

# CONNECTIONS

*Education News From Northeastern Connecticut*

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*The mid-March ribbon-cutting, above, takes place at EASTCONN's new Driver Education School in Willimantic.*

## EASTCONN Opens Its New Driver Ed School in Willimantic

In response to the growing demand for high-quality driver education programs for teens in northeastern Connecticut, EASTCONN has opened a new, year-round driving school that includes a free discussion forum for parents and/or guardians of new registrants. The driving school opened in mid-March at 90 South Park Street, Willimantic.

"EASTCONN decided to open a driver education program because of the growing concern in Connecticut about teen driving fatalities and because of the need for more top-notch driver education," said Lynn Galovich, the school's Director and one of its state-certified driving instructors.

Aimed primarily at teens, the new school will also serve adults and offer state-certified driving instruction in both the classroom and behind the wheel.

"The free parent/guardian sessions offer a unique opportunity to discuss their worries and share ideas about how to handle having a brand new, inexperienced driver in the family," Galovich said.

For more information, contact EASTCONN Driver Education at 860-428-7455, or visit the Web site at [www.eastconn.org/DriverEd](http://www.eastconn.org/DriverEd).

### In this issue

- Events Calendar ..... 2
- EASTCONN to Offer Summer Vacation Program..... 2
- Sheryl Kempain Named CAS Principal of the Year ..... 2
- Early Childhood Programs Thrive in NE Conn. .... 3
- ACT's Anna Nassiff to Attend Bread Loaf..... 4
- EASTCONN Interdistrict Update 2008 ..... insert

## LoRicco Named Principal at New Quinebaug Valley Middle College High School



*Gino LoRicco, QVMCHS Principal*

Gino R. LoRicco, formerly the principal at Tolland's Parker Memorial School, has been named principal at the new Quinebaug Valley Middle College High School (QVMCHS) in Danielson, EASTCONN officials have announced.

"We believe that Gino is the perfect choice to direct the new middle college initiative," said Thomas F. Cronin,

EASTCONN's Director of Education Services.

LoRicco, who had been principal at Parker Memorial since 2004, started at QVMCHS earlier this month.

"This is a great opportunity," said LoRicco. "It's a chance to fulfill a dream and to build something special for young people in northeastern Connecticut."

*"We believe that Gino is the perfect choice to direct the new middle college initiative."*

*— EASTCONN's Thomas F. Cronin*

QVMCHS combines high school and college classes in a program for non-traditional learners, grades 10-12, who might otherwise drop out. The program is intended to help those same capable, but at-risk students finish high school and continue on to college.

In addition to earning college credits, students will graduate from QVMCHS with the same number of credits required by the traditional high school. The program includes a strong community service component and will allow students to shape their own education plans.

See LORICCO, page 4

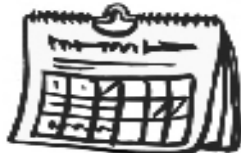
## EASTCONN To Offer Summer Vacation Camp Again This July

EASTCONN will once again offer its interdistrict summer vacation camp through The Academy of International Arts and Science Studies. Sessions take place between July 7-18 and July 21-August 1.

The program serves students entering grades 3-6 from the towns of Andover, Ashford, Chaplin, Columbia, Hebron, Lebanon, Mansfield, Marlborough and Windham.

Details are being finalized. For more information, contact EASTCONN's Peggy Roberts at 860-455-0707, or by e-mail at [mroberts@eastconn.org](mailto:mroberts@eastconn.org).

## Calendar of EASTCONN Events



### APRIL 2008

- 2 ..... Math Council
- 3 ..... Examining the Earth Beneath Us: Soils, Rocks & Minerals
- 8 ..... The Potential of Podcasting
- 8 ..... Improving School Climate to Support Student Achievement
- 11 ..... Current Issues in Service Delivery: ASHA Revisited
- 11 ..... ConnCASE
- 22 ..... Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners *with Jane Hill*
- 22 ..... EASTCONN Board Meeting
- 24 ..... URSA/NASA
- 25 ..... Teaching & Learning with "Second Life" with *Kathy Schrock*
- 28 ..... Strategies for Cultivating Respect for Diversity in Preschool and Kindergarten Classrooms
- 29 ..... Digital Storytelling
- 30 ..... Investigating the Nighttime Sky

### MAY 2008

- 8 ..... Technology Council
- 9 ..... ConnCASE
- 13 ..... Easy as Child's Play: Designing Environments to Support Learning
- 14 ..... Science Council
- 15 ..... Language Arts Council
- 21 ..... Regional Staff Development Council
- 22 ..... Optics in the Classroom
- 22 ..... URSA/NASA
- 27 ..... EASTCONN Annual Board Meeting

### JUNE 2008

- 13 ..... ConnCASE

**Note:** Workshops fill up quickly, so please reserve seats early. EASTCONN workshops are subject to change. Please e-mail the EASTCONN Conference Office at [conferenceoffice@eastconn.org](mailto: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](http://www.eastconn.org). Click on "Workshops."

## Killingly's Sheryl Kempain Is CAS Principal of the Year



*Sheryl Kempain, CAS Principal of the Year*

Sheryl Kempain, principal at Killingly Intermediate School, has been named 2008 Middle School Principal of the Year by the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS).

"It's just been a whirlwind of excitement," said Kempain, a Killingly native. "The staff has been so supportive because they are all involved in this. They've worked so hard. It's not about me. It's about all of us. We're doing it together."

Kempain has been receiving congratulations from across the state, she said, as well as from the Killingly Board of Education, her staff and students.

Sponsored annually by CAS, the Principal of the Year Program recognizes outstanding middle and high school principals. Kempain was nominated by her assistant principal, Steve Tagen, who describes her as "intelligent, purposeful, and principled."

Since becoming principal in 2002, Kempain has secured a reputation for being educationally innovative and determined. She has obtained competitive professional development grants, allowing a large number of staff to visit cutting-edge model-school programs and national workshops. Among other initiatives, she has also designed and obtained funding for an After School Intervention Program, established an Advisory Council to empower staff to share in the governance of the school and created a monthly principal's letter to inform parents.

"I went through the Killingly school system, my children went through this school system — my mother went through this school system!" said Kempain. "It really is near and dear to my heart."

"I think we have a program that can compete with anybody's. We have an awesome school here."

CAS Principal of the Year winners are selected each February. Next, Kempain will represent Connecticut in the competition for National Principal of the Year, sponsored jointly by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and MetLife.

To learn more about the Connecticut Association of Schools, visit their Web site at [www.casciac.org](http://www.casciac.org).

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# NE Connecticut Boasts Highest Concentration of Towns Offering Comprehensive Early Childhood Programs

## *School Readiness Councils Help Towns & Schools Plan, Coordinate Local Services*

In keeping with the goals of Connecticut's Early Childhood Cabinet, which aims to develop and fund high-quality early childhood programs statewide, northeastern Connecticut towns have for years been building capacity and delivering high-quality, integrated early childhood services to the region's families and children, birth to age 5.

Furthermore, thanks to the hard work and vision of the area's School Readiness Councils, which oversee School Readiness Grants and plan for the future, the northeastern Connecticut region now boasts the highest concentration of towns that participate in comprehensive school-readiness programs in the state.

Twenty-two of the 33 towns that comprise the EASTCONN region in northeastern Connecticut are already participating in the state-funded School Readiness Grant Program, which gives a minimum of \$107,000 each year to towns that qualify. Those same 22 towns are considered to be either "competitive" or "priority" communities, which means they are among the state's 50 lowest-wealth-ranked towns. The state's poorest towns are eligible to apply for funding from the School Readiness Grant Program, which was established by the state legislature in 1997.

The 22 towns include Andover, Ashford, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Chaplin, Colchester, Coventry, Eastford, Griswold, Hampton, Killingly, Lisbon, Mansfield, Plainfield, Putnam, Scotland, Sprague, Stafford, Thompson, Voluntown, Windham and Woodstock. [See map insert above.]

"In general, what's so exciting to me about our region's extensive participation in school-readiness planning is that it's not just about obtaining funding and providing direct services to children," said Elizabeth Aschenbrenner, EASTCONN's Director of Early Childhood Initiatives.

"It's also about creating a community-family-school collaborative that takes a comprehensive look at local programs and services for both families and children, from birth to age five, in the community or region," she said.

A number of things point to the success of early childhood initiatives in northeastern Connecticut.

Perhaps chief among them is the high number of NAEYC-accredited early childhood programs in the region. Those that receive School Readiness Grant Program funds have either been accredited or are in the process of being accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). NAEYC will only accredit those early childhood programs that meet rigorous standards. EASTCONN has assisted 33



*In orange, Northeast Connecticut School Readiness Grantees*

early childhood programs in their bids for accreditation, including Head Start.

Aschenbrenner also pointed to the crucial role played by towns' regional School Readiness Councils because they oversee the coordination of local early childhood services.

EASTCONN's Aschenbrenner has been a key figure in facilitating the development of the councils, which are by state statute required to direct local early childhood initiatives funded by the School Readiness Grant Program. The councils are composed of parents, educators, political leaders and early childhood professionals.

(A highly regarded early childhood educator herself, Aschenbrenner was one of the

developers of the CSDE's Preschool Curriculum & Assessment Frameworks.)

The School Readiness Councils work to ensure that local early childhood services are high-quality, collaborative programs that involve a broad cross-section of efforts, including those by schools, Head Start, local and town agencies, EASTCONN, and private, fee-based programs, Aschenbrenner said.

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***"Ultimately, our goal is to provide the finest, most comprehensive early childhood care available..."***

***— EASTCONN's Elizabeth Aschenbrenner***

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Another positive outcome of many school-readiness programs in the EASTCONN region is that from a very young age, children from different backgrounds interact in environments that are both positive and supportive, as well as diverse.

Aschenbrenner said that EASTCONN's Early Childhood division has been helping eastern Connecticut towns obtain the maximum school-readiness funding available. EASTCONN assists with school-readiness grant preparation, strategic planning, curriculum development, consultation and support, and professional development. The agency also sponsors regional meetings and other activities for the purpose of collaboration and resource-sharing across communities, she said.

"Ultimately, our goal is to provide the finest, most comprehensive early childhood care available in order to support both parents' and children's future success," Aschenbrenner said.

Contact EASTCONN's Elizabeth Aschenbrenner at 860-455-0707, or at [eiaschenbrenner@eastconn.org](mailto:eiaschenbrenner@eastconn.org).

# ACT Sophomore to Attend Conference at Bread Loaf



*ACT's Anna Nassiff*

Anna Nassiff, a sophomore at Windham High School and a student at ACT's part-day arts program at the Capitol Theater, has been invited to attend the prestigious New England Young Writers' Conference (NEYWC) at the Bread Loaf campus of Middlebury College in Vermont.

ACT is EASTCONN's arts magnet high school in Willimantic.

"Anna is one of our most outstanding students," said ACT Principal John Mayer. "She's a very hard worker and puts her heart into everything she does. She really understands what ACT is all about and the great opportunities she has here and she's just soaking it all up."

Nassiff, who is from Columbia, is focusing on performance at ACT right now, according to Mayer, who said that she will appear in ACT's spring performances of *The Wiz* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

Nassiff was recommended to the NEYWC by her ACT creative writing teacher, Lisa Taylor, who described Nassiff as "a stellar student."

"Anna is talented in so many areas and she's also an excellent writer," said Taylor. "It's a great honor to be accepted by Bread Loaf. Students from all over New England and New York will be there."

Nassiff is the fourth ACT student to be invited to NEYWC, which will take place from May 15–May 18, 2008.

## LORICCO continued from page 1

QVMCHS received final approval from the Connecticut State Department of Education in February. The new school, which will be located on the Quinebaug Valley Community College campus in Danielson, will open its doors in late August. Initially opening with 30 students, QVMCHS's enrollment will grow to 125 in the next several years.

"The expectation will be that every student who enrolls at QVMCHS will meet with a high level of success in all areas," LoRicco said. "To ensure that success, class sizes will be small, students will meet daily with their advisors and every student will be able to enjoy the extensive resources available at QVCC."

EASTCONN will manage QVMCHS for a partnership that includes Quinebaug Valley Community College, Killingly, Plainfield, Putnam, Thompson, Windham and Woodstock. As the school expands and enrollment numbers allow, students from non-partner districts will also be able to apply to QVMCHS.

Prior to becoming principal at Parker Memorial School, LoRicco was assistant principal at Tolland Middle School from 2001-2004. Between 1987 and 2001, he taught a variety of social studies subjects at the middle- and high-school levels in Newtown, Conn., and in the towns of Orange and Barre in Massachusetts.

LoRicco obtained his Sixth-Year Certificate of Advanced Study in Administration (C.A.S.) from Sacred Heart University in 2001; earned his master's degree in liberal arts from Clark University in 1995; and graduated cum laude with a B.A. in history from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in 1987. A marathon runner and former baseball, basketball and football coach, LoRicco resides with his family in Coventry and both composes and performs folk music.



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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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