

# Cranston Herald

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2023

4 SECTIONS • 24 PAGES • \$1.00

## \$40M bond package sparks controversy

By KEVIN FITZPATRICK

A resolution to bring a \$40 million bond for Cranston Public Schools before voters in a special election next year has passed in the city council in a 6-3 decision along party lines.

The resolution which was put forward at the full City Council meeting on Dec. 18 would support a legislative act of the Rhode Island General Assembly enabling Cranston to seek approval from voters for the bond. This finance committee unanimously approved the resolution, with bi-partisan sponsorship from Democrats Council President Marino, and Councilman Donegan and Republican Councilwoman Nicole Renzulli. Councilors Germain, Wall, Ferri, and Vargas also asked to co-sponsor.

Councilwoman Renzulli would go on to vote no on the resolution she sponsored.

The legislation this resolution would support, which has been written

about in previous editions of the Herald, would provide funding for several CPSED projects, including the completion of the new Gladstone Elementary building and the purchase and renovation of the building housing the Apprenticeship Exploration charter school. A central pillar of the resolution is the expectation of reimbursement from the Rhode Island Department of Education at an expected rate of 74%, including 74% of interest accrued. This number, while anticipated, was never absolute, and is subject to change due to a number of factors, including the length of time it will take to issue the bond. The 74% reimbursement rate is scheduled to expire on June 30, 2024.

In the original language of the legislation, the bond would be issued contingent on a reimbursement of no less than 70%. However, before putting the final resolution to a vote at the December 18 city council meeting, Council President

Jessica Marino asked for an amendment to be made to the language of the legislation, changing the reimbursement to no less than 50%.

"This way we are not handicapped going forward in terms of borrowing money with respect to the reimbursement rate," Marino said at the city council meeting. "All indicators are that the reimbursement rate would be higher than that but it's best to play it safe."

City Council Legal Counsel Stephen Angell further explained the need for this change moments later. "If the (Rhode Island Department of Education) comes back and says we'll only reimburse at 67%, you're dead, you can't borrow the money because the bond act says 70% and over, that's the reason for the change. So if RIDE comes back and says 74% great, if RIDE comes back and says 51% great, if RIDE comes back and says 49%, you can't do it."

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**NO MORE GRAVY TRAIN:** Speaker of the Rhode Island House of Representatives K. Joseph Shekarchi, and his Director of Communications, Larry Berman, joined Beacon Communications editors for breakfast Friday morning. (Cranston Herald photo)

## Breakfast with Joe

Speaker Shekarchi says 'no more gravy train,' provides glimpse at Assembly priorities

By RORY SCHULER

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

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

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

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

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

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

The short-order breakfast business was bouncing that morning, the last day of the work week approaching Christmas weekend. Shekarchi has been making the media rounds—television, print and radio—announcing

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swering questions and providing a forecast of next year's General Assembly priorities.

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

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

### Hot Tea & Tight Belts

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

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

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

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

"Six million went into the governor's rainy day fund to help improve the state's bonding rating ... stronger rainy day fund, we get a better rating when we borrow bonds," he explained. "And \$6 million went into help the state retirement system."

■

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## Proposed courthouse raises questions

By KEVIN FITZPATRICK

The Rhode Island Judiciary is requesting funding to build a new courthouse in Cranston, but don't hold your breath.

The Judiciary requested funding from the state last month despite not including it in its budget request to the governor in October, as was reported in a recent Boston Globe article. The request, originally for \$400 million but since downsized to a \$350 million, would allow the Judiciary to leave behind the Garrahy Judicial Complex in Providence and construct a new building in Cranston's Pastore Center.

"The Judiciary considered various available parcels centrally located and owned by the State as potential locations for the new courthouse, including at the Pastore Complex in Cranston," State Court Administrator Julie P. Hamil said in a recent statement. "The appeal of this location is that it is State-owned, is on a public transportation route, and can accommodate free parking for all court users. Given the state's small size, moving the courthouse from

Providence to Cranston would be preferable if the Judiciary were able to offer improved user and staff experience."

A new, larger location would allow for improved functioning of several services, including sensitive ones such as family visitation, support for individuals facing eviction, and veterans' and mental health treatment, all of which the current building lacks the proper facilities for. Often, due to the building's lack of dedicated spaces, services such as this take place in hallways or even closets.

"To accommodate the staff needed to administer justice in Rhode Island, closets and other storage areas have had to be converted into workspaces," Hamil writes. "The office space constraints in Garrahy are a factor not only for the Judiciary's staff, but also for our justice partners who maintain offices in Garrahy: the Public Defender's Office, the Department of Attorney General, Adult Probation, Providence Police, and Victim's Services."

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## Cranston Chatter

### Weekend Spotlight

Jan. 1, 48th Annual Penguin Plunge for Special Olympics Rhode Island, Registration is open for the New Year's Day event, the longest running New Year's Day Plunge in Rhode Island. Embrace the invigorating spirit of the New Year by taking the plunge, quite literally, into Special Olympics Rhode Island's 48th annual Penguin Plunge at Roger Wheeler State Beach in Narragansett! Join the fun on New Year's Day, Mon., Jan. 1, to make a splash for a cause that truly warms the heart — supporting the athletes of

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## Falcons win shootout



The Cranston West girls basketball team edged La Salle 48-39 in a D1 showdown last week.

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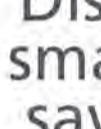
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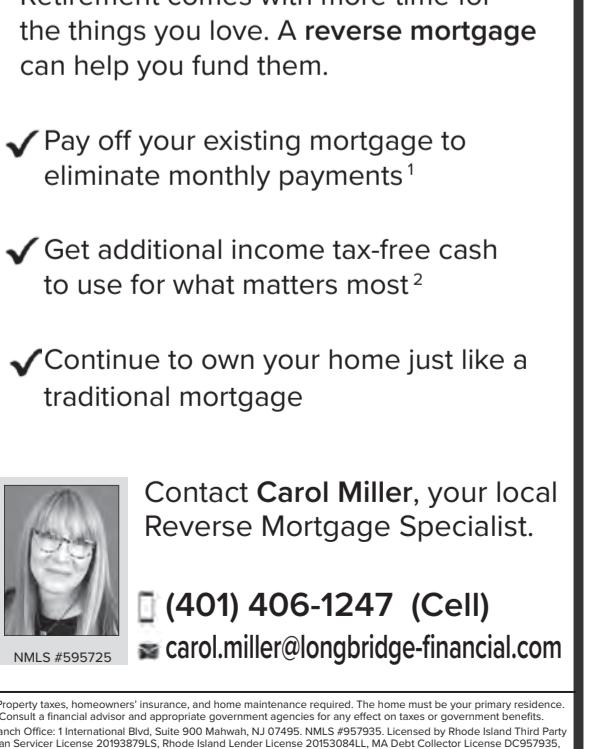
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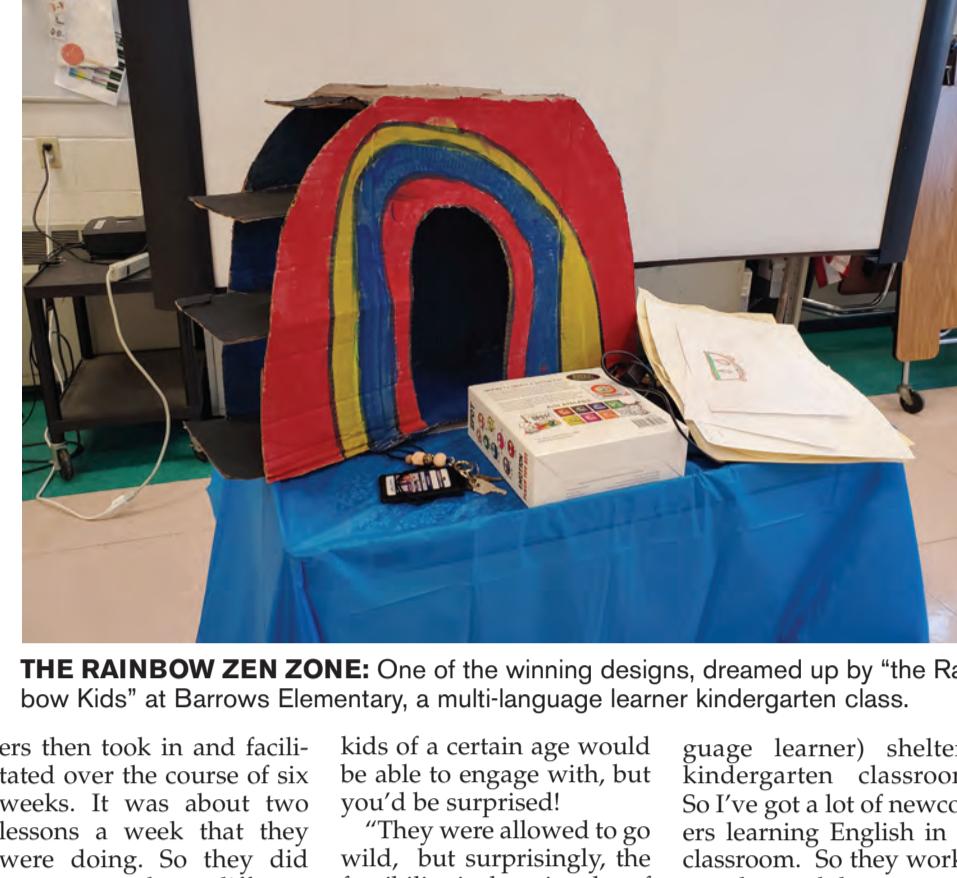
# Gladstone Elementary Students have been preparing for months for their big shot, Gladstone Shark Tank!

By KEVIN FITZPATRICK

Kids at Barrows and Waterman Elementary schools faced schoolmates, parents, teachers, and a panel of professional architects on December 20 to pitch their ideas for furniture for the new Gladstone Building. Prizes for best designs were given out, one for kindergarten second grade and one for third to fifth at each school, totaling four projects that may actually be built and integrated into their new school after Barrows and Waterman combine again in the new Gladstone Elementary.

"The district asked us to do this because they know that there's going to be an opening in two to three years," Nathan Strenge, an organizer of the event, explained. "They wanted to have kids have an opportunity to create something that would actually be built and be put into the school."

The Shark Tank was the culmination of a six week project based learning program organized by Fielding International, the architecture firm responsible for the design of all Gladstone, as well as Garden City and Eden Park elementaries. Strenge and Marlene Watson, learning designers, coordinators of the program, and two of the Shark Tank judges, have visited Cranston every couple of weeks for the last month and a half to teach kids about what goes into a design



**THE RAINBOW ZEN ZONE:** One of the winning designs, dreamed up by "the Rainbow Kids" at Barrows Elementary, a multi-language learner kindergarten class.

ers then took in and facilitated over the course of six weeks. It was about two lessons a week that they were doing. So they did some research on different types of furniture like chairs and tables and nooks."

"Eventually, they started working with pitches," he continued. "And Marlene did a lot of the beginning of pitches that were like exemplars for things they could learn from like what makes a good pitch, how do you communicate it?"

Every class in every grade of both schools participated, and they were encouraged to follow their

kids of a certain age would be able to engage with, but you'd be surprised!

"They were allowed to go wild, but surprisingly, the feasibility is there in a lot of the items," said Michael Orsi, a carpenter with Cole Cabinet, a firm tasked with actually building the winning designs. "If it's not super feasible, it can. It can be tweaked, to the point where we get it back to the real world, but it still gets their vision across."

Principal Amy Vachon of Barrows Elementary School, who acted as MC for the Shark Tank, was proud of what her littlest could accomplish. She

guage learner) sheltered kindergarten classrooms. So I've got a lot of newcomers learning English in the classroom. So they worked together and they were able to create a video for us and give their feedback on why they thought that this was an important piece to have in their classroom."

The piece in question is called the "Rainbow Zen Zone." It's a tower, and a slide, and a little reading nook. Smartly painted and built from cardboard, the prototype looks a bit like a bright red elephant. According to Orsi, the design is sound and he should be able to make it just fine. Vachon is more concerned with the kids' communication skills.

"They really did a good job and that was all on them," she said. "They were able to express why they needed it. They wanted a slide that could help for recess time, or for them to come down. So they really were able to articulate the pieces that were important for that both in the classroom and for other points in their day."

The Project Based Learning behind the Shark Tank achieved quite a few things. It brought the school together, taught the kids teamwork, project management, communication skills, and encouraged them to use their imaginations to constructive ends. That's all pretty valuable stuff. But getting to walk into your brand new elementary building and see waiting for you a piece of furniture that you designed waiting inside for you, that's priceless.



**PRESSURE'S ON:** A few brave, ingenuous kids defend their pitch in the Shark Tank!  
(Photos provided by Cranston Public Schools)

project from beginning to end.

"We went out with our kids from both schools in early November," he said. "And then we created all the lesson plans that teach-

creativity, while also learning about the realities of such concepts as "functionality" and "aesthetic pleasantness." Those are concepts one might not think

spoke eagerly about some of her youngest winners, a kindergarten class who designed what they call the "Rainbow Zen Zone."

"They are (multi-lan-



**A HAND FOR THE JUDGES:** Principal Vachon presents the day's judges: Nathan Strenge, Marlene Watson, Christopher Long, and Michael Orsi



**MY FIRST BOARD ROOM PRESENTATION:** Principal Vachon helps a young entrepreneur with their presentation of the Purr-fect Chair.

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# EDITORIAL

## Verdict is out on ferry service

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

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

While we can praise the Rhode Island Department of Transportation for their willingness to think outside the box when handling the ongoing disruption caused by the bridge closure, the verdict has been pretty clear even in just this short sample size that the service is not going to be utilized in any meaningful way, as the boats have been essentially empty during their runs, with some even reporting their scheduled trips were canceled when they arrived due to a lack of passengers.

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

Thankfully, included within the contracts is a clause that the state can end its service with the ferry providers at any time with

two weeks notice. We think they should put that notice in immediately, if they haven't already done so.

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

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

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

**Wishing for a Happy and Peaceful 2024**



Charlie Hall

## Apartment renting has become Impossible Dream

By JOANNE GIANNINI

We have a beautiful state, we really do. We enjoy the miles of ocean, beautiful parks, wonderful restaurants, and good people. You can get from one point in Rhode Island to another in one hour.

What we don't have is affordable housing. Searching for an apartment here is the impossible dream. The lack of housing in Rhode Island is beyond a crisis. How can people survive? A recent survey has shown Rhode Island (Providence) has the highest rents in the country. The average rent for a two bedroom apartment in Little Rhody is \$1,500 with no utilities. And this is considered low. What you get for that is usually a dump.

What do tenants expect? They expect a warm, comfortable and safe place to live that is up to housing codes. They expect to be able to not worry that pipes are going to burst, or heat go off in the middle of night, or have strangers banging on their door at all hours. Is this too much to ask?

And can it be affordable? Along with being a landlord, comes a responsibility to maintain your rentals. If something needs to be fixed or unforeseen damage occurs, that is not the tenants fault, landlords need to make sure the property is livable.

When and why did apartment prices reach their peak? After Covid hit Rhode Island, everything changed. People lost jobs, didn't or couldn't work, businesses closed and living conditions changed. People couldn't afford to maintain their properties. The cost of living went up and building material priced increased immensely. Everything did.

But some landlords became greedy. They saw the lack of housing and gouged their tenants. Due to the lack of housing, apartments became increasingly unaffordable for the average working person who lives paycheck to

paycheck. What you get for \$1,500 in Rhode Island is not much. One only needs to go online and check rentals, to see the prices charged.

What can be done to change this? New laws can be made to stop the landlords from increasing prices in rents. New laws should be made to make sure the tenants are protected if damages occur that are not their

fault. We live in a society that used to care about each other in good and bad times. I see such a big change in our society now. Many don't want to get involved and are apathetic to what's going on. That's too bad, because the future for our children depends on how we live our lives.

The examples that are set are embedded into their memories forever.

A single mom with a child on minimum wages really has it hard. They tell you there are programs and assistance out there, but if you work, you don't qualify. Thus, many are forced to go on welfare, even if they would rather work. Why can't there be programs for working single mothers who need rent assistance?

People are feeling the crunch. Many cannot afford food or medicine just to keep up with rent. It's sad to say, but we lost our way. We forgot what's really important and it starts right in our own backyards. Affordable housing is the new impossible dream in Rhode Island. Until new laws and programs are made at the state house, it will continue.

I remember watching a movie where a slum landlord was sentenced by a judge to live in one of his rentals and he couldn't survive. Maybe life needs to imitate that movie here in Rhode Island. Then they would get it.

Joanne Giannini, who lives in Providence is a freelance writer and a former State Representative from Providence.

## LETTERS

### Mother's advice

To the Editor,  
Advice from my mom  
You would worry less about what people  
Are thinking about you if you would  
Understand that they are probably  
Not thinking about you at all.  
You will never regret and unkind word  
That you did not say.  
If you love someone, don't cling; let them go  
If they come back you know they love  
You.  
Ralph Davis  
Warwick

### Does smashed glass at Green Airport tell of a bigger story?

To the Editor,  
Do you ever park your car next to a space spewed with broken car window shards? You can see that it's not a broken bottle but rather the remains of a car break-in. Whoa. Bad look. "I'll never shop there again," you might say.

That was my choice when picking up our daughter at RIAC's T. F. Green International. We parked way in the back of the short-term parking lot because all spaces near the terminal were filled. I'd never seen that lot filled before. And the broken window glass. I wondered if my car would be next.

So, when we got inside, I asked the nice man under the sailboat, a volunteer who always seems to be there. "Have you seen the broken glass in the short-term lot?"

He answered, "Yes. It's been there for three days." He gave me a number to call the parking lot manager. I called. No answer. Called again the next day. No answer. So I called the executive secretary at RIAC. Nobody there either. Left a message. Called over the next two days. No response.

So, just to test things out, I called the parking manager number at Bradley International Airport that was posted on the Web. Yup. The guy picked right up. We had a gentle laugh together. We take off from Bradley a lot. It saves hundreds if you're going out west. T. F. Green is okay for Florida flights. But Denver or Arizona? Check out Bradley.

Now they have largely converted the short-term lot at Green into a handy overnight lot

which offers a lower price than the big garages and is closer to the terminal. \$24 per day. So those of us who still want to meet our guests at the bottom of the escalator have to walk by all the big pickups parked by the many folks off to Florida for vacation, etc.

They keep telling us that T.F. Green International is one of the wonders of the world. It's said to be eighth-best airport, or something like that. Yet now RIAC is planning to convert it into an international freight port. I hear FedEx wants to move most of its Boston Logan freight flights to PVD. And Amazon wants to build a major freight hub at the Airport Road site being abandoned by FedEx and UPS. It would be close to the new empty warehouse in the old cornfield.

And RIAC is asking our General Assembly to help pay for new roads needed to get the trucks in and out. The trucks can't make the turns on the airport terminal loop. Nobody seems to care about the added flights that would be running all night long. Build the new road (and they will come, all right). We need more jobs at RIAC, the mayor says. Apparently, noise is not an issue for the suits and politicians who live elsewhere.

I hear that morale is bad at Green. Big management turnover. Good people gone. Maintenance is off.

Bottom line: If you find yourself in the back of the short-term lot with broken glass all about, watch out!

Richard Langseth.  
Warwick

## Seven in ten adults describe themselves as spiritual in some way

BY HERB WEISS

The late Ray Whitman, a former economist who taught at the University of the District of Columbia, didn't really consider himself spiritual or begin his spiritual quest until his late 30s. Ray's desire to understand his spirituality was a long, complicated and somewhat painful process, he told me, noting that a mid-life crisis at age 39 forced him to reevaluate his personal life, goals and religious beliefs, including his ties to the Episcopal Church.

Whitman's personal crisis would lead him to exploring spiritual beliefs and activities. During his search, he learned how to cast astrology and numerology charts, attended metaphysical church services, practiced yoga, became a Life Spring graduate and even sought advice from psychics and the counsel of gurus, even traveling to Brazil to see John of God, a self-proclaimed medium and psychic surgeon.

For years, the Rockville, Maryland economist studied the teachings and meditation practices of Guru Mayi Chidvilasananda, the current head of the Siddha Lineage of gurus.

At the end of his life, Whitman, who passed away on Aug. 26, 2021, at the age of 85, like many Americans who described themselves as spiritual in a recent Pew Research Center report, he described himself as being spiritual and not religious and being tied to mainstream religious beliefs.

Being Religious, Spiritual, or both

Just weeks before Christmas, the Pew Research Center released a report, "Spirituality Among Americans," that shows that belief in spirits or a spiritual realm beyond this world is widespread, even among those who don't consider themselves religious. Seven in ten adults (70%) describe themselves as spiritual in some way, however, many of these individuals also view themselves as religious. Still, 22% indicated that they consider themselves spiritual, and not religious.

According to the results of Pew's survey, 83% of all U.S. adults believe people have a soul or spirit in addition to their physical body. Eighty-one percent of the respondents believe there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we cannot see it. Almost three-fourths of the respondents say that there are somethings that science cannot possibly explain while 45% noted that they had a sudden feeling of connection with something from beyond this world. And 30% say that they have personally encountered a spirit or unseen spiritual force.

Overall, the survey findings, conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023 among a nationally representative sample of 11,201 members of Pew's American Trends Panel, and released on Dec. 7, 2023, found that 70% of U.S. adults can be considered "spiritual" in some way, because they think of themselves as spiritual people, or say spirituality is very important in their lives.

As to spiritual beliefs, the survey's findings indicated that half of all Americans believe that spirits can inhabit burial places, such as graveyards, cemeteries or other memorial sites. Forty-eight percent believe that parts of mountains, rivers or trees can have spirits or spiritual energy.

And respondents believed in an afterlife. Fifty-seven percent believe that people definitely or probably can reunite with loved ones who also have died. About four-in-ten also accept that dead people definitely, or probably, assist, protect and guide the living (46%), be aware of what's going on among the living (44%) or even

cate with them (42%).

As to spiritual practices, 77% of U.S. adults say they spend time in nature, usually a few times a month, and 26% note they do so to feel connected with something bigger than themselves or with their "true self."

When asked to describe what 'spiritual' means to them in their own words, one respondent said, "To me, spiritual means to be in touch with nature, see the beauty in everything, feel the love of Mother Nature, to know that there is something out there that is greater than me, that loves me, that looks out for me. I find that mostly in nature – the sun, the moon, trees, flowers, wild bunnies running through my yard, the deer standing stoically as if posing for me to enjoy their beauty. In addition, I try to follow the teaching of Jesus, because he had some pretty good advice."

Another said, "Spiritual means to discover your own self by deep meditation and contemplation. Love everyone, hate no one."

Thirty-eight percent of U.S. adults reported meditating at least a few times a month, including 22% who meditate mainly to connect with their "true self" or with something bigger than themselves.

Finally, the survey's findings reveal that for spiritual purposes more than one-third of U.S. adults say they wear a cross, and 15% say they maintain a meditation shrine, altar or icon in their home. Twelve percent have crystals for spiritual purposes and 9% have a tattoo or piercing for spiritual purposes.

Are Spiritual beliefs superseding traditional Religious Beliefs?

The researchers say that previous research has shown a decline in traditional religious beliefs and practices, including those who say they believe in God with absolute certainty, regularly attend religious services, and pray daily.

Like Whitman, articles appear in newspapers noting that Americans are turning away from organized religion and replacing it with their "own mix of spiritual elements" drawn from Hindu, Buddhism, Native American shamanism, and New Age beliefs.

While the Pew Research Center's survey attempts to ask questions about spiritual beliefs and practices, researchers say it's difficult to determine if considering oneself spiritual is more or less common today.

Previous Pew Research Center surveys say it's difficult to determine if religion is being replaced by one being spiritual because it's difficult to define and separate those concepts.

Researchers say that this survey is intended to "fill the gap." These results will be used as a baseline and the re-asking of questions about spiritual and religious practices can indicate whether there is an increase or decrease in one's turning away from organized religion and just considering oneself spiritual.

Stay tuned...

To read Pew Research Center's Spiritual report, go to

<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/12/07/spirituality-among-americans/>

Herb Weiss, LRI -12, is a Pawtucket-based writer who has covered aging, health care and medical issues for over 43 years. To purchase his books, *Taking Charge: Collected Stories on Aging Boldly* and a sequel compiling weekly published articles, go to [herbweiss.com](http://herbweiss.com).

## Chatter

(Continued from page 1)

Special Olympics Rhode Island. The main plunge kicks off at 12 noon and a family-friendly plunge at 12:30 p.m. Your participation or donation will not only kick off 2024 with a memorable experience but also contribute to a brighter future for these athletes, empowering them to achieve their dreams. Registration is \$25 and additional fundraising is encouraged. Those who pre-register and raise a minimum of \$50 will receive a fun, official t-shirt. To participate in the Penguin Plunge or support a daring individual or team, visit <https://give.specialolympicsri.org/ge/2024pp>.

Jan. 13, A Celebration for Ernie Gifford: The Hope Historical Society invites the community to join us as we celebrate Ernie Gifford's passion for all things his-

torical to the Village of Hope and surrounding areas. HHS will showcase Ernie's best and most interesting historical research. The tribute will be held during the regular meeting on Sat., Jan. 13 at 2 p.m. at the Howland Barn on 35 Ryefield Road, Hope. Refreshments will follow.

Jan. 23, Ancestry Workshop: RI Society of the Sons of the American Revolution on Tues., Jan. 23, at 6 p.m., free to the public at the Cranston Public Library, 140 Sockanisset Cross Rod., Cranston. Do you think you have a Revolutionary War Patriot in your ancestry? With America approaching the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, members of SAR will help participants learn about basic genealogy and how to begin family research. Attendees may be able to find out if they have a Revolutionary Patriot Ancestor. For more information,

email: [info@rhodeislandsar.org](mailto:info@rhodeislandsar.org).

Until March 1, 2024 Community Builders Grant Program OneCranston HEZ's Community Connectors Committee is pleased to continue our Community Builders Grant Program. Through the program, OneCranston HEZ seeks to identify and partner with residents interested in bringing their neighbors together to complete projects that improve their communities. This year we will have rolling grants: 6 grants of \$300 will be disbursed. OneCranston HEZ will be awarding one grant per a Cranston Ward, with applications opening October 1 and going until March 1 or all grants have been awarded. To apply go to this link: <https://forms.office.com/r/2yXDwmWUVT> or reach out to [jfulbright@comcap.org](mailto:jfulbright@comcap.org).

Every Monday, Gaspee Celtic Jam - The Gaspee Celtic Jam meets at the Pawtuxet Village Baptist Church, 2157 Broad St., Cranston, every Mon. from 7 - 9 p.m. Do you play fiddle, guitar, Irish flute, pennywhistle, bodhran, mandolin, banjo, concertina, accordion, folk harp, hammered dulcimer, Appalachian dulcimer, banjo, acoustic bass, ukulele, keyboard, recorder, or sing? All skill levels welcome. Visit [www.gaspecelticjam.org](http://www.gaspecelticjam.org)

Every Monday, Parent Support Group takes place

from 10 - 11 a.m., at The Huddle Center, 70 Gansett Ave., Cranston. All Cranston parents, grandparents and guardians are invited to take part in this parent-led support group. Discussions include: challenges, issues and concerns that all caregivers encounter. Activities will be available for children while the meeting is taking place. Registration is required. Contact Carol: 401-465-4593 or [cpineda@comcap.org](mailto:cpineda@comcap.org).

Every Monday, Gaspee Celtic Jam - The Gaspee Celtic Jam meets at the Pawtuxet Village Baptist Church, 2157 Broad St., Cranston, every Mon. from 7 - 9 p.m. Do you play fiddle, guitar, Irish flute, pennywhistle, bodhran, mandolin, banjo, concertina, accordion, folk harp, hammered dulcimer, Appalachian dulcimer, banjo, acoustic bass, ukulele, keyboard, recorder, or sing? All skill levels welcome. Visit [www.gaspecelticjam.org](http://www.gaspecelticjam.org)

for more info (including the current tune list/tune book) or to send us any questions. No specific Celtic music experience is required.

Every Second and Fourth Tuesday the Fall River Toastmasters Meeting, serving both Rhode Island and Southern Mass the Fall River Toastmasters holds its meetings. Doors open at 6 p.m. and meeting is from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. Join us at The Chamber, 200 Pocasset St., Fall River, MA, 2nd floor. For more information, call Sean DaCosta at (508)-840-6621. All are welcome!

Every Thursday, Get-a-Job-Thursday - We Make RI, an organization that provides free manufacturing training, hosts a series of job fairs every Thurs. from 11 a.m. to noon, 200 First Ave., Cranston. We Make RI offer job seekers a chance to meet with employers, get career counseling, resume help and more. Some employers include Swissline Precision, Admiral Packaging, KB Surfaces, Warwick Hanger and Hitachi Cable. For more information about this event or other training opportunities, visit [www.wemakari.com/get-a-job-thursday](http://www.wemakari.com/get-a-job-thursday) or contact Mike at (401) 232-0077 x109.

Oaklawn Grange Used Clothing Donation Shed in need of used clothing items at the Oaklawn Grange Donation Shed, 24 Searle Ave., Cranston. Accepted items only: Used Clothing, Shoes, Sneakers, Belts, Purses, Linens, Pillowcases, Blankets, Curtains, and Stuffed Animals. All items must be in useable condition. Your donations will be distributed as whole garments locally and worldwide. Contact [oaklawngrangeinfo@gmail.com](mailto:oaklawngrangeinfo@gmail.com) for more information.

Volunteer with NAMI-RI The RI chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI-RI) is currently seeking volunteers to facilitate our family programs in 2024. Free training is required and available for interested persons who have a loved one struggling with mental health issues. Together with our grassroots volunteers, we work every day to provide help and hope to millions of Americans. Volunteers are essential to the work that we do at NAMI Rhode Island, and we are always seeking enthusiastic people to help us achieve our mission. For more information about our family programs and volunteer training, email [beth@namirhodeisland.org](mailto:beth@namirhodeisland.org), call the NAMI-RI office 401-331-3060 or visit our website at [namirhodeisland.org](http://namirhodeisland.org).

## LEGAL NOTICES

### PROBATE COURT OF THE CITY OF CRANSTON

#### NOTICE

Of Matters Pending and For Hearing In Said Court  
On the dates specified in notices below at

9 A.M. for hearing said matters Cranston City Hall

869 Park Ave, Cranston, RI 02910

3rd Floor, Council Chambers

BARBOZA, STANLEY A. ESTATE  
Administrator's First & Final Account; for hearing January 11, 2024

CHAN SEMCO, SUSAN ESTATE  
Petition for Probate of Will; for hearing January 11, 2024

GEDERMAN, RACHEL B. RESIDENT WARD  
Petition for Guardianship; for hearing January 11, 2024

SPAZIANO, MELISSA KAYE GLORIA ESTATE  
Petition to Sell Real Estate; located at 53 Westwood Ave., Cranston, RI; for purposes set forth, now on file, wherein said property is more fully

described for hearing January 11, 2024

ARAUJO, MARIA F. ESTATE  
Jody Norberg has qualified as Executrix; creditors must file their claims in the office of the probate clerk within the time required by law beginning December 28, 2023

BUCKLER, SAMUEL ESTATE  
Barbara J. Shapiro has qualified as Executrix; creditors must file their claims in the office of the probate clerk within the time required by law beginning December 28, 2023

BURNS, LOUISE-ANN JOCELYNE ESTATE  
Steven C. Burns, Sr., has qualified as Executor; creditors must file their claims in the office of the probate clerk within the time required by law beginning December 28, 2023

SEGAL, JR., PHILIP A. ESTATE  
Joan Segal has qualified as Executrix; creditors must file their claims in the office of the probate clerk within the time required by law beginning December 28, 2023

BYRNE, DEBORAH ANN ESTATE  
Thomas Michael Byrne has qualified as Executor; creditors must file their claims in the office of the probate clerk within the time required by law beginning December 28, 2023

SLINKO, EMILY J. RESIDENT MINOR  
Kimberly Slinko has qualified as

FLOODMAN, ROBERT W. ESTATE  
Stacey L. Cossia has qualified as Administratrix CTA; creditors must file their claims in the office of the probate clerk within the time required by law beginning December 28, 2023

GRANT, LARRY W. ESTATE  
Steven Grant has qualified as Executor; creditors must file their claims in the office of the probate clerk within the time required by law beginning December 28, 2023

HAVERLY, LEIGH TRAVIS RESIDENT WARD  
Marsha Haverly has qualified as Guardian of the Person and Estate; creditors must file their claims in the office of the probate clerk within the time required by law beginning December 28, 2023

TREMBLAY, SIMONE M. ESTATE  
David Kersey has qualified as Executor; creditors must file their claims in the office of the probate clerk within the time required by law beginning December 28, 2023

YERKES, ROBERT ESTATE  
Martha Yerkes has qualified as Executor; creditors must file their claims in the office of the probate clerk within the time required by law beginning December 28, 2023

GUARDIAN OF THE PERSON AND ESTATE  
Guardians must file their claims in the office of the probate clerk within the time required by law beginning December 28, 2023

SULLO, KENNETH JAMES ESTATE  
Jennifer Manning has qualified as Administratrix; creditors must file their claims in the office of the probate clerk within the time required by law beginning December 28, 2023

TRACY, ROBERT ESTATE  
David Kersey has qualified as Executor; creditors must file their claims in the office of the probate clerk within the time required by law beginning December 28, 2023

YERKES, ROBERT ESTATE  
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# Members of East Class of 1985 are friends for life

By PAM SCHIFF

Generally, after high school graduation, people go on with their lives, and rarely stay in touch with classmates.

That is not the case with this group.

"The Cranston East class of 1985 has always been a tight group. With over 400 graduates, our class is very unique as we have many couples who are still together," said Trish McGovern McCusker.

Friendships existed before Facebook, but Facebook has extended those relationships. They have shared in the joys experienced through the years and sadly, the premature loss of several classmates far too soon.

While Facebook enables the sharing of many happy and joyous announcements, sometimes it can also be the bearer of bad news.

"Our idea was to have our upcoming reunion at the Historic Park with tours of CHSE. Unfortunately, we saw through Facebook, that two of our classmates have been facing life threatening illness" so we jumped into action when we saw the Bolt Bazaar," said McCusker.

On Saturday, December 9, they assembled to bring cheer, music and happiness to these special classmates.

Paula Chabot Brown took over the role of tech leader and created a private event. Holly McAllister Mulholland took over the roll of costumes and signs, while McCusker took care of securing tours and ordering the bus to go Christmas caroling at the homes of Kimberly Allen and Erinn Dwyer Huetteman.

Kim lives in Richmond and has been battling cancer and its effects for several years. Her son, John, is her reason for pushing forward and continuing treatments. For her, feeling isolated away from her Cranston roots



**A SPECIAL GROUP OF FRIENDS:** A busload of friends traveled on December 9, to Cranston and Richmond to bring very special holiday cheer to very special classmates.

have really had an impact too. Recently, a ramp was installed to assist in Kim's mobility.

Erinn was diagnosed last Christmas season with glioblastoma and has not had an easy battle.

"We decided not to wait until 2025 to plan something and wanted to show our support. Kim's mother was contacted and loved the idea that her friends and classmates were going to show up and sing. Her mom was brought to tears because she said Kim needed a pick me up," said McCusker.

For Erinn, her husband and one of her daughters were contacted and the thumbs up was given. Ironically, the morning before they showed up at Erinn's she had put her family cat down and she, herself, suffered a seizure.

"This morning was a particularly difficult one as we had to put down our beloved cat Ted Mosby who was dying from liver cancer, and I subsequently had a seizure due to the intense swelling in my brain. But, heaven on earth showed up on my street to wrap me up in a blanket of love without even knowing what kind of day it had been. What a community we have here in Cranston.

I was too overwhelmed with emotions. It really has been heaven on earth for me. A bus full of former classmates showed up to share the music of the season of love, and boy do I feel loved.

Cranston is such an amazing community and I'm happy I got to have a part in bringing love for each other in and out and embracing the inherent worthiness in us humans. I will carry this big cozy bus load of love and joy

through song and the lovely cards from students, my new Cranston friends, with me. May the lights of love continue to spread among us all and all sentient beings," said Huettemann on her Facebook page.

Family members were especially thankful and touched by the showing of such true friendship.

"That was so heart-warming and wonderful. Erinn felt so special and loved. It was the nicest gift and it really brightened her day and days to come. Thank you," said Mark Huettemann, Erinn's husband.

Kim Allen also was feeling grateful and blessed.

"John and I can't thank you enough. What you did with the bus and the songs and your heartfelt spirit was amazing. God bless you all and God bless Cranston. Love you from the bottom of my

heart," she said.

McCusker was very touched by all the classmates who participated and was thankful she was able to be a part of such a special day.

"The classmates who turned out for the tours and the singing found such joy in bringing a smile to our friends. And even those who are far away enjoyed the live streams that we did," she said.

The elves of the Class of 1985 were; Holly and Todd Mulholland, Paula Brown Chabot, James Hassall, Linda Guertin Beudry, Jen White Rawson, Beth Lawton Sailor, Heidi Janson Brown, Patty Gleason Sammartino, Don Depardo, Diane Goewy Quirk, Colleen Caparco Corporan (different year than 85), Richard Carreiro, Roseann Brusco, and one husband, Dan McCusker and one boyfriend, Rich Gillis.

## Holiday Giving Tree collects 7,576 gifts for local Kids in biggest year ever

### BankRI's Cranston, Warwick branches provide 1,477 presents to nonprofits

Thanks to the generosity of Bank Rhode Island (BankRI) customers, staff and the community, the holiday season has been made brighter for underprivileged children across the Ocean State. The Bank's Holiday Giving Tree program, which recently concluded, led to an incredible 7,576 donated gifts. It is the most gifts ever collected in the program's 26-year history.

In Cranston and Warwick, the Bank's local branches combined to provide a total of 1,477 presents to its nonprofit partners, AIDS Care Ocean State, Boys & Girls Clubs of Warwick, Comprehensive Community Action Program, and SSTARbirth.

"We have amazing people in our state who never miss an opportunity to help others, especially when it comes to children in need," said Will Tsonos, President and CEO of BankRI. "Our Holiday Giving

Tree program continues to reach new heights after all these years, demonstrating the true holiday spirit. Thank you to all who donated!"

BankRI began its 26th annual Holiday Giving Tree program on November 1 at all of its branches statewide. For six weeks, branches displayed a giving tree decorated with ornaments featuring the name, age, and holiday wish of a child served by that branch's nonprofit partner. Throughout the effort, people visited their local branch to select ornaments, later returning to place their donated gifts beneath the tree.

A number of branches saw tremendous support, including BankRI's Lincoln location, which led the way by collecting 1,527 presents to benefit children served by the Town of Lincoln Holiday Basket Program.



At BankRI's Atwood Avenue branch in Cranston, 400 gifts were donated to its Holiday Giving Tree program to help brighten the season for children served by SSTARbirth. Statewide, the effort led to 7,576 gifts for kids, its highest total ever.



**GIVING TREE REALLY GAVE:** BankRI's Cranston branches combined to collect 724 gifts during this year's Holiday Giving Tree program, benefiting children helped by local nonprofits, AIDS Care Ocean State, Comprehensive Community Action Program, and SSTARbirth. Seen at the Plainfield Pike branch from left are staff members: Lisa Steele, Teller Supervisor; Lori Casale, Senior Teller; and Jeff Elliott, Plainfield Pike Branch Manager.



**GIVING TREE GIFTS:** In Warwick, BankRI's three branches combined to collect 753 gifts to benefit children at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Warwick. Statewide, the program saw its best year ever, leading to 7,576 to brighten the season for kids across the Ocean State. Pictured here from left are Lori Lepizzera, Jefferson Boulevard Branch Manager, BankRI; Lara D'Antuono, Executive Director, Boys and Girls Clubs of Warwick; Lynne DeSantis, Buttonwoods Branch Manager, BankRI; and Jennifer Kilday, Warwick Avenue Branch Manager, BankRI. (Submitted photo)



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## Park View 6th graders revive Hasbro toy drive



**KIDS HELPING KIDS:** Some Phoenix team students along with teachers Darcy Mollo and Joanne Spaziano show off their donations for children at Hasbro.

By PAM SCHIFF

Joanne Spaziano, a grade 6 math teacher at Park View Middle School wanted to make sure that all kids have a happy Christmas, especially those who, through no fault of their own, won't be home to celebrate.

Originally, she started doing this project with her classes about five years ago. But, once the pandemic hit, it was put on hold.

"This is the first year we are back collecting so it feels safe again. We started collecting on December 1, going through to December 21st," said Spaziano.

Included in the donation boxes, which

were bursting at the seams, were character bandages, crayon packs, coloring books, stickers and bubbles.

"My colleagues on the Phoenix team helped me pack up my car after school, and I drove to Hasbro to deliver the boxes. I was met by a very friendly person from Child Life services who was very happy to receive our donation," Spaziano said.

For each item a student donated, they received six PBIS points. Points can be redeemed for school supplies or fidget tools and can be used to register for raffles at school.

"It is an uplifting event and everyone likes to contribute," Spaziano said.

## Kick off New Year with #FirstDayHike at state campground

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) invites Rhode Islanders to kick off 2024 and celebrate the New Year by joining a #FirstDayHike at George Washington State Campground in Chepachet on Monday, Jan. 1, 2024. First Day Hikes are part of a nationwide initiative led by America's State Parks to encourage people to get outdoors. Nearly 1,000 visitors attended DEM's 2023 First Day Hike at Fort Wetherill State Park in Jamestown, an attendance record. 2024's hike, the eighth such event DEM has hosted, is set for 10 AM to 1 PM.

"DEM is excited to once again ring in the New Year outdoors at one of Rhode Island's beautiful properties and is a great opportunity to see scenic George Washington State Campground, especially for those who have never visited before," said DEM Director Terry Gray. "First Day Hikes are part of DEM's Strategic Plan to promote our state's natural resources by encouraging people to visit RI's natural areas and state parks as part of an active and healthy lifestyle. This popular annual event also serves as an occasion to communicate DEM's mission, programs, and goals to engage with the public we serve."

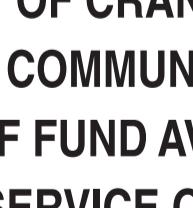
DEM will be offering commemorative pins to participants. Divisions of DEM's Natural Resources Bureau will be on hand offering information about agency programs and services. Leashed dogs are allowed if the leash is no longer than six feet. Local Girl Scout Troops will be selling refreshments and hot chocolate. Children must be always accompanied by an adult. The 1.5-mile walk is on uneven ground. The walk will be held rain or shine, so

DEM encourages participants to dress accordingly. Although fluorescent orange clothing is not required for the guided hike since it is within the state campground, with hunting season in full swing, DEM recommends that attendees wear 200 square inches (hat or vest) in case they plan on extending their hike into the surrounding management area.

Located within the 4,000-acre George Washington Management Area and on the shores of Bowditch Reservoir, the overnight 100-acre George Washington Memorial Camping Area was first owned by the U.S. Government in the 1930's and developed by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The State acquired the property in 1968 and it is now a seasonal, overnight camping facility with nearly 80 well-spaced gravel sites suitable for tents, trailers, and RV's and four primitive cabins offering a multitude of opportunities to enjoy the outdoors.

First Day Hikes began more than three decades ago, at the Blue Hills Reservation state park in Massachusetts in 1992. Since 2012, all 50 states have participated. America's State Parks hopes to make 2024 a record-breaking year as the annual event approaches major milestones, including inching closer to 1 million miles hiked and 500,000 participants in the program's history.

For more information on the First Day Hike, please visit the RI State Parks website. For information on DEM programs and initiatives, visit [www.riparks.ri.gov/hikes](http://www.riparks.ri.gov/hikes). Follow RI State Parks on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/rystateparks](http://www.facebook.com/rystateparks) or Instagram (@ristateparks).



## CITY OF CRANSTON DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT NOTICE OF FUND AVAILABILITY FOR PUBLIC SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds are available to those public service organizations that serve low to moderate income individuals and households, adjusted for household size, residing in Cranston. In order to qualify for CDBG funds, at least 51% of the clientele of public service organizations must be low to moderate income persons, based on the current income guidelines.

The Cranston Department of Community Development is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, in accordance with the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. The estimated CDBG grant for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024, is \$1,000,000.

Applications can be found online after January 2, 2024, at [www.cranstonri.org/CommunityDevelopment](http://www.cranstonri.org/CommunityDevelopment), or by calling the Department of Community Development at 401-780-6240, or by visiting the Community Development office at 35 Sockanisset Cross Road, Ste.6, Cranston, RI 02920 between the hours of 830AM to 430PM.

The deadline for submission of applications is February 2, 2024.

### CITY OF CRANSTON

#### NOTICE OF INTENT TO REQUEST RELEASE OF FUNDS

##### To All Interested Agencies, Groups and Persons:

ON or about January 16, 2024, the City of Cranston, Rhode Island, will request the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to release Federal Funds for activities authorized under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (PL-93-383), as amended, for the following project:

**Smith Street Tot Park Renovation.....\$80,000**  
-Renovate the Tot Park by replacing the old playground equipment with new equipment and by upgrading the landscaping

The activity proposed is categorically excluded under HUD regulations at 24 CFR Part 58 from National Environmental Policy Act requirements. An Environmental Review Record (ERR) that documents the environmental determinations for this is on file at the Cranston Dept. of Community Development where the ERR can be examined weekdays 8:30AM to 4:30PM.

##### Public Comments

Any individual, group, or agency may submit written comments on the Environmental Review Record to Ernest Tommasiello, [etommasiello@cranstonri.org](mailto:etommasiello@cranstonri.org), the Cranston Dept. of Community Development, or call 401-780-6240 during the seven day comment period beginning on January 9, 2024, and ending on January 15, 2024. All comments received by January 15, 2024, will be considered by the City of Cranston prior to authorizing submission of a request for release of funds.

##### Release of Funds

The City of Cranston will undertake the activity described above with Block Grant funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for activities authorized under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (PL-93-383), as amended. The City is certifying to HUD that the Mayor in his/her official capacity consents to accept the jurisdiction of the Federal Courts if an action is brought to enforce responsibilities in relation to the environmental review process and that these responsibilities have been satisfied. HUD's approval of the certification satisfies its responsibilities under NEPA and related laws and authorities and allows the City of Cranston to use the Block Grant funds.

##### Objection to Release of Funds

HUD will accept objections to its release of funds and the City's certification for a period of fifteen days following the anticipated submission date or its actual receipt of the request (whichever is later) only if they are on one of the following bases: (a) the certification was not executed by the Chief Executive Officer of the City of Cranston; (b) the City has omitted a step or failed to make a decision or finding required by HUD regulations at 24 CFR Part 58; (c) the grant recipient has committed funds or incurred costs not authorized by 24 CFR Part 58 before approval of a release of funds by HUD; or (d) another Federal agency acting pursuant to 40 CFR Part 1504 has submitted a written finding that the project is unsatisfactory from the standpoint of environmental quality. Objections must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the required procedures (24 CFR Part 58) and shall be addressed to HUD Regional Office, O'Neill Federal Bldg., 10 Causeway St., Boston, MA 02222. No objection received after 15 days from the date the request for release of funds was received by HUD will be considered by HUD. Potential objectors should contact HUD to verify the actual last day of the objection period.

**City of Cranston, Department of Community Development**

35 Sockanisset Cross Rd., Cranston, RI 02920 401-780-6240

**Kenneth J. Hopkins**

**Mayor**

**Ernest Tommasiello**

**Director,**

**Community Development**



12/28/23

# Sports

CRANSTON HERALD

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2023



SHOOTING LIGHTS OUT: The West girls basketball team after beating La Salle. (Photos by Alex Sponseller)

## Falcons beat Rams in DI shootout

By ALEX SPONSELLER

The Cranston West girls basketball team made a statement in Division I last week when it beat visiting La Salle 48-39.

The Falcons shot lights out from start to finish to hold off the Rams. La Salle remained in striking distance until late in the fourth, but the West offense would continue to come up with clutch shots to keep them at bay and pick up the win.

Olivia Tedeschi-Moran led the way with 13 points, followed by Maia Riccio with 12. Riccio scored eight of her points in the fourth quarter. Kyla Buco shot 3-for-5 from 3-point range and finished with 11 points overall.

West entered the season



### Athlete of the Week: Maia Riccio

The Cranston Herald's Athlete of the Week is West basketball player Maia Riccio, who was dominant in a pair of contests leading up to the team's holiday break. Riccio finished with 12 points in the team's win over La Salle to go along with eight rebounds and four assists, then would lead the Falcons with 12 points the following game against Portsmouth.

## Senior duo, freshman class set to lead West on mats

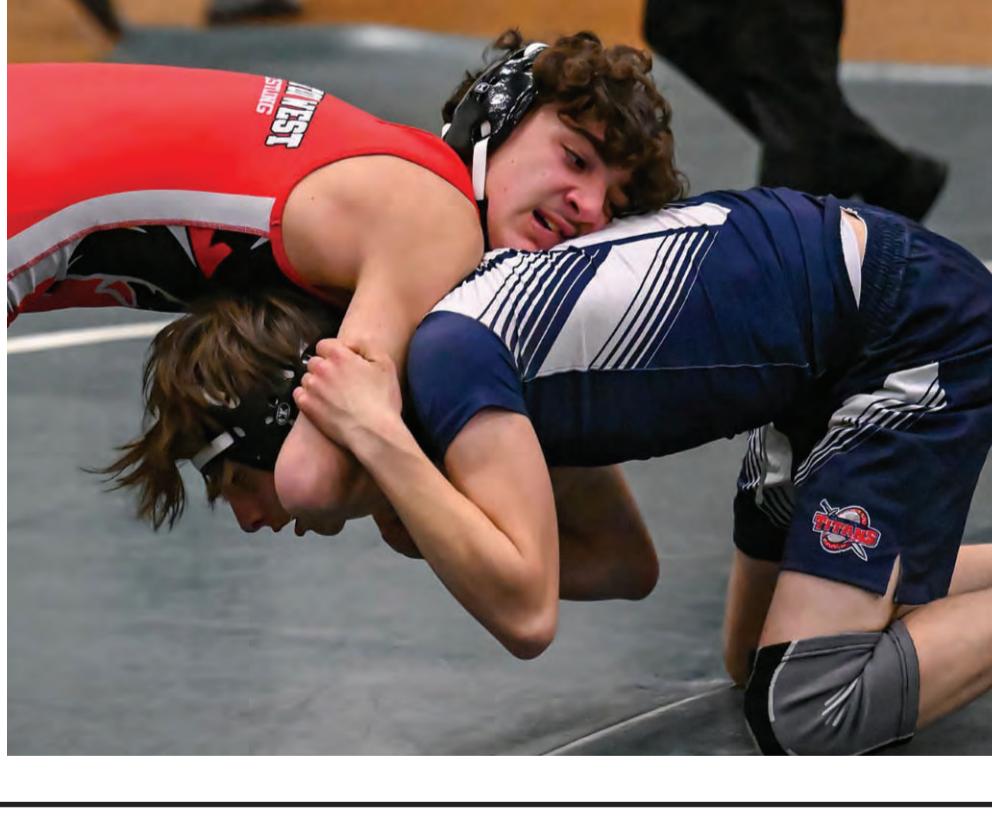
By ALEX SPONSELLER

The Cranston West wrestling team is rebuilding its roster this winter and will be getting into the meet of its regular season schedule in the coming weeks.

The team finished sixth overall at the recent South County Invitational tournament then ninth in North Providence's annual event. Making noise for West was senior captain Andrew Pappas, who won his division in North Providence, then took second in South Kingstown.

Pappas is gearing up for what should be a big season.

MATS - PAGE 8



HITTING THE MATS: Cranston West's Kenny Negron grapples with an opponent in a recent match. (Photos by Leo van Dijk/rhodyphoto.zenfolio.com)

## What a year in sports

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

Here are a few of my favorite moments of 2023:

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

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

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

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

The Hawks and Rams were even all season long which set up for a big battle at the Ryan Center.

## My pitch



by ALEX

SPONSELLER

SPORTS EDITOR

ALEX@

RHODYBEAT.COM

What was most memorable about that final game, though, was how point guard Mike Paquette led the Hawks to the win to eventually grab MVP honors. Eze Wali and Azmar Abdullah were the best 1-2 punch in the state, but Paquette's masterpiece showed that basketball truly is a team sport.

Speaking of basketball masterpieces, Derek Salvatore put on a clinic in the Division II State Championship to lead Johnston to its first title since 1996. Salvatore took that game over in what was perhaps the most impressive single performance of the year 2023 for our teams.

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

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

I remember the first time

PITCH - PAGE 9

## East boys, girls fall in hoops action

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The Classical boys basketball team rolled to an 81-50 win over Cranston East last week prior to the holiday break.

Albert Kesse and Juel Goris led the Bolts with 15 points each.

Despite a 32-point outing by Mya Jiminez, the Lady Bolts were unable to edge Smithfield last week, as the Sentinels ran away with a 51-39 win.

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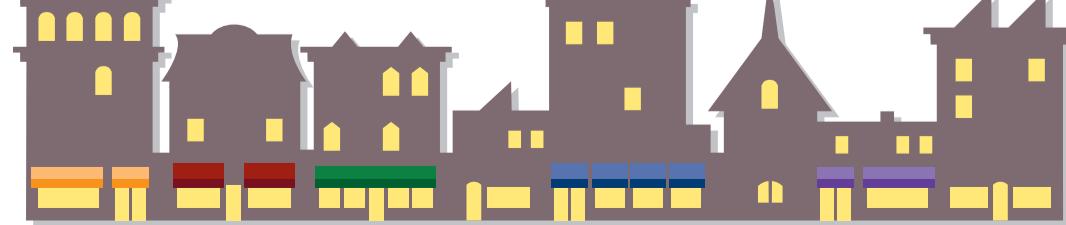
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## ■ Falcons

(Continued from page 7)

as an experienced group after a rebuilding 2022 winter. Now, West sits at 3-1 in the division and hopes that the La Salle win will give them some momentum entering the holiday break.

"It's a huge win for us, we have never beaten La Salle. This is a huge win for us personally and confidence wise, we now know that our hard work paid off and we can play again anyone," said Tedeschi-Moran, who is a captain along with Riccio.

"We haven't beaten them in a long time. To get a win against them will be really motivating for the freshmen to come in and watch us get this one," added Riccio, who is embracing her captainship in a year where the team has championship aspirations. "It's awesome. I love being a role model to the freshmen, I remember looking up to and respecting the seniors when I was a freshman. I love being able to help the team and being put in this position and role."

Last year's down season helped the Falcons learn the importance of playing in sync with one another while also building chemistry on and off the court.

"I think that our past experience showed us that we have to play together as a team. When Kyla hits a shot, I feel like I just scored on the shot. We need to play together in unison," said Tedeschi-Moran.

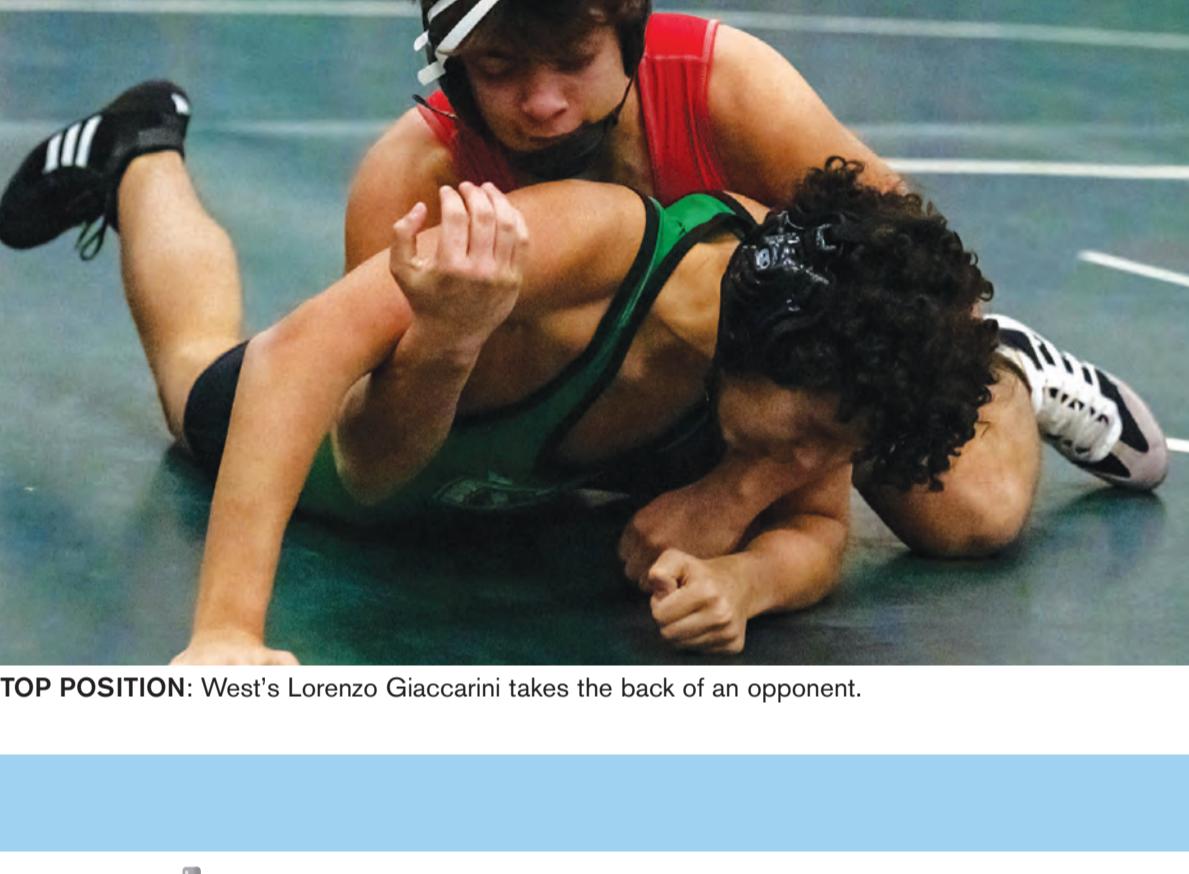
As West looks to continue to climb the standings in the state's toughest division, the Falcons feel confident in their versatility and feel that their sharp shooting will be sustainable throughout the season.

"It's an awesome advantage because not only can we drive, but we can kick and knock them down. We have that trust in each other," said Tedeschi-Moran.

The Falcons took on Portsmouth the following game on the road and fell 61-49. Riccio led the way with 13 points.



MAKING A STATEMENT: Cranston West's Kyla Buco (left) and Olivia Tedeschi-Moran.



TOP POSITION: West's Lorenzo Giaccarini takes the back of an opponent.

## ■ Mats

(Continued from page 7)

Pappas will be competing at 165 pounds and has his eyes on not only reaching the podium at states, but claiming the top spot.

"Andrew Pappas is on a tear. He's a man on a mission. He's looking to be All-State, if not the state champion," said West coach Tom Lynch.

A big question for West will be the status of fellow senior captain Andrew Alchihed, who finished last season with a perfect 12-0 record. The senior tore his ACL in the state championships last season and will likely be hitting the mat in the coming weeks. Alchihed would have been perhaps the favorite to win his division this winter, but his health will be something to watch upon his return.

The program's numbers have been impressive this season as it boasts 55 wrestlers, including 24 freshmen.

"[Having 24 freshmen] is huge. Winning the freshman state championship is definitely a goal of ours this year. Between the number of freshmen we have and the quality of wrestlers, we should be able to go at least top-3," said Lynch.

Freshman Dante Richardson has emerged as a potential difference maker for West as he took second at South Kingstown and third at North Providence, beating multiple seniors along the way. Owen Polofsky is another freshmen that will have a chance to reach the varsity lineup.

Lynch has been excited at the competitiveness he has seen at practices early this season, especially from the underclassmen, who will be relied on heavily to fill out the lineup.

"They came into the room ready to push the upperclassmen for their spot. They came in looking to make some noise and make a difference and they did that," said Lynch.

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# Top fishing stories of 2023

By CAPT. DAVE MONTI

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

Here are my top three fishing stories for 2023.

## Big animals close to shore

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

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

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

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

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

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

of the water."

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

## Striper fishing hot, but they are in trouble

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

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

So, in spite of all this catching going on, the striped bass stock is not healthy. They are overfished and subject to overfishing. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and their marine coastal states from Maine to Virginia closed the public comment period of December 22 on Draft Addendum II to Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass. Addendum II considers management measures designed to support stock rebuilding by reducing fishing mortality to the target level in 2024.

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

## New recreational fishing policy and implementation plan

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



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

plan is data modernization for recreational fishing.

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

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

## Where's the bite?

Freshwater fishing in stocked ponds for trout and salmon is pretty good with a fairly decent largemouth and smallmouth

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

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

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

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

By PETE FONTAINE

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

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

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

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

In keeping with the event's tradition, players

can only use three clubs and play just three holes after what promises to be a fun-filled reunion-like welcome inside the GCC clubhouse located at 121 Wentworth Avenue in Chepachet.

Tee off is set for 10 a.m. and if past Polar Golf Tournaments offer any measuring stick, Monday's playing field will feature men and women players dressed in a variety of garb depending upon the weather.

The event has been called several things such as Freezing for a Reason because the New Year's Day weather for previous tournaments has included everything from snow, a light drizzle of rain as well as unseasonably warm temperatures.

Perhaps the most important part of the Polar Golf Tournament is that entrance fee is only \$25 per player and that entire amount will benefit children who are

battling cancer. Even if you're not a golfer, please consider stopping at GCC to make a donation and enjoy the GCC's classic camaraderie on New Year's Day 2024.

Thus, the membership at Gloucester Country Club has designated Hasbro Children's Hospital as its official charity and that even holds true for the highly popular Co-Ed Memorial Golf Tournament that's held in September.

In addition to hosting the 8th Annual Polar Golf Tournament, that last year raised \$1,000 that committee officials are hoping to surpass Monday, Gloucester Country Club is now accepting memberships for the 2024 golf season. For more details contact Memberships@Gloucestercc.com.

People who'd like to register for the Polar Golf Tournament should contact judi@grahambuilders.com.

alive and well. Pilgrim will be a title favorite with Braxton Bragg and Ryan Barlow back in the mix.

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

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

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

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

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

W

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

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

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

It was also thrilling to see the Pilgrim and Toll Gate boys lacrosse teams revamp their rivalry as the Pats moved up to Division II and made the championship game while the Titans took a massive step forward as a program and reached the playoffs.

We'll see how these teams look in 2024, but with many of the same players returning, I am excited to say that the rivalry is

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**Bond**

(Continued from page 1)

Following this, Councilwoman Renzulli spoke, reaffirming that this bond would not be used to purchase the apprentice school for \$10 million more than it was worth, a rumor which the Herald has also written about previously. Councilor Paplauskas then asked city council legal counsel whether the change from 50% to 70% represented a "substantive change" requiring the resolution return to committee to be further renegotiated. Counsel replied with a simple "no."

Chief of Staff for the mayor Anthony Moretti did not agree. Following this question, he took the podium stating that the administration's stance would be that this was, in fact, a substantive change.

After some further discussion, the resolution was put to a vote. Councilors Renzulli, Paplauskas, and Campopiano voted no. Everyone else voted yes. The resolution passed with the amended language of no less than 50%.

The following day, Councilwoman Renzulli sent out a press release criticizing what she calls Council President Marino's "domineering tactics." The release claims the change was made without the transparency promised by Marino and councilman Donegan, who chairs the finance committee.

Renzulli writes "I was one of the three sponsors of the original resolution and I have publicly defended the resolution, but I was not even consulted by the Council President to change the reimbursement formula without any discussion of the impact on taxpayers and the City's debt service ability."

The release further reasserts the Moretti's stance that the language constitutes a substantive change to the resolution. It points out that City Finance Director Thomas Zidelis was not present at the meeting and that no one present could explain the financial impact of a potentially lower reimbursement rate.

Councilman Paplauskas said, "Let me be clear. I fully support the schools, but I do not support the process and lack of transparency. We were never given the option to ask the Finance Department if the City can afford the bond at the lesser reimbursement rate." Paplauskas emphasized, "My first duty is to protect the taxpayers of Cranston."

Following the receipt of the release, in an interview with the Herald, Chief of Staff Moretti said that the Mayor and his administration still support the bond act, but that the modification from 70% to 50% was a "shocking change."

He says "It's very peculiar, the process was transparent before but the change was done behind closed doors. I think it deserves greater scrutiny to understand why that change has taken place."

Council President Marino later responded to the release, calling it "nothing more than petty partisan politics, which is disappointing to say the least."

Marino points out that this change of language is consistent with that of the \$147 million bond resolution presented to the general assembly in 2020. That proposed legislation also read "no less than 50%" with respect to the reimbursement from RIDE. She further points out that despite the 50% lower limit, the city still received the 74% reimbursement rate they expected.

She writes "Let me be clear, this is standard reasonable, prudent, responsible language, to have the minimum threshold of 50% as the city has consistently done in its previous school bond act under the previous administration and this language still enables the city to receive 74% reimbursement."

She wrote "What transpired last evening at the council meeting was nothing out of the ordinary and comported with normal rules and procedure. To suggest otherwise is simply wrong and inexplicable."

She continued. "As for commentary about looking out for the city's finances and the taxpayers of the city of Cranston, I and my Democratic colleagues are absolutely doing precisely that. The city council corrected the bond act language consistent with past practice, and ultimately, it will be up to the voters, just as it has been in the past to determine if the city will avail itself of this opportunity to improve our schools as we hope to once again achieve a 74% reimbursement rate from RIDE."

Councilman Donegan wrote a statement as well.

The issue of additional bonding to support our Cranston Public Schools was discussed at great lengths on numerous occasions in the Finance Committee; meetings which are recorded and available to the public online thanks to an Ordinance introduced by City Council Democrats, and passed by the City Council. As represented before the City Council and the public at each meeting, we anticipate a reimbursement rate of 74%; nothing about the amendment to the bond language changes that. If the bond is approved by the voters of Cranston, further discussions will take place, in public meetings, such as the Finance Committee and budget hearings" he said.

Whether the language change was substantive or not, it will be moving to the general assembly. According to Moretti, if the general assembly approves a referendum, the decision of whether to authorize the bonds will go to Cranston voters in a special election early next year.

**OneCranston Health Equity Zone at CCAP**

We work to create a healthier, happier Cranston for all residents through events, workshops, resident-led working groups and The Huddle Center, our Cranston Family Support Center.

**Celia's Hacks Series: Sewing**  
Thursday January 4th, 5:00-6:30pm  
The Huddle Center, 70 Gansett Avenue, Cranston

Sewing made easy! Contact Celia at cmhernandez@comcap.org with any questions.

**Weekly Walk and Talk**  
Every Tuesday and Thursday at 8:30am,  
Every Saturday at 9:00am  
Bain Track

Join us on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays in the morning to walk 4 laps on Bain's large track with Sal, a Community Health Worker! To get started, find him at the chin-up bar at the corner of Gansett and Trainor. Minors must be accompanied by a guardian. Contact Sal at snacci@comcap.org with any questions.

**Community Builders Grant Program:****Applications Open!**

Our Community Connectors committee is pleased to continue our Community Builders Grant Program, which seeks to identify and partner with residents interested in bringing their neighbors together to complete projects that improve their communities. This year we will have rolling grants: 6 grants of \$300 will be disbursed. We will be awarding one grant per a Cranston-Ward, with applications remaining open until March 1 or all grants have been awarded. To apply, scan the QR code or contact JB at jfulbright@comcap.org or 401-208-3487.



Want to learn more about us or get involved? Contact Sarah Cote, Initiative Director at scote@comcap.org or 401-714-7004.

**Cranston Senior Enrichment Center**

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Chasing Away the Winter Blues  
Wednesday, January 3rd – 10:00 a.m.

URI Pharmacy Outreach Program

During the winter season, many people may experience sadness or depression due to: cold weather, illness, and decreased sunlight. What

causes this sadness? What are the risk factors, and what are the treatment options?

Caregiver Support Group  
Wednesday, January 3rd – 2:00 p.m.

Being a Caregiver can result in ignoring your own physical and emotional health. Often, Caregivers don't

recognize the symptoms of stress that they are experiencing. It may be hard to ask for or accept help, but you cannot do it alone. The Caregiver's Support Group will encourage caregivers to care for themselves and provide productive strategies for dealing with conflicts or tensions that may arise when caregiving. Our support group meets the first Wednesday of every month at 2:00 p.m. Join us or call for more information 780-6254.

Arthritis Exercise Classes  
"A low-impact physical activity"

Tuesdays – 1:15 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.  
Beginning January 9th to March 26th

Exercise is an essential tool

in managing your arthritis. Exercise reduces joint pain and stiffness, increases flexibility, endurance and so much more. Led by certified instructors, These FREE classes may be taken either standing or sitting. Space is limited. Register by calling 780-6000

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Every Thursday from 1:00 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.

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Nurse: Tuesdays 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Pharmacist: Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream."

~ C.S. Lewis  
Happy New Year!

**ANIMAL TALK**  
By Karen Kalunian

Local Adoptable Loveable

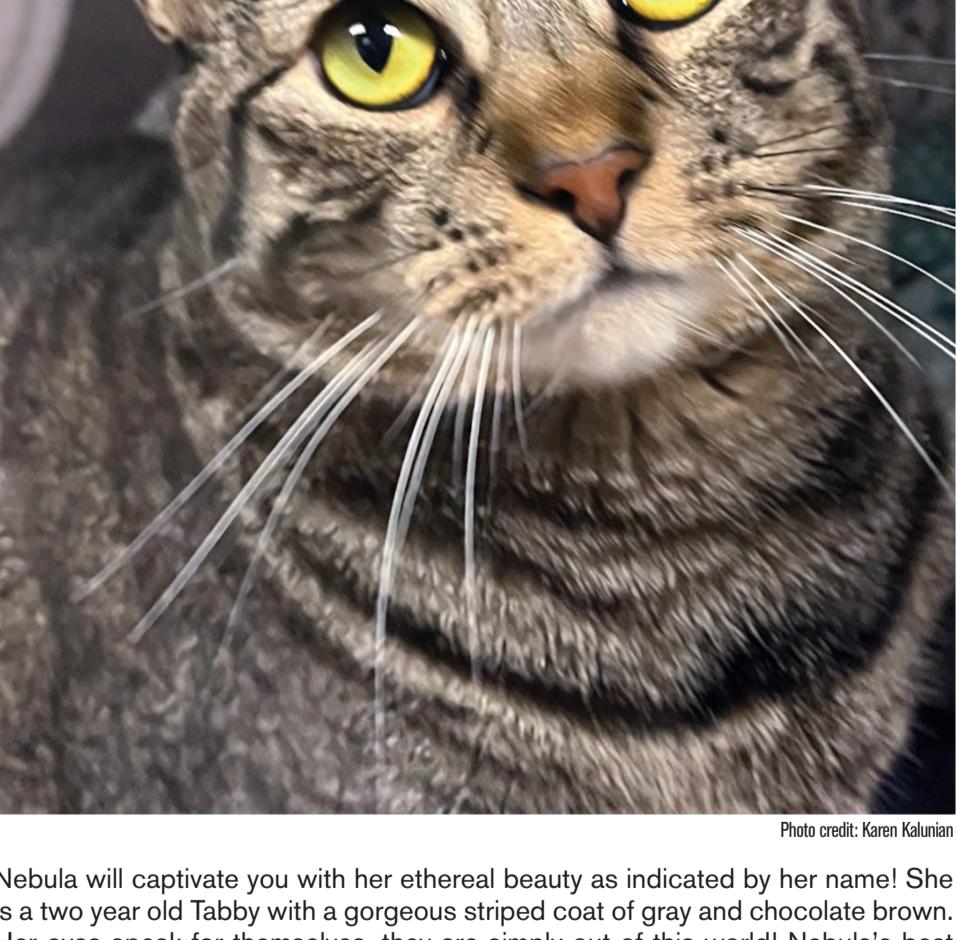
**Nebula**

Photo credit: Karen Kalunian

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

If you have been thinking of adopting or know of an

animal in need, please contact Karen directly at

**animaltalk1920@gmail.com**

**CROSSWORD PUZZLE CORNER****CLUES ACROSS**

- A way to injure
- Mutual savings bank
- Rock TV channel
- Large number of fish swimming together
- Military mailbox
- Female of a horse
- Category
- City
- Breezed through
- Officer who bears a mace
- Tax collector
- "Cheers" actress Perlman
- Pauses before acting
- Extracted information from a wave
- Tendency to revert to something ancestral
- No seats available
- Nocturnal rodents
- Moves gently to and fro
- Not good
- A way to ready
- One who makes something better
- Things associated with American history
- Ancient Phoenician fertility god

**CLUES DOWN**

- "The world's most famous arena"
- Polite interruption sound
- Private school in New York
- Refuse of grapes
- Tomei, actress
- Adult beverages
- Supporter
- Papier-\_\_\_\_, art material
- Forests have them
- Most ancient Hindu scriptures
- Downwind
- Marketplace
- Flowering plant genus

**CLUES ACROSS**

- A continuous portion of a circle
- Volcanic craters
- Units of electrical resistance
- Gamble on
- Ethiopian town
- One point east of northeast
- Polynesian garland of flowers
- Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation
- State of fuss
- Keyboard key
- Partner to relaxation
- Street where nightmares happen
- Admirer
- Dip lightly into water
- When you hope to get there
- Partner to cheese
- Egg
- A way to disqualify
- South American plant
- Fold-away bed
- Debbie Harry album "\_\_\_\_ Koo"
- Swedish krona
- Displaying warmth and friendliness
- Official orders
- Bowling alley necessity
- Stray
- About milk
- Expressed pleasure
- Caribbean dance
- If not
- fide (Latin)
- Swiss river
- Hebrew calendar month
- One easily swindled
- Point that is one point south of southwest
- Small island (British)

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## ■ Speaker

(Continued from page 1)

to get closer to that 80 percent mark." Shekarchi was first elected House Speaker in January 2021 and re-elected to the post in January of this year.

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

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

### Bridging Divides

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Oversight Imminent

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

Shekarchi promised an investigation led by the General Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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

### Next Stop, Warwick

They built it. Will the trains come?

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

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

"We built a beautiful train station," he repeated as a baby waited at another table. "It's underutilized; it's underparked. If it wasn't for the car rental agencies, it would be really, really underutilized."

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

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

### Post-Post Road Redevelopment

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

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

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

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

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

### School Projects Due

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

That's it though. Time's up.

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

### Growing Wish Lists

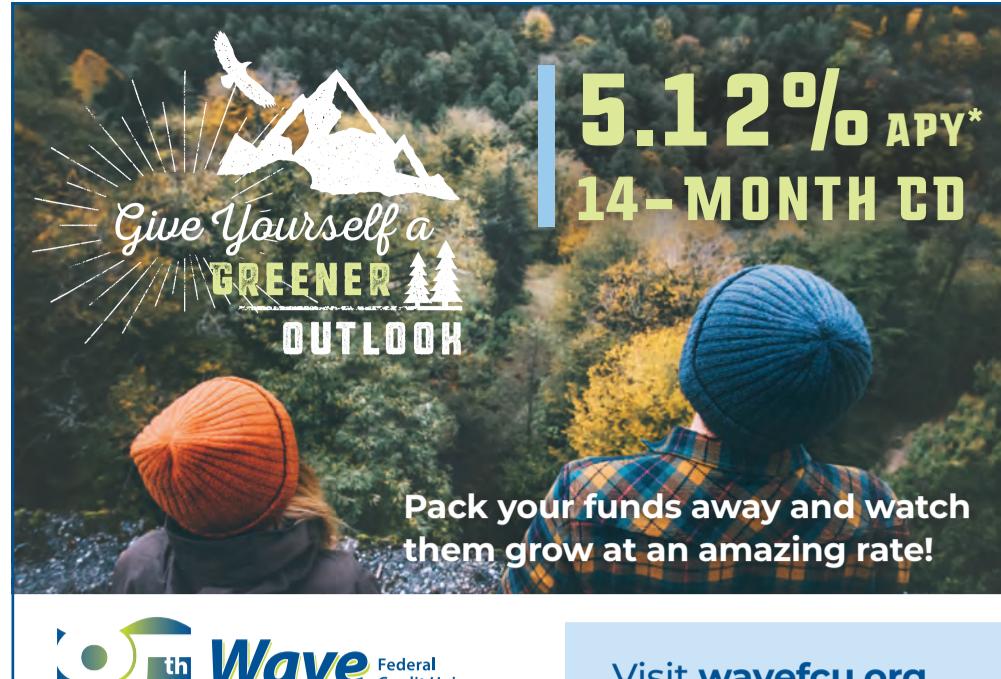
Shekarchi refused a guess at the overall size of next year's budget, but he's been receiving long wish lists from state agencies and department heads.

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

The federal pandemic response well has run dry.

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

(continued on page 12)



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## Courthouse

(Continued from page 1)

However, it may be a long wait before a project of this scale can get on the ground. According to House Speaker Joseph Shekarchi on Friday December 22, "It's a long way from moving. It's a long long way from moving. Mayor Smiley came out opposing that move yesterday. I can tell you that it is not in the Judiciary budget. I don't know if the governor is going to include it in his budget."

Furthermore, a lack of transparency and bad timing will likely stymy the effort even more. "I've been Speaker for three years and it's never been on my radar," Shekarchi says. "And then when I met with them recently, they said, 'We've been talking about this for four years and Covid slowed us down.'"

"We had all the infrastructure money," Shekarchi continued. "We had all the ARPA (American Res-

cue Plan Act) money. We had all the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act money. Nobody was talking about it. Now all that money is gone, they're starting to talk about it."

Some opponents of the courthouse move point to the newly constructed parking garage built next to the current courthouse — and how building visitors were expected to occupy most of the new garage. Shekarchi said that argument makes "a very good point."

In Cranston, there's not much to be said about the project.

The Mayor's office hasn't formally heard anything about a courthouse at the Pastore Center. City Planning Director Jason Pezzullo told the Herald on Friday "We don't have anything to do with Pastore from a development standpoint. They don't consult with locals when it's a state development."

According to Representa-

makes Chief Ryan an excellent choice. He has my confidence and is well respected by the rank-and-file members of the fire department."

Robert Ryan joined the Cranston Fire Department in January 1988 and has risen through the ranks while serving in all stations around the city. As Deputy Chief since January 2019, Ryan currently has command responsibility for one half of the city and provides direct supervision of personnel in Stations 1, 2 and 3. He responds to all fire or emergency calls in his designated area to provide in the field supervision to Cranston's first responders.

The mayor said during his distinguished career Chief Ryan has seen and responded to thousands of calls to assist residents and businesses involved with fires, accidents, and medical emergencies.

Chief Ryan will bring that broad based experience to the chief's office as he enters a new role of management leadership for departmental administra-

tive Jacqueline Baginski, who represents the 17th district in Cranston and has heard a little of the rumbling about the courthouse up at the state house, "The governor's office doesn't need to ask the General Assembly for their consent to do things like that. Unless there were some great reason it might present a danger or a traffic."

Traffic is exactly what Representative Barbara Ann Fenton Fung, who represents the 15th district in Cranston, worries about when asked about a state courthouse in the Pastore Center. "That's a very densely traveled area," she said. "When a formal proposal comes out, I'd need to see a traffic proposal in the area."

Whether that formal proposal comes out at all is a matter for the governor and the state house to decide, but whatever they agree on, it will likely be a while before Cranstonians need to worry about having the Rhode Island Judiciary for neighbors.

tion," Hopkins said. "Overseeing the full complement of firefighters and the \$37 million budget will demand Chief Ryan to draw upon his firefighting knowledge of equipment, recruitment, training, disaster preparation and staffing."

"I am honored and grateful to Mayor Hopkins for his confidence in selecting me to be Cranston's next fire chief," Ryan said. "I pledge to the members of the department and the Cranston community that we will work hard every day to protect the city and maintain our excellent record of fire and emergency services."

Robert Ryan resides in Scituate with his wife Jane, and they are the proud parents of three adult children.

The mayor said he is for-

warding Deputy Chief Robert Ryan's name to the City Council for its advice and consent. A hearing will be scheduled before the Council Finance Committee at a date to be determined in consultation with the city council leadership.

The mayor said during his distinguished career Chief Ryan has seen and responded to thousands of calls to assist residents and businesses involved with fires, accidents, and medical emergencies.

Chief Ryan will bring that broad based experience to the chief's office as he enters a new role of management leadership for departmental administra-

## Speaker

(Continued from page 11)

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

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

According to Shekarchi, the biggest unbudgeted requests include: \$100 million by Rhode Island Secretary of State Gregg M. Amore, for new state archives; the RI Black Business Association (RIBBA) asked for \$100 million; a possible (though now seemingly unlikely) \$350 million for relocation of a courthouse from Providence to Cranston; and the re-initiation of COLAs for state workers may cost \$200 to 300 million range.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### LEOBOR Pains

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Constitutional Convention?

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

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

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

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

### No Such Thing as a Free School Lunch

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

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

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

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

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

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

### How 'bout a 'Thank you'?

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

"We have made strategic investments and strategic tax cuts to help the middle class since I've become speaker," he re-

called. "We eliminated the car tax, and we did it a year earlier."

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

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

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

### Hospitals, Doctors, Dentists (or Lack Thereof)

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

"The hospital system is a great concern," Shekarchi said. "Not only to me, but the attorney general. I've been meeting with him ..."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Colorado's Rocky

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hats in Rings and Promised Announcements

What's the election outlook for next year?

"Obviously I will have an election," Shekarchi forecasts. "And I'm sure it will be tough."

Up and down the rest of the ballot?

"There's not going to be statewide races," the Speaker explained. "There'll be legislative races. And we'll have a U.S. Senate race."

And the Speaker's future?

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

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

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

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

## Humans of Cranston seeks nominations



nominate them via this form: <https://forms.microsoft.com/r/s8nBuGhtB> (Or scan the QR code).

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2023

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# Investigative reporting and big stories of 2023

By G. WAYNE MILLER

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

It was a busy year... but I suppose when isn't it in the Rhode Island news cycle?

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

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

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

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

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

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

What came next?

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

■ WHITE - PAGE 18



Photo courtesy of WPRI

## Q & A with Tim White

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**WARWICK SHOWCASE**  
**WONKA**\*\*\*  
(Family Prequel Movie)

How did Roald Dahl's famous fictional character get his start?

This pleasant little musical will tell you.

It seems that young Willy Wonka, after seven years at sea, arrives in an English town with his suitcase filled with chocolate-making ingredients and a dream.

In a plot that could have been written by Dickens, poor people, and especially young poor people were taken advantage of by rich businessmen and nasty lady innkeepers (Olivia Spenser).

Wonka (Timothée Chalamet) is immediately thrown into debt by the innkeeper and sent to the basement laundry, where he joins four other poor folks and Noodle, a delightful young girl (Calah Lane).

Together, they make some of the finest chocolate in the world, sharing it with the locals. Three greedy businessmen have the market on chocolate and stop them at every turn with the help of the local police.

Enter a tiny chocolate thief, so tiny he can fit in a bottle (Hugh Grant), who eventually joins forces with Wonka and friends to stop the bad guys.

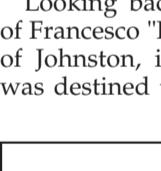
There's lots of adventure to satisfy the children and a wonderful candy store and factory filled with colorful treats.

There is one great song, "A World of Your Own." (I often wonder if young folks like their movie interrupted by songs).

There's a happy ending, and now we know how the famous Willy Wonka got started.



'Wonka' starring Timothée Chalamet is in theaters now. (Photo courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures)

**Back in the Day**by  
KELLY SULLIVAN

Looking back at the life of Francesco "Frank" Torelli of Johnston, it seemed he was destined to eventually

succumb to a fatal head injury.

Born in Italy in 1868, Frank was involved in what became known as the "Spruce Street Row" during the summer of 1893. He and a neighbor, Giuseppe DiNardo, had met up on Spruce Street and engaged in an argument. As Frank screamed out curses in Italian, he pulled a razor from his pocket and made a violent slash across Giuseppe's face, cutting his chin so badly that his jawbone was

exposed. As blood poured from Giuseppe's face, Frank made an attempt to grab the watch off his wrist. Giuseppe responded by pulling out a knife and lunging at Frank. By this time a crowd had gathered. In an attempt to disarm Frank, one of the bystanders picked up a paving stone from the ground and heaved it at him. Luckily, he was knocked from the path of Giuseppe's knife as he fell to the ground. But the stone struck his head so

hard, he endured a serious scalp wound.

Three years later, just a couple of weeks into January, Frank was with his brother John at Rossi's Saloon on Lily Street when the siblings began to argue. They decided to take the matter out into the street where they had the room to get physical. Almost immediately, John pulled out a razor and swiped it at his brother. Frank quickly escaped but did so with a very deep scalp laceration

over his left ear. John was arrested and charged with assault with a dangerous weapon.

On May 29, 1910, at about 4:30 in the afternoon, Frank was walking his dog down Binghampton Avenue not far from his home. A neighbor, Antonio Francescone, was walking his dog at the same time. When the animals set their sights on each other, all hell broke loose. The two dogs began fighting as the two men began arguing about whose dog was at fault. An individual who was standing about 100 feet away at the time, Bassi Cambio, later testified that as Antonio attempted to stop the dogs from fighting, Frank stepped up to him, grabbed his hat off his head in a threatening manner and threw it on the ground. Another witness described how Frank was in the process of physically assaulting Antonio when a small boy passed by carrying a baseball bat. Antonio grabbed the bat and hit Frank in the head with it twice before Frank fell to the ground. Neighbors carried Frank into his house and Antonio left.

Antonio, a 40-year-old odd job laborer had a wife and six children living at home, the youngest of whom was six years old. Frank, who was also an odd job laborer, had a wife and five children living at home, the youngest being 13.

No one contacted police until the following morning when it was determined that Frank's injuries were more serious than previously thought. A doctor came to examine him and noticed a deep depression in the top of the head and a scalp laceration. Although Frank was semi-conscious, the doctor believed he would recover. When several days passed and there was no progress, the doctor ordered him taken to Rhode Island Hospital where it was determined that he had a skull fracture at the base of the brain. An operation was performed to relieve pressure in the brain and Frank lingered between life and death for ten days

before passing away due to his injuries and septic meningitis on June 19, 1910. He was buried at Saint Ann Cemetery in Cranston.

Police had been searching for Antonio, who had no criminal history, since the day after the attack. Johnston residents claimed not to have seen him since minutes after Frank was removed from the street. On July 25, he was located and charged with manslaughter, which the grand jury wanted changed to a charge of murder.

The jury which heard the case took three hours and 37 minutes to return with a verdict of not guilty. Shortly after his release, the local newspapers reported on the big shindig which had been put on in Johnston to celebrate Antonio's acquittal. "Banquet given for man acquitted of manslaughter" the reports read. "Friends of Antonio display friendship and esteem - entertainment held at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament."

Antonio's lawyers were very quick to respond to these reports of celebratory dinner and dancing in the wake of a man's death. 31-year-old Antonio Alfredo Capotosto, the first Italian attorney to pass the RI bar exam, and 46-year-old John Fox made a public statement assuring the community that the banquet was a private event and that Antonio was not even present. According to the attorneys, the event was hosted by 46-year-old local saloon owner Vincenzo Jacovone and 36-year-old hardware and variety store owner John Votolato to show gratitude to Capotosto and Fox for all the hard work they did in the community.

A little over a year later, Frank's 43-year-old wife Concetta (Spetrino) was run over by an electric car on Greenville Avenue one afternoon and died from the shock caused by multiple injuries. Antonio died during the winter of 1925 at RI Hospital from the effects of diabetes.

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

**MIGRATION**

\*\*\* (Children) \*\* (Adults)

(Animated Adventure)

You can duck this animated cartoon about a family of Mallard ducks who convince their dad to leave the north and migrate to Jamaica.

Send the kids who will enjoy their narrow escapes from a family of herons, the dangers of New York City and a duck farm where they are about to be cooked.

I found the voices and the constant chattering to be irritating, while the kids seemed to enjoy the frantic activity.

The movie is short, so it is enhanced with a Minion short about an astronaut trying to get back to earth from the moon but being interrupted by a Minion. It is of poor quality and dumb, but the kids will enjoy the Minion.

**THE IRON CLAW**

\*\*

(inspired by real life wrestling family)

"The Iron Claw" is one of the most depressing, disjointed, poor editing, overlong movie I have seen in years.

Based on the lives of the Von Erich family, it tells the story of a father who holds an iron claw over his sons. He also has invented a killer iron claw hold to force his opponents into submission.

It is Texas in the '80's. Pro wrestling is the rage. Son Kevin (Zac Efron) is the heir apparent to winning the World Wrestling Championship. Brothers Kevin, Terry and David also have their shot and meet terrible fates.

The movie plods along for over two and a half hours as we watch the controlling father maneuver his sons into the ring. There is a period when all three are wrestling at once.

The problem with the movie is that they approach professional wrestling like it was for real, and the championship is something that is earned because of your ability.

**WARWICK SHOWCASE/AVON****POOR THINGS**

\*\*\*\*

(Fantastical, bizarre, R rated adventure)

You have never seen Emma Stone like this! Nor Willem Dafoe!

Stone stars as Bella Baxter, a young woman brought back to life by scientist/surgeon Dr. Godwin Baxter (Dafoe).

Dr. Baxter replaces Bella's brain and proceeds to teach her. Bella has a thirst for knowledge and strives to learn and reason, questioning everything. She also has a violent temper and is destructive, awkward and suicidal.

Bella runs off with Duncan Washburn (Mark Ruffalo) to exotic locations like Lisbon and Paris, where she ends up working in a brothel.

The two hour and 20-minute movie is filled with fascinating dialogue and philosophical gems, as Bella discov-

ers the world and herself, leading to a most interesting ending.

We must warn you that there is full frontal nudity and steamy sex scenes, plus bizarre anatomical procedures that may be a bit much for some.

After a season of bland movies, "Poor Things" jarred our senses and brought us into another universe.

The backgrounds are done in black and white and pastels, creating an esoteric atmosphere, and the acting is award-winning. We especially enjoyed Stone and Ruffalo as they travelled the world meeting fascinating people.

And wait until you see the makeup job on Dafoe.

Not for everyone, but for those who enjoy movies that offer a different perspective.



Bradley Cooper as Leonard Bernstein in 'Maestro.' (Photo courtesy of NETFLIX)

**NETFLIX****MAESTRO**

\*\*\*\*\*

(Leonard Bernstein BioPic)

Bradley Cooper wrote, directed and starred as composer/conductor Leonard Bernstein in this compelling look at his professional and personal life.

Cooper not only looks like Bernstein, but he also has all his moves, both on stage and socially.

We follow his love affair and marriage to actress Felicia Montealegre and their up and down relationship, as she tolerates his bisexual activities.

The movie opens as the unknown musician is called upon at the last minute to fill in for the ill conductor of the New York Philharmonic and the immediate recognition and success he experiences.

Bernstein's bisexuality and Jewish background play heavily on his life, influencing many of his decisions.

He is constantly seen with a cigarette drooping from his lips.

We follow him through his creation of classics from "West Side Story" to "Mass," feeling his agony and ecstasy as he seeks love, acceptance, and recognition.

Bernstein admits to Felicia that it is hard for him to be alone, but finds it necessary to create his great music, while also having difficulty dealing with people.

The movie is shot in black and white in the earlier stages of his life, shifting into color as he becomes an international figure.

Bradley Cooper gives a star performance as Bernstein in one of the best movies of the year.

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**Cranston Herald**

In Print & Online

# Blacklight Beat Patrol crafts diverse sounds with 'Faulty Uplink'

By ROBERT DUGUAY

As diverse as the Rhode Island music scene is, there are a few styles that are somewhat underrepresented. The rock & roll realm within this community is strong, and the same can be said for the singer-songwriter, jazz, hip hop, folk, blues and the heavy metal aspects of it. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for electronic. While there are talented artists who are either excellent at DJing EDM tunes or creating their own jams and performing them at numerous venues around "The Ocean State," there are only a few of these folks exhibiting this particular genre. With this in mind, it was very refreshing to stumble upon Blacklight Beat Patrol's debut full-length release "Faulty Uplink" that came out back on August 28.

The creative nucleus behind this project is courtesy of Scott Corneau, who originally started his music career as a bassist and playing in bands like the Massachusetts based alt-rock act Running With Scissors. Being influenced by the likes of Gorillaz, Daft Punk, Depeche Mode and The Chemical Brothers, which are all noticeable within the album, he decided to pursue this artistic outlet. I'm glad he did because I really dig the tracks within "Faulty Uplink." There's a nice variety that's present with each of the songs, it doesn't seem like he's deliberately putting himself in a box like some electronic music creators usually do. It's not a blatant ripoff of his influences, Corneau puts forth his own signature approach and it

makes the listening experience intriguing and adventurous.

It also needs to be mentioned that "Faulty Uplink" is a completely DIY effort. Along with handling the songwriting and instrumentation, Corneau did the mixing, mastering, producing and cover art. The art is actually what initially gravitated me to checking out the album, the detail is incredible and I love stuff that leans towards science-fiction and cyberpunk. For the highlights off of this release, I'd have to pick "Osmotica Degredata," "Spectrum Incredible," "Up, Down, Blue and Pretty" and "Winning is Overrated." I always suggest listening to an album from start to finish before gauging my thoughts on it, and I think doing so with this album is the best way to go due to the cohesion and flow of the song sequence.

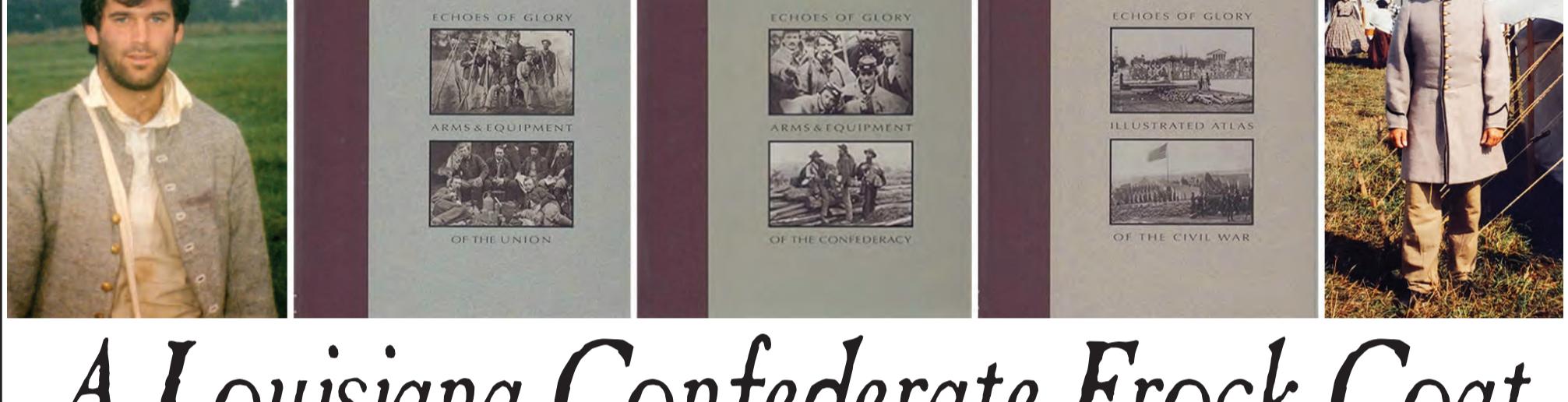
To listen to "Faulty Uplink," log on to Blacklight Beat Patrol's Bandcamp page and/or Soundcloud page at either [blacklightbeatpatrol.bandcamp.com](http://blacklightbeatpatrol.bandcamp.com) or [soundcloud.com/blacklightbeatpatrol](http://soundcloud.com/blacklightbeatpatrol). If Spotify or Apple Music are your preferred platforms, you can look the album up on either of those as well. If you're looking to check out something more recent from Corneau's project, his single "Sundays and Flapjacks" that came out on December 8 is an absolute banger. If you're looking to see what else he's up to with Blacklight Beat Patrol, check out his website at [blacklightbeatpatrol.com](http://blacklightbeatpatrol.com). In the meantime, give this album I just wrote about a listen and dive into some really cool structures and arrangements.



SCOTT CORNEAU

# Rhody TREASURES

ANTIQUES • COLLECTIBLES • CONSIGNMENTS • ESTATES • VINTAGE



## A Louisiana Confederate Frock Coat



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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**White**

(Continued from page 13)

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

You honored my dad with that obituary, I remember it well.

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

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

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

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

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

It has also helped me fight for public access to government. Keep in mind, local newsrooms no longer employ full-time First Amendment attorneys, so reporters are now largely left on our own when we are tussling with a government agency over a public record or open meeting. The lessons I learned at the law school have helped me make better arguments when penning a public records complaint, and given me the tools to conduct proper legal research when appealing the inevitable "no" we get when trying to get our hands on a document that belongs to the people. To be clear: I am not an attorney – a friend has dubbed me a "fauxtorney" – but Yelnosky was right that my education at RWU School of Law has made me a better reporter.

It's also opened up other doors outside the newsroom. I'm teaching my fourth Media Law and Ethics course in the communications department at Roger Williams University this spring. I'm told it's the course communica-

tions majors dread, but I try and make it as fun as the law allows.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Finally, it's critical to understand how powerful journalism can be, and respect that. Someone once told me when

you do a story on someone it's one of the most important moments of their life, so get it right. It was pretty good advice, if you ask me.

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

I'm worried.

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

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

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

**What's next for Tim White?**

Whatever Rhode Island throws at me.

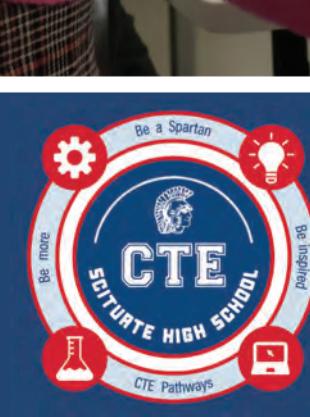
G. Wayne Miller is an author, journalist, filmmaker, and director of *Ocean State Stories*, the non-profit, non-partisan news publication based at Salve Regina University's Pell Center for International Relations and Public Policy that is devoted to in-depth coverage of issues of importance to Rhode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

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# The Piano

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

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

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

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

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

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

But Miss Rienstra wasn't strict or scary. She was sweet and kind and full of praise and happy words. I remember the magic of the mystery coming alive as I began to learn. How it all followed a pattern and made

sense, the pieces of this amazing puzzle of notes and keys and symbols and sound all falling together - I was playing the piano! It was the same kind of "aha" moment I had in first grade the previous year when I first learned to read.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## The Cottage at Briarcliffe Gardens

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

By JENNIFER COATES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To schedule your personal tour of Briarcliffe Gardens, call 401-

944-2450. For more information, you can also visit them at [www.briarcliffofri.com](http://www.briarcliffofri.com) or visit their Facebook page, Briarcliffe Gardens Assisted Living.

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# Holidays Can Increase the Risks of Heart Attacks and Strokes

## LAW ADVICE

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

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

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

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

### Tips for Minimizing Cardiac Risk

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

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

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

**Try low-salt holiday recipes:** "During the holiday season, from Thanksgiving through Christmas and Hannukah, the foods served are often high in sodium, which can be a huge problem," warns Dr. Eisenberg. Consuming too much sodium can lead to fluid retention and worsen high blood pressure. To avoid this, the American Heart Association suggests trying out their holiday recipe collection, which features low-sodium dishes like apple bread pudding and roasted turkey with butternut squash."

**Limit alcohol:** Doctors use the term "holiday heart" to describe the phenomenon where people drink excessively

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



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

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

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

### A Final Word

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

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# The Twelve Days of Christnukkah

## A Poem For Everyone



### RETIREMENT SPARKS

by ELAINE M. DECKER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Did you know?

A more active, engaged brain could help delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease in aging individuals by a significant amount of time. A study published in the journal *Neurology* in 2021 found that high levels of cognitive activity can delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease in individuals 80 or older by five years. Reading was among the cognitive activities researchers associated with that delay. In addition, a separate study found that more passive cognitive activities could be linked to an increase in dementia risk. That study, published in the journal *PNAS* in 2022, linked activities such as watching television with an increased risk for dementia.

## Are You A True Rhode Islander?

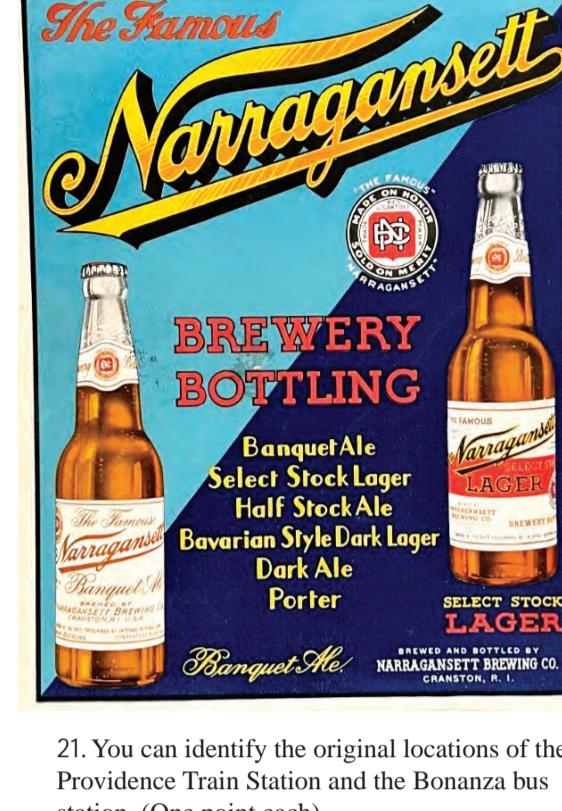


### MY SIDE OF THINGS

by LARRY GRIMALDI

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### SCORING SYSTEM:

• One to 20: You probably just moved to Rhode Island, have been out of state for several years, are age 45 or younger, or slept longer than Rip Van Winkle.

• Twenty-One to 40: You have minimum knowledge of local lore and legend.

• Forty-One to 60: You have average knowledge about Rhode Island history.

• Sixty-One to 79: Congratulations! You have earned a dozen Dunkin' Donuts, an eight-pack of Saugie hot dogs, and three free Awful-Awfuls at Newport Creamery. (Just kidding about the prizes).

• Eighty-One to 100 or 100 plus: You are a true Rhode Islander who has earned the coveted Rhode Island Red Ribbon with Johnny Cake Cluster and a plaque in the Five Wave License Plate Trivia Hall of Fame. The induction ceremony will be held in Usquepaug on Rhode Island Independence Day.

*Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year!*

Larry Grimaldi is a freelance writer from North Providence. Many of his previous PrimeTime columns have been re-issued in the anthology, "50 Shades of Life, Love, and Laughter." Columns published in this book are used with the permission of Beacon Communications. For more information about "50 Shades of Life, Love, and Laughter;" or any of his other books, e-mail [lygrimaldi49@gmail.com](mailto:lygrimaldi49@gmail.com)



# Ways to Make the World a Better Place for Seniors

## FAMILY FEATURES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

To find more ways you can care for the seniors in your community, visit [imreadytocare.com](http://imreadytocare.com).



## How You Can Help

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

■ **Lend your voice.** Be an advocate for change in public actions and medical research for the aging society. If you're an expert by experience, share your knowledge about senior-related issues and public policy measures.

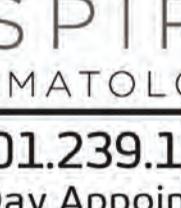
■ **Give from your heart.** Less than 1% of charitable donations go to organizations that help seniors. Find senior-focused non-profits to give your next charitable donations to, such as one dedicated to raising awareness, inspiring change and accelerating progress in Alzheimer's care and research.

■ **Get prepared to care.** Educate yourself on issues that impact seniors and complete small acts of kindness for seniors in your life. Sign up for weekly care missions and find additional information to better equip yourself to care for seniors at [imreadytocare.com](http://imreadytocare.com).

■ **Give your time.** Volunteer with local non-profit organizations that help seniors or offer support related to senior-affiliated issues.

## SENIOR RESOURCE GUIDE





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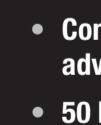


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# What You Need to Know About Social Security Scams



AARP - RHODE ISLAND  
by CATHERINE TAYLOR

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

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

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

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

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

How do scammers contact people?

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

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

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

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

debit card, cryptocurrency or by mailing cash.

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

· Direct message you on social media.

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

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

## Join us at the State House

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

### ADU Design at the State House -

January 25, 3 p.m.

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

### 2024 Legislative Reception -

February 8, 3 p.m.

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

Refreshments will be served at both events. Registration is required at [aarp.org/RIEvents](http://aarp.org/RIEvents).

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

Here’s hoping for a prosperous New Year.

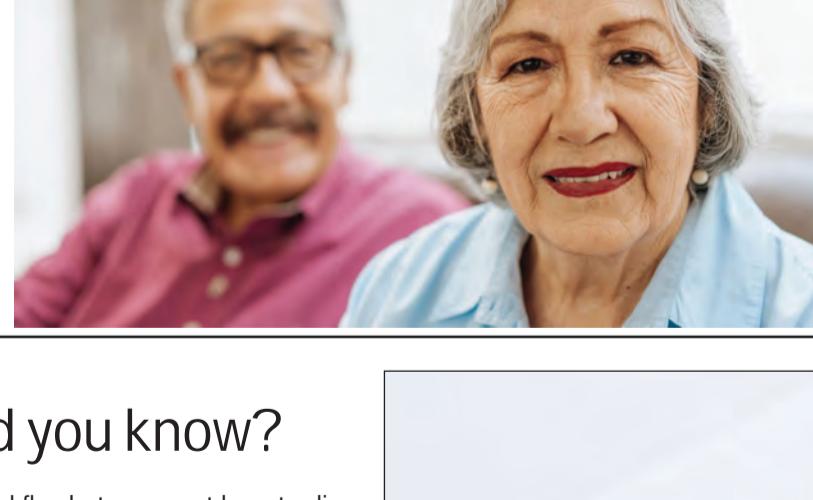
## AARP JANUARY EVENTS

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

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

\*In-person event

Learn more and register at [aarp.org/RIEvents](http://aarp.org/RIEvents)



## Did you know?

Annual flu shots may not be a tradition many people look forward to, but such vaccinations are highly effective at reducing the risk of influenza-related illness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that recent studies have indicated flu shots reduce the risk of flu-related illness by as much as 60 percent. In fact, the CDC estimates that flu vaccinations during the 2019-20 flu season prevented roughly 7.5 million flu illnesses and more than 100,000 influenza-associated hospitalizations.



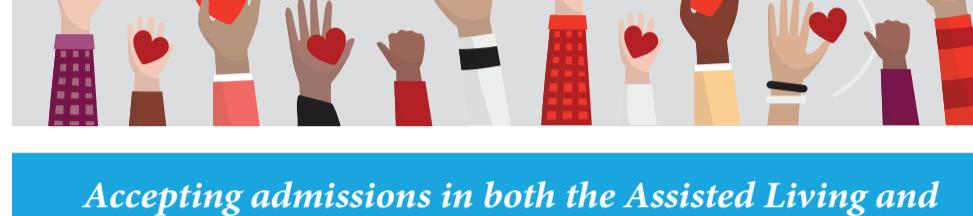
# Our volunteers are making a difference!

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

Thank You!

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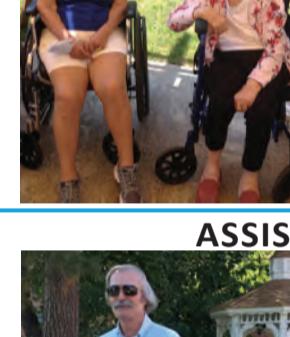


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your aging loved one can be complicated. But  
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Manager, you will have a trusted companion  
to guide you through the process of planning  
for long-term care.

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

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

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

Some other critical roles include managing  
medications and coordinating home care ser-  
vices like skilled nursing, physical or occupa-  
tional therapy, or nursing assistant coverage.

How Does Aging Life Care Work?

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

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

### Aging Life Care Covers More than Just Health

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

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