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Making artistic connections

Arts Connection Rhode Island donates artwork to brighten Hope Recovery Community Center in Merchant Square

By Nancy Burns-Fusaro
Sun staff writer

WESTERLY — The three people standing in front of the large, round, oil painting hanging on the bright, yellow wall inside the Hope Recovery Community Center of Westerly Thursday morning were all in agreement.

The painting, "Coleus Rondo," by Providence artist Janet Alling — featuring six enormous green, yellow and red leaves upon a baby blue background — was an eye-catcher.

"I don't know much about art," said Donna Sennett, Hope Recovery Community Center's director, "but I know I love this."

Michael Fry and Robert Malley stood nearby nodding and smiling behind their COVID-19 masks.

Fry, the director of Hope Recovery Community Center's Parent Support Network of Rhode Island, had driven over from Newport to see the artwork recently placed on the walls of the Beach Street recovery center.

Malley, who lives in Westerly, is the development director for Art Connection Rhode Island, the organization responsible for placing the artwork on the walls at Hope Recovery Center.

A Pawtucket-based organization dedicated to sharing works of art with others, Art Connection Rhode Island has been slowly expanding into Westerly. So far, the organization has placed art on the walls of Wood River Health Center's Westerly office and the WARM Center.

Statewide, they've arranged for the placement of artwork in Providence County at places like the Dorcas International Institute, Meeting Street, AIDS Care Ocean State and Progreso Latino; in Newport County at the Boys and Girls Club of Newport and Lucy's Hearth and in Kent County at Pilgrim Senior Center and Friends Way. More than 1,300 works of art have been placed at a total of 84 nonprofits throughout the state.

Now in its ninth year in Rhode Island, the organization is an offshoot of Boston's Art Connection, which was started by the late Fay Chandler — a noted artist and sculptor — and a group of friends. Providence artist Wendy Ingram, a graduate of the Rhode Island



Harold Hanka, The Westerly Sun
Bob Malley from Art Connection-Rhode Island with one of the art pieces that hangs at the center. Donna Sennett of the Hope Recovery Center of Washington County and Malley discussed program that provides original works of art to the Center for its public spaces during a tour on Thursday.

School of Design and a friend of Chandler's, brought the idea for a sister organization in Rhode Island when she moved to the state.

The idea behind Art Connection is still simple, Malley said: "making art accessible to everyone lends power to inspire, challenge,

heal, communicate, and transform."

"Making and experiencing art is an essential element of the human experience," Art Connection states on its website, "regardless of socio-economic circumstances."

See Art Connection, A5

Candidates for School Committee make cases at forum

Controlling costs, upgrading the facilities are hot topics

By Dale P. Faulkner
Sun staff writer

WESTERLY — The condition of school buildings and athletic fields and education funding were central topics for candidates seeking seats on the School Committee during a forum sponsored by the League of Women Voters South County.

The seven candidates seeking election to four full terms and a single partial term fielded questions posed by moderator John Bender, a reporter with Rhode Island Public Radio, Thursday. The questions were submitted in advance by the public and vetted by league members. A recording of the forum will be available on the league's website at <https://my.lwv.org/rhode-island/article/lwv-south-county-forum-videos> and on its Facebook page.

Three of the candidates are new to politics in Westerly and each of the three has experience in public school systems: Robert Cillino, who is running as a Democrat, has worked in education for 20 years and currently works as a mathematics instruction specialist in the Waterford, Conn., school district; Rebecca Fowler, an independent candidate, is director of food services for the Stonington school district; and Giuseppe Gencarelli, who is running as a Democrat, currently serves as principal of Hope Valley Elementary School.

See Forum, A5

Conn. U.S. Rep. Hayes negative for coronavirus

5th District Democrat was diagnosed three weeks ago

WATERBURY, Conn. (AP) — U.S. Rep. Jahana Hayes said a test Saturday showed no signs of the coronavirus in her body, nearly three weeks after she was diagnosed with COVID-19.

The Democrat, who represents Connecticut's 5th District, has been documenting her battle against the disease on social media since revealing her positive test results on Sept. 20.

"Tossed and turned most of the night," she posted on Sept. 21. "Breathing is so labored."

Hayes said a follow-up COVID-19 test on Saturday came back negative. She said she also received a flu shot and made an appointment with the American Red Cross to donate plasma.

"We can all do our part to keep our com-
See Hayes, A5

With Americans anxious to go out, walking tours are picking up pace

By Dan Sewell
Associated Press

CINCINNATI — With an eerily quiet and empty stadium plaza behind him, the tour guide tried to help people picture what they would have seen there more than 160 years earlier.

His audience of eight, all on foot, peered over masks at maps as he described hundreds of groceries, saloons, blacksmiths and 100,000 people living across two square miles — one of the pre-Civil War United States' most congested areas. The area had an open secret then: It was

filled with stations on the Underground Railroad for slaves trying to reach freedom. Today, they were walking those paths.

For so many Americans, this is a time of being cooped up, of being unable to interact with fellow humans and, in many cases, with the landscape itself. COVID-19 and its impact — more than 200,000 Americans dead — have kept many away from air travel, cruise ships and crowded beaches.

Enter a decidedly unplugged alternative, a very concrete antidote to a
See Walking, A2



Dan Sewell, Associated Press
Tour guide John Erardi, right, talks with a tour group on the sidewalk outside the Cincinnati Reds' Great American Ball Park in Cincinnati on Sept. 20. The walking tour was one of the few groups of people on the street as the Reds and White Sox were inside just an hour before the game without fans because of the pandemic.

SPORTS



Westerly boys, girls dominate cross country tri-meet. B1

EASY CHAIR



Belinda Learned wants a bigger tractor bucket. C1

COMMUNITY



A pictorial day in the life of Watch Hill. D1

High 65
Low 50
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Art Connection

From A1

The artwork beautifies the spaces of selected nonprofits, Malley said, thus creating warm and inviting spaces with paintings donated by Rhode Island artists.

“The process is simple, and the end results will transform your public space with beautiful original art,” reads a post on the Art Connection website.

Interested nonprofits are invited to submit an “Application to Receive Art” from the organization’s website. Next comes a site visit and a selection visit.

Agencies are asked to gather a selection committee consisting of six to 10 people, including staff, board members, clients and volunteers who collectively make decisions on which pieces are best for their site.

“We had our members help choose,” said Sennett, who facilitates groups for women, meditation groups and peer support services for people struggling with substance abuse disorders and mental health issues. “It’s good to get everyone involved ... this is their center, after all.”

Inside the Merchant Square-based nonprofit Thursday morning, Malley toured the facility with Sennett and Fry, stopping before each painting to admire and comment.

“It’s been a long road,” said Sennett as she stood near a vibrant oil painting of yellow daffodils and orange tulips. “But everything is finally here.”

Sennett said she had begun talks with Malley at the beginning of the year.

“Then COVID hit,” she said. “COVID threw a monkey wrench into things, but it was nice that Bob stayed on top of it ... we’ve developed a nice relationship.”

“We’re just thrilled,” she added. “We didn’t even know [Art Connection Rhode Island] existed.”

“I saw an article in The Sun about this place back in August of 2019,” explained Malley. “So, I made a cold call, and one thing led to another and that’s how I got here.”

“We are really very interested in serving more nonprofits in this area,” he



Harold Hanka, The Westerly Sun

Donna Sennett and Michael Fry of the Hope Recovery Community Center of Washington County discuss a program that provided original works of art to the center for its public spaces with Bob Malley (not pictured) from Art Connection Rhode Island during a tour on Thursday.

added, “and in having artists from the area get involved with us.”

Journalist Alison Bologna, who anchors NBC-10 News Sunrise with Mario Hilaro each weekday morning, has served as emcee for the center’s annual art auction for the last five years. This year’s 9th annual Celebration and Online Auction was held last month via Zoom.

“I’ve made a nice connection with

them,” said Bologna, who has also purchased art from the organization for her home and for her nonprofit, Shri Yoga in Pawtucket.

“I love art, I love local art, and I love the fact that the artists are willing to donate their work to brighten up common spaces,” said Bologna. “Art really does lift people up.”

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Forum

From A1

The other candidates have either been elected or appointed previously: Diane Chiaradio Bowdy, a Democrat, is seeking election to a third consecutive term; Christine Cooke, a Republican and current School Committee chairwoman, is seeking election to a second consecutive term; Tim Killam, an independent candidate seeking his first elected full term, was appointed in 2019 to fill a vacancy; and Michael Ober, a Democrat, served on the School Committee from 1998 to 2004 and in 2008. He also served previously on the Board of Finance.

Gencarelli said he was moved to run by the school facilities issue. Voters in the town have rejected two proposed school building projects since 2016. He called for development of “a comprehensive plan for the future of our buildings. The school building project that was rejected in 2019 was accompanied by a detailed five-year capital projects budget.

“We want 21st-century learners, and I believe we need facilities to make that happen,” Gencarelli said.

School buildings must be enhanced to allow for the use of current education technology, Gencarelli said, adding that he would support a new school building as part of a future building project. Relationship building, communication and transparency are needed to get a new project approved, he said.

A key to garnering support for the building plan, Cillino said, will be exposing residents to the current state of the town’s school buildings.

“I think a lot of people in the town don’t go into the schools, and they need to see,” Cillino said.

The community would also benefit from learning about positive strides being made in the town’s schools, he said. A new school building, Cillino said, might eventually lead to savings for the school district through reduced energy costs.

The candidates were also asked to address a question that arises nearly

every winter as the School Committee and superintendent of schools deliberate on the next year’s budget: The district’s per-pupil spending rate as compared to its declining enrollment.

Cooke said that one of the first questions Superintendent of Schools Mark Garceau asked when he interviewed for his current position was why the district’s per-pupil cost was as high as it was.

“He said the results should reflect that,” Cooke said.

If the schools are producing well-educated students, Cooke said, she believes residents will be willing to support the schools. She pointed to early retirement incentives for teachers as one potential means to reduce expenses.

“We’re trying to address it, but it’s going to take a long time,” Cooke said.

Given the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the state budget, Cooke said, school officials must plan for receiving less state financial assistance. A hard look at spending may be required, she said.

Fowler called for a detailed look at the district’s spending for students who opt to or have to attend school in other districts and continued development of strategies to keep students in Westerly.

Cillino agreed with Fowler that expenses related to students who leave the district for schools in other towns should be analyzed but said some per-pupil costs reflect economic trends.

“Everything is getting more expensive, so it only makes sense per-pupil spending is going up,” he said.

Ober advocated spending reductions, if necessary, that are equitable across the breadth of the school district. The district may also have to ask employee unions for contract concessions on pay or health care benefits, he said.

Some of the district’s costs stem from the absence of a social services department in the town, said Chiaradio Bowdy.

“We do a lot more, the staff and the administration ... because we don’t have a social service agency here. Many things that should be in a town or indepen-

dent agency are falling to the schools,” she said.

Unlike many of her fellow candidates, Chiaradio Bowdy offered a more measured response when asked whether she would support new construction as part of a school building project. While improving the facilities is the top issue facing the school district, Chiaradio Bowdy said she would support a new building but only if upgrades to other schools were also funded.

Fowler said she would support making a semester-long civics course and civics project a mandatory requirement for graduation from Westerly High School. She added that she wished such a requirement was in place when she was in high school.

“Especially the project, because when you have a learning project that is community-based, you are going to have a better learning experience and remember it. It keep our kids engaged in the community,” Fowler said.

Cooke agreed that a civics course would be useful, saying it would help students develop a sense of civic duty and understanding how government works. Such a class would help students understand “it’s not for other people to solve your problems. You need to get involved and know your government,” Cooke said.

Killam promised to remain available, if elected, to speak with residents about education and schools. He called for a unified approach between the School Committee and the Town Council in order to get a school building project approved. Using a proposed project cost set by the Town Council as a starting point might be a good approach, Killam said.

“The last one was town vs. school,” Killam said.

The building project should also include funds for artificial turf at Augeri Field at Westerly High School, Killam said.

A field of candidates that includes people seeking office for the first time and educators is “exciting and encouraging,” Killam said.

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Hayes

From A1

munity safe,” she tweeted Saturday in a post followed by three mask-wearing emojis and the hashtag “#HealthyATHome.”

In other coronavirus related news:

Rapid tests

Sacred Heart University and the University of Saint Joseph are the latest in Connecticut to use the rapid saliva-based coronavirus test developed at Yale.

The schools hope adding the testing method to tests already being conducted will help them

identify cases earlier and prevent large outbreaks on campus. Both schools also are using the nasal swab form of testing.

“Over the last few weeks as we saw upticks of positive cases on other campuses we decided to increase the percentage of students tested each week and we also wanted more rapid results,” University of Saint Joseph President Rhona Free said in a statement. “SalivaDirect was able to complete the new level of testing that we needed with quick results.”

Sacred Heart spokesperson Deb Noack said the 900 saliva tests they plan to due each week will augment the 1,300 nasal swab tests that had already been conducted.

Connecticut educators of the year from same school

WINDSOR, Conn. (AP) — Connecticut’s newly announced Teacher of the Year and Paraeducator of the Year for 2021 are from the same elementary school in Windsor, the first time in state history the two honorees have been from the same district and school.

Rochelle Brown, a kindergarten teacher at the Po-quonock School, was named Teacher of the Year on Friday, while Maria Sau was named the Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year, named after an educator killed in the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting.

Gov. Ned Lamont and state Education Commissioner Miguel Cardona announced the awards during a surprise visit to the school.

Local deaths

WESTERLY

■ Burton, Salvatore

PAWCATUCK

■ Brown, Walter Howard

The Westerly Sun publishes this list free of charge as a reader service. Additional information in the obituaries, death notices and funeral notices provided by the funeral homes allows the families to include, in paid space, the material they deem appropriate.

Salvatore Burton

WESTERLY — Salvatore Burton, 79, of Westerly, passed away after a long illness on Saturday, September 26, 2020 at Westerly Hospital. He was the loving husband of Christine (Johnson) Burton and together they shared 56 years of marriage. Born in Westerly on April 1, 1941, he was the son of the late Floyd and Mary Rose (Alice) Burton.

Sal graduated Westerly High School in 1961 and went on to serve his country proudly as a Navy Seabee stationed in Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Following the military, Sal was a hardworking and dedicated employee for over 40 years with General Dynamics Electric Boat. He was strong in his faith and a longtime member of Christ Episcopal Church. He was also an active member of the Westerly Parkinson’s support group.

Most importantly, he loved his family and cherished every moment with them. He will be dearly missed by all who knew him.

Besides his loving wife Christine, he leaves his children Alison Patton and her husband Scott of Westerly, David Burton and his wife Vivian Ng of Brooklyn, NY, Stacey Pride and her husband Stephen of Westerly and Elisabeth Donnelly and her husband Tim of Pepperell, MA; grandchildren Dana Pancaro and her husband Chris, Franklin Patton and his long-time companion Kalee Bettez, Katia Pride, Lindsey Pride and Nora Donnelly; his great-granddaughter Julia Rose Pancaro; his siblings Ken Burton of Westerly and Bert Mannix of Tortola along with his three nephews Thomas Mannix, Travis Burton and Kenneth Burton. He was predeceased by a niece Andrea Mannix.

The family wishes to extend a special thank you to the staff of Westerly Hospital for their loving care and compassion for Sal and his family during his time with them.

All memorial services will be held privately at the convenience of the family. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation in his name to the American Parkinson’s Association, Rhode Island Chapter at <https://www.apdaparkinson.org/community/rhode-island/>.

For online condolences, please visit www.buckler-johnston.com.

Walter Howard Brown

PAWCATUCK — Walter Howard Brown, proudly a lifelong resident of Lower Pawcatuck, passed away peacefully at the Westerly Hospital on October 6, 2020.

Walter was born November 10, 1938 in Westerly, RI, at the Margaret Edward Anderson Hospital, son of the late Howard C and Ruth (Gavitt) Brown.

He graduated from Stonington High School in the class of 1956, then from Mitchell College in New London, and from Bryant College in Rhode Island where he earned the Baccalaureate degree summa cum laude. His employment positions included office manager for New London Motors and accounting supervisor for Davis-Standard Company.

Walter also attended Providence-Barrington Bible College where he studied Theology and Church Music. He was an active organist and pianist for many years and member of the former Westerly branch of the American Guild of Organists. He was also a member of Shannock Baptist Church, where he had not only served as deacon, treasurer and Sunday school teacher, but perhaps most proudly and prominently as their church pianist of several decades.

In addition to his parents, Walter was predeceased by his beloved sister Alice Brown Morgan in 2012. He leaves behind two nephews, Elbert Morgan, Jr., of North Stonington and Timothy Morgan of Westerly, as well as several aunts and uncles, cousins and great-nieces. His kindness, gentleness and humor will be deeply missed by all.

Walter’s family would also like to offer a special mention of gratitude to the staff and caregivers at Chestnut Cottage at The Elms as well as, more recently, those involved with Beacon Hospice. All of the considerable compassion and support they have given of the past years has been profoundly appreciated.

A private service will be held at the family’s convenience.

Arrangements have been entrusted to the Buckler-Johnston Funeral Home, 121 Main St. Westerly, RI.

Anti-nuclear activist Sister Ardeth Platte dies at 84

By The Associated Press

Anti-nuclear activist Sister Ardeth Platte, a Dominican nun who spent time in jail for her peaceful protests, died in her sleep on Sept. 30. She was 84.

Sister Carol Gilbert, who confirmed Platte’s death, lived with her at a Catholic Worker house in Washington, D.C. Gilbert said Platte had participated in a street corner demonstration

against nuclear weapons just a few days before her death.

In 2010, Platte was arrested for trespassing at the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, during a protest, according to the Knoxville News Sentinel. At her sentencing hearing, Platte said, “Nuclear weapons are the taproot of violence, and they must be abolished. So I refuse to be silent,” the newspaper reported.