

# CONNECTIONS

*Education News From Northeastern Connecticut*

volume 29, number 3

[www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org)

April 2009

## Summit on Regional Collaboration Identifies Common Needs, Strategies



*Some Summit attendees, l-r: Marlborough's Cherie Celmer and Superintendent Sal Menzo; Sterling Principal Vincent Agostine; Windham Superintendent Doreen Fuller and Harriet Banks, Director of Personnel; and Bozrah Principal Karen Scopino.*

Nearly 50 representatives from 23 northeastern Connecticut towns and school districts met in a brainstorming session recently to share common education budgetary concerns and identify potential areas for regional cost-savings and cooperation during the Summit on Regional Collaboration.

"EASTCONN was pleased that so many representatives of so many towns and schools were able to find common ground and that they identified areas that may hold the greatest potential for collaboration and cost-savings," said Paula M. Colen, EASTCONN's Executive Director. EASTCONN sponsored the Summit on Regional Collaboration, which was held at EASTCONN's Hampton office.

"It was our intention to bring together all the stakeholders across our region who stand to gain the most from cooperative strategies," she said. The summit was built around regional data collected through focus groups and online surveys.

David J. Calchera, director of public policy for Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), was the summit keynote speaker.

During the summit, attendees met in facilitated break-out groups to consider the benefits of different regional strategies and identify those that may hold the greatest potential for regional collaboration.

"Great discussions!" observed Killingly Superintendent See **COLLABORATION**, page 2



*Willimantic resident Victor Feliciano, left, gets help with his reading from EASTCONN Adult Education teacher Cheryl Chinigo during a recent Basic Skills reading class.*

## EASTCONN Offers Strong Continuum Of Support To Area Residents, Communities

If you want to sharpen your job or business skills, earn your high school degree, improve your English, learn more about parenting, or simply take a non-credit course to improve your quality of life, EASTCONN's Adult Services provide a broad continuum of support to communities, families and adult learners across northeastern Connecticut.

"From our post-school employment-and-training to our Community Education classes in everything from accounting to aerobics, EASTCONN serves a remarkably diverse group of learners," said Paula M. Colen, EASTCONN's Executive Director.

Particularly these days, as people struggle to keep their jobs or find new ones, EASTCONN's skills-related, and transition-oriented services are in demand, according to Richard Tariff, EASTCONN's Director of Adult Services.

"We serve hundreds of area residents as they seek new opportunities to expand their education and strive to attain their personal best," Tariff said, adding that EASTCONN delivers services in communities all across northeastern Connecticut.

EASTCONN's Adult Services consist of four main areas: 1) mandated Adult Education programs, 2) Community Education

See **CONTINUUM**, back page

# Sprague's Italian Program Featured in *Education Week*

## *Italian Embassy Saves the Day*

In a March 4, 2009, front-page story exploring the nationwide decline of elementary schools offering foreign-language programs, *Education Week* has featured the highly successful, "model" Italian-language program at the Sayles School in Sprague.



*Sprague Italian class was on cover*

"For me, it's a first!"

said Sprague Superintendent of Schools Edmund Senesac.

"For us to have made a national publication is a once-in-a-lifetime thrill." The *Education Week* article featured two photos of Sprague students, an interview with Senesac, and information about Sprague's Italian program, which is taught to all 355 students, grades K-8.

The Sayles School's Italian program began eight years ago, when the tiny district was able to hire Italy native Claudio Scarpelli, thanks to a series of small grants from a foundation associated with the Italian Embassy.

But this year, Senesac said budgetary constraints were forcing him to pare down the school's Italian-language program in 2009-2010.

"I called Mary Ann Hansen, [World Language Consultant at the Connecticut State Department of Education] and said, 'Unfortunately, unless there's manna from heaven, next year we're going to have to cut our Italian teacher to three days a week.'"

Sprague has a sister school in Italy and a successful international exchange program. Scarpelli directs the exchange and leads the tours through Italy.

"In the eyes of the Italian foundation, ours is a model program," said Senesac. "Mary Ann Hansen contacted the foundation and they said they would back-fill the \$20,000 shortfall so we could get a ninth year in Italian. Hopefully, the economy will improve by then."

**Calendar of EASTCONN Workshops  
& Events, [www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org), click  
on "Workshops"**

**ACT presents comedy, *Miss Witherspoon*  
at the Capitol Theater, May 7-9 and 14-16.  
Tickets 465-5636. Info at [www.eastconn.org/ACT](http://www.eastconn.org/ACT)**

**CTAA Summer 2009 Programs**

- Summer Dance & Music begins June 24
  - Musical Theater Program, July 6 - Aug. 8
- [www.eastconn.org/CTAA](http://www.eastconn.org/CTAA)

## **COLLABORATION, continued from page 1**

William Silver about the summit's outcome. "Having mixed teams and multiple voices made things richer."

Identified among the most promising areas for collaboration were insurance coverage; common, regional assessments and curriculum; transportation; shared professional development and a common regional calendar; expanded cooperative purchasing, grant-writing and regional grants; and utilities assistance.

Lynda Joly, Special Education Director in Pomfret, said she was pleased that the summit provided a "great opportunity to dialogue with others and see we share similar needs."

Mansfield's Director of Facilities Management Bill Hammon noted succinctly, "Everybody has the same problems."

"The summit brought people together from all the professions, which helps us to understand each district's needs," said Jeff Nelson, Director of Finance for Windham Public Schools.

There were representatives from Ashford, Bozrah, Canterbury, Colchester, Columbia, Eastford, Hampton, Killingly, Mansfield, Marlborough, Plainfield, Pomfret, Region 19, Scotland, Stafford, Sterling, Tolland, Union, Voluntown, Willington, Windham, Woodstock, and Woodstock Academy.

"The level of enthusiasm among participants was extraordinary, with more than 40 who attended asking to remain involved as we continue the conversation about developing regional strategies for collaboration," said Colen.

A report is available online at <http://www.eastconn.org/RegionalismSummit.htm>. For more information, contact Dotty Budnick at 860-455-0707, or [dbudnick@eastconn.org](mailto:dbudnick@eastconn.org).



## **ACT Students Read at Writers' Coffeehouse**



*ACT Writers' Coffeehouse: ACT student Sadie Hopkins recites her poetry as fellow ACT students look on during ACT's Writers' Coffeehouse, held at the Capitol Theater in late February.*



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## ACT Students Garner Prize in Statewide DMV Video Contest on Safe Teen Driving



*Onstage at ACT! Front row, l-r, Caleb Newell, Kayne Bowling, Jeff Aarland. Back row, l-r, EASTCONN Education Services Director Tom Cronin, Emma Dudley, Kate Dirrigl, Kelly Manning, Evan Fulton, Ernie Bertothy, and ACT Principal Tracy Goodell-Pelletier. ACT student Victoria Yeager is missing from the photo.*

Student filmmakers from ACT, EASTCONN's arts magnet high school, were recently honored after winning honorable mention in a statewide Department of Motor Vehicle public service announcement video contest. The 25-second ACT video explored the dangers of street racing.

The Connecticut DMV's Ernie Bertothy and Kelly Manning presented ACT student filmmakers with certificates during a school assembly. ACT is located in the Capitol Theater, Willimantic.

"Your video was the most original one we received," Manning told about 80 ACT students who had assembled in the main theater for the ceremony. "We were very impressed with it."

ACT student filmmakers each received a certificate acknowledging their award, signed by Gov. M. Jodi Rell and DMV Commissioner Robert M. Ward.

ACT filmmaker honorees included freshman Caleb Newell (student director), from Chaplin; freshman Kayne Bowling, Willimantic; senior Kate Dirrigl, Willington; senior Emma Dudley, Storrs; sophomore Evan Fulton, Storrs; sophomore Jeff Garland, Chaplin; and senior Victoria Yeager, Marlborough.

Winners of the statewide DMV video contest, which was called "From the Driver's Seat to the Director's Chair!," were named last month. The ACT video was among 65 student videos submitted by high schools across Connecticut last fall. People visited the DMV site and voted online for their favorites.

First-place went to Branford High School, second-place to Hall High School in West Hartford, and third-place to Coginchaug Regional High School, in Durham. Five honorable mentions included ACT; Academy of Information Technology in Stamford; Greenwich High School; Ridgefield High School; and Staples High School in Westport. The top three winners will be aired on WFSB. To view the winning entries, visit [www.ct.gov/teendriving](http://www.ct.gov/teendriving).

## Parish Hill Art Teacher Wins Prestigious Award



The Connecticut Art Education Association (CAEA) recently presented Parish Hill High School teacher Ann Williams with its prestigious Connecticut Outstanding Art Educator of the Year Award, acknowledging her powerful impact on student learning and contributions to the field of art education. A 20-year veteran teacher, Williams also organizes Parish Hill's highly successful, annual Empty Bowl fund-raiser.

*[Editor's Note: Please send your district's Good News to newsletter editor Teddie Sleight at [tsleight@eastconn.org](mailto:tsleight@eastconn.org).]*



## Windham Early Childhood Task Force Puts Finishing Touches on Strategic Plan

Windham's Early Childhood Task Force is putting the finishing touches on its new strategic plan for addressing the needs of Windham's children and families, and the final report should be ready later this spring, officials say.

The Windham Early Childhood Task Force has been charged with the responsibility of identifying gaps in indicators of well-being and school readiness for Windham children, birth through age 9.

The new early childhood blueprint has identified four priority areas with respect to Windham's children and families: 1) Early Care and Education, 2) Health and Well-Being, 3) Parenting Support and Education, and 4) Family-Friendly Schools.

"Within each of those categories, we'll work to track indicators of progress related to the well-being and school readiness of Windham's children," said Elizabeth Aschenbrenner, who facilitates the task force. She is also EASTCONN's Director of Early Childhood Initiatives.

The task force's planning process is consistent with a Results-Based Accountability (RBA) model, Aschenbrenner said.

"We will generate the final plan later this spring," she said.

The Early Childhood Task Force of about 50 people has worked since last fall on a plan to ensure that Windham's infants and toddlers receive proper health care, and that families and caregivers have access to important information about child development. Members of the task force represent a broad cross-section of the community, including parents, town and school officials, and other community and state agencies, Aschenbrenner said.

"Every member is highly committed to the well-being of Windham's young children and their families," she said.

The task force was created after The Windham School Readiness Council and the Windham Parent Network in collaboration with the Town of Windham and Windham Public Schools were awarded a \$50,000 planning grant supported by the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet and the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund.

## CONTINUUM, continued from page 1

programs, 3) Employment and Training programs, 4) and other assistance for parents and families.

Adult Education's mandated programs, which include high school credentialing classes, English-as-a-Second-Language classes, Life Skills and Basic Skills Instruction, and American Citizenship Preparation, are funded by state and federal dollars, which means they are free to qualified residents. For area residents, 16 and older, who want to earn their high school diplomas, for example, EASTCONN offers three options, each of which is designed for different life circumstances: the GED Diploma, the External Diploma Program, and the Credit Diploma Program (Adult High School).



*Jennifer Garcia (left) and Jessica Sanchez use computers to improve their English during an Intensive English-as-a-Second-Language class at EASTCONN's Community Learning Center, Willimantic, where different skills & training courses are offered.*

Then there are EASTCONN's reasonably priced Community Education classes, open to northeastern Connecticut adults of all ages. These classes provide non-credit instruction in career advancement courses like accounting and computers, and a wide variety of recreational and personal improvement courses, including dance, fitness, painting, photography, jewelry-making, and much more.

"If you want to learn about *PowerPoint* or *Excel*, or simply take a course to better appreciate art, Community Education offers something for everyone," said Tariff.

Employment and Training programs in partnership with the Eastern Workforce Investment Board (EWIB) offer programs to promote employability for income-eligible residents. Out of School Youth (OSY) is an initiative for young adults, ages 16-21, who need academic support, high school completion assistance, and/or help obtaining a job. The Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) Intensive Employability Training program provides residents with rigorous training and employability skills, ESL instruction, and GED preparation.

For those students who have successfully earned their high school degree through EASTCONN's high school credentialing programs, EASTCONN provides guidance through the Transitions to Post-Secondary Education program, which helps the new graduates prepare for college or other training programs.

EASTCONN also provides customized work-site training for the learning needs of employers and employees, on-site GED or ESL classes, and other basic academic and technology skills training.

Other EASTCONN programs focus on the needs of area families. The Even Start ESL Family Literacy initiative provides eligible Windham families with classes in ESL, parenting, early childhood education, and interactive learning activities. Parent Education workshops can help parents increase both their parenting skills and their understanding of children's growth and development. The Family Literacy program offers intergenerational instruction and support to parents/guardians and their children, aimed at encouraging them to read and learn together.

"Everything we do is really about helping people in our communities prepare for those next steps, whatever they may be," said Tariff.

For more information, contact Richard Tariff at 860-455-0707. Or, call EASTCONN's Northeast Learning Center, Danielson, at 860-779-3770, or EASTCONN's Community Learning Center, Willimantic, at 860-423-2591. Or, visit [www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org) and click on Adult Services.



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*EASTCONN, one of six Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) in Connecticut, has been serving the educational and training needs of schools, organizations, and individuals of all ages in northeastern Connecticut since 1980.*

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