

News Briefs

Yard waste site closed Saturdays

NORWALK

Starting Dec. 6, the yardwaste site on South Smith Street will be closed on Saturdays. For questions or more information, call (203) 854-3200.

American Legion holds tree lighting

NORWALK

The American Legion at 60 County St. will hold its annual Christmas Tree Lighting festivities at 5 p.m. today. Family activities and refreshments are part of the event.

Medicare bus coming to Norwalk

NORWALK

The Medicare Bus will be at the Norwalk Senior Center, 11 Allen Road, to help residents enroll or change their Medicare Part-D Prescription Drug Plans. The bus has four computer terminals and trained professionals to answer questions. For more information, call (203) 847-3115.

Free hearing test offered in Norwalk

NORWALK

Affordable Hearing Solutions will offer free hearing tests at 149 East Ave., suite 8. A copy of the audiogram can be sent to your physician free of charge. For reservation, call (203) 857-4540.

Garden club plans Christmas fair

NORWALK

The Norwalk Garden Club will hold its Christmas Fair from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Dec. 6, at Cranbury Chapel on Frank Street. Wreaths, baked goods, homemade crafts, 18-inch doll clothes and Christmas arrangements will be available for purchase.

Helping teens when parents have cancer

FAIRFIELD

A free two-hour workshop to help teenagers cope when a parent is diagnosed with cancer will take place Dec. 11 at the Norma F. Pfriem Breast Care Center, 111 Beach Road in Fairfield. The workshop runs from 6 to 8 p.m. and is open to youngsters aged 12 to 18. Advance registration is required.

To register, call (203) 255-5300 or (203) 256-1835.

Food drive for pet owners

WESTPORT

Poster Animal Hospital of Westport, 1677 Post Road East, in conjunction with "Save Our Strays," is coordinating a pet food drive to benefit pet owners in Fairfield County. The program will target owners who are having difficulty providing everyday care and nourishment for their animals. If you are in need of assistance or would like to assist in the effort, visit the Poster Animal Hospital.

BMHS soulful 70's reunion

NORWALK

The Brien McMahon High School' Soulful 70's committee group is planning a reunion for the May 22, 2009 weekend. Organizers are looking for individuals who graduated or attended BMHS from 1970 to 1979. For information, contact Reva Walker (203) 374-4434, Stephanie Ollie Stringfellow (203) 216-3234, Jimmie "Bud" Penn (203) 673-3784, Darryl "Rock" Ross (203) 613-6519 or Jackie Brickhouse (203) 820-6541.

Library entrance closed for renovation

NORWALK

The main level of the Norwalk Public Library, 1 Belden Ave., will be closed for renovation through Dec. 8. The lower and upper levels and north entrance will be open. For information, call (203) 899-2780.

Government Today

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2008

No scheduled meetings

Highways relatively quiet during holiday

NORWALK

By STEVE KOBAK
Hour Staff Writer

Local and state police reported a relatively calm holiday commute on the roadways Friday.

Only six accidents — none of them with injury — were reported in Norwalk on Thursday and 167 — 27 of them with injury — were reported in the state from Wednesday through 9:45 a.m. on Friday, according to spokesmen for the Norwalk Police Department and Connecticut State Police.

Norwalk police also arrested one person for driving under the influence and issued six citations on Thursday.

State police said they arrested 28 people for driving under the influence and have issued 568 tickets for speeding and 335 for seat belt violations.

Last year, state police said they had four fatal accidents, 408 total accidents, 67 DUI arrests, 1,468 speeding arrests, 833 seat belt arrests and 1,203 hazardous moving arrests.

As the holiday enforcement continues, state police will man sobriety checkpoints and additional troopers will be on patrol.

State troopers will be using unmarked patrol cars, aircraft and



Hour photo/DANIELLE ROBINSON

Holiday travelers on Interstate 95 Friday afternoon.

laser units to enforce traffic laws. Troopers are watching for and enforcing hazardous moving violations, such as unsafe lane changes,

following too close and speeding.

Thanksgiving has the highest average of vehicular deaths with 523 yearly deaths from 2001 to 2006,

according to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Special offerings punctuate church's upcoming fair

NORWALK

By JOHN REILLY
Editor Emeritus

As St. Ladislaus Parish, 25 Cliff St., enters its second century of service, it continues the traditions of the past. After a year of events marking its 100th year, the church is preparing for its annual Christmas Fair on Saturday, Dec. 6 in the Parish Hall from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

A number of special offerings are planned for this year's fair, according to Joyce Steinhoff, overall chairwoman of the event. In addition to the number of traditional booths, there will be outside arts and crafts vendors offering their wares.

Donations are being sought for the White Elephant booth, which will be directed by Dorothy Stefan who may be reached at (203) 866-8125. She asks for items in working order but no furniture

and clothes.

Always a big hit is the Chinese auction that features only new items. Donations are sought also for this booth, according to Anita Gilchrist, chairwoman, (203) 847-3252.

Other booths and their chairmen and chairwomen are: kitchen, B.J. Soltes and Irene Breault; pastry shoppe, Irene Szabo; Coffee, Tea and Dessert, Elaine Cheh; Butcher Shop, Bill Szabo; Cemetery Boxes, Marie Pino; and

Baskets of Cheer, John Soltesz, who is seeking contributions for this booth, (203) 853-9021.

Although founded 100 years ago to serve the growing Hungarian community in South Norwalk, today the parish draws its membership from all areas of the city and even beyond.

The Rev. Michael J. Bachman is pastor and the Rev. Stephen J. Balint is in residence.



Hour photo/MATTHEW VINCI

Stamford resident Paul Ridley is preparing to row solo across the Atlantic Ocean to raise funds for melanoma research at Yale Cancer Center. He will be rowing for more than three months and is leaving in December.

Stamford resident becomes youngest to tackle Atlantic Ocean

STAMFORD

By JILL BODACH
Hour Staff Writer

In just a few weeks Stamford resident Paul Ridley will leave his family, home and job behind to travel solo across the Atlantic Ocean in a 19-foot boat. The journey may seem daunting, but not as much as the cause that inspired Ridley to take it.

Ridley isn't seeking to break a world record, although he will be becoming the third and youngest American to row any ocean solo. He also isn't seeking to enter some transcendental state of self-awareness, although he admits he'll have plenty of time to think. Ridley is making the journey to raise money for research being conducted at the Yale Cancer Center, and to remember his mother whom he lost to melanoma.

"I lost my mom to skin cancer in 2001 and a few months after that, my dad was diagnosed with prostate cancer and was treated and is fine," Ridley said. "That really showed me at an early age the difference between what happens when you are diagnosed with a cancer that has had a lot of research done as opposed to one like my mom had where there is still a lot to be done."

The journey has been in the

works for three years, encompassing most of Ridley's time and energy. On Dec. 20, all the preparation will come to a head as Ridley leaves the Canary Islands to head to Antigua, traversing the Atlantic Ocean.

Ridley's accommodations for this journey will be sparse. The boat, named Liv, which is Norwegian for "life," is 450 pounds bare, but will probably weigh about 1,200 pounds, when Ridley takes off, complete with all of his gear and food. The boat was custom-designed for Ridley, based on his height and weight.

"The concept is minimal accommodations for a solo rower," Ridley said. "There are two compartments, cabins might be a generous definition. One is for storage of my goods, about 8,000 to 10,000 calories a day. The middle of the boat is where rowing happens, so there is a sliding seat just like in a flat water racing shell. The rear cabin is long enough for me to lie down in, tall enough to sit down in, and has watertight hatches on all sides so that if the boat were to roll, it is designed to withstand heavy seas, 30 feet plus, and would be able to right itself. It would be an uncomfortable event with me in it, but safe nonetheless."

see S0N, A4

Connecticut MTA considers cutting 4 Metro-North trains

STAMFORD

Associated Press

Connecticut's Department of Transportation is considering cutting four Metro-North Railroad trains to help close a budget gap.

The reductions would affect the New Haven Line, which Connecticut owns.

The state funds 65 percent of its costs and the Metropolitan Transit Authority, which faces a \$1.2 billion budget gap, funds the rest.

Officials say they are looking at off-peak trains that could be eliminated with the least disruption to customers.

However, some Connecticut officials worry cutting trains would undermine the state's efforts to boost mass transit use.

Other proposals include cutting dozens of MTA jobs, decreasing the number of cars on some trains to cut power costs and cleaning trains less frequently.

New Haven police officer sued over police brutality

NEW HAVEN

By JOHN CHRISTOFFERSEN
Associated Press

A New Haven police officer is facing two federal lawsuits accusing him of brutality and an illegal strip search, while records show he has been subject to a history of complaints of excessive force.

Union officials call Officer Dennis O'Connell "a good cop" who works in tough, violent neighborhoods. But the coordinator for the department's Civilian Review Board said complaints against O'Connell are high.

"One person with eight complaints of the same type could be perceived as excessive," said Reginald Thomas, coordinator of the Civilian Review Board. "It's not the average for a New Haven police officer."

A telephone message was left for O'Connell with Sgt. Louis G. Cavaliere, president of the police union, who said O'Connell declined to comment. O'Connell has been on the force for about a decade and makes about \$59,000.

"This is not Mayberry U.S.A. or Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood," Cavaliere said. "You're dealing with the scum of the earth when you're dealing with people with drugs and guns."

The department has a recent

history of scandal. Three detectives were sent to prison for planting evidence and stealing money from crime scenes.

The incidents sparked an independent review of the department, which found problems with investigations of complaints against police. Many cases were closed because those who filed the complaints did not pursue them, according to the report last year by the Police Executive Research Forum, a national group that evaluates police operations.

In one of the lawsuits, five men and a woman say O'Connell used excessive force. One man said he was repeatedly punched in the face and sprayed with chemicals while he was handcuffed, while another said he was beaten unconsciously.

Dramese Fair, who is black, also filed a federal lawsuit earlier this year accusing O'Connell and two

see CIVIL, A4

A Chuckle . . .

I once took a test drive in a Porsche, until my neighbor realized it was missing.

David Corrado