

CONNECTIONS

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EASTCONN, 10 Partners Form Health Insurance Cooperative

In a historic move in the region and in direct response to changes in state law, five northeastern Connecticut school districts and five municipalities have partnered with EASTCONN to form the area's first health insurance cooperative, aimed at saving taxpayers money.

"EASTCONN has been working with municipalities, school districts, and insurance carriers -- in particular, Cigna — to hammer out the details of this insurance cooperative for the last two years," said John Baskowski, EASTCONN's chief financial officer.

"The goal is to reduce health insurance costs for all parties, while increasing local decision-making related to the provision of employee health benefits," Baskowski said.



New Health Insurance Cooperative Board members, following the inaugural meeting, May 2nd. Their names are listed on page 2.

At a meeting on Wednesday, May 2, 2012, at EASTCONN's Hampton Conference Center, founding members from the municipalities and school districts of Coventry, Griswold, Plainfield, Putnam and Tolland, in addition to EASTCONN, met to form the Eastern Connecticut Regional Health Insurance Cooperative, officially creating the 11-member partnership.

An executive board and alternates were also elected. By-laws had been previously accepted. Composed of a representative from each member town and school district, the board will guide the cooperative as it moves forward. Baskowski said that EASTCONN will provide staffing for the cooperative, whose

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State Commissioner of Education Stefan Pryor, left, joined EASTCONN Executive Director Paula M. Colen during a reception at EASTCONN's Capitol Theater in downtown Willimantic. Pryor was the keynote speaker at the agency's annual meeting.

CT Commissioner of Education Speaks at EASTCONN's Annual Meeting in May

As guest speaker during EASTCONN's annual meeting at the Capitol Theater in late May, Connecticut's commissioner of education joined the celebration, watched a student performance and enjoyed a Taste of Willimantic during a pre-meeting reception.

State education Commissioner Stefan Pryor had been invited to give the keynote address at EASTCONN's 32nd annual meeting, held at the Capitol Theater, which also houses EASTCONN's arts magnet high school, ACT. Eighty-five people attended the event.

Before Pryor gave his keynote, dance students from ACT (Arts at the Capitol Theater) performed an original ACT dance work titled, "Objects Appear Closer."

"That was just marvelous," Pryor said, following the presentation. "And this is a beautiful theater. I'm just so happy to be here."

Among those present to hear Pryor were EASTCONN
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View the EASTCONN Calendar
at www.eastconn.org and
Click on "Workshops, Events & Classes"

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new insurance policy period will take effect on July 1, 2012.

Nearly two years ago, following the passage of Connecticut Public Act 10-174, which allowed school districts and municipalities to jointly purchase employee health insurance, EASTCONN invited representatives from across northeastern Connecticut to explore the possibility of forming a health insurance partnership. Talks have been ongoing since that time.

After the cooperative's first official meeting on Wednesday, new executive board members shared their thoughts.

"It's been exciting to move forward as the first cooperative of this kind in the state and I hope this will result in reduced insurance costs for both towns and school districts," said Chairman Steve Werbner, who is also Tolland's Town Manager.

Executive board member William Hull, Putnam Superintendent of Schools, added, "It's a great start. Hopefully, it's something that will save towns money and bring the region together collaboratively to help all our employees."

"This is an exciting time because, as the result of a change in state law two years ago, we are now able to take advantage of this law," said William Guzman, Tolland Superintendent of Schools, who is also an executive board member.

Board member John Elsesser, Town Manager of Coventry, said, "Eastern Connecticut has always been innovative and has always worked collaboratively to come up with great solutions. We take pride in having taken this collaborative approach to health insurance."

The cooperative's executive board will meet in the coming months to further develop operating procedures and address other details, Baskowski said.

For more information, contact EASTCONN CFO John Baskowski at 860-455-0707, or at jbaskowski@eastconn.org.

Health Insurance Board Photo IDs from page 1:

Front row, l to r: Holly McCalla, Griswold Public Schools Business Manager; Kelly Vachon, Plainfield Town Finance Director; Executive Board Chairman Steve Werbner, Tolland Town Manager; William Hull, Superintendent Putnam Public Schools; and Erik Christensen, Griswold Town Finance Director. Back row, l to r: William Guzman, Superintendent Tolland Public Schools; John Elsesser, Coventry Town Manager; alternate Beth Bauer, Coventry Town Finance Director; Doug Cutler, Putnam Town Administrator; alternate Robert Carroll, Coventry Public Schools Finance Director; Ronald Lussier, Plainfield Public Schools Finance Director; and John Baskowski, EASTCONN Chief Financial Officer. Missing from photo: Coventry Superintendent Dave Petrone.

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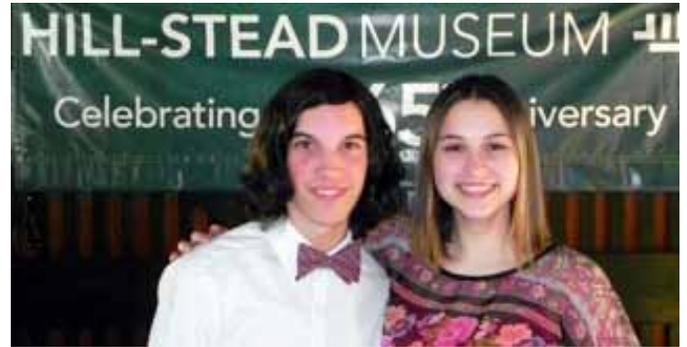
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EASTCONN ACT Student Poets Honored by Sunken Garden Festival



Two of EASTCONN's Arts at the Capitol Theater (ACT) creative writing students, senior Amanda Goode, of Amston, and junior Kevin Kissane, of Willimantic, were selected from among 175 entrants as finalists in the statewide Hill-Stead Museum's 2012 Fresh Voices Competition, part of the annual Sunken Garden Poetry celebration held each June in Farmington.

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

Goode was also named one of the six Fresh Voices Competition winners and was asked to read her poems "The Map" and "Pyromania" during the festival. The Hill-Stead Museum in Farmington is home to The Sunken Garden Poetry Festival.

To learn more about ACT's creative writing program, contact the school at 860-465-5636, or visit www.eastconn.org/ACT.



PD Forums Scheduled for October, March to Help Small K-8 Districts Meet Mandates

Small, K-8 school districts in the northeastern Connecticut region are invited to attend EASTCONN's **PreK-8 Collaborative Professional Development Forums**, aimed at helping small districts meet their PD needs, respond to new state and federal mandates and save district resources.

Dates for EASTCONN's new PD Forum, topics for which came from a recent survey of 22 small K-8 districts in the EASTCONN region, are based on the Common Calendar.

The first PD Forum is scheduled for Tues., Oct. 9, 2012, at EASTCONN's Hampton Conference Center, 376 Hartford Turnpike (Route 6). The second PD Forum will be held on March 28, 2013, at a site to be determined.

EASTCONN's PD Forum will bring in staff developers and other outside experts, who are recognized in their fields, to share topical information with both teachers and administrators; the PD Forum is intended to help small districts meet mandates in a collaborative environment.

Break-out sessions, based on district survey responses, will focus on topics like the Common Core, instructional strategies and academic intervention strategies, among others.

"We are planning to offer a mix of break-outs and full-day presenters at both Forums, and we will also offer some overlap sessions for both dates," said EASTCONN staff developer Amy Drowne, who is one of the Forum organizers. Learn more by contacting EASTCONN Director of Teaching and Learning Jim Huggins at 860-455-1569, or at jhuggins@eastconn.org.

EASTCONN Professional Notes



Marianne Cavanaugh

EASTCONN's **Marianne Cavanaugh**, a math trainer for Project Opening Doors (POD), is one of six educators nationwide who has received the Laying the Foundation (LTF) Trainer of the Year Award. LTF is a national teacher-training program. POD, which is facilitated by EASTCONN, encourages low-income and minority students to take more AP classes.



Nancy Magnani

EASTCONN Staff Developers **Nancy Magnani** and **Mary Lou Smith** presented three different workshops at the National Science Teachers Association STEM Forum and Expo in Atlantic City, in May. The Forum focused on sharing tools that elementary and middle school educators can use to more effectively teach science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Their STEM presentations included: "The Marshmallow Challenge: Using an Engineering Design Exercise to Get Kids Thinking Critically;" "Integrating STEM Topics into a Study of Wind Energy;" and "Blending STEM Curriculum with a Study of Forces and Motion."

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Debra Stipe

In May, **Debra Stipe**, an Early Childhood Specialist for EASTCONN, presented a session on "Enhancing Oral Language" at Goodwin College's Third Annual Literacy Conference, during which literacy workshops are offered to specialists in birth-to-kindergarten education.



Toni Ryan

Toni Ryan, Ed.D., EASTCONN's Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Accreditation, will be a presenter at the American Classical League Annual Institute at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, in June. Ryan will present "Classics, Complexities and the 5C's: A Rationale for a Critical Pedagogy of Classics," during what is the

largest annual gathering in North America of practitioners in Classical languages.



Nancy Celentano

EASTCONN's Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) Director of Training **Nancy Celentano** and TEAM Field Staff Representative **Grace Levin** have been invited to present at the 2012 Learning Forward Annual Conference in Boston in December. Celentano and Levin's presentation, "Teacher Induction 3.0," will focus on Connecticut's teacher-directed, embedded professional growth model, TEAM, and the ways in which schools can help novice teachers become more effective in the classroom and improve student outcomes.



Grace Levin

Early Childhood Initiatives Align with Governor's Reform Legislation

After its passage in May, one of the central precepts of Connecticut Gov. Dannel P. Malloy's education reform legislation seeks to improve access to early childhood educational opportunities in high-need, low-performing communities.

"Research clearly indicates that early education and intervention effects markedly positive outcomes in children's lives and school success," said EASTCONN Early Childhood Initiatives Director Elizabeth Aschenbrenner.

EASTCONN's Early Childhood division continues to provide and facilitate a variety of regional and statewide early childhood education initiatives that are aligned with the governor's education reform legislation.

■ EASTCONN's Early Childhood staff coordinate the Connecticut State Department of Education Training Wheels initiative, an intensive, statewide professional development program for implementing the cycle of intentional teaching using the state's Preschool Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks. Training Wheels is designed to increase child outcomes. Regionally, EASTCONN provides training and technical assistance to member districts.

■ In collaboration with McREL (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning), EASTCONN is engaged in the Scaffolding Early Learning Project, which offers professional development to preschool and kindergarten teachers. "The goal is to increase language, literacy and math skills, as well as those executive function skills that are critical to children's school success," said Aschenbrenner. EASTCONN is the first in the state to pilot the implementation of this approach in Killingly, Plainfield, Putnam, Vernon and Windham.

■ EASTCONN is playing a central role in the state's PreK-to-Grade-3 Initiative, which is aimed at closing the achievement gap in Connecticut. Thus far, two symposia have taken place with more than 250 in attendance. Six teams have analyzed current practices by piloting a new assessment tool, which is a rubric for identifying areas of strength and those in need of improvement. In connection with this initiative, Aschenbrenner is also working with Colchester, facilitating their Early Leadership Team; together, they are examining the district's policies and practices with the goal of increasing student success by ensuring consistency and continuity of curriculum assessment and transitions.

■ EASTCONN's Early Childhood division is a collaborating partner with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), in its Willimantic catchment area, and Child First, having facilitated a recent gathering of 50-plus community-based representatives from early care and education programs, public schools, mental health agencies, DCF, school readiness councils, health clinics and Child First, Inc. During the meeting, participants worked collaboratively to provide mental health services and support to the region's children and their families.

■ As part of EASTCONN's regional Common Core State Standards Consortium, which is aimed at helping area districts

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develop English language arts and mathematics curricula that align with new Connecticut standards, EASTCONN's Early Childhood division provided training for 90 area teachers and math coordinators, preK-to-Grade 2, featuring the nationally prominent math expert Dr. Juanita Copley.

■ EASTCONN staffs the Northeast School Readiness Council for Killingly, Plainfield, Putnam and Sterling in a regional collaboration that leverages limited resources to support children and families. The Council is composed of superintendents, Family Resources directors, parents, parks and recreation representatives, community childcare providers, town library staff and EASTCONN Head Start staff.

■ EASTCONN Head Start and Early Head Start programs collaborate successfully with public schools and other community partners to provide comprehensive services to 560 low-income children and their families in Tolland and Windham counties.

■ Early Childhood Initiatives staff also supported 18 preschool/ kindergarten classrooms in both the region's community-based and public-school-based settings, to help them meet national standards of high quality as defined by NAEYC accreditation, the nation's primary indicator of program quality.

■ EASTCONN's Birth-to-Three program serves 185 northeastern Connecticut families, providing multidisciplinary services to infants and toddlers with identified disabilities.

To learn more, contact Elizabeth Aschenbrenner at [easchenbrenner@eastconn.org](mailto: easchenbrenner@eastconn.org) or at 860-455-1518.

ANNUAL MEETING, from page 1



EASTCONN Executive Director Paula M. Colen, left, reads from the "Friend of EASTCONN" plaque, presented to Prof. Xae Alicia Reyes, Ph.D., of UConn, for her contributions to education.

Executive Director Paula M. Colen, who emceed the annual event, the EASTCONN board of directors, agency staff and superintendents from across the northeastern Connecticut region.

Other guests included Windham Mayor Ernie Eldridge; state Rep. Tim Ackert, R-8th District; Rep. Gregg Haddad, D-54th Dist.; and Rep. Susan Johnson, D-49th District.

During his keynote address, Pryor praised EASTCONN and the region for its collaborative efforts on behalf of education.

"EASTCONN has helped create a real platform for progress here in the region," Pryor said. "...and you have created many of the ideas for collaboration and forward thinking."

Pryor said he was impressed by the fact that there was "so much advocacy and initiative being taken in this [northeastern Connecticut] region."

He also advocated for Gov. Dannel Malloy's education reform agenda with an overview of the principles that comprise recently passed state legislation.

"Our state has stepped up and decided this is the year for education reform," said Pryor.

"I think we all know that high quality education is essential to our state," he said.

After Pryor's speech, Colen presented University of Connecticut Professor Xae Alicia Reyes, Ph.D., with a "Friend of EASTCONN" award, honoring her education advocacy for students and families across the region.

Colen also recognized two EASTCONN employees for their longtime service to the agency: Karen I. Schenck, a 30-year employee; and Karen B. Gregorzek, a 20-year employee.

During the Taste-of-Willimantic-themed reception, local restaurateurs, including Willibrew, Fred's Blues & BBQ, Cafemantic, Harp on Church, City Side Deli, A Cupcake for Later and Hosmer Mountain Soda helped EASTCONN culinary staff cater the event with their signature dishes.

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