



# NEW BRITAIN HERALD

Serving the Communities of Central Connecticut



CT Inspector General Suzanne Laprise

## Bristol officer 'justified' in shooting Plainville woman

BRENDAN CROWLEY @NEWBRITHERALD

BRISTOL — The Connecticut Inspector General determined a Bristol Police officer was justified when he fired two shots at a woman who had walked into the station lobby and fired her pistol at a window and door securing the interior of the department in October 2023.

In a report released Thursday, Inspector General Robert J. Devlin Jr. said Bristol Police Officer Spencer Boisvert was justified in firing at Suzanne Laprise, 52, of Plainville, because she was "actively using deadly force against members of the Bristol Police Department," and Boisvert acted in an attempt to stop the threat. Devlin said the offi-

See OFFICER ON PAGE 4

## Drive-through marijuana coming

BRENDAN CROWLEY @NEWBRITHERALD

PLAINVILLE — The first pot store in Plainville has opened its doors, becoming the first business to open in a new plaza on New Britain Avenue.

Opening in the plaza next to Goodwill, it's the first of three stores Shangri-La Dispensaries is opening in Connecticut. Its owners say the store's drive through win-

dow will make it uniquely accessible for a Connecticut marijuana retailer.

Shangri-La CEO Nevil Patel said the company looked at what areas of the state were "underserved" without a marijuana retailer. While there are marijuana stores in Bristol, the company still saw Plainville and the surrounding area as an attractive market.

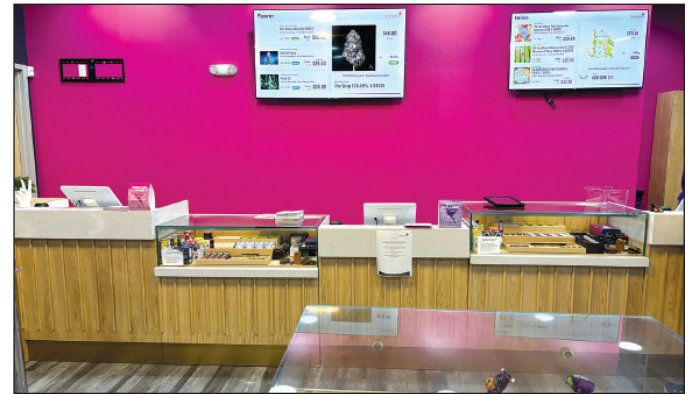
Patel said the space at 349 New Britain Ave. was ideal

because it offered a vacant, newly-built space, near several active retail plazas, and with relatively easy access to Interstate 84 and Route 72.

The plaza was recently built, replacing buildings that had been demolished years ago, and includes four spaces. Jersey Mike's is set to open in the plaza soon.

Trinity Health was in discussions to open an urgent care facility in the plaza, but

See DRIVE ON PAGE 4



Bright pink welcomes customers inside the new Shangri-La Dispensaries marijuana retailer on New Britain Avenue.

## HALLOWEEN HAVOC



Plainville Town Manager Michael Paulhus next to the coffin he'll be lying in when he turns into the Undertaker at a Halloween celebration in Plainville.

## Metacomet Rd thrills on Halloween

MAINA DURAFOUR @NEWBRITHERALD

PLAINVILLE — For many children and adults, Halloween is a holiday that is synonymous with scary movies, costumes, decorations and

"trick or treating." But a street chose to dedicate this holiday to support the local food pantry.

Driving into the neighborhood, you cannot miss the place. Forget the classic green front yard, because this house

transformed into an open house of horror filled with Halloween decorations of all sizes.

On Halloween, Metacomet Rd, a street located in Plainville, celebrated the 10th anniversary of their annu-

al food drive benefiting the Plainville Community Food Pantry. This year, the street hosted food trucks, as well as their usual thriller live performances by the YWCA New Britain School of Dance.

This time, the event

included Michael Paulhus, Plainville's town manager, and Representative Francis Cooley to the festivities, strengthening the community around a fun and necessary project.

See HALLOWEEN ON PAGE 4

### INSIDE

- Dear Abby .....11
- Classified ..... 9-10
- Comics.....11
- Editorial.....5
- Features.....11
- Horoscopes .....11
- Local News .....2-4
- Today in History.....2
- Obituaries.....6
- Puzzles.....10
- Sports..... 7-10
- Home & Garden..... 12
- Television .....8
- Weather .....2

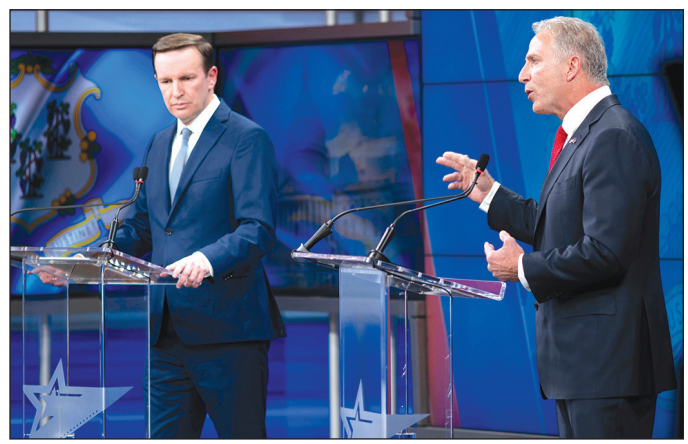
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Republican senate candidate Matt Corey, right, speaks during a debate with Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy.

## Corey says Murphy is fearmongering over abortion

SUSAN HAIGH ASSOCIATED PRESS

While the right to abortion has been codified in Connecticut law since 1990, U.S. Sen. Chris Murphy warned Wednesday night how women in the state could still be at risk if

Republicans impose a national ban.

"I know that doesn't seem possible in Connecticut. But if the Republican Party platform is put into law, then no one in Connecticut is safe," the two-term Democrat said during a televised debate.

Even though he is favored to win reelection, Murphy echoed a key talking point Democratic congressional incumbents and challengers in much tighter races across the country have been using to capitalize on the national debate over abortion rights.

See MURPHY ON PAGE 4





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# Murphy-Corey running for Senate

**Continued from Page 1**  
That prompted Murphy's Republican challenger, small business owner Matt Corey, to accuse Murphy of trying to scare voters.

"The state of Connecticut's law is what it is," he said, calling it "settled law" and that he stands by the state's laws. "So Senator Murphy wants to fear-monger in this election because that's what they do in Washington. They send fear through you," said Corey, adding how GOP leaders have said any bill that would enact a national ban on abortion would be vetoed.

But Murphy insisted that Connecticut law would be at risk if a fetus was considered a person in federal law.

"If that is indeed the law, that means that every abortion in this country would be illegal, regardless of whether you live in Connecticut, a blue state, or you live in Texas, a red state," he said. "So I don't think I'm fearmongering on this topic. I just think I'm reflecting what the actual Republican Party platform is."

"I want to make sure that Connecticut families and Connecticut women get to make their own health care decisions," he said.

Corey, who challenged Murphy six years ago and lost, then questioned Murphy's true support for women, criticizing him for not opposing efforts



to allow transgender athletes to participate in girls' sports.

The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference currently has a policy of allowing transgender girls to compete in girls high school sports.

"When are men in this country going to start standing up for women's rights? Why should women suffer?" Corey asked. "You see around the country, women are trying to stand up for what they believe in. Why should we wipe out the achievements, the scholarships, records?"

Murphy said he believes the issue of transgender student athletes should be left up to individual communities and local school boards and not the federal government. He also warned of a "campaign of fear underway in this country" to make people believe they should be scared of others with a different sexual orientation.

"There's an epidemic of suicide and self-harm in this country amongst our gay students and transgender students," Murphy said. "And it often happens because they are made to feel ostracized by the communities in which they live."

# Halloween celebration

**Continued from Page 1**

It all started 10 years ago, when Dan Bucci and his family started decorating their yard with two hay bales and a scarecrow for Halloween and organized a drive for the local food pantry. Little by little, neighbors of the Bucci family asked if they could decorate their house as well.

"So here we are with six houses, and it's a little mini-Las Vegas strip at night with thousands of lights and lasers, music, so much fog," Bucci said.

But what took this decorating theme to the next level is when the school dance group started performing Michael Jackson "Thriller" dance. Thousands of people started to show up in the little spooky neighborhood, bringing food for the pantry and enjoying the Halloween decorations.

As a Halloween lover, Bucci and his family take the décor of their neighborhood seriously and try to make it sensational as much as they can. They have an impressive collection of Halloween décor, but his favorites are the ones he made with his family, like the baby carriage and dolls that people threw away.

"People sometimes throw away baby carriages or even baby dolls. And then we take them, and we bloody them up, we scar them, we make them really dirty, and then it's Halloween," Bucci said.

Despite being a must-see on the night of Halloween, this event is about supporting those in need and strengthening the community.

Suzy Woerz is the executive director of the Plainville Food Pantry and works with seven

volunteers all year long. She currently has 175 households in the program, the biggest number she has seen in 35 years of doing this. And each year, the number of people in need goes up.

"We're seeing a household every half hour now where before we were waiting for people to come in," she said.

She has noticed that most of the beneficiaries are veterans, people with disabilities and seniors. But overall, she said that the variety of profiles coming to the pantry shows that everyone is suffering the current economic conditions.

"They don't have enough money at the end of the month and they're having a hard time paying their light bills. Their rents are outrageous," she said. "The middle class is hurting. The low-income working poor are hurting with everything going up and their money is not going up."

She has seen people that used to be donors becoming beneficiaries.

However, despite the difficult conditions, she embraces how generous and supportive the Plainville community is.

"The Plainville community is amazing. And they've always said there's nothing plain about Plainville. Yeah, it's true. Because we are supported so well," Woerz said.

When he started this, Bucci did not expect that so many people in his community would be in need. And to him, organizing a food drive on Halloween was a perfect time with all the other holidays coming up.

Cooley was there disguised as Paul Bearer, a famous figure of World Wrestling

Entertainment, and helping put a smile on people's faces. To him, this event is a good way for people to be part of a nice community and see nice displays.

Jokingly, he said, "I think everyone's gonna be happy because I play Paul Bearer, which means I don't speak. So, you have a politician who isn't speaking. We got him to shut up."

Cooley pushed a coffin in which Michael Paulhus, the town manager, was lying, disguised as the Undertaker, another figure of the WWE. It's his first time participating in the event.

"I'm happy to be involved and be part of it because what they do to help the Plainville Food Pantry is great, so it's a great community event," he said.

All the costumes and the makeup are from local businesses and institutions like the International Institute of Cosmetology and CT stage and Theater supplies.

For Paulhus, this is a good way to promote Plainville businesses, as well as to show that even a small town in the United States can have fun and put on an entertaining Halloween event that is more than just candies.

For Bucci, this event is about the community and goes beyond personal convictions, ages, or races.

"It's such a great, safe and fun event for all ages. And just seeing the smile on everybody's face. It doesn't matter if you're left, right. Whatever color anybody is, everyone's here for the same reason. Just have a good time on Halloween," Bucci said.

# Drive-through marijuana

**Continued from Page 1**

Plainville Town Manager Mark DeVoe said they have not signed a lease, and it's unclear if they will.

Both the landlord and the town were welcoming and easy to work with, Shangri-La Director of Community Impact Jocelyn Cerda said.

Cerda said it will be the first marijuana retailer in Connecticut with a drive through window, which will become a feature of Shangri-La's other stores opening around the state. The drive through window will make the store more accessible, she said.

Patel said that in addition to making the store more accessible to people with disabilities, or just during cold weather, the drive through just makes it more convenient.

"I think about, where do I want to spend my time?" Patel said. "I would rather use the drive through."

The drive through uses the same mechanism as a bank drive through for secure transactions. While the store is open, the drive through won't be ready for about another month while construction is ongoing to other parts of the building, Patel

said.

Cerda said the store is required to hire a majority of its staff from Plainville and the surrounding communities, and Shangri-La likes to promote from within, giving employees an opportunity to advance that isn't always available in a retail workplace.

Cerda said Shangri-La has also partnered with the Plainville Community Food Pantry to help fund their food programs.

Shangri-La has 11 stores across the country, including stores in Ohio, Missouri and Illinois.

# Officer justified in shooting

**Continued from Page 1**

the window 17 times. She cer's use of deadly force is reasonable "to defend a third person," and said he would take no action against Boisvert.

Just before midnight on Oct. 5, 2023, surveillance video shows Laprise park her car in front of the Bristol Police station, step out of her car, and promptly fall "flat on her face," according to a summary of the surveillance footage included in Devlin's report.

Laprise, who had been drinking at a Bristol bar, then gathers herself and walks into the station carrying a purse, a black bag and a handgun in her right hand, the report said video shows.

Laprise walked up to a glass window in the lobby and bangs the pistol against

the window 17 times. She paces, then continues banging on the windows before firing her gun into a lobby door and two windows between the lobby and the interior of the station, the report said.

Boisvert had just finished his shift and was sitting in an office in the department when he and another officer heard a "loud pop," according to Boisvert's written report of the incident. They went to the lobby to investigate, when they heard two more pops and identified them as gunshots.

The video shows an officer slightly open the lobby door before Laprise fires two more shots at the door, which quickly shuts.

"I believed at that moment that the threat of imminent harm to others or myself con-

tinued, and that the woman had intended on killing or severely injuring another police officer, myself or anybody who might appear in the lobby," Boisvert wrote. "I fired two shots from my handgun, aiming at the female's torso."

Boisvert's two shots came 12 seconds after Laprise last fired her gun, according to the Inspector General's report. The shots did not penetrate the glass.

Laprise then turns her back to that door to start banging on a bathroom door in the lobby, no longer holding the gun. Three officers rush out of the door, fire a Taser at Laprise, and bring her to the ground. Several more officers rush out of another door as Laprise is handcuffed, the security video shows.



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Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, *I See Red: Ban Dancing* (detail), 1998, Mixed media on canvas, 50 x 60 x 1 in. (127 x 152.4 x 2.5 cm), General Purchase Fund and William and Bette Batchelor Memorial Acquisition Fund, 2021.25

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