

Town Hall Lanes' time is up

By RORY SCHULER

Johnston's lane time has expired. The town's lone bowling alley will soon close. Although an exact date has not been released, Town Hall Lanes will cease operation in several weeks.

And Atwood Avenue's about to welcome another bank branch.

"Because Johnston needs another bank on Atwood Avenue," Town Hall Lanes employee, and the current business owner's aunt, Lori Richardson said sarcastically Wednesday morning. "People of every town should have a right to say what's built (and demolished) in their town. Especially something like this ... It's a staple."

The Johnston community will miss its little duck-pin bowling alley, which has been a downtown landmark since 1959 (the alley celebrated a half-century in-business in 2009).

"I know they have the power to do this, but why?" Robert Sandberg, of Johnston, asked in a letter to the editor. "The lanes bring fun, a little exercise and a place to meet friends. This is important to seniors as well as young people who need a place to go that isn't a bar."

Although the lanes also had a bar, the business has been struggling for years.

However, the current owners were optimistic. With a little luck, they had hoped to stay in business for another half-century.

Despite the building's sale to the bank, Richardson said Town Hall Lanes was in the midst of a remodel. The snack bar was under renovation and the current owners had hoped, at very least, to finish out this year's league-play.

"It's all going to depend on when they shut the water off," Richardson explained. "To get to the bank they're building out front, the way the sewer goes under the building they'll have to shut off our fire sprinklers for months and months. We can't survive that. We'll probably be closed the third week of April. We've told our leagues because they're not even allowing the leagues to finish their season."

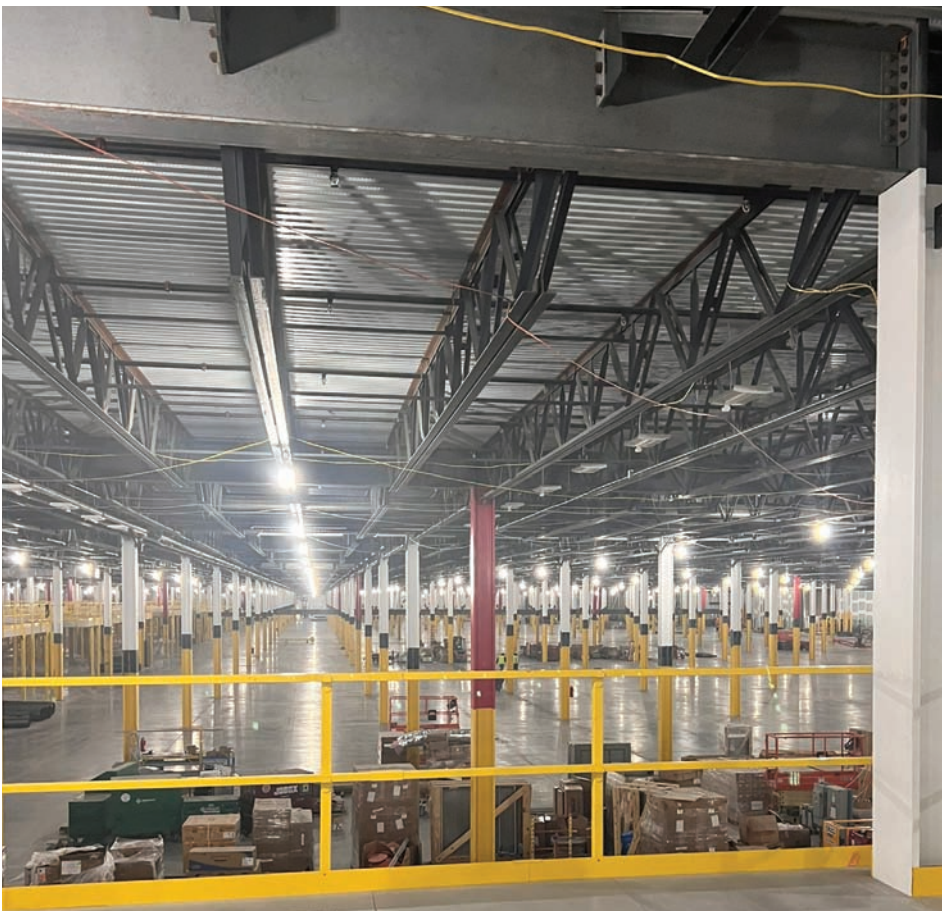
Former owner Frank G. "Junior" Ferri, a former Warwick State Representative, contacted at his home in Florida, confirmed he sold the property "last February" to Cobble Hill LLC.

"It's a little said," Ferri said. "I guess it's bitter-sweet that it's closing, but that's the way property values are going. It was a labor of love."



WATER WORKS: An employee at Town Hall lanes said the bowling alley will be without water for months as they construct a new bank branch building along Atwood Avenue. Because of the utility work, the bowling alley will shut its doors forever in a few weeks. (Sun Rise photo by Rory Schuler)

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

No public tours or answers on Amazon opening

By RORY SCHULER

Johnston's local newspaper has been trying to land a tour of the Amazon construction site for more than a year.

The Sun Rise received its first official rejection from Amazon on Jan. 18, 2022.

"We are in the very early stages of construction at this site," wrote Caitlin McLaughlin, Amazon Public Relations New England. "There are no photos at this time. We would love to do a hard hat tour with you closer to the completion date which is scheduled for second half of 2023."

Another request, about six months later, was met with no answer. Time passed — eventually a year went by.

In the meantime, the building materialized, from the ground up, a white and blue monolith on the hill above Hartford Avenue.

The Sun Rise hired a drone photographer to document Rhode Island's biggest building project from the air. You can't

see much from the road — though you can see a lot more now that so many trees have been toppled.

Earlier this month, the Sun Rise contacted Amazon again. We made another request to tour the site.

On Tuesday, March 14, Amazon replied.

"I appreciate you continuing to follow up about Johnston," McLaughlin wrote. "However, there isn't any new information or a timeline to share from us on this project right now. As things firm up, I will be sure to keep you posted. And I will certainly let you know when we are able to do a tour."

A few days later, on March 17, Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena Jr. announced on Twitter that he had toured the site with US Sen. Jack Reed.

"Had a great tour of Amazon facility in Johnston this morning with @SenJackReed," Polisena wrote on Twitter.

AMAZON - PAGE 8

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JHS Panther of the Week



POTW: This week's Panther of the Week is Mouhamadou Marone. Mouhamadou was nominated by Ms. Jill Royer. Mouhamadou is a senior and is a member of the Boys Soccer and Volleyball team. Ms. Royer said, "Mouhamadou is a bright spot in my day every day. Every time he walks by my classroom and I am standing at the door, he makes it a point to say hello and ask how my day is going. While many students do show such courtesy, it is apparent that Mouhamadou truly is listening for the answer! He always has a smile on his face and that smile lights up the hallways! He is kind and caring, and an all-around wonderful soul." (Photos submitted by Matt Velino, Johnston High School Assistant Principal)

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


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Watch out for the Leprechaun!

Green-clad crowd celebrates St. Patrick's Day at the JSC

By PETE FONTAINE

A green-clad crowd enjoyed the festivities at this year's Johnston Senior Center (JSC) Saint Patrick's Day party.

For starters, the multi-purpose room was filled to capacity and decorated in a sea of green including unique floral centerpieces.

The party even received a visit by the JSC's resident Leprechaun, volunteer bus driver-special server Jackie Pion.

Each tabletop was covered with white placemats surrounded by green plastic plates, silverware wrapped in a green napkins and a beautiful green and white carnation centerpiece.

The room was also accented by perfectly placed green and white balloon bouquets.

The room was filled by men and women who were decked out in some sort of green garb and received complimentary green carnations courtesy of John Dick, a long-time JKSC friend who owns and operates Atwood Florist in Johnston.

The day's luncheon, served by many valuable volunteers, was completely sold out because the feature was traditional corned beef and cabbage.

Meanwhile, a teenage girl from Johnston High School captured the hearts of everyone in the room.

"What a beautiful voice," people offered time and again as they listened to Katie Rodriguez sing a beautiful rendition of Patsy Cline's ageless and legendary hit "Crazy."

Moreover, everyone in the capacity crowd rose to their feet — not once, but twice — and gave the pretty, peppy and always smiling Johnston High School student a standing ovation for the three songs she sang.

It was a proud moment for Rodriguez and her JHS teacher Julie Forte, who was thrilled with the rave reviews people offered after Rodriguez's prolific performance.

But that wasn't the only duty Rodriguez and her JHS classmates Kayla Beaudry, Avery Ream and Hayden Judd (who were also accompanied by Louise Stanielon) performed during the luncheon.

The JHS students joined forces with JSC volunteers and served the day's main menu, dessert and some even poured coffee and filled water glasses.

If that wasn't enough, luncheon-goers enjoyed a musical presentation from Gregory Ayriyan, a classic violinist and composer who played a number of Irish tunes before the classic celebration concluded with a number of raffles.

"Richard is really bringing the Center back to life," said Steve Macchione, a former Johnston Town Councilman, retired beverage salesman whose son Cory is Director of Basketball Operations for the URI women's basketball team. "He's made this (JSC) the place to be."

Delfino thanked his longtime friend (Macchione) for the compliment. Then the director thanked his staff and offered: "Stay tuned; we'll be having more of these events in the coming weeks."



SUPER SERVERS: Singing sensation Katie Rodriguez (left) is joined by her JHS classmates Kayla Beaudry, Avery Ream and Hayden Judd as well as Louise Stanielon and "Leprechaun" Jackie Pion during last week's JSC St. Patrick's Day Party. (Sun Rise photos by Pete Fontaine)



GREEN GALS: Twin sisters Judy Santilli (left) and Jeanne LaFazia (right) joined Debbie Quiles enjoy a mighty moment during last week's JSC St. Pat's Party.



CLASSICAL COMPOSER: Highly accomplished violinist Gregory Ariyan made a special guest appearance at last week's JSC St. Patrick's Day Party.

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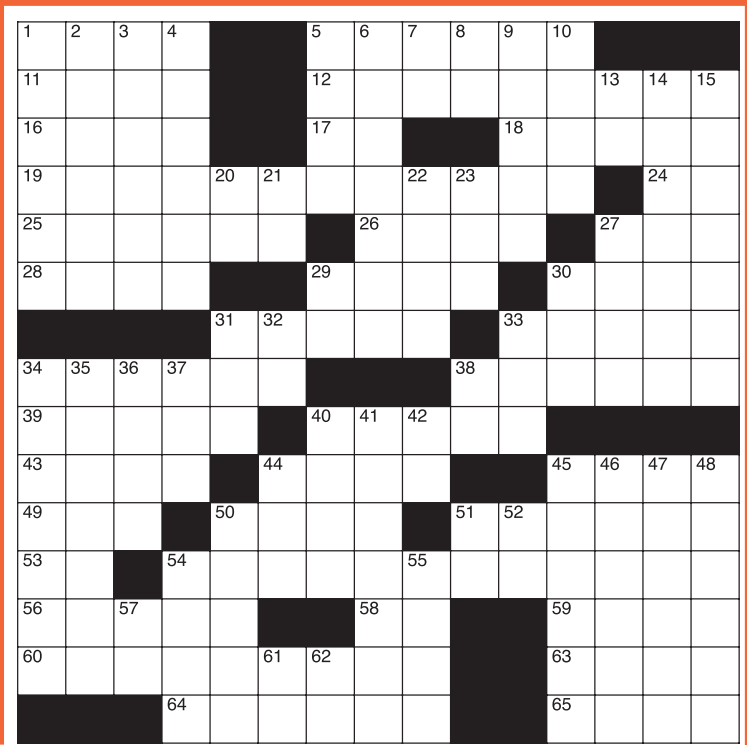
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SKIMMING OFF THE TOP: On Tuesday, March 21, Johnston Police discovered an illegal "skimming device" attached to this ATM inside Cumberland Farms at 663 Killingly St. Police warned those "who may have recently used this ATM should check with their financial institution for unauthorized transactions or withdrawals, and monitor accounts for fraud." (Johnston Police photos)

CROSSWORD PUZZLE CORNER



CLUES ACROSS

1. Influential American political family
5. ___ Chantilly, ___ de Menthe
11. Within
12. Pleasure seekers
16. Computer manufacturer
17. Home to college sports' Flyers
18. Fungal disease
19. Sleepwalk
24. Spielberg sci-fi film
25. Seasonable
26. Taxis
27. Radio direction finder (abbr.)
28. Thin, narrow piece of wood
29. "Mystic River" actor Sean
30. Ingenuous
31. Musical composition
33. Turkish surname
34. High or hilly area
38. Wilco frontman
39. Pour it on pasta
40. Electric car company
43. Sea eagle
44. Walk with difficulty
45. Sign of healing
49. Boy
50. Protein-rich liquid
51. Washington city

CLUES DOWN

1. Large, dangerous animals
2. Straighten out
3. Family tree
4. Large stinging paper wasp
5. European river fish
6. Cut down in size
7. Denotes past
8. Larry and Curly's partner
9. Samoyedic ethnic group
10. Male parent
13. Specific gravity
14. Demeaned oneself to
15. Rigidly
20. Yankovic is a "weird" one
21. Belonging to me
22. Path
23. Airborne (abbr.)
27. Level
29. Atomic #94
30. Born of
31. Midway between northeast and east
32. Northeastern bank
33. Defunct airline
34. Having no purpose
35. A low wall
36. Swedish city
37. Earn a perfect score
38. Atomic #81
40. Beginner
41. Give off
42. Incorrect letters
44. Telecommunication service provider (abbr.)
45. Idyllic
46. Popular beer
47. A way to fine
48. Evildoer
50. More withered
51. Seventh note of a major scale
52. Commercial
54. Abnormal breathing
55. Moved more quickly
57. City of Angels
61. Partner to Pa
62. Equally

Johnston police investigating discovery of ATM skimming device

By RORY SCHULER

Have you swiped your bank card at this automatic teller machine (ATM)? Hours after Johnston Police discovered a "skimming device" attached to a Killingly Street ATM, they were looking for suspects and asking customers to review bank balances.

Police "located" the device "attached to an ATM inside the Cumberland Farms" at 663 Killingly St. on Tuesday, March 21. They released images of a green Citizens Bank ATM. "Those who may have recently used this ATM should check with their financial institution for unauthorized transactions or withdrawals, and monitor accounts for fraud," police warned residents.

Johnston Police defined card skimmers as "small, illegal devices that fit onto ATMs, or on top of card readers at self-service sale terminals, and are designed to blend in with the rest of the machine while obtaining personal information."

Skimmers can be tough to spot, police said. "The skimming device was located just a few hours ago," Johnston Police Chief Mark A. Vieira said Tuesday afternoon. "This incident is currently under investigation. No suspects have been identified at this time."

Johnston Police had a few tips for residents. When using an ATM, they suggest remembering the word "SCAN," an acronym checklist.

- **S:** Scan the area for hidden cameras that may record you typing your PIN. These may be mounted near the keypad so always cover your hand while you type in a PIN.
- **C:** Compare the card reader and keypad to the rest of the machine. The colors and styles should all match, and graphics should be aligned and unobscured.
- **A:** Assess for obvious signs of tampering. Broken or dented panels may be visible or security seals may be broken.
- **N:** Nudge the card reader and keypad. Card skimmers and fake keypads are meant to be removed, so if they feel loose, you may have spotted a skimmer.

Citizens Bank urges customers to "report any suspected fraud concerning your Citizens accounts" by calling 1-800-922-9999, or the phone number found on the back of your credit/debit card or monthly statement.

S-C-A-N FIRST:

Police found this skimming device attached to an ATM on Killingly Street. If you used the machine, check your bank balance and report any suspicious activity to police and your bank.



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BIG HEALTH: Encompass Health, the largest provider of inpatient rehab in the nation, is building a \$42 million rehabilitation hospital in Johnston. (Sun Rise photo by Rory Schuler)

Questions remain over impact of planned rehab hospital in Johnston

By IAN DONNIS
Special to the Sun Rise

A new inpatient rehabilitation hospital is under construction in Johnston after a long and winding approval process, but some observers still doubt the new venture can succeed without hurting existing rehab facilities in Rhode Island.

A formerly wooded section of Hartford Avenue in Johnston is the future home of a \$42 million rehabilitation hospital planned by Encompass Health, a publicly traded company based in Alabama.

Encompass bills itself as the nation's largest operator of rehab facilities for patients dealing with strokes, hip fractures, traumatic brain injuries and similar conditions.

Three years ago — back in March 2020 — a little-known advisory panel known as the state Health Services Council recommended approval of Encompass' proposed 50-bed rehab hospital.

That decision, on a three-to-two margin, was noteworthy for a few reasons. For starters, a state consultant found that Rhode Island already had enough rehab beds to last another 10 years. And as The Public's Radio previously reported, a lawyer for Encompass was able to change the makeup of the Health Services Council shortly before the vote. She challenged the impartiality of a member who decided to recuse himself even though he didn't think he had a potential conflict of interest.

The council's recommendation to support Encompass was approved by then-state Health Director Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott, who said the project would benefit Rhode Island. A state hearing officer then overturned Alexander-Scott's decision, finding that Encompass did not prove the need for its rehab hospital. But Encompass didn't back down.

It appealed the decision in Superior Court. That's where Judge Brian Stern overturned the state hearing officer last year, ruling that Alexander-Scott was justified in her approval.

Now, three years after the initial vote, heavy equipment is preparing the site for the Encompass rehab facility in Johnston. Why would the company pursue such a lengthy fight to do business in Rhode Island?

"They're in to make money, right?" said Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena Jr., during a recent interview in his office. "They wouldn't go to a region where they didn't think there was a need, where they weren't going to make money."

Polisena believes Encompass can succeed without hurting the five existing inpatient rehab providers in Rhode Island, four of which are linked with hospitals.

"But I think, more importantly," he said, "we need to cater to the needs of the people, and I think competition in any sense of the word — whether it's restaurants or whether it's goods — competition spurs innovation, it spurs growth. It also spurs, I think, lower prices for people."

In a statement, President of Encompass' Northeast Region Pat Tuer said the Johnston facility will improve access to high-quality rehab care, while allowing more patients to receive care close to home.

But not everyone thinks the new rehab hospital will be a good thing when it opens next year. And the issue has caught the attention of some state lawmakers.

Senate Finance Chairman Louis DiPalma (D-Middletown), remains skeptical about the state's decision to approve Encompass' project, due to how a consultant found a surplus of rehab beds.

"It was articulated that we have an excess of this capacity," DiPalma said. "So I'm not sure why we're seeking to put more of it. I think it's potentially going to have some negative impact on the rest of the state, where these services are provided."

DiPalma said the state needs to be careful about allowing for-profit healthcare companies to come to Rhode Island.

He cited the example of California-based Prospect Medical Holdings, owner of Fatima Hospital and Roger Williams Medical Center, whose owners and other investors have taken more than a half-billion dollars in dividends out of the company. (The Health Services Council approved a controversial change in ownership for the two hospitals in April 2021, despite questions about the financial stability of the buyer — another instance in which fewer than half of the members of the council decided an important vote.)

When Encompass first proposed its rehab hospital, lobbying groups for hospitals and nursing homes fiercely opposed it. They said it would cannibalize rehab services at existing providers and increase the cost of care. The Hospital Association of Rhode Island — led by former state Senate President Teresa Paiva Weed — declined comment for this story.

Former state Health Insurance Commissioner Christopher Koller, now president of the Milbank Memorial Fund, which focuses on health equity, said the concern about Encompass drawing market share from existing rehabs is real: "Some of Encompass' volume would have to come from existing facilities."

The panel that initially recommended approval of Encompass, the Health Services Council, would be eliminated under a bill sponsored by state Senator Dawn Euer (D-Newport). Euer said she believes the council adds confusion to the approval process for healthcare entities.

Health Department spokeswoman Annemarie Beardsworth said the department appreciates the work of the council and is reviewing Euer's bill.

Editor's Note: The Public's Radio Political Reporter Ian Donnis can be reached at idonnis@ripr.org. Follow him on Twitter @IanDon and sign up for email delivery of his RI politics newsletter. This story first appeared on The Public's Radio website, thepublicradio.org.

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Lanes

(Continued from page 1)

Ferri, and his father (Frank R. Ferri) bought the bowling alley from Anthony Zanni in 1984. They operated the alley with brother, Robert, for more than 30 years.

The site plans call for construction of a bank branch along Atwood Avenue — the newest location for the Rhode Island financial institution formerly known as the Pawtucket Credit Union, now known as Coastal Credit Union.

"It seems rather dumb for a bank to tick off a lot of people for no good reason," Sandberg wrote. "There seems to be a lot of other places for a bank. I know that I will never do business with the bank."

Ferri said he sold the building, and the surrounding plaza, for \$2.9 million. The plaza's other businesses are expected to remain open.

"They're starting to put the bank up," Ferri said over the phone. "I had heard they wanted to keep the bowling alley, but changed their mind."

Ferri bought the property in 1984. He kept the bowling business going strong until he sold it (but kept ownership of the building and property) to Richard Fraielli in 2015.

Fraielli could not be reached for comment for this story.

A recorded message at the bowling alley (401-831-6940) informs callers

of limited hours of operation:

"On Wednesday, we'll be open from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. for league play only," the recorded greeting informs potential bowlers.

Richardson replied to a message left at on the Town Hall Lanes answering machine.

"We were going to be able to survive, but the way they have to shut the water off ... it will take months and months and we couldn't survive without the water," she explained.

Richardson said many of the Lanes' longtime customers are heartbroken.

The Smithfield Seniors, for example, had to find a new location for their 75 to 100 members.

"They've bowled here forever," Richardson said. "Looks like everybody's going to Meadowbrook (in Warwick)."

Now they'll have to travel from Smithfield, through Johnston and Cranston, to the Warwick alley.

"Like this town really needs another bank," Richardson said, trying hard, but failing to stay positive. "Another bank on Atwood Avenue ... We didn't need another bank."

She took a deep breath.

"You couldn't put a bank somewhere else?" Richardson asked again. "It is what it is. We're trying not to be bitter."

Editor's Note: Share your Town Hall Lanes memories with the Johnston Sun Rise. Email photographs and written memories to Sun Rise Editor Rory Schuler at rorys@rhodybeat.com.



NOT ANOTHER BANK : (A stack of last week's Johnston Sun Rise newspapers awaited throngs of league bowlers late last week. Town Hall Lanes will be closing, likely in mid-April. (Sun Rise photo by Rory Schuler)



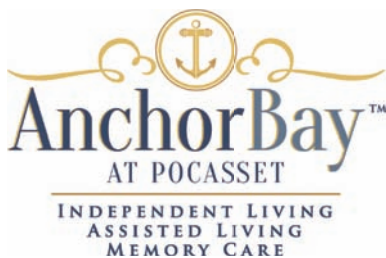
BIDDING FAREWELL: Rich Fraielli, who worked as the manager of Town Hall Lanes in Johnston for four years, bought the business from Frank Ferri in 2015. (2015 FILE photo)



PAST PROPRIETOR: Former state Rep. Frank Ferri sold Town Hall Lanes in Johnston to the bowling alley's longtime general manager, but maintained ownership of the building and property. Now he has sold that to Cobble Hill LLC for \$2.9 million. (2015 FILE photo)

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Outside firm hired to audit school finances

By RORY SCHULER

Johnston has hired a Pennsylvania auditing firm to examine school finances.

"The mayor is seeking an independent, out-of-state auditing firm called PFM Group," according to Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena Jr.'s Deputy Chief of Staff Dominique Turner. "The firm will come in and conduct a comprehensive financial and personnel audit of the school department."

The agreement, approved by Town Council and signed with the Philadelphia-based education audit specialists, caps the firm's fee at \$68,000 (\$66,000 for consulting and \$2,000 for travel costs).

"PFM Group is a national leader in education audits and will provide a transparent, unbiased and professional process," Turner wrote via email. "The audit will establish a baseline for future decisions and help identify strengths and weaknesses as well as any needs or excesses of the school department. This will ensure that when money is spent on the school department, it goes to the specifically tailored needs as identified by PFM."

Johnston Superintendent Bernard DiLullo Jr. attended the March 13 Town Council meeting to answer questions if asked.

"The Mayor and school department agreed to have a consultant come in to analyze our operations," DiLullo said before the meeting. "Hopefully the outcome will be suggestions to more efficiently offer our services. This will be helpful going forward as we assess our programs, staffing patterns and needs."

Town Councilman Robert J. Civetti ultimately voted against hiring the firm — not because he disagreed with a full examination of school finances, but because he thought the audit should also dig through the town's coffers.

"I just think there's more that we should be hiring them to do — not just go after the school department," Civetti told his fellow council members.

Soaring project costs

Two weeks ago, Polisena informed the Johnston School Building Committee that the town's estimated \$215 million facilities overhaul faced booming construction costs and skyrocketing interest rates (overshooting the approved bond by around \$50 million total).

The project — previously pitched and planned as a newly constructed town-wide elementary school, new early childhood center, and major

renovations at the middle and high schools — may be altered significantly to trim the overall project price tag.

Last month, Polisena promised a revised plan by late summer.

School Building Committee Chairman (and School Committee Vice-Chairman) Joe Rotella drew a line between the town-wide facilities overhaul and the proposed audit.

"This is not about the school project," Rotella said. "It is a proposal by the Mayor to examine the adequacy of local funding to the school district. The Mayor's office can fill you in on any more details."

Polisena has promised residents there will be no tax increase to cover the bond, and that scheduled payments by Amazon (once the Hartford Avenue robotic sorting facility opens) will cover the school building overhaul costs.

"This has nothing to do with brick-and-mortar school construction and is only for the purpose of optimizing operations and spending and saving where needed," Turner explained.

Not your average audit

Town Finance Director Joseph Chiodo said the school-wide audit falls under a "highly specialized field."

He said it's "not just a regular audit."

"There's other people that do it but they wouldn't respond to me," he told Town Council.

Chiodo said he contacted three firms in all; one wanted to farm it out and another never replied. The third, PFM Group, was willing and able to provide the services requested by the town. Town Council's approval was required to begin work.

Civetti arrived at the March meeting with questions.

"I also have a concern over where the money is coming from to pay for this since I do not recall seeing a budget line item in 2023," he said before the meeting. "(It's) also a concern that it never went out to bid."

At the March 13 meeting, he addressed Assistant Town Solicitor Dylan Conley.

"For Mr. Conley, I know under state law and our town charter, they're supposed to be going out to bid for items like this," Civetti said. "It sounds like he tried to solicit some prices, but we didn't do a public advertisement."

"It's my understanding that this is a specific type of service, which depending on the quality of respondents, the availability of respondents, that the appropriate bid procedure has been followed in this case," Conley replied.

"Even though we didn't go to public advertisement?" Civetti asked.

"I believe we (attempted) to solicit bids from multiple agencies," Conley explained. "We received two responsive bids, was the description I heard from the finance director. One was deemed to be nonresponsive because of their desire to sub it out to a third party. So this is the recommended bid winner."

Civetti then addressed Chiodo. "What prompted this study?" he asked.

"As you know, we've been up and down with financial operations, and I think both the superintendent, the mayor and I would like to get a grip on the baseline of where we're at," Chiodo answered. "Where we're at and where we're going."

Town-wide audit forthcoming?

"Now, is there any attempt to look at any departments in the town?" asked Civetti, an accountant by trade. He provided a few numbers.

"Because I think if we look ... at the past five year history ... the school department's budget has grown by 3.67 percent, where the town's general fund budget has grown by 15.6 percent," Civetti said. "And likewise ... during that same period the school overspent their expenses \$4.7 million, and the town's general fund overspent their expenses by \$7.1 million. I'd like to have the whole thing looked at; not just the school department."

Civetti argued that the town's overspending has far eclipsed the schools'.

"I'll defer to Mr. Conley, but when a budget is passed and approved by the Town Council, I think it authorizes the town to spend a certain amount within that budget," Civetti argued. "But as I said, the town over the past five years overspent its budget by \$7.1 million, which is a little less than double, probably about 70 percent of what the schools overspent their budget. But as we all know, unfortunately the school doesn't have an ability to raise cash, so if they're overspending they can't be coming up with additional fees to cover their deficits, whereas the town obviously generates significantly more revenue."

Hearing from the hired experts

Dean Kaplan, Managing Director and Engagement Manager for PFM, addressed Town Council.

"As you know, school districts and towns have a little bit of overlap ... obviously both have a very large proportion of their expenditures in personnel, including both the salaries and benefits ... schools also have a

number of specific areas that we take a look at, including ... transportation, food service," Kaplan said, mentioning the segments of the school budget his firm will examine.

PFM will also audit the district's special education spending, and revenue streams from the state and federal government.

He said PFM will "get together with the district and with the town" and "go through those different sources, both on the revenues side and expenditures on that side. They'll take a look at ... what recent trends are and what's going to be happening in the future."

"In particular, right now, most governments on the school side are facing an end to pandemic relief funds in September of 2024," Kaplan explained. "So people should be prepared for that going away, similar to what you're seeing on the town side, with ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding ... Look at some different areas where perhaps the town and the school district can collaborate and cooperate to try to moderate expenditure increases over time and make sure you continue to have robust revenues."

Town Council President Robert V. Russo asked about the audit procedure timeline.

Kaplan said the timeline was originally set for three to four months, "but we're aware that we're heading toward the end of the fiscal year, you want to put together your budgets, so we're going to try to get as much done ... as early as we can."

Before this month's meeting, Russo called the hiring of a firm to examine the school's finances a "great idea."

"I think the mayor wants to start with a clean slate as to the school department to learn where improvements can be made to assure that any increased funding is objectively justified for the benefit of the taxpayer and for the staff and students to that the correct amount of funding is provided to the areas identified through the audit," Russo wrote via email. "The comprehensive examination is geared toward the districtwide operations of the school department and the actual financing needed to run the system in the best interest of the students and community."

Russo called the \$60,000 fee for the comprehensive audit a good deal for the town, "which considering the overall expense to run the school department is reasonable."

Polisena and Turner did not attend the Town Council meeting. Polisena has not attended a monthly Town Council meeting since his inauguration in January.

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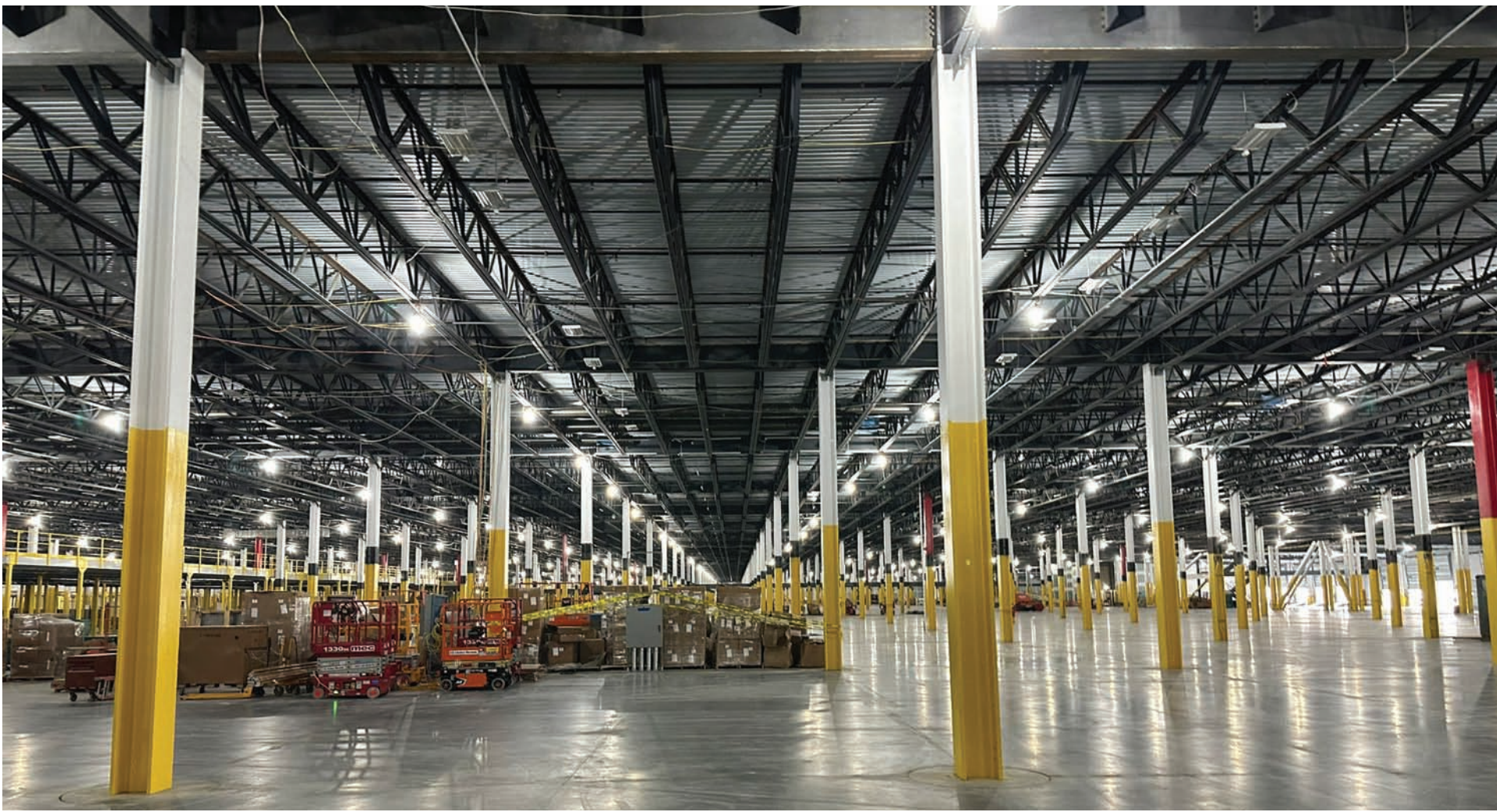


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■ Amazon

(Continued from page 1)

Polisena listed the local windfalls the project is expected to yield: "1,000 union construction jobs," "\$145m in tax revenue for Johnston over the next 20 years," "over 1,000 full-time jobs," and "installation of new of RIPTA route for public transit."

He released four photos from the tour.

The Sun Rise wrote back to Amazon: "Saw this tweet today from the Johnston Mayor. He toured the facility with Sen. Jack Reed. If politicians are touring, why can't the local newspaper?"

Amazon mulled the question for a few days, and after the weekend, they answered.

"I understand your anticipation to get into the site," McLaughlin replied. "As soon as it is open to the public, you will be the first one to know and we can arrange a tour."

So, on the record, the only opening day estimate available to the public is last year's "second half of 2023" best guess.

"As of right now, there are no updates to share on the Amazon project," said Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena Jr.'s Deputy Chief of Staff Dominique Turner. "Feel free to use the information and photos from the mayor's tweet."

The first day of spring has passed. We're entering the second quarter of the year. The end of the fiscal year's about three months away.

We'll keep asking.

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



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Opinion

EDITORIAL

Let's set a precedent on cell phones in school

Rhode Island so often finds itself following in the footsteps of other states (hi, Massachusetts) when it comes to passing policy. We see no reason why Rhode Island cannot become a nationwide leader in dealing with a problem faced by every state across America — cell phone use in schools.

While over 75% of school districts across the nation have some type of policy preventing the use of cell phones during school hours, there is not one state that has gone that one crucial step further to legislate this issue from the highest level of local government; and we fail to understand why that is.

There's no debate regarding how distracting cell phones in class can be. They are enough of a distraction for fully grown

• WHERE TO WRITE:
1944 Warwick Avenue
Warwick, RI 02889
RoryS@RhodyBeat.com

adults, never mind the degree of distraction they cause for teenagers with blossoming social lives, exploding brain chemistry

and still-developing attention spans.

There is nothing preventing the writing of a state law — crafted with the support and input from school administrators and a large committee of teachers and parents — that would once and for all provide a straightforward policy on to how to keep kids off their devices during the school day.

So far, the only argument against outright banning phones from school that we've seen that seems worthy of some consideration is in regards to student safety and being able to communicate with parents in the event of an emergency. Particularly in today's climate, there should always be multiple layers of contingency to ensure that in the instance of a true emergency — be it a shooting, a fire, or anything — that the authorities can be promptly notified.

However, we would argue that if the only means of effectively ensuring communicating an emergency is through the use of students' cell phones, the adults have surely fallen short in their responsibilities. Surely, there are solutions that don't rely on students reporting their own crises. In many cases, a resource officer will be able to alert police or fire personnel faster than any student can text or call. Parents might feel safer being able to contact their child at a moment's notice, but the trade-off for that reassurance is an overall negative impact on their overall learning environment.

Rhode Island should tackle this problem from the top, instead of relying on districts individually to figure it out on their own. Without a statewide policy to fall back on that is applied consistently to each school district, teachers and principals in individual school buildings are burdened with policing their use in schools, wasting their time as well as the students'.

And although the outcry among students will likely be severe, and considered an affront to their rights as human beings — understandable, considering how many of today's youth have had a device stuck in front of them by their parents earlier in their life than they can even remember — they might actually be surprised to find that being forced to relinquish that device for eight hours a day is actually somewhat freeing. You can't miss out on something if everyone else is missing out on it, too.

SO WHO'S WEIGHING IN ON A RUN THIS WEEK?



LETTER

Town Hall Lanes will be sorely missed

A bank is about to tear down Town Hall Lanes to build a new bank.

I know they have the power to do this, but why? The lanes bring fun, a little exercise and a place to meet friends. This is important to seniors as well as young people who need a place to go that

isn't a bar. It seems rather dumb for a bank to tick off a lot of people for no good reason. There seems to be a lot of other places for a bank. I know that I will never do business with the bank.

Robert Sandberg, of Johnston

Is Rhode Island poised for a rude awakening?

SHEKARCHI'S DECISION: Occam's Razor is the idea that the simplest explanation is often the one closest to the mark. That's a good prism for the decision by House Speaker Joe Shekarchi — whose office is often called the most powerful post in Rhode Island — to not run in CD1. While he would have had a good shot at winning, giving up his perch on Smith Hill to be the lowest-ranking member of the U.S. House, in the minority party, was not ultimately inviting. Shekarchi tells me a conversation with U.S. Sen. Jack Reed at the IHOP in Warwick helped drive home that point. There's also how the speaker has a busy private law practice, and regular travel to DC, if he were to win, would take him away from his 97-year-old father. For now, the CD1 race remains wide open. Lt. Gov. Sabina Matos is the only prominent Democrat running so far, Helena Foulkes bowed out early this week — and a host of other Democrats may jump in.

ANOTHER CD1 PROSPECT: Could a first-time candidate emerge from the business sector to become the next congressman from Rhode Island? Don Carlson, a renewable energy investor who lives in Jamestown, is seriously considering running for the CD1 seat and tells me he hopes to make his decision in early April. Carlson, a 62-year-old Democrat, checks a lot of boxes: he grew up in Warwick, worked at Newport Creamery as a youth, went to Williams and Harvard Law, worked as a trial lawyer and on Wall Street, served as legislative director for former U.S. Rep. Joe Kennedy II of Massachusetts, and ran the 2008 campaign for U.S. Rep. Jim Himes of Connecticut. Carlson said he believes he'd do well with fundraising. In Jamestown, he is a volunteer EMT and an assistant scoutmaster, he said. Carlson began investing in renewable energy about 23 years ago, starting with one outfit that consisted, he said, of five guys and a station wagon. In an alumni talk at Williams a few years back, "Carlson emphasized the need to 'blow up'

false assumptions about environmentalism. To him, the most harmful environmental myth is that sustainability precludes profit. According to Carlson, environmentalists 'don't have to make that tradeoff between doing well and doing good. Sustainability and profit can be joined through impact investing, which actively targets projects that benefit society.' As far as a possible CD1 run, he tells me, "I've been given some amazing opportunities in my life, starting with an amazing scholarship that allowed me to get a world-class education. I'd like to make this next chapter about creating opportunities for every young person in America. From my prior experience in government, I believe Congress is the best place to accomplish that."

HEALTHCARE: Three years after a little-known state advisory panel recommended approval, an Alabama-based publicly traded company, Emcompass Health, is building an inpatient rehab hospital in Johnston. The proposal was sharply opposed by lobbying groups for nursing homes and hospitals, who said it would cannibalize services and increase costs. Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena Jr., like his father before him, is a booster of the project and said it will spur competition. Here's my story tracing the long approval process and ongoing questions about the new rehab hospital.

HEALTHCARE, PART II: The initial recommendation for the Emcompass' Johnston proposal came from the state Health Services Council, on a 3-2 vote. As I subsequently reported, that was not the only time when the HSC decided a significant issue with less than half its membership. And the council approved a change in ownership for the owner of Fatima Hospital and Roger Williams Medical Center despite financial concerns about the buyer. State Sen. Dawn Euer (D-Newport) tells me her bill to eliminate the Health Services Council is based on the importance of public health in Rhode Island. Attorney

General Peter Neronha also has concerns about how healthcare approvals are determined in the state. "Based on my experience with Prospect Medical Holdings in 2021 and the proposed Lifespan/Care New England merger last year, it was plain to me that there had been underinvestment in the regulatory side of the Department of Health," he said. Neronha points to the HSC's vote when a private equity firm was trying to sell its stake in Roger Williams and Fatima. "In the end, it required intervention by my office to obtain \$80 million in necessary financial security for those hospitals," he said. "Similarly, the Department of Health never issued an opinion or decision regarding the proposed Lifespan/Care New England merger, though they, like my office, were charged with regulating that transaction. There are outstanding public servants in that agency, and I am proud to work alongside them in areas like opioid abatement, recovery and treatment. But no one can seriously argue that the regulatory side of the agency would not benefit from an additional investment of resources. Properly resourced and led, that agency should be making the health care regulatory decisions for the state, in conjunction with my office where authorized by statute."

TWITTER: I joined Twitter not long after starting at The Public's Radio in 2009, and it's such an intrinsic aspect of my work as a reporter that it's hard to imagine it fading into oblivion. Yet Elon Musk's rule of Twitter has been marked by disruptions and questionable moves. Dave Karpf lays out a plausible case for why Twitter may just have months before heading into bankruptcy. For now, though, reporters like Ted Nesi and me are hanging in with Twitter — because it remain a valuable information source — so here's hoping for the best.

Ian Donniss can be reached at idonniss@ripr.org



Publisher
John I. Howell Jr. - JohnH@rhodybeat.com

Credit Manager
Lynne Taylor

Advertising Director
Donna Zarrella - Donna Z@rhodybeat.com

Bookkeeping
Leslie Paz

Editor
Rory Schuler - RoryS@rhodybeat.com

Production Manager
Lisa Bourque Yuettner - LisaB@rhodybeat.com

Sports Editor
Alex Sponseller - AlexS@rhodybeat.com

Production Staff
Monique Rice - MoR@rhodybeat.com

Journalists
Pete Fontaine

Advertising Representative
Natalie Payette - NatalieP@rhodybeat.com

Classified Advertising
Ida Zecco - Classifieds@rhodybeat.com

Spotlight Profile Writer
Jennifer Coates - JenniferC@rhodybeat.com

Circulation
Leslie Paz

Tel. 401-732-3100
Fax: 401-732-3110

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NICHOLAS A. FERRI MIDDLE SCHOOL Q2 HONOR ROLL

High Honor Roll

Samaya Anzivino 2027
 Kelly Barrenechea 2027
 Isabella Boudreau 2027
 Hunter Feinstein 2027
 Lucas Frisella 2027
 Kylie Geremia 2027
 Elizabeth Kue 2027
 Jordan Maggiacomo 2027
 Arthur Men 2027
 Natasha Mendes 2027
 Giabella Pagliaro 2027
 Anthony Pannone 2027
 Nikko Pezza 2027
 Isabelle Ricci 2027
 Isabella Salazar 2027
 Sebastian Sanchez 2027
 Lorelai Sarli 2027
 Madelyn Sarli 2027
 Emma Taglianetti 2027
 Andrew Urizar 2027
 Sofia Williams 2027
 Thomas Xoydara 2027
 Timothy Xoydara 2027
 Juliette Amaya 2028
 Oscar Arriaza 2028
 Tyler Brunelle 2028
 Michael Chounlamany 2028
 Daniel Curiel 2028
 Dimazlia DiBiasio 2028
 Christopher DiPanni 2028
 Gina Ford 2028
 Fotis Fotopoulos 2028
 Sparrow Katowicz 2028
 Kamryn Kue 2028
 Brianna Lapati 2028
 Lila Lautieri 2028
 Jasmeet Mann 2028
 Gabriela Noriega Garcia 2028
 Angie Quiroa 2028
 Isaiah Ramirez 2028
 Adriana Rikken 2028
 Sophia Rubino 2028
 Brooklyn Russillo 2028
 Isabella Serpa 2028
 Kaleigh-James Slader 2028
 Aubrey Soares 2028
 Mia Soprano 2028
 Javiana Stec 2028
 Gianna Stomberg 2028
 Jayeden Thayorath 2028
 Ashlyn Wheeler 2028
 Scarlett Agnoli 2029
 Adrian Amaya 2029
 Alexis Arias 2029
 Mackenzie Arsenault 2029
 Jonathan Botelho 2029
 Calla Cadieux 2029
 Nolan Cahill 2029
 Breonna Carleton 2029
 Krishna Chu 2029
 Ibrahim Fall 2029
 Sokhna Fall 2029
 Carleigh Flath 2029
 Gabrielle Gonsalves 2029
 Ian Heywood 2029
 Mason Johnson Goncalves 2029
 Brayden Lariviere 2029
 Ella Martin-Sharkey 2029
 Joshua Ortiz 2029
 Matthew Otero 2029
 Jianaliz Pagan 2029
 Abigail Price 2029
 Ethan Quixtan Portillo 2029
 Isabel Rocha 2029
 Dante Santos 2029
 Penelope Santos 2029
 Lily-Anne Segee 2029
 Alexander Soto 2029
 Alexa St. Clair 2029
 Julianna Stonis 2029
 Brandon Turbitt 2029
 Cory Veitch 2029
 Nicolas Villa-Pinto 2029
 Grace Wilbur 2029
Total High Honor Roll: 84

Honor Roll

Selena Albanese 2027
 Alexander Amarel 2027
 Andre Amato 2027
 Morgan Andrews 2027
 Blake Angel 2027
 Ella Annicelli 2027
 Elianna Baptista 2027
 Juliana Buscemi 2027
 Abner Cambranes 2027

Madisyn Card 2027
 Abbigaelle Cenafils 2027
 Shemorie Constant 2027
 Cody Cook 2027
 Aidan Cross 2027
 Santino Cucinotta 2027
 Dominic DeGrazia 2027
 Jacob DeLeon 2027
 Gianna Desmarais 2027
 Daniel Dubon 2027
 Zoe Fairbanks 2027
 Anelee Fernandez 2027
 William Ferrara 2027
 Logan Finelli 2027
 Diana Gaitan Flores 2027
 Ian Gobeille 2027
 Sofya Gonsalves 2027
 Isabella Halliwell 2027
 Noah Hazebrouck 2027
 Vanessa Jean-Philippe 2027
 Jaylinn Khun 2027
 Adrien Kirkland 2027
 Dario La Terra Bellina 2027
 Ariana Lara 2027
 Freddy Magana Landaverde 2027
 Charlene Maranhao 2027
 Analeah Martins 2027
 Antonio Morales 2027
 Hayden Morin 2027
 Isabella Nunes 2027
 Brady O'Donnell 2027
 Aubree Padula 2027
 Evelyn Pagliarini 2027
 Aiden Pannone 2027
 Bricen Parris 2027
 Isabella Paulson 2027
 McKerry Petit Homme 2027
 Sophia Pinheiro 2027
 Owen Polofsky 2027
 Natalya (Nat) Rhind 2027
 Gian Ricci 2027
 Joaquin Rodriguez 2027
 Angelo Romano 2027
 Ivana Rua 2027
 Katelyn Silva 2027
 Alana Smith 2027
 Alexander Smith 2027
 Kailey Souza 2027
 Anthony Sposito 2027
 Jack Tabla 2027
 Ella Trementozzi 2027
 Kyle Urban 2027
 Angel Veillard 2027
 Fabian Vejarano-Tolentino 2027
 Abdiel Vidal 2027
 Carldjon'n Volcy 2027
 Clark Znoj 2027
 Jania Zolkos 2027
 Malaika Ali 2028
 Emily Alvarado Mota 2028
 Larissa Alvarenga-Pesoa 2028
 Olivia Babcock 2028
 Paris Blakely 2028
 Liam Brennan 2028
 Joella Carpentieri 2028
 Jon Costa 2028
 Nickola D'Aquila 2028
 Faith Kennedy D'Elia 2028
 Alessandro DeSimone 2028
 Matthew Duquette-Siswick 2028
 Michael Fantini 2028
 Ruben Feleja Correia 2028
 Jazlyn Garcia 2028
 Giovanni Gauthier 2028
 Brandon Giron Caballero 2028
 Mariana Gutierrez 2028
 Chelsea Guy 2028
 Anthony Hopp 2028
 Jaelyn Jordan 2028
 Syvianna Jules 2028
 Hadley Kampper 2028
 Aristotle Landim 2028
 Jewel Langlois 2028
 Kaylee (Roman) Lucas 2028
 Patrick Lucini 2028
 Giavanna Manfredi 2028
 Joseph Marandola 2028
 Giana Mercurio 2028
 Samaya Montrond 2028
 Marissa Morsilli 2028
 Cecilia Mullen 2028
 Anthony Murphy 2028
 Frank Nasisi 2028
 Owen Niles 2028
 Kaiya Nop 2028
 Linda Orozco 2028
 Savannah Paquin 2028

Aganeliz Perez Rosado 2028
 Lea Petrillo 2028
 Quintin Picon 2028
 Gianna Piloni 2028
 Mason Provoyeur 2028
 Leilani Quinones 2028
 Brea Rianna 2028
 Derryck Roberts 2028
 Jacob Rosa 2028
 Carolyn Rosales 2028
 Daisy Rosales 2028
 Mia Rubino 2028
 Joseph Santos 2028
 Max Sciotti 2028
 Gisele Semper 2028
 Derek Simas 2028
 Nicholas Smith 2028
 Isla Troxell 2028
 Ava Turgeon 2028
 Courtney Turner 2028
 Izabella Urena 2028
 Belinda Urizar Ruiz 2028
 Angelina Vallier 2028
 Loyal Vanstone 2028
 Adam Venditelli 2028
 Ella Ware 2028
 Melvin Wilson 2028
 Neji Acksonvong 2029
 Julio Alicea-Guzman 2029
 Ethan Archambeault 2029
 Melisis Arias 2029
 Antonio Baez 2029
 Ariana Barboza 2029
 Angelina Belmont 2029
 Ashly Bercian 2029
 Ryder Calabro 2029
 Brady Cartwright 2029
 Jacob Castro 2029
 Jacob Celeste 2029
 Brooke Charpentier 2029
 Jacqueline Chevalier 2029
 Marlee Cole 2029
 Domenic D'Aguanno 2029
 Alexander DaPonte 2029
 Sophie Darby 2029
 Michael DeAngelis 2029
 Paola DeLeon 2029
 Autumn DelVecchio 2029
 Grayson Desmarais 2029
 Jordan Diclo 2029
 Gabriella Dinucci 2029
 Kendall Duguay 2029
 Marco Fava 2029
 Dante Ferranti 2029
 Francesca Ferranti 2029
 Brayden Garceau 2029
 Layla Gonsalves 2029
 Trezure Hall 2029
 Kenzi Harrop 2029
 Layla Kelly 2029
 Dominic Lacasse 2029
 Angelina Lambrese 2029
 Brianna Maggiacomo 2029
 Skyla Malouin 2029
 Khady Marone 2029
 Gianna McCranie 2029
 Emma McDougall 2029
 Mason Mejia 2029
 Addyson Meloni 2029
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 DiMartino Petit Homme 2029
 Mason Petteruti 2029
 Mykhal Picon 2029
 Madison Pinheiro 2029
 Sergio Polanco Sanabria 2029
 Ethan Pongvongkeo 2029
 Valerie Rios 2029
 Daphne Rodriguez 2029
 Victor Rojas 2029
 Jonathan Sanchez 2029
 Angelina Santanelli 2029
 Christopher Sbardella 2029
 Natalia Scorpio 2029
 Joseph Silva 2029
 Lilyana Trikoulis 2029
 Jaxon Vanstone 2029
 Johnathan Winiarski 2029
 Winston Xaymongkhoun 2029
 Lorelei Znoj 2029
Total Honor Roll: 202

They set a table for Saint Joseph

By PETE FONTAINE

Many people will attest there's nothing quite like "Padre Peter's Parties." That theory was again upheld Saturday when Rev. Peter J Gower hosted "The Feast of St. Joseph" at Our Lady of Grace Church in Johnston.

"This is a major celebration for Italian Catholics in Johnston," Father Gower offered. "Our Lady of Grace Church lays claim to the largest St. Joseph Table with volunteers spending weeks baking homemade food items."

Saturday, though, was an exception to any rule. A total of 231 proud parishioners showed up at Fioretti Hall for the 2023 event, which was sponsored by the parish's St. Ann Sodality and Holy Names Society and may have set an all-time attendance record.

In the middle of it all was Mike Lombardi, an accomplished chef with years of experience under his belt, who put together what countless people called "an absolutely phenomenal feast" consisting of specially-mixed salad with dressing, Italian wedding soup replete with mini meatballs and lasagna — all served family style.

For dessert, there were delicious homemade zeppole made especially by Executive Chef Marvin Carter, and donated for the night by the Bridge at Cherry Hill, per Executive Director Maryann Grace who is a long-time OLG supporter and neighbor.

Finally, members of the Confirmation Class went table-to-table offering the famous pizzelles that drew as many rave reviews as did the mega-raffle which was coordinated by "Mr. OLG Joseph Andreozzi" who proudly wears many hats for the parish.

While more than 50 OLG parishioners made the St. Joseph's celebration so successful, Father Gower issued a heart-warming "thank you to the 25 members of our confirmation class who waited on and cleared each and every table."

To which Lombardi added: "All the kids did a great, great job tonight. I also want to thank my son (Jordan) who volunteered to wash all the dishes."

As Father Gower, who has a knack for organizing events, said: "It's friendship that brings us together; the young, the old, we all know each other, and we get together this time of year ... everyone looks forward to this celebration."

Father Gower explained that OLG has been hosting the St. Joseph Table since 2013, held smack in the middle of Lent and has since evolved into a fundraiser for the parish.

However, the St. Joseph Table came to a halt suddenly in 2020 because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Then OLG skipped 2021 and offered a pared-down version last year.

But as Father Gower said Saturday: "This the first year we can welcome visitors back to the St. Joseph's Table. It's everybody coming together, eating together. The whole tradition is beautiful, and the good thing is everything goes to help our parish."

He also explained that St. Joseph — husband of the Virgin Mary, earthly father of Jesus Christ and the patron Saint of Sicilians — holds special significance for people with Italian heritage in OLG.

"According to the Catholic Church, the original St. Joseph Table (or alter) originated sometime in the Middle Ages when the Island of Sicily was suffering from drought and famine. After praying to St. Joseph for intercession, rains came, and their crops prospered. To thank him, the community gave offering of food — and shared with the poor."

On Saturday, they celebrated the St. Joseph Table during a special supper featuring food, drink, music and classic camaraderie and one of OLG's all-time best super, special suppers.



DELICIOUS DUTY: Debra St. Hilaire, one of the many dedicated parishioners at Our Lady of Grace Church, holds a tray of specially made Italian Zeppole as a crowd of 231 people enjoyed Saturday night inside Fioretti Hall. (Sun Rise photos by Pete Fontaine)



HELPING HANDS: OLG Chef Mike Lombardi is joined by members of the parish's confirmation class who performed many duties in and out of the kitchen during Saturday's St. Joseph's Day Party.



FAMILY FEAST: Marysue Andreozzi, member of the Johnston School Committee and Vilma Zanni brought Maryrose Andreozzi to Saturday's annual OLG St. Joseph's Table event.



FATHER'S FLOCK: Rev. Peter J. Gower is joined by members of Our Lady of Grace Church's Confirmation Class who helped serve and clear tables for what people called Saturday's "phenomenal St. Joseph Day food fest" in Johnston.

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MODEL MATT: JHS Music Department Chorus and Select Choir Director is all smiles as he shows off a bedding item that will be on sale April 1 during a one-day mattress sale that will run from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the school cafeteria. (Submitted photo)

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JHS Music Department’s sixth annual Mattress Sale is back on April 1

By **PETE FONTAINE**

Bed & Bedroom is coming to Johnston. A new business? Not quite, although Johnston High School’s national award-winning music department will be hoping to drum up lots of business on Saturday, April 1 during its sixth annual Mattress Sale.

Proceeds from the event, which is held in conjunction with Custom Fundraising Solutions, will help finance the JHS Music Department’s Band and Chorus trip to Hershey, Pennsylvania, where they will again complete in the highly acclaimed Music in the Park Festival.

“If anyone is looking to replace a bed or even purchase a new mattress, the sale will be the place to do just that,” Ron Lamoureux, who chairs the JHS Music Department, offered. “The sale is always special; with great prices.”

Custom Fundraising Solutions — a nationally recognized company that has raised more than \$50 million dollars since 2005 for countless non-profits and schools — will transform the JHS cafeteria into a day-long mattress and bed store beginning at 10 a.m. and continuing through 5 p.m.

There’s no admission, plenty of parking and some of the finest names in mattresses will be available at reduced rates courtesy of CFS.

Lamoureux, who has developed the JHS Music Department to one of the best among Rhode Island schools, offered: “There will be 25 different mattress styles on display in all sizes for customers to actually try. They’ll also be feature below retail prices.”

Likewise, people will be able to purchase adjustable power bases, premium pillows, bed frames and mattress protectors. Some of the biggest brand names — such as Simmons and Beauty Rest — will be offered during the event. They all come with full factory warranties and are made to order and will be available two to three weeks after the fundraiser.

Jason Clander, who heads the Rhode Island area division for CFS, explained that delivery will be available. He announced that “the Johnston High School Music Department will benefit from every purchase on April 1.”

The Mattress Fundraiser, which was first introduced to the Cleveland area back in 2005 and now has 80 locations throughout the country, will have staff members who can answer questions during the sale.

JOHNSTON POLICE LOG

MOLESTATION

The Rhode Island Attorney General's Office announced indictments against a Johnston man for multiple sexual assault charges.

On March 13, the Statewide Grand Jury returned an indictment charging Joshua Gomez, 41, of Johnston, with a total of six counts: two counts of first-degree child molestation, two counts of second-degree child molestation, one count of assault with intent to commit first-degree child molestation, and one count of failure to notify change of address by sex offender, according to a press release from AG Peter Neronha's office.

"The alleged acts occurred in both Johnston and Providence on various dates between March 1, 2021, and November 20, 2022," according to the press release. "The investigation was jointly conducted by the Rhode Island State Police, the Providence Police Department, and the Johnston Police Department."

Gomez is scheduled to be arraigned on March 29 in Providence County Superior Court.

WARRANT ARREST

At 12:11 p.m., Feb. 19, Warwick Police Officer Nathaniel Gray was on patrol when he entered the parking lot of the Warwick Mall at 400 Bald Hill Road.

"It should be noted that I have made numerous arrests at this location, as there is a large volume of shop-liftings and other criminal activity," Gray wrote in the arrest report.

Gray spotted a black 2015 Toyota Camry parked near JC Penney, and occupied by a man.

Gray ran a check on the vehicle's plates and found the registered owner, Francisco E. Pineda, 48, of 101 Charles Way, Apt. 2, Johnston. Gray discovered that Pineda "was wanted out of Third District Court for a technical violation for a prior charge of obtaining property under false pretenses."

Pineda was identified as the driver. He was arrested and placed in the rear of Gray's cruiser. He was transported to Warwick Police Headquarters, where he was later fingerprinted and photographed for booking. Pineda was later transported to the ACI.

DUI

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

Warwick Police Officer Derek J. Hagopian spotted an

older model red Ford Ranger pickup truck stopped in the driveway of a business at the address.

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

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

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

Police asked Graziano to submit to a series of standardized field sobriety tests. Following the tests, Graziano was arrested and transported to Warwick Police Headquarters.

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

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

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CHEF'S CORNER: The Bridge at Cherry Hill's Executive Chef Marvin Carter is joined by Bri Butzke of Marquis Health and Lucy Hebert of Capital Ridge during a recent networking breakfast.

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MONTHLY LOCAL NEWS REGARDING MENTAL ILLNESS, THE HOMELESS AND THOSE IN NEED

We just completed our annual breakfast of who we are and what we do. Our guest speakers were Rick Wild from Crossroads and John Tassoni from The Recovery Hope Tv. There were videos shown and the focus was on the homeless and mental illness. Everyone got a full breakfast, enjoyed raffles and took in a lot of information. Pat Docherty on the right opening the event with the word of God. Plans are being worked on to put some legislation together for supporting the homeless with onsite mental health help.

Current State News:

Some good news looms over the horizon for over several hundred homeless individuals who are now using the Cranston Street Armory in Providence's west end as their temporary overnight sleeping respite until other arrangements can be made by state officials and community groups ,such as Amos House, to secure larger and better facilities that will at least be air-conditioned as we approach the summer months and beyond. RI housing official, Stefan Prior, told a large group of concerned citizens last week at the West Broadway Middle School that the Cranston St. Armory will be closing to outside groups of needy people as of April 30. But then what? Convincingly, Mr Pryor did place emphasis on larger shelters across the state and with more amenities including support services form state and local community centers to make the whole process more beneficial to the users so that they can end the vicious cycle of poverty and health issues that many also face. He claims the state is "fanning out, contacting anyone who could help us with places where pallet shelters, vacant houses and even pieces of land " for future development that can be utilized quickly to provide shelter for the growing population of homeless men and women throughout the state. The Spirit of Hope Board of Directors agrees whole heartedly with the state's position that more needs to be done to help secure decent housing and counseling services for our less fortunate. The places that need help are the shelters in the morning. They need the state to provide counselors/employers/support programs to help those going back into the streets.

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WRITERS: PAUL ORLANDO, LOUIS SPREMULLI | ALWAYS EXCEPTING NEW SPONSORS



BREAKFAST BUDDIES: These are some members of North West Links who attended last Thursday's networking breakfast at the Bridge at Cherry Hill.

North West Links hosts networking session

By PETER FONTAINE

North West Links, which includes professionals who work at assisted living, rehabilitation and nursing facilities within the state, held another impressive networking meeting on a recent Thursday morning inside The Bridge at Cherry Hill in Johnston.

Maryann Grace, The Bridge's executive director and Sales/Community Relations Director Mike Mangasarian welcomed 28 people to the fun and information-filled event that affords members further recognition and better understanding of what is happening within the sphere of elder care.

In keeping with tradition, Co-Chairpersons Jen Burns and Christine Crum presided over what many people assessed was one of the non-profit's best networking events in recent memory.

Burns, who once worked at The Bridge and is now Sales Director for Anchor Bay at Pocasset in Johnston, and Crum, who owns and operates Cranston-based Gentry Moving and Storage, headlined the morning's fun-filled and informative session that began with coffee along with Chef Marvin Carter's bountiful breakfast that included cheese omelets, bacon, egg and cheese breakfast sandwich, bacon, home fries, coffee and tea.

Likewise, each member delivered a brief yet in formative explanation of their respective agency along with upcoming events at facilities within the elder care community.

"There's a wealth of information here today," said Mangasarian, as he scooted to the kitchen to replace the orange juice and coffee. "Our industry benefits from events like this as well as learning about upcoming events."

A "Make and Take Flower Bar" has been scheduled for May 4 from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. at the Wingate Residences, 353 Blackstone Boulevard in Providence. And the 30 Charcuterie Tutorial set for Thursday, March 30 at The Bridge, will show attendees how to properly set up their own board as well as how to pair different wines and cheeses."



LINKED LEADERS: North West Links co-chairs Jen Burns and Christine Crum are joined by Mike Mangasarian and Maryann Grace during last week's breakfast meeting. (Sun Rise photos by Pete Fontaine)

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By **JENNIFER COATES**

Dreamland Learning Center, a creative and cheerful childcare center in Johnston, is a bright and welcoming place where learning is fun and where every space was designed to enrich the growing minds of the many children who come here. This learning center was opened in 2015 and has been evolving and expanding ever since to meet the needs of today's modern family.

Every space in this center is thoughtfully planned and designed to be developmentally appropriate and purposeful. Child-size furniture makes each room look comfortable and adapted to the needs of pint-sized early learners, while shelves are filled with toys and walls are strewn with art projects. Centers are set up for imaginary play, arts & crafts, building, science, music and story time.

The outside playgrounds provide the perfect place for youngsters to run off all that childhood energy; they are even divided for children of different age groups. The after-school room is replete with long tables for homework time.

With the weather finally warming, spring is in the air and the staff here is busy planning seasonal activities for all the busy bodies here!

The curriculum and staff-to-child ratio requirements here meet the strict standards of the state while all staff are licensed and CPR certified. The staff here work as a team with one goal in mind and that is to enrich the lives of the children over whom they have been given this special stewardship.

The team at Dreamland is always vigilant in their efforts to stave off all sicknesses, but most especially Covid infections. All common spaces are regularly sanitized with an emphasis

on frequent hand washing! You can be assured that your child is in a safe, secure, and happy place!

If you are looking for childcare this summer or are just interested in giving your child a fun place to spend time with friends, check out the Summer Camps starting soon at Dreamland Learning Center. When school ends, your child can enjoy hours of play, outdoor activities and of course, lots of learning. Call or visit their website in the weeks ahead to learn more ~ time to plan ahead!

Dreamland Learning Center is now accepting enrollment for children ages 6 weeks through age 12 years of age. After school programs are in session. The Center is located at 1253 Hartford Avenue. For more information, to discuss your questions or concerns, call Simone or Sheena in the office at 401-280-1400 or visit their website at www.dreamlandlearningcenter.com.

Be sure to check out the other Dreamland Learning Centers in West Warwick (401-828-8200) and Pawtucket (401-655-1000).

As times are evolving, the team at Dreamland is looking to grow. If you love children and want to work with them in this supportive and important line of work, give the office a call today.



Imagine your child playing out in the spring sunshine on this colorful and inviting playground at Dreamland Learning Center in Johnston ~ perfect for kids of all ages!



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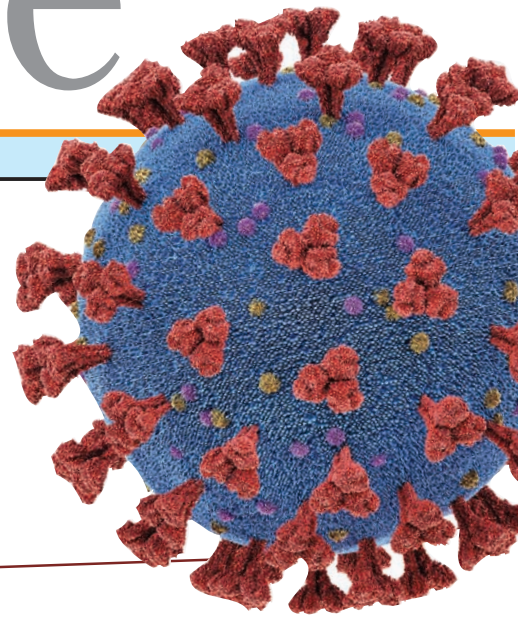
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3 years in



Ocean State Stories reflects on Rhode Island during the pandemic

By G. WAYNE MILLER

Editor's note: Miller covered the pandemic as a staff writer for the Providence Journal from January 2020 until November 2022, when he left the newspaper to become Ocean State Stories director.

The first year

The first portend of what might await came on Jan. 22, 2020, when the Rhode Island Department of Health issued an advisory about a worsening flu season.

I reported on that in a story that briefly mentioned "the outbreak of the deadly coronavirus in China," which the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was monitoring. Confirmation of the first American to be infected, a resident of Washington state who had traveled to China, had been made on Jan. 21.

"While CDC considers this a serious public health concern," the Health Department declared on its website, "based on current information, the immediate health risk from 2019-nCoV [the strain of virus] to the general American public is considered low at this time. Nevertheless, CDC is taking proactive preparedness precautions."

For my story, Health Department spokesman Joseph Wendelken told me that his agency "has been in contact with health-care providers. This is routine when federal officials are responding to an acute health issue at the national level. We have sent out a summary of the situation, criteria to guide evaluation of patients, and guidance on reporting, testing, and specimen collection. Again, though, these are the routine steps we take in this kind of situation out of an abundance of caution."

A month later, I was in New York City to attend Toy Fair, usually a festive event, as part of promotion for one of my books, "Kid Number One: Alan Hassenfeld and Hasbro."

Over the long weekend, thousands of people attended the convention at the Javits Center. No one practiced social distancing or wore masks -- but talk of COVID was everywhere at the center and anywhere I went in the city. As I walked past a construction site near Fifth



Gov. Gina Raimondo and Health Department director Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott held regular press conferences.



Drive-by birthday celebrations like this one for Mary Whalen became popular.

■ PANDEMIC - PAGE 24



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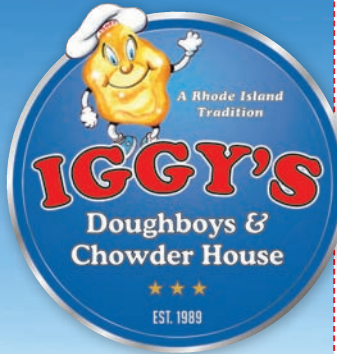
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Sports



NEXT LEVEL: Johnston's Arianna Velasquez last season. (Photo by Alex Sponseller)

Favorite teams, moments of winter

The Bishop Hendricken hockey team took home a 2-0 state championship win over rival La Salle last weekend to officially wrap up the winter sports season at Beacon Communications.

As always, it was a lot of fun to watch for our schools and teams. Prior to the season tipping off, if you remember, I mentioned that winter sports were collectively my favorite to cover. After this season, I will stand by that statement.

We had many standout athletes and teams, so here are some of my favorite stories from the winter.

Although the Warwick co-op boys hockey team did not win it all, that team was probably the one that I found most interesting to cover.

After a down season last year in which it won just one game, the young Militia would turn things around fast and all of a sudden become a force in Division I. The eventual champion Hawks needed a wild third period comeback in the semis to get the job done against Warwick, but make no mistake about it, the Militia was absolutely a top team in the state. I believe that it could have beaten the Rams if they squared off.

Warwick will return a large core next year and should be among the cream of the crop again. It's been awhile since a public school has won a hockey title at the Division I level, and I believe that Warwick will have as good a chance as any to get it done.

The Hendricken basketball team was also a great story. I know, I know, Hendricken is always a favorite to win a championship. But after losing to

My pitch



by ALEX SPONSELLER
SPORTS EDITOR
ALEXS@RHODYBEAT.COM

La Salle in the division matchup, it did not feel that way heading into the big dance.

My favorite part of the championship was the fact that it was Hendricken's role players that stepped up. Mike Paquette, Matt Brock, those guys were the difference in that game. Eze Wali and Azmar Abdullah were studs all year long, so it was nice to see the other guys step up.

The Pilgrim girls also surprised the state by winning the Division III Championship at RIC. I was happy for the seniors on that team, especially Gianna Ramos and Faith Meade. Those two had seen it all in their high school careers, going from a winless season to a championship.

Between a few shaky seasons, having a new coach in Kaitlyn Rachiele, it was hard to make a firm prediction heading into the season. To predict the Pats would be hoisting the championship plaque, though? I would not have guessed it.

Then of course, the Johnston boys, who won the Division II title.

You know, it is sometimes nice to see the team that should win actually pull it off. It's always fun to root for an underdog, but at the same time, you have to appreciate domi-

■ PITCH - PAGE 19

Velasquez commits to DII Bridgeport

By ALEX SPONSELLER

Johnston junior infielder Arianna Velasquez took a big step forward in her softball career, recently com-

mitting verbally to Division II University of Bridgeport.

Velasquez, who also plays travel softball for Bombers Elite, had a breakout sophomore campaign for

the Panthers, who reached the playoffs for the second straight season. She finished the year batting .377 in 19 games to go along with

■ VELASQUEZ - PAGE 19

Spring sports underway at JHS

By DAVID ROLAND
Special to the Sun Rise

Boys volleyball: The boys volleyball team is coming off a very successful 2022 season, where they were crowned 2022 Division 3 state champions. Coach Greta Lalli will attempt to recreate the same success as she did last year.

Key player: Yandel Gonzalez, Jacob Muller, Josh Philbrick

Boys baseball: The boys baseball team coached Joe Acciardo and Paul Robitaille had a successful season but sadly they were eliminated from the playoffs in the second round. Hopefully they can bounce back and win it all this year.

Key players: Dylan Martins, Derek Salvatore and Davian Nunez



RUNNING IT BACK: The 2022 Johnston boys volleyball team that won the state championship. (Photo by Leo van Dijk/rhodyphoto.zenfolio.com)

■ SPRING - PAGE 19



THE THROW TO FIRST: Arianna Velasquez last year. (Submitted photo)

■ **Velasquez**
(Continued from page 18)

20 hits and 18 RBI. After visiting the Bridgeport campus and meeting the team, Velasquez was thrilled to announce her verbal commitment. "It was a big relief for me. When I started playing travel softball, that was one of my biggest dreams, that was my biggest goal. When I achieved it, it was a breath of fresh air," said Velasquez. "I visited and the environment, everything was perfect. The team was so welcoming and (Bridgeport) Coach Dawn (Stearns) was really nice. They're a really good DII team and they're very competitive which I like." Velasquez will also have a familiar face on the team as well, as Bombers teammate and former Pilgrim star Madi D'Amato is on the roster. "I'm really nervous, but knowing someone on the team has helped me feel comfortable and she was very helpful when I went to visit. I really wanted to

know the team and she helped me out with that," said Velasquez. Although Velasquez is a middle infielder for the Panthers, she is ready to take on any role that Bridgeport sees fit when she arrives. She is also looking forward to the family atmosphere at the college level. "I'll happily play any position. I just want to play college softball. I'm going to live, eat, sleep with these girls once I get there, so it's going to be interesting and it should be a stronger bond. It will definitely be more competitive, I can already tell," said Velasquez. With two more high school seasons on the docket, she is also hoping to bring home a state championship to Johnston. "I have a lot more room for improvement confidence-wise. We just started the high school season so I am focused on that. We have a small group this year and the past two years we have fallen short in the playoffs. Hopefully we can win a state championship because that is a big goal of mine as well," Velasquez said.

■ **Pitch**
(Continued from page 18)

nance. Although the Panthers let their guard down and lost a couple of games late in the regular season, they were clearly the best team in the division and would roar to the title. Between Derek Salvatore, Anthony Corsinetti, Neari Vasquez, Camani Batista, Johnston was just so deep in talent and it showed. It really was the best team in that division, hands down. Middletown emerged as a true threat and gave Johnston everything it could handle in the championship, but the Panthers were the best team across the entire season and deserved that win. I am looking forward to seeing how the Cranston West boys play next year. The Falcons got off to a 2-5 start and appeared to be in some trouble, but then became one of the best teams in Division II in the back half of the regular season schedule to earn a playoff berth. A few players will be graduat-

ing, but a few will return. The Toll Gate girls will also be welcoming back Adeline Areson which will be interesting to see. The Titans reached the Division III semis and will have a few girls coming back. I'm excited to see how they fare as well next winter. Lastly, Cranston's Brooke Anderson had a huge end to her season by winning the all-around gymnastics championship at both states and regionals. What a way to end her high school career and what a nice achievement for the city. I'm sure there are plenty more that I am missing, but overall, what a fun winter sports season. Spring will be here in a couple short weeks, then the summer, and round and round we go. There was some huge Rhode Island news as longtime Providence College men's basketball coach Ed Cooley decided to pack his bags, leave his hometown team and join Georgetown, a conference rival.

This has created quite a bit of buzz since it was officially announced on Monday afternoon. I would say the majority of Rhode Islanders are angry and disappointed, which is and isn't surprising. Why it is not surprising is obvious, it's his hometown club and he's not only leaving, but leaving for a rival team. Locals have every right to feel betrayed and abandoned. Why it is surprising, though, is because at the end of the day, how do we not accept the fact that coaching turnover is frequent in college sports? I'm sure it was nothing personal, just money if we're being honest. Cooley is arguably the most accomplished college sports coach that the state has ever seen. He brought the program back to life and established it as a true powerhouse at the Division I level. Instead of pointing fingers, lashing out, the best solution is to appreciate what he did and to realize that everything must come to an end. On to the next one.

■ **Spring**
(Continued from page 18)

Girl's Lacrosse: The girl lacrosse team are hoping for another successful season. Last year they made the semifinals, unfortunately they couldn't get the job done, but this is their year. Key players: Kaylee Poole and Hannah Lavergne Track: The track team had a very lackluster season, hopefully they can bounce back this year with coach Christian Young. Key players: Brandon Souza, Mike Cepeda, Josephine Olagundoye, Talia Laflame and Nick Rianna Girls Softball : The Girl's softball team had a prosperous 2022 season, going 11-8 under head coach David Iannuccilli. Unfortunately, they lost first round to Middletown, but the team is hoping to bounce back this year. Some other sports we should look forward to are Golf and Boys Tennis. Editor's Note: David Roland serves as Freshmen Class President. The Johnston Sun Rise regularly publishes stories submitted by the Johnston High School Student Council.

RIC athletes named to All-Academic teams

Nine Rhode Island College student-athletes were named to the 2022-23 Little East Conference Winter All-Academic team as announced by the league office. Women's Basketball: McKenzie Field (Glocester), Madison Medbury (Scituate), Neleesha Meunier (Leominster, Mass.) and Angelina Nardolillo (Hinsdale, N.H.). MEN'S INDOOR TRACK & FIELD: Christopher McCarthy (Cranston). WOMEN'S SWIMMING: Junior Rebecca Fyrer (Cranston), junior Meghan Laflamme (Smithfield), junior Marta Matzko (Rumford) and junior Anna Vygoder (Smithfield).

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Fishing show big success, sets table for early season

By CAPT. DAVE MONTI

The excitement was building outside the New England Saltwater Fishing Show exhibition hall at the RI Convention Center earlier this month as hundreds of anglers waited in line for the show to open.

Once the doors opened at 12:30 p.m. the traffic was nonstop for quite a while. I worked the Saltwater Anglers Foundation booth at show opening next to Rhode Island Kayak Fishing Adventures' booth and the action was nonstop.

Dustin Stevens owner of RI Kayak Fishing Adventures and a Kayak Centre of RI (North Kingstown) pro guide said, "The traffic was pretty good from the start. Both Kayak Fishing Adventures and the Kayak Centre of RI had great shows. We had a lot of interest at the booth with folks inquiring about booking us and the seminars we gave on kayak fishing were well attended and received."

Elisa Cahill of Snug Harbor Marina, South Kingstown, said Friday, "Traffic has been very good with lots of people in our booth, things are going well."

Greg Vespe, Tiverton resident, who is Executive Director of the RI Saltwater Anglers Association and show director, said, "What a great start to the fishing season for all. If the Show is any indication it is going to be a great fishing season. We had over 10,000 people attend about 1,000 more than last year, and last year was our first year back after COVID."

"We were nonstop in the booth and just about sold out of offshore charters from those wanting to target tuna. And, we did really well booking inshore charters too. The seminars we hosted were packed, so it was a very, very good show. We attend shows in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey and this Show here in Rhode Island is always the best of them all," said Capt. Brian Bacon of Big Game Fishing Charters, South Kingstown, RI.

Quaker Lane Bait & Tackle, North Kingstown, experienced a very busy show too. "We sold a lot of everything we brought. Rods, reels and lures were all selling well," said Nick Krajewski of Quaker Lane.

"This Show is amazing I cannot believe all the people that came out to support us and all the other vendors. It's the number one Show in New England. So, if you are not here you are losing out," said Bill Trudell of Feindell Custom Lures.

Al Gags of Al Gags Lures said, "It's a great organization that puts this together. I am so proud to be a part of it."

"It was very gratifying to have our old vendors back who may have missed a year or two due to COVID. And, see a host of new vendors too. About 35 more booths than last year for a total of over 300 booths. We signed a bunch of vendors up for next year too. To me this is a great complement to have vendors or those attending the show say I'll be back next year," said Greg Vespe.

Doherty to present at CT Fishing Show

East End Eddie Doherty, a Cape Cod Canal fishing expert, will present "Surfcasting the Cape Cod Canal for Striped Bass" at the Connecticut Fishing & Outdoor Show on Saturday, March 25 at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. at Mohegan Sun, Uncasville, CT. His presentation will feature photos by surfcaster John Doble.

Doherty of Mattapoissett, and a former North Attleboro, MA resident, is a fishing writer and Falmouth Enterprise columnist, and he is author of SEVEN MILES AFTER SUNDOWN which was announced on Amazon as the No. 1 New Release in Fishing and selected as an Award-Winning Finalist for the American Bookfest in the Sports Category at the 2019 International Book Awards in Los Angeles.

Trout Unlimited Annual Fundraiser and Banquet

The Rhode Island Trout Unlimited Chapter (TU#225) will hold its Annual Fundraising Banquet and Auction on Saturday, April 22, 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Quonset O Club, North Kingstown, RI.

The key note speaker will be Simon Gaweswork, Education and Engagement Manager for Far Bank, the parent company of Rio Products, Sage, Redington and Fly Water Travel. The title of his talk is "Understanding Fly Lines & How To Choose The Right Line For Maximizing Performance".

Glenn Place, President of TU#225 said, "The annual banquet is our main fundraiser of the year that allows TU225 to realize our vision to ensure that the habitats for cold water and estuary fish thrive in Rhode Island for future generations."

The Banquet will feature an early evening dinner buffet with multiple entree choices, served salad, dessert and cash bar. There will be numerous bucket raffles, door prizes, silent auction and live auction items. Contact Susan Estabrook with questions at susan@ysinc.com putting TU#225 in the subject line or to purchase dinner and raffle tickets online visit <https://secure.etransfer.com/RICTU/Dinner.cfm>.



FISHING SHOW: Elisa Cahill and her brother Matt Conti of Snug Harbor Marina, South Kingstown. Elisa said traffic at the show was outstanding. (Submitted photos)

[etransfer.com/RICTU/Dinner.cfm](https://secure.etransfer.com/RICTU/Dinner.cfm).

Where's the bite?

Freshwater. Vincent Castaldi of Quaker Lane Bait & Tackle, North Kingstown, said, "A few area ponds are yielding largemouth bass for customers but the bite has been slow most of the week."

Both Falls Pond and Whiting Ponds in North Attleboro were stocked with trout last week. 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.

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.island-current.com.

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



ALL-TIME HIGH: Dustin Stevens, owner of RI Kayak Fishing Adventures and pro staff member at the Kayak Centre of RI, North Kingstown, said interest in kayaks and kayak fishing are at an all-time high.

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SLIDING IN: Don O'Leary slides into second base. (Submitted photos)

The Boys of Summer!

SPECIAL TO THE SUN RISE

Some are snow birds playing softball all winter in Florida, some are working out at their local gym, some are taking batting practice indoors in Quonset, and most are sitting at home just waiting for the calendar to turn to May and the start of the 2023 RI Senior Softball League season.

May 7 will mark the start of the 41st season of senior softball in Rhode Island. The RI Senior Softball League has operated continuously since the 1982 season when seven founders decided that they needed to play softball even though they were in their 50's. Fast forward 41 years and one of the original founders is still playing in the league.

Joe Giordano played during the initial season and has played and managed in every one of the 41 seasons. Currently Joe is a player/manager of the Blue Cross team, which won the league and playoff championship in their division in 2022. On July 16 at Atwood Field in Cranston, Joe will be celebrating his 94th birthday.

Currently the league has 20 teams divided into three divisions defined by age limits. There are six teams operating in Division 1 which is a 50 year and older division. The division has 146 players where the median age is 58.

Division 2 has four teams and is a 60 year and older division. There are 68 players in this division and the median age is 67.

Finally, Division 3 has eight teams (145 players) and the minimum age of the division is 65. The median age of Division 3 is 72 with 43 players at least 75, 11 players at least 80, and then there is Joe Giordano at 94.

The league begins play this year on Sunday, May 7 and will continue through the playoffs which end Sunday, Sept. 17. Teams play doubleheaders every Sunday that begin at 9 a.m. The league uses 11 different fields throughout the state that include fields in: Barrington (Vets Field), Cranston (Atwood, Cooney, Western Hills), East Providence (Agawam-2), Johnston (Mazzulla, Woodlake), North Kingstown (Ryan), South Kingstown (West Kingstown Field) and Woonsocket (Bou-

ley).

The league has its own website that contains league news, team rosters, schedules and results/standings at www.leaguelineup.com/riseniorsoftball.

While many of the teams will have a complete roster at this time, there are still a few teams looking for additional players to fill out their roster. These teams are in Division 3 and are looking for players in the 65 and over age bracket. If you are 50 or over and interested in joining the RISSL go to the website at and complete a Player Inquiry Form. A member of the league's Executive Board will contact teams looking for players and provide them with your contact information.

If you are looking for something interesting to do on a Sunday morning take in one of our games and see how the desire to compete and play the game love continues even in their senior years. You will marvel at the skills and competitiveness each player still possess. They are still the Boys of Summer!



STILL AT IT: Joe Giordano, who is turning 94 this season and has been in the league since its first season 41 years ago.

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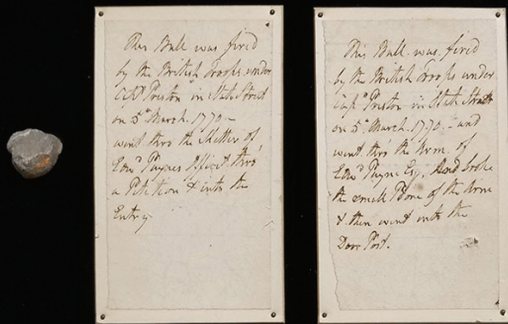
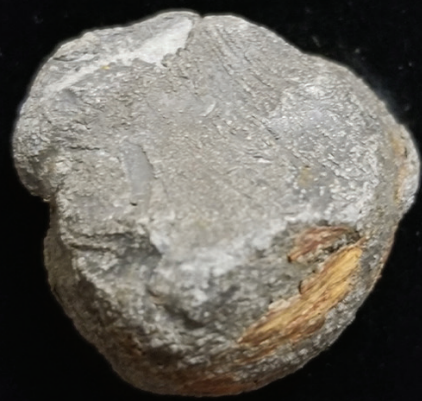
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This ball was fired by the British Troops under Captain Preston in State Street on 5th day of March 1770, went through the shutter of Edw. Payne's office and through the partition and into the entry.

This ball was fired by the British Troops under Capt. Preston in State Street on 5th day of March, 1770, and went through the arm of Edw. Payne, Esq. and broke a small bone of the arm and then went into the door-post.



Artifacts from the Boston Massacre



(No. 93.)
 The subscriber, being desired by the committee of enquiry to take ranges of the holes made by musquet-balls in two houses near opposite to the Custom-house, find that the bullet-hole in the entry door post of Mr. Payne's house, and which grazed the edge of the door before it entered the post where it lodged, two and a half inches deep, ranges just under the stool of the westermost lower chamber window of the Custom-house. And that the hole made by another musquet-ball, through the window shutter of the lower story of the same house, and lodged in the back-wall of the shop, ranges about breast-high from the ground, and between the second and third window from the west corner of the Custom-house.



By Joel Bohy
 Historic Arms & Militaria
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through the arm of Edw. Payne, Esq. and broke a small bone of the arm and then went into the door-post."

In a deposition, Payne mentioned what transpired and that a few guns had gone off "after which three or four more went off in the same manner; at which time a ball passed through the deponent's right arm." Payne, being right-handed had to sign the deposition with his left hand. The shots are also mentioned in the court proceedings when a ballistics study was done for the trials of Captain Preston and his men.

It seems the ball were kept by Payne and passed down to one of his sons who wrote the notes in the early 19th century and framed the artifacts. Searching for the history of these artifacts was tough, but they ended up with a collector in New Jersey and were donated to the Massachusetts Historical Society in the 1940s.

About five years ago, I went to the historical society with some

friends to study them. We carefully removed them from the frame and weighed each of them. They fell right in the weight range that British musket balls should be. They also still have pieces of the wood from striking Payne's office imbedded in them.

A year after we sat down and studied the balls, we did a live-fire ballistics study trying to figure out as close as we could the velocity that they struck Payne and his office. We did numerous tests over a three-day period that are now published for archaeologists and historians.

For such a politically important event with such loss of life, where we have propaganda printed by Paul Revere and clock-maker Jonathan Mulliken and many other published books, it's incredible the only objects to survive are two mangled lead balls. But as simple and ugly as they are, they have an important story to tell.

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ANIMAL TALK

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Photo credit: Karen Kalunian

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■ Pandemic (Continued from page 17)

Avenue one morning, a worker on coffee break held his dust mask up to people passing by and joked: "Get 'em while you can! Bargain price! Just ten dollars!"

Five week later, a repurposed Javits Center opened as a field hospital. Across the country, masks and sanitizers were in short supply, and life had been upended.

In Rhode Island, meanwhile, the CDC on March 3 had confirmed the first local case of COVID: a man who had been on a mid-February trip to Europe by chaperones and students of Pawtucket's Saint Raphael Academy.

Six days later – on March 9, three years ago this week – Gov. Gina Raimondo, now the U.S. Commerce Secretary, declared a state of emergency, authorizing the state Emergency Management Agency to "create and mobilize mobile support units" and the head of the National Guard to order members to active duty "if necessary, to assist in the response" to COVID. She was joined by Health Department director Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott and other officials at the start of a series of almost daily press conferences that kept many Rhode Islanders glued to their TVs, radios and devices as fear spread and life as we knew it unraveled.

On March 21, in one of my Reporter's Notebook stories, "Thoughts on living in a state of dystopia," I wrote about new phrases and words that had entered daily conversation: "Cough etiquette. PPE. COVID-19. Shelter in place. Lockdown. Self-quarantine. Presumptive positive. Flatten the curve. Contact tracking. Social distancing. Distance learning." I referenced previous pandemics, the Black Death and Spanish flu, and closed by declaring "Be well. Be safe. Ignore rumor and nonsense. Heed direction from our public-health authorities and trusted leaders."

Thus the grim milestones of 2020 began.

On March 28, the first Rhode Islander died of COVID. The Health Department described the deceased as an "individual in their 80s."

On March 29, 294 cases of COVID had been reported. Thirty-five people were hospitalized, with 11 in intensive care and nine on ventilators. Schools and daycare centers were closed. At locations on Rhode Island's southern border with Connecticut, State Police were stopping drivers with out-of-state plates and asking for the address where they would self-quarantine for two weeks.

Spring brought crushing job losses and previously unimaginable stresses on hospitals, medical and dental practices, front-line emergency workers, and health care professionals from therapists to nurses to nursing home staff. Telemedicine began to emerge as a life-saving option. Schools and religious services sifted to virtual platforms, but internet connectivity inequities further punished some neighborhoods and communities that already were disproportionately suffering.

May 2020 was one of the deadliest early months of the pandemic, with weekly deaths near 150 and one week exceeding that, according to the CDC. Particularly brutal days included May 4, with 21 new deaths reported; May 22, with 23 new deaths; May 24, with 21; May 28, with 22; and May 30, with 18, according to The New York Times COVID data tracker.

On the home front, home deliveries of food and consumer goods had ramped up and takeout and outdoor dining constituted the takeout scene, but large gatherings – athletic events, concerts, theatri-

cal productions – remained banned. Dissenters took to social media and talk radio to boast about flaunting masking and social-distancing rules -- and misinformation, fed by a disbelieving president, was rampant throughout Rhode Island.

On June 29, the state entered so-called Phase 3 of Raimondo's response plan, which allowed indoor weddings, musical performances, museum visits, movie-going and other venues to resume – albeit with limited numbers of individuals allowed and other restrictions.

On July 21, a drive-up test site opened at the Rhode Island Convention Center. Test sites at other locations had been operating since March, some manned by National Guard personnel. Before the year ended, testing was available at state-run sites, pharmacies, doctors' offices, urgent-care clinics, community health centers and other locations.

On July 23, the statewide toll reached 1,000 dead, many having perished in hospitals and nursing homes where they were not allowed visits, except on a screen (nationally, deaths had surpassed 149,000). "Normal" wakes and funerals were not conducted. I asked several community leaders to reflect on these terrible numbers.

"Numbers alone can't quantify the extent of loss in this moment," said Rabbi Sarah Mack of Temple Beth-El in Providence. "Each soul lost to this pandemic leaves behind innumerable grief. As we attempt to grasp the meaning of 1,000 deaths here in R.I., let the tragedy impel us to go forth tirelessly to preserve life."

Said Umer Akbar, community member of the Islamic Center of Greater Attleboro: "In the end, if we learn to cooperate and help those in need, and reinforce the positive effects and lessons, then society will have emerged stronger after this pandemic."

"Suffering unleashes love," the Rev. Marcel Taillon, pastor of St. Thomas More Parish in Narragansett, said. "There is so much suffering but love is more evident and exposed. That is my experience. It is the cross."

The Rev. Chris Abhulime, then senior pastor of King's Tabernacle Church in Johnston, which has a predominantly African American congregation, declared: "We are once again reminded of humanity's frailty and the fragility of the institutions that surround us. Therefore, we lend our shoulders to cry on, and remind ourselves that we need each other to survive."

Oct. 27, Dr. Ashish Jha, then dean of Brown University's School of Public Health, began a regular podcast (weekly, at first): "COVID: What comes next." Forty-one episodes would be produced, with the last on Jan. 2, 2022. In March 2022, it was announced that Jha would take a leave of absence from Brown to become the White House coronavirus coordinator.

On Nov. 30, Care New England opened a 353-bed COVID field hospital on Sockanosset Cross Road in Cranston. The next day, Lifespan opened a 600-bed field hospital at the Rhode Island Convention Center.

As 2020 neared its end, the numbers continued to climb. Two days before Christmas, Rhode Island had recorded 1,704 deaths and 82,066 known COVID cases; in all of America, 324,948 had died and more than 18.4 million known cases had been confirmed.

The second year

But hope was on the horizon. Announced in May 2020, Operation Warp Speed, a government/private partnership, accelerated development of a COVID vaccine and by the end of 2020, two companies had received emergency authorization

for use of their products: Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech. High-risk health care professionals were the first to be vaccinated in Rhode Island, in mid-December.

On Jan. 12, 2021, a mass vaccination site run by the National Guard opened in an unused Citizens Bank building on Sockanosset Cross Road in Cranston.

On Feb. 24, Lifespan closed its Convention Center field hospital after admitting and discharging 516 patients. Nine days later, the Care New England field hospital also closed, after admitting and treating 208 patients.

On Feb. 27, the FDA approved use of a third vaccine, manufactured by Johnson & Johnson.

On March 2, Dan McKee was sworn in as Rhode Island governor, succeeding Raimondo, who had gone to Washington. Meanwhile, pharmacies including CVS and Walgreens began offering vaccines to the public as Rhode Island began its ascent to the state with the highest percentage of residents who had been inoculated. According to the latest CDC report, posted on Feb. 28, 2023, 87.7% of Ocean State residents had completed a primary series and 95% had received at least one dose, making Rhode Island the national leader.

On May 10, the federal government approved use of the Pfizer vaccine for children 12 to 15 years old. Within days, 300 Rhode Islanders in that age group had received a first dose.

On June 18, McKee, Dr. Philip Chan and other officials at the governor's regular press conference warned of the threat, particularly to unvaccinated people, posed by the deadly and highly contagious Delta variant, which was on its way to becoming dominant. It would peak in late summer, when deaths, hospitalizations and positivity rates all rose, though not nearly at the levels seen in other states with lower vaccination rates.

During a press conference on Aug. 10, McKee announced that all health care workers at all state-licensed public and private health care facilities – hospitals, nursing homes and other centers – would be required to be vaccinated by Oct. 1. The declaration prompted an additional outcry by individuals opposed to vaccinations who had been protesting during the summer.

On Sept. 22, the FDA authorized a single booster shot of the Pfizer vaccine. Approval of Moderna and Johnson & Johnson boosters followed in the weeks to come.

On Oct. 14, McKee, Alexander-Scott and pediatrician Dr. Elizabeth B. Lange, then president of the Rhode Island Medical Society and an American Academy of Pediatrics fellow, held a press conference at the Providence Children's Museum to urge parents and guardians to have children ages five to 11, the youngest group to become eligible, to be vaccinated. Anti-vaxxers attempted to disrupt the conference.

As the fall unfolded, another variant, Omicron, raised alarms. First reported to the World Health Organization in November, Omicron was initially detected in Rhode Island in December, prompting the McKee administration and the Health Department to begin preparations for what many expected would be another deadly surge that would again tax hospitals and health care systems. McKee's staff on Dec. 11 said, "the comprehensive set of actions the governor is focused on are vaccination, testing, masking and staffing capacity."

Another troubling development was affecting increasing numbers of Rhode Islanders: long COVID, a post-acute sickness syndrome that can cause chronic fatigue, headaches, dizziness, difficulty concentrating or thinking that is sometimes

■ Pandemic
(Continued from page 24)

called "brain fog," joint pain, diarrhea, depression, anxiety among other symptoms, according to the CDC. Long COVID can persist for months or years, with no cure. "Pretty much everything hurts," North Kingstown resident Shannon Maynard told me for a story. "I have pain in my back and my neck and all of my muscles, every day."

The year 2022 dawned with little cheer, as January saw a so-called "fourth surge" that brought record numbers of cases and hospitalizations – though not record numbers of deaths, thanks in large part to high vaccination rates and the availability of booster shots.

The surge had subsided by early February, when interim Health Department director Dr. James McDonald, who had stepped into leadership after Alexander-Scott resigned on Jan. 13, spoke during a press conference of coronavirus eventually becoming "endemic... a disease we're going to learn to live with." He later predicted COVID would become "a preventable, treatable infectious disease," likely of seasonal occurrence, much like pneumonia and the flu.

The third year

With the numbers continuing to trend favorably, vaccines widely available at non-government sources, home test kits proliferating, most schools reopened, and many activities back to what could be considered "normal," or close to it, the state on March 12, 2022, closed the Sockanosset vaccination site.

But COVID had not disappeared. Viral evolution, a process by now all-too-familiar to the layperson, had produced yet another variant: the BA.2, easily transmitted but less likely to cause severe illness than Omicron.

On April 12, 2022, The New York Times coronavirus tracker reported that Rhode Island led the nation in new cases per capita: 32 cases per 100,000 people over the previous seven days. Health Department spokesman Wendelken said that "the metric we are focused on most right now is hospitalizations... Fortunately, despite the uptick in cases that we have seen, our hospitalization numbers are relatively low."

Also encouraging was the decision by the CDC and FDA to approve a second booster shot of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines -- and the arrival of a new weapon in the fight, the drug Paxlovid, which had been approved in December 2021 for treatment of mild to moderate cases.

But a reminder of the seesaw nature of the pandemic came on May 18, when the CDC, concerned about increases in spread of the disease, said residents and leaders in many areas of the U.S., including Rhode Island, should consider more stringent containment measures, among them more testing and mask-wearing in indoor public settings. Under the agency's new Community Level rating system, Providence, Kent, Bristol and Washington Counties were rated at medium risk; Newport County was rated high.

The risk abated during the summer of 2022, and on Aug. 11, the CDC updated its guidance, dropping the six-foot social distancing standard, among other measures. Hospitals, medical and dental practices and other health care providers continued with masking requirements, however, and some screened patients before visits.

• Another milestone was reached on Aug. 31, when the FDA authorized use of a third Pfizer or Moderna booster – the so-called bivalent shot, which could be received together with a flu shot. Many public-health experts believed a COVID booster would become a part of the annual inoculation regimen.

In late August and early September, students began the school year with few COVID requirements. Halloween 2022 more closely resembled the traditional day than in 2021 and 2020, and many families celebrated Thanksgiving and the winter holidays as they had before, guided by public-health leaders who urged anyone who showed signs of any illness to forgo festivities to prevent spread of coronavirus, the flu, RSV and the common cold.

But like the ghost of Christmas past, coronavirus continued to haunt the state. That reality was brought home in dramatic fashion when Trinity Rep on Dec. 22 canceled six days of performances of "A Christmas Carol," one of Rhode Island's most cherished winter traditions, "due to the number of positive COVID cases in the company." Trinity Rep declared that "we need to pause to prevent further spread and keep everybody safe."

The year 2023 was a month old when, on Jan. 30, the Biden Administration announced that it planned to let the COVID public health emergency expire in May. The end will trigger a number of complex developments involving federal COVID assistance and it was met with a mixture of criticism and praise – and immediately became a political football in a bitterly divided Congress. Administration officials said little publicly but a senior administration official told Politico: "This decision is based on what is best for the health of our country at this time... We're in a pretty good place in the pandemic, we've come through the winter, cases are down dramatically from where they were the past two winters."

An average of 113 cases per day were reported in Rhode Island in the week that ended on Friday, March



Drive in vaccinations were conducted in August, 2021 by the Rhode Island Medical Reserve Corps at CCRI.

3, 2023, according to The New York Times tracker. Cases have decreased by 28 percent from the average two weeks ago and deaths have decreased by 12 percent. Since the beginning of the pandemic, a total of 460,045 cases have been reported in the state. At least 1 in 272 residents have died from the coronavirus, for a total of 3,896 deaths.

In the three years since Raimondo declared a state of emergency, no community in Rhode Island went untouched by COVID and four were especially hard-hit: Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence and Woonsocket, the urban core. The pandemic lay bare systemic health and economic disparities, causing disproportionate suffering and loss in communities of color.

For Rhode Island as a whole, COVID has also exacerbating longstanding deficiencies in behavioral health care. In its Feb. 22 edition, Ocean State Stories explored some aspects of what many call a crisis in such services for adults.

And in a Providence Journal opinion essay published on Feb. 25, Tides Family Services CEO Beth A. Bixby, an Ocean State Stories Advisory Board member, highlighted a "behavioral health crisis [that] is as dangerous

to our children as COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses; in fact, for some, this is life or death. In 2020, suicide was the second-leading cause of death for young people ages 10 to 14." She cited Rhode Island Kids Count data showing how emergency department visits for "children experiencing a behavioral health crisis increased by 92% from 2019 to 2022."

State Sen. Lou DiPalma, chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance and a longtime leader of the movement to rebuild Rhode Island's behavioral health care system, told Ocean State Stories that "the COVID-19 pandemic has certainly taken its toll on just about every Rhode Islander. Especially hard hit were our seniors and those supporting them, those served by the state's health and human service programs, and the associated caregivers."

"The pandemic has shined a spotlight on our behavioral healthcare systems, nursing homes, hospital and associated medical and non-medical staffs. All are in urgent need of rebuilding to ensure we are appropriately prepared for the next pandemic, which surely will come, the only question being when. We must be ready, and the time to start is now. Delaying is not an option."

Spring

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3 things every homeowner should do at the start of spring

Brandpoint

Spring is the perfect season for home improvement as it presents many opportunities for first-time homebuyers and experienced homeowners to be more thorough when it comes to maintenance. As the weather warms up, you'll find plenty of indoor and outdoor projects that can improve the functionality of your home and boost its curb appeal while also avoiding unpleasant surprises. "Many homeowners perform spring cleaning tasks to freshen up and declutter their homes, but it's also crucial to tackle important maintenance tasks," said Viviane Essex, merchant at The Home Depot. "For most people, their home is their biggest investment. The Home Depot's Home Services can help homeowners with routine repairs and installation projects that provide comfort, safety and most importantly, peace of mind."

Don't know where to start? The Home Depot's Home Services has provided a helpful spring maintenance checklist. Here are three items you can check off your to-do list to make sure your home's internal systems and external features run smoothly.

1. Schedule seasonal maintenance on your HVAC system

Your heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system is crucial to keeping your home cozy in the winter and cool during the summer. Most systems have a lifetime of 10 to 20 years, and efficiency can drastically decrease as your equipment gets older. If your HVAC system is working harder and not performing as well as it should, it may be time to replace it. Book a consultation with a certified professional who can



inspect your existing system, make recommendations and give you an estimate for a new system. Not only will it help improve your home's air quality, but it will also keep your family comfortable all season long.

2. Maintain, repair or replace your water heater

Water is used throughout your entire home, from showering and bathing to cooking and watering your lawn. To ensure you are using quality water, you'll need to inspect, replace and repair your water heater.

Make sure to check "inspecting your water heater" off your spring cleaning list. Keep an eye out for any water buildup around your water heater, water-quality issues or small plastic pieces from your fixtures that can affect your water supply.

Also, look out for changes in water temperature or temperature duration, a broken pilot light, noise in your unit or pipes, or the smell of gas around your water heater. If you notice any of these signs, your water heater may be failing and need to be repaired or replaced.

3. Spruce up the outside of your home

The exterior of your home is just as important to inspect and repair as the interior. Your windows are an especially visible part of your home that need careful attention.

During winter, you may feel drafts or frequently see condensation on your windows. As the seasons change, you may notice cracking or peeling around window exteriors. These are signs that it may be time to replace your windows.

This spring, book a window replacement. Windows should be inspected by a licensed professional every 20-25 years to see if they need to be replaced. No matter what windows you choose, a new high-quality window with thick, insulated glass is more energy efficient than older single-pane windows. Best of all, new windows can also improve your home's appearance.

Another external item to inspect this spring is your garage door. You may not think your garage door needs regular maintenance, but just like a car, it needs regular tune-ups. Small issues can quickly turn expensive down the line. Also, some garage door problems can pose a safety hazard and cause serious injury.

Depending on the age and condition of your garage door, it may be time to replace it. Replacing your garage door can improve the look of your home and increase its market value.

Finally, consider installing a new fence around your property. Fences provide privacy and security. They can help keep children and pets safe inside your yard, while also keeping out unwanted animals and trespassers. This decorative element also provides protection around an outdoor space, like a pool or garden.

For all your indoor and outdoor spring-cleaning projects, you can find help at The Home Depot's Home Services. Their installers can help you choose the material and style that best fits your property and needs.

All certified service providers are local, licensed, insured and background checked. To learn more and book appointments to spruce up your home this spring, visit [HomeDepot.com/Services](https://www.homedepot.com/Services).

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Spring Cleaning

Don't Toss That 'Junk,' It May Be Valuable!

StatePoint

It's time to hit the garage, basement, attic and closets for that age-old task of spring cleaning! Before hauling unwanted possessions to the curb, you may be surprised to learn they might be valuable -- especially if you have sports cards and memorabilia gathering dust.

With prices of sports cards rising in recent years, take time to determine if yours are valuable and how to best sell them.

"Older sports cards and memorabilia aren't just highly collectible; they can be worth lots of money. Recent sales of scarce vintage cards have topped anywhere from thousands of dollars to tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands. And really rare cards can go higher," says Al Crisafulli, Auction Director at Love of the Game Auctions, an internet sports auction house that helps families identify and sell valuable items.

Crisafulli has assisted people in selling such keepsakes as a grandparent's autograph collection and an uncle's childhood baseball cards, for tens of thousands of dollars. In one life-changing event, he helped a family determine that a baseball bat that spent decades protecting their home was used by Hall of Famer Lou Gehrig -- and Love of the Game Auctions sold it for almost half a million dollars. Today, that bat could bring more than a million dollars.

The key is understanding what makes old sports collectibles valuable. To help, Crisafulli is sharing some tips:

Older is Usually Pricier

Cards from the 1960s and earlier are collectible, and those from before the 1940s can be worth a lot of money, especially those depicting stars. Do you have cards of Hall of Famers, such as Mickey Mantle, Babe Ruth, Honus Wagner or Ty Cobb? Even non-stars from the early days of a sport can be worth big bucks, especially if the cards have no creases and retain sharp corners and original gloss.

If you have very old cards from the 1880s through the 1930s, look for tobacco, gum and candy brands, such as Old Judge, Piedmont, Sweet Caporal, Goudey or American Caramel.

If you want to sell sports items for the most money, consider a specialty auction, such



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as Love of the Game, which has the expertise to properly research sports ephemera and maintains bidder lists of collectors specializing in sports. More information is available at loveofthegameauctions.com.

Postcards and Photographs

We all have keepsakes of vacation destinations, but most aren't valuable. However, photographs and postcards depicting

sports stars and ballparks can be significant. Look for early "real photo" postcards from the 1900s through the 1940s, which are photographs printed on postcard backs.

As with sports cards, star power matters, so preserve those Babe Ruths as opposed to images of your great grandma's baby cousin once-removed. And when it comes to photos, look for old markings on the back, such as photographer, publication and

date stamps.

Memorabilia

Set aside old advertising posters depicting sports stars and food, tobacco or sporting goods brands. Ads from magazines aren't valuable, but those used as store displays and for other marketing purposes can be pricey. Tin signs from the 1960 and earlier can be highly prized, but reproductions aren't.

Your family's sporting goods, such as balls, gloves and bats, can be valuable. Pre-1950s uniforms and catcher's masks, helmets and other equipment are highly collected, especially when endorsed by star players. Top condition brings the highest prices, but even used equipment can be valuable.

"The golden rule is the older the sports card or item, the more valuable it usually is. Pre-1975 pieces start to get interesting and are worth researching," says Crisafulli.

Don't just clean out your "junk" this spring, examine it closely to potentially maximize its value.

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THINKING ABOUT SELLING OR BUYING PROPERTY IN R.I.? HERE ARE A FEW QUICK STATS AND TIPS TO GET STARTED...

Stats

- Single family, condo and multi family sales have declined in January and February 2023 from 2022
- Medium prices rose for .. Single families by 5.8% Condos by 6.7% Multi's by 10%
- Inventory for all categories are low
- Interest rates increased to over 6%

A few tips-

- Be prepared to enter the real estate market
- Work with a professional to create strategic plan to reach your unique goals.
- If you are financing a purchase you need a reputable mortgage lender with loan options and great service advising how to make the most of your funds.
- Buyers and sellers are best served by a recommended Realtor working on your behalf to represent your best interest.

Whether buying or selling, contact me for the most updated information to help create a plan to reach your goals

Donna DeLauro
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YOUNG TALENT: The young Johnston team competed in the event, held on March 5 at Bryant University. (Submitted photos)

During 'rebuilding year,' JHS Academic Decathlon team scores a pair of medals

By Kerry L. Murphy
Special to the Sun Rise

Several Johnston High School Academic Decathlon team members took medals home from the competition, held on March 5 at Bryant University.

Isabella Ribezzo, the team's captain and a senior, won a silver medal in Art. Caroline Pesenecker, a sophomore, won a bronze for Economics.

This year's theme was The American Revolution. It was a rebuilding year but this young team placed fourth in Super Quiz! They bonded as they studied the Academic Decathlon materials, traveled to the Freedom Trail in Boston for a guided tour, and prepped during an all day study session on March 3.

This team is going to be one to watch in the future!

Debbie Smyth and I are very proud to coach this group of students!

Editor's Note: Kerry L. Murphy, a JHS Art Teacher and Fine Arts Co-Chair, submitted this story. Murphy and Debbie Smyth served as coach's for this year's Johnston High School Academic Decathlon team.



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