Size cap law defeated

Vote fails to get supermajority of New Scotland Town Board

By RYAN MUNKS
munksr@spotlightnews.com

New Scotland's size cap law was defeated at a Thursday, March 11, special meeting of the Town Board at Voorheesville High School. Due to a protest petition signed by at least half of the businesses in the commercial zone, the 3-to-2 vote in favor of the law was not sufficient to pass the measure, which now requires a supermajority.

"We are going to live with what we get and hope no large retail development tries to locate here," said Supervisor Tom Dolin following the vote, adding that he would be meeting with those opposed to the size cap to see if they could find some "common ground." The Town Board introduced the size cap law, which was officially called Local Law B of 2010, at its Wednesday, Jan. 27, meeting. The vote to introduce the law and pass it on to the Planning Board passed 4-to-1, with Councilman Rich Reilly representing the only dissenting vote. That executive order gave the passage of a size cap law was near, following nearly three years of vocal debate in the wake of Sphere Development LLC's announcement that it intended to build a shopping center with a possible anchor of Target on the site of the former Bender Melon farm.

Breslin delivers State of the County

By RYAN MUNKS
munksr@spotlightnews.com

In Albany County Executive Michael Breslin's State of the County address, he laid out a number of fiscal challenges faced by the county and estimated next year's budget deficit to be about $335 million.

Breslin's address, which took place Monday, March 8, at the Albany County Office Building, focused on the county's economic challenges, much like Gov. David Paterson's State of the State address focused on the state's economic challenges. Breslin said the county's unemployment rate has reached its highest on record — 8 percent, and the price of homes has declined by 6.5 percent.

Another economic hit taken by the county as a result of the recession has been a decrease in sales tax revenues. "Our 2009 sales tax receipts were the lowest we have seen since 2005, dropping more than $11 million just last year," said Breslin.

Porco verdict upheld

A state appellate court has upheld Christopher Porco's 2005 murder conviction. Porco will continue serving his two consecutive sentences of 25 years to life in prison for killing his father and attacking his mother with an axe in their Delmar home in 2004.

Lawyers for Porco had argued that an affirmative nod by mother Joan Porco when asked after the attack if her son had attacked her should be treated as an "excited utterance" and deemed inadmissible in court.

The Appellate Division Second Department court unanimously upheld the lower court's ruling that the nod was the result of direct questioning. "...The affirmative nod was not made spontaneously but is in response to probing, direct questions by the detective and, as such, constituted testimonial hearsay subject to exclusion from evidence..." the decision reads in part.

Police questioned Joan Porco following the attack because they believe she could die of her injuries. She later said she had no recollection of the attack. The court also upheld other elements of the prosecution's case that were challenged on appeal. The defense will have the opportunity to continue the appeal process in the state Supreme Court.

The trial and appeal was held in the New York City court because father Peter Porco was a clerk in the local Appellate Division Third Department.

For the young at heart

To her mother, grandmother and those around her, Gracie Green is a champion, and now that title has been made official because she's the Heart Champion for the 27th Capital Region Heart Ball.

See Page 19.

Saints march to Spokane

The Siena College Saints know who they're facing and where they're playing in this year's NCAA men's basketball tournament. All they need to do now is figure out how to avoid the first half blues.

See Page 32.

Making sense through saving cents

BC's school banking program builds savers early on

By CHARLES WIFF
wiffc@spotlightnews.com

Kids learn early on that five and five make ten, but when do they learn that two nickels make a dime?

Bethlehem Central School District's school banking program aims to have that realization come sooner rather than later. Elementary students have the opportunity to open a First Niagara bank account and, during a specified time weekly, make deposits during school hours. Letting students manage their own account takes math principles out of the classroom and into the real world, said Glenmont Elementary Principal Laura Heffernan.

"We're teaching our children the value of saving their money," she said. "Those are life skills that they'll need."

All six BC elementary schools participate in the program. Parents, volunteers and computer software provided by the bank to take deposits, and give students

Cent Page 16
Two charged with selling heroin out of Bethlehem home

The Albany County Sheriff’s Office Drug Interdiction Unit, along with the assistance of the Tri-County SWAT Team and the North Greenbush Police Department, arrested two men on drug charges Friday, March 5.

Police said Ronald A. Davis, 38, and his cousin Torrin Matthews, 26, both of 246 North Greenbush Road, Troy, dealt heroin from their home and had previously done the same in Bethlehem. An early-morning SWAT team raid at their East Greenbush home discovered a heroin mill used to process and distribute heroin, according to police.

Inspector John Burke of the Sheriff’s Office Drug Interdiction Unit said police had been aware for about the past month the two were running an operation at 40 Hanover Drive in Bethlehem and had the location under observation, but the pair moved due to “rent problems” before police could execute a search warrant.

“We had been watching the house for a while,” he said.

Police arrested the two in East Greenbush shortly after they relocated.

Customers would travel from as far as Warren County to purchase the drug, which was sold in varying amounts and branded by way of a label on the packaging, according to police. Burke said he did not know of any connection to a large heroin bust that occurred about a year ago.

Davis was charged with criminal sale of a controlled substance in the third degree, a felony, and Matthews was charged with criminal facilitation in the fourth degree, a misdemeanor.

Both were arraigned before Bethlehem Town Judge Paul Dwyer and remanded to the Albany County jail.

Charles WildSpotlight

Teen charged with booze theft

Guilderland police arrested Joshua R. Geier, 19, of 103 Serfe Lane, Schenectady, on Tuesday, March 9, and charged him with burglary in the second and third degrees, both felonies, and petite larceny, a misdemeanor.

According to police, Geier allegedly entered a garage on Depot Road in Afton and took a bottle of Jack Daniels. Police said Geier then allegedly entered the residence on the property with the intent to commit another larceny. He was arrested, and arraigned later that day in Guilderland Town Court.

Other arrests

• Guilderland police arrested Edward Overton Ware, Sr., of Richmond Va., on Thursday, Feb. 25, and charged him with DWI and leaving the scene of an accident.

Police responded to a motor vehicle accident around Western and Arcadia avenues, in which witnesses said a gray minivan struck a small retaining wall, and continued to head west on Western Avenue before turning right on Elmwood Avenue. Police responding to the call eventually found Wade at 1465 Western Ave., in a gray minivan with extensive damage on the passenger side.

According to police, there was a strong odor of alcohol emanating from the vehicle. Ware failed subsequent sobriety tests and was arrested. A Breathalyzer test showed Ware with a BAC of 0.16. Ware was arraigned at Guilderland Town Court on Thursday, March 11.

• Guilderland police arrested Eric W. Kuprel, 27, of 1420 Western Ave., Albany, on Saturday, Feb. 27, and charged him with DWI. According to police, Kuprel was pulled over on Western Avenue in the area of Parkwood Drive for having a headlight that was not working. Police also observed that the vehicle has extensive front and rear end damage, and that the driver’s side airbag had been deployed.

Police observed a strong odor of alcohol emanating from the vehicle. According to police, Kuprel said he was involved in an accident on the Northway that left his vehicle severely damaged. He was arrested in Guilderland Town Court on Thursday, March 11.

• The Bethlehem Police Department on Friday, March 5, charged Robert H. Neal, 40, of 5112 Curry Road, Schenectady, with DWI and felony aggravated unlicensed operation following a traffic stop.

Police allegedly observed Neal’s vehicle crossing the yellow line several times while traveling southbound on River Road in Selkirk. It took Neal 800 to 900 yards before stopping once police activated emergency lights to pull him over, according to arrest reports.

Police noticed the odor of alcohol on Neal, and he exhibited sluggish responses and glassy, bloodshot eyes, according to arrest reports. When asked to produce his

PHOTO: Shawn Morgan

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Hotel holds benefit for workers facing tough times

Avenue are holding a cereal, oatmeal, coffee,
My siblings may have wanted a new TV

By ROBIN SHRAGER SUITOR
news@spotlightnews.com

My parents decided to start a "second family" when my siblings were about 8 and 11. The goal was to have two more; both issues caused a revision in the plan, and I ended up the third and final child. Due to the age gap, many ways I was an "only", child, albeit one with siblings.

By the time I came along, my mom and dad had a fair amount of parental experience. They were more mature, better off financially and calmer when it came to discipline methods (in other words, I never got spanked).

I went off to elementary school and my brother and sister became "those people who sent me letters from college." Having these older siblings was like having a second, cooler set of parents. When they were home they would take me places and teach me things and give me advice about dealing with our actual less-cool parents.

I was well into my 20s before I figured out that my older siblings hadn't been "grown up" for so long because they childishly believed. By the time I was nine, they were both in college, but even in their teen years they seemed quite knowledgeable and adult-like to me.

My brother Steven would play in the yard with me and try to teach me to run football plays like "take seven." Then he'd yell, "You run like a girl!"

One time I prayed for a snowstorm hoping he wouldn't be able to return to college at the end of his winter break. Much to my delight, my wish was granted and he had to stay home one more day! When my sister Barbara finished graduate school, she took a job in Saratoga. A few days later she stopped at my apartment. A few miles away. Then we switched places and I got into the driver's seat and he gave me some driving pointers. Soon we decided that it would be better to practice in a larger "I'll drive you up to the high school," he said.

I remember clearly how much we practiced places again. My brother got out of the passenger side of the car and walked around to return to the driver's seat. I simply slid over from the driver's seat into the passenger seat ... without even putting the car in "park."

Is this why my mom was worried? Nothing terrible happened, meaning the car didn't hit my brother as he made his way to the driver's seat. But it was pretty sure it started to move as he was climbing in. I felt pretty stupid and even yelled at him. When I got my license he gave me a key chain engraved with "THAT'S MY BABY!"

When I returned home after graduating from college, I remember calling my sister to ask if she'd noticed a change in our parents. "They look the same," I told her, "but it's clear aliens have invaded their minds. They act weird."

She said, "Nope, this is how they've always been. You're just seeing them through more grown-up eyes. Well, she knew then, so I figured she was right."

There wasn't really any rivalry between my siblings and me, although I often was jealous of them as a unit: jealous of the years they had together before I came along, of the time they spent with grandparents and other memories of living that I don't share, and of stories and private jokes they had amassed as children.

On one occasion that my brother and sister were on board with the idea of having a new sibling, "When your mother was pregnant," he told me, "they both put in writing that they would baby sit." My sister said she'd work for free, my brother negotiated a penny an hour. They definitely had a role in raising me. There's even a photograph of the two of them sleeping in a bath. Now that all of us are middle-aged, that seems kind of weird.

I think it must have been a big change to add a baby to the family after so many years. My father said, "Your siblings were outgrowing the hugging stage and your new baby would have to be loved more children. We were also thinking about buying a TV."

"You're deciding between a baby and a new TV?" I asked him.

"My boss at the time had young twins. He said all his wife did was chauffeur them around all the time. He understood what your mom was feeling. He said we should have the baby, and that "we could eventually buy a TV too. He pointed out that we'd be in debt either way."

I have reap many benefits from having the "only" child and having two older siblings. When I needed advice about college, job interviews, marriage, buying a home, or raising a child, there has always been a sibling with relevant experience. I've found any time, there has always been a sibling to provide advice. Even though I was clearly spoiled, my brother and sister managed to love me anyway.

I'm sure glad they did have a chance to vote for the TV.

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**Got views?**

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For information on submitting a Point of View, e-mail news@spotlightnews.com or call 439-4949.
BC continues to find ways to cut

Next workshop to feature instruction, athletics

By CHARLES WITT
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The Bethlehem Central School District Board of Education continued paring down the 2010-11 school budget Wednesday, March 10, tentatively approving approximately $344,000 in cuts to the special education and technology portions of the budget.

The board will review the reductions again before formally adopting a budget later in March.

Last year, the technology portion of the budget was spared from cuts, but there was some discussion as to whether this was one area of the budget too important to touch.

"It would be a huge setback with where we want to go," said Assistant Superintendent Jody Monroe.

A $125,000 cut to the technology replacement fund would likely mean neither the middle or high school would see wireless Internet next year and, if the cut is maintained long-term, the 6-year replacement schedule for computers could be pushed back.

Board Vice President Lisa Allendorf and Board Member Charmaine Wyssinghpe dissented in the tentative vote.

Allendorph and Board Member Member Charmaine Wyssinghpe dissented on a tentative vote to cut two technology aides (of five), which would substantially increase repair service times for computers and other equipment district wide.

In the area of special education, the board tentatively approved $236,000 in cuts, which Pupil Personnel Services Director Rita Levay said are least harmful to the program.

"We have spent a lot of time looking at every student that we serve," she said. "It has been challenging, but I believe we can do that."

"We have spent a lot of time looking at every student that we serve," the board’s ‘standpoint,’” Board of Education President James Dering said. "We’re trying to find the best that we can do with the money we’re going to have."

Other items

The district is continuing to examine facility usage fees, and took a look at a tentative fee schedule that would see slight fee increases across the board for facility use by community groups.

At the previous week’s budget workshop, the board had examined a proposal to close the Middle School pool to save on maintenance and energy use. Several members of the Delmar Dolphin Swim Team said they’d rather pay higher fees than to lose the pool available for use.

The tentative fee schedule has the pool rental fees jumping from $375 to $50 per hour, the largest increase out of all facilities. The board will revisit the fee structure on Wednesday, March 24.

The next board meeting will be Wednesday, March 17, when the K-12 instructional program and athletics will be among the items of discussion. 14 teaching positions are among the cuts administrators will put forward. That meeting will be held at the high school in anticipation of high attendance.

The Board of Education is scheduled to adopt a budget the following week, on March 24, or on March 31 if they cannot reach a consensus at that meeting. The public votes on the budget May 18.

The public will also vote on a separate $4.1 million bus replacement referendum, the cost of which is not included in the budget. If approved, the cost would be bonded over five years.

The referendum, approved Wednesday night, includes 15 vehicles—11 large buses, four medium ones, and would equate to zero growth in the Transportation Department’s fleet.

The referendum is $800,000 higher than last year’s, even though fewer vehicles are included. The cost of steel and new EPA emission standards are driving up the price of vehicles, said district CFO Judith Kehoe, who added deferring the purchase of new buses can result in hidden maintenance costs.

"The newer buses are easier to maintain," she said.

It is possible the Board of Education will also put to vote a referendum to increase the walking distance from the high and middle schools from one half mile to a greater distance. They will be receiving more information on the impact and potential cost savings from the Transportation Department at their next budget workshop.

There is no walking distance for elementary schools; all students are offered bus service.

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The Spotlight
March 17, 2010 · Page 5
Top 10 things we’d like to see on the Bender Melon Farm

New Scotland’s size cap law has languished for more than a few years, and its most recent iteration was defeated last week at a special meeting of the Town Board, after a protest petition signed by at least half of the businesses in the commercial zone forced a supermajority vote on the matter.

The vote wound up being 34-2 in favor of the law, with Council members Richard Reilly and Debra Baron against, but it was not sufficient to pass the measure.

So much of the debate has centered on what people don’t want on the Bender Melon Farm that we at The Spotlight have decided to list our top 10 suggestions for what should be on the farm:

1. A melon farm. Think about it, you wouldn’t even have to change the name.
2. A 750,000 square-foot inflatable bounce house shaped like a Target. You know, for the kids.
3. District 9. One word: Prawns. And you thought the pictures at www.peoplesofwalmart.com were gross.
4. A big camp for people who like big-box stores. (That way we can better keep an eye on ‘em.)
5. Residential development. Spot zoning is cool if it works out in your favor.
6. NSASED headquarters, complete with helipad and “secret melon entrance.”
7. A money tree that voters in New Scotland get to decide whether or not the farm’s owners can use.
8. Bethlehem Town Hall, because apparently we can’t put an end to that.
9. Bethlehem’s size cap law finally being in effect.
10. A way we can better keep an eye on ‘em.

Point of View

By SEAN AHERN

It’s true that on St. Patrick’s Day, everyone is Irish. The hard part for everyone else is being a Brady, Sullivan, Quinn, or Ahern the other 364 days of the year.

March 17 is, of course, St. Patrick’s Day, the day every year that people gather from all walks of life to celebrate the driving of the snakes from Ireland by Saint Patrick (s), who is of course the patron saint of Guiness, peas, Jameson and disdain for the English.

Many Irish Americans use this holiday as a way of celebrating their Irish heritage, but for the overarching masses in the county it’s another reason to get three sheets to the wind on green beer, eat over salted meat products and sing out of tune renditions of “Danny Boy” late into the night.

All of which “get my Irish up,” as my mother would say.

I have always worn my 99.9 percent Irish heritage like a badge of honor, even going so far as to tell an English Social Studies teacher I once had that she was wrong in her description of the Bloody Sunday riots in the 1970s. Because of the work of my grandfather, I can trace my family lineage back to the mid 1600’s where my great grandmother grew up in County Kerry, Ireland, know that I had family running guns for the IRA, during the Irish Revolution as a part of the Sinn Finn and that my great-grandmother’s head was shaved by the Black and Tans, mercenaries employed by the British in Ireland as police, for speaking out against the King of England at the time.

In my own research, I have found that the Irish Potato Famine’s Latin motto is “Per Ardua Auris,” meaning “I rise through difficulties” – an apt motto for the many families that came to this country at the turn of the last century and has worked hard to find out where it came from since.

Weekly poll

Last week’s poll results: Question: What should be the first thing cut in school budgets? • Sports. We shouldn’t keep athletics at the expense of education: 12% • Arts. Theater and music should go before anything else: 9% • Teachers and administrators. They’re all overpaid, anyway: 10% • A sensible reduction in most or all services is needed to balance school budgets in this financial crisis: 59% This week’s question: “What would you like to see on the Bender Melon Farm in New Scotland?” Log on to www.spotlightnews.com to cast your vote and see results.
Community contributes to hockey team's success

Editor, The Spotlight:

Author and educator William A. Ward once said, "Adversity causes some men to break; others to break records." The 2009-10 Bethlehem Varsity Hockey team is living proof of this maxim. The team started the season not only with a new coaching staff, but also with an additional burden of having to raise approximately $21,000 to pay for practice and game ice because of budget cuts. The team, however, kept their collective heads up every step of the way to ensure that we could have Monday when it is typically round to plan for the players after the game and supported by hot and delicious pizza.

The team worked with approximately $21,000 to the 2009-10 Bethlehem Varsity season and raised funds. Romo's Pizza in Glenmont kept our hungry players after every home game. Five Guys also provided free hot dogs to our hungry players after every home game.

Moreover, this team was staff members who worked that benefited the team. They, and Assistant Coach Gregory's Barbershop and Hewitt's in Glenmont showed up in the community bought home ads and provided support. An impressive 15-4-2 record. Moreover, this team was the first team in Bethlehem history in first place and to play in the divisional finals. In acknowledgment of these achievements, the Capital District High School Hockey League recognized seven players in its All-Star selections.

Of course, the players and coaches could not have done this without an overwhelming support network. The Bethlehem community showed up in full force at every home game and supported the various fund raisers throughout the season. The parents of the players were tireless in volunteering to work at the games and raising. My fellow Booster board members worked year round to plan for the season and imaginatively came up with ideas for raising the needed money. The training provided by the Bethlehem Youth Hockey program over the years has helped produce the high-quality players for the Varsity team.

The Bethlehem School District worked with us every step of the way to ensure that we could have a successful season. Their staff members who worked at the games were cheerful and ardent supporters throughout the season. The work of the Bethlehem YMCA helped us through the many hurdles during the season and worked tirelessly to provide quality ice throughout the season. Additionally, the YMCA gave us the latitude to run additional fund raisers in the risk.

Many businesses in the community bought ads and provided support, but a few deserve special recognition. Five Guys in Glenmont provided T-shirts and gift cards for us to raffle to the crowd and to toss to the crowd after every home goal. Five Guys also provided free hot dogs to our hungry players after every home game.

The Spotlight:

Your Opinion in The Spotlight

Editor, The Spotlight:

Fact: The Act would not produce additional revenue for SUNY. The state would pay less; students and parents would pay a lot more.

The Act would eliminate state appropriations for tuition and other revenues, so there is no guarantee that student tuition and fees would be used to benefit students or the academic mission of the campus. Quality would suffer.

No one wants an empty big-box store

Editor, The Spotlight:

I am a resident of New Scotland and own a successful business of 25 years at Stuyvesant Plaza. I have a colorful history of dealing with developers throughout the Northeast. Rich Reilly and Debbie Baron, do you really trust these developers? Read the Wall Street Journal and look around through the Capital Region and you will see big box retail rethinking their business model and their expansion plans.

The public is spending less — even in Walmart — and retailers are all cutting back on inventory. New Scotland's local population base will not generate sales numbers to support the square footage minimums required to turn on the lights. And the shopping habits of the Capital District are well-entrenched — you will not get customers from across town and you surely will have alienated everyone locally from ever setting foot in one.

Take a look at Wolf Road, both the Barnes and Noble and Borders have abandoned their big boxes for smaller spaces in the malls and they still are not doing well. Office supplies, bed and bath, hardware etc all the same saturation scenario played out over and over again across the country. Retailers are clearly not afraid to close down a big box when the numbers don't pan out.

Are you planning for this and how much will it cost New Scotland taxpayers to watch the weeds spring up in an abandoned parking lot? Would you then be willing to convert the big box into a retirement home for those same feeble developers? Only the naive or grossly misinformed would believe their inflated claims.

The owners of the big boxes are not afraid to say no to a developer, especially in this economy when dot.com sales are growing geometrically. Small is beautiful again. Communities are demanding it and the smart retailers, local or national chain, listen to their communities. The last thing either Walmart or Target wants is to lose a customer forever for a gamble on a field in New Scotland.

Empty big box stores! Really, who wants them?

Susan Newcom
Slingerlands

Don't be fooled by the ACT. Keep SUNY Public!

The so-called "Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act" is not good for SUNY and students. Don't let the name deceive you.

Here are the facts:

FACT: The Act would not produce additional revenue for SUNY. The state would pay less; students and parents would pay a lot more.

FACT: SUNY could place a surcharge on tuition (differential tuition) that would vary by campus and program without limitation. Student access would be denied.

FACT: There is no evidence that public/private partnerships—especially those created without government oversight—raise revenue. In fact, SUNY's previous joint ventures have cost taxpayers millions.

If this Act is passed, students like us would not be able to afford SUNY.

Don't deny our opportunity.

Don't like the Act? Go to SaveSUNY.org
Tell NY lawmakers to keep SUNY public.

The Spotlight
Economy bleak, but education cuts would be worse

Guess she didn’t read the paper.

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The Spotlight

www.spotlightnews.com

Your Opinion in The Spotlight

Economy bleak, but education cuts would be worse

Ten years ago, PS 32 in the Fordham section of the Bronx was a school in danger of state closure. Test scores were low, parental involvement was lacking and so was teamwork among school staff. It was bleak. And with every passing day, PS 32 inch ed closer toward its own demise: Test scores soon climbed, with students showing substantial progress in English and math. By 2009, the school received an "A" on the city’s annual Department of Education’s Progress report. Today, PS 32 — the school that once faced shutdown — ranks in the top 10 percent of all New York City elementary schools.

As a teacher at PS 32 for 20 years, I was fortunate to witness, firsthand, what’s possible when teachers, staff, administrators, parents and students work together for a greater good. Yet, what happened at PS 32 is hardly unique. Similar success stories can be found throughout the state.

Yes, these impressive turnarounds can be attributed to the hard work and commitment of teachers, administrators, parents and students. But critical, too, was the availability of resources necessary to add new teachers and essential programs. If Gov. David Paterson’s proposal to slash $1.4 billion in education aid stands, however, replicating the type of achievement seen in the Bronx, Poughkeepsie and Elmira will become far more unlikely.

Paterson’s cuts would cause lasting harm to students, school and taxpayers statewide. They would force schools to slash teachers and staff, lead to the elimination of important academic programs, and result in double-digit property tax hikes. Consider: In the Albany City School District, officials say the governor’s proposed education cuts would result in the elimination of more than 100 positions, and likely mean program cuts and a possible school closure. Meanwhile, in the low-income Wyandanch school district on Long Island — which would lose almost $1 million under the governor’s proposal — teacher layoffs, as well as the elimination of Advanced Placement courses, summer school, sports teams and bus rides are on the chopping block. And the Williamsville School District near Buffalo, which is facing the loss of $3 million in aid, may be forced to impose the biggest tax increase that homeowners have seen in years. Similar stories are playing out daily in districts throughout the state.

New York’s economic problems, without question, are severe. But as this state works to establish a high-tech, knowledge economy, we cannot afford to dismantle our children’s education. And as we struggle for economic recovery, we cannot afford to send more people to the unemployment line and impose measures that make the burden heavier already overwhelmed taxpayers. Unless lawmakers reject the governor’s education cuts, however, this will be our reality. And success stories like those in the Bronx, Poughkeepsie and Elmira will be few and far between.

Andrew Pallotta
NYSUT Executive Vice President
Shoe Depot shuttered

The Saratoga Shoe Depot on Delaware Avenue in Delmar had its last solds.

After nearly 30 years in Delaware owner Frank Panza made baseless levels against him by negative. The decision supports his ilisciplinary Hughes not guilty of work as the result of illness. Dehnar, owner to focus on

Hughes was the officer Hughes said the Bethlehem police
did not disobey... there is no question... Hughes said. "You... for a day off on Friday, April 3, 2010; a fishing trip, called in sick that day and the two subsequent days, according to the arbitrator's decision.

... Hughes was dropped by way of disciplinary charges A dealing with for two years. In my opinion it's just Hughes did not disobey... there is no question... Hughes said. "You... for a day off on Friday, April 3, 2010; a fishing trip, called in sick that day and the two subsequent days, according to the arbitrator's decision.

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Please call Underway Lawn Care* at 439-4590 for your free written no-obligation proposal.

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G’land discusses special-needs initiative

School board hears how three-tiered system can help students with learning difficulties

By RIAN MUNK
munkr@spotlightnews.com

Demian Singleton, assistant superintendent for instruction at the Guam Children’s School District, told the School Board at its Tuesday, March 5, meeting about the district’s implementation of the Response to Intervention Program. The goal of the program is to identify children with learning difficulties as early as possible, with the goal of addressing the child’s needs before it’s too late.

Singleton said RTI is a “schoolwide integrated and systemic program whose goal is to achieve for all students having learning difficulties and ultimately disabilities.”

“RTI is not a program. It is not an approach. It essentially is a process, a process that would incorporate essential elements of many programs,” said Singleton. “It is not a static model.”

The program combines elements of special education and general education. According to Singleton, the two types of education are normally run parallel to each other, however, RTI attempts to bring them together.

“The shift will require us to essentially exhaust all possible general education interventions before identifying a student as having a learning disability,” he said.

The combination of special education and general education is reduced in the first essential component of RTI—a multi-tiered delivery system of educational services.

The first of the three tiers in the system, which contains 80 percent of all students, is the least intensive. At this level, general education classroom teachers respond to the needs of a student, in the classroom setting.

“If a child is not responsive to tier one, they are recommended to tier two. As you progress, the intensity and duration of intervention will increase,” said Singleton.

Tier two, which encompasses 10 to 15 percent of students, is a more intensive intervention in which students are put into smaller groups with instruction targeted to meet their needs. In tier two, the student’s progress is regularly monitored in the areas in which he or she is deficient.

“Tier three is designed for students who have exhibited little or no response to tier one or tier two interventions,” said Singleton.

The third tier, which includes 5 percent of all students, includes individualized support for students.

“A successfully implemented RTI model is expected to reduce special needs identification significantly, to approximately 5 percent of the student population, currently we hover around 13 to 15 percent,” said Singleton.

He said 13 to 15 percent is commonplace for school districts nation-wide.

Singleton said that when a student makes a transition from elementary school to middle school, the middle school teacher can track the progress made by the student before he or she arrives at the new school, and the integrated data system will help address that need.

The need to track student progress throughout their entire career has been recognized by the federal government.

.Singleton said, “We are working to offset this expense through the use of stimulus funds, this was one of the primary categories for accepted use of stimulus funds,” said Singleton.

His presentation was generally well received by the board; however, some members did have concerns about the feasibility of the program.

“It sounds amazing that we could potentially reduce IEP’s from around 15 percent to 5 percent,” said Catherine Barber, vice-president of the School Board. Barber asked whether or not the RTI model has worked in other areas.

“Districts that really went full force into RTI have reduced their rates of identification from around 15 percent to less than 5 percent, or somewhere like 7 or 8 percent, or some as low as 6 percent,” said Singleton.

Board member Gloria Towhill commented on how RTI shifts a great deal of responsibility, and said it would be especially difficult considering elimination of teacher leader positions in the current budget proposal.

Singleton said Towhill’s concern was “very valid,” however the district hired literacy and math specialists earlier in the year to facilitate the implementation of RTI.

Board member Julie Cono expressed her concerns about the effect of implementing the model could have on instruction.

“I’m wondering about the burden on the teachers as far as documentation,” said Cono. “It seems like after each sign-off you document and then retest.”

According to Singleton, the implementation “won’t be so much at the classroom level.”

He said teachers would have to document progress about three times more than the classroom. However, as a student progresses through tiers two and three, the need to document and document will be ongoing.

Singleton’s ended his presentation by fielding questions from the board. At the meeting; he said the school is looking at all federal funding for RTI, however, the actual implementation of the process will not begin until next school year.

Clear

(A From Page 9)

contemptuous, impertinent and insolent manner during his intermarche with Lieutenant Heffernan on April 2. The conduct was inappropriate and objectionable. There has been no showing that an order was given to Officer Hughes and that his conduct was in defiance of contravention of such an order, the decision read in part. "

Supervisor Sam Messina declined comment, citing the case as a personnel matter, except to say the following:

“The Police Department believed it had a strong position to pursue disciplinary action and is disappointed in the outcome. It is recognized that there is no appeal process from a hearing officer’s decision. Hughes had been on medical leave from the department and, this past December, was placed on 207-c leave, a state law provision that allows said leave for police officers and firefighters who have been found to have on the job related disability or disease. Hughes said he saw a doctor of the town’s choosing, who made the recommendation that he declined to go into the details of recommendation. He made a recommendation that I could not return to duty, [in my department].”

Hughes said he will receive full pay while under 207-c: possibly until he reaches retirement age. His annual salary is $65,206.

Messina said town officials couldn’t discuss the matter.

Mr. Hughes is on leave under general municipal law section 207-c, and I am not permitted to discuss the nature of this leave because of health and personal privacy issues," he said.

Mr. Hughes said he is continuing on the town’s taking of Hughes’ badge and gun, A process that could be several months in coming.

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Fair Trade initiative in Delmar moving forward

By CHARLES WIFF
wiff@spothlightnews.com

A grant made to TransFair USA has local fair trade advocates hoping their movement will be picking up steam in other communities.

Anna McMahon of Fair Trade Delmar said her group is well into the process of having Bethlehem declared an Official Fair Trade Town, and she hopes a $925,000 grant from Green Mountain Coffee Roasters Foundation to the national fair trade certifier will trickle down to raise awareness of the movement.

"I hope it'll mean the ability to publicize what we're doing and to encourage other towns to set up their own Fair Trade Town groups," she said. According to McMahon, Delmar is one of only 30 communities nationwide with an active FTT movement, though national organizers have hopes of accrediting hundreds of towns by 2013. Only 15 municipalities are accredited as Fair Trade Towns nationwide.

The Village of Ballston Spa completed the process to become the first Fair Trade Town in the state in December 2008. Fair Trade Delmar will meet with other fair trade advocates there for a conference April 24.

Additionally, Fair Trade Delmar will be holding a fair trade chocolate event on April 2 at the Delmar Reformed Church.

Fair trade products cut middlemen in order to return more of a profit to the producers, who are usually indigenous third-world people and often living in extreme poverty. Items are always handmade using traditional methods and materials, and fair trade foods and coffees are produced through non-industrial methods.

TransFair USA lends certification to these products so consumers can more easily find and purchase fair trade goods.

To be designated a Fair Trade Town, municipalities must meet several criteria. A steering committee must lead the efforts, fair trade items must be available in proportion to the citizenry, fair trade items must be used by a number of local organizations, the media must take notice and the town's governing body must pass a resolution supporting fair trade and the local campaign.

Once a resolution is passed, Bethlehem should meet all those criteria, said McMahon, a goal Fair Trade Delmar is hoping to meet in coming weeks.

"I've been discussing things with the super visor, and I need to get back and have another meeting with him," McMahon said. "We'd very much like to have this done by May 8, which is World Fair Trade Day."

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Saturday is Baby Palooza in G’land

Baby Palooza, the Guilderland Public Library’s annual celebration of babies and new and soon-to-be parents, will be held in the Library’s Helderberg Room on Saturday, March 20, from 11 am to 2 pm.

The library along with local and community organizations have put together workshops, presentations and demonstrations all of interest to new parents.

For a complete list of exhibitors, and a map of the exhibit area, click on the Baby Palooza link on www.guilpl.org.

These workshops have limited availability. Tickets to these events will be available at the door on a first-come, first-served basis. Exhibitors include: Ask the Pharmacist, Bellevue Woman’s Center, Capital District Child Care Coordinating Council, Certified Prenatal Yoga Instruction, Community Cradle, Honest Weight Food Co-op, Seton Health Childbirth Center, Certified Prenatal Yoga, Star of Life, Yoga & More, and The Spotlight.

Sweepstakes:

This year’s sweepstakes is brought to you by Price Chopper and the Guilderland Public Library. To enter, complete the entry form at the library and you could win a $25 Price Chopper gift card.

It’s time to tango at V’ville library

“Tango and More: Latin American Music for Saxophone by Piazzolla, Moreno, Pena, and Rivera” will be performed on Sunday, March 28, at 2 p.m.

The 12th annual Harborling of Spring Classical Concert features Broken Reed, a saxophone quartet based in New York City, performing classical and folk pieces with Latin American roots. The group’s diverse musical influences range from jazz and classical to swing.

Parents is a group of parents of children with special needs. Members are all such parents and believe that music has healing powers. This concert is made possible in part through the support of the State Council on the Arts, a state agency and the Friends of the Library.

The quartet’s Web site is www.brokenreedsax.com, and their compact disc, “The Sound of a Broken Reed,” “A Reed Breaks in Dumbo” and “Out the Window,” are available in the library.

This program is made possible in part through a Community Arts Grant, a program funded by The Arts Center of the Capital Region through the State and Local Partnership Program of the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency and the Friends of the Library.

While you are here, take the opportunity to view the special Latin American exhibit in the hall gallery, the community room and the showcase by the Marinees Gallery of Troy, and experience the spirit of Tango & More.

Real Life look at senior housing

Signups are still being taken for Real Life 2010 on Senior Housing on Wednesday, March 24, at 7 p.m.


The Spotlight}

For information on these events, please call 518-439-3670 www.pestylas.biz

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Grant funds special needs program

The library's Youth Services department has received a grant from the Upper Hudson Library System to support a new library initiative: reaching out to children with special needs and their families, teachers and caregivers in the Bethlehem Central School District.

According to the district's 2009-2011 Special Education Plan, 656 of the more than 6,000 enrolled students had a disability in 2008—50 preschoolers and 606 school-aged students. The library saw an opportunity to help.

The project will set up a series of storytimes, playtimes, outreach and parenting programs. Family storytimes called "The Children's Circle" will provide interactive activities for children with different learning abilities. Each storytime will be followed by a free-play session that will encourage children and caregivers to socialize with their peers.

"The Children's Circle" will not be restricted to special-needs families, but placing emphasis on special-needs children means that caregivers can expect a welcoming, accepting atmosphere.

Youth Services librarian Jennifer Hanley, who developed the project, is looking forward to seeing it unfold. "This is an exciting opportunity. This project will begin a sustainable tradition of service to the special needs population in our community," she said. "The Capital District Child Care Council has been a tremendous asset, and has offered to help as we go forward."

Circle of Friends, a local preschool for special-needs children, has also agreed to be a grant partner, and will host some of the outreach programs.

Our newsletter, Web site and house materials will keep you informed of upcoming programs.

Louise Grieco
All library programming is free and open to the public. The Bethlehem Public Library is located at 451 Delaware Ave., Albany. For information, call 439-9314.

Library screens 'Coraline'

RCS School District kids are off school on March 26 for Superintendents Day. What's a middle school student to do? The library will be showing the movie "Coraline" with our new, multi-purpose projector. "Coraline" is a stop-motion animation film based on the novel by Neil Gaiman, who also wrote "The Graveyard Book" (movie to be released next year).

At a special Time 4 Teens program that day, we'll discuss the book, eat lunch, and watch the movie. Admission is by ticket only. The program will run from noon to 2:30 p.m. Interested kids should contact the library to request a ticket and to receive a ticket to this event. The deadline for registering is March 20.
Sibling sanctuary

Club helps brothers and sisters of special needs kids cope

By RYNN MUNKS
mmunk@spotlightnews.com

Having a child with special needs is tough on a family. It is particularly hard on the siblings of the child who, at times, must cope with the disproportionate amount of attention a parent must give to care for their sibling.

The Bus Stop Club, a Guilderland-based not-for-profit organization, hopes to provide siblings of children with special needs an environment in which they can express themselves and interact with peers that understand where they are coming from.

Dr. Brian Sheridan, a pediatrician in the Town of Guilderland, began the Bus Stop Club as an advocacy project four years ago when he was a patient resident at Albany Medical Center.

"We really got these kids together to express their feelings," said Sheridan. "They could only go to other kids so they didn't have to feel alone." He said the club meets monthly at the Guilderland YMCA and the East Greenwich YMCA. The program has eight volunteers, five of whom are professionals, including social workers and doctors, who can help the children cope with their situation.

"The kids will come in, eat pizza, do arts and crafts, and just talk," said Sheridan.

He said afterward, the children usually take advantage of the YMCA's facilities and play basketball or go swimming.

Sheridan said it is often the case that siblings of wheelchair-bound children do not have the same opportunities as other children.

"For a lot of these kids, it's a chance to get out and do something; something they normally don't get to do," he said.

The Bus Stop Club serves 25 families, and in addition to the monthly meetings at the two YMCA's, the group attends Siena and SUNY Albany basketball games, Six Flags in the summer, and, according to Sheridan, the club is planning a camp for the kids this summer.

"We became a not-for-profit about one year ago," said Sheridan. "Since then we raised about $14,000." Most recently, the club received a $5,000 grant from the New York Life insurance company, which was presented during halftime at a Tuesday, Dec. 29, Siena Saints basketball game.

Dana Ackerman, whose 13-year-old daughter, Courtney, attends the Bus Stop Club, said the club has provided a way for her daughter to cope with the disproportionate amount of attention given to her younger brother, Kyle, who was diagnosed with Type One diabetes.

"It gives her a chance to just have an outlet and talk to other kids in the same boat as she is," said Ackerman.

The main focus is to have her witness her circles. She feels with Kyle's disease a lot of times the focus is on him," said Sheridan. "She finally comes home and sees she is not the only one with the experiences she has in everyday life."

Dana said that Courtney gains perspective by talking with the other children in the club. "In some ways it makes her appreciate that she doesn't have it as bad as others," she said.

Sheridan said he hopes to expand the club into the City of Albany and Clifton Park in the coming year.

"In the Capital District, there are about 25,000 children who are mentally or physically disabled," he said.

According to Sheridan, that means there are from 25,000 to 50,000 siblings that could benefit from the Bus Stop Club.

"We're a small group, but if we come together we can do a lot," said Courtney.

State

(From Page 1)

He said that represents a $5 million decline in sales in the county throughout the year, and that trend is expected to continue into the current year.

Breslin said that over the past two years, the county has experienced an increase in the need for services, combined with the decline in revenues.

The precipitous drops in state tax revenues, the delays and cuts in state reimbursements and the loss of all public assistance services are placing an extraordinary strain on our operations," said Breslin.

He specifically mentioned a 53 percent increase in food stamps, a 20 percent increase in temporary assistance as well as a 21 percent increase in emergency assistance to families.

"We don't take action that burden will be passed on to county property taxpayers," said Breslin.

He announced the formation of a budget oversight committee, a special meeting with legislators later in the month to discuss the county's fiscal challenges, and a review of the county's capital plan.

For 2011, Breslin expects a budget deficit of $35 million, an amount that if made up in real property tax revenues would result in a $15 percent increase in the county's property tax rate.

"The deficit stems from a $4 million increase in the cost of both employee health and retirement benefits, a $1.5 million increase in the cost of Medicaid, the loss of federal nursing home and stimulus aid and expected reductions in the amount of state aid in the 2010-2011 state budget.

"The stimulus funds have provided much-needed relief for us," said Breslin. "While I hope that some additional federal funds will be secured, rest assured any federal funding will not be at last year's levels." Although mostly highlighting the fiscal challenges of the county, Breslin took a positive tone when talking about job creation through the county's Empire Zone program, and through the county's Al Tech Loan Fund, a program he said has provided more than 1,200 jobs since it was created in 1994.

"Looking forward, Breslin said, the county expects to consolidate its ten 911 call centers, expand its solid waste management capabilities, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and design the Albany County Rail Trail.

"There has been a special committee that's been trying to clean up the numbers thrown around. When you hear 35 million dollars, you really hear it's shocking," he said.

"You have to talk about economic development, how to attract businesses here, and how we are going to create jobs," said McCoy.

McCoy said Albany County is an attractive place to live, with its government and educational opportunities, but it needs to do more to make businesses have chosen to leave the county and relocate out of state, or even across the river in Rensselaer County.

"That's taking the tax base and out of the county," said McCoy. "How can we run things better, and more efficiently? People want to hear that, and that's the message you should send out." As for the following year, Comissio said it will be a "year of difficult challenges by fiscal challenges.

"While we're in Albany County have tightened our belts, we have to make sure we are not out of any, he said.

Search for woodcock at Fiver Rivers

An outdoor search for the American woodcock will be conducted Thursday, May 22, at 7 p.m. at the NYSDEC Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, 2688 Six Farm Road, Delmar.

The program, sponsored by the Hudson Bird Club, is open to the public free of charge.

Participants are urged to wear sturdy shoes and dress for outdoor activity. In the event of inclement weather, the program may be cancelled.

Call the Center at 475-0231 for more information.

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Parks and Rec to host first 'Eggstravaganza' on Saturday, March 27, from 9 a.m. to noon, the Town of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Department will host its first "Eggstravaganza" at the Elm Avenue Park Large Pavilion.

Join them for some fun at the park with clown/comedic entertainment, a jelly bean guessing contest, egg hunt and more.

Recommended ages for participants are ages 3 through grade 5. Children will be broken up into three age groups for the event. Each child will bring your own basket.

In case of rain or poor field conditions, this event will be held in the Town Hall Auditorium.

The Spotlight
We've faced tough times before — including the Great Depression and two world wars. And, like our parents and grandparents before us, we've worked hard to build a better future for our kids, the next generation of New Yorkers, a future made strong through public education.

Yes, times are tough — we've already lost more than 5,000 education jobs over the past year. Further cuts to education are the wrong way to go.

Gov. Paterson's proposal to slash $1.4 billion in education funds would force schools to lay off educators, eliminate programs and derail the substantial progress students have made statewide. The plan would also further burden local property taxpayers at a time when they can least afford it.

Hope for the future starts in our public schools. Urge legislators to do the right thing. Reject education cuts.
Longtime Senior Services Director retires

By CHARLES WFF
wff@spglightnewss.com

Longtime town employee and the veritable founder of the Town of Bethlehem Senior Services Department Karen Pellettier bid Town Hall adieu last week and entered retirement with 32 years of service under her belt.

Pellettier got her start in town government working as a volunteer liaison between seniors and the Parks and Recreation Department, and was quickly hired to expand the breadth of senior support offered by the town.

By 2000, several volunteers were assisting Pellettier in what became the Senior Services Department, which today offers transportation, food bank program, and over 200 volunteers.

Pellettier was honored at a Wednesday, March 10, Bethlehem Town Board meeting, during which former supervisors Jack Cunningham, Theresa Egan and Sheila Fuller joined Supervisor Sam Mesina in presenting her with an official resolution.

Pellettier was key in building the breadth of senior support for the town. Mesina read the official proclamation and gave a short speech recognizing Pellettier's impact on the town.

"Out of all the public servants I know—and I know a lot of them—you are the one we should all emulate," he said.

Pellettier and her husband, John, have three grown children and are awaiting the arrival of their fifth grandchild. She will be spending more time with her family in retirement.

Beuhlem Senior Services Director Karen Pellettier was honored for 32 years of service at the most recent Town Board meeting, just prior to her retirement. From left to right: Former Supervisors Jack Cunningham, Theresa Egan, Supervisor Sam Messina, Pellettier, Former Supervisor Sheila Fuller.

Cents

(From Page 1)

receipts that they'll later use to keep track of their account in a ledger. Withdrawals can be made from a First Niagara branch along with a parent's consent.

Kilcher said the program sees approximately 30 participants every week out of a student body of about 400. Some students bank every week.

"We've really had tremendous success," said Glenmont PTA President Dawn McMahon.

Any elementary student can take part in the program, and First Niagara's Suzanne Kilcher said the program has merit for even the kindergartners.

"The product is really geared toward this young student," she said. "We know children learn by doing.

Even young students will recognize the reward of small prizes for every seventh deposit they make.

That also enters them into a drawing for a $50 deposit into their accounts.

The program is offered in 260 schools across the state, from very affluent districts to the inner city. It's successful partly because account can be opened without any initial deposit, just parental consent, and from that point on deposits as small as 25-cents can be made.

First Niagara rewards the student with $1 upon their first deposit of any amount.

Kilcher said she sees people mismanaging their finances all the time, which is why banks offer services like overdraft protection.

She hopes that instilling the value of saving and keeping track of one's money early on will make better bank customers in the future.

"We don't teach in our education system how to manage money," she said. "This is a start.

Click it up! Comments on this story and others at www.spglightnewss.com

Camp Adventures

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St. Matthew Lutheran School and Child Care Center

FULL/PART Time programs to suit your needs

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YMCA summer camp is all about fun... and so much more!

We change lives for the better at the YMCA. Give your child the chance to do more and be more at YMCA summer camp.

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• group projects
• creative play
• arts and crafts
• sports

Camp — Discover the YMCA Difference!
Cynthia Elliot, in her recommendation.

Dolin said at the time that the Planning Board's recommendation is completely contrary to the Albany County Planning Board's recommendation in favor of the law.

The public hearing began with Town of Bethlehem Supervisor Sam Messina voicing his support for the law. "The principles of balance, sustainability and quality of life are apparent in the law... It advances the balance that should be in the cornerstone of the town's comprehensive plan," said Messina. Messina said he supported the size cap because of the traffic issues a large development would bring to the area, as well as the burden a big-box store would put on the Town of Bethlehem's water supply, and the inability of trucks to fit under the Delaware Hudson railroad bridge, forcing delivery vehicles to travel closer to Town of Bethlehem residents. For the next two hours, residents spoke about the size-cap law.

"People of this town have spoken. I think the Town Board should pass this law. Why destroy a scenic area like this," said Louis Brown, a New Scotland resident, after two hours of hearing comments from the public, most fearing the effect a big-box store would have on New Scotland's sense of community. Dolin made a motion to close the hearing amidst shouts of "Yotel!" emanating from the crowd. At that time, Maura Mottolese, the attorney for Bender Melon Farm, submitted a protest petition signed by at least 50 percent of owners from the commercial district, saying, "The protest petition was filed; it does appear it's a valid protest petition, which would trigger the supermajority requirements." After the petition was submitted, the board voted on the measure, Councilmen Douglas LaGrange and Daniel Mackay, and Supervisor Dolin voted "Yes" without explanation.

He said he could not afford to develop his entire parcel of land all at once, as would be required by the new law.

After two hours of hearing comments from the public, most fearing the effect a big-box store would have on New Scotland's sense of community, Dolin made a motion to close the hearing. After the meeting, Dolin spoke about the future of the farm and business. He said it's not the law's intention to stop big-box development that concerned him but "all of the little stuff that comes behind it.""People of this town have spoken. I think the Town Board should pass this law. Why destroy the scenic area like this," said Louis Brown, a New Scotland resident, after two hours of hearing comments from the public, most fearing the effect a big-box store would have on New Scotland's sense of community. Dolin made a motion to close the hearing. After the meeting, Dolin spoke about the future of the farm and business.

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Homeownership and you: It's not all about tax credits...but they help

By Anthony Lanizzo Senior Vice President KeyBank

Nancy Reagans home story is really no more than the people who live in them. Of course, Nancy Reagan tonight. Homes are where we raise our families and build our memories. They are a part of our life story and a realization of the most American of dreams—the opportunity to take a place of shelter and, with love and luxury, transform something more meaningful than four walls and a roof.

However, it is easy to say home is no more than the people who live in them. In fact, you actually live in one. For many, the opportunity to build a home of love and dreams begins by first moving into a house made of walls and beams. And thanks to the extension and expansion of the Homebuyer Tax Credit program and the current real estate market more people are going to have the opportunity to do just that.

Unlock your possibilities

To get $150 and KeyBank Rewards

When you open a Key Express Free Checking Account by April 30 and make one KeyBank Rewards debit card transaction plus a combination of two direct deposits and/or automated payments each of $100 or more by July 2, you'll likely find that she

About the author: Anthony Lanizzo is senior vice president of KeyBank and heads the Capital Region's Retail Banking team. He can be reached at either 518-257-8598 or anthony_lanizzo@keybank.com
The Capital Region Heart Ball, put on for the past 27 years by the American Heart Association, will be Saturday, March 20, from 6 p.m. to midnight at the Hall of Springs in Saratoga Springs. Gracie Green, 7, is this year's Heart Champion and will have her story told as inspiration to other struggling with heart-related issues. Tickets are $350 or $3,500 for a table of 10.

An event with heart

By ALYSSA JUNG
junga@spotlightnews.com

To her mother, grandmother and those around her, Gracie Green is a champion, and now that title has been made official, since she's the Heart Champion for the 27th Capital Region Heart Ball.

Green, 7, has already had heart surgery and may have a pulmonary valve replacement after she turns 10, but she is able to live a normal life, and that's why her story will be told to inspire others with heart-related diseases on Saturday, March 20, from 6 p.m. to midnight at the Hall of Springs in Saratoga Springs.

Green's mom, Jaime Lafferty, described her daughter's condition in simple terms: She has a hole in her heart and a valve that doesn't work properly.

The medical name for the common congenital heart defect is Tetralogy of Fallot, which is diagnosed at birth and can sometimes make affected children turn blue.

"That was a scary feeling because after my mother and I found out, she looked blue to us all the time," said Lafferty.

Green did have a "blue spell" at 6 months old, and after surgery to patch the hole, she became an active 7-year-old with essentially no restrictions. She plays soccer in the fall and basketball in the winter, plays piano, has done ballet, tap dance and hip-hop dance since she was 3 years old. She also takes an active role in community groups like 4H and Girl Scouts. Green has even done her part to help other girls by donating her hair twice to Locks of Love, an organization that provides wigs to those who have lost their hair due to cancer or other diseases.

"She's able to do all these activities and do some of her favorite things, like going on roller coasters at amusement parks," said Lafferty. "It would break my heart to have to tell her she couldn't go on or do some of those things."

Green gets her heart checked once a year and Lafferty said she handles her disease pretty well, even sharing her story with her friends. When she once asked about the scar on her chest, Lafferty said she told her her heart was once broken and doctors fixed it. Lafferty, though, said she takes things one day at a time, leaning on her own mother for support.

"It was very scary at first finding out my baby had a problem and understanding what exactly she had — understanding the medical terms," said Lafferty. "[My mother] has come to every appointment Gracie has had since birth. She's there if I miss something the doctor said or I don't understand. We can, between the two of us, figure it out."

Lafferty said she has been active in the American Heart Association, which sponsors the Heart Ball, since her daughter was born. For eight years, they have participated in the Heart Walk as "Gracie Green's Gang," raising money and spreading awareness in honor of Green's friend, Owen, who was also born with a heart condition.

"Heart disease runs in my family so it's more personal for me. It's definitely something I felt strongly about and I thought I could make a difference," said Fusco.

Fusco said by working to make the Heart Ball a success, she hopes to help prevent heart disease in others.

"Heart Ball is important because we definitely need to build awareness about heart disease—it's the No. 1 killer in America—and to help raise money to continue to do research," said Fusco. "It's a really fun vent, a great time. It's very well attended and there are some wonderful people that will spread the word."

The Heart Ball will feature a cocktail hour, silent auction, live auction, dinner and dancing to Good for the Soul, John Gray of FOX 23 is the host, and Legrande Serras of The Reel Seafood Company will act as auctioneer.

Patty Fusco, president of Fusco Personnel and CEO of TCE Search Group and volunteer chairwoman for this year's Heart Ball.

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AN IDEAL HUSBAND
Doreen Wicke, directed by Sandi Christy, Almada: Civic Players, 12 South Church St., Schenectady, through March 26, per­formance Wednesdays through Sundays, $15. Information, 342-2661.

AND THE MAN
George Bernard Shaw classic, presented by Circle Theatre Players, Sand Lake Center for the Arts, 2060 Route 43, New­rk, through March 23, performances Fridays through Sundays, $10. Information, 477-2729.

MIRACLE WORKER
The story of Helen Keller, presented by Greenleaf Cut Theatre, 219 Old Latham Road, Latham, through March 27, per­formances Thursdays through Sundays, $10. Information, 477-2729.

SUDOKU

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are tomated as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Music

BOOKS

Valerie Weir

SARATOGA AUTOMOBILE MUSEUM

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Call for Artists

THE HYDRO COLLECTION
Calling for entries for the 2010 Artists of the Mohawk-Juried Exhibition, which runs from 1st through 10th, juried by Sue Giddings. Openings are scheduled through March 26. Information, 170-0741, ext. 30.

CAPITAL COMMUNITY VOICES
Seeking singers in all voice parts for May concert, "American Opera Treasuries," featuring the Albany Pro Musica, which runs from 1st through 12th, juried by Sue Giddings. Opensings are scheduled through March 26. Information, 170-0741, ext. 30.

THE CHORALISTS
Musical group looking for solos of all abilities, choral parts for Christmas and in the spring. Juries are similar and no auditions are needed. Rehearsals are on Tuesday at 5:00 p.m. Wednesday at Saratoga Chamber, 38 Main Street, Saratoga Springs. Information, 584-2275.

ETERUN CLUB
Looking for women interested in vocal and instrumental performance, meets each Thursday at 6 p.m.信息服务, 584-2275.

SARATOGA ARMS
Seeking local artists and fine crafts to display in our new addition. Galleria features, Information, Albany, 584-1132 or saratogaautomobi­le.com.

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Bethlehem Town Hall to host Medicare Basics

The Spotlight
March 17, 2010 • Page 21

Are you turning 65 this year? Come to Medicare Basics on Thursday, March 25, 10:00 am to noon. Learn about Medicare and EPIC, New York State’s prescription plan for the elderly. Find out about signing up for Medicare, what is covered, and Medicare Part D. The program is presented by Janet Kinfhey, Albany County Health Councilor, and Candy Rivera-Whitehead, EPIC representative. It takes place at the Town Hall, Room 101. Call 439-4955, ext. 1176 for reservations.

Join us for lunch and music, “Music and More”, at the First Reformed Church of Bethlehem, 38 Church Rd. in Selkirk on Wednesday March 24, from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm. The suggested meal contribution is $2.50 for seniors and $5.00 for those under age 60. Voluntary contributions for the music are welcome. Call Elizabeth at 439-4955, ext 1176 for reservations and to arrange transportation. Suggested donation is $5.00. Home pick up is available on a pre-arranged basis.

Program Highlights
Tuesday, March 23
- Seniors in Motion: Low level full aerobic exercise class to music. Bethlehem Town Hall auditorium, 445 Delaware Ave., Delmar, 9-10 am. No registration is necessary. $3 fee per class.- AARP Income Tax Assistance Program, Bethlehem Town Hall, 445 Delaware Ave. Delmar, 9 am - 3 pm. Appointments are needed and you should bring various tax documents, including your 2008 return, your W-2 and 1099 forms, and receipts for contributions, medical bills, and property/school taxes. Call 439-4955, ext. 1176.

Wednesday, March 24
- Senior grocery shopping for residents of Elsmere, Delmar, Slingerlands, North Bethlehem and Marie Rose Manor. For reservations, call 439-5770.
- Bethlehem Senior Citizens Club meets for an enjoyable social afternoon of games, entertainment, and dessert at the Bethlehem Town Hall auditorium, 445 Delaware Ave., Delmar at noon. All seniors are welcome. Bring a sandwich and join others for lunch if you wish. As noted above, this week’s meeting will feature a concert by the Bethlehem Senior Chorus and a trash and treasure sale Call 439-4955 #1176 for more information.
- Medicare Basics See above for details.

Thursday, March 25
- Senior grocery shopping for residents of Glenmont, Selkirk, and South Bethlehem. For reservations, call 439-5770.
- Bethlehem Senior Citizens Club meets for an enjoyable social afternoon of games, entertainment, and dessert at the Bethlehem Town Hall auditorium, 445 Delaware Ave., Delmar at noon. All seniors are welcome. Bring a sandwich and join others for lunch if you wish. As noted above, this week’s meeting will feature a concert by the Bethlehem Senior Chorus and a trash and treasure sale Call 439-4955 #1176 for more information.

Senior Action Town of Bethlehem

“Foot Health” and Maladies of the Foot and Ankle
This workshop, presented by Jennifer Hutton, DPM, of Community Care Physicians, will include a discussion on common foot disorders with explanations of conservative and surgical treatment options. Topics will include hammertoes, bunions, neuromas, nail disorders, heel pain, and diabetic foot care. It is held in Room 101 of the Bethlehem Town Hall at 10:00 am - 2:00 pm. “Lunch Out”, cost on your own, is available at the Windrowbox Cafe in Slingerlands before the program. Call Bethlehem Senior Services at 439-4955, ext. 1176 to make a reservation for lunch and/or if you require transportation.

Senior grocery shopping for residents of Good Samaritan Senior Housing and Van Allen Senior Apartments. For reservations, call 439-5770.
- Seniors in Motion (see Tuesday’s activities for details.

For information on the above or a list of additional activities, call the Bethlehem Senior Services Office at 439-4955, #1176.

Wi lma De Lucco, Bethlehem Senior Projects, Inc. Board Member

We were blown away by the response to the ad...”

Hi Scott,

We just wanted to let you know we were absolutely thrilled with the article regarding our massage therapy office in Malta and our grand opening. We couldn’t have asked for a better representation of our business in that article - it truly conveyed what we are about. Which means to us that article truly conveyed what we are about. Which means to us it truly conveyed the message of the business. We have not regretted running the ad and all around good person to work with. You’ve shown us how to get the most for our modest budget and don’t feel it necessary to push us into things that we can neither afford or that may not work for us. We are very grateful for that.

Your diligence in returning calls, answering questions and just guiding us earned you a long-term loyal client.

We thank you!
Jennifer Narkiewicz, LMT
Jessica Dunn, LMT
Co-owners - Welcome Relief Massage Therapy, Malta, NY

PARADE GROUND VILLAGE - IUIUE

Learn how to increase your business.
Call today for a free consultation.
439-4949
Presentation slated on driver fitness

Ed Neary, Executive Director of Colonie Senior Service Centers, will present a speech about a new Driver Fitness Center at Guilderland Town Hall on Tuesday, March 23, from 11 a.m.-12 p.m.

The goal of the Center is to empower and educate older adults with information, tools, and resources to drive safer, longer, and help maintain their independence and self-sufficiency. Seniors are welcome to attend and no registration is necessary.

Any friend who would like to stay for lunch may order a meal by calling 536-1989, ext. 1004, by March 19.

RSVP program
The Capital District Retired Senior Volunteer Program has a mission to link all adults 55+ to rewarding and meaningful volunteer opportunities in their local communities.

Please register by calling 536-1989, ext. 1094, to schedule an appointment. Transportation service is available upon request.

Monday March 22
Scheduled Shopping
9:00 Aerobics
10:30 Strong Bones +
1:30 Strong Bones +

Tuesday March 23
9:00 Strong Bones +
1:30 Lunchsen: Swiss Steak or Cold Plate
12:30 Bingo/Games/ Billiards

Wednesday March 24
Scheduled Shopping
9:00 Line Dancing
10:30 Strong Bones +
10:30 Square
11:45 Sr. Fitness
11:00 Needlecraft
1:30 Strong Bones +

Thursday March 25
Scheduled Shopping
9:00 Strong Bones +
10:30 Movie: "Amelia" (call ahead to signup)
1:00 Pincush/ Mahjong

Mammography Screening
A National Mammography screening, co-sponsored by the Town of Guilderland and Bethlehem GOP to host open forum

The Bethlehem Republican Committee will host an open forum to encourage conversation and discussion of current events on Monday, March 22, at 7 p.m. at the Bethlehem Grange in Selkirk.

The forum is for anyone who is interested in learning about local, state and national issues, and is free to attend. Suggestions for topics include: economic development in Bedheim, traffic, land use, spending and taxes, cap and trade, national security and health care.

GOP Committee Chair Melody Burns will facilitate the discussion.
Call 527-5663 for more information.

VPL has board vacancy

Petitions are now available at the Voorheesville Public Library for any school district resident over the age of 18 who is interested in running for the office of trustee for a term of five years terminating in June, 2015, to fill the vacancy caused by the expiration of the term of Rita Stein. Candidates are required to obtain signatures from 25 qualified voters and return the notarized petition to the library by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, April 15, 2010.

The election will be held on May 18 at the Voorheesville High School.

Hall of Fame seeks inductees
The Bethlehem Call's Hall of Fame Committee has posted an online nomination form on the district's Web site to allow alumni and community members a way to submit candidates for possible induction in the Hall's Class of 2010.

The online nomination form is available on the district's Web site, bchsd.k12.ny.us/alumni/.

The induction will take place at this year's BCHS commencement ceremonies on June 25.

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"Corporate neighbors committed to serving the community.

To Life! hosts breast cancer benefit concert

Xolasses Creek will perform a Benefit Concert for To Life!, a local community based non-profit, on Sunday, March 21, from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Delmar Reformed Church, 120 Delmar Ave., Delmar.

Band member Marcy Brenner will inspire everyone with her breast cancer story, while Xolasses Creek will get the audience up and moving with their high-energy music, elegant harmonies and quirky sense of humor.

Events at the benefit include: "About Breast Cancer" at 3 p.m. Hear about To Life! services, view a 10-minute piece from Marcy Brenner's documentary on her experience with breast cancer, and listen to some live songs written, recorded and published for the documentary. There will be an opportunity for Q&A.

At 5:45, there will be an intermission. Stretch your legs and enjoy some refreshments. The Perfect Blend will be on hand to offer specialty coffee, tea and pastries. A percentage of the proceeds from food and beverage sales will be donated to To Life! Win a raffle and enter to win a door prize.

At 6 p.m., celebrate with the music of Xolasses Creek. Put on your dancing shoes or sit and tap your feet to this high-energy acoustic group.

All attendees will receive a coupon (good through April 21) to Swiftly's Restaurant & Pub in Delmar where 10% of your food bill will be donated to To Life!

Tickets will be sold at the door: Adults $15; Seniors' $10, Children 13 and under free.

To Life! is the Capital District's personal source for breast cancer education and support. The offices are located at 410 Kenwood Ave., Delmar and 110 Spring Street, Saratoga Springs.

For more information, contact Judi at 439-5675 or visit www.tolife.org

Women's Network offering scholarship

The Capital Region Women's Network is offering the Cornelia A. Bregman Scholarship for Returning to Education. The $2,000 is available to women ages 20 and older, who permanently reside in Albany, Schenectady, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenecty, Greene or Washington County. The deadline is April 15, and a personal interview is required of all finalists.

To obtain a copy of the application form, visit www.capitalregionwomen.com.

Storytelling at the Beverwyck

A collection of stories, entitled "The New Playbook," will be told by Storyteller Nancy Marie Payne at the Terrace at Beverwyck at 41 Beverlyke Lane in Slingerlands on Friday, March 19 at 8:30 p.m.

It is a family event for children 8 years and older, and admission is free. Books will be available for purchase, and the author, Nancy G. Payne, a.k.a. jambal, and be available to sign the books.

For information, call 518-4002.
Arrests

From Page 2

Police, Neal allegedly said, "I don't have any license, man, and when I packed if he had been drinking, allegedly said, "You got me, I had probably eight beers, marijuana and several .arrested man,"

seven or eight doing any tests, you got Jane while traveling age of 15 in the vehicle. test, which he failed, but said, "Nah, I'm not failing to use the designated with passengers under the

allegedly exited the vehicle observed Kaplan's vehicle aggravated DWI for DWI jail in lieu of station showed Neal's remanded to Albany County.

A vehicle inventory not initially respond, 10

"I allegedly said, if he had probably eight beers, marijuana and several .arrested man,"

Grady said she was coming from Wangs Over Albany and had consumed a couple glasses of wine at her residence, according to police. She said she then picked up her passengers and drove them to get food.

Grady allegedly failed sobriety tests and police took her into custody. A chemical test at the station showed her BAC to be 0.11 percent. He was released on tickets and scheduled to appear in court on Tuesday, March 16.

Police allegedly observed Kaplan's vehicle failing to use the designated lane while traveling westbound on Route 32, then failing to signal while turning right onto Kenwood Avenue. Kaplan allegedly failed sobriety tests and exhibited poor balance and coordination, and was taken into custody. A vehicle inventory allegedly recovered a glass pipe containing marijuana residue. A chemical test at the station showed Kaplan's BAC to be 0.11 percent. He was released on tickets and scheduled to appear in court on Tuesday, March 16.

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From Page 3

the benefit that made a difference.

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LEGAL NOTICE
Notice of Formation of LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

FOURTH: The organization of the LLC were Feura Bush Road, Albany, County, New York.

OFFICE LOCATION: Albany, County, New York.

MAILING ADDRESS: Albany, County, New York.

Purpose: For any lawful activity.

The registered agent of the LLC was designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail a copy of any lawful process to the LLC, 46 State St., Albany, NY 12205.

FIFTH: The name of the LLC was designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail a copy of any lawful process to the LLC, 46 State St., Albany, NY 12205.

March 17, 2010.

LEGAL NOTICE
Notice of Formation of LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

FOURTH: The organization of the LLC were Field Street, Albany, County, New York.

OFFICE LOCATION: Albany, County, New York.

MAILING ADDRESS: Albany, County, New York.

Purpose: For any lawful activity.

The registered agent of the LLC was designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail a copy of any lawful process to the LLC, 46 State St., Albany, NY 12205.

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March 17, 2010.

LEGAL NOTICE
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OFFICE LOCATION: Albany, County, New York.

MAILING ADDRESS: Albany, County, New York.

Purpose: For any lawful activity.

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March 17, 2010.
Milestones

Joshua and Meagan Meagan Aileen Webster and Joshua Wade Berezansky have announced their engagement. Meagan is the daughter of Deborah Webster of Lancaster, NY, and the late Paul Webster. Joshua is the son of Bohdan and Roxanne Berezansky of Melrose, NY, and Joyce and Michael Harrold of Mentor, OH. The future bride is a 2003 graduate of Catholic Central High School, and earned her bachelor's degree in psychology in 2007 from Siena College. She will receive her MA and CAS in school psychology from SUNY Plattsburgh this May. Her fiance is a 2003 graduate of Catholic Central High School, and is a recent graduate in mechanical engineering from Clarkson University. He is now a mechanical engineer for Georgia Pacific in Plattsburgh. The couple is planning a June 26, 2010 wedding.

Edward J. Engleman Applebee Funeral Home, 403 Kenwood Avenue, Delmar, NY 12054 (518) 349-2715 / (518) 475-0657 (fax) Obituary of Edward J. Engleman BALTIMORE, MD Edward Joseph Engleman, 91, son of the late James and Lorraine Engleman of Delmar, NY, passed away on March 5, 2010 surrounded by love and family after a long struggle with cancer. Born in Troy, New York on November 11, 1918, Edward passed away on March 5, 2010 surrounded by love and family after a long struggle with cancer. He served in the United States Navy during World War II and went on to teach dance throughout his life, including as the director of choreography of musical theatre productions at both the middle and high schools in Bethlehem.

Over the years, he held numerous positions. He ended his career as the Secretary to the Principal at Bethlehem Central High School, retiring just last month.

Frances Anne Cocozza

DELMAR, NY Frances Anne (Katt) Cocozza, 65, lost her battle with cancer on Tuesday, February 23, 2010, at the Hospice Inn at St. Peter's Hospital, Albany, NY. Frances was born on March 17, 1944 in Albany, NY, the daughter of Joseph and Mary (Katt) Cocozza. She was a dedicated member of both family and community.

She is survived by her husband of 43 years, Joe, her four children: Keith J. Cocozza, 42, and his wife Paula of Fairfield, CT, Michael (Cocozza) Faia, 40, and her husband Lou Faia of Delmar, NY, Peter A. Cocozza, 38, and his wife, Ruth, of Greenwich, CT, and Daniel J. Cocozza, 27 of New York, NY and her six cherished grandchildren.

Survivors also include her two sisters, Donna Katt and Christopher Katt both of the Lawrence, MA, and her brother, Thomas Kattard and his wife, Deborah, of Dubai, UAE, and two nephews, Carol and Jake Engleman, both of the Lawrence, MA, and Nicholas Kattard of New York, NY. She is also survived by her mother, Betty Cocozza, of Albany, NY, and two sisters-in-law, Camille Cocozza of Bensalem, PA, and Patricia Cocozza of Pittsburgh, PA.

The family would like to extend their gratitude to Dr. Thomas Morrissey, Dr. Janet Moore, and Anne and the staff at St. Peter's Hospital Cancer Center. Also, a special thank you to all the staff on 6 McAuley, at St. Peter's Hospital.

Calling hours were held at the Applebee Funeral Home, 403 Kenwood Avenue, Delmar, NY, on Thursday, February 25, 4pm to 6pm. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Monday, February 29th at 11am at St. Thomas Catholic Church, 35 Adams Place, Delmar. She went home to Massachusetts for services and burial on February 29th, 11am, at St. Anthony's Cemetery in Methuen.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made in her memory to the Fran Cocozza Memorial Scholarship, c/o Methuen Credit Union, Methuen, MA in honor of her lifelong love of dance and theatre. Checks should be made payable to Bethlehem Central Endowment Fund, c/o J. Davies, 31 Morningstar Lane, Feura Bush, NY 12076-9799.

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Congratulations were in order for the Saratoga Springs and Queensbury hockey teams for representing Section II well at last weekend’s state tournament in Utica. Even though they both lost in the state finals, they still showed that the sport is alive and well in the Capital District.

Can there be a more true national champion in high school indoor track and field when there are two national championship meets taking place on the same day? No, but at least there are athletes who can say they are national champions. So, congratulations to the following area athletes who can claim that honor (all from the Nike Indoor Nationals in Boston): Kyle Plante (Colonie) in the girls 200-meter dash; Saratoga’s girls 4x1 mile and distance medley relay teams and Shaker’s boys 3,000-meter relay team.

Finally, a word of advice for those of you who are planning to watch every NCAA Tournament game Thursday and Friday: don’t have a life to lead, so lead it. You’ll catch the highlights on TV, anyway. That said, be sure to watch Siena play Purdue Friday. Then, you can go back to your lives.

That’s for this week, folks. Remember to send some comments my way at jonasr@spotlightnews.com.

Saints

Siena’s Edwin Ubiles shoots over a Fairfield defender during last Monday’s MAAC tournament championship game at the Times Union Center.

“We can: afford to have slow starts in the tournament,” said Moore.

With so many great teams, being behind can hurt us.” The winner of Friday’s Siena-Purdue game plays in Sunday’s second-round against either No. 5 Texas A&M or No. 12 Utah State. Whoever wins Sunday goes to Houston the following weekend for the South Region semifinal.

Siena boys basketball coach Tony Miller had his team playing well at last weekend’s NCAA Tournament, with two three-pointers in overtime to lift the Saints past Ohio State 74-72. “I like to take big shots in big games,” Miller said.

Fairfield tied the game with less than one minute in regulation, but Siena opened the five-minute overtime period by scoring the first four points and the Saints never recovered.

Franklin contributed 22 points for the Saints, who are going to their sixth NCAA Tournament in their Division I history.

“Try just glad that it’s over with and looking forward to being the underdog,” said Franklin.

Siena may not be the underdog in Friday’s game against Purdue, though. Despite being the higher seed, the Boilermakers are being viewed around the country as being vulnerable following a 27-point loss to Minnesota in last weekend’s Big Ten Tournament. Purdue played that game without its second-leading scorer, Robbie Hummel, who suffered a season-ending knee injury in the final month of the regular season.

Those factors, plus Siena’s success in the opening round of the NCAA Tournament the past two years, have many national columnists predicting a victory for the Saints. But the players said they would have been confident going in, no matter who they were matched up with.

“That just comes from our experience of playing top teams from around the country (over the last three years),” said Franklin. “We think we can play with anybody.”

The one thing Siena may not be able to afford to do is fall behind in the first half.

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The Saints march to Spokane

Siena draws Purdue in opening round of NCAA Tournament

By ROB JONAS
jonas@spotlight.com

The Siena College Saints know who they’re facing and where they’re playing in this year’s NCAA men’s basketball tournament.

All they need to do now is figure out how to avoid the first-half doldrums.

The Saints drew Big 10 co-champion Purdue in Friday’s opening round of the tournament in Spokane, Wash. Siena enters as the No. 13 seed, the same seed it had two years ago when it defeated Vanderbilt in the opening round – while Purdue enters as the No. 4 seed.

Getting to the NCAA Tournament for a third consecutive year wasn’t easy for Siena. The Saints had to rally from halftime deficits in all three of their Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference Tournament games one week earlier in Albany to clinch the automatic berth.

“It’s definitely a relief to accomplish the goals we set for ourselves at the beginning of the year,” said senior forward Alex Franklin.

Last Monday’s MAAC championship game against Fairfield was especially nerve-wracking for Siena and its fans. The Saints fell behind by as many as 15 points in the first half and had to go to overtime before defeating the Stags 72-65 in front of a partisan Siena crowd of more than 10,000.

“It’s not something that we’re doing deliberately,” Siena coach Fran McCaffery said of his team’s first half woes. “Maybe it’s nerves, but we’re playing teams that also give out scholarships. So they have some talent, too.”

Siena’s comeback was keyed by a full-court press that forced several Fairfield turnovers in the second half. One such turnover led to a spectacular 360-degree dunk by senior Edwin Ubiles that brought the crowd to its feet.

“He’s always been someone who gets people energized, but more than anything he’s someone who plays energized,” McCaffery said of Ubiles, who scored a team-high 27 points in the victory.

Senior guard Ronald Moore completed Siena’s comeback with a game-winning three-pointer that put the Saints up 62-60.

“I’ve got two words that best describe last week,” Moore said. “The Saints are fantastic.”

Senior forward Alex Franklin added, “It’s just a confidence thing,” said Moore, who gained

Lots of good news (unless you’re a Browns fan)

I’ve got two words for John conspicuously as he settles into his new role as the Cleveland Browns quarterback Jeff Garcia. That’s who you are right now – a veteran quarterback who may not have much left in his tank, but is expected to take the Browns to the top of the AFC North. Good luck with that.

Why am I a Browns fan again? Then again, who am I a New York Mets fan? I must like losing. OK, moving on...

... Siena basketball fans bummed out that their Saints barely got into the Big 10, will love to see Purdue lose. It’s not that I want Purdue to lose, or even that I want to see Siena win. I just don’t want to see Purdue win. Purdue’s loss is a win for Siena.

... Those last two facts are what should encourage Siena fans, though. It seems that Purdue has lost its way a bit without Hummel helping out in the low post. Forward JaJuan Johnson can be a lot to handle near the basket (15.1 points per game, 7.2 rebounds per game), but the Saints have three healthy forwards who can slow him down. Guard E’Twaun Moore (17 points per game) will get his points, but without a third reliable scorer, Purdue is going to have to rely on his defense to help his one out.

... But, who is Purdue going to try to stop? Alex Franklin? Edwin Ubiles? Ryan Rossiter? (I’d insert Clarence Jackson in here, but he may not play because of an ankle injury.) If the Boilermakers focus on any one Saint, the others are likely to pick up the slack.

... Normally I wouldn’t go out on a limb with Siena as a No. 13 seed, but I like this matchup-up – which, knowing my luck, probably means the Saints will lose. Still, I think Siena will find a way to advance to Sunday’s second round against either Texas A&M or Utah State.

... I’ll admit I laughed out loud when I saw that top-seeded Syracuse earned a first-round game against No. 16 Vermont. Perhaps it’s because I remember what happened in 2005 and thought of all despite out-shooting Quinnipiac 27-31 in the second half.

... Siena’s Ryan Rossiter drives through the Fairfield defense for a layup during last Monday’s MAAC Tournament championship game at the Times Union Center. The Saints defeated the Stags 72-65 in overtime to earn their third consecutive trip to the NCAA Tournament.

... If Syracuse is going to have to play Alex Franklin again... I doubt Syracuse will lose to UVa a second time, but it would be kind of funny if it happened again. Except to Syracuse fans, who would probably boycott all things Vermont for a year. (That would be quite a blow to Ben & Jerry’s and the maple syrup industry.)

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