

RUNNING AHEAD



Marsella wins Class A race as Chargers take second. p.9



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WEATHER



EMILY JALBERT

Today: Morning snow, with the storm moving northeast; high of 45. Details, p.2

WESTERLY, R.I. SUNDAY, October 30, 2011

HOME DELIVERY \$4.75 PER WEEK \$1.75

O'Loughlin's death leaves void in loved ones' lives

■ Ryan O'Loughlin, who died 16 hours after his arrest by Westerly police, would have celebrated his 35th birthday today.

By DALE P. FAULKNER
Sun Staff Writer

WESTERLY — Ryan O'Loughlin was the kind of guy who got to know people quickly and had dozens of friends wherever he lived.

"He was always very outgoing, very friendly. He would become

friends with strangers," Lucia "Lucy" Uchalova said of her husband, who died June 9, just 16 hours after being arrested by Westerly police.

Lucy and O'Loughlin's parents and sister are left with a huge void, trying to make sense of their loss. The pain is more pronounced today, Ryan's birthday. He would have been 35.

"I am devastated, our lives will never be the same," said Ryan's mom, Diane O'Loughlin.

Ryan O'Loughlin was charged with disorderly conduct and re-

sisting arrest outside of Perks & Corks after his friend, Daniel Smith, punched a hole in the café's bathroom wall. The Connecticut Medical Examiner's Office ruled in September that O'Loughlin's death was a homicide resulting from blunt force trauma to the abdomen.

Lucy, a native of Slovakia, met Ryan early in the summer of 2007 on Block Island, where she was working as a bartender as part of an international student program. Ryan was an engineer

See RYAN, page 5



Ryan O'Loughlin stands with his wife, Lucia Uchalova, and his mother, Diane. O'Loughlin would have turned 35 today.

COURTESY OF THE O'LOUGHLIN FAMILY

Could it have been prevented?

■ Authorities, counselors ponder last weekend's accident which left four teens injured.

By CYNTHIA DRUMMOND
Sun Staff Writer

WOOD RIVER JCT. — Danny Nesmith can name many elements of the Chariho campaign to keep teenagers from drinking alcohol: Parents. Schools. Police "party" patrols. Liquor stores. Public outreach. The Internet.

As grant manager and coordinator of the Chariho Tri-Town Task Force on Substance Abuse, a big part of Nesmith's job is constantly searching for new ways to prevent accidents like the one that happened in the early hours of Oct. 23.

Four high school students were injured, three of them seriously, when their car slammed into a tree on Carolina Back Road in Charlestown. Terri Serra, the Chariho School Committee member whose property they had just left, has been charged under the state's social host law, although police have not said that she served alcohol to minors. She has also been charged with failing to render aid to the teens at the scene of the accident.

See ACCIDENT, page 3

Pensions could sock Westerly

By DALE P. FAULKNER
Sun Staff Writer

WESTERLY — Without pension reform, the town's annual contribution to the teacher's pension system, now about \$3 million, could increase by close to \$2 million next year and continue to grow.

"We're being told that without this reform, because of the current unfunded liability in the state system, that Westerly's contribution could grow to close to \$5 million next year and more after that. With pension reform it will stabilize," Town Manager Steven Hartford said, referring to pension-reform legislation proposed by Gov. Lincoln Chafee and General Treasurer Gina M. Raimondo.

Hartford attended briefings held by Chafee and Raimondo two weeks ago and offered input on the plan.

The Town Council unani-

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FRESH FROM THE FARM



R.I. Farm to School Project shows promising growth

By CHRIS KEEGAN
Sun Staff Writer

Mark Baton bites into a tiny yellow apple. Sequoyah Burrell munches on baby carrots.

It's Friday, and the fruits and vegetables at the Charlestown Elementary School's fresh food bar are competing with cheese pizza and popcorn chicken for second-graders' attention. The students pluck bags of celery sticks and orange wedges for their lunch trays.

"These kids are good eaters, you can tell they're eating well at

home," said Laurie Morehouse, a lunchroom cashier.

Students have a choice between four and six different produce items, and two of the items available on this day — apples and pears — are grown right here in Rhode Island.

"When you know your farmer, you know how your food was grown," said Kimberly Clark, the Rhode Island Farm to School Project coordinator for Kids First, a Pawtucket-based advocacy group that's leading efforts to get local

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Michael Eilert, Logan Cleary and Cooper Beck, above, students at Charlestown Elementary School, pick out their fruits and vegetables for the day during lunchtime. Sequoyah Burrell, left, tries one of the baby carrots.

CHRISTINE CORRIGAN / The Sun

Congressman learns challenge of food stamps first-hand

By LESLIE ROVETTI
Sun Staff Writer

U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney has learned that getting enough to eat on a food-stamp budget is hardly a snap.

Courtney just finished a SNAP challenge, spending about \$4 a day for food over seven days. SNAP is the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly called food stamps, and \$4 a day per person is about the average SNAP ben-

efit.

"The point of it is to have policy makers see first-hand how it works," he said. "It was a real eye opener."

The congressman, along with his wife and daughter, lived on a food budget of \$32.59 per person for the week

beginning Oct. 20, which translated to an average of \$1.59 per meal.

While shopping for the week, they found apples at 79 cents a pound and a box of brownie mix for \$1. They splurged on a \$6 kielbasa, which they stewed with \$2 worth of cabbage, and \$2.45 worth of pork chops.

They hit all four major food groups with their menus and spent little of their money on junk food, other than a \$1.19 bag of chips and 99 cents for a pound

of unpopped popcorn. However, they could no longer eat all of the food they wanted, or maintain the energy levels they were used to, he explained.

"You had to parcel out the portions," he said. "I lost some weight, which probably is not a bad thing."

They also ate lower quality food, he added, such as canned green beans instead of fresh ones. And he went a week without eating a salad.

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Courtney

\$32.59 per person for the week

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In The Easy Chair with Westerly cardiologist Stephen Kutz. p.13

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★ Farm

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farm-fresh food into schools across the state.

The nonprofit group has helped broker relationships between local farmers and food distributors. In just six years, the number of locally grown produce offerings at schools has grown from two or three fruits and vegetables to 36 varieties, Clark said.

State nutrition requirements changed two years ago, and public schools are now required to provide three fruit and vegetable choices at lunchtime.

"Last year, every school district in the state purchased at least something from the 2010 harvest," Clark said. "Our goal now is to make the program more sustainable by getting the schools to look to Rhode Island growers first when sourcing fruits and vegetables for their food programs, and buying them more consistently."

In Westerly, the district's food service provider, Chartwells, bought 720 pounds of Rhode Island produce, including 200 pounds of potatoes from Quonset View Farm in Portsmouth; 24 cases of apples from Steere Orchard in Smithfield; and 40 pounds of butternut squash from Young Family Farm in Little Compton, according to numbers compiled by Kids First.

Mary Piccolo, Westerly's food service director, said the district was awarded a state grant that allows three elementary schools to serve fresh local produce — like cherry tomato and cucumber cups, pepper strips and whole apples — two times a week. The high school has also served local broccoli as a pizza topping, in calzones and with pasta, she said.

"Farm fresh produce may not always be cost effective, although sometimes it can be depending upon the harvest season, but students often prefer the local produce since they understand, like we do, the importance of supporting our farmers," Piccolo said.

The Chariho Regional School District's food service provider, Aramark, bought 1,756 pounds of local produce last year, including 13 pounds of honey from Aquidneck Honey in Middletown and 60 pounds of zucchini from Confreda Farms in western Cranston.

Tom Hoagland, a general manager of operations for Aramark, said the company has been working to increase the volume of local produce it serves. It buys from 15 to 20 farms in Rhode Island, he said.

"The expectation is that food costs would be higher, but that didn't turn out to be the case," Hoagland said. "You're buying seasonal, in the fall ... We're finding local stuff is not necessarily that



CHRISTINE CORRIGAN / The Sun

Max and Uli Hence own Hillendale Farm, where they grow organic food. They want to enhance the farm's educational offerings and turn it into a working classroom.

Hillendale Farm hoping to expand education program

By CHRIS KEEGAN
Sun Staff Writer

WESTERLY — One local farm in partnership with Kids First is hoping to expand a program that teaches schoolchildren about locally grown produce — and what it means to the food supply and the local economy.

Uli Hence and her husband, Max, whose family has owned the Hillendale Farm property on Haversham Road for a century, connected 2½ years ago with area school principals, who were looking for ways to bring up science scores and inquiry-based learning.

While the couple's wholesale organic produce doesn't make it onto school lunch trays, they're hoping their upstart Ayers Foundation, a nonprofit venture, will turn the farm into a working classroom with an expanded pasture, a new greenhouse and a commercial kitchen. They're seeking funds from

the public and private sectors for the project.

Public and charter school students who have visited the farm have learned about animal husbandry, and helped plant and harvest crops, including squash, zucchini, eggplant, cucumbers and six to eight varieties of tomatoes.

The farm harvested a record 8 tons of produce this year; much of it has been sold to area restaurants that pay a premium for organic ingredients. "The more we grow, the more impact we can have," said Max Hence.

About 1,500 students came through the farm in 2010 to learn about sustainable organic food-growing. Local school field trips have also taken them to nearby Ocean Breeze Farm, Westerly's last remaining dairy farm.

"Our goal is 5,000 students," Uli Hence said. "Awareness is key to better consumers in the end."

much more expensive, and there are ancillary benefits."

"The taste is so much better, and the quality is higher," he added. "If the price is a little higher, so be it. We're finding the positives are outweighing the negatives."

Frances Sayer, Chariho's assistant food service director, said most of the local produce is used in fresh food bars throughout the district.

"For the most part, we use most of it raw," she said, noting that younger students have been more receptive to eating raw vegetables than have secondary school students.

Westerly and Chariho buy their food from large-scale distributors: Chartwells purchases from Sid Wainor & Son of New Bedford, Mass., which part-

ners with local farms; while Aramark buys food from Sysco, which procures locally grown products from Robert's Precut Vegetables,

based in Johnston.

During the autumn months, apple, carrots, cranberries, grapes, lettuce, plums and potatoes are available from local growers. Food from the 2010 harvest was still being served in schools as late as April of this year.

"[The districts] have one vendor to work with to get all of the produce," Clark said. "That produces efficiencies, so there's no multiple deliveries, no multiple vendors to pay. Depending on the farmers and distributors, a farmer might bring their produce to distributors, or the distributors pick it up at the farm."

Rhode Island farms have found some success partnering with food distributors, though Clark said it wouldn't make sense for Westerly or Chariho-grown produce to be trucked as far away as New Bedford, Mass., only to return to the area.

Nevertheless, efforts to bring locally grown produce into schools have been energized by the resurgence of farmers' markets, as well as agri-tourism businesses like corn mazes and farms that host apple and pumpkin picking.

"We really think if we get the community involved, there will be an awareness among parents and people in the community," Clark

said. "There's a huge opportunity in Westerly and Chariho to increase locally grown food in school meal programs. Now, they're available through the distribution systems that these schools use. They have an opportunity to get them."

Clark said hand fruits — like apples and carrot sticks — are ideal for schools because they don't have to be prepared, meaning lower labor costs. One district has shredded carrots to make carrot muffins for breakfast, she said.

"B-grade potatoes are very small brown potatoes, they're the perfect size for a kid," Clark said. "They're golf ball sized. They're rinsed and seasoned and roasted whole."

Kids First also encourages schools to purchase Rhody Fresh milk, which is produced by cows from a number of local farms — including Meadowburg Farm in Richmond, and the Tomaquag Valley Farm and

Elmrock Farm in Hopkinton.

A large part of what Kids First does includes education, which in turn boosts demand for local produce.

"What we try to do is go into a school, do educational programs and teach students about agriculture in Rhode Island," Clark said. "We coordinate with food service providers that day so the lesson is reinforced in the cafeteria."

Field trips to area farms also give students a chance to learn about farm life and see how fruits and vegetables grow. Kindergarten students at Dunn's Corners Elementary School will visit two local farms this year — Hillendale Farm, an organic farm on Haversham Road, and Ocean Breeze Farm, Westerly's last remaining dairy farm, on Noyes Neck Road.

For more information on Kids First, visit www.kids-first.org.

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