

CONNECTIONS

Education News From Northeastern Connecticut

volume 24, number 4

www.eastconn.org

June 2004

EASTCONN's Calchera to Retire in December; Board Names Colen As Successor



David Calchera and Paula Colen are planning a smooth transition for EASTCONN; Calchera will retire in December.

EASTCONN Executive Director David J. Calchera will retire at the end of December after almost 25 years in the job. Paula M. Colen, Deputy Executive Director, was unanimously selected by the EASTCONN Board of Directors to succeed Calchera. Colen will become EASTCONN Executive Director on January 1, 2005.

Calchera has been Executive Director of EASTCONN since 1980 when the agency was created. Under his leadership, EASTCONN's annual budget has grown from \$1.8 million to more than \$30 million.

Colen has served in a variety of positions since joining EASTCONN in 1980, most recently as Deputy Executive Director.

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Left to right, ACT Principal John Mayer and Executive Director David Calchera present a check to Herb Arico, EASTCONN Board Chair, launching the new ACT scholarship campaign.

EASTCONN Launches ACT Scholarship Campaign

EASTCONN has begun a scholarship campaign to help defray tuition costs for eastern Connecticut high school students attending ACT: Arts at the Capitol Theater, EASTCONN's new arts magnet school in Willimantic.

EASTCONN Executive Director David Calchera and ACT Principal John Mayer recently kicked off the ACT scholarship drive at EASTCONN's Annual Meeting when they presented Board Chairman Herb Arico with a check for \$3,083.

Calchera used the occasion to describe the new initiative and encourage donations.

"The State of Connecticut has supported a \$17 million grant for the renovation and complete equipping of the arts magnet school in downtown Willimantic," Calchera said.

"In addition, the State of Connecticut also provides an operating grant for students who attend the magnet school. Boards of education are asked to make up the difference between the operating grant and the actual cost of the program."

Unfortunately, the magnet school opened at a difficult time economically, Calchera said.

"Local districts have experienced two of the most difficult budget years in the last 20 years in Connecticut," said Calchera. As a result, local boards are having difficulty finding local resources to support students in the ACT program.

"From the beginning, we recognized that towns in eastern Connecticut would have difficulty supporting all of the

See **SCHOLARSHIP**, page 2

Calendar of EASTCONN Events



JUNE 2004

- 28 Technology as a New Literacy - CT Statewide Technology Conference, Water's Edge, Westbrook

JULY 2004

- 12 Picturesque Writing
13 Dynamic Instructional Units
14 Integrating "Empowering Writers" and Comprehension Strategy Instruction into Anthology and Trade Books
19 Introduction to MarcoPolo: Internet Content for the K-12 Classroom
19-30 Classroom Management Strategies (Online)
20 MarcoPolo Website: K-12 Lesson Development Integrating Technology
21, 22 ... iMovie: Making Movies with Your Students
26, 27 ... Taking the Mystery Out of Creating Webpages

AUGUST 2004

- 2 The Classroom Internet Workshop—An Instructional Tool to Promote Understanding and Higher Order Thinking
3 Web Based Technology Tools that Support Literacy Learning
9 Differentiation in Practice: Strategies and Tools
9, 10.. Catching a Thousand Eyes: Music Videos Created by Students Based on Classroom Research
11 Implementing Seven Key Comprehension Strategies and Literature Conversations into Your Reading Program
12 Supporting a Culture of Differentiated Instruction
17 Differentiated Instruction; What It Is, What It Isn't
18, 19 ... CT Data Warehouse Users: Regional Training Options for District Data Leadership Teams

SEPTEMBER 2004

- 16 School Improvement Planning (SIP) and NCLB Requirements
28 Enhancing Oral Language—State Department of Education Reading First Module

EASTCONN workshops are subject to change without notice. Please E-mail the EASTCONN Conference Office at conferenceoffice@eastconn.org for more information about any of the meetings and workshops listed here.

Workshop information is also available on our Web site at www.eastconn.org. Click on Workshops.

SCHOLARSHIP, continued from page 1

students who wanted to attend this program," Calchera said. "However, it is important that boards begin to budget at least some support."

The unsubsidized cost of the program this year is \$3,000 per student.

"Even a partial subsidy would help defray the cost of the program to parents of ACT students," explained Calchera.

In the meantime, EASTCONN has entered into partnership with the Community Foundation of Northeast Connecticut to create a scholarship fund for ACT students with financial needs. In the last few months, more than \$3,000 has been donated by the EASTCONN board, management and others with ties to the students and staff at the school. More than half came from friends and family of ACT Principal John Mayer.

"We would hope and expect that interested parties will provide donations to the program," said Calchera.

Contributions may be made in a number of ways to help support full or partial scholarships.

One fundraising event is already planned. EASTCONN's 1st Annual ACT Scholarship Fund 5K Road Race will take place on Sunday, October 24. For more information, contact ACT School Counselor Tracy Pelletier at tpelletier@eastconn.org.

The ACT program will move to the newly renovated Capitol Theater in downtown Willimantic over the summer. Opening events are being planned for October.

For more information on the EASTCONN ACT Scholarship Fund, contact Dotty Budnick, at 860-455-0707 or dbudnick@eastconn.org.

[Editor's Note: A brochure detailing the EASTCONN ACT Scholarship Fund is included in this newsletter.]



New Online EASTCONN Publications Now Available

Visit www.eastconn.org to download a copy of:

Summer at EASTCONN, describing June-August 2004 workshops for teachers and administrators.

The EASTCONN Professional Development Book for 2004-2005, listing workshops, meetings and training sessions for teachers and administrators.

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Sandra & Sally Go to China...

Group Trip a Memorable One

In April, personnel from 12 Connecticut schools traveled to Shandong Province, China, for 10 days. Five districts from eastern Connecticut were represented, including Colchester, Columbia, Pomfret, Somers, and Region 19. Schools were selected and matched after a competitive application process and onsite visits both in Connecticut and Shandong.

The Connecticut-Shandong Sister School Project is funded through a grant from the Freeman Foundation to the Connecticut State Department of Education, in partnership with the World Affairs Council, Connecticut. EASTCONN provides administrative support to the program.

According to Dan Gregg, the CSDE Social Studies Consultant who led the delegation to China, this initiative is an extension of a relationship that began in 1986 between then-Gov. William O'Neill and the governor of Shandong Province in an effort to foster friendship, trade and other relationships between the two regions. It builds on a number of initiatives over the years designed to encourage collaborative educational activities and exchange.

In addition to visits with sister schools, members of the Connecticut project received briefings on the Chinese education system at the Ministry of Education in Beijing and the Shandong Provincial Education department in Jinan.

Each Connecticut school leadership team consisted of one administrator and one teacher coordinator. The Pomfret Community School team included Principal Sandra Ahola and Sally Rogers, the music teacher. Both had traveled to Asia before.

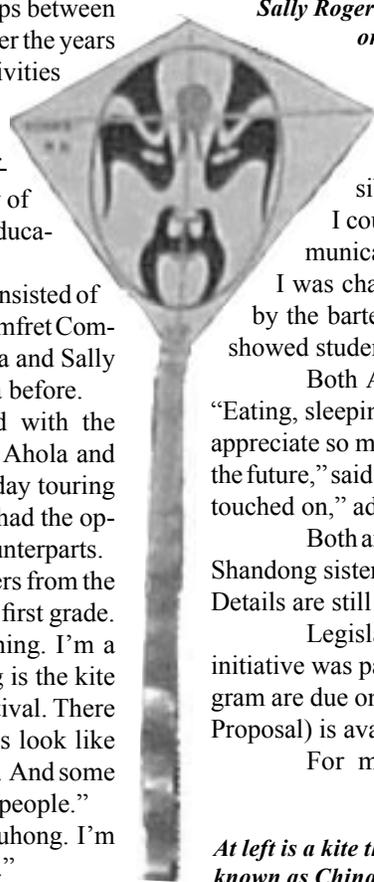
Pomfret Community School was teamed with the Kuiwen Zaochunyuan Primary School in Weifang. Ahola and Rogers spent a day visiting the school and another day touring the surrounding community. During their visit they had the opportunity to observe classes and meet with their counterparts.

Among their most valued souvenirs are letters from the Weifang students who begin studying English in the first grade. One student wrote, "Hello. My name is Lin Huiming. I'm a primary school student. I'm from Weifang. Weifang is the kite capital of the world. The 20th of April is the Kite Festival. There are many kinds of kite [sic] in Weifang. Some kites look like dragons. Some look like eagles. Some look like bears. And some are triangle.[sic] This is a special holiday for many people."

Another wrote, "Hello! My name is Fu Shuhong. I'm in Class 5, Grade 3. How are you. Glad to meet you."



Pomfret Community School Principal Sandra Ahola (left) and Sally Rogers, Music Teacher, pose in front of a watercolor on rice paper, a gift from their sister school.



Upon her return, Ahola visited each Pomfret Community School class to share her experiences. "I was challenged in all ways possible," said Ahola to her students. "I couldn't read. I couldn't speak. I had to rely on other ways to communicate. I was challenged by eating with chopsticks. I was challenged by the currency. And I was challenged by the bartering." She brought back Chinese currency and showed students how exchange rates work.

Both Ahola and Rogers expressed a desire to return. "Eating, sleeping, drinking the culture – I became aware of and appreciate so many things [about China] more – the history and the future," said Ahola. "There were so many things that we barely touched on," added Rogers. "It left us hungry for more."

Both are looking forward to October when staff from the Shandong sister schools have been invited to visit Connecticut. Details are still being worked out.

Legislation extending the sister schools partnership initiative was passed this spring. Applications for the 2005 program are due on July 16, 2004. A copy of the RFP (Request For Proposal) is available on the CSDE Web site.

For more information about the Shandong Sister

At left is a kite that Ahola and Rogers brought back from Weifang, known as China's City of Kites.

EASTCONN 2004 Summer Camps

Explorations in Madcap Math and Alien Science

Focus: Math and science skills
Location: Lebanon Middle School, Lebanon

The International Language and Performing Arts Festival

Focus: International language, dance, music, masks, theatre and puppetry
Location: Horace Porter School, Columbia

Ages: Grades 3-6 from participating schools
Times: Monday-Friday, 8:45 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Dates: Session #1 (7/12-7/23); Session #2 (7/26-8/6)
Fee: \$30.00/session

For more information, contact Carole Messier at 860-455-0707 or go to www.eastconn.org.

Talented Instructors Share Joy of Learning in Adult Classes

EASTCONN Community Education Program Continues to Thrive

by Kate Fortier

At first glance, you might not think that a fiddle player, a computer programmer, a chef, a stone wall builder and a jewelry crafter would have much in common. Yet they share a mutual passion and purpose: each is a teacher for EASTCONN Community Education. And while their fields of interest may be diverse, their enthusiasm for teaching is the thread that binds them.

EASTCONN Community Education has been providing affordable, quality adult enrichment classes to northeastern Connecticut for more than 20 years. Administered out of EASTCONN's Windham Community Learning Centers in Willimantic and Danielson, the program offers a wide variety of non-credit classes featuring hands-on learning throughout the region.

Most agree that the program's team of knowledgeable, friendly instructors is the key to its longevity and popularity.

"I love my job because as I work with existing and new instructors, I am constantly struck by the richness their particular craft or area of expertise adds to their lives – a richness they are eager to share with our Community Education students," said Program Coordinator Kate Fortier. "Whether they are passing on an age-old art or are preparing students for the work-world of tomorrow, passion for teaching is the common denominator among all of them."

Fiddle instructor Chuck Morgan discovered his love for the fiddle almost accidentally.

"About seven years ago, I joined the Old Fiddler's Club of Rhode Island as a guitar player," remembers Morgan. "After a couple of years, I got tired of playing just chords to accompany the fiddlers, so I bought a fiddle for \$40 at a local auction house."

After stumbling a bit through the learning process, Morgan finally mastered the instrument.

"Now, I just thoroughly enjoy playing, and can play for hours," Morgan said. His motivation for joining EASTCONN Community Education as a fiddle instructor a year ago was to share with others the pride he feels in being "part of a fiddling fraternity and heritage that stretches across hundreds of years and thousands of miles." Both of his classes have been filled to capacity and students have raved about his instruction.

Dance instructor Marty Edwards is a seasoned teacher who has been sharing her passion for country line dancing with students for over 10 years.

"I love seeing my regulars every semester," said Edwards. "But, I also love teaching new students who just don't think they are going to get it. After a couple of classes, they are so happy at how quickly they have learned the steps. We say, 'There are no mistakes – just variations.'"

Chef and culinary instructor Cynthia Stewart sees great value in EASTCONN's program.

"The environment is not intimidating and this makes it easier for some people to try new things out," said Stewart. "The short sessions are easy to fit into our busy schedules and offer a break from the regular routine – a break that can keep us young-thinking as we learn new things and meet new people."

But it's not always about what the instructor brings to



Community Education jewelry instructor Susan Swinney (right) provides guidance to a student. Photographer: Kate Fortier

the student. According to Program Coordinator Fortier, "It's been my experience that the very best instructors are those who are as eager to learn from their students as they are to teach them."

Computer programmer Thomas Mason possesses a great deal of education and experience. But about a year ago, he began to question his career direction.

"I realized that I don't want to sit in an office and stare at a computer all day. I understand but don't enjoy the technical aspect of computers; I enjoy the human aspect of them – the communication and learning that they facilitate. I realized that I would probably enjoy teaching people how to use computers."

Susan Swinney, a crafter and seller of beaded jewelry, has also been inspired by her EASTCONN teaching experience. She says her classes are about so much more than technique and style.

"My students come to class with such a positive attitude, and they are encouraging to each other and to me. In fact, twice I have had students who were undergoing treatment for cancer. Both were cheerful, loved the class, and were a help and a delight to the rest of us. So, now I think to myself, 'Okay, so maybe my arthritis is bad today. Or, maybe I have a cold. But, gee whiz, girl! Get a jump on!'"

Stone wall builder Jim Weslowski finds the true power of his stone wall building classes comes from hands-on learning and interaction among his students. "Each person has a whole, distinct set of experiences he or she brings to the class," Weslowski said. "To tap into each one and bring out that individual resource so the whole class can profit – that's the big story that comes from each little tale."

To request a free copy of the EASTCONN Community and Adult Education Fall 2004 course brochure please call (860) 423-2591 in Willimantic or (860) 779-3770 in Danielson, or visit www.eastconn.org for a complete course listing. To learn more about becoming a Community Education instructor, please contact Program Coordinator Kate Fortier at (860) 423-2591 or kfortier@eastconn.org. Certification is not required.

Talented Young ACT Writers Are Recognized for Their Work

By Lisa C. Taylor



ACT student Andy Morrison, of Thompson, a winner of Hartford Stage's WRITE on!

Five extraordinary young high school students from ACT: Arts at the Capitol Theater have been recognized for their writing talents during recent literary competitions across Connecticut. ACT is EASTCONN's arts magnet school in Willimantic.

Andy Morrison, a senior from Thompson recently won WRITE on!, a playwrighting competition sponsored by Hartford Stage Company. Morrison had to write a one-paragraph synopsis of a 10-minute play that he would

like to develop. The theme was "A Moment of Dignity." The Hartford Stage Company selected eight teen playwrights to spend a weekend at the theater developing their ideas with the help of acclaimed playwright Edwin Sanchez. Edwin Sanchez's play, *Diosa*, had its world premiere at Hartford Stage Company last spring.

Selected student plays will be read by professional actors at the Hartford Stage Company Brand: NEW Festival in June.

Andy enjoyed working on his play and also had an opportunity to share his efforts with Lezley Steele, the author of the Broadway play, *Hide and Seek*. Steele recently presented a workshop for the screenwriting and playwrighting students at ACT.

Stephen Seaward, a senior from Thompson; Michelle Bold, a freshman from Plainfield; Zane Roberts, a freshman from



(L to R) Stephen Seaward, Zane Roberts, Devin McDonald and Michelle Bold were named Young Writers Awards finalists.

Hebron; and Devin McDonald, a freshman from Columbia (who attends Windham High) were named as finalists the IMPAC-Connecticut State University Young Writers Awards.

Devin McDonald also won the Windham County regional prize of \$1,000 for her poem, "Yellow Lights," which she wrote in a poetry class taught by ACT instructor Lisa C. Taylor. Devin went to the state competition in Litchfield this month where she competed against all the other regional winners for another \$1,000 prize.

The IMPAC-CSU Young Writers Program is co-sponsored by the Connecticut Commission on the Arts, the Connecticut Library Association and the Litchfield-Morris Rotary. It is the largest literary prize for young people in the state.

[Editor's Note: Morrison, McDonald and Seaward also took top honors in the Windham Regional Arts Council Literary Contest earlier this year. See story in the January 2004 Connections.]

PACE Peer Mediators Honored

Members of the Connecticut National Guard traveled to the PACE high school in Columbia to honor 11 students who have successfully completed a year of training as peer mediators.

The students participated in formal training last fall at Camp Rowland. Classroom instruction was followed by a year of on-the-job training back at school, where students were called upon to mediate a variety of conflicts.

James Potter, a therapist at the PACE Columbia School and the coordinator of the program, is both proud of the students as well as excited about the impact they have had on the school as a whole.

"We've seen a lot of changes," said Potter. "There are fewer suspensions and time away from class. As a result, there is more instructional time."

The greatest benefit, however, is that "students learned that they can resolve any of their own conflicts using the mediation skills learned in this program," Potter said.

The PACE Columbia School serves students in grades 9 to 12 with significant social, emotional and behavioral problems. PACE stands for ProActive Cooperative Education.



Peer mediation honorees from PACE Columbia school pose with a member of the Connecticut National Guard (far right).

For more information about the PACE Peer Mediation Project, contact James Potter at 860-228-4317. For more information about PACE, contact Paul Rennick, EASTCONN Director of Student Services, at 860-455-0707 or prennick@eastconn.org.

EASTCONN 2004 Annual Meeting

EASTCONN's Annual Meeting was held on May 25, 2004 in Hampton, CT. Against a backdrop display of colorful student artwork from EASTCONN's many schools, guest speaker Dr. Betty Sternberg, Connecticut's Commissioner of Education, spoke about challenges facing educators. During the annual meeting, administrators and Board members also celebrated the 18 employees who have given more than 20 years of dedicated service to EASTCONN. Photos from the meeting appear to the right and below.



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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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