



SPORTS
Giants receive good news on Thibodeaux
 | Page 9

STATE
Warrant: Man struggled with mall store guard before shooting
 | Page 3

NATION
Asylum seekers caught in political battle in NYC, Washington
 | Page 4

the Chronicle

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Fire at Ladd's Garden Center still under investigation

MICHELLE WARREN
 CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

WINDHAM — The cause of a fire at Ladd's Garden Center in South Windham that damaged a storage building on Saturday was still being investigated Monday afternoon.

South Windham Fire Chief Jan Mott said the second-alarm fire was reported at 11:57 p.m. at Ladd's, which is at 671 Windham Road, on Saturday.

He said no one was injured during the fire.

However, property in the storage building was damaged.

"It was a significant fire," Mott said.

The damaged building is a

house that was being used for storage.

Lance Ladd, who has owned the business with his wife, Carol Ladd, for more than 40 years, said there were garden fixtures and other items in the house.

The Ladds live in Scotland. Windham Fire Marshal Michael Licata said Monday afternoon he was with the insurance adjuster and was still investigating the fire.

Mott said it was challenging to put out the fire due to the number of items in the building.

"The bulk of the fire was knocked down around 3:40 a.m.," he said. "After that, we went into overhaul, getting all the hotspots out."

The business was started



The cause of a fire at Ladd's Garden Center in South Windham is still under investigation. Scotland Volunteer Fire Department Firefighter Scott Cormier



by Lance Ladd's grandfather, Raymond Ladd in 1948 as Shetucket Park Gardens. A variety of plants and garden-

ing items are sold there. The business has been at its current location since 1981. On Monday, Lance Ladd

issued a "big thank-you" to the firefighters who fought the fire. "It's amazing what they

do," he said, noting that the firefighters were on scene for many hours.

FIRE, Page 4

Coalition hoping to save Windham Hospital maternity unit



Lynne Ide, Universal Healthcare Foundation of Connecticut & Windham resident, and John Brady, RN, AFT Connecticut vice president. AFT CT

MICHELLE WARREN
 CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Willimantic resident Lynne Ide's daughter's gynecological office is only a few miles away from Windham Community Memorial Hospital. But despite the close distance to the facility, she was not able to give birth to her daughter, Ide's first grandchild, at Windham Hospital.

Ide shared her story during a press conference held by the Windham United to Save Our HealthCare Coalition outside Hartford Hospital on Monday.

The coalition has been vocal about their opposition to the closure of the maternity unit at Windham Hospital, which

was closed in July 2020. "We are impatient," said Ide, who is the director of program and policy at Universal HealthCare Foundation of Connecticut. "We have offered to work with the hospital to come up with viable solutions for labor and delivery at Windham Hospital and yet we have not been able to have a single conversation."

Hartford HealthCare is the parent company that owns Windham Hospital and Hartford Hospital. Hartford HealthCare Spokesperson Tina Verona could not be reached for comment on Monday.

Ide said when Hartford HealthCare decided to "shutter" labor and delivery ser-

vices at Windham Hospital, it left women in a rural part of the state "to travel dozens of miles on scary and windy back roads" to their deliveries. Hartford HealthCare officials have said the company ended maternity unit services at Windham Hospital due to a low number of deliveries and staffing challenges.

As part of their plan, Hartford HealthCare officials have stated that arrangements will be made to transport Windham Hospital patients to The William W. Backus Hospital in Norwich for delivery.

As some opponents have pointed out, however, that hospital is far away for patients in the Windham area.

Windham United to Save Our HealthCare Coalition leader Brenda Buchbinder noted that the coalition "rejoiced" when OHS announced in July that Hartford HealthCare was unjustified when it terminated its maternity unit, which it did before obtaining a certificate of need, a requirement under state statutes.

That was a proposed final decision, according to OHS.

Jose Salas, a member of The Neighbor Fund Steering Committee, spoke about the challenges some in the community face due to language and cultural barriers, noting that some are afraid to seek help due to their immigration status. The Neighbor

COALITION, Page 4

Scotland Elementary students heading back to class soon

TRACI HASTINGS
 CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Some new teachers will be a part of the new school year at Scotland Elementary School.

Following the retirement



Scotland Elementary School. Traci Hastings | Staff

of Karen Schenk this past June, a new physical education/health teacher will join the staff this fall, Nathan Musser. Musser was previously a third-grade teacher in the Killingly school district.

The school also has a new first-grade teacher, Nicole Craig. Craig earned her master's degree in elementary education from Sacred Heart University.

Scotland Elementary's principal, Ann Knowles, said all staff were excited to start the new school year with "new adventures and success." The first day of school for students is Wednesday, with a Back-to-School Night planned for families on September 8.

"We will welcome our families to visit our beautiful school, tour their classrooms and visit with our teachers and staff," Knowles said. "After touring the classrooms, families are invited to enjoy an ice-cream treat from a visiting ice-cream truck."

An Interdistrict Committee formed between the towns of Scotland and Hampton have been studying whether a consolidated elementary school serving both towns would be a good alternative. School officials still have to hear a formal presentation from the committee before voting on the proposal, and, if both boards of education approve it, a decision would have to be made on whether students would be served in the current Hampton school building or in the current Scotland elementary school. A date for the committee to present to a joint meeting of the Hampton and Scotland school boards has not yet been set.

"We are still working on dates," Scotland Board of Education Chair Cassidy Martin said.

If approved, the consolidation could take place for the 2023-24 school year, but for now Scotland Elementary staff are focused on pro-

BACK, Page 4

UConn among recipients of grant funding to help disadvantaged students

CONNOR LINSKEY
 CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona recently announced that the University of Connecticut was one of 189 colleges and universities to be awarded grant funding to improve disadvantaged students' preparation for graduate school.

Renee Trueman, coordinator of the McNair Scholars Program at UConn, said this is the third time the U.S. Department of Education has allocated funding for the school's disadvantaged students' preparation for graduate studies. The students enrolled in the program at UConn have greatly benefited since the funding was first allocated 10 years ago and Trueman hopes students will continue to reap the program's rewards.

"It's really wonderful to be able to continue the program for students," Trueman said.

Grants were awarded to colleges and universities in 45 states as well as Puerto Rico.

The total allocated to all of the institutions is \$51.7 million. UConn was awarded \$261,888. Wesleyan University in Middletown was the only other Connecticut institution that received grant funding. Their award was in the same amount as UConn.



UConn students walk through the Storrs campus back in January of this year. The university was recently awarded a grant to help its disadvantaged students pursue graduate degrees. Connor Linskey | Staff

The grant funding is part of the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program.

Colleges and universities are awarded McNair grants through an application process. According to the U.S. Department of Education website, the McNair program provides funding to institutions of higher education to prepare eligible participants for doctoral studies through involvement in research and other scholarly activities.

The U.S. Department of Education also states that participants in the McNair program are from disadvantaged backgrounds and have demonstrated strong academic potential.

Institutions work closely with participants as they complete their undergraduate requirements. Institutions encourage participants to enroll in graduate programs and then track their progress through to the successful completion of advanced degrees.

The goal of the McNair program is to increase the number of Ph.D. degrees attained by students from underrepresented segments of society.

All McNair projects must provide the following activities: opportunities for research and other scholarly activities; summer internships; seminars and

UCONN, Page 4

Inside

- Abby.....6
- Classified.....10
- Comics6
- Editorial.....5
- Features.....6, 8
- Horoscopes.....6
- Local News 2-3
- Nation/World.....7
- Obituaries.....4
- Public Notices.....10
- Sports 9-12
- State.....7
- Television.....7
- Weather2

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Coalition trying to save maternity unit

Continued from Page 1

Fund is a non-profit that helps immigrants in Windham and Tolland counties.

Salas said the closure of the maternity unit will “rip” expectant mothers away from help and resources once available to them in Windham.

“Their actions show an indifference to ours,” he said, referring to Hartford HealthCare.

Salas thanked OHS for listening to the protestors and weighing the evidence presented to OHS. In February, OHS issued a \$65,000 civil penalty to Hartford HealthCare based on the determination that the obstetrics services were terminated before CON approval was obtained, a requirement under state statutes. The penalty amounts to \$1,000 a day.

That timeframe begins on the day Windham Hospital began its termination of obstetric services, which was July 1, 2020, and ends when the CON application was filed, which is Sept. 3, 2020.

A hearing was held about the CON application on Nov. 10, 2021.

“Without proof of a willful failure to file a CON application, the civil penalty must be rescinded,” Hartford HealthCare attorney Jennifer Fusco said in an Aug. 12 letter to OHS.

Hartford HealthCare response to the civil penalty is due to OHS by Friday at 4:30 p.m.

In their documentation, Hartford HealthCare officials

claim that they did not terminate the service, but rather, suspended it.

They also claimed that the system was in communication with the Department of Public Health about their plans.

“The decision to suspend OB services at Windham was made of necessity and in the interest of patient safety,” Fusco wrote. “Windham made plans for the safe transition of women to other area hospitals for their deliveries, hospitals better-equipped to meet their needs and the needs of their babies and the process has worked seamlessly as a final decision on the CON application remains pending nearly two years after it was filed.”

OHS Staff Attorney/HSP Manager Lara Manzione said in an Aug. 12 letter that Hartford HealthCare “willfully terminated its inpatient obstetric services without first obtaining a CON.”

“The evidence showed that Windham Hospital knew it needed to file a CON application to terminate these services as of July 1, 2020 and it willfully did not seek a CON until more than two months later,” she wrote.

She said Windham Hospital broke the law.

“The consequences for breaking this law are being widely felt throughout the Windham community, a community that can no longer rely on the security of having a local hospital ready when they are to deliver a baby,” Manzione wrote.

Follow Michelle Warren on Twitter — @mwarrentc.

UConn receives grant funding

Continued from Page 1

other educational activities designed to prepare students for doctoral study; tutoring; academic counseling and activities designed to assist participating students in the project in securing admission to and financial assistance for enrollment in graduate programs.

Nasser Paydar, assistant secretary of education for postsecondary education, said that the grant funding will help many students finance their graduate education.

“When we look at U.S. students studying to become our future physicians, professors, scientists and other crucial professionals requiring graduate degrees, many demographic groups are underrepresented, including

first-generation college students and those from low-income families,” he said in a press release. “McNair grants fund projects at universities and colleges that help underrepresented students to access doctoral programs.”

The U.S. Department of Education said in a press release that the announcement of grant funding on August 18 delivers on Cardona’s priorities to expand equitable access to education and make higher education more inclusive and affordable.

The U.S. Department of Education said on August 18 that several McNair awards will be announced on a second slate. It is expected that those awards will be announced in September.

Follow the Chronicle on Twitter — @thechroniclect.

Fire still under investigation

Continued from Page 1

Lance Ladd said Monday that the insurance adjuster was determining the value of the items that were damaged during the fire.

“It will probably be a day or two before we know,” he said.

Mott said at least 40 firefighters responded to the fire, including personnel from South Windham, North

Windham, Windham Center, Willimantic, Scotland, Lebanon, Columbia and Yantic.

“We all worked very well together,” he said.

Windham Community Memorial Hospital paramedics also responded to the fire.

Mott said the road was closed around midnight and was reopened about five hours later.

Follow Michelle Warren on

Back to school in Scotland

Continued from Page 1

viding the best educational experiences for students in the 2022-23 school year.

“This year promises to be welcoming, enjoyable, and academically challenging for our students,” Knowles said. “[Our] small school community remains supportive and individualized to meet the

needs of every student. Our teachers and staff remain committed to providing an outstanding teaching and learning environment for all. We are excited to celebrate a new school year, starting without masks, and opening our doors, and embracing our extended community of learners.”

Follow the Chronicle on Twitter — @thechroniclect

Asylum seekers caught in political battle in NYC, Washington

BOBBY CAINA CALVAN AND ASHRAF KHALIL
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Weary of Venezuela’s autocratic government and the pittance he earned in the military, Dario Maldonado deserted and fled with his family to neighboring Colombia.

But life remained hard — money was tight and expenses mounted. So he set off for the United States, an odyssey that required him to travel by foot through Central American jungle infested with venomous snakes and gun-toting bandits, sometimes sidestepping the corpses of people who died on the same journey.

Now Maldonado and thousands of other asylum seekers from across Latin America and the Caribbean are caught in the political battle over U.S. immigration policy after two Republican governors started sending busloads of migrants to New York City and Washington.

Border cities such as San Diego have long wrestled with influxes of asylum-seekers and created well-oiled machines to respond, but the nation’s largest city and its capital were caught flat-footed. That created an opening for Greg Abbott of Texas and Doug Ducey of Arizona to exploit what they consider failed Democratic leadership.

Nearly 8,000 migrants have arrived on the state-sponsored bus trips, straining the resources and humanitarian services of both cities, which have also sought assistance from the federal government.

“This can be chaotic. But we want to send a message: We’re here to help, and we want to put politics aside,” said New York City’s immigration commissioner, Manuel Castro, as he greeted arriving migrants on a recent morning.

Abbott started the practice in April with Washington, and Doug Ducey followed suit in May. Abbott also recently began sending buses to New York.

For migrants, the politics are only dimly understood — and far less relevant than finding temporary shelter, jobs and a long-term home in America.

“I have heard that the Texas governor is anti-immigrant,” Maldonado said outside a New York shelter. “It is like a war between the party of the governor of Texas and the party of Biden.”

A voluntary consent form for free transportation from Texas tells migrants that Washington is where the president and members of Congress “are more immediately able to help address the needs of migrants.”



Silvia Moreno del Castillo, center, of Lima, Peru, holds her daughter Brisa, 3, by the hand, followed by her husband Gerardo Puento, as the family who is seeking asylum from Peru is greeted by Derick Alegria, left, and Orlando Andara, both with the nonprofit SAMU First Response, as a bus of asylum seekers who were sent from Arizona to Washington arrives, Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022, to a church on Capitol Hill in Washington. AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin

Migrants who sign a consent form for a free trip to New York are told that the city has designated itself a “sanctuary” for migrants, who are provided with food and shelter.

U.S. authorities stopped migrants 1.43 million times at the Mexican border from January through July, up 28% from the same period last year. Many are released on humanitarian parole or with notices to appear in immigration court.

The sight of both cities scrambling to cope with the influx drew undisguised Schadenfreude from Abbott, who called New York City “the ideal destination for these migrants, who can receive the abundance of city services and housing that Mayor Eric Adams has boasted about within the sanctuary city.”

In both cities, social service charities and churches have mobilized to support new arrivals, offering temporary shelter, medical attention and often a ticket to their next destination as they await a date in immigration court.

“Many are fleeing persecution and other very severe circumstances. They’re confused. And we want to make sure that we support them as much as possible and make sure that they’re not being used as political pawns,” Castro said.

On a recent August day, a bus of 41 migrants from Arizona arrived at a church in Washington’s Capitol Hill neighborhood, where they were greeted by workers from SAMU First Response, an international relief agency.

Within minutes the group was enjoying a hot meal inside the church and filling out arrival forms.

Texas buses arrive haphazardly, said Tatiana Laborde, the agency’s managing director. They only hear from charitable groups that a bus carrying a certain number of people has departed. At some point about 48 hours later, that bus drops

off riders at Washington’s Union Station.

Arizona provides detailed manifests of passengers and their nationalities, coordination on arrival times and has medical personnel aboard each bus.

“They don’t want to just dump people here,” Laborde said.

Many of those who arrive in Washington don’t stay long. Mayor Muriel Bowser, in her second request for National Guard support, told Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin that most migrants stay up to three days before moving on to their final destinations.

“They don’t know much about D.C. other than the president is here,” Laborde said.

The Pentagon on Monday denied the mayor’s request for help, saying the use of the National Guard would be inappropriate and would hurt the overall readiness of the troops by forcing some to cancel or disrupt military training.

Kelin Enriquez, another Venezuelan, was among them. She and her children first arrived in Washington and later found themselves at a family center in the Bronx to plan the family’s next steps.

“No one leaves their land because they want to. We want to work. We want a better opportunity,” said Enriquez, who helped care for Alzheimer’s patients in her native country.

Some migrants see a free ticket from the border as the best of bad options.

For Eduardo Garcia, the top priorities were finding a job and a place to live and starting life anew.

It was an agonizing journey, even if he hadn’t broken his left ankle while trying to keep his wife from falling along the perilous trail. He limped in pain for more than 1,000 miles.

“I didn’t care because I cared more about getting

here,” he said.

He told no one about his fractured limb until he arrived in New York, where he got medical attention, a cast and crutches.

In New York, many of the migrants make their way to the offices of Catholic Charities. Officials in Texas — it is unclear who — listed the office as the migrants’ address, which perplexed church officials at the New York Diocese. The diocese has now received more than 1,300 court notices on behalf of migrants.

“I think we were maybe caught off guard, a little bit disappointed by the governments in Texas and Arizona just putting individuals on buses to D.C. without any plan at the other end,” said Msgr. Kevin Sullivan, executive director of migrant services for Catholic Charities in New York.

In the last two months, the procession of Venezuelans seeking refuge in the United States has grown dramatically. In July, Border Patrol agents stopped Venezuelans 17,603 times — up 34% from June and nearly triple from July 2021.

The United States does not recognize the government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro because of allegations that the country’s 2018 election was a sham. The lack of official recognition complicates the country’s ability to take back asylum-seekers. The Mexican government also refuses to accept the migrants, which gives the U.S. few options in handling Venezuelans.

At a New York City shelter, brothers Leonardo Oviedo, 22, and Angel Mota, 19, seemed giddy shortly after arriving in New York. They had plans to reconnect with an acquaintance in New Jersey.

Big plans lie ahead. Oviedo wants to land a job. Mota wants to attend school. How they will accomplish their dreams was still uncertain as the pair swiped through photos of relatives they left behind in Venezuela, including their mother, grandmother, brother and sister.

For now, neither brother is especially concerned about the politics that brought them here.

“We had nowhere to go,” Mota said outside a shelter on a sweltering summer morning. “This is where they would welcome us.”

Khalil reported from Washington. Associated Press journalists Anita Snow in Phoenix, Claudia Torrens and Robert Bumsted in New York, and Jacquelyn Martin and Nathan Ellgren in Washington contributed to this report.

Haitians launch protests, demand ouster of prime minister

EVENS SANON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — A couple thousand protesters in Haiti’s capital and other major cities blocked roads, shut down businesses and marched through the streets Monday to demand that Prime Minister Ariel Henry step down and to call for a better quality of life.

Associated Press journalists observed an unidentified man fatally shoot a demonstrator in Port-au-Prince and then flee in a car as the crowd temporarily scattered.

Demonstrator Lionel Jean-Pierre, who witnessed the shooting, said things in Haiti have gotten out of control.

“Families don’t know what to do,” he said as the crowd around him chanted: “If Ariel doesn’t leave, we’re going to die!”

Violence and kidnappings have surged in Port-au-Prince and nearby areas in recent months, with warring gangs killing hundreds of civilians in their fight over territory. They have grown more powerful since last year’s assassination of President Jovenel Moïse.

In one of the most recent killings denounced by the prime minister and Haiti’s Office of Citizen Protection, suspected gang members killed eight people over the weekend in one community, including a mother and her two daughters who were set on fire while still alive.

“This collective crime adds to the list of victims...that has reached an alarming proportion,” the office said.

Poverty also has deepened, with inflation reaching 29% and some prices of some basic goods such as rice more than quadrupling. Gasoline



People run past a burning barricade during a protest in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Monday, Aug. 22, 2022. AP Photo/Odelynn Joseph

also remains scarce and, if available, costs \$15 a gallon. “I need the gas to work,” 28-year-old moto-taxi driver Garry Larose said as he marched. “I have a family to feed, school to pay.”

In one protest, people wore black T-shirts, while at another they wore red T-shirts emblazoned with the

words, “RISE UP.”

The protests come days after dozens of demonstrators staged a sit-in in front of Henry’s official residence and demanded that he resign.

On Monday, police clashed with demonstrators in some areas, firing tear gas to break up the crowd as burning tires blocked roads.