

BRIEFS

NHSAA fundraiser

NORWALK — The Norwalk High School Alumni Association will hold a fundraiser from 7 to 10 p.m. Wednesday, July 14, at O'Neill's in SoNo. The public is invited with music provided by "NIGHTWATCH", featuring a combination of soft rock & yesterday's hits. Chip Swain, Class of 1972, is a long-time member on the Norwalk music scene. A donation of \$20 includes appetizers and a beverage with the proceeds going to the scholarship fund for NHS seniors (pay at the door or in advance; e-mail Mattscul@aol.com).

Local author to speak at Norwalk Library

NORWALK — Author Abrendal Austin, a Norwalk High graduate and author of two books, will be giving a book reading and signing copies of her book at the Norwalk Public Library at 1 Belden Ave. from noon to 2 p.m. on Saturday, June 26, and at the South Norwalk Public Library at 10 Washington St. from 3 to 5 p.m. on Monday, June 28. Austin has written "On a Clear Day You Can See L.A." and "A Fugitive's Wife."

NHS Alumni Association picnic

NORWALK— The annual picnic of the Norwalk High School Alumni Association is set for 5:30 p.m. Thursday, July 8, at Cranbury Park. All members and their guests are invited to the free event at which hot dogs, hamburgers and beverages plus all the fixings will be provided plus salads and desserts by members. New selectees to the NHSAA Wall of Honor will be announced at that time.

Red Cross blood drive set at Norwalk Hospital

NORWALK — Norwalk Hospital is sponsoring a Red Cross Blood Drive on Friday, July 16, from 8 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. in the Patio Room and urges the public to join hospital staff and volunteers in donating blood. All blood types are needed, especially O negative. For more information, call (203) 852-2250.

Safe boating course

NORWALK — The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk is offering a "Safe Boating & Personal Watercraft" course from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on July 24 and Aug. 28 to help boaters to get the most out of their summer. Cost is \$85 per person. Advance reservations are required. Call (203) 852-0700, ext. 2206. Other "Safe Boating" classes will be held at The Maritime Aquarium on July 24 and Aug. 28.

Revolutionary War Tour Mill Hill

NORWALK—The Norwalk Historical Society is pleased to announce a fascinating Revolutionary War Tour of the Mill Hill Burying Ground adjacent to the Town House, located at 2 East Wall St. in Norwalk on Sunday, July 4. The tour will begin at noon at the west side of the cemetery. For more information, call (203) 846-0525.

see BRIEFS, A5

Government Today

MONDAY, JUNE 28, 2010

Finance
9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., City Hall room 231

Jermin leaves one UMC for another

WESTPORT

By TOM EVANS
Hour Staff Writer

Emotions ran high at the United Methodist Church of Westport and Weston on Sunday morning — much the way they have since the Rev. Tisha M. Jermin arrived three years ago as associate pastor.

On Sunday, Jermin left that church to take over as pastor of Norwalk United Methodist Church, replacing the Rev. Janet G. Hodge, who stepped away from the pulpit to become a pastor in the Bronx.

Jermin, who will take the reins at Norwalk UMC July 4, was honored with a recep-

tion after the 9:30 a.m. service.

"Tisha brought us 'passionate spirituality,' and someone told me 'in Tisha you have a walking, talking billboard for passionate spirituality,'" said the Rev. Edward C. Horne, pastor of the church. "It's been a true gift to work with Tisha. I can still hear her 'oh yeahs' and 'that's rights' and 'amens' and 'hallelujahs' one seat over. We've adapted ourselves to her energy."

One area of spiritual energy Jermin focuses on is dance, choreographing Fairfield County's first Liturgical Dance Ministry at the church at 49 Weston Road.

Tess Maggio, 16, who will

be a junior at Weston High School in September, became one of those dancers that Jermin molded.

"This is a celebration for her," Tess said. "This is a big change, a really great change. Tisha brought great energy to our church. She was a lot of fun, and she created a sisterhood. This is a transition for her, and we're very proud of her."

When asked if she will travel those several miles south to visit Jermin and her new congregation.

"Oh yeah, we have a very strong connection," Tess said.

Jermin said her move came as a reappointment

see JERMIN, A4



Hour photo / DANIELLE ROBINSON

The Rev. Tisha Jermin from the United Methodist Church of Westport and Weston performs a dance routine during her last service Sunday morning in Westport.

Local Sea Scouts enjoy annual rendezvous on Sheffield Island

It has been six years since Norwalk hosted a Sea Scout Rendezvous, but last weekend's extravaganza on Sheffield Island clearly made up for any lost time.

The annual affair, which is held at a different port each sailing season, drew a healthy crowd from area Sea Scout troops all around Long Island Sound. The 2010 Gam (an old nautical term referring to a social visit or friendly interchange between whalers or seafarers), started out with picture-perfect weather special ordered by Mother Nature herself.

The early morning hours on Saturday had the crew of local Ship 6 "Celebration"



KAREN JEWELL
Water Views

headed out to Sheffield Island to set up and prepare for visiting troops to arrive. By the time the noon bell tolled, there were a total of nine Sea Scout vessels anchored just offshore of the historic island. Included

in the fleet were Ship 6 from Norwalk, Ship 30 from Peekskill, Ship 110 from Bridgeport, Ship 2037 from Wesley Hills, Ship 721 from Milford, Ship 460 from Northport, Ship 1 from New Haven, Ship 584 from New London, and Ship 84 from Southport. With nearly 40 scouts and countless captains and escorts, Sheffield Island quickly assumed the look of a well-seasoned campsite.



Contributed photo

The Sea Scouts gather on Sheffield Island for the first rendezvous in Norwalk in six years.

Once all of the necessary gear was strategically placed in their pre-assigned spots, the scouts were able to sit down and enjoy a delectable lunch as they took in breathtaking views from the shore of the island. The visibility was clear enough to see across to the Long Island coastline and down to the Manhattan skyline. A slight windward breeze helped to make the typically warm Connecticut

summer climate quite comfortable.

After their brief respite, the scouts embarked on a full schedule of afternoon activities that included a rowboat challenge, an on-board man overboard retrieval session, a hands-on technique practice session climbing the mast in a boatswain's chair, and a "Gumby" survival suit practice swim. Each troop was divided into separate teams

so that they could interact and work together with neighboring scouts. As the teams revolved around the four "practice" stations, everyone had a chance to try their hand in each training procedure. Once all of the tasks were completed, the troops joined forces in carrying out an island "trash pick-up" campaign. After that, they received an unexpected visit from the

see NORWALK, A4

Hearings to focus on fatal power plant blast

HARTFORD

By STEPHANIE REITZ
Associated Press

The circumstances around the fatal Middletown power plant explosion will be the focus of separate hearings today by a congressional subcommittee and a federal safety advisory board.

Members of both groups are traveling to Connecticut from Washington, D.C., to get testimony from industry experts, emergency responders, regulators and others on the Feb. 7 blast at the Kleen Energy Systems plant and its aftermath. Among the scheduled speakers is the widow of Colchester pipefitter Ron Crabb, who died in the explosion along with five fellow workers.

The blast occurred when something ignited 400,000 cubic feet of gas and air that had accumulated in tight quarters at the plant during a "gas blow" procedure. That industrial practice, common in power plants and factories, involves blowing high-pressure natural gas through pipes to clear debris.

The ignition source in the Middletown blast is still under investigation.

Middletown detectives and state police are investigating whether any people or businesses should face criminal charges in connection with the explosion and deaths.

The U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board, which recommends policy to regulators, has criticized the gas blow procedure as inherently unsafe and wants companies to use safer alternatives.

Some of those possible alternatives are expected to be discussed when the board holds a hearing at 6:30 p.m. Monday at the Saint Clements Castle conference facility in Portland, across the river from the explosion site.

Earlier Monday, congressional members of the Workforce Protections Subcommittee of the U.S. House Education and Labor Committee have scheduled a separate hearing at 10 a.m. at Middletown City Hall.

Middletown Mayor Sebastian Giuliano said he and city fire officials plan to discuss emergency preparedness measures and how they responded to the blast on that frigid Sunday morning.

As for specifics of what occurred and whether some industrial procedures are safer than others, he said, "I don't think I'm really in the position to talk about what might have been done differently. I think that's best left to the technical people."

But he added they are closely watching construction since it resumed at the power plant and say Kleen Energy's contractors are doing a much better job keeping track of specifically who is at the site at any given time.

The plant was near completion when the explosion occurred in February. Construction has resumed, but is not expected to be finished before it needs to renew its construction permit after Nov. 30 with the Connecticut Siting Council.

A Connecticut panel set up by Gov. M. Jodi Rell wants the council to add more

see PLANT, A4

Westport teen picked to represent U.S. at chemistry Olympiad

WESTPORT

(AP) — Teens from Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey and New York have been selected to represent the United States at the International Chemistry Olympiad in Tokyo.

Alexander Siegenfeld, a resident of Westport, who attends the private Hopkins School in New Haven, will compete in July with three teammates: Richard Li of Clarksville, Md.;

Colin Lu of Vestal, N.Y.; and Utsarga Sikder on Monmouth Junction, N.J.

They were picked from more than 11,000 students nationwide, and will compete in chemistry competitions against teams from more than 65 countries.

The Olympiad takes place July 19-28.

Two alternates also were picked: Joe Tung of Cerritos, Calif.; and Kevin Yan of North Potomac, Md.

Bristol's Decker wins Miss Connecticut

NEW LONDON

(AP) — A Bristol woman will represent Connecticut in the Miss America pageant.

Brittany Decker won the crown Saturday in New London and earned the right to represent Connecticut in January's national competition. Decker also received a \$5,000 scholarship and other

prizes. Kate Ottavio, Miss Rocky Hill, was awarded first-runner up.

Logan West of Southington was named Connecticut's Outstanding Teen. The 15-year-old will compete in the Miss America's Outstanding Teen Pageant in Orlando, Fla., in August. She won a \$1,000 scholarship and other prizes.

NORWALK POLICE BLOTTER

June 27

•Ruben Munquia, 32, of 17-19 Monroe St., was charged with disorderly conduct. Munquia was held on \$250 bond and given a July 7 court date.

•Kristen Jordan, 28, of 7 Center Ave., was charged with second-degree breach of peace. Kristen Jordan was released on a promise to appear in court on July 7.

•Ralph Jordan, 24, no address given, was charged with second-degree breach of peace. Ralph Jordan was released on a promise to appear in court on July 7.

June 26

•Laura Cascante, 28, of 74 Main St., was charged with second-degree breach of

peace. Cascante was held on \$1,000 bond and given a July 6 court date.

•Elbin Bonilla, 26, of 66 Chestnut St., was charged with simple trespass. Bonilla was held on \$103 bond and given a July 9 court date.

•Marling Rodriguez, 50, of 22 Osborne Ave., was charged with second-degree breach of peace. Rodriguez was released on a promise to appear in court on June 28.

•Latina Brames, 19, of 133 Monterey Place, was charged with injury/risk/impairing morals, second-degree breach of peace, and third-degree assault. Brames was released on a promise to appear in court on June 28.

—For more Norwalk Police Blotter, visit www.thehour.com on the Web.

Jermin to serve as pastor of Norwalk UMC

From A3

from the national hierarchy of UMC, and the process began with a phone call from the district superintendent in February.

"It's been an amazing experience here, in all honesty," Jermin said in between long, tearful hugs from parishioners. "I have grown to know how big God's world is, and it encompasses all races. My time here has been amazing, as has the way the church has grown. I honestly believe I'm a better pastor because of the people here."

Glenn Hightower, a member of the congregation for 40 years, liked the infusion of youthful enthusiasm Jermin brought to the church.

"I liked Tisha's energy," Hightower said. "The first time she read Scripture I felt that she knows it and feels it. She had vibrance, and she did a great job reaching out to people of all ages."

Hightower wants Jermin to keep ministering the way she has for the last three years.

"I told her to keep on keeping on, be yourself, and enjoy your new job," Hightower said. "Tisha's working at being a minister. She's investing herself in various ways, and it's all good. We miss her."

Horne said Jermin was absolutely qualified to take on her new responsibilities.

"Tisha was one of the great gifts ever given to me," Horne said. "Nobody I've ever

worked with understood what being an associate pastor means the way Tisha does. She was always standing with me, behind me, and we were on the same wavelength. She can fulfill the calling given to her."

Tisha offered the congregation advice about any new faces that may come to the church.

"I don't know what to say other than I love you with the depths of my soul," Jermin said. "People will come through these doors — people who are phenomenal, talented and gifted — and I ask you to love them as passionately as you love me. Thank you for your gifts, both tangible and of the heart."

Jermin wants these parish-

ioners to continue her high-energy spiritual calling.

"I must confess there are not enough words to tell you what you mean to me," Jermin said in her sermon. "I have a new understanding of love and worship. God is doing something new in this house. I understand I began great work in you, but God is not finished with you yet. If you don't respond to God's calling, you can't come to fruition."

Horne believes that Jermin will continue to live and preach in a way that pleases the most important power of all. "Lord God, Tisha will dance the dance of your spirit, and she will speak the words of your heart," Horne said.

Norwalk Sea Scouts enjoy annual rendezvous on Sheffield Island

From A3

US Coast Guard Eaton's Neck station in one of their newest patrol boats.

With appetites at an all-time high, the scouts had no problem putting together a

top-rate barbeque dinner that evening that would satisfy even the hungriest sailor.

Just when they thought their day was over, however, there was one more nautical surprise in store for the

tired, but enthusiastic, crews. With the proper arrangements in place with the USCG Long Island Sector, a comprehensive and educational flares drill began.

Under close supervision, the scouts were shown the

differences and appropriate protocols for hand-held, aerial, daytime smoke, and day/night flares. With ideal testing conditions, the flares training session went off like a dream.

After a few S'mores by

the campfire, dreamland was exactly where the now exhausted scouts headed off to.

As daylight arrived on Sunday morning, it brought with it an easy wake-up call to the lulling sounds of the Greens Ledge Lighthouse foghorn. The troops slowly woke and casually gathered on the lawn by the Sheffield light. After a brief morning service, a hearty breakfast, and a tour of the lighthouse, the campsites and boats were packed up, a final inspection of the island was completed, and the Sea Scout troops said their good-byes as they departed for home and an afternoon of family time with lots of wonderful stories to share.

As a direct result of the help of many local organizations and individuals, the event was a great success. The skipper and crew of Norwalk Ship 6 "Celebration" truly appreciate the support of the

Norwalk Seaport Association for graciously hosting the weekend affair, Rex Marine and Norwalk Cove Marina for helping with transport logistics, Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 72 for Vessel Safety Checks, Preferred Printing for providing event posters, Norwalk Sail and Power Squadron and private boat owners for helping shuttle scouts, leaders and gear to the island, the United States Coast Guard Long Island Sound Sector (New Haven and Eaton's Neck stations) for Flares arrangements and a patrol boat visit/demonstration, the Sheffield Island staff for offering great support, and the Norwalk Harbormaster for keeping a watchful eye on the channel during their stay.

It may have been six years, but Norwalk didn't miss a beat in the presentation of this year's unforgettable Sea Scout Rendezvous weekend.

Hour People



DIANE SMITH
President, Diane Smith Media

The greatness of a community is a direct reflection of the character of its people. People who see beyond their own lives and give of their time, resources and hearts to make their neighborhoods and towns better places for everyone. Diane Smith is one of those people.

An Emmy award winning TV journalist, Diane Smith has been on the air in Connecticut since 1982. She produces programs for CPTV, based on her series "Positively Connecticut™", which searches out the inspiring, warm, funny, and sometimes downright strange stories that give Connecticut its character.

Globe Pequot Press has published five of her books. *Seasons of Connecticut* has just been released and *A Connecticut Christmas* will be out in October.

Diane's documentary "Living Modern in Connecticut" won an Emmy award in 2010. The program examined the threat to Connecticut's iconic mid-century modern architecture.

As a consultant with the Connecticut Public Affairs Network, Diane is serving as coordinator of CT-N's election coverage, where she produced and anchored gavel-to-gavel coverage of the state party nominating conventions. CT-N provides TV and web coverage of state government and public policy.

Diane co-hosted the Morning Show on WTIC-AM and was a news anchor and reporter at WTNH-TV in New Haven.

Diane actively promotes local business and tourism. In 2010 Diane received the Governor's Award for Excellence in Culture and Tourism for her lifetime achievements and contributions to the arts and tourism in Connecticut. Diane said at the ceremony, "My greatest thrill is when someone says to me, 'I have

lived in Connecticut all my life and never knew there was so much happening until I saw your TV show and read your books'. My goal is to show people what a great place Connecticut is to live, work and visit."

Diane serves on the board of directors of the CT World Affairs Council and CT Young Writers Competition. Diane is on the advisory council of Women's Health Research at Yale, which provides grants for studies of women's health. As a spokesperson for Easter Seals, Diane helped raise over eight million dollars to help people with disabilities live independently. Diane served on the board of the Women's Campaign School at Yale, a non-partisan organization dedicated to helping women get elected.

Charter Oak State College awarded Diane an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters. In conferring the degree the trustees praised Diane's work promoting and contributing to the quality of life in Connecticut, saying, "Your willingness to give back to the community is a core value of the College which emphasizes the importance of being a good citizen in a global and diverse society."

Diane is president of Diane Smith Media, a company providing services to businesses, non-profits and schools.

Diane lives in Norwalk with her husband Tom Woodruff, Director of Health Care Policy & Benefit Services for the state of Connecticut.

THE HOUR NEWSPAPERS

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The Hour is the only locally owned daily newspaper in Fairfield County. We work hard to bring you the news because what's happening in our neighborhood is important to all of us and we're proud to report the stories of these people.

Hour Towns

NORWALK • WESTPORT • WESTON • WILTON • STAMFORD

Plant hearings set

From A3

safety restrictions on the permit before renewing or extending it this fall.

That group is also advising state regulators to consider stronger licensing and training rules on the gas blow procedure. If adopted, it would make Connecticut the first state to add that extra oversight.

Retired U.S. District Court Judge Alan Nevas, chairman of the Connecticut panel and another scheduled speaker at Monday morning's congressional subcommittee hearing, said they were surprised that people who perform the gas blow procedure don't need special licensing or oversight.

"This is a process that appears, to me at least, to have fallen between the cracks," Nevas said earlier this month when his panel adopted its recommendations. "We live in a very highly regulated society, and to find that this was not regulated

was surprising."

Investigators also are reviewing whether workers were fatigued from long hours at the plant. State reviews of work records from contractors found a majority of workers were on the job for more than 40 hours a week, and that some worked as many as 90 hours per week.

Linda Agnew, acting commissioner of the state Department of Labor, said there are no laws limiting work hours at private workplaces. She said their review found minor violations in record-keeping, but nothing suggesting those violations could be blamed for the long work hours or blast.

Several other industrial accidents involving natural gas have occurred in recent years, including one that killed four people last year at the ConAgra Foods Inc. plant in Garner, N.C., and another in 1999 at a Ford Motor Co. power plant in Dearborn, Mich., that killed six.

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