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Covering the Communities of Ansonia, Derby, Oxford and Seymour

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Jars of Faith:

One arrest, one to go

By Bill Bittar
Staff

Fairfield police arrested an Ansonia man on larceny and fraud charges Tuesday afternoon, stemming from his alleged theft of thousands of dollars in a scam last summer.

People touched by Stephen Bacchiocchi's story of suffering from cancer opened their hearts and wallets to him, filling collection jars and cans at businesses throughout the region with dollars and loose change to help pay for his treatments.

But everything began to unravel in September, when the *Fairfield Sun*, a sister paper to the *Gazette*, investigated complaints alleging the whole thing was a fraud.

In a follow up story, Fairfield Police Detective Bernie Kelley revealed that the money raised was not spent on treatment. Bacchiocchi and his girlfriend, Christine Stover of Trumbull, responded by removing most of the jars from the counters of small businesses, giving conflicting reasons for doing so.

"We know of close to \$6,000 that was taken," Fairfield Police Sgt. James Perez said Tuesday night. "But it was probably a lot more than that that we don't know of."

Perez said Bacchiocchi turned himself in at 1:30 p.m. in response to a letter from police. He credits Kelley with heading the investigation that led to the arrest and said police are also applying for a warrant for Stover's arrest.

Bacchiocchi, 36, of Myrtle Avenue, Ansonia, was charged with six counts of second-degree larceny and

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Tear-down plan arouses misgivings

By Susan Hunter
Editor

ANSONIA — Attorneys representing the residents of the Riverside Public Housing complex are looking to protect their clients' interests in the wake of an action plan that calls for dismantling more of the complex and temporarily preserving another section.

The Ansonia Housing Authority's Board of Commissioners approved the plan Feb. 18.

The action plan was drafted as a result of an Oct. 31 letter from New Haven Legal Assistance Association Inc., the legal firm representing Riverside residents, said Andrew Daniels, president of Mapplan Associates. His consulting firm is crafting the redevelopment plan for the Riverside site.

The attorneys alleged that keeping buildings empty and others in disrepair showed the Ansonia Housing Authority's intention "to destructively demolish" the building in violation of the law, according to the letter.

The allegation of de facto demolition was "not trivial," Daniels said. "The Housing Authority had no choice," he said. The

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Teacher cuts loom in Derby

By Susan Hunter
Editor

DERBY — Derby School Supt. Stephen Tracy had looked forward to setting academic priorities as he tackled his first budget formulation season in Derby. But as the national and world-wide economy takes a tailspin, he's faced with choices he couldn't foresee.

To preserve his proposed initiatives to revive a struggling and money-strapped school system and cover mandated expenses, the school

department would have to cut staff and programs.

Tracy will present his recommended \$17.4 million budget for the 2009-10 fiscal year to the Board of Education Thursday, Feb. 26 at 6:30 p.m. in the Derby High School auditorium.

A total of 21 positions would be cut, under his plan, including four elementary level teachers and one each at the middle school and high school. Three librarians would be replaced by clerks, 12 para-professional positions would

be eliminated, and clerical staff would be cut by a half a position.

"The vast majority of the 21 will be layoffs," he said. "These are real people who have done valuable work for the school system who will be unemployed. It's a major reduction."

The cuts would represent 10% of the school district's staff, or 21 out of 210 positions, he said.

They would include the position of assistant superintendent, a post that includes

heading up curriculum development, professional development and assessment of student performance.

But since the position is vacant, there wouldn't be a layoff. The job responsibilities would have to be passed on to others, including Tracy and outside agencies.

Some positions would be lost due to normal attrition.

Reductions could also be realized by negotiating a wage freeze for non-union personnel

- see *Cuts* on page 6A

History comes to life



Tammy Denease Richardson portrays Elizabeth Keckly, former slave and dressmaker to Mary Todd Lincoln, during 'They Call Me Lizzy' program at Derby Neck Library Saturday. (Photo by Wayne Ratzenberger)

Both sides see apathy on issues

By Susan Hunter
Editor

ANSONIA — People on both sides of the minority party requirement issue may have differing points of view. But they seem to agree that most residents don't seem to care one way or another.

Other than a few members of the Board of Aldermen who spoke out in opposition to minority party requirements

on that board, residents didn't voice their opinions on the topic at a Feb. 19 Charter Revision Commission public hearing.

Commission member Joan Radin had expected that the minority representation topic would come up during the hearing, and urged residents to come out and make their ideas known.

Ansonia's 14-member Board of Aldermen has no

Republican representation, and the same tendency runs throughout other city departments.

Radin, who heads Ansonia's Republican Town Committee, had urged Democratic Mayor James Della Volpe to appoint a charter revision commission and change the charter to provide for minority representation on the Board of Aldermen.

Republican Town

Committee members have said for years that the lack of representation has harmed minority party residents.

"It's kind of heartbreaking to realize people aren't that interested," Radin said Friday. "People are apathetic."

"I think the hearing was very one-sided," she said, with Aldermanic President Stephen Blume, Alderman Gene

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Teacher Stephanie Baer blows bubbles for 2-year-olds in the Honey Bears classroom at the Teddy Bear Tree House Learning Center. (Photo by Susan Hunter)

Learning center maintains roots in Seymour

By Susan Hunter
Editor

SEYMOUR — The Teddy Bear Tree House Learning Center has a new and larger home on South Main Street, and Director Anne Marie Violano said the new learning environment seems to fill a need.

The Teddy Bear center outgrew its space on Smith Street, where it had been in operation for 10 years, and Violano and

her husband and co-owner, Dom Violano, moved the center to its new space Jan. 12.

"We enrolled 20 kids within the first week and a half," Violano said, and enrollment has increased from 44 to 56 children.

"I'm the only infant/toddler center in town," she said, serving children six weeks to six years old.

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On The Web

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THIS WEEK ONLINE

Click the Community tab on our Web site for complete listings of community events

VISIT THE SITE TO:

- Comment on stories
- Sign up for breaking news

It's maple syrup time!

The Ansonia Nature Center is offering two events on making maple syrup. One is for preschoolers on Friday, March 6 at 10 a.m. and a maple sugaring program will take place Sunday, March 14 at 10. Participants will learn how to tap trees, collect sap and boil it down to make syrup with Ranger Dawn Sotir and Richard Feher Jr. of the CT Association of Maple Sugar Producers.

Sports
Roberts, Chargers bolt by Naugatuck.
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