

CONNECTIONS

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New Program for Students With ASD to Open in Coventry

This fall, EASTCONN will open a new northeast Connecticut program for primary-grade students who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and related disabilities, EASTCONN officials have announced.

EASTCONN's new site-based program, called the Integrated Service Program (ISP), will serve northeastern Connecticut students, principally those in kindergarten through second grade. The program will be housed at Coventry Grammar School, which will allow young ISP participants important access to inclusive opportunities in a public school setting.

EASTCONN's new program will offer families and students from the region an alternative, closer to home.

Currently, northeast Connecticut youngsters with ASD and related disabilities who don't have in-house programs must travel long distances to obtain services, according to Ron Morin, EASTCONN's Clinical Program Director. He will oversee the new ISP in Coventry.

"We are responding to the need in our region for comprehensive services for children with ASD and related disabilities," Morin said.

"EASTCONN's continuing goal is to provide families and schools flexible placement and support options to meet students' individual programming needs," he said. "This is just one step in the process of providing a continuum of services for students with autism spectrum disorders and related disabilities."

"I also want to acknowledge Coventry Public Schools for supporting this much-needed program and inviting us to be part of their school community," Morin said.

The new ISP will offer an integrated, multidisciplinary team approach, with an emphasis on the family as vital members of the team, Morin said. Extended Year Services (EYS) are part of the program.

Overseen by a clinical program director (Morin), ISP will provide a board certified behavior analyst, a special education

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Free Community Forum on Teen Driving Safety, New Laws

Public Invited to June 18 Panel Discussion With Experts, Parents, on Tougher Teen Driving Laws

Parents and teens are invited to learn more about Connecticut's new, tougher teen driving laws during a free Community Forum on Teen Driving Safety, featuring state Department of Motor Vehicles Commissioner Robert M. Ward, on Wednesday, June 18, 2008, at 7 p.m. at the Capitol Theater, 896 Main Street, Willimantic.

Forum panelists will discuss Connecticut's new teen driving laws, which take effect August 1, 2008, and strategies for improving the safety of teenage drivers. WILI-AM radio host Wayne Norman will moderate.

The Capitol Theater box office will open at 6 p.m. the night of the forum. Seating is limited. Free tickets may be reserved in advance by calling EASTCONN at 860-779-3770.

Forum panelists include David Calchera, executive director of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents; Brendan Campbell, M.D., director of Pediatric Trauma, Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Hartford, and a member of the Governor's Task Force on Teen Safe Driving; Sherry Chapman, president of !M.P.A.C.T. (Mourning Parents Act), of Coventry, and a member of the Governor's Task Force; Capt. Frank Griffin, of the Connecticut State Police, Eastern District Headquarters; Taylor Jennett, a student at Holy Cross High School in Waterbury; Jim MacPherson, a driver education professional of AAA, West Hartford, and a member of the Governor's Task Force; Jack Thaw, Ph.D., adolescent psychologist, Glastonbury, and a member of the Governor's Task Force; and Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles Commissioner Robert M. Ward, who also co-chairs the Governor's Task Force.

WILI-AM, Windham Area Chamber of Commerce, Wind-

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ham Regional Community Council, Windham Hospital, Charter Communications, the Chronicle, Willimantic Fire Department, Willimantic Police Department, Safe Kids Windham County, and EASTCONN are co-sponsoring the forum.

Last November, in the aftermath of seven teenage deaths in car crashes over a four-month period, Connecticut Gov. M. Jodi Rell formed the Governor's Task Force on Teen Safe Driving. Task Force recommendations resulted in the state legislature's bipartisan approval of new, tougher teen driving laws, which will affect both teens and their parents. The new laws will impose tighter restrictions and enforce tougher penalties for teen driving violations.

The DMV's Center for Teen Safe Driving web site reports "...car accidents claimed the lives of 15 teens in 2007 and 14 teens in 2006. In the first three months of this year, the state lost seven teens to traffic fatalities on Connecticut roadways."

To learn more about Connecticut's new teen-driver laws, visit www.ct.gov/teendriving.

Calendar of EASTCONN Events



JUNE 2008

13 ConnCASE

JULY 2008

1-3 Technology, Writers and Writing
9 Using Poetry to Help Readers Connect to Text and Infer Meaning
15, 16 Creating a Classroom Web Site
16 Strategy Instruction to Enhance Comprehension and Vocabulary Development Using Nonfiction
23 Blogging Basics
24 The Wonderful World of Wikis
30 Potential of Podcasting
31 Digital Storytelling

AUGUST 2008

5 Google Earth in the Classroom
6 Google Tools for Educators
12 SMARTBoard in the Classroom for Beginners
13 Intel Teach Leadership Forum
13 Supporting and Maintaining a Culture that Aligns with SRBI and RTI (& Oct. 8)
13 Increase Students' Understanding, Engagement & Motivation in All Content Areas with Foldables Part I
14 Using Foldables in All Content Areas: Part II
14, 15 Scratch
15 Making Sense of Math Text
18 Increasing Student Achievement through Content Area Writing
18, 19 Thinkfinity

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 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."

The Wiz



In March, ACT students mounted their first-ever fully staged musical production when they performed *The Wiz*, a witty, urbanized musical based on *The Wizard of Oz*. Main characters from the sold-out show are depicted above, including, left to right, Aimee-Rose Willett (a resident of Putnam) as Dorothy; David Wikholm (Columbia) as The Cowardly Lion; Laura Gorman (Plainfield) as The Scarecrow; and Anna Nassiff (Columbia) as The Tin Man.



Some Slots Remain at CTAA Summer Musical Camp

The Capitol Theater Arts Academy's 2008 Summer Musical Theater Camp still has openings for campers, grades 4-12, who are interested in performance or technical theater.

The camp, which is administered by EASTCONN at the Capitol Theater, 896 Main Street, Willimantic, will present a fully staged production of *Bye Bye Birdie* at the end of the session, on three days starting July 31, Aug. 1 & Aug. 2. CTAA camp runs June 30 through Aug. 2. Campers may elect to participate in either the performance (acting, singing, dancing) or technical sides (lighting, set-design and construction, costumes) of the program.

Visit www.eastconn.org/capitoltheaterarts and click on Summer Camp 2008, or contact CTAA Director Adam Friedman at 860-465-5636 or via e-mail at afriedman@eastconn.org.



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Arts in the Afternoon Off to a Great Start

Chinese Puppeteer Hua Hua Teaches Ancient Art of Shadow-Puppet-Making to Kids

Arts in the Afternoon, EASTCONN's new, after-school, arts enrichment program for Windham children and their families, is off to a great start, according to program officials, who say the integrated arts curriculum, visiting artists, and creative programming are having positive effects on participating youngsters.

Funded by a \$97,000 Connecticut State Department of Education grant, Arts in the Afternoon opened its doors in early February to Windham area children, grades 3-10. The program takes place at the Windham Heights Community Learning Center in Windham.

"Arts in the Afternoon is going very well," observed Dan Mullins, Program Coordinator. "We have an artist-in-residence who conducts dance lessons on-site, and our students also attend dance, acting and keyboard classes at the Capitol Theater Arts Academy [EASTCONN's community arts program in Willimantic]." So far, students have worked with two different puppeteers and a professional mime.

"Arts in the Afternoon gives kids one more safe and nurturing place to go after school for assistance with their academic life, as well as helping them develop their social skills by working with peers and a diverse staff," said EASTCONN's Nancy Vitale, Manager of Arts in the Afternoon.

"The program keeps kids involved in academic, positive activities that foster positive youth development and leadership skills," Vitale said. "We have a heavy focus on language arts, language acquisition, comprehension, fluency and more."



Chinese puppeteer Hua Hua shows a delighted student how to make a shadow puppet dance across the screen during a recent puppeteering class at EASTCONN's Arts in the Afternoon program at Windham Heights. Hua Hua is one of the distinguished artists who have been invited to teach at Arts in the Afternoon.

Pedro Flores, 19, an Arts in the Afternoon staffer, said children were lucky to have an after-school arts program at Windham Heights.

"I was raised here [at Windham Heights]," Pedro said, "and there's a lot more to do here now because of [Arts in the Afternoon] than there ever was when I was growing up. It helps keep

kids out of trouble."

In the context of the arts, the program's curriculum is designed to complement classroom instruction, improve student achievement in the arts, language arts, math and technology, in addition to encouraging parental engagement.



Arts in the Afternoon youngsters concentrated on creating Chinese shadow puppets using oak tag, glue, scissors, fasteners, tape and lots of imagination. A short time later, the boys used their puppets to present a spirited, giggle-filled puppet show to fellow students.

A delightfully colorful scene unfolded during one recent Arts in the Afternoon session when Chinese puppeteer Hua Hua Zhang engaged a large group of youngsters in the ancient art of making Chinese shadow puppets.

Hua Hua, a professional artist who is both internationally renowned and a graduate of UConn's school of puppetry, traveled from Pennsylvania to guest-teach.

"Remember!" Hua Hua said, as the children made their own puppets, "Everybody has a different imagination and a different talent. Trust your imagination."

Hua Hua said her shadow puppet workshop helped children focus not only on art, but also on language arts skills since each child was asked to create a short, shadow puppet play against a back-lit, white screen at the end of the workshop. The children also worked with geometric shapes to construct their own shadow puppets.

"Art and education together are so important," said Hua Hua. "My goal is to help children recognize that everyone has potential in art. All they have to do is try."

While Hua Hua and staff assisted them, the children chattered happily back and forth in both English and Spanish as they changed fluorescent-colored oak tag shapes into shadow puppet creatures. Learn more about Hua Hua at www.huahua.com.

Arts in the Afternoon will operate a six-week summer session, Monday through Thursday, from July 8 through August 14, Vitale said. The session, which has weekly themes, will offer regular field trips.

To learn more about Arts in the Afternoon, e-mail Dan Mullins at dmullins@eastconn.org. Or, contact Nancy Vitale at 860-455-0707, or at nvitale@eastconn.org.

Coventry, Putnam Get Share of \$13.2 million to Bolster AP Science, Math, English

EASTCONN's Helen Weingart Named Field Project Manager for NMSI Grant

Coventry and Putnam are among 10 Connecticut towns that will get a share of a \$13.2-million National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI) grant to bolster AP science, math and English at the high school level. The NMSI grant is intended to encourage students to pursue careers in science and technology.

Over a five-year period, the NMSI grant, called Project Opening Doors, will distribute \$465,467 to Coventry and \$385,788 to Putnam. The program will be expanded in the next five years to include at least 25 to 30 Connecticut schools, officials said.

In partnership with the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA), the State of Connecticut was awarded the funds following a highly competitive grant process. EASTCONN assisted with the grant application and EASTCONN Staff Developer Helen Weingart has been named the Field Project Manager for Project Opening Doors.

Connecticut is one of only seven states to win a grant from NMSI. The grant is part of NMSI's Advanced Placement training and incentive program. NMSI is a non-profit organization designed to help America maintain its global leadership position in technological innovation, according to CBIA press materials.

The grant was awarded to the CBIA's Education Foundation in partnership with the Connecticut Academy for Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology; the Connecticut Science Center; the State Department of Education; and the Connecticut Department of Higher Education.

The 10 Connecticut towns that will benefit from a portion of the \$13.2-million NMSI grant include Ansonia, Coventry, Danbury, East Hartford, Hartford, New Britain, New London, Putnam, Stamford and Waterbury.

Exxon Mobil Corp., the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation are also supporting the national initiative.

To learn more, contact Project Opening Doors Field Project Manager Helen Weingart at 860-455-0707, or via e-mail at hweingart@eastconn.org.



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teacher and one-to-one instructors for each child. In addition, related services personnel will be available on-site.

In its first year, ISP plans to accept five children into the program, Morin said, adding that ISP's highly structured approach to intervention is aligned with the latest National Research Council findings and recommendations.

To learn more about EASTCONN's new Integrated Service Program, contact Ron Morin at rmorin@eastconn.org, or by cell at 860-933-7371.

Caring Killingly Volunteers Win \$10,000 For Helping Teacher After Cancer Diagnosis



Killingly Intermediate School teacher Mona Gardiner (front left) celebrates with her friend, cancer survivor Judy Quinn (front right), and Quinn's three children (standing), as they display the April USA Weekend Magazine announcing the 2008 Make a Difference Day Awards. Missing from photo, Wendy Johnson-Cavar.

Thanks to combined fund-raising efforts on behalf of a teacher diagnosed with breast cancer, Killingly Intermediate School, Killingly Memorial School and community volunteers were named \$10,000 National Award recipients of the Make A Difference Day Awards 2008.

Make A Difference Day, which takes place the fourth Saturday each October, encourages volunteerism and is sponsored by *USA Weekend Magazine*. The Killingly award was announced in the magazine in late April.

When former Killingly Memorial School teacher Judy Quinn learned she had breast cancer in June 2007, friends and students from Killingly took action. Quinn, who was 49 and a single mother, had just started a new teaching job in another Connecticut district, which meant she had few sick days as she faced weeks of treatment.

Wendy Johnson-Cavar, a friend of Quinn's, began organizing a "huge" benefit dinner and auction. Another Killingly teacher and friend, Mona Gardiner, who was already involved with other Make a Difference Day activities at KIS, joined forces with Johnson-Cavar to hold the Quinn benefit on Make a Difference Day in October 2007.

"Everything just seemed to fall into place," said Gardiner.

Students and staff were involved throughout the project. KIS sixth-graders hosted a "Harvest Fest" for the Judy Quinn Benefit Fund. Both KMS and KIS hosted Casual Day for Charity in Quinn's honor. KIS staff donated baskets, services and gifts to be raffled off at the benefit. KMS staff assisted and local businesses donated gift certificates.

See **MAKE A DIFFERENCE**, back page

Six EASTCONN Districts Win Technology Grants

The Connecticut State Department of Education has awarded technology grants to six districts in the EASTCONN region, including Ashford, Brooklyn, Killingly, Mansfield, Willington and Windham.

Only 13 grants (up to \$65,000 apiece) were awarded statewide by the federal Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) program, also known as CSDE Title II Part D. The state announced its EETT awards in late May. The yearlong EETT grant will serve grantees through June 30, 2009.

EETT funding will allow middle schools to develop “assured technology experiences” for students, according to Jim Huggins, EASTCONN’s Director of Teaching, Learning and Technology.

“What that means is that embedded in each school’s curriculum content areas would be a technology component that requires students to meet both technology competencies and content area standards,” said Huggins.

“For example,” Huggins continued, “while middle school students are becoming proficient in a subject like social studies, they might also be asked to do online research, collaborate through an online environment, and develop a podcast to demonstrate their learning.”

The EETT grant will be used to develop assured technology experiences that can be shared by schools statewide, Huggins said. The grant will also fund professional development and new equipment, such as SMART boards, iPods, and science probeware.

Brooklyn, which plans to use EETT funds to embed technology in its science curriculum, for example, is considering new SMART boards and science probeware, Huggins said. EASTCONN assisted Brooklyn and Windham with the EETT grant process. EASTCONN is also exploring a regional collaborative effort between the six school grantees.

In Mansfield, the EETT grant will be applied to fourth graders’ traditional American Indian unit, culminating in collaborative digital storytelling projects and podcasts, according to Steve Sokoloski, Mansfield’s PreK-4 Technology Coordinator. He and Jim Griffith, Mansfield’s Technology Coordinator for grades 5-8, were the primary authors of Mansfield’s EETT grant. Mansfield seventh-graders will apply grant funding to a robotics and writing unit, while eighth-graders will explore the physics of flight using Adobe’s Flash Animations to illustrate a manual about flight, Sokoloski said.

Other 2008-2009 Connecticut EETT grant winners include Bloomfield, Danbury, Derby, Groton and Norwich, Cooperative Educational Services (CES), in Trumbull, and the Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC), in New London.



In purple, above, the six northeast Conn. towns that won tech grants

New Vocational Coordinator Gives Northeast Regional School Students an Edge Out There...



Steven Dyer is Northeast Regional School's New Vocational Coordinator

Building on its recent successes, Northeast Regional School in Brooklyn has expanded its student school-to-work program by hiring a new Vocational Coordinator.

“My goal is to open a window to new career opportunities that our young adults might never have thought possible,” said Steven Dyer, NERS’ new Vocational Coordinator.

“I want our students to take risks and to have the chance to try unexpected careers and to discover who they are and what they would like to be.”

Dyer will work closely with area businesses to create local internships and new job opportunities

for NERS students. He will also provide students with ability assessments, vocational goals counseling, assistance with job applications, resumes, interview techniques and business-letter-writing skills, among other things.

NERS, which is administered by EASTCONN, offers a regional, educational, day treatment program focusing on vocational opportunities for high school students who have been unsuccessful in traditional school settings.

“Bringing Steve Dyer on board is another way Northeast Regional School is improving its focus as an exemplary day treatment program with a strong vocational emphasis,” said Thomas F. Cronin, EASTCONN’s Director of Education Services.

One sign of the blossoming vocational opportunities at NERS is its new Student Chapter of the National Association of Home Builders of the United States.

Under the auspices of an EASTCONN Interdistrict program called Skills for Success, NERS students have created their own small-business environment. Students recently elected officers, which teaches them how a board-governed business works. Students also learn valuable lessons in team decision-making and the importance of giving back to the community, Dyer said.

Students are learning about the basic tools used in the residential construction field, as well as the importance of forging strong relationships with other trade professionals. Dyer said that NAHB students will make and sell picnic tables and other items in the community. Area businessmen are advising the NAHB student chapter.

For more information about NERS, contact Principal Denise Davis-Resonina at 860-779-5613, or via e-mail at dresonina@eastconn.org.

To learn more about NERS vocational opportunities, contact Steven Dyer at sdyer@eastconn.org.

Merchant of Venice



*ACT, EASTCONN's arts magnet high school, presented **The Merchant of Venice**, above, Shakespeare's morality tale, in late April. On stage, left to right, are ACT students David Wikholm, of Columbia; Laura Gorman, of Plainfield; and Brittany Skaats, of Lebanon.*

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"Everyone worked together to make the benefit a success," said Gardiner.

When the benefit night arrived on Make a Difference Day, donors ate by candlelight at the local Knights of Columbus hall to the sounds of a local band and raised more than \$12,000. As a result, Quinn was able to work half-days during cancer treatment. Quinn is doing very well, according to Gardiner.

Killingly's \$10,000 Make A Difference Day Award will be donated to the Connecticut chapter of the Polycystic Kidney Disease Foundation. Make a Difference Day grants are provided by the Paul Newman and Newman's Own Foundation. Winners donate their prizes to a favorite charity. The award cannot go to an individual, Gardiner said.

"You see? Working together does make a difference," said Gardiner. "Through the generosity, kindness and determination of a group of people, we were able to rally together to help our friend and colleague and also make a difference in the lives of those who will benefit from the research done by the PKD Foundation."



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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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