	Maiele, Michael J and Jones, Laura A	12/8	\$626,000
1001 Main St Lot 11	Giovina A Iannucci RET and Calenda, Paula J	Debartolo, Gina-Marie	12/4	\$389,000

Johnston

ADDRESS	SELLERS	BUYERS	DATE	PRICE
1 Celona Dr	Bamford, Christina R and Foss, Barbara A	Cormier, Ellen and Cormier, Charles	12/6	\$370,000
1 Claire Ct	Minicucci, Stephen J and Ruest, Elizabeth M	Marsella, Jeffrey and Marsella, Danya	12/11	\$699,000
4 Loud St	Carosi, Peter	Principe, Rosemarie	12/12	\$549,900
7 Park St	Manning Realty Rign	Tirpochi, Michael E	12/7	\$1
11 Edwards Rd	Houle Jr, Leo and Houle, Bethany	Roderick, Michael P and Roderick, Carissa M	12/6	\$365,000
12 Loxley Dr	Kue, True	Quinn, Mary J	12/12	\$390,000
27 Flanders St	Day, Mary A	Nemey, Emmaus	12/11	\$375,000
127 Hedley Ave	Metals Recycling LLC	Iraheta, Ana C	12/6	\$294,500
159 Bishop Hill Rd	Principe, Rosemarie	Rosa, Jazmin and Enriquez, Ernesto	12/12	\$395,000
163 Central Ave	Mcsheffrey, Rebecca and Vota, Duran	Belusky, Nancy E and Belusky, Michael	12/12	\$450,000

Warwick

ADDRESS	SELLERS	BUYERS	DATE	PRICE
31 Woodstock Dr	31 Woodstock Dr LLC	Pestana, Christina	12/8	\$257,000
47 Cavalcade Blvd	Rayhall, Daniel L and Rayhall, Anthony F	Obrien, Dennis J	12/4	\$400,000
62 Tremont St Lot 94	Dorsey, Duane and Dorsey, Thomas	Meadows, Brian S and Meadows, Linda L	12/4	\$235,000
62 Tremont St Lot 95	Dorsey, Duane and Dorsey, Thomas	Meadows, Brian S and Meadows, Linda L	12/4	\$235,000
89 New York Ave Lot 210	White, Matthew N	Kong, Lee L and Seng, Vimol	12/5	\$285,000
89 New York Ave Lot 209	White, Matthew N	Kong, Lee L and Seng, Vimol	12/5	\$285,000
89 Pheasant Ave Lot 176	Ucci, William	Tuell, Joseph	12/8	\$315,000
89 Pheasant Ave Lot 177	Ucci, William	Tuell, Joseph	12/8	\$315,000
89 Pheasant Ave Lot 175	Ucci, William	Tuell, Joseph	12/8	\$315,000
110 Marigold Dr	Botelho, Robert J	Connolly, Roger F and Queen Connolly, Jessica M	12/5	\$360,000
112 Point Ave Lot 47	Cirillo, Joan	Ri Prop Grp LLC	12/4	\$265,000
112 Point Ave Lot 46	Cirillo, Joan	Ri Prop Grp LLC	12/4	\$265,000
115 Graystone St	Lamoureux, Nicolas	Cabral, Paulo R and Cabral, Isilda C	12/5	\$466,000
160 Gray St	Mut Jr, Ronald A	Faircloth, Britt M	12/5	\$559,900
160 Manolla Ave	Jordison Keeler, Lee A and Jordison Keeler, Jacob A	Perez, Laury C	12/8	\$336,000
170 Pilgrim Pkwy	Arrud, Craig	Voghel, Maureen	12/6	\$405,000
173 George Arden Ave	Barbara E Carlow Irt and Carlow, Robert G	Vieira, Brandon J and Cotoia, Jennifer L	12/4	\$450,000
203 Sandy Ln Lot 71	Brennan, Linda A	Sullivan, Jean M and Aptt, Michael T	12/6	\$285,000
203 Sandy Ln Lot 72	Brennan, Linda A	Sullivan, Jean M and Aptt, Michael T	12/6	\$285,000
272 Hoxsie Ave Lot 13	Bainton, Virginia B	Comella, Michaela	12/7	\$350,000
272 Hoxsie Ave Lot 14	Bainton, Virginia B	Comella, Michaela	12/7	\$350,000
322 Maple St	Title Invest Co	Westell, Jane E	12/4	\$1
339 George Arden Ave Lot 5	Schmidl, Alexandria A	Plante, Matthew and Mathews, Donnah	12/4	\$344,000
339 George Arden Ave Lot 8	Schmidl, Alexandria A	Plante, Matthew and Mathews, Donnah	12/4	\$344,000
339 George Arden Ave Lot 7	Schmidl, Alexandria A	Plante, Matthew and Mathews, Donnah	12/4	\$344,000
339 George Arden Ave Lot 4	Schmidl, Alexandria A	Plante, Matthew and Mathews, Donnah	12/4	\$344,000
339 George Arden Ave Lot 3	Schmidl, Alexandria A	Plante, Matthew and Mathews, Donnah	12/4	\$344,000
339 George Arden Ave Lot 6	Schmidl, Alexandria A	Plante, Matthew and Mathews, Donnah	12/4	\$344,000
400 Commonwealth Ave Lot 8	Remmes Firt and Remmes, Sandra E	Mattera, Diane	12/7	\$265,000
639 Warwick Ave Lot 4	Verrier, Patricia M	Melhem, Imad	12/8	\$300,000
639 Warwick Ave Lot 5	Verrier, Patricia M	Melhem, Imad	12/8	\$300,000
1055 Narragansett Pkwy	Woodward, Bryan A	Baribault, Jon-Michael and Gammell, Kimberly S	12/7	\$385,000
1340 Warwick Neck Ave	Campanella, Vincent A and Campanella, Joan H	Jansen, Paige	12/4	\$2,801,000
1736 Elmwood Ave Lot 6	Shakarjyan, Hagop J	Polanco, Carlos	12/4	\$335,000
1736 Elmwood Ave Lot 5	Shakarjyan, Hagop J	Polanco, Carlos	12/4	\$335,000

West Warwick

ADDRESS	SELLERS	BUYERS	DATE	PRICE
10 Albion St	Westwarwick Town Of	Quiles, Nelson and Quiles, Deborah	12/8	\$1,914
14 Windsor Park Dr	Vargas, Dayna	Bismonte, Jan D	12/8	\$408,000
26-30 Vine St	Warzeka, Melissa A	Thompson, Zachary W	12/8	\$477,000
73 Providence St	Watkins, Amy A	Freeman, Jerry C and Freeman, Blake E	12/6	\$325,000
93 Esmond St	Champagne, Robert E	Pickett, Emmy L and Pickett, James E	12/12	\$404,000
565 Quaker Ln Lot 125	Desautel, Edward	K C Goulet Ft and Goulet, Katherine C	12/8	\$330,000



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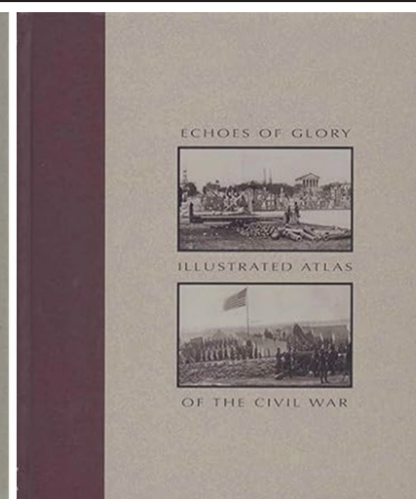
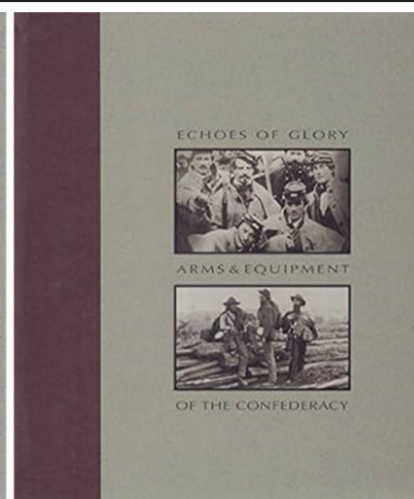
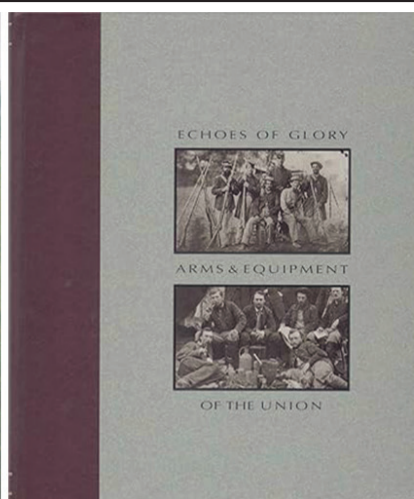
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A Louisiana Confederate Frock Coat



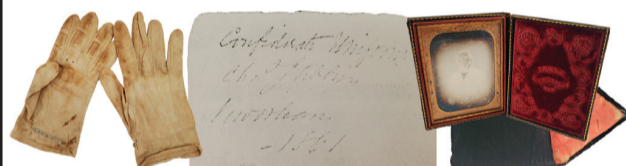
By Joel Bohy
Historic Arms & Militaria
 Bruneau & Co. Auctioneers
 Cranston, RI



Years ago, when I was a lot younger and thinner, I used to participate in Civil War living history events. The group I was with was like myself, really interested in material culture and we reproduced original items to wear. One of the items I reproduced was a Louisiana frock coat formerly in the collection of my friend and historical artist Don Troiani. I remember driving down to his house in 1994 to study and pattern the coat. Fast forward 29 years.

I had first seen the coat published in *Echoes of Glory* by Time-Life Books, a three-part book series with first volume on Union arms, uniforms, and equipment, the second volume on Confederate arms, uniforms, and equipment, and the third volume is an atlas of the Civil War. To us material culture freaks, the two volumes on arms and equipment were amazing. I personally have worn through a few sets of these books since they first came out!

In the years between then and now, the coat was sold to



another collector, and recently I got a call to come pick it up along with other great Civil War items on consignment for auction. After a quick road trip, I walked into the owner's collection room and immediately spied the coat. It really brought back memories of my youth and the feeling I had when I originally visited it 29 years previous. How cool it was to handle it, to see how it was made, what was used in production, and how I was going to replicate that. I tweaked the pattern to fit me and reproduced the coat. In digging through some old photographs, I could only find one image of my reproduction worn by another friend. I ended up only wearing it once and selling it as I stopped doing Civil War living history not long after... but now I have the original to catalog, photograph, and sell to the next owner!

The coat is made from what is now a gray/green color jean cloth, a twill woven cloth with a cotton warp and a woolen weft. It has black very finely woven woolen twill tape around the collar, fronts, cuffs, and back pocket flaps. It has Louisiana buttons up the front, and cuff-size eagle dragoon buttons on the epaulets, and cuffs. It is unlined with the exception of

the sleeves. While the cloth it is made from wasn't the best quality during the period, it has a great cut and looks very martial.

With the coat came a pair of cotton gloves, a Daguerreotype of a man in civilian clothing, and a small hand sewn padded case that held the image. There was also a name written on a piece of paper in the pocket which stated: "Confederate Uniform/Chas. Stebbins/New Orleans/1861."

It's interesting that after all of this time, I ended up with this fantastic frock coat that I once admired in a book. One of the best parts of my job is the ability to handle this and other absolutely fantastic pieces of history!

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Classifieds

Sun Rise **401-732-3100**

OFFICE HOURS: Monday thru Friday 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM

TO PLACE OR CANCEL A CLASSIFIED AD:

Call 732-3100 by —
 • **10 AM Monday for Cranston Herald (Thursday), Warwick Beacon (Thursday) & Johnston Sun Rise (Thursday)**

Please Check Your Ad!

We make every effort to carefully proofread all advertisements, however, we ask you to check your ad the first time it appears. If you find an error, call 732-3100 so that we may correct it in the next publication. Beacon Communications shall not be liable for errors or omissions in, or failure to insert, any advertisement for which it may be responsible beyond the cost of the actual space occupied by the item in which error or omission or failure to insert occurred. Advertiser will be entitled to refund of advertisement price or insertion in next issue at advertiser's option.

ADVERTISING COSTS:

LINE-BY-LINE:
1 Week — Warwick Beacon, Cranston Herald and Johnston Sun Rise 4 lines - \$25.00; each additional line \$4.00
4 Weeks or More — Warwick Beacon, Cranston Herald and Johnston Sun Rise 4 lines - \$23.00 per week; each additional line \$4.00
CLASSIFIED DISPLAY:
1 Week — Warwick Beacon, Cranston Herald and Johnston Sun Rise \$35.00 per column inch.

BUSINESS SERVICE ADS:
 \$32.00 per column inch - Warwick Beacon, Cranston Herald and Johnston Sun Rise
 Ad Must Run 4 Consecutive Weeks.

Add the RI Reminder:
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Email ads to: AshleyM@rhodybeat.com

CREDIT POLICY We accept all major credit cards. We will bill line-by-line classified ads (with the exception of YARD SALE ADS) to customers adding \$1.50 billing fee. Business Service ads must be prepaid until a Credit Application has been approved and account established.

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CLEANERS: 1st & 2nd Shift, 20-25 hours per week, Monday-Saturday. \$15/hour. Must have valid Driver's License, reliable vehicle and clean BCI. Great job for retirees! Call Joe, 401-301-1162.

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WE BUY HOUSES: Any condition!! Quick sale!! House needs work? We don't mind. Call 401-595-8703.

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M & R Computers: Providing all aspects of computer support (spam, email, anti-virus, upgrades), MS Office, iPhone, Alexa, Wi-Fi, File Backup, One-Drive. Onsite or remote support. pcgeek2023@gmail.com or 524-4560.

To place your ad by phone, please call Ida at **401-732-3100**

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DEADLINE FOR THE JANUARY 2 EDITION IS THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28 AT NOON

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Bold Face First Line of ad for \$4.00 per week

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USE 1 BLOCK FOR EACH LETTER, NUMBER OR PUNCTUATION MARK. LEAVE ONE BLANK BLOCK BETWEEN EACH WORD OR AFTER EACH PUNCTUATION MARK. (MINIMUM AD - 4 LINES)

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2)																				
3)																				
4)																				
5)																				
6)																				

CATEGORY _____
 \$25.00/Week – \$29.00/Week with Bold
 \$29.00/Week – \$33.00/Week with Bold
 \$33/Week – \$37/Week with Bold



CARD # _____ EXP. DATE: _____ SEC. CODE _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____ CHECK # _____
 # OF WEEKS AD IS TO RUN _____

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We remove all content from cellars.
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15 years of reliable service.
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Anything hauled away, some for FREE!
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741-2781 Lic. #37379 - Insured

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Johnston Sun Rise, Warwick Beacon
& Cranston Herald
(All 3 papers for one low price)

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White (Continued from page 14)

What came next?

I worked in print when I was at UMass, then changed mediums to radio for a few years after college (including as the morning drive news anchor for a rock station on the Cape). An internship at WBZ-TV in Boston my junior year eventually led to a part-time job in that newsroom, and then I was offered a full-time gig as an assignment editor at WFXT (now Boston 25). In 1999 I returned to WBZ-TV as what's called a planning editor — think of it as an advance person handling coverage for major events like the New Hampshire presidential primary. I worked at WBZ for nine years — ultimately as their managing editor — before coming to WPRI in 2006. The best part of my time at WBZ was meeting my future wife, Melissa. Our oldest, Eliza, was born in 2006, followed by Dylan in 2008.

Talk about the influence of your late father, the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Jack White. As you know, I was his friend dating back to when we were both staff writers at The Cape Cod Times decades ago (and I had the honor of writing his obituary while I was at The Providence Journal after he died suddenly in 2005.)

You honored my dad with that obituary, I remember it well. Growing up as Jack White's son was like living in an investigative reporting master class every day. He was the most principled person I have ever met. I would often join dad at work when he was a reporter for the Cape Cod Times, and watched him every night on TV when he returned to Rhode Island and WPRI in the mid-1980s. He instilled a passion for the job, and boy did he make reporting look so damn cool.

When I started working in the industry, dad was my best and toughest editor. Candidly, when he passed away in 2005, I felt adrift for a while ... it was incredibly painful. But I know how fortunate I was to have learned from him for decades. He had such a respect for journalism and its power. I recall him once telling me, "Remember, when you do a story on someone, it is one of the most important moments of their life, so get it right." Now, I was in third grade working on a story for my elementary school newspaper when he said that — so he could be intense. But I wouldn't trade any of it. I'm lucky that 18 years after he died, I still encounter people all the time who knew my father and tell me how much they admired him.

Oh, and he was a hell of a hockey player, so I learned to skate practically before I could walk. That was fun.

Among your many other achievements is the degree you earned in 2022 from the Roger Williams University School of Law. Why did you pursue that degree and how has it influenced your journalism?

In 2019 I was approached by the then-dean of RWU School of Law, Michael Yelnosky, who thought I would be a good fit to enroll in the master's program there. After covering the American legal system for more than two decades, I thought I knew almost everything there was to know about the courts. My first day of class on campus in Bristol — in "Criminal Law" with Professor Emily Sack — set me straight on that. My instructors at RWU gave me a much deeper understanding of the law, and that has helped inform my reporting enormously.

It has also helped me fight for public access to government. Keep in mind, local newsrooms no longer employ full-time First Amendment attorneys, so reporters are now largely left on our own when we are tussling with a government agency over a public record or open meeting. The lessons I learned at the law school have helped me

make better arguments when penning a public records complaint, and given me the tools to conduct proper legal research when appealing the inevitable "no" we get when trying to get our hands on a document that belongs to the people. To be clear: I am not an attorney — a friend has dubbed me a "fauxtorney" — but Yelnosky was right that my education at RWU School of Law has made me a better reporter.

It's also opened up other doors outside the newsroom. I'm teaching my fourth Media Law and Ethics course in the communications department at Roger Williams University this spring. I'm told it's the course communications majors dread, but I try and make it as fun as the law allows.

And yet another achievement: Tell us about "The Last Good Heist," a book you co-authored.

When I was a kid I would pester my dad to tell me tales from the trenches, and I had a particular fascination with stories about organized crime (Dad covered the Patriarca crime family in its heyday). One of my favorites was the brazen 1975 robbery of a secret bank of safe deposit boxes hidden inside the Hudson Fur Storage building on Cranston Street in Providence. It was a bank, of sorts, used largely by made members of the mob and their associates. I kept telling my dad that he should sit down — with all that free time I apparently thought he had commuting from Cape Cod to East Providence and back every day — and write a book about it.

When he died in 2005, I vowed to see that through.

The first think I did was call former Projo scribe Wayne Worcester, who was then a professor of journalism at the University of Connecticut. Simply put, he was the best writer I had ever read. Wayne and I then tracked down the globe-trotting Randy Richard (which was harder than it sounds), who was an investigative reporter at the Journal with my dad. One of Randy's talents is an uncanny gift for getting people to talk to him.

It took us more than six years to research what happened to all the characters from the heist, due in no small part to several of the main players having been swallowed up by the Witness Protection Program. Among them: the lead gunman who the mob wanted snuffed out. (We found him, but you'll have to read the book to find out where.)

It wasn't easy getting the book published coming out of a recession, but in 2015 our agent inked a deal with a publisher, and it was printed the next year. I learned a lot from Wayne and Randy working on that project, and they are like family to me now. In many ways I also feel I got closer to my father, retracing his steps reporting out the heist in its early days.

I think I was right, for what it's worth, that the story did make a damn good book. And I hope dad thinks so, too. The inscription on the inside is simple: "For Jack."

What advice do you have for young people who are studying journalism or starting in their careers, whether in broadcast, print, digital or other media?

For budding journalists, understand what a noble profession it is, and — despite what others may say — know that it is a cornerstone of a free society. The last time I checked, a free press was one of the Five Freedoms of the First Amendment. It's not always the easiest job (and certainly not the most lucrative), but it's immensely important. Good journalists help people cut through all the noise. To do that, you have to be a good writer, and that goes for print, broadcast, digital — any medium you pick. You could be the best reporter in the world — digging up critical information that is vitally important for the public to know — but if you can't effectively communicate your findings, what good is it? To be a good writer, you need to read good writers, emulate them.

It's also important to understand

that reporters don't necessarily have to be experts. Our job is to find the answers and the truth at the heart of the matter. In that light, reporters have to be resourceful, don't take anything at face value, question everything, and go into every story with an open mind.

Finally, it's critical to understand how powerful journalism can be, and respect that. Someone once told me when you do a story on someone it's one of the most important moments of their life, so get it right. It was pretty good advice, if you ask me.

How are you feeling about the media industry as a whole, and the future of journalism.

I'm worried. Reporters don't work on commission; if I have a report that garners huge ratings or a million page views online, my paycheck doesn't change. But what we see today are platforms that incentivize content creators to generate as much material as they can to get clicks, because the more views, the more money. The problem is that has also incentivized people to generate content that feeds into people's beliefs rather than challenge them. As a result, people have been flooded with misinformation and conspiracy theories by those who brand themselves as journalists, when in reality they're modern-day snake oil salesmen who profit off anyone who will watch their outrage porn on YouTube. There are plenty of examples of the societal damage this has done in recent years. Some is a result of the contraction of the newspaper industry: there are simply fewer reporters getting answers, so misinformation has filled that vacuum.

Maybe to a certain extent because of that, attacks on journalism have also hit a fever pitch. I can't count how many times one of my colleagues is out covering a run-of-the-mill school committee meeting and gets an angry finger pointed in their face by some member of the public who has been told by those in power we're the enemy. (As if reporting on a school committee meeting is the genesis of all the country's woes?) Public officials, too, have increasingly found that blaming "the media" is an easy path to explaining away a critical report. It's nothing new, of course, but that page of the communications playbook is no longer used solely by national figures, and has been adopted by some elected officials at the state and local level, too. It's been my experience, however, that those who attack journalism usually have something to hide.

That said, I see signs of encouragement. More independent and non-profit news organizations have sprung up, and they are providing reliable information to communities that may have gone uncovered since the big daily newspaper in their state closed a bureau in their community. I have also seen local TV news — Americans' most trusted news source in almost all polling — invest in more enterprise and investigative reporting. Every news outlet is going to cover the tragic car accidents, fires, and severe weather. And that coverage is important. But if the core mission of a free press is to act as a watchdog, local news outlets need to lean into enterprise reporting. The community must feel the value we provide directly, or we'll go extinct, and democracy will suffer.

What's next for Tim White?

Whatever Rhode Island throws at me.

G. Wayne Miller is an author, journalist, filmmaker, and director of *Ocean State Stories*, the non-profit, non-partisan news publication based at Salve Regina University's Pell Center for International Relations and Public Policy that is devoted to in-depth coverage of issues of importance to Rhode Islanders. Miller is also co-founder and director of the *Story in the Public Square* program, also based at the Pell Center. And he co-hosts and co-produces with Jim Ludes the national Telly-winning public-television and SiriusXM Radio show "Story in the Public Square"



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The Piano



MEMOIRS

by SUSAN DEAN

I grew up in a tiny Cape Cod style house in Warwick. The living room was small - containing a couch, matching arm-chair, TV, two end tables, and a baby grand piano. How a piano that size was ever able to fit into such a small room amazes me now. But I am eternally grateful that my parents chose to sacrifice space, and also probably a few sensible interior decorating rules, for that baby grand's presence in our lives.

Although my father's family were the musicians - music teachers who taught and played many instruments - my mother was the pianist. She took lessons during her childhood in the 1920s and had to stop when the Great Depression hit. Both my mother and my grandmother told me many stories about those hard times - and how the ten dollar monthly cost of piano lessons - extravagant at the time - became too much of an expense with my grandfather out of work. And my grandmother's wistful voice when she told me that story revealed the pain she still felt when she recalled telling my mother - who was about twelve at the time - that they could no longer afford her piano lessons.

My mother would sit at the piano and play during my childhood. I thought the whole process was magical. My job was to dust the piano and carefully wipe down the keys. How did my mother make such beautiful music, I wondered, as I plunked the ivory and black keys clean.

My mother started all three of us - my two brothers and me - with piano lessons when we each turned seven. I watched my older brother practice and eagerly awaited my turn to learn the magic. And then, at the start of second grade, it happened.

I was dropped off at Miss Rienstra's house after school on Thursdays. My mother then went to have tea with her friend, Clara, who lived nearby, for the forty-five minutes of my lesson.

Miss Rienstra, who appeared to be at least 100 years old with her steel gray hair, rimless glasses, Victorian dresses, and sensible shoes, lived in a huge dark house with many rooms, parlors, heavy curtains and lace doilies. She had a piano and also a huge organ. It was the perfect Halloween house, reminding me of "The Addams Family" and thinking back, could also have doubled as a funeral home with its serious and staid interior.

But Miss Rienstra wasn't strict or scary. She was sweet and kind and full of praise and happy words. I remember the magic of the mystery coming alive as I began to learn. How it all followed a pattern and made sense, the pieces of this amazing puzzle of notes and keys and symbols and sound all falling together - I was playing the piano! It was the same kind of "aha" moment I had in first grade the previous year when I first learned to read.

I enjoyed my progress as I improved and was excited and

proud when I was told that we were advancing to the "next book". The "next book" was always stiff and smelled new and didn't have any pencil marks. I loved learning new pieces.

Recitals were held every spring in Miss Rienstra's parlor on a Sunday afternoon in June. Each of her students would approach the piano, dressed in their Sunday best, and play their most accomplished piece. The audience consisted of our families, also in their Sunday best. And when everyone had finished with their turn at the piano, Miss Rienstra served iced tea, lemonade, and cookies. A lovely, subdued, and genteel affair.

My years with Miss Rienstra ended half-way through seventh grade when we moved to Syracuse, New York. My lessons continued with a new teacher there - my brothers had given up music for sports by then, and I was the only one still taking lessons.

Two years later we moved to Wayland, Massachusetts where I found another new teacher, and two years after that we moved back to Rhode Island. Miss Rienstra had retired from teaching by then, so I continued my lessons with someone else who carried me through high school.

I loved my lessons, I loved practicing, and I loved that baby grand piano. It was a source of comfort and stability during those years of constant moving. I could always sit at the piano and find solace in its music and in the pieces I was mastering.

I married soon after college and was pregnant with my first child when I convinced my husband that we needed a piano. We bought a used Wurlitzer spinet for about \$800 - a fortune and extravagance for us back in 1979. That piano followed us through the years, and witnessed the births of two more children, my divorce, my years alone with my daughters, and my re-marriage.

As the years went by it became evident that my spinet was getting old - too old and too expensive to keep tuning and refurbishing. It took about two more years of putting it off before I finally made the decision to replace my old and tired spinet with a digital piano. I felt like I was losing a dear and trusted friend.

I wasn't home when the new piano arrived and my beloved old spinet was taken away. My husband kindly told me not to worry - that my old piano was probably going to a "home" where it would be with lots of other aging pianos happily playing together into eternity. He succeeded in making me laugh through my mourning.

My digital looks just like my spinet - just a bit smaller and sleeker, but has the look of a full and solid piano. It has many bells and whistles, but I just set it to "Steinway Grand" and play away. It has a most beautiful sound.

My mother's baby grand is now in my brother's house in Atlanta. I'm grateful that it's still in our family.

I'm also grateful that my parents provided me with piano lessons at such a young age. Learning music has enhanced my life, given me confidence, and expanded my horizons. Piano gave me a deep appreciation for and love of music. Learning to read music has made it easy and possible for me to sing in my choral groups. I attend several vocal workshops annually and these seminars and singing classes are so much more enjoyable and fulfilling because there's less struggle and less of a learning curve due to my piano background and musical knowledge.

I once saw a quote that said "music is the language of the soul". Music fills my soul still - just like it did all those years ago. When I sit down at the piano now, I'm transported back in time. The masters come alive as I play pieces I learned long ago. And Miss Rienstra would be happy to know that I'm still learning new pieces, too, all these years later.

I now live about a mile or two from Miss Rienstra's house. I pass it often and it looks exactly the same as it did all those years ago. Miss Rienstra is long gone, but I pause, smile, and remember my Thursday afternoon lessons and can almost see my 7-year-old self carrying red and yellow piano books and climbing up those wide front steps. Miss Rienstra holds a special place in my heart of cherished memories. And I send her a silent "thank you" for being part of my childhood and for starting me on my musical journey.

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The Cottage at Briarcliffe Gardens

A State-of-the-Art Memory Care Assisted Living Residence

By JENNIFER COATES

When the plans were being drafted for Briarcliffe Gardens, a memory care assisted living residence tucked away on Old Pocasset Road, just off Central Avenue in the shady woods of Johnston, owner Akshay Talwar, and his team poured over every detail. Every design decision was based on thorough dementia research and experience. Every detail, from the amount of light that bathes the community rooms to the placement of furniture, was implemented with the intent of enhancing the quality of life and the safety of the residents of this busy center.

As soon as one walks through the doors of Briarcliffe Gardens, these research-based design features are immediately apparent. Nothing here looks haphazard or unplanned. Visitors and residents alike experience a "sensory journey" as they tour the residence. There is a feeling of spaciousness, light and openness here which appeals to all the senses and which dispels the feeling that one is in a secured environment.

To start, Briarcliffe Gardens is built entirely on one floor with dining and living spaces in the center, forming the social core, much like one's own kitchen. On any given day, this warmly-lit open space area is filled with residents who are being guided through crafts, games or socialization experiences. In adjoining rooms, it is not uncommon to see residents engaged in therapeutic activities such as seated yoga, tai chi, pet and music therapy.

The single-occupancy bedrooms all have outside windows and line the perimeter of this common center space. Numerous skylights provide diffuse sunshine during daytime and natural and artificial lighting are balanced to create a seamless transition between daylight and nightfall. The colors, light, and air temperatures throughout are all coordinated in a concerted effort to comfort residents who might be prone to agitation or irritability.

As the tour continues, one will find a 24-hour retro-design diner, a movie hall, specially adapted recumbent bikes, a Wii gaming center, a hair salon/barber, a sunroom for meditation and, in the spring/summer, a courtyard with fruit-producing trees, walking path and patio. The caregivers and administrators of this progressive memory care center have considered every aspect of their residents' lives and work diligently to anticipate their every need.

From the time when the first ground was broken on Briarcliffe Gardens, this state-of-the-art memory care assisted living residence's primary mission has been to provide a secure, nurturing and vibrant community for its many residents.

When family members are considering a possible long-term stay for a loved one who suffers from health concerns like Alzheimer's Disease/Dementia, Briarcliffe Gardens offers so much more than exceptional care. It exemplifies everything that a memory-care residence should be ~and can be ~ in this modern age.

To schedule your personal tour of Briarcliffe Gardens, call 401-944-2450. For more information, you can also visit them at www.briarclifferi.com or visit their Facebook page, Briarcliffe Gardens Assisted Living.

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Holidays Can Increase the Risks of Heart Attacks and Strokes

LAW ADVICE

by DON DRAKE
CONNELLY LAW OFFICES, LTD.

"The winter holiday season is a time of joy and merriment, filled with laughter and cheer. However, it is also a time that can jeopardize our health," warns professional fiduciary and certified elder law Attorney RJ Connelly III. "Medical professionals have found that the holiday season can be a serious threat to our health, with studies revealing that more people die from heart attacks during this time than any other time of the year. In fact, research has shown that cardiac death is almost 5% higher during the holidays compared to the rest of the year, and a seasonal trend is also evident with strokes, as more occur between November and February than at any other time of the year."

There is no simple explanation for this, as complex and multifaceted reasons exist for these medical issues to occur. For instance, during the holiday season, our daily routines are often disrupted, leading us to indulge in more food and drink while exercising and relaxing less. Another factor is that we may not be getting enough sleep or may be experiencing increased levels of stress, which can further exacerbate the risk of a heart attack and stroke -- and there are more, which we will look at a bit later in this blog. Knowing this, it is essential to be mindful of our health and take steps to mitigate these risks during the winter holiday season.

According to Attorney Connelly, the holiday season can be a time of high stress for many people due to a variety of factors. One significant cause of stress is the need to interact with family members, which can be challenging and emotionally taxing for some individuals. Also, making travel arrangements can be stressful, especially if there are logistical issues or unexpected delays.

In addition to these stressors, medical professionals have noted that winter weather can significantly impact our health. Breathing in cold air can cause constriction of blood vessels in the lungs, which can affect the coronary arteries. These are the first blood vessels downstream from the lungs, and constriction can lead to reduced blood flow to the heart and an increased risk of heart attack or other cardiovascular events.

Tips for Minimizing Cardiac Risk

Dr. Marc Eisenberg, an Associate Professor of Medicine at Columbia University Irving Medical Center, has shared advice for people with heart-related conditions during the holiday season. See below:

Don't ignore new symptoms: During the holidays, people tend to ignore symptoms like shortness of breath or leg swelling, thinking that they will see a doctor later. However, this procrastination can lead to emergencies and increase the likelihood of death en route to the hospital or the ER. According to Dr. Eisenberg, waiting too long to address symptoms can be fatal. He suggests that while you may not want to spoil anyone's holiday by going to the ER, it's better than collapsing during dessert.

If traveling, reduce your risk of clots: Prolonged sitting in a car or plane can increase the risk of blood clots forming in your legs. These clots can detach and travel to your lungs, leading to a pulmonary embolism, which can be life-threatening. To reduce your risk, take breaks during long flights, walk down the aisle, or move your feet while seated. When driving, stop at a rest stop or other safe area every hour to walk around. If you experience new leg pain or swelling, shortness of breath, or palpitations after arriving at your destination, seek immediate medical attention and ask for an ultrasound to rule out a blood clot. If a clot is detected, prompt treatment with blood thinners can save your life.

Try low-salt holiday recipes: "During the holiday season, from Thanksgiving through Christmas and Hannukah, the foods served are often high in sodium, which can be a huge problem," warns Dr. Eisenberg. Consuming too much sodium

can lead to fluid retention and worsen high blood pressure. To avoid this, the American Heart Association suggests trying out their holiday recipe collection, which features low-sodium dishes like apple bread pudding and roasted turkey with butternut squash."

Limit alcohol: Doctors use the term "holiday heart" to describe the phenomenon where people drink excessively during events or gatherings, and then experience symptoms like dizziness, shortness of breath, or palpitations a few days later. Dr. Eisenberg explains that these symptoms are a delayed reaction to alcohol consumption and that they could lead to a stroke. In general, excessive alcohol consumption can raise a person's blood pressure, putting them at increased risk for heart attacks, strokes, aortic dissections (a tear in the aorta, which is the main artery leading away from the heart), and heart failure. Therefore, it is advised to limit alcohol intake during the holidays



in order to avoid such risks.

Triple-check your meds: It's common to forget to pack daily medications such as blood pressure pills when traveling for the holidays. However, it's important to ensure you have all your necessary prescriptions. If you do happen to forget them, it's not wise to attempt to go without them. Skipping blood pressure medication for even a few days can cause "rebound high blood pressure," meaning your blood pressure might climb higher than before. In such a situation, it's best to contact your doctor so that they can arrange for a supply of your medication to be sent to a local pharmacy for the duration of your trip.

Check on aging parents: During the holidays, adult children often visit their aging parents, whom they may not have seen in a while. It is not uncommon for them to notice health issues that their parents may be experiencing, such as leg swelling or difficulty walking. If you notice any such problems, it is advisable to call your parent's doctor or covering doctor and explain what you are seeing. The doctor may not be aware of the issue, and your input could be valuable. You may also want to consider extending your visit to attend the doctor's appointment with your parent.

Relieve stress: The holiday season can be stressful due to various factors such as interacting with toxic family members, budget concerns, and other anxieties. This time of year is also known for the prevalence of seasonal affective disorder (SAD). Stress and depression can also affect the heart, so it's crucial to take a deep breath and put things in perspective. According to Dr. Eisenberg, if you feel like you need additional support, it's recommended to seek help from a licensed therapist or other forms of support.

A Final Word

"Keep in mind that this time of year is characterized by an array of social gatherings, delicious meals, and fun-filled activities, which can make it easy to neglect our health," stated Attorney Connelly. "It's important that we take a few extra steps to prioritize our health during the holiday season. This can be achieved through mindful eating by choosing heart-healthy options, getting enough rest to avoid fatigue, and staying active to keep our hearts and bodies strong and in good condition. As the holiday season approaches, prioritize your well-being and safety. To avoid falling ill or becoming a statistic, make sure to stay alert and keep a watchful eye on any symptoms that may arise. Taking care of yourself and seeking medical attention if necessary can help ensure a happy and healthy holiday season."

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What You Need to Know About Social Security Scams



AARP - RHODE ISLAND
by CATHERINE TAYLOR

We at AARP want to make sure you have all the information you need to protect yourself and your family from scams. This month, I want to tell you about a favorite of identity thieves: Social Security scams.

A common scam involves someone posing as a representative of the Social Security Administration (SSA) contacting you about a supposed problem with your Social Security number — for example, that your number has been linked to criminal activity and suspended. They ask you to confirm your number so they can reactivate it or claim they can issue you a new one for a fee.

Or an impostor may contact you to “activate” your cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), claiming you must pay a fee or verify your name, date of birth and Social Security number to receive an increase in benefits.

These are lies: The SSA does not suspend Social Security numbers, and COLAs are applied automatically to your benefit payment.

Once scammers have your identifying information, they can ask the SSA to change the address, phone number and direct deposit information on your record, thus diverting your Social Security payments.

How do scammers contact people?

Robocalls are the most common way scammers reach out, often threatening to seize your bank account due to illicit activity supposedly tied to your Social Security number or offering to help transfer your money for safekeeping. Impostors also reach out via phishing emails, texts, social media messages and paper mail.

To feign legitimacy, some use the real names of Social Security officials, recite “badge numbers,” or stamp mailings with phony SSA letterhead. They may even send you counterfeit versions of credentials to “prove” they’re on genuine Social Security business.

A large-scale, multifaceted effort by the government to spread the word about these scammers — and stop them — includes warnings about tell-tale signs of a Social Security scam. If someone contacts you claiming to be from Social Security, you can be sure it’s a scam if they:

- Threaten to suspend your Social Security number.
- Warn of arrest or other legal action.
- Demand secrecy.
- Pressure you to take immediate action, such as making a payment or providing personal information, to avoid consequences.
- Ask for payment by gift card, prepaid

debit card, cryptocurrency or by mailing cash.

- Threaten to seize your bank account.
- Offer to move your money to a “protected” account.
- Promise to increase your Social Security benefit if you provide personal information.
- Direct message you on social media.

The real Social Security Administration will never do any of these things.

What should you do if you spot a scam? If you are targeted by a Social Security scam, report it to the SSA’s Office of Inspector General (www.oig.ssa.gov/report/) and the Federal Trade Commission (www.reportfraud.ftc.gov/#/).

Join us at the State House

We have two exciting AARP events coming up I hope you can attend. As the 2024 General Assembly session begins, our advocacy volunteers be busy on Smith Hill, representing Rhode Islanders 50+ on key issues such as housing, financial security, and caregiving. If you have considered becoming an AARP advocacy volunteer, I urge you to take advantage of these events to learn more about our work.

ADU Design at the State House - January 25, 3 p.m.

AARP Rhode Island teamed up with some of the brightest minds in architecture and design to explore ways to build a better Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU.) Rhode Island School of Design student teams participated in a November ADU design charrette, the results of which will be exhibited at the Rhode Island State House. Join us to see the designs and hear from the students about how they worked to create these options for people to age in their communities.

2024 Legislative Reception - February 8, 3 p.m.

Our annual meet-and-greet with state lawmakers is an opportunity to speak with your senator and representative in an informal setting in the State House’s beautiful State Room. Discuss issues important to Rhode Islanders 50-plus and let your voice be heard.

Refreshments will be served at both events. Registration is required at aarp.org/RIEvents.

Finally, I would like to extend best wishes to you and your family as we welcome in 2024.

Here’s hoping for a prosperous New Year.

AARP JANUARY EVENTS

- January 10, 1 p.m. - Everybody Dance!
- January 18, 4 p.m. - RI Healthy Cooking Demo
- January 23, 4 p.m. - Tai Chi/Qi Gong
- January 24, 6 p.m. - Laughter Yoga
- January 25, 3 p.m. - ADU Designs at the State House*

Save the Date - February 8, 3 p.m. - 2024 Legislative Reception*

*In-person event

Learn more and register at aarp.org/RIEvents



Our volunteers are making a difference!

In 2023, AARP Rhode Island volunteers helped win legislative victories, connected our virtual Healthy Living programs to thousands and made Movies for Grownups and other in-person events fun and informative for all. Our success would not be possible without you.



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Making the World a Better Place for Seniors

FAMILY FEATURES

By 2050, the senior population (adults age 65 and older) will be more than double that of the world's youngest citizens, and the number of people living beyond age 80 is expected to triple over the next 30 years.

As the aging population increases, some 11.3 million seniors are living alone, according to the Institute on Aging. In addition, women are twice as likely as older men to live by themselves.

Without proper support, seniors may face a wide range of issues including limited mobility, chronic conditions, improper nutrition and feelings of loneliness. For example, older adults can have problems chewing or may take medications which interfere with their appetites. However, research shows lack of companionship may be the biggest challenge.

In fact, an AARP survey found 1 in 5 adults over the age of 40 were "socially disconnected," which can impact health. People who reportedly experienced loneliness and isolation had lower mental well-being scores, and those who were dissatisfied with their level of social engagement were more likely to report a decline in cognitive function, as well.

While anyone can benefit from a kind gesture, seniors are some of the most in-need members in many communities. There is likely a wide range of opportunities to enhance the lives of seniors in your area. Numerous programs and agencies exist to help you determine the best way to make a difference.

One example is Ready to Care, an initiative from Home Instead Senior Care that challenges people to complete weekly care missions. Each activity guides members through various ways to give to senior-related causes, learn about the aging crisis and issues impacting seniors, and serve seniors through small actions of kindness.

Most care missions are simple acts, such as opening a door, learning about Alzheimer's or helping with a chore. Each week, a new mission is delivered to participants' phones via text message.

Small gestures, like these simple acts of kindness, can go a long way toward improving a senior's day.

Physical assistance: Most seniors are eager to retain their independence, but everyday tasks can pose fall risks or require exposure to harsh weather conditions that can be dangerous to older adults.



- Offer to bring in the daily newspaper or mail.
- Mow their lawn or offer to help with other yardwork.
- Lend a hand in caring for pets, such as taking a dog for a walk or helping clean up waste from the yard.
- Offer moral support and a sense of physical safety by volunteering to join them on a walk.

Social support: Loneliness is common among seniors, especially those who live alone. Show seniors in your area they have a meaningful place in the community and options for companionship.

- Offer a friendly wave and say hello when you see them out.
- Invite them to dinner, either at your home or at a restaurant.

- Have your children or kids you know in the area draw pictures or write letters.
- Make a date for an afternoon or evening of entertainment, such as cards, a movie or board games.

Practical solutions: For various reasons, some seniors may be unable to complete everyday tasks. Offer a helping hand in their daily routines when possible.

- Lend your time to take them to run errands.
- Deliver baked goods or a home-cooked meal to improve access to nourishing foods.
- Help arrange for professional assistance and services, such as an audit to ensure homes are safe.

To find more ways you can care for the seniors in your community, visit imreadytocare.com.



How You Can Help

Consider these simple ways you can help the aging population by taking action and learning about issues impacting seniors:

- **Lend your voice.** Be an advocate for change in public actions and medical research for the aging society. If you're an expert by experience, share your knowledge about senior-related issues and public policy measures.
- **Give from your heart.** Less than 1% of charitable donations go to organizations that help seniors. Find senior-focused non-profits to give your next charitable donations to, such as one dedicated to raising awareness, inspiring change and accelerating progress in Alzheimer's care and research.
- **Get prepared to care.** Educate yourself on issues that impact seniors and complete small acts of kindness for seniors in your life. Sign up for weekly care missions and find additional information to better equip yourself to care for seniors at imreadytocare.com.
- **Give your time.** Volunteer with local non-profit organizations that help seniors or offer support related to senior-affiliated issues.

Sweet and Savory Ways to Shake Up Holiday Celebrations

FAMILY FEATURES

'Tis the season for sweet and savory favorites – from the mouthwatering desserts you crave each year to starters and snacks that hold over hungry guests. Elevate your holiday entertaining with the right combination of appetizers, main courses, sides, sweets and beyond that start with the same seasonal staple: pecans.

As a versatile nut that can be used throughout the holidays, pecans have you covered so you can cook and enjoy a myriad of dishes, add festive flair to decor, or provide a nutritious snack in the midst of season-long indulgences. This year, pick up an extra bag of pecans to create nutritious, delicious dishes to enjoy on-the-go or serve to guests.

To help celebrate the holiday season, the American Pecan Promotion Board introduced a digital Pe-Calendar to highlight the many ways pecans can be enjoyed in and beyond a traditional pie. From Dec. 7-18, the interactive calendar will unveil tasty recipes for pecan fans to enjoy, along with fun games that can enter you in to win exciting prizes each day. From delicious Baked Brie with Pecans and Cranberry Orange Chutney to nutritious Pecan Snack Mix with Cranberries and Chocolate, along with prizes, the calendar provides an ultimate way to shell-cebrate with the must-have holiday nut.

To sign up for daily email reminders to open a new door for chances to win nutty prizes, or to find additional holiday recipes, visit EatPecans.com.

Pecan Snack Mix with Cranberries and Chocolate

Recipe courtesy of Jess Larson and the American Pecan Promotion Board
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 5 minutes, plus 10 minutes cooling time

- 1 cup pecan halves
- 1 cup rice squares cereal (wheat or cinnamon)
- 1/2 cup pretzels
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 1/2 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries
- 1/2 cup dark chocolate chips

In large, microwave-safe bowl, add pecans, rice squares cereal and pretzels. In small, microwave-safe bowl, add butter, brown sugar, maple syrup, salt and nutmeg. Microwave butter mixture 1-2 minutes until melted then pour over dry mix. Toss well to combine.

Microwave snack mix in 45-second intervals, about 4-5 intervals total, until mix is fragrant, golden and toasty.

Cool mix completely then stir in cranberries and dark chocolate chips.



Pecan Snack Mix with Cranberries and Chocolate



Baked Brie with Pecans and Cranberry Orange Chutney

Baked Brie with Pecans and Cranberry Orange Chutney

Recipe courtesy of the American Pecan Promotion Board
Cook time: 24 minutes
Servings: 8

- 1 bag (12 ounces) fresh cranberries
- 1/2 cup maple syrup, plus 1 teaspoon for garnish, divided
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 orange, zest and juice only
- 1 teaspoon freshly chopped thyme, plus additional for garnish, divided
- 1 teaspoon freshly chopped rosemary
- 1 tablespoon bourbon (optional)
- 1 round brie (13.4 ounces)
- 1/2 cup roasted pecan pieces
- crackers
- toasted bread
- apple slices

Preheat oven to 350 F. Line baking sheet with parchment paper or silicone baking mat.

In medium saucepan over medium-high heat, bring cranberries (reserving some for garnish), 1/2 cup maple syrup and water to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally, until cranberries pop and mixture thickens, 8-10 minutes.

Remove cranberry mixture from heat and stir in orange zest, orange juice, 1 teaspoon thyme, rosemary and bourbon, if desired.

Place brie on parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake 5-7 minutes, or until inside of cheese softens while outside remains intact.

Transfer brie to serving platter and top with chutney and toasted pecans. Drizzle remaining maple syrup over brie and garnish with remaining fresh thyme and reserved cranberries. Serve with crackers, toasted bread and apple slices.

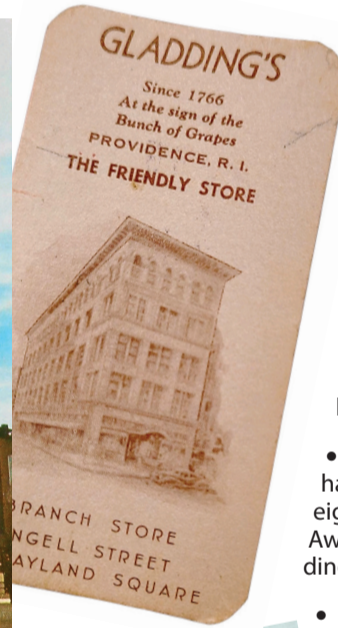
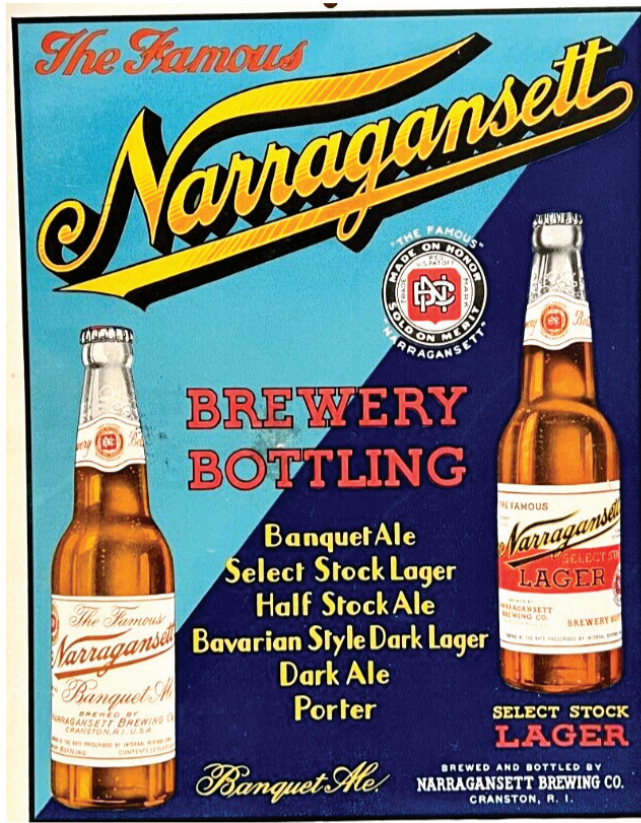
Are You A True Rhode Islander?



MY SIDE OF THINGS
by LARRY GRIMALDI

Inspired by a Mark Patinkin column in the *Providence Journal*, I created my own brain teaser to define, once and for all, who is a true Rhode Islander. You earn five points for each correct answer, plus bonus points as designated. (You're on your honor, so Google searches are banned). Pens, pencils, crayons, or Sharpies ready?

1. Name the banquet hall at Rocky Point Amusement Park.
2. Award yourself five points if you have ever attended a political "time" at the 1025 Club in Johnston. (Three bonus points if you can define "a time.")
3. Have you devoured hot "weenies" and Del's lemonade in the same day? (Three extra points if you inhaled weiners, french fries, and a coffee milk at 2:00 am sitting at the Olneyville New York System counter).
4. You can name the locations of the long-gone Gladdings, Shephard's, Peerless, Outlet, and City Hall Hardware. (One point for each correct answer and two additional bonus points for revealing the original locations of Harris Furs and Muffet's Music Store).
5. You remember which local TV station called The Outlet home.
6. You went to McGarry's Restaurant "Downcity" after school.
7. You saw a double feature at the Shipyard Drive-In.
8. You attended midnight night Mass at St. Francis Chapel Saturday nights after a date so you could sleep Sunday morning.
9. You can name the location of the RKO Albee theatre in Providence. (TEN extra points if you saw the obscure horror flick *DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS* there!)
10. You can name five duckpin bowling alleys in Rhode Island when duckpin bowling was all the rage.
11. You attended a wedding reception, anniversary, or other event, eating the standard Italian chicken dinner served up by What Cheer Catering Company, at St. Bart's Hall or Prudence Halls, or the Rosario Club in Silver Lake.
12. You knew the meaning of the term "double shower" and your mother kept a list of the "gifts" for reciprocal contributions at a friend or relative's similar event.
13. You drove from Woonsocket to Westerly without stopping for lunch. But you've probably "snuck over the wall" to Massachusetts or Connecticut on a stealth mission.
14. You know the location of the former Johnson Hummock's Restaurant.
15. You remember when the *Providence Journal* had two daily editions and more than five reporters. (Two bonus points each if you delivered the *Evening Bulletin* and remember the name of the *Providence Journal* sports cartoonist).
16. You know the original name of the Almacs supermarket on Eddy Street in Providence.
17. You can name five costume jewelry manufacturing factories when the area was REALLY was the Jewelry District.
18. You know the location of the Narragansett Brewery and the carriage barn.



19. You remember your uncles drinking Narragansett "stubbies" from that green metal cooler as they listened to Curt Gowdy call a Red Sox double-header on a Sunday afternoon at Goddard Park.

20. You know the location of the Yacht Club Soda Company. (Two bonus points if you know long the company has been producing those distinctive carbonated beverages).

21. You can identify the original locations of the Providence Train Station and the Bonanza bus station. (One point each).

22. What is the oldest shopping mall in the nation? (bonus point for naming the original location of the Italo-American Club).

23. You can name the sites of Lido's, Olivo's, and Shawmut Beaches. (One point each).

24. You know the first and most prominent tenant of the Superman Building.

25. You can remember the original slogan for CVS Health. (You can earn five bonus points, one point each, for citing five locations of the now-defunct Adams Drug Store chain).

26. Easy bonus question: Five points for standing at the site of the ancient Rhode Island Auditorium, can name the American Hockey League team that played there, and what night they played most of their games. (You are required to satisfy all three conditions to earn the points).

27. Extra, Extra Bonus Question: What did the letters UTC signify on buses that delivered the lady of the house with the kids in tow, to "Downcity" stores for Saturday shopping, browsing, and (maybe if you were lucky) an ice cream soda at The Outlet Company fountain? (Three points).

28. Extra, Extra, Extra Bonus Question. Name the location of the former Warwick Shoppers World (Three points).

Scoring System:

- One to 20: You probably just moved to Rhode Island, have been out of state for several years, are age 45 or younger, or slept longer than Rip Van Winkle.
- Twenty-One to 40: You have minimum knowledge of local lore and legend.
- Forty-One to 60: You have average knowledge about Rhode Island history.
- Sixty-One to 79: Congratulations! You have earned a dozen Dunkin' Donuts, an eight-pack of Saugie hot dogs, and three free Awful-Awfuls at Newport Creamery. (Just kidding about the prizes).
- Eighty-One to 100 or 100 plus: You are a true Rhode Islander who has earned the coveted Rhode Island Red Ribbon with Johnny Cake Cluster and a plaque in the Five Wave License Plate Trivia Hall of Fame. The induction ceremony will be held in U-squepaug on Rhode Island Independence Day.

Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year!

Larry Grimaldi is a freelance writer from North Providence. Many of his previous PrimeTime columns have been re-issued in the anthology, "50 Shades of Life, Love, and Laughter." Columns published in this book are used with the permission of Beacon Communications. For more information about "50 Shades of Life, Love, and Laughter;" or any of his other books, e-mail lvgrimaldi49@gmail.com

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Get your Message Out to Local Seniors!

Saver's Credit can help low and moderate income taxpayers to save more in 2024

YOUR TAXES

by MEG CHEVALIER

The Internal Revenue Service reminds low- and moderate-income taxpayers that they can save for retirement now and possibly earn a special tax credit in 2024 and years ahead.

The Retirement Savings Contributions Credit, also known as the Saver's Credit, helps offset part of the first \$2,000 workers voluntarily contribute to Individual Retirement Arrangements (IRAs), 401(k) plans and similar workplace retirement programs. The credit also helps any eligible person with a disability who is the designated beneficiary of an Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) account and contributes to that account. For more information about ABLE accounts, see [Publication 907, Tax Highlights for Persons With Disabilities](#).

The maximum Saver's Credit is \$1,000 (\$2,000 for married couples). The credit can increase a taxpayer's refund or reduce the tax owed but is affected by other deductions and credits. Distributions from a retirement plan or ABLE account reduce the contribution amount used to figure the credit.

Contribution deadlines

Individuals with IRAs have until April 15, 2024 - the due date for filing their 2023 return - to set up a new IRA or add money to an existing IRA for 2023. Both Roth and traditional IRAs qualify. Individuals with workplace retirement plans still have time to make qualifying retirement contributions and get the Saver's Credit on their 2023 tax return. Elective deferrals (contributions) to workplace retirement plans must be made by December 31 to a:

- 401(k) plan.

- 403(b) plan for employees of public schools and certain tax-exempt organizations.
- Governmental 457 plan for state or local government employees.
- Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) for federal employees.

See the instructions to Form 8880, Credit for Qualified Retirement Savings Contributions, for a list of qualifying workplace retirement plans and additional details.

Eligibility

To be eligible, taxpayers must be 18 years of age and older, not claimed as a dependent and not a full-time student. The Saver's Credit has income limits based on a taxpayer's adjusted gross income and their marital or filing status.

2023 income limits are:

- Married couples filing jointly with adjusted gross incomes up to \$73,000.
- Heads of household with adjusted gross incomes up to \$54,750.
- Married individuals filing separately and singles with adjusted gross incomes up to \$36,500.

Taxpayers can use the Interactive Tax Assistant tool for the Saver's Credit to determine their eligibility. Visit the Saver's Credit page on IRS.gov to learn about rules, contribution rates and credit limits.

The Twelve Days of Christnukkah

A Poem For Everyone



RETIREMENT SPARKS
by ELAINE M. DECKER

On the First day of Christnukkah my true love sent to me A Star of David On A Pine Tree.

On the Second day of Christnukkah my true love sent to me Two Challah Loaves (With spectacular braiding!) And A Star of David On A Pine Tree.

On the Third day of Christnukkah my true love sent to me Three Wise Men, Two Challah Loaves, And A Star of David On A Pine Tree.

On the Fourth day of Christnukkah my true love sent to me Four Kvetching Yentas, Three Wise Men, Two Challah Loaves, And A Star of David On A Pine Tree.

On the Fifth day of Christnukkah my true love sent to me (Sing along and hold that last note...) Five Gold Coins, (And the chocolate inside the gelt was delicious!) Four Kvetching Yentas, Three Wise Men, Two Challah Loaves, And A Star of David On A Pine Tree.

On the Sixth day of Christnukkah my true love sent to me Six Angels Praying, Five Gold Coins (Hold that note...), Four Kvetching Yentas, Three Wise Men, Two Challah Loaves, And A Star of David On A Pine Tree.

On the Seventh day of Christnukkah my true love sent to me Seven Dreidels Spinning. (He made them out of clay.) Six Angels Praying, Five Gold Coins (Keep holding that note!), Four Kvetching Yentas, Three Wise Men, Two Challah Loaves, And A Star of David On A Pine Tree.

On the Eighth day of Christnukkah my true love sent to me Eight Menorah Lights Burning, Seven Dreidels Spinning, Six Angels Praying, Five Gold Coins, (Holding, holding...), Four Kvetching Yentas, Three Wise Men, Two Challah Loaves, And A Star of David On A Pine Tree.

On the Ninth day of Christnukkah my true love sent to me Nine Reindeer Prancing. (Can't forget Rudolph...) (And just keep singing!) Eight Menorah Lights Burning, Seven Dreidels Spinning, Six Angels Praying, Five Gold Coins, (Still holding, holding...), Four Kvetching Yentas, Three Wise Men, Two Challah Loaves, And A Star of David On A Pine Tree.

On the Tenth day of Christnukkah my true love sent to me Ten Bells A-Jingling, Nine Reindeer Prancing, Eight Menorah Lights Burning, Seven Dreidels Spinning, Six Angels Praying, (You know the drill by now) Five Gold Coins, Four Kvetching Yentas, Three Wise Men, Two Challah Loaves, And A Star of David On A Pine Tree.

On the Eleventh day of Christnukkah my true love sent to me Eleven Latkes with Applesauce, (And away we go!) Ten Bells A-Jingling, Nine Reindeer Prancing, Eight Menorah Lights Burning, Seven Dreidels Spinning, Six Angels Praying, Five Gold Coins, (Holding, holding, holding), Four Kvetching Yentas, Three Wise Men, Two Challah Loaves, And A Star of David On A Pine Tree.

On the Twelfth day of Christnukkah my true love sent to me Twelve Carolers Humming, Eleven Latkes with Applesauce, Ten Bells A-Jingling, Nine Reindeer Prancing, Eight Menorah Candles, Seven Dreidels Spinning, Six Angels Praying, Five Gold Coins (Still holding—You've got this!), Four Kvetching Yentas, Three Wise Men, Two Challah Loaves, (Sing it loud for the grand finale!) And A Star of David On A Pine Tree!

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

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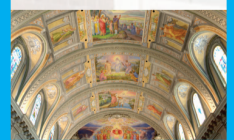
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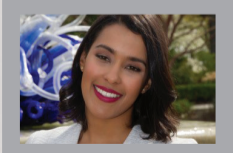
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Finding the right long-term care for you or your aging loved one can be complicated. But it doesn't have to be when you enroll in Aging Life Care Services.

With the support of an Aging Life Care Manager, you will have a trusted companion to guide you through the process of planning for long-term care.

Prepare for the Future with Aging Life Care

"We hire experts to help us in so many areas of our lives from financial planning to benefits navigation," explained Caroline Rumowicz, Director of Aging Life Care Services at Saint Elizabeth Community. "Aging well is so critical, especially as we're living longer. You want someone you can trust to guide you through the process."

A trained and certified specialist will work with you and your family to develop an individualized plan that connects you with services. They'll cover everything from arranging home care to identifying appropriate options for long-term living arrangements. The specialist collaborates with your doctors and other medical professionals to ensure continuity of care.

The Aging Life Care Manager is also there in the event of a crisis, familiar with your family's situation so they can assist with decision making quickly and appropriately. They can arrange short- or long-term coverage, referrals, at home or in the hospital.

Some other critical roles include managing medications and coordinating home care ser-

vices like skilled nursing, physical or occupational therapy, or nursing assistant coverage.

How Does Aging Life Care Work?

The process starts with an initial needs assessment to identify goals and make recommendations for service options, home safety, community resources, and long-term planning. The specialist collaborates with your family's healthcare professionals, from accompanying them to appointments to ensuring that everything stays on track with their doctor's recommendations. As their needs change, the plan may be adapted.

"We regularly reevaluate each individual's plan and recommend new solutions as their life situations change," added Rumowicz.

Aging Life Care Covers More than Just Health

Daily household management may become a challenge and Aging Life Care may include a range of services like companionship, transportation, errands, cleaning, and preparing and serving meals. Care Managers arrange any services necessary to keep their clients in a safe and comfortable environment. They'll also navigate insurance, reviewing policies related to home care services to ensure you know what's covered.

Take away some of the stress of growing older by connecting with an Aging Life Care Manager.

Submitted by Saint Elizabeth. stelizabethcommunity.org

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