

CONNECTIONS

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Film Royalty Holds Court at ACT; Capra Shares Insights With Students



Earlier this fall, Frank Capra, Jr., (left) president of EUE Screen Gems Studios, joined by filmmaker Tim McGrath (center), spent an afternoon in Willimantic enlightening ACT high school students about the film industry.

The marquee at the Capitol Theater read, "Welcome Frank Capra" on September's Third Thursday in downtown Willimantic. Frank Capra, Jr., President of EUE Screen Gems Studios, and Richard Schulenberg, former film, theater and music producer and executive, spent the afternoon in Willimantic enlightening ACT students about the film and media industry.

Both Capra and Schulenberg are affiliated with the North Stonington Studios project in eastern Connecticut which, along with the New England Film Association, was instrumental in organizing the event. EASTCONN, the North Stonington Studios, the New England Film Association, and other film and media groups have been meeting since last spring to consider ways that EASTCONN can partner with them to support and expand education and employment opportunities for ACT students.

Capra, Jr., an award-winning television director and film producer, has made movies like *Marooned*, several *Planet of the Apes* films, and *Firestarter*, to name a few. His EUE Screen Gems Studios is located in Wilmington, North Carolina, and is considered to be the largest motion picture studio east of Hollywood.

See **CAPRA**, page 3

EASTCONN Eager to Expand Its After-School Enrichment Program

EASTCONN wants to expand a highly successful after-school enrichment and remediation program that has worked well for children in Willimantic, Moosup and Norwich, officials have announced.

The after-school program, called the VESTA/Lifelong Learning Project, is the result of a collaboration among EASTCONN, VESTA, QVCC, local public schools and numerous community-based civic, arts and social service organizations, said Nancy Vitale, Program Manager for the VESTA/Lifelong Learning Project.

More than 80 students in grades two through 12 participate in the three programs, she said, adding that the results have been so positive that EASTCONN is eager to duplicate its success for children in other eastern Connecticut towns. The VESTA/Lifelong Learning Project is in its third year in the three towns. EASTCONN coordinates and oversees the programs.

"Because of the overwhelming success of the VESTA/Lifelong Learning Project in these three towns, EASTCONN is absolutely committed to finding ways to create similar enrichment and remediation programs in other communities in our region," said Paula Colen, EASTCONN's Director.



Youngsters from VESTA's Moosup Gardens proudly display the masks they made for an Around the World enrichment project.

According to Vitale, the program will seek new sources of funding for expanding science, the arts and humanities programming.

VESTA Corporation is a Connecticut-based real estate development company with a long history in public housing.

See **VESTA**, page 4

Calendar of EASTCONN Events



NOVEMBER 2006

- 15 Overcoming Barriers to Student Understanding of Fractions
- 16 Technology Council
- 17 ConnCASE
- 29 Teaching Science Process Skills
- 29 Play Symposium

DECEMBER 2006

- 4 Wanted in Three States: Exploring Matter
- 5 Using *Excel* to Develop Templates
- 5 Diversity Matters
- 6 SOLO™ Hands-On Exploration
- 6 Regional Staff Development Council
- 7 URSA/NASA
- 12 Improving Students' Ability to Solve Word Problems
- 14 Moving Into Action: School Wellness Policy Implementation and Promotion (CSDE)
- 15 ConnCASE

JANUARY 2007

- 11 Math Council
- 16 Writing Across Content Areas
- 18 Regional Staff Development Council
- 18 Technology Council
- 19 ConnCASE
- 19 URSA/NASA
- 26 Explore Forces and Motion Using Legos and Web-Based Technology
- 26 & 3/23 .. Effective Teaching Strategies

FEBRUARY 2007

- 1 Helping Students to Think Algebraically
- 5 Making Ratios Real
- 6 Live and Let Live: Ecosystems Simplified
- 6 Analyzing Formative Assessment Data Using *Excel*
- 16 ConnCASE
- 16 URSA/NASA

Note: Workshops fill up quickly. Please reserve seats early. EASTCONN workshops are subject to change. Please e-mail the EASTCONN Conference Office at conferenceoffice@eastconn.org for more information about any of the meetings and workshops listed here. Register online for any of the above workshops at www.eastconn.org. Click on Workshops.



A note of thanks . . .

Many thanks to those who participated in the Third Annual ACT Scholarship Fund 5K Road Race on Sunday, Oct. 22 in Willimantic. The Fund earned \$2,126.

ACT Calendar



Scarf Auction to Benefit ACT

Visit ACT (Arts at the Capitol Theater) at 896 Main Street in Willimantic and bid on beautiful hand-crafted scarves during a silent auction that benefits the ACT Scholarship Fund.

View and bid: Evenings, Nov. 3, Nov. 16.

Winning bids will be announced at the ACT Annual Showcase on Thursday, Nov. 16th. See date below. Call ACT at 860-465-5636 for more information.

Nov. 16, 2006 – 7 p.m.

ACT Annual Showcase – A buoyant, fun-filled evening as ACT high school students showcase their many talents.

Jan. 11, 12, 13, & 20 – 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 13 & 21 – 2 p.m. matinee

Noises Off – is ACT's fully staged student production of the comedy where everyone gets caught in the act! *Noises Off* follows the antics of a hapless English acting troupe that is touring a farce called *Nothing On*. But the actors themselves are entangled in a series of hilarious romps, misunderstandings and behind-the-scenes dalliances that are every bit as deep (and irrelevant) as the funny characters they portray.

Tickets, call Elizabeth at 860-465-5636, or emacha@eastconn.org.



Willimantic Cinema Project

EASTCONN is collaborating with the Windham Area Arts Council and the UConn's radio station, WHUS-FM, to sponsor award-winning films at the Capitol Theater:

November 3

7 p.m. *Annie Hall* (PG)

9 p.m. *Pieces of April* (PG-13)

January 26

7 p.m. *Meet Me in St. Louis* (G)

9 p.m. *Casablanca* (PG)

February 9

7 p.m. *Being There* (PG)

9 p.m. *Like Water for Chocolate* (R)

Tickets are \$5 at the door for each featured film. For information: www.WindhamArts.org

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New Principal Brings A Working Spirit to ERA

Gary Lenoce has joined EASTCONN as principal of Eastern Regional Academy (ERA), a collaborative education program between Windham Public Schools and EASTCONN.

“Every student can and will learn,” said Lenoce, adding, “They just need a strong, rigorous curriculum with a high level of instruction.”

ERA is designed to meet the needs of students with emotional disturbances and related classifications. Academic instruction is provided in combination with clinical and behavioral support, and work-study opportunities. The academy is located in Columbia.



EASTCONN welcomes Gary Lenoce as Eastern Regional Academy's (ERA) new principal.

Lenoce's goals for ERA combine academic enhancements in a strongly supportive environment, with increased parent participation and an expansion of the work-study program. He also hopes to place more students in paid employment.

“Not only are students being paid a real wage in a true work environment,” he said, “they are getting great practice in obtaining and retaining jobs.”

Lenoce worked previously at the Children's Center Community Programs of Connecticut and was a special education teacher for 17 years in several different Connecticut communities. Originally from New Britain, Lenoce resides in Waterford. He graduated from UConn, completed his graduate work at Central Connecticut State University, and is pursuing his doctorate. Lenoce enjoys travel, physical fitness and his two cats, Pete and Ted. Contact Gary at glenoce@eastconn.org.



CAPRA, continued from page 1

He is the son of Academy Award-winning director Frank Capra, Sr., who made such silver screen classics as *It Happened One Night*, *You Can't Take it with You*, *Mister Smith Goes to Washington* and *It's a Wonderful Life*.

ACT students had the opportunity to film Schulenberg in an interview session hosted by Connecticut filmmaker Ronald Howard. Schulenberg has almost 40 years of legal and executive experience at Capitol Records, Paramount Pictures, CBS, Shakespeare Globe Center as well as a best selling book. The interview was followed by a facilitated interview of Capra and Schulenberg in front of the entire ACT student body. Many local and state dignitaries sat among the students in the audience as the guests spoke. ACT students filmed the conversation.

“At least one of you will make it,” Capra told the ACT students, adding that persistence and networking will be critical to their future success. Afterward, students had an opportunity to chat one-on-one with the guests.

EASTCONN Welcomes Tom Cronin to New Post

An enthusiastic Tom Cronin has joined the EASTCONN staff as Director of Student Services. Cronin replaces Paul Rennick, who will retire in December.

“I've always had tremendous heart for kids and finding ways to unlock their potential,” said Cronin recently.

“I believe you must create structured environments where kids feel safe to open up and explore their capabilities,” Cronin said he is excited about the possibilities at EASTCONN.

Having recently worked in public school settings, Cronin has an understanding of the challenges that local districts encounter in meeting the needs of low incidence populations. “We will be looking for ways to collaborate with local schools to better serve all kids, whether it's through special education programming, magnet programs or after-school enrichment and remediation programs,” Cronin said.

[Editor's note: See related stories, Page 1]

“In my short time here I can see that I am surrounded by dedicated people committed to public education in eastern Connecticut,” Cronin said. When asked about his focus for Student Services, he noted EASTCONN's ever-increasing role in meeting the needs of kids at every age and ability level. Three things in education matter most to Cronin: high nurturance, high rigor, and high accountability.

Until recently, Cronin was Superintendent of Schools in Bolton. Before that, he spent four years as principal and two years as assistant principal at Tolland Middle School. Before Tolland, Cronin was the administrator of an after-school program at the Connecticut Children's Medical Center and a special education teacher for 12 years. He also held a teaching position at EASTCONN's PACE program in Chaplin.

Cronin earned a bachelor's in psychology from SUNY Plattsburgh, and three separate degrees from UConn: a master's in Special Education; a Sixth Year in Educational Leadership; and a superintendent certification from UConn's Executive Leadership Program.

On the home front, Cronin is happily married with three children. Cronin loves baseball, fishing, carpentry, and home remodeling. “I'm a car guy, too,” he added.

“Being nice matters” is a philosophy that Cronin practices both at work and at home. “I believe that we are all doing our very best—people don't show up thinking they will not do well. I try to model for teachers how I expect kids to be treated—with dignity, empathy, respect and accountability... because nice matters.”

Tom Cronin can be found at the EASTCONN Hampton facility when he's not out visiting student programs. Contact him at 860-455-0707 or tcronin@eastconn.org.



Tom Cronin joins EASTCONN as its new Director of Student Services.

\$400,000 Grant Employs 200 Youths Over Summer

More than 200 young adults gained meaningful employment experiences last summer, thanks to a \$400,000 grant awarded to EASTCONN by the Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board (EWIB), EASTCONN officials said recently.

“This summer youth opportunity has given students a chance to explore different occupations, work with a diverse population and give back to their communities,” said Cyndi Wells, EASTCONN’s Youth Coordinator for the grant. “We have received many positive comments from the community partners, the young adults and their families.”

The funding was provided by the Federal Distressed City Grant, thanks to state Senate President Pro Tempore Donald E. Williams, Jr., D-Brooklyn, who was instrumental in securing the grant. The program paid participants \$7.40 an hour.

Students from the VESTA/Lifelong Learning Project were among those participating in the summer program, building picnic tables and bookshelves for their community centers. **[See related VESTA story, Page 1]** Another successful program paired English Language Learners and native English speakers. Students worked on signs and paths along the northeast Connecticut leg of the Airline Trail. Under the guidance of Mark Paquette and the White Water Partnership, students identified local flora and fauna and learned about Willimantic’s history. Other students worked in social service agencies like TEEG, Windham Hospital, Even Start, Killingly Parks and Recreation and Windham’s Weed and Seed Program. High school students worked as teachers’ aides, office assistants and recreational assistants.

For more information, contact Cyndi Wells at 860-455-0707 ext. 3027, or cwells@eastconn.org.

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VESTA is currently refurbishing Section 8 properties across the country. As part of its redevelopment projects at Willimantic’s Windham Heights, Moosup Gardens and Norwich Gardens, VESTA built learning centers in each complex, equipped them with computer labs and hired site managers, who work with local, social and educational agencies to secure programming for residents.

EASTCONN provides after-school enrichment and remediation programming for the school-age residents. At the end of each school day, students travel home to their community centers, where from 2:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., EASTCONN teachers direct educationally related activities that include homework, age-appropriate reading, storytelling, music, dance/movement, athletics, arts and crafts, and online research.

At the Moosup site, located in Plainfield, teacher Stephanie Gounaris’ students have a “passport” that takes them on a trip Around the World. Each week, students “visit” a new country and learn about its culture, language, art and food. An added benefit at the Moosup site is its co-location with the EASTCONN Head Start program. Siblings of Head Start children from other communities attend the Moosup program.

In Windham, Kervin Ocasio, the VESTA Community Center Coordinator, has recruited UConn students, who provide tutoring to complement the EASTCONN program. Ian Harrington, VESTA’s Windham Heights teacher, has used his theater background to develop connections with ACT (EASTCONN’s part-day, arts magnet high school in Willimantic), as well as Arts in Motion, and other Windham-area arts organizations.

For more information, contact Nancy Vitale at 860-455-0707 or nvitale@eastconn.org.



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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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