

STATE CHAMPS



VICTORY: The Johnston boys basketball team rolled to a 59-52 comeback win over Middletown to earn the Division II Championship last weekend at Rhode Island College. The Panthers were led by senior Derek Salvatore, who scored 24 points to guide JHS to its first boys hoops title since 1996. Read the full story on Page 18.

Adventures of the Catalytic Avenger

FBI raids metal recycler tied to larceny case

By RORY SCHULER

They crawl under your vehicle and hack away at its tender underbelly. Then they sell the severed parts.

It's a good living if you don't get caught. And most catalytic converter thieves never get caught.

Enter the Catalytic Avenger.

"These guys don't want to put an honest day of work in," Daniel S. Walsler III said Monday. "I'm working hard over here. I'm here every day just busting my butt to make the money they're making while stealing."

The Larceny

Last week, the FBI raided Accurate Converter, a more than century-old Branch Avenue metal recycler in Providence. Providence and Cranston police were on the scene.

Though federal and local law enforcement won't reveal details from the raid, the business was linked to a catalytic converter theft from Walsler's Warwick business last year.

As a small business owner, Walsler has been forced to deal with more than his fair share of larceny.

Back in 2016, the Johnston man and entrepreneur behind Walsler Mobile Refrigeration used Facebook to track down the culprits who swiped more

than \$25,000 in tools from his operation's original location in Johnston.

He had only a grainy image of a vehicle, taken from his landlord's low quality surveillance camera. But he posted it, offered a \$500 reward and tracked down the offender. Justice served.

Then in September 2022, thieves struck his business's new location on Brownlee Boulevard in Warwick. Someone cut a hole in the fence surrounding the property and snuck in, swiping a pair of catalytic converters, but leaving two others behind.

"We reported it to Warwick Police," Walsler recalled. "They're like, we'll look into it. It was a 'We don't know who it was — nothing's going to happen' sort of thing."

Walsler knew the burglars would be back for the other two, so he drove to Target, bought a pair of Apple AirTags, and attached them to the remaining car parts.

Soon after, the parts were stolen and the AirTags led Walsler on a wild ride.

First, one of the tags pinged at Accurate Converter. He went to the business to find out who sold them to the scrapyard. Employees matched the converter with the man who sold it — William E. "Hacksaw" Hazard Sr.



THE CATALYTIC AVENGER: Daniel S. Walsler III, owner of Walsler Mobile Refrigeration, refused to be a victim. He tracked down the suspect who swiped catalytic converters from his Warwick business. Earlier this week, Walsler showed the partially mended hole the suspect cut in the fence surrounding the property. (Sun Rise photos by Rory Schuler)



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JHS Panther of the Week



POTW: This week's Panther of the Week is Dariana Carrocoza. Dariana is a senior honors student who has previously participated in Girls Soccer her sophomore year, and is now an active member of the Girls Lacrosse team for three years. She is also President of the World Cultures Club and plans on being a Dietician after high school. She was nominated by Ms. Brianna Cardillo. Ms. Cardillo said, "I have known Dariana since she started high school. Although I don't have her in class this year, I still see her in homeroom and personalization to work on college planning. Dariana is an exceptional twelfth grade student. She possesses determination and grit, and is motivated and kind, as well as outstanding academic success. All of this hard work has resulted in Dariana receiving nearly a full scholarship to JWU. She is always helpful with new students, and emails me to offer assistance whenever there is a new student. She is president of the World Culture's Club and is a true example of a global citizen." (Photos submitted by Matt Velino, Johnston High School Assistant Principal)

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

johnstonsunrise.net

Spreading their Spirit of Hope via sunrise buffet

By PETE FONTAINE

The Johnston-based Spirit of Hope may be one of the youngest and most unique non-profits to start up in the state's recent memory.

It all started in 2020 when the COVID-19 Crisis began its storied and sad history.

Louis J. Spremulli had previously founded the Pannese Society's legendary Sister City Exchange with his late father Joseph Spremulli. That program linked Panni, Italy —where many Johnston residents still have roots — with their Ocean State home.

Louis Spremulli launched Spirit of Hope via zoom, and the organization later turned into a religious nonprofit group.

"We decided to do some good things and make donations to the homeless and needy that quickly led to formation of a 501C3 non-profit entitled Spirit of Hope," Spremulli said Sunday morning during an impressive and interesting presentation inside Chelo's Banquet Room in Warwick.

The all-volunteer group was designed specifically to follow the word of God to help other people. Despite having only 10 members, those gathered discussed many programs and ways to give back to the Rhode Island community.

"We do it because it makes us feel good and that's what God wants us to do," Spremulli said. "Our mission statement is simple; we serve the community with those who are in need physically, psychologically and spiritually following the Word of God."

In less than three years, the Spirit of Hope has a five-member Board of Directors and 10 different committees, ranging from marketing to grants and rescue kits, just to name a few.

Moreover, there's a Partnership Committee that tomorrow (March 3) will be joined by the Johnston Senior Center headed by Executive Director Richard J. DelFino who called Sunday's Sun Rise Buffet Breakfast/Program "one of the most impressive and interesting groups I've seen in years."

Which is why DelFino announced "we will have some of our valuable volunteers join Spirit of Hope members to assemble rescue kits that will be delivered to various homeless sites in our area."

"We are excited about the partnership with the (Johnston) Senior Center," said Vice President Paul Orlando, who was one of four people that delivered brief yet heartwarming messages Sunday. "This is a huge step that will help us grow."

That will mark the seventh such Spirit of Hope partnership along with The Providence Rescue Mission, McCauley House, John Hope Settlement House, Women's Life Center, Providence VA Medical Center and community churches and mental health agencies.

Likewise, there is a Sponsorship Committee that Sunday received a \$500 Diamond level donation from Pannese Society President David Venditelli in memory of the late Joseph Spremulli, who did many things for many people and groups.

"We want to thank everyone for coming today," said Louis Spremulli. "Also, thank you to the 26 people and businesses to made Gold Sponsorships of \$150 each."

The Spirit of Hope, he explained, has also benefited from a RI State Grant secured by Rep. Ed Cardillo Jr. and the RI Foundation.

"We want to keep growing so we can help more people" he went on. "Please, consider joining or mission to help others."

That's what Spremulli, his wife Carla, Paul Orlando, Lisa Ricci and Linda Orlando want to keep doing on a much, much larger scale. Anyone who'd like more information, to join, make a donation or become a sponsor should call Spremulli at 401-374-4590.



FOUNDING HOPE: Spirit of Hope Founder-President Lou Spremulli (right) and Vice President Paul Orlando are joined by Crossroads RI Community Outreach/Volunteer Manager Ric Wild and Tanya Signore Host of Tuesday with Tanya during Sunday's Spirit of Hope Breakfast. (Sun Rise photos by Pete Fontaine)



GOLDEN GROUP: Pannese Society officers President David Venditelli (left), Lou Mansolillo and Jason Parenteau (right) join Carla Spremulli, Carol Thompson and Dr. David J. Coia during Sunday's Spirit of Hope Sun Rise Buffet Breakfast.



IMPORTANT ITEMS:

During its brief yet successful tenure, the Spirit of Hope has donated everything from blankets to soccer balls to other local non-profits in need.



INTERESTING INVITATION: This one of the unique signs on display at Sunday's Spirit of Hope fundraising/membership breakfast.

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THE BRIDGE AT CHERRY HILL

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SUPER SELLERS: Among the JHS music students who sold 970 calendars during "February Fever" are from left, Marcel Johnson-Goncalves, Amelia Ann Almonte, Hailee Joyal-Weiss, Katelyn Loffler and Trinity Blondin. (Submitted photo by Steve Turner)

Music boosters catch February Fever

By PETE FONTAINE

While college basketball's storied "March Madness" will soon be in full swing, the Johnston School Music Association recently completed a highly successful fundraiser titled "February Fever."

The unique program — a.k.a. the JMSA's annual Calendar Raffle — began last summer with members of the talented Johnston High School Marching Panthers Band and vocalists from the music department's highly-rated choir and choirs collecting prizes.

Upon completion, the nationally accredited JHS Music Department groups collected more than 70 valuable prizes ranging from cash amounts of \$200, \$100 and \$50 as well as valuable gift certificates to restaurants, golf courses, supermarkets, bakeries, garden centers, credit unions, elected town officials and just about every type of business as well as including nationally famous lumber companies and hardware stores.

The prize list totaled over \$4,000 in value with 70 percent being sold by members of the Ron Lamoureux-directed band and chorus students who study under Matt Gingras, selling a combined total of 970 calendars.

As Lamoureux, who has developed the JHS Music Department into a national award winner said: "We really appreciate the help from all these donors and from our JSMA members that have worked for months to collect all the prizes as well as selling the calendars."

Since every prize was donated, the JHS music students earned \$9,700, which Lamoureux emphasized "is great because our upcoming trip to the national competition in Hershey, Pennsylvania this year will cost almost \$60,000."

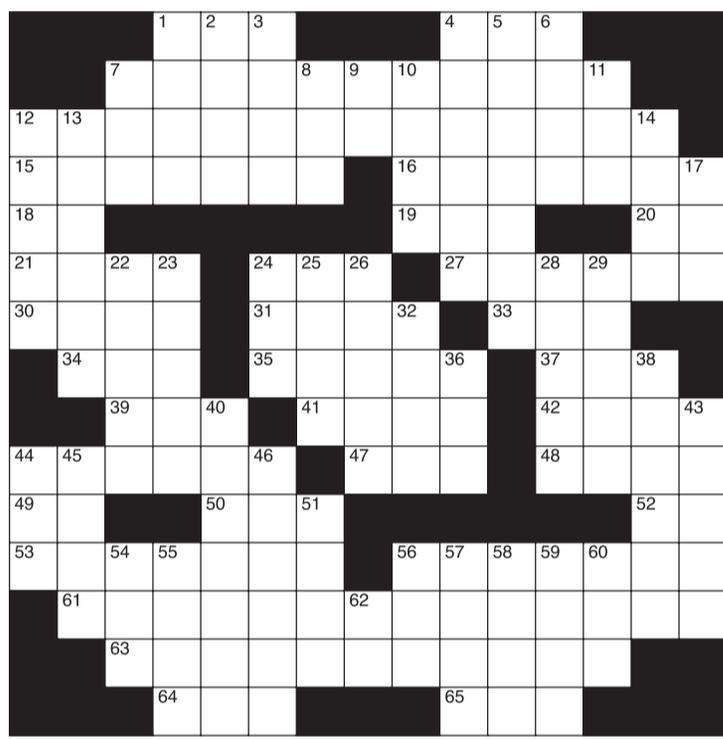
In the spring, JHS musicians and vocalists will continue what has become a tradition by competing for national honors in the highly acclaimed Busch Gardens Music Festival in May that features some of the finest school bands and vocalist groups in the eastern United States.

"The support we get from the community is unbelievable," Lamoureux exclaimed. "There's no other town and/or city in the state that gets this sort of support for our student programs like it does here in Johnston. With everything that all these businesses have been through in the past few years, it is absolutely amazing how generous everyone has been."

Even former Mayor Joseph M. Polisena and his son now Mayor Joseph Polisena Jr., State Sen. Frank Lombardo, State Rep. Deb Fellela, Council members Robert V. Russo, Linda Folcarelli and Robert Civetti, Johnston Police IBPO 307 and Johnston Firefighters Local 1950 donated valuable cash prizes for the Calendar Raffle.

As Lamoureux emphasized: "Now that's yet another example of Panther Pride at its highest level."

CROSSWORD PUZZLE CORNER



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Relaxing place
- 4. Plant by scattering
- 7. A type of explorer
- 12. Unique traits
- 15. Lady
- 16. Dismayed
- 18. Railway
- 19. Type of whale
- 20. Sodium
- 21. Manning and Lilly are two
- 24. Where golfers begin
- 27. Entrapped
- 30. Influential punk artist
- 31. Hebrew calendar month
- 33. Car mechanics group
- 34. Undesirable rodent
- 35. Minneapolis suburb
- 37. Witch
- 39. Get free of
- 41. A written proposal or reminder
- 42. British School
- 44. Country on west coast of Africa
- 47. Cool!
- 48. Information

- 49. ___ route
- 50. Jim Nantz's network
- 52. Something to register (abbr.)
- 53. Give cards incorrectly
- 56. One who's learning on the job
- 61. Stevenson adventure novel
- 63. Taking careful notice
- 64. CNN's founder
- 65. Speak badly of

CLUES DOWN

- 1. A person with unusual powers of foresight
- 2. Single sheet of glass
- 3. Portrays a character
- 4. Expresses happiness
- 5. Acquires
- 6. "The Martian" author
- 7. Degree
- 8. 60-minute intervals
- 9. A detective's pal
- 10. Group of nations (abbr.)
- 11. Popular Georgia rockers
- 12. Fencing swords
- 13. Basement
- 14. Samoan monetary unit
- 17. Male parent
- 22. Finnish lake
- 23. A smooth fabric
- 24. Arctic explorers (abbr.)
- 25. Mild yellow Dutch cheese
- 26. Very willing
- 28. Expressed pleasure
- 29. Lasso
- 32. Hindu model of ideal man
- 36. Move your head in approval
- 38. Ill-___: gained illegally
- 40. Die
- 43. Accused publicly
- 44. Precious stone
- 45. Individual thing or person
- 46. Behaved in a way that degraded
- 51. Derogatory term
- 54. No seats available
- 55. Liability
- 56. Popular beverage
- 57. Tough outer skin of fruit
- 58. ___ Spumante (Italian wine)
- 59. Troubles
- 60. Negative
- 62. Camper

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RACE FOR CD1

Shekarchi weighs 'free pass' bid for Congress

By JOHN HOWELL

"It's a free pass."
 K. Joseph Shekarchi was talking about the appeal of running for the First Congressional District seat now that David Cicilline has announced he will step down in May to assume the position of president and CEO of the Rhode Island Foundation.
 Shekarchi didn't need to explain. Although he lives in Warwick and the Second Congressional District, he can run for CD1 that covers the East Bay, a chunk of Providence and Pawtucket. Most appealing, however, the Warwick Representative who has ascended to the Speaker of the House and has amassed the largest campaign fund of any Rhode Island official at \$1.7 million could run without stepping down from his current seat — "a free pass."
 So, will he run?
 "I haven't made a decision yet," Shekarchi said Monday following a change of zone hearing before the

Warwick City Council. An attorney, who focuses on development and land use issues, Shekarchi was representing a developer seeking approval of a zone change to enable the construction of 21 condos on Centerville Road. The council unanimously approved the change in zone.
 So, what is Shekarchi hearing?
 He said according to his count, 17 Democrats are considering a run for the seat.
 Yet, another surprise leaked from the conversation.
 Shekarchi has a fundraiser planned for March 8.
 Where?
 "Washington, I'll send you the invitation."
 The event is scheduled for the Laborer's International Headquarters from 6 to 8 p.m. Suggested contributions range from \$250 to \$1,000. And then there is the kicker: the invitation lists special guests as Senator Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse and Congressmen David Cicilline and Seth Magaziner.



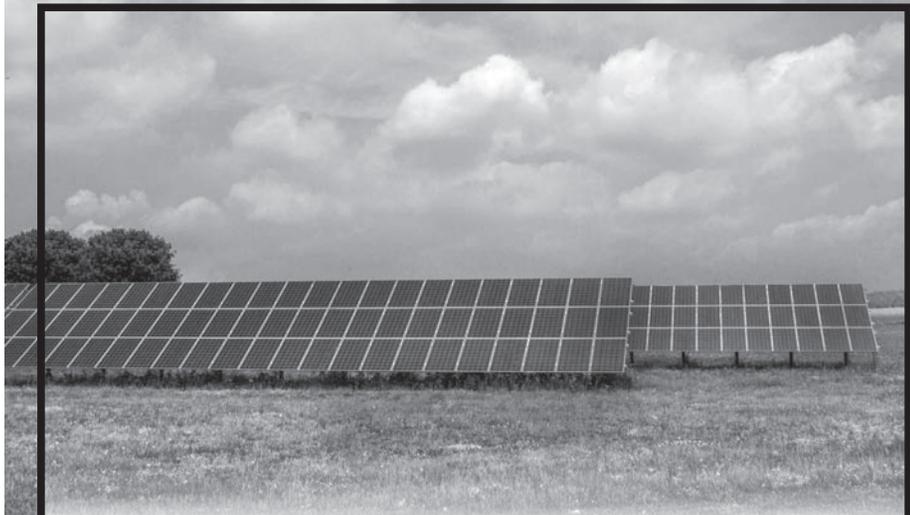
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With special guests from the Rhode Island Congressional Delegation:
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 Senator Sheldon Whitehouse
 Congressman David Cicilline
 Congressman Seth Magaziner

Wednesday, March 8th
 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm
 at
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 9th Floor Conference Center
 Washington, DC
 Cocktails and Hors D'oeuvres to be served
 Suggested Contribution: \$250 / \$500 / \$1,000
 Please make your personal check payable to:
 Friends of Joe Shekarchi
 or visit www.JoeShekarchi.com

HOT INVITE:

K. Joseph Shekarchi, Rhode Island Speaker of the House, has amassed the largest campaign fund of any Ocean State elected official at \$1.7 million. He's weighing a run at the state's soon-to-be-vacated First Congressional District seat. Shekarchi has a fundraiser planned for March 8 in Washington D.C. Check out the night's special guests on the invitation above. (Submitted image)



SOLAR PANELS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Hello,

I'm writing this letter in regards to an article that was printed in the Journal February 5, 2023 about Johnston council won't hear of Solar farm restrictions. First let me start off by saying I've been a resident of Johnston on Windsor Avenue for 60 years in a nice wooded neighborhood zoned R-40. I've been to every solar panel meeting since this started, even the one that went until 2:30 in the morning and had to go to work the next day. Two things in this article caught my attention. One, Green's attorney John O. Mancini mentions that the board's decision was flawed "because they went as long as they did and as late as they did, they got tired and the board's decision is flawed". The reason they went as long as they did was because Green Development went on approximately until midnight telling us how good this will be for us. I believe this was part of their plan to burn the residents out. When the meeting started at the Johnston Senior Center the place was full, all the seats were full, and people were standing waiting to speak. As the night went on around 9:00 PM people started leaving a couple at a time (most of us had to work the next day) 10:00 PM the same residents that wanted to speak continued to leave and this continued until approximately midnight. When people finally had the chance to voice their opinions there were only a handful left. Many people had great points, how this would affect our drinking water by disturbing the orchard that has chemicals like lead and lead arsenic on the soil, how cutting down 200 acres of trees to install over 90,000 solar panels would warm our neighborhood in the summer months and destroy the wildlife that lives there, how the trees make the oxygen that we breathe and how this would destroy our property values and way of life. This list goes on and on.

The second thing I found disturbing is when they mentioned the town being sued over not allowing these projects. I find it a little hard to believe that the town can be sued over somebody wanting to put an Industrial solar array consisting of over 90,000 solar panels into a residential R-40 zoned neighborhood that doesn't conform in any way. Speaking of lawsuits this could result in a class action lawsuit from the residents of upwards of \$30,000,000.00 towards the town, Green Development and property owners. For a meeting that didn't give many residents a chance to speak in a timely manner, the devaluation of people's properties and way of life. We didn't move into these neighborhoods to look out the window to see solar panels. Lastly, I would like to mention that most of the people that are behind this class action lawsuit against the Town, Green Development and the property owners are not against residential solar panels on their property for personal use or on commercial or industrial property zoned for this, just large commercial projects in residential neighborhoods.

Thank you,

Paul Scopelliti

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ALL FIXED UP: Eagle Scout Aidan Paplauskas posed for a photo with the freshly scrubbed outdoor classroom sign at St. Mary's School. He built the classroom and erected the sign. The sign was vandalized, but Paplauskas went to work immediately cleaning up the site. (Photo courtesy Chris Paplauskas via Twitter)

Cranston Police charge teens for St. Mary's School vandalism

Eagle Scout promptly cleans up the mess

Sun Rise Staff Reports

Cranston Police have made two arrests in a school vandalism case — a Johnston man and a Cranston minor.

On Wednesday, Feb. 22, Cranston Police Chief Col. Michael J. Winquist announced the "arrest of two teenagers alleged to have spray-painted signs at the St. Mary Catholic School in Cranston."

On Feb. 20, Cranston Police received a report that two signs had been vandalized at St. Mary's Catholic School. According to police, a local teen who created an outdoor classroom posted one of the signs as part of an Eagle Scout project.

"The signs were spray painted with red and black paint with pentagram symbols," according to police.

Police determined the vandalism occurred between the afternoon of Feb. 17 and the morning of Feb. 20, when it was discovered.

"The case was assigned to a detective from the Criminal Investigations Unit who worked closely with Patrol Officers," according to a press release from Cranston Police. "Video surveillance was collected from the area, which captured a vehicle with distinctive markings at the time of the crime. An inquiry was then made in the Flock license plate reader camera system, which captured the license plate information for the same vehicle as it passed a camera in the proximity of the time and location of the crime."

Police used the evidence to track down a Carmine DiSanto IV, 18, of Johnston, "who had been known to operate the vehicle in question," according to Cranston Police.

DiSanto agreed to an interview

with detectives and allegedly admitted that he vandalized the signs on the evening of Feb. 19, after purchasing spray paint from a Home Depot, according to police. Police charged a second suspect, a 17-year-old Cranston girl, who also allegedly admitted to defacing the signs with DiSanto.

On Feb. 21, DiSanto was arraigned by a Justice of the Peace on misdemeanor charges of Vandalism and Conspiracy and released on personal recognizance, according to police. The juvenile was released to a parent, and the case will be reviewed for consideration for a hearing at the City Juvenile Hearing Board or Family Court.

"This case was solved quickly thanks to the diligence of our Patrol and Detective divisions aided by modern technology, including our license plate reader system," Winquist said. "We recognize a lot of hard work went into the Eagle Scout project, and we are glad that the signs were repaired quickly and the responsible persons will be held accountable."

Cranston City Councilor Chris Paplauskas confirmed on Twitter that his son Aidan was the scout who originally built the outdoor classroom and erected its sign. They immediately went to work cleaning up the vandalism.

"Aidan took the vandalism much better than Judy or I did," Chris Paplauskas wrote. "He said, 'Dad sometimes people do bad things, but we can fix it. It's important to fix it today to show this isn't ok.' His positivity is infectious. With some elbow grease the signs are fixed and the classroom is cleaned."

POLICE LOG

STOLEN VEHICLE

Around 12:37 a.m. Feb. 21, Johnston Police Patrolman Derek Parascandolo was on patrol and checked on a vehicle that had been sitting at a gas pump for more than an hour at a Johnston gas station.

The employee inside told police that the vehicle's driver had entered the business around the start of the worker's shift at 11:30 p.m., bought some candy and went back out to the black Mercedes.

"He advised that due to it being heavily tinted he was unable to see the operator at which time I conducted a well being check," Parascandolo wrote in the arrest report.

Police identified the driver as Michael Olivo, of 121 Morgan Ave., Johnston. He was the sole occupant of the vehicle and told police he was waiting for somebody on their way from a club in Providence.

A check with dispatch notified Parascandolo that the vehicle was reported stolen. He asked the driver who the car belonged to, and the driver allegedly answered that it was his "cousin's car."

Olivo was arrested without incident, transported to police headquarters, permitted to make a phone call and secured in a cell pending arraignment at Third District Court. The vehicle was towed back to headquarters.

Olivo was charged with Possession of Stolen Vehicle (first offense).

LARCENY

At 7:46 a.m., Feb. 12, Johnston Patrolman Steven Letterle responded to a local business to investigate a reported larceny from the previous day. Upon arrival, he spoke to an employee who told him that a man walked into the store and grabbed a wrapped packet of lottery tickets and put them inside his jacket prior to leaving the store.

The employee informed police that there are 30 tickets in each packet. The tickets were \$10 tickets, totaling about \$300 in scratch tickets.

The man parked at one of the fuel pumps and was driving a silver Dodge pickup truck with Rhode Island plates. A DMV check revealed that neither plate on the vehicle matched the vehicle. The suspect was described as a white man wearing blue jeans and a dark blue shirt with a red flannel jacket and a grey hat.

A surveillance footage check revealed the ticket theft. The case was forwarded to the Johnston Police Detective Division for further investigation.

On Feb. 13 Johnston Police Detective Kevin Brady

spoke to the store owner who informed him that the ticket book had been reported to the Rhode Island Lottery as stolen.

"In the event that someone tries to 'cash in' a winning ticket from this book the vendor ringing in the scratch ticket will be notified that the ticket and ticket book is stolen," Brady wrote in his investigation report.

On Feb. 14, Brady spoke to the registered owner of the plates that were on the suspect's truck. The owner of the plates informed police that they were on an old black Chevrolet Silverado that was totaled in a car crash in 2017.

Further investigation led Brady to identify the suspect in the case as David W. Dilibero, of 379 Douglas Pike, Apt. 15, Smithfield. Johnston Police issued an arrest warrant for Dilibero on a charge of Larceny Under \$1,500.

On Feb. 15, Dilibero showed up at the Johnston Police Department to turn himself in. He was processed and later released with a district court summons.

WARRANT ARREST

Around 4:20 p.m., Feb. 23, Johnston Police Patrolman Matthew D. Murphy was on a fixed post in the area of 2880 Hartford Ave., when he spotted a white Chevrolet Volt pass his location at a high rate of speed. He noted that the vehicle was missing its front license plate and its driver's side rearview mirror.

Murphy followed the vehicle and clocked it traveling 45 miles per hour in a 35 mile per hour zone.

In the arrest report, Murphy noted that he could not initiate a traffic stop due to safety concerns, so he followed the vehicle for 1.5 miles, "during which time the vehicle's speed remained consistent at 45 miles per hour."

He eventually stopped the car and identified the driver as Citlaly S. Sitamul, of 30 Leah St., Providence. A background check revealed an active warrant out of the Providence Police Department for a charge of Breaking & Entering, according to police. Police also discovered that the vehicle's registration had been suspended.

Sitamul was arrested and transported to Johnston Police Headquarters. She was held for transfer to Providence Police on the active warrant. Johnston Police cited Sitamul for Speeding 1 to 10 MPH in Excess of Posted Speed Limit, Rear Reflectors Required, and Display of Plates.

Providence Police took custody of Sitamul at 7:45 p.m.

Three sentenced in 'Grandparent Scam' con that defrauded RI seniors

Three men have been sentenced to federal prison for their roles in a "grandparent scam" conspiracy that defrauded more than a dozen Rhode Island seniors between the ages of seventy-nine and ninety-four out of more than \$300,000, according to a press release U.S. Attorney Zachary A. Cunha.

At least fourteen Rhode Island seniors were contacted by members of the conspiracy who impersonated family members or attorneys, claiming that a family member, often a grandchild, had been arrested and was in immediate need of cash for bail payments. The victims were directed to gather cash for these fake bail payments and to provide the money to a courier who would be sent to their home.

Bryan Valdez-Espinosa, 22, and Diego A. Alarcon, 22, of Union City, New Jersey; and Jason Hatcher, 40, of New York, New York, previously admitted to a federal judge that in June 2021, they traveled around Rhode Island posing as the couriers, collecting cash from victims of the scam. The elder victims were defrauded out of a total of \$304,081, according to the press release.

In July 2022, Hatcher pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud and aggravated identity theft; Alarcon and Valdez-Espinosa each pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud.

On Friday, Alarcon was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge William E. Smith to 30 months of incarceration to be followed by 3 years of federal supervised release, and ordered to pay restitution totaling \$304,081; Valdez-Espinosa was sentenced by Judge Smith on February 13, 2023, to 30 months of incarceration to be followed by 3 years of federal supervised release, and to pay restitution in the amount of \$262,240; Jason Hatcher was sentenced on November 21, 2022, to 33 months in federal prison followed by three years of federal supervised release, and ordered to pay restitution totaling \$304,081.

The cases were prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Lee H. Vilker, G. Michael Seaman, and Christine D. Lowell. The matter was investigated by Homeland Security Investigations.

Cunha thanked the Warwick, Cranston, East Providence, Johnston, Hopkinton, Cumberland, Coventry, North Kingstown, Barrington, and Smithfield Police Departments for their assistance with the investigation.

Two dead in house fire by Garden City

By EDWARD KDONIAN

A house fire broke out on Whitewood Drive around 2:30 a.m. on Friday, Feb. 24, killing two elderly men despite more than 25 firefighters working to extinguish the blaze.

"We have a fire with two victims deceased and our detectives are working with the State Fire Marshal's office and Cranston Fire Prevention on the fire investigation," said Cranston Police Chief

Col. Michael J. Winquist. "There's nothing further at this point as we work to determine the cause of the fire."

Fire Chief James Warren said the call for the fire came in at 2:40 a.m. and that upon arrival they found heavy fire. He also said that it took a full hour for the department to extinguish the flames.

"Obviously we had some investigators out there, and they were able to get inside the building after dealing with some of

the collapse damage," said Deputy State Fire Marshal and Investigator James Given. "Unfortunately, we are carrying the fire as undetermined. There is no obvious cause that we've been able to nail down, which can happen just due to the level of destruction caused."

Though the cause of the fire is still unknown, as is the official identity of the victims, NBC News 10 reported that property records show the house is

owned by a Bruce Jeremiah and that multiple neighbors confirmed to their reporters the house was occupied by two brothers of that last name.

Windows around the exterior of the house were blown out by the intensity of the blaze, charred markings of where the blaze spread from the back of the house towards the front show the intensity of the blaze, though any exposed windows have since been boarded up.

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Watch Your MOUTH
by Rochelle Rhodes, D.M.D. and David McFarland, D.D.S.
DENTAL EMERGENCIES
When does a dental problem become an emergency? Some issues need immediate attention, while others can wait until your next dental checkup. A dental emergency is any problem that requires immediate attention, like severe pain, bleeding that won't stop, the risk of losing a tooth, or an infection. Other examples are a sudden or severely painful toothache, sudden swelling in the mouth or jaw, exposed nerves, knocked out or fractured teeth, abscesses, and objects lodged in the teeth or gums. Missing fillings and crowns can also be considered dental emergencies, due to the risk of further damage and infection. If you're not sure if your issue requires an emergency visit, call your dentist to discuss your symptoms.
It's so much easier to prevent a dental tragedy than have to treat it when it turns serious. Place your oral health in our capable hands at DENTAL ARTS GROUP, A Collaborative Practice Committed to Excellence. We'll work together as a team with you to achieve the long-term benefits that quality dentistry affords. You can trust us to help you keep on top of a healthy dental profile that will serve you well into your future. For routine dental maintenance visits to late-breaking emergencies, you can reach us at 401-521-3661, here at 1136 Hartford Ave., Johnston. Most insurance plans accepted.
P.S. If you are experiencing a dental emergency, you can request an emergency appointment with a dentist, but it may require a trip to the emergency room if no immediate appointment is available.
www.dentalartsgroupri.com

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- Sun. Mar. 19- DAVENPORT'S, East Prov.*
- Sat. Apr. 8- The ISLANDER, Warwick
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CCRI rebounds in wake of pandemic

President Hughes discusses what she's seeing in the higher ed landscape

By EMMA BARTLETT

Meghan Hughes is all about optimism. The fifth president of the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) is focusing efforts on how she can continue to build a team and inspire community to build the very best community college in the country while also being mindful of how CCRI can remain affordable to students.

CCRI is the largest community college in New England with four campuses. The institution serves more than 40,000 Rhode Islanders annually, Warwick Rotarians learned Thursday as Hughes reflected on what the institution has done since she was named president in 2016.

Hughes is not a first generation college student; both her parents attended college. On one side of her family, Hughes' grandparents attended a post-secondary institution while her mom's side were blue collar workers. Her mother's father began his career on the railway and later moved into working on cars and airplanes. Hughes said her grandfather built a more profitable career working with his hands than her dad did as a lawyer and, thanks to her grandfather's financial support, she graduated from Yale University and New York University with minimal student loans.

"That is not the case for most Americans," said Hughes. In the higher education landscape, Hughes has noticed that individuals are questioning if it still makes sense to attend college. People are looking at whether they can afford additional schooling as well as if they would get a well-paying job after completing a higher education program.

"I think Americans are asking a really important question," Hughes said.

She said the pandemic affected CCRI enrollment. Hughes explained that CCRI looks at the metrics of how many Rhode Islanders are enrolling at the college. She said she'd sweat if that number was down a single percentage point. When Covid hit, that enrollment number dropped 17 percent.

"That number holds true for community colleges across the country," Hughes said, adding that community colleges in New England community colleges were down 20 percent, resulting in CCRI outperforming the region by 4 percent.

The college started recovering enrollment in February of 2022.

"It was the first time we saw an enrollment uptick since the pandemic began," Hughes said.

Last fall, CCRI enrolled just north of 12,000 Rhode Islanders in credit bearing. This number is up by roughly 3 percent.

Meanwhile, enrollment for the college's Promise Program



CCRI'S FIFTH PRESIDENT: Meghan Hughes is the fifth president of CCRI. She spoke to Warwick Rotarians recently about where the college is now and what she's looking at moving forward. (Sun Rise photo)

jumped 13 percent. This state-funded program assists Rhode Islanders who've graduated from high school and directly enter CCRI as a fulltime student. Students must maintain a 2.5 GPA and earn 30 credits in their first year.

More than 2,000 Rhode Island graduate annually from CCRI.

"We know that north of 96 percent stay right here in Rhode Island, raise their families in Rhode Island, go to work in your companies in Rhode Island and contribute to the economy," Hughes said.

Hughes said there are certain metrics that the federal government looks at when determining whether to continue making federal financial aid dollars available to colleges. They use the percentage of first time full time students who were never enrolled elsewhere. Hughes said this is a small fraction of CCRI's population.

"When I arrived, that number hovered 4 percent," said Hughes, adding that is now up to 18 percent.

This number does not mean that the college is only graduating 4 percent of its student population.

Additionally, a number of students are completing a degree in three years rather than two. The three year graduation rate increased from 18 percent to 30 percent just before the pan-

demic. Right now, the number is hovering at 17 percent.

Hughes is looking to build a community that is able to evolve and adapt, which means serving students right now and positioning the college for the students who are going to walk through CCRI's doors in the future.

Looking forward there is room to explore careers in offshore wind. The college is already providing 150 offshore wind workers with basic safety training. The college is also a partner of Electric Boat and has trained more than 700 Rhode Islanders for them. This number is expected to expand.

The institution also has several workforce partnerships with those in healthcare and Industrial Technology. The college provides adult education, literacy and math training and trains bus drivers, truck drivers and kids getting their licenses.

"Workforce training, it's how we produce a new workforce coming into companies across Rhode Island and how we upskill or reskill an incoming workforce," Hughes said.

Hughes added that there are ways for community members to assist students. The new Coaching 4 Success program allows adults the opportunity to mentor a youth. This initiative will launch in September and the mentor and mentee will meet once a month either in person or virtually from September through May.

Mail theft reports on the rise locally

By DANIEL J. HOLMES

Carl Mercer had already heard about the local uptick in mail-fishing before he went to mail his insurance bill earlier this month. In fact, he even had a friend who had a check stolen from a mailbox in Cranston and cashed for multiple times its original value.

"I figured the mailbox near the Beacon would be safe," he said, adding that he lives in the neighborhood behind the newspaper's main office. "Then I got a notice from my insurance company saying that the payment had never been received. I was able to stop the check before it could be cashed, fortunately."

Mail theft has been on the rise in the region since the pandemic, with confirmed incidents having occurred at post boxes on

Spring Green Road and Post Road, as well as those in front of the United States Post Office branch on Strawberry Field Road. The practice of "fishing" for mail can include a variety of techniques, ranging from putting an adhesive substance at the end of a rope lowered into a mailbox to discretely inserting a bag within the mailbox to collect deposited letters.

According to USPS Strategic Communications Specialist Stephen Doherty, the postal service has working since 2019 to replace traditional mailboxes with slotted boxes which are more resistant to fishing attempts. "With thousands of these blue collection boxes nationwide, the process of replacing them is ongoing," he said. "There is no strict timeline for completion but, eventually, all collection boxes will be of this type."

The new boxes were introduced through the federal agency's Aviation Security Program; in addition to deterring potential thieves, the boxes also enforce weight and size requirements for letters and packages.

Postal Inspector Danielle Schrage encourages any victims of mail-fishing to contact the United States Postal Inspection Service at 877-867-2455 or visiting uspis.gov. At the outset of the mail theft spate, the Warwick Police Department also issued a statement requesting that anyone who witnesses suspicious activity near a local mailbox contact them with a description of the incident and persons involved. Several arrests have been made for the crime throughout Rhode Island over the course of the past two years.

Schrage's suggestions for minimizing the risk of having your own mail stolen include

keeping an eye on your home mailbox: these are even easier to access than USPS boxes, and a raised flag can be a signal to thieves that there is unattended mail within. Avoid depositing letters after the posted last collection, so they will not be sitting within the box overnight, and always check boxes for any signs of tampering before inserting mail.

When sending money in the mail, never use cash; Schrage said that those paying bills can request secure checks from their bank which are more difficult for thieves to alter.

As for Mercer, he plans to play it safe for the time being.

"I've seen them putting out those new mailboxes, but for now, I'm going to just stick with dropping it off in person down in Apponaug," he said.

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Opinion

EDITORIAL

Balancing criticism on Cicilline's departure

Last week, one of Rhode Island's most high-profile politicians made waves by announcing his departure from Congress less than three months into a new term which he had handily won this past November.

In the days since, Congressman David Cicilline has been the subject of think pieces that range from wholesale lambasting for a supposedly selfish move to lead the Rhode Island Foundation, to pieces that seem to bend over backwards in order to defend and empathize with his decision. Any consistent reader of this editorial page can probably assume where we'll land on the issue

— somewhere in the vacuous space between those two extremes.

One can hardly judge Cicilline for taking a lucrative job atop one

• WHERE TO WRITE:
1944 Warwick Avenue
Warwick, RI 02889
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of the state's most influential organizations. It's a job where a politically-minded individual can affect real, tangible change for the people they represented as an elected official — and in Cicilline's case, this means also representing people beyond his Congressional district. However, we think it is fair to ponder exactly how much influence the president and CEO of the foundation has over the large board that makes the final decision on who will receive what funding. Perhaps the connections Cicilline has made while representing Rhode Island in Washington will provide an additional boost to the foundation, and to Rhode Islanders by extension, but only time will tell.

We also think it is fair to criticize Cicilline for his decision to vacate his seat in the very beginning of a two-year term. The costs of a special election will now be burdened by Rhode Island taxpayers, which shouldn't be forgotten.

At the same time, understanding Cicilline's willingness to leave that seat isn't too difficult. With a Republican majority in the House, his influence has only been trending downwards since his glory days where he led committee meetings questioning some of the world's most affluent and influential tech CEOs, and could often be found quoted in national publications on issues as lofty as presidential impeachments. When he lost his bid to become assistant minority leader, the writing was on the wall for Cicilline that it would be many years still before he had another chance at ascending the precarious ladder of Congress rather than slowly sliding down it.

Perhaps we're a bit puzzled by some of the criticisms we've read. Is it supposed to be surprising for a politician to be an opportunist? Cicilline, whether you agree with his policies or not, has had a scandal-free tenure as a Congressman and has placed Rhode Island in the national spotlight through his committee roles during some of the more newsworthy hearings of the past few years. Overall, he has earned the benefit of the doubt in going forward to advocate on behalf of Rhode Islanders.



TO RI REP. BRIAN NEWBERRY ASKED IF HE MIGHT RUN FOR CONGRESS...



LETTERS

'\$80,000 for a glorified assistant is outrageous'

As a Johnston resident I was shocked to hear about a recent appointment that current Mayor Joe Polisena Jr. had announced.

The mayor appointed a former local TV Newsperson to his staff as Deputy Chief of Staff at an annual salary of \$80,000 — \$80,000 for a glorified assistant is outrageous.

I am sure there are others who feel this way.

Johnston Town Council President Robert Russo did not seem to object to the annual salary this person is getting.

I am sure the new assistant, who was among several on-air talent at WLNE-TV, a station that continues to lose its employees, is qualified, but not at this price.

Edward Collins
Johnston

RHODY CLEANS UP AFTER THE BIG STORM



JOHNSTON Sun Rise

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SUN RISE SCOOPS

Sun Rise Staff Reports

JFD Blood Pressure Screening Event

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

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

Little League

Johnston Little League Baseball sign-ups are underway and close on March 4.

Visit jllri.com to sign up and for more information. The first 100 players to sign up get a free Dick's Sporting Goods coupon book. Email any questions to johnstonrillittleleague@gmail.com.

Coed Middle School Volleyball

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

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

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

More at Mohr Library

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

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

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

Regular story time for preschoolers is offered Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. There are afterschool activities nearly every day, including varied programs for middle and high-school age kids and crafts for younger kids.

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

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

JRTC Fundraiser

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

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

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

Coat Exchange

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

Those looking to donate can either drop off items at the Coat Exchange's Cranston, East Greenwich or Providence lo-

cations, or you can order items online and have them shipped to Cranston or East Greenwich. Collection site addresses can be found at RICoatExchange.org. Contributions are also welcomed via the nonprofit's GoFundMe fundraiser. Collection site addresses and GoFundMe information can be found at RICoatExchange.org.

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

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

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

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

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

Launched more than 20 years ago by Rhode Island activist Greg Gerritt, the Buy Nothing Day Coat Exchange is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit and an extension of Buy Nothing Day, an international day of protest against consumerism that runs concurrent with Black Friday, the United States' busiest shopping day of the year. In recent years, local organizers have expanded beyond collecting solely for the Buy Nothing Day event to include the Spare a Pair Sock and Underwear Drive, held annually at the start of each calendar year.

Johnston Senior Center highlights

The Johnston Senior Center is better than ever. Offering more exercise programs and trips every week; Hi Lo Jack, Monday & Wednesday and Poker on Wednesday. Arts & Crafts, on Monday, Mar Jong on Thursday & Quilting on Wednesday, Tia Chi on Tuesday. The Senior Center also has a book Club the last Tuesday once a month.

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

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

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

Soul of '71 Scholarship Fund

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

RIDE Summer Meals Program

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

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

For more information on the program, call the Rhode Island Department of Education, Office of Statewide Efficiencies, at 401-222-8701. Applications for participation during the 2023

summer season must be completed and approved prior to June 15, 2023; interested organizations should reach out to RIDE no later than May 1, 2023 to start the application process.

GED Preparation Classes

The Tri-County Employment & Training Program offers GED Preparation Classes at 3 Career Center locations. The GED prep classes offer personalized instruction for students in a classroom setting. Individual tutoring is available to help students learn in their own style, leading to successful completion of the class, and a high rate of passing the GED exam on the first try.

Day and evening classes are available at Career Center locations: 33 Maple Avenue, North Providence; 415 Tower Hill Road, North Kingstown; 23 Friendship Street, Westerly (located in the Westerly Education Center). Contact them for more information, at 401-519-1929.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance

More than 1 in 4 US households struggle with their home energy bills. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) can help keep the heat on. The Tri-County LIHEAP Program helps to cover the cost of home heating bills for those that qualify.

Visit www.tricountyri.com for more information about the LIHEAP program, and other weatherization programs that can help to reduce your home energy bills. To submit an application for LIHEAP, or to see if you qualify, contact them at 401-519-1913. The Tri-County LIHEAP program has locations in North Providence and North Kingstown.

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

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

Explore the 'Woony'

You can "Join the Woony Team!"

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

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

More hikes have been planned for future dates:

Hike Fort Wildlife Refuge in North Smithfield at 10 a.m., Saturday, March 4. Located near Primrose Pond, this 3 mile hike is very near the northernmost part of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed. This loop trail is part of an Audubon site, so wildlife abounds.

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

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

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

Neighborhood Watch

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

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

LEGAL NOTICES

Public Auction Legal Notice

Form of notice under RI General laws 39-12.1 to 12.1-15

To: Carol Boga 389 Prospect st 3rd floor Pawt RI A public auction will be held at 100 South Street Johnston RI on March 10, 2023 at 900 am. The vehicle a 2009 Hyundai KMHDU46D79U819256 belonging to the above, the auction being held is to satisfy towing and storage fees.

**YOUR AD
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BE HERE**

**For more info, call
732-3100**

Obituaries

Nicholas Pisani

Nicholas Pisani, 96, of Johnston for 65 years passed away peacefully on February 19, 2023 in the HopeHealth Hular Hospice Center, Providence after a brief illness. He was the beloved husband of the late Elvira B. (Gaioni) Pisani for almost 59 years.



Born in Providence, he was the eldest son of the late Filippo A. and Rafaella (DeRosa) Pisani.

Nicholas was a model maker in the Jewelry Industry for many years, working for such places as Coro Manufacturing, Dante Shields, Vargas Ring and W.T. Wilson before retiring in 1988. He was also a WW II Army Veteran serving in the 96th Infantry and was in active combat in Okinawa in which he spoke about at least three brushes with death.

He was a communicant of Holy Cross Church. He was a devoted husband and father and enjoyed vegetable gardening, swimming at the beach and walking in the park. He often relaxed with a pen and pad in his hands creating sketches of jewelry ideas, caricatures and landscapes. Nick loved to talk with the many people he met, especially at the beach.

He was the father of Nicholas A. Pisani and Carol A. Pisani, both of Johnston; brother of Ralph D. Pisani and his wife Judith Bell and brother in law of Mario Assante. He was also predeceased by his brothers John A. Pisani, Phillip A. Pisani, Jr. and his sister Rose Assante

His funeral will be held Friday at 9:00 AM from the ROMANO FUNERAL HOME, 627 Union Avenue, Providence followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at 10:00 AM in Holy Cross Church, 645 Hartford Avenue, Providence. Burial with Military Honors to follow in St. Ann Cemetery. VISITATION THURSDAY 4-7 PM.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made in Nick's memory to the Holy Cross Memorial Fund or any Veteran affiliated charity of your choice. For online tributes and condolences, visit www.romanofuneralhome.com.

Angelo Imondi

It is with deep sorrow that the family of Angelo Imondi share the sad news of his passing at the age of 91. He was the husband of the late Lois (Gisselbrecht) Imondi for 61 years. Born in Providence, he was the son of the late Angelo and Vincenzina (Mancini) Imondi.



Angelo, a Korean War Veteran, a loving father, grandfather, brother, and uncle, is survived by his daughter, Lois O'Brien, granddaughters, Alexandra Brown and her husband Richard and Angela O'Brien. He also leaves his great-grandchildren, who he referred to as his paisans, Chayden, Ava, Alivia, Camden, and Amaya, and his sister, Evelyn Grindley and brother, William Imondi and his wife Muriel, and sisters-in-law, Grete and Janice Imondi. He was predeceased by his siblings, Ann Blackwood, Carmine (Hank) and his wife Rita, Joseph and his wife Angie, Albert and his wife Maria, Mary Kusmierz and her husband Stephen, John and his wife Nancy, Paul and Richard Imondi.

We wish to offer a special thanks to the Hular Hospice Center for the compassionate care of Angelo.

His funeral will be held on Friday, February 24, 2023 at 11 am in the Robbins Funeral Home, 2251 Mineral Spring Ave., North Providence. Burial with military honors will follow in Highland Memorial Park. Calling hours Thursday 5-7 pm and Friday 10-11 am.

Obituaries

In your time of need, the *Johnston Sun Rise* will print your loved one's full obituary for a small charge. The paper also places the obituary on our website, johnstonsunrise.net.

Should you desire our services, kindly inform your funeral director, or call (401) 732-3100 or email Obits@rhodybeat.com for additional information. Obituary prices start at \$60. You may include the obituary in any of our other newspapers for half price.

- Thank you

www.johnstonsunrise.net

Look for me in the entranceway of your local BankRI



BankRI kicks off statewide children's book drive

On March 1, Bank Rhode Island (BankRI) kicked off its 2023 Children's Book Drive at all 20 of its branch locations, including the Johnston branch. This is one of the largest annual collections held in support of Books Are Wings, which also coincides with National Reading Month.

It is the 13th year BankRI has partnered with Books Are Wings, the Pawtucket-based nonprofit whose unique, youth-centered programs put more than 60,000 free books into the hands of local kids every year.

"The reason we hold our book drive in March is this is traditionally a time of low inventory for Books Are Wings and when they're ramping up for their spring and summer programs," said Will Tsonos, President & CEO of BankRI. "We have an incredibly generous community that supports this collection year after year. I hope we can make this one the best ever."

For the entire month of March, all BankRI branches feature a marked collection bin in its foyer or near its entrance door to accept donations of new and gently-used children's books. There is also the option to support the drive virtually by purchasing a book from an Amazon Wish List of titles requested by Books Are Wings. The Wish List can be accessed at BooksAreWings.org/donate-books.

Books collected through the BankRI drive will help Books Are Wings programs where the need is the greatest, including its summer reading outreach in Rhode Island's core communities.

"Every book donated to us is a big deal — when you stop and think about the fact six out of ten children living in under-resourced communities grow up in homes without books, this is about providing access that can ignite a love of reading," said Jennifer Smith, Executive Director of Books Are Wings. "This drive is so important to our ability to get books to kids before they leave school for the year and to keep books available to them during the summer."

To find the BankRI branch closest to you and its hours, visit www.BankRI.com/locations.



DROP BOOKS HERE: Bank Rhode Island kicked off its 2023 Children's Book Drive at all 20 of its branch locations, including the Johnston branch at 1450 Hartford Ave. Look for bins like the one pictured above.

David M. DiPaolo FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

2018 March 5 2023



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Mom & Step-Dad Walter



THE TUSSELE: After someone stole a pair of catalytic converters from his property in September of last year, Daniel S. Walser III tracked the suspect down at a local gas station and held him for police. The suspect, William E. "Hacksaw" Hazard Sr. is seated on the curb surrounded by police. According to police, he pleaded no contest to possession of stolen parts, and remains locked up at the ACI. (Photos courtesy Daniel S. Walser III)

Converters

(Continued from page 1)

Walser contacted Providence Police. They arrived on the scene. Walser said workers at the business were a little rude to police, but together they found Hazard on camera and matched it to the man seen on video surveillance stealing the converters. "They were given a warning by Providence Police Department that 'Hey, look you need to get paperwork,'" Walser said. "I'm guessing this whole raid had something to do with them not following that order. Again, that's just my guess."

The 'Tussle'

Several days later, on Sept. 21, 2022, the second AirTag pinged at a local gas station.

Walser said he "wasted no time" getting to the scene.

"I know the police have their hands tied with the ways the laws are written," Walser said. "They can't just show up and raid your house. I knew nothing was going to happen from prior experience."

At the Mobil gas station on Jefferson Boulevard, he spotted the same beat up Toyota captured on video at the Providence scrap yard. The small car's passenger seat had been removed and in its place a large exhaust system was riding shotgun.

"I got there and I blocked him in until the police arrived," Walser recalled. The police report mentions a "tussle," but notes that Walser merely held Hazard in place until police arrived.

"Surveillance from the Mobil verify (Walser's) story, (Hazard) was not assaulted, Daniel just attempted to detain and hold him until Police arrived to solve the matter," Warwick Police Officer Normand G. Guilbert wrote in Hazard's arrest report.

"The guy was known to them," Walser said. "They knew who he was. When I found him at the gas station, they

knew who it was right away. They're like oh, that's Hacksaw ... that's his nickname because he's just done it so many times."

Hazard faced two charges: Possession of Stolen Parts and Habitual Offender Shoplifting, Larceny or Receiving Stolen Goods (after three previous convictions).

According to court records, Hazard entered a plea of Nolo Contendere (no contest) to Possession of Stolen Parts. The Habitual Offender charge, however, was dismissed by the prosecution.

Hazard received a three-year sentence, and as of Tuesday, remains incarcerated at the Adult Correctional Institutions (ACI), according to Warwick Police Chief Col. Bradford Connor.

"He even told the police later, 'When I get out I'll do it again and I'll go right back to his property,'" Walser said. The police report noted the threat. Walser said there haven't been any incidents since Hazard's arrest.

The Trend

Catalytic converter theft has been soaring in frequency throughout the Ocean State.

In 2021, Johnston Police "recorded 30 incident reports in reference to catalytic converter thefts with a total of 47 converters stolen," according to Chief Mark A. Vieira. Last year, Johnston Police received 36 converter theft reports (43 stolen in all).

In 2020, Cranston Police investigated 38 reports of stolen catalytic converters. That number more than tripled by 2021, when Cranston Police received 133 reports, and 108 in 2022.

"Catalytic converter thefts remain an issue in Cranston and cities/towns across Rhode Island and the country," said Cranston Police Chief Col. Michael J. Winiquist.

So far this year, Cranston Police have had just 13 reports.

The vast majority of catalytic converter thefts are never solved. Only a tiny fraction of a single percent of the reported thefts typically results in an arrest.



RIDING SHOTGUN: The suspect's tiny car was so small that he had to remove the passenger seat to fit the exhaust systems he stole. When a Warwick business owner tracked down the suspect he caught stealing from his property, the catalytic converter was still in the Toyota, riding shotgun.

According to Winiquist, Cranston Police arrested just four suspects for the theft of catalytic converters in 2021, and made only a single related arrest in 2022.

"It is not very often we are fortunate to make an arrest in these cases," Winiquist explained via email earlier this week. "The individuals involved in this criminal activity are well-versed in removing the catalytic converters quickly (less than a minute) and block the field of vision of any surveillance cameras and witnesses with their vehicle. If we stop a person with catalytic converters, we must be able to track it to a crime that was previously reported to bring charges. Without any identifying numbers, it is rare to make the connection."

The Law

Several state laws have been passed to specifically address the theft of catalytic converters. The first prohibits the removal of catalytic converters, except to replace a defective part. Offenders face a \$500 fine for violating the law.

Rhode Island also passed legislation requiring anyone "purchasing a converter to obtain either the vehicle registration or VIN from which it was removed and provide the information to law enforcement upon request," according to Winiquist.

That law, however, is only effective paired with vigilant enforcement.

"There is a need for routine checks or reseller facilities to ensure they are following this, which is difficult due to limited police department resources," Winiquist explained. "Vehicle owners can also seek to have their vehicle's VIN number inscribed on their catalytic converter, which will assist police if we stop a person who has possession so we can match it to a prior theft and bring charges. Ideally, federal law needs to be passed requiring vehicle manufacturers to stamp the VIN on the converters of all new vehicles."

The Raid

The exact items seized and the reasons for the raid at Accurate Converter

have not been made public.

"The FBI was conducting court-authorized activity in connection with an ongoing federal investigation," said Kristen Setera, spokeswoman for the FBI Boston Office. "To protect the integrity of the ongoing investigation we will refrain from commenting on its substance."

When asked to comment on the criminal trend of catalytic converter theft in general, and in New England specifically, Setera still had no comment.

"Given that there's (an) ongoing investigation, we're going to decline comment at this time," she wrote via email.

Cranston's connection to the pending FBI case remains unclear.

"The Cranston Police Department assisted the FBI and Providence Police in searching a catalytic converter reseller dealer in Providence last week," Winiquist said on Monday. "I cannot comment further on this activity and would defer to the FBI."

The Defense

Walser recommends local businesses arm themselves with high-quality video surveillance. He suggests investing in lighting for exteriors, and urging employees to remain vigilant.

In most cases, however, there's not much you can do to stop would-be catalytic converter thieves.

"That guy didn't care about lighting," Walser said. "He came right in — in the middle of the day."

If you show up at Walser Mobile Refrigeration, however, the crime won't be the end of the story.

"I'm not going to let you get away with it, if I can do anything about it," Walser said. "With social media ... If you can get some information you can find people now. I'm going to use technology as best I can to make sure these guys don't get away with it. You can't always stop them prior to it happening, but I'm going to do my best to make sure it doesn't continue to happen ... It's more about protecting my own property and not letting these guys get away with it."



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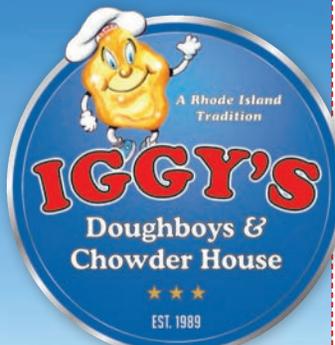
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DAMAGED TRUCKS: Daniel S. Walsler III points out two of the trucks damaged by a thief who stole the catalytic converters and sold them for cash at a metal recycling facility in Providence. Last week, the FBI and local police departments raided the Branch Avenue business, Accurate Converter. *(Sun Rise photos by Rory Schuler)*



THE THEFT: In this grainy surveillance footage, a suspect can be seen entering the property of Walsler Mobile Refrigeration in Warwick. The business owner tracked down the suspect with the help of cutting-edge technology he bought at Target, and held him for police several days later. *(Photo courtesy Daniel S. Walsler III)*

HOLES IN THE STORY:

Daniel S. Walsler III, owner of Walsler Mobile Refrigeration, refused to be a victim. He tracked down the suspect who swiped catalytic converters from his Warwick business. Earlier this week, Walsler showed the partially mended hole the suspect cut in the fence surrounding the property. *(Sun Rise photos by Rory Schuler)*



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By JENNIFER COATES

The door swings open at Tita's Tailors and Cleaners in Johnston and a young woman carrying an armful of clothing strides in. Along with some clothes that need to be dry cleaned is a gown that she will need for an out-of-town wedding in a few weeks, and she has come to exactly the right place to tackle both of these tasks. The dress is a bit too long and a bit too loose in the torso ~ it needs to be fit to her body so she can move in it effortlessly for this special occasion. She wouldn't trust this alteration job to anybody but the best, and that "best" is Tita Meija and her team of hardworking tailors.

Tita's Tailors and Cleaners, which officially opened its doors on Atwood Avenue in September of 2022, is owned and operated by Tita Meija and Tim Henry. The team here at Tita's Tailors is comprised of six tailors, including Tita, all of whom lend their considerable experience, expertise and talent to their work. Because clothes are made in standard sizes, and most bodies are not "standard", having an expert tailor to whom you can trust your things is an absolute must.

These tailors are meticulous, detail-oriented, friendly, and dedicated to their customers. They are respectful of your possessions, your money and your time, working hard to finish their work in an efficient and professional manner.

Tita's Tailors provides a long list of services, including the alteration of men and women's clothing (Think about that old suit that needs a little "taking out" around the waist! Think about that skirt whose hem is falling out or whose hem has fallen "out of style"!) Tita's Tailors can alter almost anything including gowns, shirts, dresses, pants, jeans, swimsuits ~ they can even alter costumes,



Meet the team of talented and experienced tailors at Tita's Tailors and Cleaners in Johnston: (l-r) Flor, Yeimy, Cecelia, Paola (Tim & Tita's daughter), Tita Meija and Tim Henry.

cultural outfits and household items such as curtains and pillows.

It may not feel like it, but spring is right around the corner, and with that comes prom and wedding season! Don't wait to get that prom, wedding, formal or casual occasion attire altered before the crush begins. Tita and her team will do everything to accommodate you, but don't put this off to the last minute!

Tita's Tailors repairs backpacks, zippers, leather items and upholstery. You would be surprised what an expert tailor can do!

Customers will also find dry cleaning, laundry and

pressing as well as wash & fold services here. They will handle your clothes and possessions with professionalism and care.

Come to Tita's Tailors at 11 Commerce Way in Johnston. Hours are Mon. - Friday, 8:00am - 6:00pm and Saturdays, 8:00am - 3:00pm. For more info, call 401-403-2292 or follow them on Instagram, Facebook, Yelp and Google reviews. Their website is titastailors.com. Check out their military/first responders/veterans discounts as well as their generous 10% discount to those who donate clothes (all of which go to local charities such as House of Hope).

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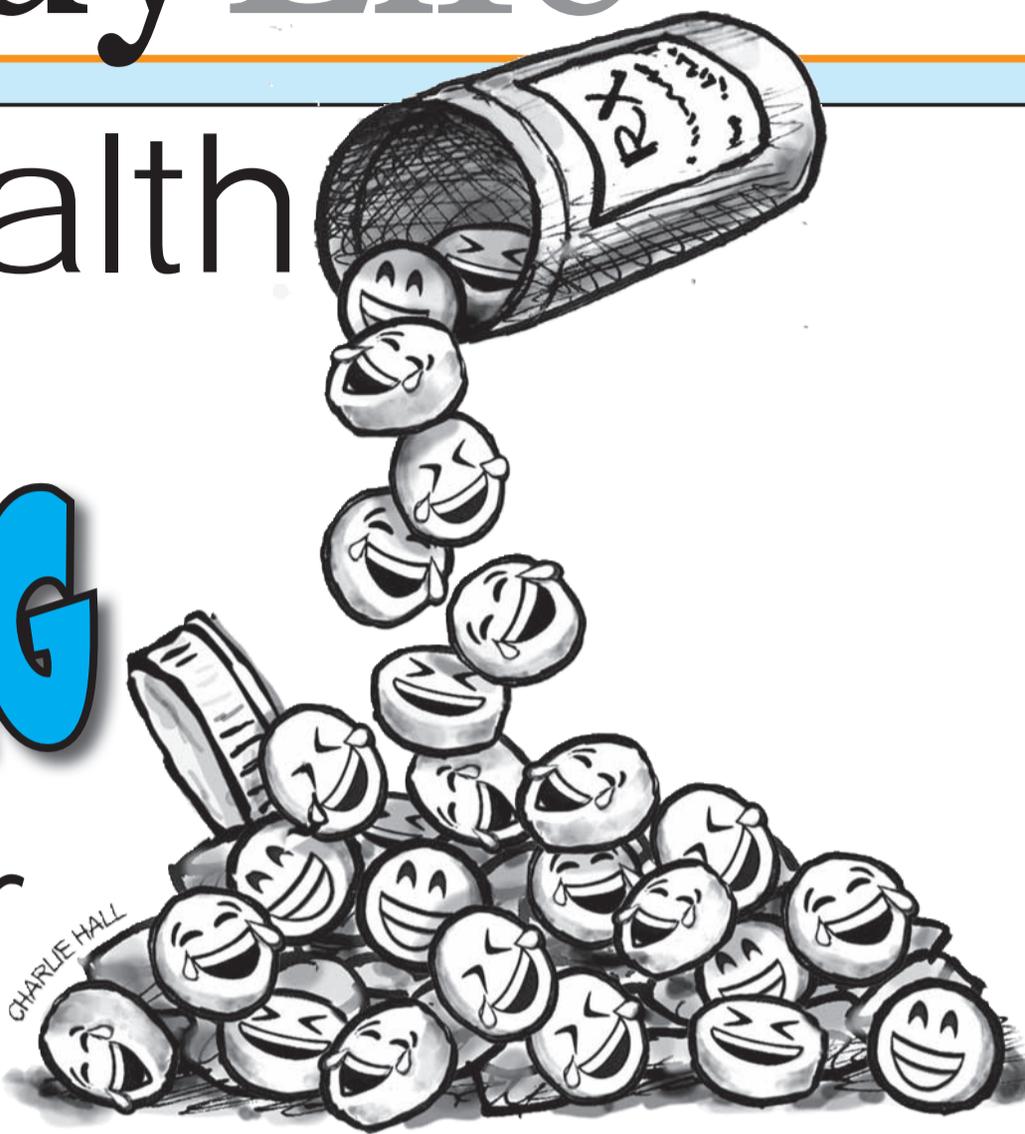
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Dr. Mariah Stump



OCEAN STATE STORIES

By W. WAYNE MILLER

Did you hear the one about how laughter is good medicine?

It's no joke.

Science confirms that laughing enhances not just mental health but physical health, too.

Just ask Dr. Mariah Stump, an attending physician at Lifespan's Women's Medicine Collaborative and a professor and researcher at the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University.

"When you laugh, it helps people work their respiratory system," Stump told Ocean State Stories. "It activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which is the body's natural relaxation 'rest and digest' system."

The benefits can be both momentary and lasting, Stump said.

"There's a lot of data on how laughing releases endorphins, which are the 'happy hormones,' dopamine and serotonin," Stump said. "It suppresses the body's stress hormones, like cortisol. And all of those are linked with longevity and an improved immune system."

LAUGH - PAGE 24

Dr. Mariah Stump on the Ocean State coast (Submitted photo)



'I guess you could argue that we laugh-getters provide rubber-chicken soup for the soul.'
Comedian Charlie Hall

CHARLIE HALL (Submitted photo)

Sports

Panthers win DII crown



BACK ON TOP: The Johnston boys basketball team after winning the Division II title on Sunday against Middletown. (Photos by Alex Sponseller)

Salvatore's epic performance leads JHS to first title since 1996

By ALEX SPONSELLER

The Johnston boys basketball team completed its championship run, pulling off a 59-52 comeback win over Middletown in the Division II Championship on Sunday evening. It was the Panthers' first boys championship since 1996.

Middletown was firmly in control, taking an eight-point lead early in the third quarter and hitting shot after shot. Late in the third, senior guard Derek Salvatore would take control and lead an epic comeback throughout the fourth quarter.

Salvatore finished the night with 24 points, 20 of which coming in the second half and 16 in the fourth quarter to put on one of the greatest championship performances in school history.

"I'm just so happy for my team, my coaches. I thank my coaches, the fans, I couldn't do it without them. I lost (the championship) my freshman year so it feels so good to get it back. It feels so good," said Salvatore. "I couldn't have done it without my team, but I just knew that I had to get it done."

"He knew. I think in the back of his mind he was like, 'This is it and I have to leave it all out there,'" added



LEGENDARY NIGHT: Johnston senior point guard Derek Salvatore celebrates after scoring a basket in the fourth quarter of the Division II Championship. Salvatore guided the Panthers' comeback win, scoring 16 points in the fourth quarter.

■ CROWN - PAGE 20

What a big year for our basketball teams

What a basketball season for our teams at Beacon Communications. In the five years I have been here, this has been by far the most successful as three of our teams reached the division championships with two taking home wins.

The Johnston Panthers came back to beat Middletown to claim the Division II title on Sunday, just a few years after falling in the big game at CCRI prior to the pandemic.

The Panthers finished the regular season in first place but there was some doubt heading into the tournament. Johnston

dropped a pair of late season games and seemed to be cooling off at the wrong time.

Well, come Sunday, Johnston was where it belonged and got the job done after beating a very good St. Ray's team in the semifinals.

Derek Salvatore was a force on both ends of the floor for Johnston. He is the heart and soul of the team and one of the best point guards in the state, if not the best. He played just like that, and completely took the game over in the fourth quarter to guide the comeback.

Neari Vasquez came up with

My pitch



by ALEX SPONSELLER
SPORTS EDITOR

ALEXS@RHODYBEAT.COM

the biggest shot of the game on a 3-pointer with just over three minutes left. Anthony Corsi-

netti overcame a slow start to come up with some big plays, as did Camani Batista. The Panthers were a step behind through the first three quarters but would come roaring back to get the job done.

Now, it's time for the open state tournament. Johnston should advance to the Elite 8, but from there, it will get interesting.

Between teams like La Salle, Hendricken, Central, and even Middletown again, there will be some stiff competition. It's hard to see a team other than the Rams or Hawks taking it

all, but Johnston absolutely has enough to be a dark horse in this race.

The Pilgrim girls also took first place in the regular season and proved to be worthy by running away with the Division III title over Narragansett.

We all anticipated a defensive battle and that is exactly what we got. The Pats struggled throughout the season to score so they relied on their ability to shut teams down. That came in handy last Friday as they held the Mariners to

■ PITCH - PAGE 19

RI Hockey HOF unveils 2023 class

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Toll Gate High School's John Hynes, head coach of the NHL's Nashville Predators, and Bill Thayer, Aldrich High School's legendary USA National Team player, have been announced as inductees-elect of the RI Hockey Hall of Fame's "Class of 2023", which was unveiled on February 24th between periods of the Providence Bruins vs Charlotte Checkers "Hall of Fame Game" at the Amica Mutual Pavillion in Providence.

Vin Cimini, founding chairman of the Hall of Fame, noted that the five new inductees-elect are, "among the most accomplished hockey figures our state has produced. This year, we honor two coaching greats and three players whose hockey careers and play representing our nation have brought great honor to themselves, their families, their schools, and their state." With their formal inductions this coming August, the number of honorees in the Hall will reach 45.

The Enshrinement Celebration & Dinner for the 2023 Class will be held on Saturday, August 19th at Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet in Cranston. Tickets are now on sale on the the Hall of Fame's website - RIHHOF.com

The "Class of 2023" inductees-elect are:

JOHN HYNES

John Hynes is a Warwick native. He played his high school hockey at Toll Gate and was a member of the Boston University team that captured the 1995 NCAA title in Providence. Before becoming head coach of the NHL's New Jersey Devils in 2015, he Team USA to three medals at IIHF World Championship tournaments. John then became head coach of the Pittsburgh Penguins' Wilkes-Barre/Scranton affiliate in the AHL, where he captured the Louis A.R. Pieri Memorial Award as the league's top coach. He now serves as head coach of the NHL's Nashville Predators.

BILL THAYER

The great Bill Thayer was born and raised Warwick. A 3-time, 3-sport All-Stater at Aldrich High School, he was one of the finest all-around athletes of his generation. In 1943 he became the first native Rhode Islander to play with the RI Reds and then skated with the Boston Olympics. Bill helped lead the RI Scarlets to the USA Amateur title in 1948 before starring with Team USA at the 1949 World Championships in Europe. Nicknamed "Playmaker", he became a revered youth hockey coach after retirement. Each year since 1965, the Thayer Award is presented to the Interscholastic League's assists leader. In 1970, after his passing in a construction accident, the Warwick Municipal Arena was dedicated in his name.

JEFF JILLSON

Jeff is a native of North Smithfield. He earned All-State honors at Mount St. Charles and was a 2-time NCAA All-American and Academic All-American at the University of Michigan, where he won numerous awards before being selected in the first round of the 1999 NHL Entry Draft by the San Jose Sharks. Jeff represented his country as a member of Team USA in three world championships before his first professional season with the Sharks. Over his 11-year pro career, the rugged defenseman suited up in the NHL with the Sharks, Buffalo Sabres, and Boston Bruins. He played four seasons in the American Hockey League, including one with our Providence Bruins in 2003.

STEVEN KING

Born and raised in East Greenwich, Steve was a 2-time All-Stater at Bishop Hendricken High School before starring at Brown University. He was selected as the New York Rangers' first choice in the 1991 NHL Supplemental Draft. The speedy right winger scored over 250 goals over his career, which included three NHL seasons with the Rangers and the Anaheim Mighty Ducks and eight in the AHL, including one with the Providence Bruins, where he came

out of retirement just before the playoffs in 1999 and became a key figure as the P-Bruins captured the Calder Cup Championship.

BABE MOUSSEAU

Babe was born in Harrisville, attended his hometown high school and starred on the gridiron and the ice for the legendary Tom Eccleston before attending St. Bonaventure University. Babe took over the Burrillville coaching reigns in 1957. He coached the Broncos for 18 seasons, becoming a legendary coach in his own right. During that period, his teams never missed the playoffs. They won 7 state championships, capturing the state hockey crown in the decades of the '50s, '60s and '70s. His 1959 Burrillville team was the first RI squad to win a New England interscholastic hockey title. During his tenure, Babe would guide them to four more, tied for most ever.



Bill Thayer

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Pitch

(Continued from page 18)

just 19 points.

Gianna Ramos was once again the tone setter in the paint while Faith Meade was the go-to ball handler and led the team on offense. Amaya Coffie continued to be an elite perimeter defender and had her moments as well. The key players played like key players.

This Pilgrim team has been through a lot over the past few years. Between the pandemic, being bounced around divisions, having a winless season and playoff years, the seniors including Ramos and Meade had seen it all.

To see them get an opportunity to play on the big stage and walk away with a title is a fantastic story. I'm not sure if anyone would have picked them to win the DIII crown heading into the winter. I figured they'd be competitive considering the experience, but I did not think a championship was the ceiling.

As always, the question will be how the returning girls perform next season. Pilgrim should stay in Division III as its seniors were so important. The team will be rebuilding to an extent, but this championship run should pay dividends when it comes to experience.

Then, Hendricken. What an incredible game.

La Salle took control early, but the Hawks would come back to even things in the fourth quarter. It felt like we were going to get a classic Hendricken comeback win, but the Rams were the ones that came up with the key play late to grab the Division I Championship.

Hendricken's stud duo of Eze Wali and Azmar Abdullah were fantastic, but ultimately, in my opinion, La Salle's top player Kelvin Odih and the size of Rams was the difference. The Hawks just

could not consistently find their way to the basket. Relying on the long ball just is not a reliable way to win, especially against an elite team like La Salle.

Hendricken won in overtime in the regular season, the Rams took this rematch on a buzzer beater in the fourth quarter. It feels inevitable that these will be the last two teams standing in two weeks at the Ryan Center. Who will win? Who knows.

For Hendricken, I think the biggest thing will be to find a way to create more open shots from short and mid-range. It is clear that La Salle's size is going to be too much in the paint, and again, you can't expect to win by shooting 3-pointers all night. Hendricken played the way it has all year, which has obviously worked, but now we will see if it can adjust.

We had a few other teams have big years as well.

The Cranston West boys returned to the playoffs and although they lost to Burrillville in the opening round, they should be happy with the season they had.

After missing the postseason in 2021-22, West got off to a slow, 2-5 start this season. However, it would then win six of its next seven games to get back into the playoffs. It was a great turnaround that should carry over into next year.

The Cranston West girls also made the playoffs despite graduating nine seniors, and the East girls also saw postseason action after getting a new coach. The Johnston girls reached the quarterfinals and nearly won, while the Toll Gate girls advanced to the semis and had a chance to advance.

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■ Crown

(Continued from page 18)

Johnston coach Mike Bedrosian. "He wanted the ball in his hands. He's the most unselfish, humble 1,000 point scorer there is. He finally told himself that he had to be selfish. Good things happen when the ball is in his hands."

The Panthers would see its other stars step up in the fourth quarter, including Neari Vasquez, who hit a 3-pointer in the final four minutes that would turn into a four-point play. Vasquez finished with 14 points while Camani Batista added 12.

"We got contributions from everyone. Neari accounted for seven points in two possessions, Anthony (Corsinetti) didn't have an Anthony game, but he kept us in it by scoring six straight points, then Derek took over. That's been the theme of the season. If one person is not getting theirs, another person is going to step in. That's exactly what happened," said Bedrosian.

Middletown came out fast in the opening half and the two teams would exchange leads in the first quarter. The Islanders heated up in the second quarter and would enter the halftime break with a 25-19 lead.

"Our motto was that we had to stay together. When things are going bad, we have to stay together through it all. We stuck together in the end and finished it off," said Salvatore. "We're just so happy. This group, it's the closest group I've ever seen. We're all together every single day."

Defensive adjustments also helped stymie the Middletown attack in the second half.

"We told them that this was nothing that we couldn't overcome, but obviously, we were going to have to do something quickly. We felt going into the game that we had a lot of mismatches, so we played man (defense) and had a lot of isolations," said Bedrosian.

Johnston entered the playoffs as the top seed after finishing first in Division III in the regular season. Although the Panthers were the top unit, things got rough as they dropped a pair of late-season matches to limp into the playoffs.

That did not matter, though, as the Panthers rolled past St. Ray's in the semis and then got the win in the title clash. Vasquez led the Panthers with 22 points against St. Ray's while Corsinetti added 14, Batista 12 and Salvatore 11.

"Those rough patches, those were just learning experiences for us. It just helped us get better and prepare for these moments," said Salvatore.

The Panthers will now take on Smithfield in the open state tournament on Thursday. Although Johnston still has some unfinished business, the team will enjoy the DII win and celebrate with each other.

"This group was probably the closest group that we have seen relationship-wise ever. This is a tight group that has played together since they were in fifth grade and this was the cherry on top for them. For me personally, coaching them, it is a big part of what gave me that passion with the game of basketball," said Bedrosian. "To finish on top with them is a dream."



LOOKING TO SHOOT: Branden Testa gets set to shoot in the second half on last Sunday's game.



RAISE THE ROOF: Neari Vasquez pumps the crowd up in the final moments of the DII Championship.

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Get your gear ready for an early season

By CAPT. DAVE MONTI

Spring is around the corner and starts March 20. Although it snowed this week, we hardly had a winter and the water is very warm.

How warm is the water? The temperature at Narragansett Pier was 41.7 degrees Fahrenheit on last week. The average sea temperature for February over the past several years there has been 37.9 degrees Fahrenheit. Water temperatures in the area last week included 40.8 degrees at Horseneck Beach, 39.9 degrees at Westport, and Block Island was a balmy 43.7 degrees.

For the past three years the warm water has brought new abundant bait profiles. We have had a variety of mackerel, herring, Atlantic menhaden and peanut bunker (immature Atlantic menhaden), sand ells, silversides, squid and more in our waters here together in great abundance. This abundance of bait has driven the fish we like to catch, eat and/or release closer to shore including tuna, mahi, sharks, striped bass as well as a variety of mammals including porpoise and humpback whales. Right whales have been close too with over 30 of them feeding on zooplankton on the surface in Cape Cod Bay in January, which is usually a spring event.

So, get your gear ready as the season could start early. Here are some tips I like to share about getting your gear ready.

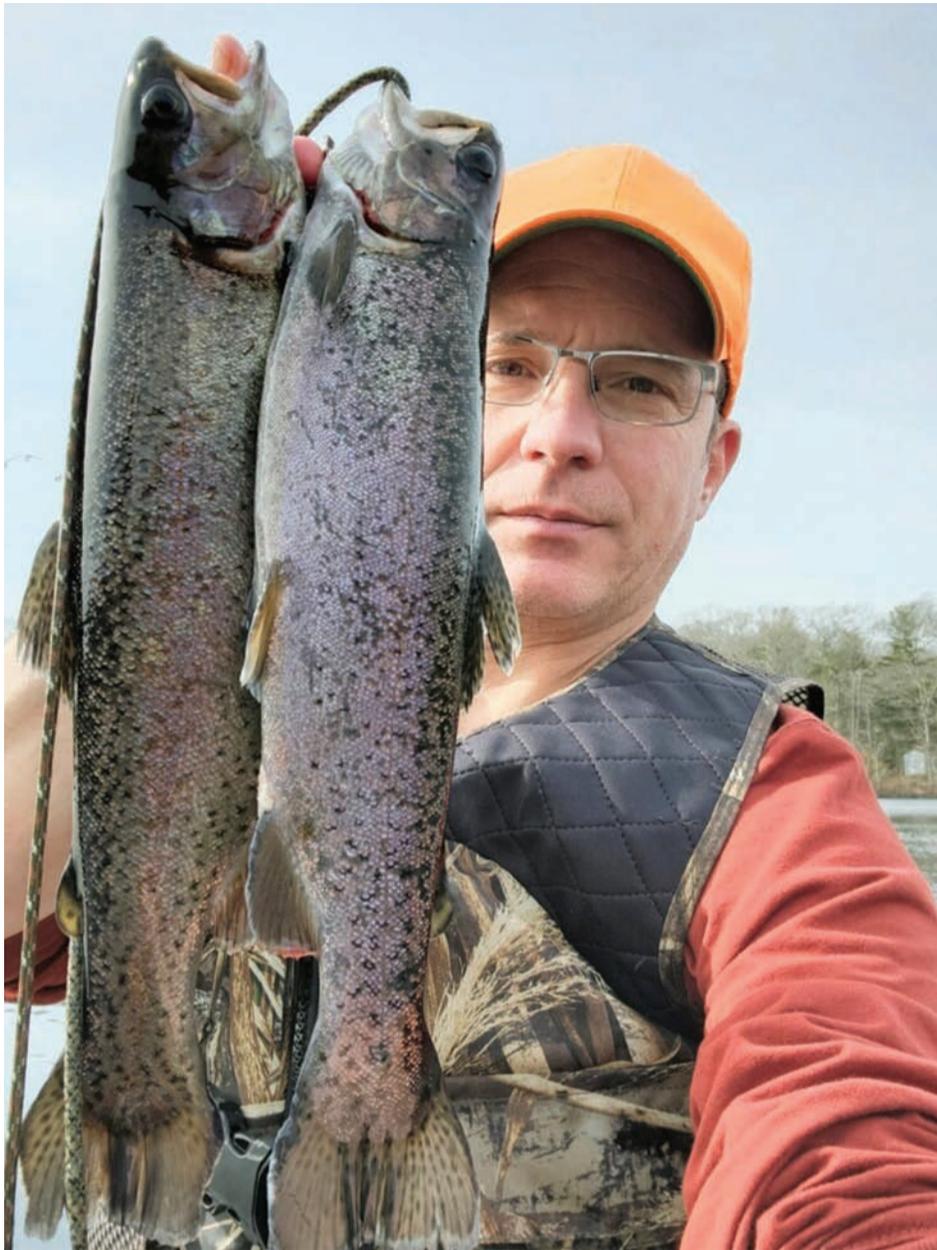
Reel maintenance

Give your reels a good cleaning, particularly when the line is off and spool exposed. Grease where directed by manufacturer, often times, the reel is marked where to do this. If instructions are long gone do not hesitate to stop by your local bait or tackle shop to ask where to grease. Do not grease the drag, it is not meant to be greased, if you do, it will not work.

Every other year (or as needed) I have my reels thoroughly cleaned by a bait & tackle shop or by a rod and reel repair expert. The reels are taken apart, cleaned, parts that are broken or worn are replaced and then everything gets put back together. I use Dave Morton of Beavertail Rod & Reel (www.beavertailrodandreel.com) who has been repairing reels for almost 20 years.

Line

Each year, replace used line. This is a judgment call as to what is meant by "used". Braid line may still be OK to leave on the reel, however, I usually take off line at the beginning of the reel that shows signs of wear. Experts say to cross braid line when spooling



RAINBOW TROUT: Joe Klinger with rainbow trout caught from his kayak at Barber Pond, South Kingstown. The bite continues to be good there as many have not fished stocked ponds RI. (Submitted photo)

onto conventional reels to prevent the line from digging into the spool when a big fish is on.

I often fish with lead core line that is designed to sink in the water column when trolling for striped bass and bluefish in 20 to 35 feet of water in Narragansett Bay. I re-spool the lead core line putting the used portion on the reel first, this way you use line that is new as most anglers rarely use more than three to four colors (90' to 120') of line.

Replace all monofilament line on reels at the start of the season. Monofilament line has memory so it creates bird nest tangles when it is old or has been sitting in the cold for a while. Also stretch the line, the first 100 feet (of monofilament line) to relax its memory and avoid tangles.

When you change any type of line it is important to spool tight or the line may slip on the spool. To prevent braided line from slipping on the reel, first spool some monofilament backing to the reel as it will not slip, tie braid line to the monofilament, then spool the braided line onto the reel.

Rods

Examine the rods for cracks and stress marks. Closely examine the eyes for chips or cuts on the ceramic rings inside the eyes. These cracks could cause line to snag, rub or break.

Do not place hooks on the eyes or they will eventually create cracks that will cut line as it passes through. Place all lures at the base of the reel as those hooked to an eye brace will bang on the rod and may cause microscopic cracks in the rod blank that could lead to a broken rod.

Tackle

I get tackle ready in chronological order when certain species are fished... in this region that means starting with tautog, then striped bass, bluefish, fluke, sea bass, etc. Make sure you have enough rigs to fish the species. Hooks should be clean and sharp (no rust), and strong enough for the size fish you are going after. Often hooks that come with lures are not quality hooks so I replace them with stronger hooks.

Leaders/Hooks

Use wire leaders for bluefish and monofilament or fluorocarbon for striped bass, fluke, sea bass, etc. Blues won't bite though the wire and other species will find it harder to see the monofilament or fluorocarbon leaders. As a rule I replace all used leaders at the beginning of the season. During the season make sure leaders have no nicks or stress marks from fish pulling. If they do, replace them.

I switched most of my

hooks to in line circle or wide gap hooks, I did this so I can safely catch and release undersized or unwanted fish. In-line circle hooks now required when fishing for striped bass with bait. Circle hooks are designed to hook the fish at the corner of the mouth and not down in the belly.

Where's the bite?

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

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

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

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What happened to my eyelashes?

Usually too busy getting dressed and flying out the door in the morning, I do not often look in the mirror. When I did this morning, naked eyes not naturally adorned with eyelashes, stared back at me. What happened to my eyelashes and how could that happen?

Many symptoms of old age have taken over my body. White hair has replaced blonde, wrinkled skin, like alligator skin, covers my body, and there are brown spots up and down my arms due to excessive sun exposure when I was a kid, with parents who did not believe in using sunscreen. Surprisingly, losing one's eyelashes is also a normal part of aging, for the same reason my previously thin hair is even thinner now. (I am thankful for the perm that "fluffs" it up.) I will have to remain eyelashless because putting on mascara with shaking hands due to familial tremors is just too dangerous.

I learned that we also lose brain cells at my age. What? I had assumed because I do not have dementia or any kind of memory issue that my brain was safe, but apparently not. How will I continue to be my quick-thinking self if the dead brain cells are not replaced?

The bathroom is now my friend. Whereas I used to use it a few times a day, now it is an hourly occurrence. I thought it was the reaction to drinking more water because my mouth is so dry, but, alas, it is a symptom of aging.

Life Matters



with LINDA PETERSEN

Hearing aids have provided increased sound for my aging inner ears, and I need glasses for reading everywhere, which means I wear them propped on top of my head when shopping because they are needed to see the prices. My sense of smell seems to have diminished. The other day I sniffed the expired milk and thought it was fine, until I put it in my tea and it curdled up.

When I get home from work, I am more pooped than previously and sit in the Lazy-Boy recliner with a glass of Diet Coke, watching one of the many series on Hulu. My joints feel tight and stiff. My balance seems off and I must make sure I hold onto the railing rather than skipping merrily down the stairs which has been done in the past. When walking, my muscles seem wobbly, and I tire much more easily when shopping, the benefit of which is lots of money is saved. I used to have the reputation

of being able to sleep anywhere, anytime. This goes back to my college days when I would bunk on a couch in the Student Union to have a quick nap between classes. Sleep has always been one of my favorite activities, but my sleeping skills have also aged. Whereas five minutes in bed used to lead to a sound sleep, now I can lay there for an hour or more without joining the land of the sleeping. Where I used to sleep all night long, now waking up several times a night is the norm, contributing to a constant feeling of sleep deprivation.

Swallowing pills, especially horse size tablets, has also become a challenge, causing me to gag easily. It wasn't until I did research on the effects of aging that I learned that changes in the vertebrae at the top of the spine can cause my head to tip forward, compressing my throat, which can result in choking and difficulty swallowing.

My body seems to be maturing around me. My outlook on life, however, has not been broken. I am still a happy camper. A study documented in TIME magazine proves that despite the physical ravages of aging, elderly people are the happiest. My eyelashless eyes, unsteady legs, diminished hearing and vision, sleep disruption, and choking on pills will not diminish my spirit. Who needs eyelashes anyway?

WARWICK SHOWCASE

COCAINE BEAR

** 1/2 Based
(Loosely) on True Story

Take a true story: Cocaine dumped off plane into National Forest in Georgia. The body count grows Bear eats and goes berserk.

Pack it full of dumb characters, extreme violence, and a stupid story, and you get "Cocaine Bear" the hottest movie on the big screens these days.

Critics are all over the place on this one. I've lost my faith in Rotten Tomatoes, but agree with many others who think it is disjointed, disgusting and deficient.

Lots of people are after the cocaine and the bear is after them all.

Two kids skip school and go for a hike. Mom searches for them. Three teenagers are running from the park ranger who is after some bad guys, as is the local cop. The drug runners' father (Ray Liotta in his final film) is after the drugs.

Either the bear gets them, or they shoot each other.

Lots of torn limbs, even a head, and blood. The body count grows.

"Cocaine Bear" can be looked at as a satire or as one of the dumbest movies ever made.



Puss in Boots is again voiced by Antonio Banderas in "Puss in Boots: The Last Wish." (Courtesy of Dream-Works Animation)

PUSS IN BOOTS: THE LAST WISH

(Great Family Film)

Only one life left for Puss (Antonio Banderas), and he is pretty depressed over it.

See it at the *with Joyce & Don Fowler*

Movies

Puss and his pals Kitty and Perrito search for the Last Wishing Star, competing against Goldilocks and the three (delightfully funny) three bears and a gigantic Tom, the Piper's son.

Love for life and Kitty are restored and this sixth animated film in the series ends in a colorful fashion.

Note: I watch the film with clear and large sub-titles, which replace the old glasses.

NETFLIX

CHROMOSOME 20

*** 1/2
(Chilian Crime Drama)

Tomas, a Downs Syndrome young man, is accused of murder.

A policewoman with her own personal problems, gets personally involved in the case.

Tomas takes responsibility for killing a drug dealer who is about to kill his brother. The brother is loaded with guilt, as Tomas' trial points the finger at him.

Is there a dirty cop? Is the brother the killer? Can the policewoman get Tomas to jog his memory, tell the truth, and help solve the case?

The movie uses a number of Downs actors who do a terrific job in their roles. The story will hold your interest until the very end.

SHOWTIME

Showtime has brought back "Everything, Everywhere, All at Once" and the long, philosophical, sci-fi, martial arts movie made a bit more sense to me the second time around.

It is still too long, too confusing and too scattered to satisfy us, but it stands a good chance of sweeping the Academy Awards.

ANIMAL TALK

By Karen Kalunian

Local Adoptable Loveable



Photo credit: Karen Kalunian

PUPPIES!!

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Laugh

(Continued from page 17)

Laughter, of course, can be found in many places: in get-togethers with family and friends, in comedy clubs, or watching a funny movie, TV show or cute-pet video. And it can be stimulated – for example, through a Laughter Yoga class from Laughter Yoga International, founded by Dr. Madan Kataria of India, whose work has inspired Stump.

“The brain doesn’t actually know if you’re laughing at something ‘real,’ like a joke,” Stump said, “or if you’re making yourself laugh. In other words, whether the laughter is stimulated or spontaneous, like you just told a really good joke, the benefits are the same – whether it’s ‘fake laughter,’ if you will, or ‘real laughter,’ which is something that comes very spontaneously when we find something funny.

Rhode Island comedian Joanna Rapoza fits into the ‘real laughter’ category. She elicits it during her performances at venues including The Comedy Park in Cranston, the Mass Arts Center in Mansfield, Mass., and Mohegan Sun in Montville, Conn. Rapoza also performs in banquet halls, bars, and nursing homes, among other places.

“If you read the studies -- and it seems to be confirmed by anecdotal experience -- laughter puts a better spin on life,” Rapoza said in an interview. “It helps. You enjoy the journey a little bit better. It must be working for me, because, knock on wood, I’m considered to be in very good physical health for my age, 61.”

Rapoza said her mental health benefits, too.

“I’m actually quite a serious person for a good portion of the time,” she said. “I manage my lifelong depression, PTSD and anxiety in part by finding ways to authentically laugh at least several times each day, whether it’s inspired by myself or someone else.”

Rapoza’s mental health challenges date to the sudden death of her father when she was a teenager.

“His heart stopped,” she recalled. “He was sleeping.”

Rapoza said her father “had an excellent sense of humor” – but laughter did not immediately help his daughter heal after his passing.

“There’s that initial blanket of terrible depression after you lose a loved one and everybody processes it differently,” she said. “But once I kind of came out of the state of shock I was in and I felt good enough to make jokes or laugh just in response to somebody else’s joke, it was a great relief. And I relied on searching out things that would make me laugh after that.”

And later, as an adult, making others laugh, too.

Among Dr. Stump’s other responsibilities, she is an adjunct professor with the Mindfulness Center at Brown’s School of Public Health and director of the Concentration of Lifestyle Medicine and Integrative Health at Brown’s Warren Alpert Medical School, a program that seeks to further healing approaches that have not typically been part of traditional medicine.

“Despite the major advances of biomedical science during the 20th century, physicians have become increasingly burdened by the difficulties and challenges of treating chronic illnesses, and patients have grown wary of medicine’s over-reliance on technology and of the potentially harmful side effects of pharmaceuticals and invasive procedures,” the program declares on its website.

“The field of lifestyle medicine is the use of evidence-based lifestyle therapeutic interventions—nutrition/dietary choices, physical movement/exercise, reduction of toxins (substances and environmental), social connectivity/stress reduction and restorative sleep as a primary modality to prevent, treat, and even reverse chronic disease.”

A growing body of research confirms laughter as an effective intervention. One landmark study, “The Laughter Prescription,” published in the American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine, proclaimed the benefits:

“Laughter is a normal and natural physiologic response to certain stimuli with widely acknowledged psychological benefits. However, current research is beginning to show that laughter may also have serious positive physiological effects for those who engage in it on a regular basis. Providers who prescribe laughter to their patients in a structured way may be able to use these natural, free, and easily distributable positive benefits.”

The respected Mayo Clinic views laughter in such a positive light that it has devoted a lengthy page to its benefits that concludes:

“Laughter is the best medicine. Go ahead and give it a try. Turn the corners of your mouth up into a smile and then give a laugh, even if it feels a little forced. Once you’ve had your chuckle, take stock of how you’re feeling. Are your muscles a little less tense? Do you feel more relaxed or buoyant? That’s the natural wonder of laughing at work.”

Like Joanna Rapoza, fellow Rhode Island comedian Frank O’Donnell, a member of the Rhode Island Comedy Hall of Fame, has experienced deep tragedy. He and his wife, Karen, lost their 15-year-old daughter, Keri Anne, in a car crash in July 2010.

“When her accident happened, I had a lot of people who said that I would never perform again and when I heard them say it, at first I kind of believed them,” O’Donnell told Ocean State Stories. “I was not where I wanted to do anything funny. You’re just in a horrible place when something like that happens.”

“A little over a month after she passed, I already had a show that was booked down in Matunuck and I called the organizers and I said, ‘listen, I need to replace myself. I can’t be in this show.’ And they completely understood. So I hired somebody else to do my job but I decided to take a ride with him just to watch the show, for a little bit of a distraction.

“I watched what they were doing and there was something inside of me that said, ‘you’ve got to get up there’ and I did. They gave me a standing ovation because everybody in the room knew what had happened and it was a great feeling to be able to be funny -- to be able to put away what had happened for, you know, 20 minutes.”

O’Donnell said that Keri, who shared his sense of humor, surely would have approved.

“Had I stopped doing comedy because of what happened,” he said, “she’d have found a way to kick my [rear] because it’s therapeutic for me as well as for other people and that’s really important.”

For audiences, O’Donnell said, laughter “is almost like a prescription. When people walk out and they’ve had a good time and they’ve got a gigantic smile on their face or they’re just very complimentary, you know, that you’ve done some good for them. If the comedy is good, you’re going to laugh and you’re going to feel good. It’s a pretty amazing thing.”

Fellow comedian, Classical High School classmate and friend Charlie Hall, the first person elected to the Rhode Island Comedy Hall of Fame, also experienced deep



JOANNA RAPOZA
(Submitted photo)



CHRIS D'ALESSANDRO
(Submitted photo)

tragedy earlier in his career and was faced with a similar choice about continuing in his profession.

“When I was about 30 years old, my mom passed from a severe heart attack right in front of me,” Hall told Ocean State Stories. “Two days later, I had a comedy show that had been scheduled for months. I decided to go with the ol’ ‘the show must go on.’ And for 40 minutes I did my act and forgot about what had happened.”

“Now in this case, laughter was my best medicine -- but in most cases, we are the audience’s best medicine. We get them to smile and hopefully it ripples out like a pebble dropped in a lake. I guess you could argue that we laugh-getters provide rubber-chicken soup for the soul.”

Hall added that in his latest show, “Aging Disgracefully,” which he performs with Doreen Collins, another Comedy Hall-of-Famer, “we actually discuss how good laughing is for your health, noting many medical studies -- and that because of this our show qualifies as a doctor’s visit. They chuckle, and then we add, ‘So we’re charging you all a \$10 copay.’ It gets big yucks.”

Chris D’Alessandro, a voiceover artist and friend of Joanna Rapoza who lives in Connecticut, has performed stand-up comedy and says that “absolutely the best thing is laughter.” It helps her deal

with the tensions and aggravations of daily life and the stress associated with her 80-year-old mother, a nursing home resident who lives with dementia.

Laughter, she said, “gives you an outlet. Whether it’s my situation with my mother or you had a bad day at work, your boss was driving you nuts, I think everybody needs a little bit of laughter. Go to a comedy show, go watch a comedy movie. By doing that, it just takes your mind off whatever happened.”

What motivates her to want to make others laugh, on stage or in daily life?

“You don’t know what somebody’s going through,” she said. “So I try to make everybody laugh. If there is a moment where I could sit and talk to you or the gas station clerk for two minutes and take their mind off whatever’s bothering them -- bad day, bad time, whatever -- and lighten their day, make them laugh a little bit, to me I’ve done my daily job without pay.”

Next week: Three years after former Gov. Gina Raimondo declared a state of emergency, we reflect on three years of COVID.

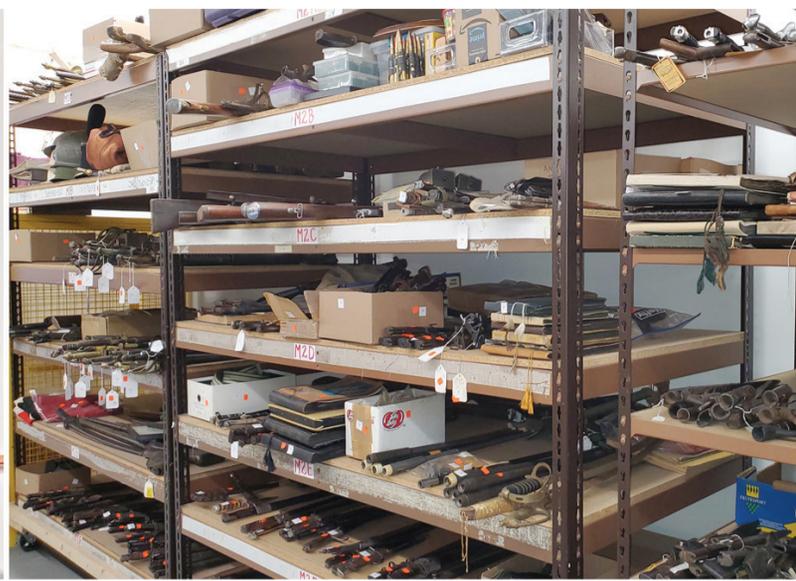
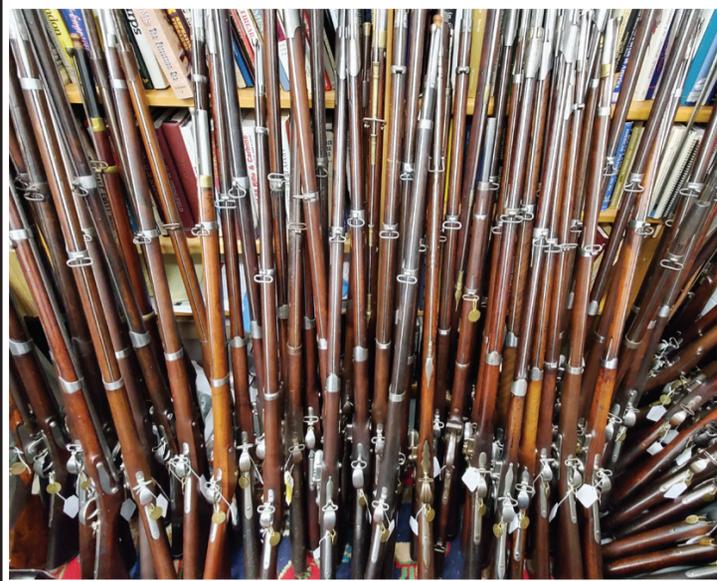
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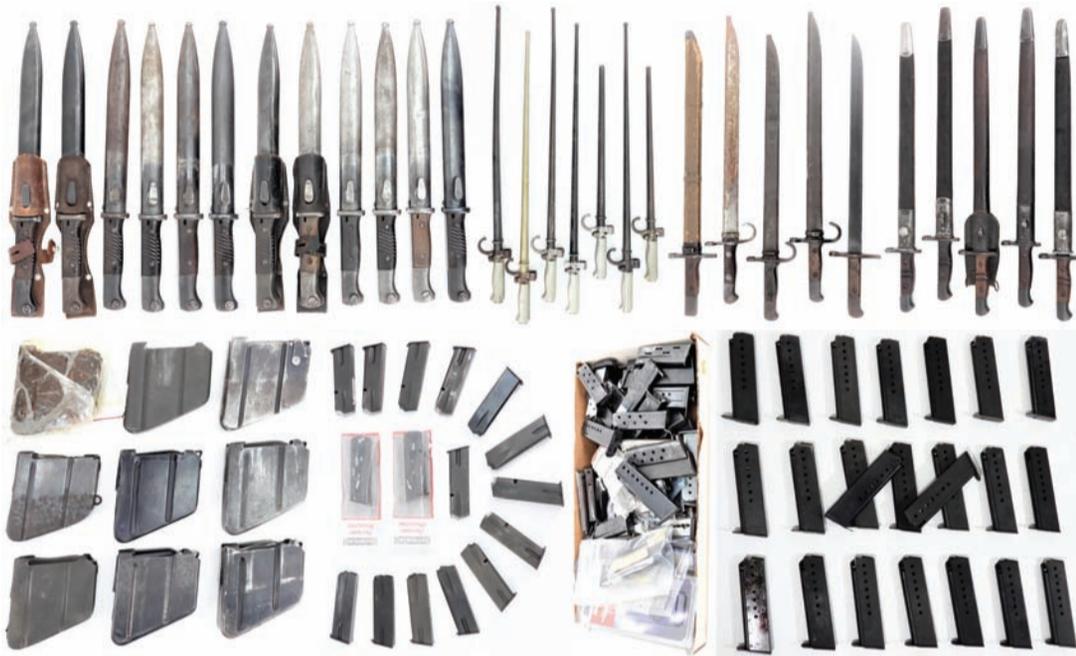
FRANK O'DONNELL
(Submitted photo)

Rhody TREASURES

ANTIQUES • COLLECTIBLES • CONSIGNMENTS • ESTATES • VINTAGE



Preparing for a Militaria Auction



Last spring, I picked up a massive collection of WWI and WWII arms, parts, bayonets, holsters, and all sorts of other related material. And I do mean massive! I've been selling the arms in every sale since, but never had a chance to go through the other stuff until last month. It was quite an experience!

Years ago, before the internet if I was looking for something I wanted for a gun (like a bayonet, holster, spare magazine, a sling), I would go to every show in the area digging for it. Now I have a ton of it here. As I opened boxes of stuff to organize it all I was stunned.



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

There were literally piles of things I then organized into lots for my next auction. In a way it was great fun going through the mountains of material culture. There were pieces I didn't know much about, and it gave me a chance to learn more about them. A good example would be Polish Viz 35 Radom magazines. The pre-war made magazines have a little "G/2" on the bottom in an oval. The later magazines look exactly the same with the exception of that marking, and that little mark means the magazine is worth quite a bit more than the one without. Speaking of magazines: there were boxes and boxes of them! I put them into group lots for those that might want a set of like examples.

Did I mention bayonets? We have hundreds of them, and going through those has been interesting! Having reference books covering each country is a must. With greasy hands from handling the bayonets, I've spent a lot of time in Paul Kiesling's Bayonets of the World. I think I'd be lost without it. There are some really nice examples of K98k, U.S. Model 1917, Japanese Type 38, and many other obscure bayonets from around the world.

There are also lots of web gear and leather holsters. We had separated them by country initially to box and store them, but we went through and put lots together of those also. Need any P38 holsters? How about Colt 1911? They're here!

But the antique arms we have are great also. There are M1 Garand's in great condition, M1 Carbines, and all sorts of bolt-action military arms from the late 19th century through WWII. I know I've mentioned

this before, but cataloging all of the bolt-actions would have been a real pain without having Stuart Mowbray's Bolt Action Military Rifles of the World. My first copy is really worn, and I keep a second copy handy for when the first completely breaks down.

While I have looked at the boxes of stuff in dread sometimes over the past six months, I have to say that I've really enjoyed setting up tables and going through it all. It's always a great opportunity to learn about things I never really would have had a chance to before.

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Rhody Health

What Women Need to Know About Stroke Risks

FAMILY FEATURES

It may not be widely known that women face unique risk factors for stroke throughout their lifetime. Things like pregnancy, preeclampsia and chronic stress can increase the risk for high blood pressure, a leading cause of stroke.

Cardiovascular disease, including stroke, is the leading cause of death among women, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and 1 in 5 women will have a stroke. However, a large majority of strokes can be prevented.

Caring for yourself by understanding your risk factors can help reduce your risk for stroke and provide a better quality of life. Start managing your stroke risk with these tips from the American Stroke Association, a division of the American Heart Association:

Monitor Your Blood Pressure

The first step you can take in reducing your risk for stroke is knowing your blood pressure and keeping it in a healthy range. High blood pressure is the No. 1 preventable cause of stroke, according to the American Heart Association.

The best way to know your blood pressure is to have it measured at least once per year by a health care professional and regularly monitor it at home then discuss the numbers with a doctor. For most people, a normal blood pressure should be 120/80 mm HG or less.

In addition to properly monitoring blood pressure, maintaining a healthy weight, being physically active, eating healthfully and reducing or eliminating alcohol and tobacco usage can help control blood pressure. If you do develop high blood pressure, work with a health care professional on a plan to help manage it.

Plan for Pregnancy

In the United States, high blood pressure during pregnancy is becoming more common, according to the CDC, and medical conditions including preeclampsia, gestational diabetes and blood clots during pregnancy all increase stroke risk during and immediately following a pregnancy.



Photos courtesy of Getty Images

Managing conditions like high blood pressure before getting pregnant helps keep you and your baby healthy during pregnancy and beyond. In addition, your health during and immediately after a pregnancy can shape the lifelong health of you and your child. If you're planning to become pregnant or are currently pregnant, it's important to regularly monitor your blood pressure.

Take Care of Your Mental Health

Some stress is unavoidable but constant stress is not healthy. Chronic or constant stress may lead to high blood pressure and other unhealthy behavior choices, which can increase risk for stroke.

Based on findings in a Stress in America 2020 survey conducted by the American Psychological Association, the top sources of stress are money, work, family responsibilities and health concerns. Managing your stress and blood pressure can improve your overall health and well-being. Reclaim control of your schedule and build in time to invest in your health. Find 10 minutes every day to do something for you, like listening to music, meditating or going for a walk.

Learn the Warning Signs

A stroke can happen to anyone at any point in life. Immediate treatment may help minimize the long-term effects of a stroke and even prevent death. Learn how to spot a stroke F.A.S.T:

- Face drooping – Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile. Is the person's smile uneven?
- Arm weakness – Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- Speech difficulty – Is speech slurred? Is the person unable to speak or hard to understand? Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence like "The sky is blue."
- Time to call 911 – If someone shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 911 and get to a hospital immediately. Check the time so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared.

Talk to your doctor about ways to improve your well-being and help prevent stroke. Find more wellness tips at stroke.org.

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Colorectal cancer (cancer of the large intestine) is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States where it will likely cause over 50,000 deaths in 2023. These cancers typically start out as small growths in the colon. If the polyps are identified and removed at this stage, they are harmless. However, if they are not removed they can progress to cancer, which can spread to other parts of the body, be much more difficult to treat and lead to serious illness and death. Although colon cancer can cause symptoms like blood in the stool, weight loss, stomach or abdominal pain, or changes in stool shape or consistency, these symptoms often do not happen until the polyps or cancer have progressed and become more difficult to treat or even life-threatening. To prevent this from happening, it is very important to find these polyps and remove them before they have the chance to turn into cancer and to identify any cancers as early as possible.

When should I start to get screened?

In the past, we have generally suggested that patients start screening for colon cancer at age 50 (or earlier if there are concerning symptoms or other risks like family history). However, in the past several decades, there has been a significant increase in colon cancer in patients under the age of 50. This has several organizations in-

Staying Healthy



by
DR.
CHRISTOPHER M.
FUREY
Primary Care

cluding the American Cancer Society (ACS) and the United States Preventative Task Force (USPSTF) suggest that patients start screening at age 45. However, if you have a family history, or other symptoms be sure to discuss them with your primary care doctor, as you may need testing sooner than age 45.

How can I check for colon cancer?

There are several ways to test for colon cancer. The most common way to be screened is with a colonoscopy. During a colonoscopy, you are given sedation to make you very sleepy and relaxed. Then a long, thin camera called a colonoscope is inserted to the colon and used to look for any polyps or cancers. The camera can also be used to remove polyps. Prior to the colonoscopy, you will be asked to "prep" using laxatives to clean out the colon prior to the procedure. Many patients find that this is the most difficult part of the entire procedure. Be-

cause a colonoscopy is a procedure there is a small risk of problems from the medications used for prep or during the procedure or of damaging the colon during the procedure.

There are also non-invasive tests to look for colon cancer. One test that has become more common lately is the Cologuard test which looks for signs of polyps or cancer in the stool. This test is less invasive than a colonoscopy but does have some drawbacks. It should not be used for patients who have risk factors for colon cancer such as a personal or family history of colon cancer or certain types of polyps. It can also miss a small number of polyps or cancers, and if the test is abnormal, you will still need a colonoscopy to identify the problem.

How often should I be screened and when should I stop screening for colon cancer?

If your colonoscopy is normal, and you do not have any other risk factors for colon cancer, you should have repeat screening in 10 years. If you have a normal Cologuard test you should be tested again in 3 years.

Currently, most groups suggest stopping colon cancer screening at age 75. However, additional tests may be suggested if a patient has a family history of colon cancer, or if previous tests were abnormal.

To learn more about or to schedule a colorectal cancer screening please visit <https://www.carenewengland.org/schedule-a-colonoscopy>.

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Louie Bello brings his soul-infused sound to Cranston Country Fest

By ROB DUGUAY

On March 4 at the Park Theatre on 848 Park Avenue in Cranston, the Cranston Country Fest is going to be taking place. It's the first-ever edition of the festival with the doors opening at 6 p.m.. Trenton, Florida native Easton Corbin, who folks might know from his hit singles "A Little More Country Than That" and "Roll With It", is going to be headlining with a few other musicians taking part. Patrick Kearns from Weymouth, Massachusetts and hometown hero Kevin Herchen are going to be performing as part of the pre-show festivities with Kearns performing during the after party as well. Another musician that'll be making their presence felt is Boston's Louie Bello, who will be directly opening for Corbin at 8pm.

We had a talk ahead of the event about his recent musical approach, a new single he has out, a music video he made for that new single, his thoughts on performing at the Cranston Country Fest and his plans for the coming months.

Rob Duguay: You've had this interesting approach to music lately where you've been putting your soul and R&B background into a country format while in turn putting a creative spin on pop music. What would you say has inspired this artistic route you've been exploring these days?

Louie Bello: It's love of the songwriting in country music, the love of the soul & pop music that I grew up on as a kid and just trying to meld those. I think when you're an artist and you try to change totally it's never authentic. Some people try to reinvent themselves and their style and I think that changing your style and evolving is a better way to do it. As I'm evolving I'm still bringing that soul background I have with me and so far it's been pretty cool, I've been getting a good response.

RD: From listening to your latest releases, it seems like it's very exciting. When you usually hear pop music and country coming together it can most of the time be formulaic and bland, but what you're doing is very engaging to the senses and I like it a lot. A little over a month ago, you released the new single "Yippy Ki Yay". Where was the track recorded and what would you say is the messaging behind it?



LB: We recorded it down in Nashville with a good friend of mine named Joey Diehl who is a producer down there and he's actually Brett Young's production manager. He's on tour most of the time with him during the year but when he gets back we always pop in, mess around and create. I had this idea for "Yippy Ki Yay", we got into the studio, wrote the track and then recorded it. The idea behind the song is kind of saying "whatever" and having some fun. Your girl always wants to go on vacation and you always got excuses so this time there's no excuses.

It's about envisioning what's going to happen when you get to where you want to go and that's what "Yippy Ki Yay" is. It's about letting loose.

RD: The music video for the single has you and your crew riding bicycles and doing some line dancing in a suburban setting. Who did you work with on the music video and what was the experience like making it? Did you film it locally in Massachusetts or did you film it somewhere else?

LB: We filmed it in Massachusetts with another good friend of mine, Sonny Patel. He did a lot of the set direction for that and Cisco Santiago, who is one of my partners when it comes to making videos, he directed it and I produced it. I just wanted it to be fun, nostalgic and just kind of representing the lyrics of the song. When I'm saying "I'm gonna hit it big in crypto, I'm gonna finally tint my windows", I'm talking about how while growing up in a blue-collar family I wanted all this stuff. I could afford some of it but I couldn't afford other things, I rocked what I had so that's why the bicycles are in the video.

We had the big trucks come in because that's where I always wanted to get to when I was growing up, just getting to have those big, fun machines. The music video was kind of like a big boy playground, that's what I wanted to create.

RD: It seems like you did a good job of that from watching the video. What are your thoughts on the Cranston Country Fest happening at The Park Theatre? It looks like it's going to be a fun event.

LB: I was honored when the organizers reached out. Easton Corbin is an amazing artist who's had some number one hits, it's going to be awesome to share the stage with him. There's so many other amazing artists who are going to be part of it as well. For me right now, it's all about getting in front of audiences that I can share my music with and I feel like during an event like this it's a great opportunity to perform not just to Easton and his fans but for other guys like myself and people who are just trying to push through the industry. It's all based on fans and this Country Fest is the best place to do it.

RD: I couldn't agree more. After the festival, what are your plans for the spring & summer?

LB: The week after the festival, I'm going to be opening up for Shane Profitt. He's an up and comer out of Nashville, he's got some big numbers right now and some songs on the radio. That show will be at Six String in Foxboro and after that I'm going to be doing smaller shows around the country to build a fan base before I jump on a bigger tour. I'm literally taking that old school approach I used to do when I was first starting in music, just making one fan at a time. Playing small shows, grabbing some fans and trying to connect.



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