



STARS & STRIPES: Above, Johnston High School chorus members Katelyn Loffler, Trinity Blondin, Chelsea Marahao, Joshua Sanford sang the national anthem at Johnston War Memorial Park's Memorial Day Weekend Service. Below, Johnston High School Music Director Ron Lamoureux played "Taps" at the Memorial Day ceremony, held on Saturday morning, May 25. For more photos from the event, turn to page 10. *(SunRise photos by Steve Popiel)*



Johnston man gets 10 years for fentanyl trafficking

SunRise
Staff Reports

According to the U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Rhode Island, the "leader of a fentanyl trafficking conspiracy that distributed and possessed enough fentanyl to create more than two million potentially lethal doses of the drugs has been sentenced to 10 years in federal prison."

U.S. Attorney Zachary A. Cunha distributed a press release earlier this week, announcing the sentence and the seizure of more than two kilograms of fentanyl and two firearms.

Jonathan King, 33, of Johnston, "previously admitted to a federal judge that he arranged for the sale and delivery of thousands of fentanyl-laced pills, some of which were delivered at his direction by family members, including his father, was convicted in U.S. District Court on June 7, 2022, of conspiracy to distribute more than 400 grams of fentanyl and distribution of 400 grams or more of fentanyl," according to prosecutors.

He was sentenced Tuesday by U.S. District Court Chief Judge John J. McConnell Jr. to 120 months of incarceration to be followed by five years of federal supervised release, according to Cunha's office.

DRUGS - PAGE 6

House passes safe weapons storage bills

By CHRISTOPHER SHEA
Rhode Island Current

Following an hour of debate, the Rhode Island House of Representatives voted Tuesday to approve a pair of bills seeking to set new rules on how firearms must be stored.

The Democratic-led chamber voted 46-24 to pass a bill by Rep. Justine Caldwell, an East Greenwich Democrat, and identical legislation sponsored by Sen. Pamela Lauria, a Barrington Democrat, mandating that all firearms not in use by the owner or another authorized user be stored in a locked container or equipped with a tamper-resistant lock.

"This is a bill whose time has come," House Judiciary Chairman Robert Craven, a North Kingstown Democrat, said when introducing the legislation to the floor. "I believe it addresses a problem that has resulted in deaths."

PASSAGE - PAGE 8

Gun law backed by family, friends of lost Johnston teen

By CHRISTOPHER SHEA
Rhode Island Current

Gun safety advocates erupted in applause LAST Thursday evening as the House Judiciary Committee voted 9-5 to advance two Democratic bills seeking to strengthen the state's gun storage law to the State House floor.

"This is a big deal, this will save lives," Tony Moretini, a volunteer for Moms Demand Action Rhode Island, said after the vote.

DILLON - PAGE 8



SAFER STORAGE: Claudia Townend of Charlestown holds a photo of Dillon Viens, 16, of Johnston, the victim of a fatal 2022 accidental shooting, in the west House Gallery during the House floor debate on a firearms safe storage bill on Tuesday, May 28, 2024. Dillon's father, David Viens, is shown in the background at left, holding up a photo of his son. *(Alexander Castro/Rhode Island Current)*

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Richard Fascia announces District 42 State Representative run

Submitted by the Candidate

Republican Richard Fascia has officially announced his campaign for state representative for the 42nd House District.

“Today, I am proud to announce my candidacy for the Rhode Island House of Representatives, District 42,” Fascia said. “With a lifetime dedicated to public service, including 20 years in law enforcement with the Providence Police Department, a decade aiding the homeless, and 19 years on the Johnston Zoning Board, I am ready to take the next step. Serving as the representative for the people of Johnston and Cranston will be the culmination of a career dedicated to serving others.”

Fascia said he is committed to engaging with voters throughout the campaign.

“I believe it’s time for the voices of Johnstonians to be heard. It has been an honor to serve the Johnston community,” Fascia said. One of my proudest accomplishments has been to lead the Johnston Zoning Board’s defeat of the 55,000 panel solar farm in the Windsor section of town. I hope the people of Johnston will continue to support my efforts to represent them at the State House.”

“This campaign, like all political endeavors, is about the people, not the candidate,” he emphasized. “Over the next few months, I aim to meet with as many voters as possible to hear their con-



Richard Fascia
(Submitted photo)

cerns and stories firsthand. Understanding the needs and experiences of my constituents will not only empower me but also strengthen the community I hope to represent as we move forward to the State House.”

“Rhode Island currently holds the unfortunate ranking of 47th in fiscal stability, 40th in education, and 48th in infrastructure, in the nation this, despite a fourteen billion dollar budget, more than double that of states like Delaware or South Dakota,” Fascia said. “Rhode Islanders will face the repercussions of the Washington Bridge issue for years, affecting not just our daily routines but also our economic outlook. As a retired police officer, I in-

tend to pose challenging questions at Smith Hill and will expect concrete responses.”

For additional information, visit Fascia’s website at www.FasciaRep42.com. For further inquiries, email Richard@FasciaRep42.com.

Fascia will likely face the winner of the Democratic Primary in November’s General Election. Democrats Kelsey Coletta, Dennis Cardillo Jr., and incumbent District 42 state Rep. Edward Cardillo Jr. are competing against each other in a Democratic Primary rematch this September. The three also ran against each other in 2022, and Ed Cardillo narrowly won the race. District 42 contains parts of Johnston and Cranston.

Editor’s Note: Are you running for office? If so, contact Johnston SunRise Editor Rory Schuler at rorys@rhodybeat.com. Send us your candidate announcement and a photo. We’ll edit only for style and publish your submission prior to the election. Please, no personal attacks on other candidates. We also welcome candidates to submit guest opinion columns and letters to the editor on important election issues. The Johnston SunRise strives to give all candidates a fair shot at reaching the voters via our newspaper. Candidates can also purchase advertising. For paid advertising questions, contact Donna Zarrella at dzarrella@rhodybeat.com.

More at Mohr Library

There is room in the library’s chess program for kids grades 1-5 on Saturday, June 1 from 10 to 11 a.m. Several seats may still be available during Dungeons and Dragons for ages 9-12, Monday, June 17, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Check the library’s website or call 231-4980.

Storytime runs through the first week in June, on Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m., with “Babies and Books” and Preschool Storytime Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m.

Preschool yoga is June 12 at 10:30 a.m. No registration necessary. Yoga programs are sponsored by The Tri-County Community Action Agency, Health Equity Zone.

Ms. Pauline is a certified yoga teacher practicing since she was 17 years old. A former school teacher, she began programs to bring yoga to children and teachers in schools throughout Rhode Island. Children will be guided into gentle movement exercises using the power of their imagination. They will also learn breathing techniques that calm and center them. It will be a time of joy, wonder and movement. Register for the class with Mohr Library.

Registration for the Library Summer Reading Program starts June 17. More information about summer events to come.

Registration opened May 1 for the next series of STEAM and ArtSmart programs with Ms. Melyssa.

STEAM — Thursdays at 5 p.m. on June 6 (No class May 30). Children ages 6 to 9 are invited to experiment, explore and build.

Art Smart for Ages 8 to 12 — Wednesdays from 4 to 5:30 p.m., through June 5. Have fun exploring different art styles, techniques and genres.

Art Smart Jr. for Ages 5 to 7 — Saturdays from 2 to 3 p.m. and 3:30-4:30 p.m., through June 8. Have fun exploring different art styles, techniques and genres.

See more programs at mohrlibrary.org, where you can also sign up for our email list, or call 401-231-4980. The Library is at 1 Memorial Ave. in Johnston.

Say you saw it in the Johnston SunRise

Spirit of Hope accepts grant to help homeless

On May 8, Johnston State Rep. Ed Cardillo presented a \$5,000 check to Louis Spremulli, President of Spirit of Hope, for the faith-based organization helping the community’s homeless and those in need. Spremulli said Rep. Cardillo “has gone above and beyond what anyone has done for us.” “He gets us funding, donated jackets and even goes to the streets with us,” Spremulli said. “Now, we can help more people according to our funding we receive. If you’re reading this article, see if you can put a few hours aside per month to get involved. Helping those in need should be on everyone’s mind in our society today.”



TAKEN FOR GRANTED: Johnston State Rep. Ed Cardillo presented a \$5,000 check to Louis Spremulli, President of Spirit of Hope. (Courtesy photo)

Summer Day Camp signups start

Johnston Parks and Recreation Department announced Summer Day Camp 2024 will begin on Monday, July 8, and ends on Friday, Aug. 16. Camp will be held Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. The age groups will be: 6-7,8-9 & 10-12 (age as of July 1, 2024). The fee structure is as follows: one child, for six weeks at \$975, or \$250 per week, \$75 per day; two children for six weeks at \$1,400 (sibling discount), \$450 per week, \$110 per day; and three or more children for six weeks at \$1,650 (sibling discount), \$625 per week, \$145 per day. Registrations and payments can be dropped at the recreation office at Johnston Memorial Park from Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Camp must be paid in full by Friday, July 5, 2024. Make checks payable to the Town of Johnston (check, money order or cash only accepted). A minimum of \$100 deposit is required, per family, to hold a spot. Birth certificates are required in order to qualify for the sibling rate. One week minimum notice to attend for a week or a day. No refunds will be issued once camp begins. For more information, call 272-3460.



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WHAT’S COOKIN: The Johnston Senior Center Advisory Board recently decided to collect family recipes and publish a book in time for the holidays. Board Chairman Arnie Vecchione cooked up the idea. (Photo courtesy Richard J. DelFino Jr.)

He’s cookin’ up ideas

Arnie Vecchione’s hungry, but he wants it the way your mama used to make it

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

The Johnston Senior Center Advisory Board is embarking on what they hope will be an annual fundraising initiative on behalf of the Johnston Senior Center. The idea surfaced when board chairman Arnie Vecchione, known for his traditional recipes that he enjoys sharing online, mentioned his recollections of family members cooking when he was a child. So many recipes, especially among Italian families, were never written down, and only remembered that they were prepared a certain way. The plan presented to the Advisory Board, was simple. Let’s get the information out there, have JSC members write down those recipes, their favorites, and add a short narrative or story that will accompany all the details. The idea was sharing a recipe book, with all proceeds going to the Center. As board members discussed the idea, many reminisced of long gone food prepared by families and friends which were never recorded. Arnie is hoping the recipe books will be the hottest local Christmas gift this year. We here at the JSC think he will be right.

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

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SUNRISE SCOOPS

SCOOP OF THE WEEK

May 30 Food Truck Thursday

Tonight, Thursday, May 30, Johnston Food Truck Nights begin again at 5 p.m. Join the crowd at Memorial Park for delicious food, local beer and wine from Trinity Brewhouse, and live music, according to a post on the town's social media accounts. The event promises a "family-friendly" event with no admission fee.



5pm Thursday May 30th
4:30pm Saturday July 27th, August 31st

Johnston Food Truck Nights
Memorial Park - 1583 Hartford Ave.

 Upcoming Events

Free to attend - Pay for what you eat & drink
Community Fun - Support Small Businesses
Trinity Brewhouse - Local Beer & Wine
Live Music

Families Welcome. Food trucks accept cash, credit or debit.
Smoking and vaping is strictly prohibited. Pets are not permitted.
Outside coolers with alcoholic beverages are not permitted.



LARCHMONT REMEMBERED: Daniel Harrington, a Providence Journal columnist and Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame, will present "Larchmont Remembered: The Greatest Story You've Never Heard!" At right, This old edition of the Boston Herald captured the moment in time. (Courtesy photos)

June 4

The Larchmont, raised from the seabed

At 6:30 p.m. on June 4, Mohr Library will host a history presentation for adults titled "Larchmont Remembered: The Greatest Story You've Never Heard!" The speaker will be Daniel Harrington, long-time monthly columnist for the Providence Journal and a Director for the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame. The event promises to be "a gripping one-hour PowerPoint presentation telling the unforgettable story of the sinking of the passenger steamship Larchmont on a late night in February of 1907 when the temperature was zero and the waves were 20 feet high off Watch Hill," according to Library Director Jon Anderson. "A coal schooner came at the Larchmont downwind at high speed and rammed into them as they attempted to turn out of the way. An unknown number of passengers went to the bottom in the dark, rapidly sinking ship, and many others had no time to put on warm clothing as they found their way to deck. Some lifeboats and rafts made it to Block Island where survivors were taken in by people all over the community. Digitally restored photos and eyewitness accounts buttress this remarkable story." Some images are not suitable for very young children. Call the library at 231-4980 to register or email info@mohrlibrary.org.

June 12

NAMI-RI: Registration open

The Rhode Island chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI-RI) is now accepting registration for our June/July session of NAMI's Family-to-Family course which begins Wed., June 12. Course is on Wednesdays from 6 to 8:30 p.m. This is a free and virtual, 8-session educational program for family, significant others and friends of people with mental health conditions. It is a designated evidence-based program, which

means that research shows that the program significantly improves the coping and problem-solving abilities of the people closest to a person with a mental health condition. NAMI-Rhode Island's Family-to-Family course is taught by trained family members who have lived experience with a loved one, and includes presentations, discussions and interactive exercises.

■ SCOOPS - PAGE 5



JOHNSTON

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Rhode Island General Treasurer

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SUNRISE SCOOPS

June 22 ClamCake & Chowder

On Saturday, June 22, at 6 p.m., Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, at 54 Cedar Swamp Road, will host its annual Clam Cake & Chowder Dinner. In addition to clam cakes, chowder and coleslaw, there will be hot dogs available for kids. For dessert, there will be strawberry shortcake with whipped cream. The cost is \$15 for adults and \$8 for children ages 5-12. A portion of the proceeds will benefit Phil's Friends, a Christian nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing Christ-centered hope and support to those affected by cancer (www.philsfriends.org). Please call 401-232-7575 for reservations before June 16.

June 22 Strawberry Festival

Smith Castle invites the public to join in celebrating the annual Strawberry Festival on Saturday, June 22, from 12:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Smith's Castle, 55 Richard Smith Drive, North Kingstown. This family friendly event will feature puppeteer Dan Butterworth, as well as pop singer Jesse Liam. Colonial games, activities, and crafts will be provided by our junior docents, as well as pony rides for children. Vendors will also be onsite, and Smith Castle famous strawberry shortcake will be for sale. Visitors to the historic house museum will be welcomed by docents in period attire and be able to tour the downstairs interior of the former home and grounds of the prominent Smith and Updike families. A special exhibit will feature collections from the Narragansett Bay Quilt Association. Admission to Strawberry Festival is \$10 per adult, \$8 for seniors and military, \$6 for children over 6 years of age. Family Cap is \$25. This event was made possible by the generosity of the North Kingstown Arts Council, and the volunteers and staff of The Cocumscussoc Association.

July 20 1974 CHSE Reunion

Cranston East High School, class of 1974, will hold its 50th Reunion on Saturday, July 20, at the Radisson Hotel (Airport), 2081Post Road, Warwick, from 6 to 11 p.m. The reunion features live music by Brass Attack, a dinner buffet, and a cocktail hour with live piano music. Tickets: \$100 pp. Send checks to: CHSE Reunion, 301 Oaklawn Ave, Apt. 205, Cranston, RI 02920. Keep up with Reunion news on the class Facebook page: CHSE Cranston East High School Class of 1974. Email your contact information or ask questions: chse1974reunion@gmail.com. There are rooms at the hotel at a special group rate for attendees. Call (401) 298-2294 and mention CHSE Class of 1974 Reunion or see the link on the class Facebook page.

July 27 Tolman High 60th Reunion

The Class of 1964, Tolman High School, Pawtucket, will hold its 60th reunion on Saturday, July 27, from 2 to 6 p.m. at the Wyndham Newport Resort, 240 Aquidneck Avenue, Middletown. Reservation deadline is July 1. For more information, please contact: nwalshdsigns@gmail.com.

Aug. 3 2014 JHS Reunion

The Johnston High School Class of 2014 will be hosting its 10-Year Reunion this summer! The event will be on Saturday, Aug. 3, at R1 Entertainment from 5 to 9 p.m. The venue is located at 100 Higgins Ave., Lincoln. Tickets are \$50 a person, which includes food and a drink ticket. For more information, you can visit the following link below: <https://sites.google.com/view/jhs-201410year/home>.

The class has an optional "Where are they now?" Form on the website that they encourage fellow alumni to fill out (they will put together a presentation for everyone who participated).

"We hope to see you all at the reunion this summer!" wrote Jordan Villella, the class member organizing the reunion.

Sept. 14 1964 CHSE Reunion

Cranston East High School Class of 1964 will be holding its 60th reunion on Saturday, Sept. 14, from 6:30 to 11 p.m. at the Prata Club, 29 Walnut Grove Avenue, Cranston. Music by Ron Giorgio. Menu: Chicken Francaise/NY Sirloin/Honey Mustard Salmon. Tickets: \$65 pp. Check's payable to Lucille Lonardo, 129 Colwell St., Cranston, RI 02920. Please RSVP your choice of dinner to Marie Spolidoro Monti (401-944-9646) or Cheryl Mangasarian Klein (401-575-0659). Seating is limited.

Sept. 28 1974 Pilgrim High Reunion

Pilgrim High School Class of 1974 will hold its 50th reunion on Sat., Sept. 28, at the Quonset O Club, 200 Lt. James Brown Rd., North Kingstown, at 6 p.m. Please contact Jack at bosjpb1bender@gmail.com or Sue at srice311@gmail.com for further information. Registration deadline: Sept. 14.

Nov. 30 WVMHS Holds 50th

Warwick Veterans Memorial High School Class of 1974, will hold its 50th Reunion on Sat., Nov. 30, at the Quonset "O" Club, 200 Lt. James Brown Rd., North Kingstown. The Reunion Committee is actively seeking to contact our classmates. Please email your current address as soon as possible to receive an invitation to: wvmhs7450@gmail.com.

Pilgrim High School Class of 1975 50th Reunion, "Time in a Bottle," is currently being planned. Organizers need to find contact information for classmates as well as information regarding those who have passed. Organizers are looking for email address, cell phone numbers, home phones and mailing addresses. If you are not a PHS 1975 graduate, but have a family member or friend who is/was, please contact: Dean Plowman dean695@gmail.com. The date, time and venue for the reunion has not yet been determined but will be forthcoming.

ONGOING SCOOPS

Help OSDRI restock!

Operation Stand Down Rhode Island needs your help. Their food pantry needs a major restocking. See a list of needed nonperishable items in the photo.

Like many people, OSDRI's clients have been faced with some real obstacles these past couple of years. With your help, they pledge to always be there to give a hand up for veterans and their families in need.

Items can be dropped off Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at OSDRI's main office, 1010 Hartford Ave., Johnston. If you have any questions or would like more information, call the OSDRI office at 401-383-4730.

NAMI-RI Offers Family Support Groups

The RI chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI-RI) offers free support groups for families and friends of loved ones who are struggling with their mental health. The groups are led by trained facilitators who also have lived experience as family members themselves. The group meetings last about 1.5 hours, and everyone who participates in the meeting gets a chance to share. The other members of the group try to offer help and resources, when appropriate, based on their own experiences. More information and full schedule can be found at namirhodeisland.org. or call 401-331-3060. No pre-registration for these monthly groups is necessary.

First Thursday at 6 p.m. IN PERSON ONLY at the Rochambeau Library in the Community Room, Rochambeau Library, 708 Hope Street, Providence (NEW-starts Aug.)

Second Tues. at 5 p.m. IN PERSON ONLY at the Middletown Public Library in the Community Room. Middletown Library, 700 West Main Road, Middletown.

Third Tues. at 6:30 p.m. MEETS VIA ZOOM ONLY Please call 401-331-3060

or email info@namirhodeisland.org for the Zoom link

Fourth Wed. at 6 p.m. IN PERSON ONLY at the Hope Valley Grange, #71116 Main Street, Hope Valley.

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, call the NAMI-RI office 401-331-3060 or visit our website at namirhodeisland.org.

Soul of '71 Scholarship Fund

In 2021, the Johnston High School Class of 1971 established The Soul of 1971 Scholarship Fund at The Rhode Island Foundation. The Class of '71 is the first class in the history of the Johnston School System to establish a permanent Fund.The Fund currently stands at \$23,031. Scholarships have been awarded in 2022 and 2023 to deserving JHS seniors. For additional information or to donate, contact Harold J. Hemberger at hembergerharold@gmail.com. All funds on deposit are managed by The Rhode Island Foundation.

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

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2. RI ADVANTAGE: applies to Rhode Island residents attending school in any state and non-Rhode Island residents attending a school in Rhode Island.



TEA FOR 55: The Johnston Historical Society hosted 55 paying guests at their recent country Victorian tea party, which was held at Anthony Ricci's barn on Morgan Avenue in Johnston. *(Photo courtesy Louis McGowan)*

■ Drugs

(Continued from page 1)

"The defendant's drug distribution network put countless Rhode Island lives at risk for his own selfish gain," Cunha said. "This prosecution, and today's decade-long sentence should make one thing clear: in a time when overdose rates in our state remain at crisis levels, and every city and town in Rhode Island has seen opioid overdose deaths, we are determined to use every federal law enforcement tool at our disposal to stop combat significant opioid traffickers."

"The state of Rhode Island is faced with a fentanyl crisis unlike ever before as deaths continue to soar," said Acting DEA Special Agent in Charge Stephen P. Belleau, New England Field Division. "Those responsible for distributing lethal drugs like fentanyl disguised in pills to the citizens of Rhode Island need to be held accountable for their actions. Today's sentence holds Mr. King accountable for his crimes and we will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to put other callous distributors like him behind bars."

Make no mistake, DEA will aggressively pursue Drug Trafficking Organizations who are distributing this poison in order to profit and destroy people's lives."

At Tuesday's sentencing hearing, King was also "ordered to forfeit proceeds derived from his drug trafficking activities to include a Jaguar XF and \$6,750 in cash seized at the time of his arrest on July 20, 2021," according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

In June 2022, prosecutors said that King, then 31, "admitted to the court that on May 25, 2021, he arranged to sell and have delivered 4,000 fentanyl pills to a person who arranged for the purchase while under surveillance by members of the Rhode Island DEA Drug Task Force. King sold the same individual an additional 1,000 fentanyl pills on two dates in June 2021."

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney G. Michael Seaman, with the assistance of Assistant U.S. Attorney Lee H. Vilker, and investigated by the Rhode Island Drug Task Force, comprised of personnel from the DEA; Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation; Rhode Island State Police (RISP); Amtrak Police; and officers from the Cranston, Middletown, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, Warwick and Woonsocket police departments.

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rhodybeat.com](mailto:donnaz@rhodybeat.com)

Johnston Senior Center Highlights

From the Staff

Starting on Mondays, July 8, the Senior Center's Steve McGrath Photography Class will return if five students sign up. The cost is \$100 per person. And the instructor, Steve, will be taking the class out to different locations. Please sign up with the front desk. Five people are needed for this class to go!

Come and enjoy our exercise night classes on Monday, with Fran, at 6 p.m., and on Tuesday, with Deb, at 6 p.m.

Doors open at 3:30 p.m. for Wednesday night Bingo (the game starts at 5:30 p.m.).

On Thursday and Friday Bingo starts at 2 p.m. Check out The Book Club with Mary, on May 28. The group is reading "Blind Knowledge" by Elizabeth Splaine. They meet at 10 a.m.

A new event at the center: High Lo Jack on Tuesday nights starting on June 11 at 6 p.m., through July 30. Cost is \$5 per week.

Weekly Fun

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

Upcoming Activities

- Mondays — Walk away the pounds, 9-9:30 a.m.; Arts & Crafts, 10:30 a.m.; Hi Lo Jack, 12:30 p.m.; Yoga & Pilates w/Fran, 6 p.m.
- Tuesday — Walk away the pounds, 9-9:30 a.m.
- Wednesday — Walk away the pounds, 9-9:30 a.m.; Quilting, 9:30 a.m.; Zumba, 10 a.m.; Fit & Strong -Chair, 11 a.m.
- Thursday — Walk away the pounds, 9-9:30 a.m.; Mahjong, 9:30 a.m.; Chair Yoga, 10 a.m.; Bone Builders, 11 a.m.
- Friday — Walk away the pounds, 9-9:30 a.m.; Line Dancing, 10 a.m.; Fit & Strong-Chair, 11 a.m.

We're All Ears

Your opinion is something we always want to hear.

Questions? Comments?
Story ideas?

Let us know how we're doing.



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Opinion

EDITORIAL

A win for common sense gun laws

On Tuesday, by a vote of 45-25, the House passed legislation that would strengthen and bolster the responsible, safe storage of firearms. The measure is now headed to the Senate.

The bill, H7373 in the House (introduced by Rep. Justine Caldwell), and S2202 in the Senate (sponsored by state Sen. Pam Lauria), takes the existing safe storage law in Rhode Island and strengthens it with additional expectations for gun owners and by enacting increasingly penalties for infractions of that law.

This bill carefully fulfills the intended definition of so-called “common sense gun legislation” that is so often touted by gun control advocates, but which all too often results in amorphous or overly broad legal language that reduces the efficacy of those intentions.

In this instance, this bill clearly demonstrates that it is a gun owner’s responsibility to prevent their firearm from falling into the hands of anyone who should not have access to it; be that a child or a person who is not legally allowed to have a gun. It sets an expectation that gun owners realize the incredible responsibility that comes with owning a gun, and that serious consequences will be realized if that responsibility is neglected, be it a small fine for a small offense or a potentially lengthy prison term if their gun is used to commit a crime by someone who should not have been able to access it.

More than simply legislate these expectations without further explanation, the bill also makes serious strides to increase education and awareness around the topic, requiring licensed dealers to include gun locks for shotguns and rifles (in addition to pistols, which is already the law), and to display signage (at no expense to them) that warns customers about the inherent dangers that come with owning a gun, and how it is now their responsibility to keep preventable harm from happening at risk of fines or imprisonment. The legislation goes further to require school districts to distribute a pamphlet of information on the safe storage requirement to families each year, furthering the inability for someone to claim ignorance about this important issue.

Those who oppose gun control legislation so often point to the notion that responsible gun owners are the ones victimized by policies that only target irresponsible gun owners. This legislation will do nothing to harm gun owners who already do the right thing by keeping their guns away from those who should not have it, and creates an environment of greater accountability for those who don’t exercise the same level of care.

We consider this bill to be the very epitome of common sense gun legislation that Second Amendment advocates and those who want stricter gun laws should all be able to agree on. If it saves even one life by being enacted, it is more than worth it.



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LETTERS

D-25 candidates offer nothing but fluff

To the Editor:

In the Johnston SunRise May 9 edition, the two Democrat Candidates, Richard J. DeFino III and Andrew Dimitri, running for State Senate D-25, had the opportunity to address real pertinent issues (“Two Johnston candidates declare run for D-25 state Senate seat”); unfortunately, all we got was fluff.

Their combined presentations only addressed higher COLAs for retired civil servants, hiring mental healthcare workers for our public schools, crimes relating to vandalism and graffiti, enforcing speeding tickets, prohibiting panhandling on our roadways and wasting more money on public education. Note: nationally our state ranks #36 for education, #47 for fiscal stability, #45 infrastructure, #33 for job opportunities and noted for worst state to retire.

As for crime, why aren’t they addressing the outrageous expense of incarceration at approximately \$80,000 per inmate, mandatory sentencing guidelines, rehabilitation requirements or death penalties when citizens are savagely brutally murdered and speedy trials etc.?

As for public education, why aren’t they advocating supporting private and religious education, via school vouchers, that are much better, less expensive and alleviate many concerns parents have regarding the liberal indoctrination that’s been going on across public education?

What about the need for welfare reform such as community base housing and reforms that would prevent fraud and abuse that are now epidemic? What about Tort reform, as everyone is suing one another over little fender benders that drive up insurance costs and enrich lawyers? What about the dangers and concerns of undocumented immigration in our state that’s costing millions of dollars annually?

If municipalities had the freedom to acquire their services cost effectively, via privatization and regionalizing various services, the savings would be in the hundreds of

GUEST OPINION

Urgent action needed to support RI youth

By RI State Senators Sandra Cano, Alana DiMario, Louis DiPalma, Valarie Lawson & Joshua Miller

“We are not meeting our shared obligation to some of Rhode Island’s most vulnerable children,” we wrote in 2021, in an opinion piece intended to highlight the urgent need to improve our treatment programs for youth with behavioral health issues, and particularly girls. “This is an emergency. It is also an equity issue that needs to be addressed as soon as possible.”

It is extremely troubling that those same words are just as applicable today as they were when we first wrote them. On May 13, US Attorney Zachary A. Cunha described an “appalling failure” of our state to appropriately meet the needs of children with behavioral health issues, particularly girls. He outlined a situation in which hundreds of Rhode Island children were hospitalized, usually at Bradley Hospital, for unnecessarily lengthy periods of time.

We are failing these children, and, frankly, it is unjustifiable.

So again today, we are calling for urgent action to address this situation. We need to work together – all of us, the Legislature, Governor McKee, the Department of Children Youth & Families (DCYF), the Department of Education (RIDE) – to address the systemic failures that have led to this situation.

Firstly, it is important to say how much we value and respect the work taking place at the DCYF and RIDE. We appreciate the difficulty of the jobs they do and their dedication to the children and families in our state.

Let us all work together, with increased urgency, to provide sustained investments in supportive services throughout the continuum of care, including at home and at school –

and in those services between counseling and hospitalization – to ensure our children receive the supports they need in the most appropriate settings.

These issues have been – and continue to be – priorities for us in the Senate. We have advanced legislation and conducted several oversight hearings with DCYF and RIDE in our efforts to improve treatment and to ensure that children are receiving quality education regardless of their placement. To that end, it is absolutely imperative that RIDE ensure all children, including those placed at Bradley, have an educational plan in place.

In the Senate, we have prioritized – and in 2022 the General Assembly provided \$57 million to fund – two residential treatment facilities, one for psychiatric treatment and one for behavioral health treatment. While it is important that these facilities are brought online as expeditiously as possible, this will not be enough to solve the problems we are facing, as Mr. Cunha noted.

The General Assembly also appropriated \$22.9 million in wage stabilization funds to help DCYF recruit and retain qualified staff. However, these funds were temporary by nature. Another critical step is for the department to enter into new contracts that increase reimbursement rates to providers. These contracts are long overdue, and we hope and expect that they will be awarded soon.

Additionally, we expect that the Senate will again pass legislation (S-2705) requiring DCYF to conduct periodic comprehensive needs assessments to determine whether the department’s programs and services meet the needs of children and families in their care, assess client accessibility, and collect data to develop goals and measurable objectives for new and existing programs and ser-

millions annually. The endless outrageous contractual agreements, that never should have been, now enslave every Rhode Islander. Note: our municipalities now have more retirees than current employees. As for Johnston we have approximately 385 full time employees and 641 retirees now costing \$7.4 million for continued paid healthcare and climbing.

As Rhode Islanders realize the need for pragmatic commonsense laws, policies and programs, that would reflect the will of the people, what about a “Voter Initiative” process to enable the citizenry to introduce or overturn laws, programs and policies when they see a need for it.

The truth is our blue state representation believes we are only smart enough to vote them into office. As for eligible nonvoters, they need only know one thing; approximately 80% of our elected officials are Democrats in which balanced representation would enable reforms that would enhance the livelihood for every honest hardworking Rhode Islander, especially our elderly living on limited incomes.

In closing, our society is on life-support via greed, ignorance and uncaring attitudes, as the unions and nowadays socialist communist perverse Democratic Party are one in the same.

Yes, we all have family, friends and dear neighbors in civil service, but we must be honest with ourselves. Over the years I ran in 10 local elections, including mayoral, in which I had been told by a few civil servants if they ever expressed at a union meeting that they supported me they could lose their jobs; let that sink in. When you consider the direction of our society; truth be told, "Not Fluff," our children, grandchildren and their children won't have a prayer in hell of a chance to realize the American Dream of Freedom, Opportunity and Prosperity.

Peter A. Filippi III, of Johnston

vices. This data is an important step as we work to strategically improve our systems of care.

Finally, we need an Olmstead Plan.

The Supreme Court ruled in Olmstead v. L.C. that states must make services available to individuals with disabilities in the most integrated setting possible. That decision was in 1999. While this administration – and prior administrations – have worked towards compliance, we remain the only state in New England, and one of just a few in the nation, that lacks a plan.

Therefore, the Senate is scheduled to consider legislation (S-2618) that would create, by statute, an Olmstead Planning Commission to develop this long-needed plan to better serve people vulnerable to unnecessary institutionalization. Too often, we have made decisions based on short-term budgetary pressures, and that has led us to the insufficient services in place today. However once in place, better care, in more appropriate settings, will not just benefit the individuals being served; it is also more cost effective.

The extremely troubling findings by the US Attorney are a reminder that we can and we must prioritize sustained investments throughout our continuum of care to better serve Rhode Island’s most vulnerable children and families.

Editor’s Note: This op-ed piece was signed by Senators Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket), Alana DiMario (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown, New Shoreham), Louis DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Newport, Little Compton, Tiverton) and Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence); all are committee chairpersons in the Rhode Island Senate. Sen. Valarie Lawson (D-Dist.14, East Providence) is Senate Majority Whip.

Dillon

(Continued from page 1)

The amended legislation sponsored by Rep. Justine Caldwell of East Greenwich and Sen. Pamela Lauria of Barrington requires that all firearms not in use by the owner or another authorized user be stored in a locked container or equipped with a tamper-resistant lock. Unsafe storage of guns would also be a civil offense punishable by a fine of up to \$250 for the first offense and \$1,000 for the second. A subsequent violation would be punishable by up to six months in prison and a fine of up to \$500. Under existing state law, which was passed in 1995, gun owners can be fined up to \$1,000 if a loaded firearm is left within a child's reach — but only if the child injures themselves or others. Under the proposed amended law, if a child or a person prohibited from us-

ing the firearm is injured, the gun owner could face a first-degree charge of criminal storage of a firearm with up to five years in prison and \$5,000 in fines. The advancement of the bill was especially personal for David Viens of Johnston, whose 16-year-old son Dillon died in 2022 of a gunshot to his right eye from a weapon that was not safely stored. "My son would be alive today if his friend's gun was properly stored," Viens said in an interview, fighting through tears. "To come to the State House and fight for justice, it's not easy — very overwhelming. Voting against the bill were Democrats David Bennett of Warwick, Arthur Corvese of North Providence, and Thomas Noret of Coventry. Republicans David Place of Burrillville and Sherry Roberts of West Greenwich also opposed the legislation. Rep. Jason Knight, a Barrington Democrat who co-sponsored Caldwell's leg-

islation, was not present for Thursday's vote. Caldwell and Lauria's bills made the House calendar on Tuesday, May 28, said chamber spokesperson Larry Ber- man. Opponents of the legislation have repeatedly argued that requiring guns to be stored in a locked container could delay their efforts to protect themselves and their families. To address this, Caldwell said the requirement would not apply if the firearm is being carried or "can be readily retrieved and used." "We wanted to make these as clear as possible since these bills are more likely to be challenged in court," she said in an interview before the vote. Lauria's bill, which was passed by the Senate in March, has also since been amended to include this change. Should her legislation clear the House next week, it will have to go before the full Senate again. But Rhode Island Second Amend-

ment Coalition President Frank Saccoccio said the language in Caldwell's leg- islation is still too vague. "If you go from one judge to another judge, you're going to get differing opinions," he said. "If I get up to answer the door and leave a gun on the table, the judge may find that to not be readily accessible — it's another en- croachment into Second Amendment rights without proper safeguards." Viens said he understands the oppo- sition from Saccoccio and other gun owners, but said keeping weapons properly stored "just comes down to common sense." "If you're not home, just lock your guns up," he said.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Christopher Shea cov- ers politics, the criminal justice system and transportation for the Rhode Island Cur- rent. Rhode Island Current is part of States Newsroom, the nation's largest state-fo- cused nonprofit news organization.



CALL FOR STRENGTH: Gun safety advocates watch the Rhode Island House of Representatives debate legislation to strengthen rules for how guns must be stored from the House Gallery on Tuesday, May 28. (Alexander Castro/Rhode Island Current)



Passage

(Continued from page 1)

The legislation now heads to the Senate for a vote. Senate spokesperson Greg Paré said both bills will likely be scheduled for a floor vote Tuesday, June 4. Under the legislation, unsafe storage of guns would be a civil offense punishable by a fine of up to \$250 for the first offense and \$1,000 for the second. A subsequent violation would be a criminal charge

punishable by up to six months in prison and a fine of up to \$500. Under an existing state law passed in 1995, gun owners convicted of "criminal storage of a fire- arm" can be fined up to \$1,000 if a loaded firearm left within reach of a child age 16 or younger causes an injury to the child or others. The pair of bills would also revise the existing law to increase the severity of the criminal storage of a firearm charge to a first- degree charge, which would make it punishable by up to five years in pris- on and up to \$5,000 in fines in cases where a child or a person prohibited from using the firearm is injured. "Leaving a lethal weap- on where anyone else can use it is an invitation to tragedy," Caldwell said in a statement. "Ensuring that all weapons are stored in a way that keeps them out of the hands that shouldn't touch them pro- tects not only the public in general, but gun owners and their families in par-

ticular. Both bills also require school districts to inform students and their families of the importance of prop- er firearm storage and safety. Additionally, fire- arms dealers would have to display a sign contain- ing a warning that "access to a firearm in the home significantly increases the risk of suicide, death dur- ing domestic violence dis- puts, and the unintentional death of children, household members, or others." Caldwell's bill was amended ahead of the floor vote to clarify who would be subject to the law. Penalties for not storing a firearm would not apply to would not apply if the weapon is being carried or "can be readily retrieved and used," according to the legislation. Lauria's bill, which was passed by the Senate in March, has also since been amended to include this change. The legislation has the support of the state's five general officers, which in-



TURNING LOSS INTO LEGISLATION: David Viens of Johnston watches as mem- bers of the House Judiciary Committee vote to advance legislation mandating safe weapons storage to the House Floor on May 23. Viens' 16-year-old son Dillon died in 2022 from a gun that was improperly stored. (Christopher Shea/Rhode Island Current)

MOMS' APPROVAL: Advocates from Moms Demand Action and the Rhode Island Coalition Against Gun Violence celebrate the House Judiciary Committee's decision to advance two safe weapons storage bills to the House floor on May 23, 2024. To the far right is Rhode Island Second Amendment Coalition President Frank Saccoccio, who was not pleased with the committee's vote. (Christopher Shea/Rhode Is- land Current)

cludes Gov. Dan McKee and Attorney General Peter Neronha. But Second Amendment advocates oppose strengthening the state's safe storage law and have repeatedly ar- gued that requiring guns to be stored in a locked container could delay a gun owner's efforts to pro- tect themselves and their families. "This particular bill ren- ders firearm ownership practically useless in terms of defense," said House Minority Leader Mike Chippendale, a Foster Rep- ublican. "Those seconds will make a big difference when I'm trying to defend my family and I cannot get to my safe or find the key to my safe or forget the password because I'm under pressure because there's a maniac trying to kill my children," he said. Rep. Patricia Morgan, a West Warwick Republican, called the legislation "an- other attack on gun own- ership. She also took aim at the messaging used by firearm safety advocates. "As for mental health and suicide, you're just

putting that on this legisla- tion to make it look good," Morgan said. That elicited a few groans from lawmakers and audience members in the gallery. "It's just astounding that someone would dare to stand on this floor and say that," said Rep. Teresa Tanzi, a South Kingstown Democrat. On average, 51 Rhode Islanders are killed by guns and 165 people are wounded every year, Ev- ertown for Gun Safety reports. That's a rate of 4.7 deaths per 100,000 people. More than 60% of these deaths are self-inflicted. Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee, a South Kings- town Democrat, assured opponents of the bill "we're not taking your guns away." "We're telling you to lock them up," she said. "You can live with this." Gun safety advocates, many of whom crowded the House gallery in their orange and red t-shirts, applauded the legisla- tion's passage through the House.

"The bottom line is that secure gun storage prac- tices are an effective step we can take to keep guns out of children's hands and save the lives of chil- dren, teens and adults," Rhode Island Coalition Against Gun Violence Ex- ecutive Director Melissa Carden said in a state- ment. Moms Demand Action Rhode Island volunteer Amy Herlihy said the pas- sage was a long time com- ing. "We need to do every- thing we can to prevent gun violence" she said in an interview. "Every child should be able to grow up in a neighborhood where they're safe and they're able to do things every child can do." **Editor's Note:** Christopher Shea covers politics, the crim- inal justice system and trans- portation for the Rhode Is- land Current. Rhode Island Current is part of States Newsroom, the nation's larg- est state-focused nonprofit news organization. Read more Current stories at rhodeislandcurrent.com.

LEGAL NOTICES

Public Auction Legal Notice

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961 E Main st Spartanburg, Sc. Della
Doryeh Nimely 999 Merrimac Way
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will be held at 775 Hartford Ave
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3PCA5M13KF125029 belonging to
the above. the auction being held is
to satisfy towing and storage fees.

5/30/24

JHS SENIOR HONORS NIGHT



Valedictorian Trinity Blondin and Salutatorian Jaylin Locum



JHS Principal Matthew Velino

Recognitions

Salutatorian Award: Jaylin Loeum
Valedictorian Award: Trinity Blondin
Principal's Leadership Award: Alexia DiLorenzo
(Presented by JHS Principal Matthew Velino)

Senior Student Council President Award: Alexia DiLorenzo
Senior Class President Award: Alessandra Pesare
(Presented by Mike Harwood & Debra Smyth, Senior Class Advisors)

Aspiring Educators Award: Aubree Allen, Willow Andrews, Trinity Blondin, Kalina Bonetti, Javanna Carnett, Alexia DiLorenzo, Samantha Marcotte, Eliyahna Negron, Lena Torti
(Presented by Mrs. Amy Wheeler, JPS District Teacher of the Year)

Awards

The Herbert and Claiborne Pell Medal Award for Excellence in United States History: Logan Brennan
(Presented by JHS Principal Matthew Velino)

Lieutenant Governor Leadership Award: Alexia DiLorenzo
(Presented by Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena Jr.)
Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizens Award: Alexia DiLorenzo
Rhode Island College Book Award: Jaylin Loeum
American Mathematical Society Award: Cameron Ferrara
(Presented by Mrs. Rachel Salvatore, Assistant Principal)

Scholarships

Janice D. Mele Memorial Scholarship: Landon Faucher
(Presented by School Committee Chairman Robert LaFazia, Vice Chairman Joseph Rotella, and Members Dawn Aloisio, Susan Mansolillo and Marysue Andreozzi)

Mayor Joseph M. Polisena Scholarship Fund: Jaylin Loeum, Gabriella Mercado, Alessandra Pesare, Michelle Recinos and Raylin Santos
(Presented by Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena Jr.)

The Mayor and Johnston Town

Council Scholarship: Santiago Aguilar, Hailey Arroyo, Kevin Biscelli, Georgiana Cardullo, Gianna Halliwell, Jaylin Loeum, Isabella Maggiasco, Gabriella Mercado, Alessandra Pesare, Raylin Santos, Shanna Scopelliti, Andrew Sia, Shyla Soto, Jacob Spinella and Syeda Zainab
(Presented by Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena Jr.)

The Michael E. and Lida M. Contillo Scholarship: Trinity Blondin, Sofia China, Landon Faucher, Riley Guenette, Ariana Iasimone, Nina Lautieri, Chelsea Maranhao, Samantha Marcotte, Alessandra Pesare, Raylin Santos, Shanna Scopelliti
(Presented by Mrs. Rachel Salvatore, Assistant Principal)

The Chief Richard S. Tamburini Criminal Justice Scholarship: Steven Finegan and Ava Waterman
(Presented by retired Johnston Police Chief Richard S. Tamburini & Johnston School Resource Officer Louis Cotoia)

The Thomas L. Ucci Sr. Memorial Scholarship: Alexia DiLorenzo
(Presented by Mrs. Pamela DelPon-

te, Mrs. Susan Mansolillo, and Mr. Stephen Ucci)

Gary Mazzie Memorial Health Sciences Scholarship: Jaylin Loeum and Raylin Santos
(Presented by Dr. Brian Kwetkowski)

Paul & Ann Marie Pursche Scholarship: Riley Guenette and Samantha Marcotte
(Presented by Mrs. Natarcia Pursche, School Counselor)

Soul of 1971 Scholarship Fund: Peyton McClish
(Presented by Harold Hemberger)

Carcieri/Webber Family Scholarship: Alessandra Pesare and Jayden Testa
(Presented by Mrs. Emily Webber and Ms. Rebecca Webber)

The DiIorio Family Scholarship: Cameron Ferrara
(Presented by Mr. Michael T. Crawley, Class of 2000)



HONORED: Johnston Senior High School presented Senior Honors Night on Thursday, May 16. Members of the Class of 2024 were recognized for achievements and awarded scholarships. (SunRise photos by Steve Popiel)

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THE VOICES: Senior members of the Johnston High School Select Choir sing the National Anthem. (Sun Rise photos by Steve Popiel)

Honors

(Continued from page 9)

Portuguese/American Scholarship: Carolina Cardoso, Alexia DiLorenzo and Lexie Palma
(Presented by State Rep. Deborah Fellela)

Picerne Family Scholarship: Ariana Iasimone, Alessandra Pesare and Raylin Santos
(Presented by Miss Deborah Licciardi, Guidance Department Chairperson)

Kenneth Skitt Memorial Scholarship: Alexia DiLorenzo
(Presented by Miss Deborah Licciardi, Guidance Department Chairperson)

Gary V. Mazzie Memorial Scholarship: Trinity Blondin and Chelsea Maranhao
(Presented by Mrs. Lee Mazzie)

Johnston Federation of Teachers Scholarship: Trinity Blondin and Logan Brennan
(Presented by Ms. Kathleen Kandzierski, Johnston Federation of Teachers President)

Johnston School Music Association Scholarship: Trinity Blondin, Jonathan Guilmette, Chelsea Maranhao, Eliyahna Negrón, Daniela Noriega Garcia, Johan Rodas and Shanna Scopelliti
(Presented by Ms. Melissa Loffler, Johnston School Music Association President, & Sheila Haley, Johnston School Music Association Vice President)

tion Vice President)

Rachel E. Carson Scholarship: Trinity Blondin and Chelsea Maranhao
(Presented by Ms. Melissa Loffler, Johnston School Music Association President, & Sheila Haley, Johnston School Music Association Vice President)

Hopkins Family Memorial Scholarship: Raylin Santos and Jayden Testa
(Presented by Mr. Chris Hopkins)

Johnston Senior High School Student Council "Students in Government" Scholarship: Alexia DiLorenzo, Alessandra Pesare and Raylin Santos
(Presented by Dr. Jonathan Mendelsohn, Assistant Principal)

Anthony DeAngelis Wrestling Scholarship: Landon Faucher
(Presented by Dr. Jonathan Mendelsohn, Assistant Principal)

Sabrina Conti Memorial Scholarship: Alessandra Pesare
(Presented by Mrs. Natarcia Pursche, School Counselor)

The Oszejca Family Scholarship: Trinity Blondin and Jaiden Gonsalves
(Presented by Mr. Robert Oszejca)

Timothy Westell Memorial Scholarship: Logan Brennan
(Presented by Dr. Jonathan Mendelsohn, Assistant Principal)

Chester Welch Memorial Scholarship Fund: Trinity Blondin
(Presented by Ms. Christine Welch)

FM Global Scholarship: Timothy Davis and Yandery Rodriguez
(Presented by: Miss Brittany Smith, Climate and Culture Coordinator)

Johnston Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition — Chris' Memorial Scholarship Fund: Raylin Santos
(Presented by Ms. Priscilla DiMaio)

Johnston Senior High School Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO) Scholarship: Alexia DiLorenzo and Samantha Marcotte
(Presented by Mr. Lance Niles, PTSO President)

Olivia Rotondo Memorial Scholarship for Dance: Nina Lautieri
(Presented by Mrs. Dorothy & Mr. David Rotondo)

Richard Salzillo Memorial Scholarship: Aubree Allen, Sofia China, Alexia DiLorenzo, Cameron Ferrara, Kingstan Glenn, Riley Guenette, Nina Lautieri and Brandon Testa
(Presented by Miss Brittany Smith, Climate and Culture Coordinator)

Honey Dew Donuts Scholarship: Kevin Biscelli

BIG WINNER:
Alexia DiLorenzo won a ton of awards Thursday night, including, the Principal's Leadership Award and the Senior Student Council President Award.





THE TOP: The Johnston Senior High School Class of 2024 Top 10 students, numbers 1-10 standing, and the next 11-20, seated behind them.

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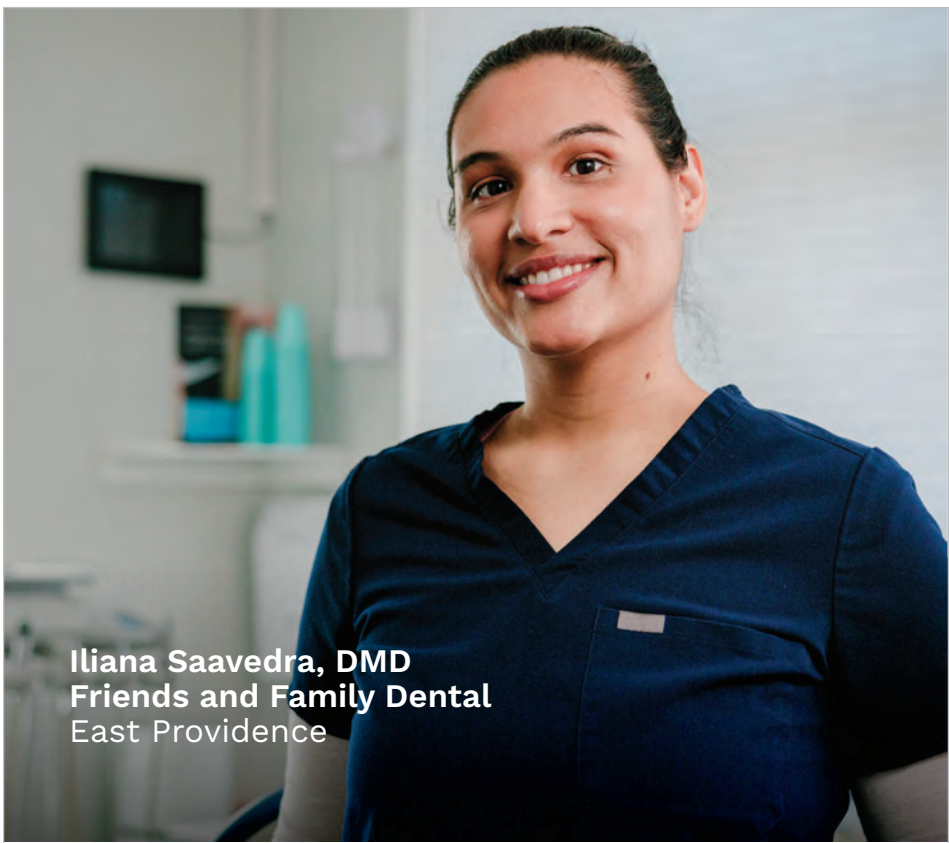


James A. Dirosa
Rhode Island General Treasurer

CollegeBound Saver is a program of the office of Rhode Island General Treasurer, James A. Dirosa.



TOP TWO: Valedictorian Trinity Blondin and Salutatorian Jaylin Locum



Iliana Saavedra, DMD
Friends and Family Dental
East Providence



SCHOLARS AROUND:
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(Sun Rise photos by Steve Popiel)

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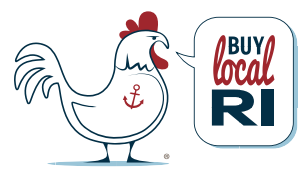
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Young Mr. Thompson went to Washington



TALLER IN PERSON: Mark-Anthony Thompson advocated for Tourette Syndrome in front of members of Congress and their staff. He met with Sen. Jack Reed, and said that was one of his favorite parts of his trip to Washington D.C. (Submitted photos)

Johnston student serves as Rhode Island's Youth Ambassador for the Tourette Association of America

By RORY SCHULER

Mark-Anthony Thompson loves to play Fortnite, like most modern day teens. Some evenings you can hear him warning fellow players to watch out for snipers, legendary back bling and the impending storm (if you know, you know). While interacting with friends online however, the other youngsters have usually been warned in advance that Mark-Anthony may involuntarily let out a few non PG-13 zingers while gaming. He's a passionate player, but the outbursts have little to do with the game. The profane outbursts are a sign of the neurodevelopmental disorder with which he lives daily, Tourette Syndrome (TS). And without educating those around him on a regular basis, the condition could feasibly threaten his every interaction. Mark-Anthony Thompson begins each fall semester the same way. "Every new school year I explain to my new class that I suffer from Tourettes with a few explanations of my tics," explained the 13-year-old Ferri Middle School eighth grader.

The Signs

Thompson described the signs of his neurodevelopmental disorder, beginning with the coprolalia. "I cannot control outbursts of inappropriate language," he said, adding that the symptom is fairly rare, experienced by only around one in 10 people who have Tourette syndrome.



MR. THOMPSON GOES TO WASHINGTON: Mark-Anthony Thompson, 13, of Johnston, recently visited Washington, D.C. as Rhode Island's Youth Ambassador for the Tourette Association of America.

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By JENNIFER COATES

By definition, a “pest” is an insect which harms both crops and plants and is an overall nuisance to humans. While a “pest” can also refer to small animals, anyone who lives in New England knows that the worst kinds of problematic “pests” are the mosquitos, ants, fleas, ticks, beetles, gnats, roaches, flies, spiders and fruit flies that live amongst us in this wet and lush region of the country. Pests are a reality that we must simply live with, right?? Wrong.

According to Stephen Gustafson, (also known as the “Bug Buster”), we don’t have to resign ourselves to a life with these pesky creatures at all! Gustafson has a personal vendetta when it comes to controlling troublesome insects. As an avid outdoorsman, he spent a lot of time in nature until a dangerous bite from a disease-carrying tick (a

new species of tick here in Rhode Island) sidelined him several years ago. That experience was a catalyst in his decision to become a pest control technician.

After months of extensive training, Stephen fulfilled that goal. Today, he has earned the moniker “Bug Buster” and licensed pest control expert. But he took this pursuit to a next level when he stepped outside the more commonplace toxic treatments used by larger brands (you know them, they are ones that leave behind signs on your lawn like this one: “chemicals applied, do not walk on this grass”). Instead, he chose to work exclusively with a product line which is non-toxic and environmentally-friendly.

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the same cedar that keeps moths out of your cedar closet! It kills and repels insects of all kinds, except bees and butterflies which breathe differently than their insect counterparts and therefore do not suffocate when exposed. The solution will attack bugs which settle in the lawn, bushes or tall grasses which thrive around the perimeter of your property, posing health risks to vulnerable hosts (think fleas, ticks, and mosquitoes).

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Sports

Vasquez, Carlino to play college hoops

State
champs
headed to
St. Joe's,
CCRI

By ALEX SPONSELLER

Big happenings continue with the Johnston boys basketball program, as two of its most notable players made their college decisions official. NeAri Vasquez will be heading up to Maine to play for DIII St. Joseph's while Michael Carlino will be staying nearby to compete for CCRI.

The standouts were key pieces to the program's 2022-23 championship season, helping the Panthers capture their first title in nearly three decades. They were also starters this past season when the team returned to the semifinals



■ HOOPS - PAGE 17

NEXT LEVEL: Johnston's Michael Carlino (left) and NeAri Vasquez last season. (Sun Rise file photos by Alex Sponseller)



Townies shut down Panthers in opening round

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The No. 4 Johnston baseball team was shut out by visiting East Providence 2-0 on Tuesday night to be bumped to the losers bracket of the Division II playoffs.

The Panther bats were held in check from start to finish as they only collected two hits, each coming in the fourth inning from Matt Clements and Armani Arias. Each of East Providence's runs came in the top of the first inning, which proved to be enough to get the opening round win.

Despite the loss, Johnston starting pitcher Emmanuel Rios was strong on the mound for the Panthers. Rios tossed a complete game and allowed just one earned run while striking out four batters. The two teams played once in the regular season, with the Townies picking up a 1-0 decision.

The Panthers went on to face No. 9 Burrillville on Wednesday night, but the results were not available at press time. The Broncos handed the Panthers back to back losses in the regular season.

For more photos of Tuesday night's playoff game, turn to page 16.

COMPLETE GAME: Johnston starting pitcher Emmanuel Rios on Tuesday night. (Photos by Alex Sponseller)

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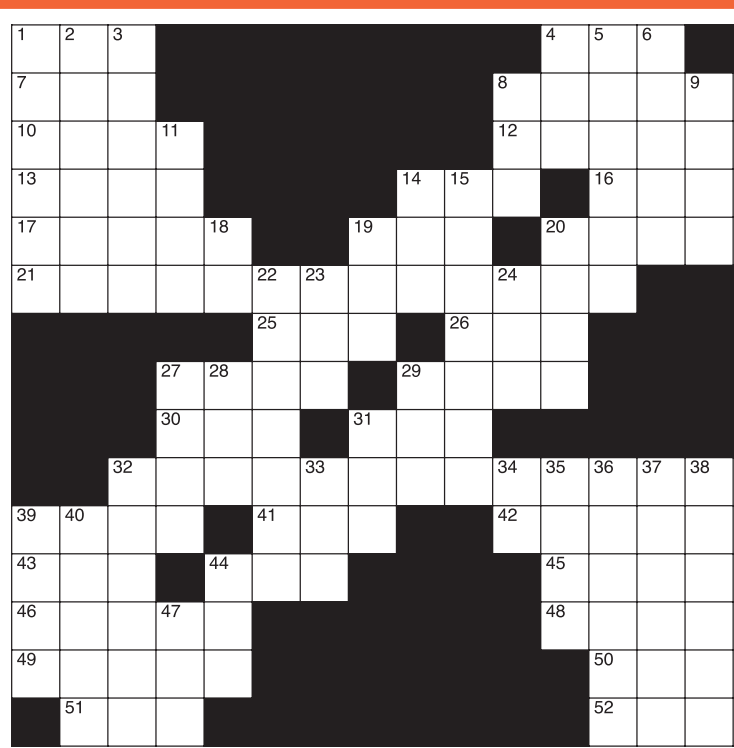
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RUN IT OUT: Dylan Guernon runs out a ground ball.

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- 4. Engine additive
- 7. Small, faint constellation
- 8. Gives a job
- 10. Self-righteous person
- 12. Caucasian language
- 13. Surinam toad
- 14. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
- 16. Former French coin
- 17. Levels the score
- 19. What stage performers do
- 20. Egyptian Sun god
- 21. Localities
- 25. Spherical body
- 26. Licensed for Wall Street
- 27. Perfect
- 29. It's on many people's heads
- 30. Boxing's GOAT
- 31. Photo
- 32. Popular HBO show
- 39. Popular music awards show
- 41. Pouch

CLUES DOWN

- 42. Lake in Botswana
- 43. Unruly group
- 44. One-fourth
- 45. Very eager
- 46. Edward __, author and writer
- 48. Flying insect
- 49. Dragged forcibly
- 50. Thus far
- 51. Not just "play"
- 52. Commercials

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Occur
- 2. Show up
- 3. Capital of Taiwan
- 4. Brother or sister
- 5. Secret get-togethers
- 6. Type of tea
- 8. Where the action is
- 9. Cast out
- 11. Crime group
- 14. Type of vessel (abbr.)
- 15. Accept and handle

- 18. Sacrifice hit
- 19. One who buys and sells securities simultaneously
- 20. Month
- 22. Most thin
- 23. Naturally occurring material
- 24. Luke's mentor __-Wan
- 27. Postmodernist Austrian "House"
- 28. Aquatic salamander
- 29. Baseball stat
- 31. Beginning military rank
- 32. Talk rapidly and unintelligibly
- 33. Paddle
- 34. Caregiver (abbr.)
- 35. Old Irish alphabet
- 36. Japanese city
- 37. In a way, acted
- 38. Things to see
- 39. Nursemaid
- 40. Type of tooth
- 44. To be demonstrated
- 47. Defunct European group



AROUND THE HORN: Shortstop Davian Nunez makes a play.



THE THROW TO FIRST: Chris Civetti at second base on Tuesday.



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The beauty of bookend championships

Cranston resident Alfred Travieso, AKA Danger Boy Alfredo, recently became the Renegade Wrestling Alliance's oldest individual champion after securing the Hype Championship belt. He is a longtime partner of Wolverine, and the team has won multiple tag team championships. However, the last time Danger Boy took home an individual title was back in 1995 when he was just breaking out in the sport.

His story and road back to a title encapsulated one of my favorite dynamics in sports: Bookend championships.

I love those stories. When a player or coach wins a championship early in their careers, thinking that it is going to be easy, but then goes on a drought and claims one more just in time before they hang 'em up.

Championship stories are always great. Whether it is the newcomer that had an early break out, the older athlete that finally gets one after paying his or her dues over an extended career.

There's something about bookend championships that is so awesome, though.

Before Danger Boy's title, the most recent one I got to cover was Toll Gate girls basketball coach Jim Areson's championship win back in March. He won a field hockey title with Vets nearly 20 years ago as a young coach, then had a drought before finally breaking through on the basketball court. There are plenty of examples of this, but these two recent ones are fresh on my mind.

In these stories lie two messages, one is motivational and the other is a cautionary tale.

In terms of motivation, it shows that age doesn't matter and that you can always get back on top if you put in the work. Danger Boy admitted in our interview that he is inching toward the end of his career, but desperately wanted just one more shot at being a champion. As for Areson, age is not as big of a factor for coaching, but he put in the

My pitch



by
ALEX
SPONSELLER
SPORTS EDITOR

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work across three sports and proved that he is still one of the best coaches in the state. The new generation of players, the ever evolving sports that he coaches, haven't slowed him down one bit.

The cautionary tale is that just because you win one, doesn't mean it will be easy moving forward or that you will absolutely win another. Every championship requires a ton of work, a ton of commitment and elite performance. Sometimes, we see these young players and coaches let their guard down after getting one early, then all of a sudden, a decade or two goes by and they wind up empty handed.

Congrats to Danger Boy on winning the title, getting one for the older guys. His outreach goes far beyond Cranston, as he competes all throughout New England and umpires baseball in Rhode Island in the spring and summer. He made a statement for so many people. What a cool story.

The basketball community lost a giant earlier this week as Bill Walton passed away at 71 years old due to cancer.

Walton dealt with a stutter throughout his entire life and at times, it was a very pronounced stutter. He always did his best in working through it and masking it. Like most stutters, though, there were times where it was unavoidable.

He had said on multiple occasions

that he never considered broadcasting during his playing days due to his stutter. He was always self conscious and couldn't bear the thought of having his voice heard on national airwaves.

Ultimately, once he retired, he put his fear aside and gave broadcasting a go, and over the course of the past two, nearly three decades, he has become one of the best and most recognizable faces in the sport. He was as a player, but managed to maintain his place for all these years later.

His achievements were remarkable on the court, winning national championships at UCLA then winning a pair of rings in the NBA along with an MVP. If you ask me, what he did as a broadcaster, him challenging himself and facing his fears head on, that is what I'll respect him for most.

Lastly, the Boston Celtics swept the Indiana Pacers to reach the upcoming NBA Finals. The Celtics were heavy favorites this series, so it was a bit expected.

Each passing win, we have to take a moment to tip our caps to Joe Mazzulla. The Johnston native continues to impress and has taken this team to the finals in just his second year as a head coach.

Sure, the Celtics roster is loaded. That does not mean winning is a given, though. Every year we see super teams fall short for various reasons. Mazzulla has done a great job of getting the most out of this star-studded cast and has four wins to go before getting the ultimate prize.

I am no basketball expert, but from watching at home, you can see the improvements that Mazzulla has made since last season. He has been much more consistent and efficient with his timeouts, his rotations, his substitutions. He really has hit another level with his command of the game which has been huge in the team improving on last year's finish.

Hoops

(Continued from page 15)

and open state tournament.

Vasquez elected to pursue basketball over football and is looking forward to reconnecting with former Panther Derek Salvatore, who just wrapped up his freshman year with the Monks.

"I wanted to keep playing basketball, basketball is my passion. I chose St. Joe's because I felt like it was a good fit and I have a good relationship with the coach already. I get to reunite with Derek Salvatore, so it should be a fun four years," said Vasquez. "(Salvatore) told me how fun the campus is, how the school is, how fun the basketball team is. I went to watch one of their games and they play really well together. They're a fast paced team with great plays. They have great speed, size, a great coaching staff."

Carlino is looking forward to staying local and is confident that he will be able to produce for the Knights from the get-go.

"It may be a little difficult at first, but as we get into the season, once I get to know my new coaches and teammates, it will be good. I give it my all on the court, I play with a lot of toughness and heart and that's all you need to play. I've been in tough experiences in games. Having that, you go into games with the mindset of, 'I have done this before and I can do it again,'" Carlino said.

Vasquez will be starting on the St. Joe's bench as a freshman, but he is embracing the opportunity to develop his game and provide tough competition in practice while he looks to earn a larger role moving forward.

"As a freshman, my role is going to be to help push the older guys. (Not getting a lot of minutes) will give me the advantage in the weight room, in the gym to work out and to prove to the coaches in practice that I can be an asset to the team," said Vasquez.

With the duo set to graduate and move to the next level, along with guys like Branden and Jayden Testa and Cam Walker, the 2022-2023 championship core will be moving on, but its impact on the Johnston program will be felt forever.

"That 2023 championship team was a hell of a team. We gelled together and stuck together. We did go our separate ways, but those are my guys forever. That will always be a special team in my heart. That chemistry we had, playing from elementary school, to rec, to travel, then high school. It was a special group," said Vasquez.

Carlino added: "Looking back, I have no regrets at all. Coach Mike (Bedrosian) is a great coach, more like a brother to some of us. It was the most fun I've ever had. It was a smart group of kids that wanted it bad. We worked hard that year and the summer and it led to big things. Rings and a championship banner. We made history."

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By CAPT. DAVE MONTI

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The partnership will facilitate innovative, technology-based tools, and increase the use and awareness of existing technologies to reduce vessel strikes to the North Atlantic right whale. These could include tools that detect and identify whales and alert vessels when a whale is present and recommend actions.

For information visit <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/noaa-fisheries-partners-national-fish-and-wildlife-foundation-support-north-atlantic>.

Impact of climate on fish stocks

If “overfishing” of a fish stock continues unchecked with no strategies to rebuild it will become “overfished” with a population size that is too low and jeopardizes the stock’s ability to produce a sustainable yield.

Today, prevailing environmental and fishery conditions are changing exponentially due to climate impacts. From warming waters to acidification, the climate crisis is fundamentally changing the ocean; these changes are jeopardizing the ability of fish to grow and thrive, in turn reducing fisheries’ productivity.

Earlier this month, NOAA Fisheries released a 2023 Stock Status Report which can be found on their website at <https://www.fisheries.noaa>.

gov/national/sustainable-fisheries/status-stocks-2023. Although some of the news in the report is encouraging, much more needs to be done.

The overfishing status is only known for 72% of stocks and the overfished status for 52%. That means hundreds of fish stocks have an unknown status. We need to improve data collection of unknown stocks so NOAA Fisheries can do their job.

According to the 2023 Stock Status Report nearly a fifth of stocks remain overfished. The good news is that the number of overfished stocks decreased: 47 fish stocks, or 18% of all known U.S. stocks, are considered overfished. Some of our most iconic stocks, including Atlantic cod, have remained on the overfished list for years.

Despite recent fisheries progress the U.S. still isn’t doing enough to keep up with climate change. For more on this perspective visit www.fisheriesforward.org/status-of-stocks/.

Where’s the bite?

Freshwater fishing

Striped bass and bluefish. Elisa Cahill of Snug Harbor Marina, South Kingstown, said, “The southeast and southwest sides of Block Island were on fire over the holiday with anglers catching striped bass using topwater lures. The fish were slot size (28 to < 31 inches) and above. Our salt ponds are good too we worm hatches still occurring.”

Cape Cod Canal fishing expert and author East End Eddie Doherty, said, “The full moon Thursday morning, ushered in some breaking tides have been more pronounced and powerful in the east end. Some nice bass were caught by Joe Gray of Sagamore Beach on his Ditch Witch and Taylor Point’s ‘Brea-

kin Bob’ Weir with a white spook during a mid-Canal surface bite. Worcester Firefighter Joel Benoit fooled some slots and Buzzards Bay’s Ben Sivonen lost count after reeling in over 10 fish with the biggest measuring 45 inches. I was jigging a 5-ounce white Hurley Canal Killer in the east tide next to Vietnam Veteran Steve Colleran when fish started breaking in front of us like a happy dream.”

Anglers Shaina Boyle and her father Gary Vandemoortele caught five striped bass to 28-inch and bluefish to 30 inches in Greenwich Bay last Wednesday. This weekend I fished in the same area with a friend and hooked up with a keeper and two smaller fish. All these fish were caught in 7 to 12 feet of water trolling tube & worm at the bottom. No fish were found in the East Passage at Poppasquash Point, Bristol nor at Warwick Neck.

Declan O’Donnell of Breachway Bait & Tackle, Charlestown, said, “The bait is getting pushed into the ponds on an incoming tide with small spooks, and small soft plastics working in the salt pond channels. Back in the pond the worm hatch is still on, and out front bass and blues are being found on rockpiles and Breachway outflows eating anything from top water to live eels. Won’t be long before some of the 30-40-pound bass start staging on our local reefs.”

Tautog. The spring tautog season ends on May 31 in Rhode Island for the spawning season and will reopen August 1. In Massachusetts, the catch limit drops to one fish/person/day from June 1 to July 31. In both states the open season limit changes on Aug. 1 with a three fish/person/day limit, 16 to 21-inch slot with one fish allowed to be over 21 inches.



BLUEFISH BITE: Shaina Boyle with a bluefish caught in Greenwich Bay. (Submitted photo)

“Summer Flounder (fluke), black sea bass and squid. “Fluke reports are starting to pick up with mostly smaller fish being caught locally and a few bigger fish being caught at the island. Black Sea Bass are still out in deeper water but are slowly making their way in. There is an abundance of squid out-front,” said O’Donnell of Breachway Bait & Tackle. We weighed in an 11-pound fluke over the holiday caught along the southern coastal beaches. Anglers are having some difficulty finding flukes but when they do they tend to be large. Anglers are also targeting fluke

at the East Grounds and in the Block Island Wind Farm area with good results,” said Elisa Cahill of Snug Harbor.

“Squid fishing remains strong along the coastal beaches,” said Cahill of Sung Harbor.

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

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Battle of Bunker Hill Loss Petitions



By Joel Bohy
Historic Arms & Militaria
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I've recently been cataloging loss petitions for the Battle of Bunker (or Breed's) Hill I've been compiling for some time. They are scattered through the volumes of documents at the Massachusetts State Archives, and it's taken a long time to track them all down and add in related documents from other archives as well as the newspapers of the period. Now that I have them all cataloged, it's really interesting to go through and read, albeit a bit tough. Some are for losses of arms, equipment, and clothing, and some are for the losses of men killed, as well as some for men who had been grievously wounded during the battle.

Obviously in this article I can only discuss a few, but I think with the 249th anniversary coming up on June 17, I feel it's a good time to remember these men and their service. I'll start with the not so humble petition of Chester Parker:

"The Humble petition of Chester Parker of Dracutt in the County of Middsex.—Humbly Shews That your Petitioner on ye 17th of June Last Was a Soldier in the Army In Capt. Oliver

Parkers Company In Colo. Prescotts Rigement in the Battle Called the Bunker Hill Fight That your Petitioner was stationed in that parte of the Battle Called the Brest Work That he had a very good Firelock That he had an oppertunity of Firing the same Seventeen Times at our unnatural Enimys Which he Carefully Improved to great advantage (being a Marksman) — But was there Wounded by a Ball from the Enimy In his Knee by which means he fell and Dropt his gun and was helped off the ground with the greatest Daring and Difficulty only Escaped With his Life and Lost his gun and Knapsack there for Which he hath not Received any Recom pence."

While being shot in the knee with a nominal .69-inch ball must have been horrible, Eleazer French of Dunstable lost a little more. He was a member of Capt. Samuel Gilbert's company, Col. William Prescott's regiment:

"This may Certif that Eleazer French Did in the Bunker's Hill Fight Loose his Right Arm and with it his gun Price Eight Dollars and Catrage Box-Powder Horn-Bayonet, ¾ lb Powder 1 ½ il Balls and 1 Blanket all his own property."

Another man badly wounded was Samuel Bradish of Winchendon. He wrote he: *"was in the Battle on Bunker Hill, and received a Musket Ball through my head. Which it was almost*

the Humble petition of Chester Parker of Dracutt in the County of Middsex.—Humbly Shews That your Petitioner on ye 17th of June Last Was a Soldier in the Army In Capt. Oliver Parker's Company In Colo. Prescotts Rigement in the Battle Called the Bunker Hill Fight That your Petitioner was stationed in that parte of the Battle Called the Brest Work That he had a very good Firelock That he had an oppertunity of Firing the same Seventeen Times at our unnatural Enimys Which he Carefully Improved to great advantage (being a Marksman) — But was there Wounded by a Ball from the Enimy In his Knee by which means he fell and Dropt his gun and was helped off the ground with the greatest Daring and Difficulty only Escaped With his Life and Lost his gun and Knapsack there for Which he hath not Received any Recom pence."

This may Certif that Eleazer French Did in Bunker's Hill Fight Loose his Right Arm and with it his gun Price Eight Dollars and Catrage Box-Powder Horn-Bayonet, ¾ lb Powder 1 ½ il Balls and 1 Blanket all his own property which left him only Price 28 ½ the whole amount of 3 in 15—In March 1778 To the Day Master for the Attoft Joseph French Lieut. Said French Belong To Colo. Prescotts Regiment Capt. Samuel Gilberts Company

a Miricule that it did not put an End to my Life, but thanks to god I am yet alive under miserable circumstances not being able for the most part to perform Business a Family to Maintain."

There are so many more that as mentioned can't be written about here; however, I may do a few articles here and there with more information on the

men who fought, and some who didn't make it home afterwards on June 17, 1775.

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By Karen Kalunian

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Photo credit: Karen Kalunian

Roland

Are you ready to get rollin', well so is Roland! This ten-month-old pup loves to run! He's got the supermodel legs to prove it too! Roland is a mixed breed with a beautiful brindle coat and a white nose that looks like it was dipped in sugar! If you have another playful pup, Roland loves other dogs! If you are ready to spend your days playing and snuggling, then contact Rhode Home Rescue for more information. You can visit their website <http://www.rhodehomerescue.org> or email them directly at rhodehomerescue@gmail.com Roland is ready to run right into your heart!

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



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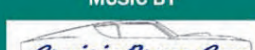
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FirstWorks' Summer Beats Concert Series returns to Roger Williams Park

By ROBERT DUGUAY

For the past 20 years, FirstWorks has been a vital entity in Rhode Island's cultural sphere with their inclusion of world-class performing arts while accompanying these experiences with education programs. This endeavor has attracted nearly a million participants within this time period while positively impacting local youth, their families and their communities. The fantastic result is due to the organization's unique presentation and curation of events with their Summer Beats Concert Series being one of several examples. For its fifth edition, the series will take place at the Roger Williams Park Grandstand throughout July. It promises to be a global journey for anyone who attends along with being a prime opportunity for folks to put on their dancing shoes and move to the music.

Each installment of the Summer Beats Concert Series is free while guaranteeing an abundance of fun for the entire family. It also promises to provide an array of musical and ethnic styles where people who attend can enjoy a type of art from a different part of the globe without having to do any extensive traveling.

"FirstWorks is thrilled to bring this welcoming concert series back to the park for a fifth year, expanding our partnership with Roger Williams Park Conservancy," FirstWorks' Executive Artistic Director Kathleen Pletcher says about the series. "Our lineup invites all to dance their way from the Ivory Coast through the Southern Hemisphere and back up the East Coast corridor, all without



DOBET GNAHORÉ

leaving Providence! There is so much joy to experience through our artists this summer. Bring your dancing shoes, bring a picnic, bring a friend. All are welcome to join in the fun!"

"We're thrilled to expand our partnership with FirstWorks to bring dynamic, world-class talent to Providence's backyard for the entire community to enjoy this summer, no passports needed," adds Bonnie Nickerson, who is the Executive Director of the Roger Williams Park Conservancy.

The first night of the series is on July 11 with Ivory Coast singer, dancer, percussionist and songwriter Dobet Gnahoré performing. Gnahoré is a Grammy-winning artist who pushes the musical roots of her home country in a variety of directions. She's also known for her fantastic approach to dancing, exuberant stage presence and emotional way of singing. Her lyrics come across in various languages ranging from French to English to numerous Ivorian vernaculars while relaying a sense of optimism. Gnahoré honors the legacy and current impact of African women through her craft with empowerment and encouragement of others being her primary goal.

July 14 is the second part of the series with the tropical Afro-Latin sextet combo Quitapenas taking the bandstand stage. Influenced by rhythmic music of the '60s, '70s, and '80s, this band aims to get folks lost in their songs while having them let go of their worries and inhibitions. The band consists of sons of immigrants from Guatemala and Mexico while taking influences from the cultures of Angola, Peru, Brazil, Colombia and other countries. Their most recent release is the single "Bailando, Gozando" that came out back in 2022 with the B-side "Buena Que'sta", which is available for listening on Spotify and Bandcamp. Chances are that the people who show up will hear both songs performed live.

Closing out the Summer Beats Concert Series on July 21 will be La Excelencia, who are a staple of the salsa dancing scene in New York City. Inspired by the sounds of the '70s and today's socio-political landscape, this 12-piece band has a knack for putting on performances that go beyond their genre while engaging audiences in energetic fashion. They have four studio albums under their belt with 2020's "Machete" being their latest full-length release. La Excelencia have also had their music featured via several indie flicks, TV shows and compilations. They're a prime example of the danceable vibe that this string of shows will be providing and they'll be exhibiting this while conveying a mindful message.

Each show as part of the upcoming series starts at 6pm while being all ages and free admission. For more information and details for the series, log on to FirstWorks' website at firstworks.org.



QUITAPENAS



LA EXCELENCIA

Wilbury adds new life to ‘Once’

Theatre Review by DON FOWLER

“Once”, the minimalist movie that became a theatrical hit is the simple story of unrequited love.

Set primarily in a Dublin bar, the simple tale has some nice music and lighthearted book.

Wilbury Theatre, under the spirited direction of Artistic Director, Josh Short, has expanded the musical, using every available space in the Waterplace building, and given the audience two hours of feel-good theatre.

Josh does this by using 18 actor/musicians playing everything from accordions to violins as accompaniment to the main characters: a guy (Nile Scott Hawver) and a girl (Alison Russo).

The guy is a down and out Irish singer/songwriter who writes about his lost love who has moved to New York City.

The girl is an energetic Czeck pianist whose husband has left her with a young daughter.

She hears his sad song to his lost love and quickly discovers the talent within him, encouraging him to release that talent, which he eventually does, shifting his feelings in his music towards her.

She resists his advances, but pursues a platonic friendship, encouraging and helping him cut a demo tape, raise money, and as-

semble a band.

Does boy get girl in the end? I won’t tell.

I had seen the movie and the musical (On the large proscenium stage at PPAC) and was not overly thrilled with the story but enjoyed the music.

The intimacy of the Wilbury space changed all that. Musicians surrounded the stage, playing softly in the background on the guy and girl’s ballads and then filling the stage with music and dance to move the change of scenes along smoothly.

If you arrive early, you’ll enjoy the musicians warming up on stage.

Some of them also double in supporting roles.

Jason Quinn adds a bit of needed humor to his role, while actor/director/URI Professor Vince Petronio plays the mandolin (quite well) and is the guy’s father.

Alison Russo, hot from a long run as one of the twins in Gamm’s hilarious “Twelfth Night” is the perfect fit for the girl, with all the energy, enthusiasm, and marvelous voice needed for the role.

Keep your eye on her. She is a most talented actress.

FLASH: Wilbury’s quick response for tickets has moved the theatre to extend the run of “Once” to June 23rd. And that’s for a PG rated show!



Dave Rabinow with Nile Hawver and Alison Russo who appear courtesy Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. (Submitted photos by Erin X. Smithers)

Moving forward in a “One Room” theatrical engagement

An Interview with Josh Short, Director/Artistic Director

By IDA ZECCO

“Once” the musical is a heartfelt and enchanting production that shines with its simplicity and authenticity. “Once,” book by Enda Walsh; music and Lyrics by Glen Hansard and Markéta Irglová, captures universal themes of love, longing and following one’s dream. The Wilbury production fully immerses the audience in both storytelling and action. This “one room” experience, directed by Wilbury’s Artistic Director, Josh Short, delivers a truly moving and unforgettable evening of theater running now through June 23. I had the opportunity to catch up with Josh Short in a recent interview.

Ida: What drew you to select “Once” as a production for the Wilbury Theater Group?

Josh: I think that there are a lot of thematic elements of “Once” that resonate with me and with the community right now. It’s a beautiful story about two people who feel stuck in their own lives. Coming out of COVID over the last few years, there were a lot of people that are looking for connection. This play is about that and about two people who are stuck within their own minds, find each other and help each other move forward. The musical recognizes the inherent loneliness that we all carry with us as individuals. Everybody is stuffed in their own story, but it’s hard for us to look outside of ourselves until somebody comes along in our life and gives us the kick in the pants that we need.

Ida: So how does “Once” resonate with the theater’s artistic at mission and vision?

Josh: It’s a great ensemble, musical piece which is something that we really love doing here and that the team here does really well. All the actors play their



JOSH SHORT

(Submitted photo by Erin X. Smithers)

own instruments, and we utilize the whole space. It’s very much one of those pieces that for a long time I thought would be a great thing for the Wilbury. “Once” clearly engages and provokes the audience which is what our productions offer to the community. John Carney who wrote and directed the film was asked why it was called “Once.” He said, “Because everybody goes through their lives thinking that ‘once I do this, then I’ll have that or once this happens, then I’ll be able to do that.’” We put off pursuing the dreams that we want. I’m excited to share this production with audiences and have that conversation.

Ida: What were some of the unique challenges in bringing “Once” to life on your stage?

Josh: We had a very long casting process, trying to find actors, who were also excellent musicians. I admit, we have an A-Team of string players. I’m so happy with how it all came together, but that was certainly a challenge. Also creatively maximizing the space, as you know we have a small, black box theater with a 70 to 80 seat house. We have 18 cast members with instruments which pushes the space to its limit.

Ida: What particular elements of the show do you think will resonate most with your audience?

Josh: Well, I think in addition to the performances, which are really moving, I hope people walk away recognizing the sheer talent in the room as well as how we have creatively engaged them as

participants within this production. I hope they are excited about that.

Ida: How have you worked creatively with the cast and the team to really capture the essence of “Once?” Have you done anything unique in terms of staging, direction or design?

Josh: I think what’s unique is the size of the theater which is very intimate and so the audience and the actors are out there the entire time together, sharing the space together. As the design team, we wanted to create an expensive community and shared storytelling was important to us and so from the moment the audience walks in, the actors are out there mingling with them. The audience is not removed from the action of this piece which we call “immersive” or “one room theater.” You can’t do that in a large, Broadway theater. It is not only sharing space with the audience, but also storytelling.

Ida: Can you share any sort of behind the scene insights or anecdotes about the production process of Once?

Josh: Some actors have a very solid music background with formal training. Some are musicians with some acting experience. The cast is then made up of actors who are playing musicians and musicians who are playing actors. I honestly wondered how all of this was going to meld together to make something real and cohesive. It is exciting to see how that line between musician and actor has not only blurred but practically disappeared. This is a musical in which it is more than learning lines and notes. We have created something here that integrates the music with the action in order for there to be a direct relationship to the script, actor and audience. Together, the music and the script tell a very intimate story in which we can all relate.

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