

**SPORTS**

Windham girls basketball defeats Griswold on Senior Night

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RFK Jr. appears on track to become US health secretary as he wins key Republican senator's support

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The CHRONICLE

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The free "Go Red for Windham" event will take place on February 7 at Windham Hospital.

Community invited to free 'Go Red for Windham' event

NICOLE ZAPPONE
@THECHRONICLECT

WILLIMANTIC — To kick off heart health and education, Windham Hospital will hold its annual "Go Red for Windham" event.

The event is set to take place on Friday, February 7, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Windham Hospital.

The event, which is free to attend, aims to educate the public about heart health. The evening will be filled with educational opportunities and community fun.

Attendees will have access to free cardiovascular health screenings, which will provide a valuable chance to assess heart health and learn about prevention.

The event will also feature a variety of crafters and vendors, which will be perfect for browsing and connecting with local businesses.

Guests will have the opportunity to enjoy red wine tastings and a host of other activities designed to promote wellness and awareness.

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Condo fire displaces two town families

NICOLE ZAPPONE
@THECHRONICLECT

WILLIMANTIC — A fire that broke out in a condo complex in Willimantic has left two families displaced as it roared through three units.

The Willimantic Fire Department was dispatched on Monday afternoon at 3:05 p.m. to a reported fire in an apartment building at 19 Cameo Drive.

Fire Marshal Mike Walker for the Town of

Windham was in the area and first on the scene at 3:10 p.m. He reported that smoke and fire were visible from the second floor.

Shift command Captain Peter Bruscano arrived at the scene around the same time and called for the first alarm.

Willimantic's first fire engine and ladder truck arrived at 3:12 p.m., and all occupants were reported to have left the building.

Bruscano elevated the incident to a second alarm

not long after.

When Chief Marc Scrivener arrived at 3:15 p.m., the scene was upgraded to a third alarm.

A three-alarm fire indicates a significant situation that requires additional resources and personnel, typically involving a larger building or hazardous materials.

A three-alarm fire indicates a significant emergency situation that requires mutual aid from

See THREE ON PAGE 4



Three units were heavily damaged and cannot be reoccupied. One was under renovation and not in use.

Jason Scott Sr. Contributed Photo

Frank's Lasting Donation



Contributed Photo

Left to right, Ray Aramini, Tom Gilmano and Kimberly Clark hold the \$20 bill offered by Frank during a recent shopping trip to the local Stop & Shop.

Dying man helps feed the community

MAIN DURAFOUR
@THECHRONICLE

WILLIMANTIC — Tom Gilmano and his wife were about to finish their food shopping at the local Stop & Shop when a stranger named Frank came up to them. It was that encounter that turned a simple trip for groceries into a spark that ignited a light for action.

Frank, who is known only by his first name, told the

Gilmanos he was looking to do something good and help his community. He asked the Gilmanos if he could contribute to pay for their groceries. When asked why, Frank said he was dying.

Frank explained that helping someone randomly was something from his bucket list, and that even if the Gilmanos were not in need, he wanted them to have that \$20 bill. That's when Tom Gilmano asked him if it was

OK to take the bill but give it to someone who needs it more. Frank said yes, and their paths never crossed again.

He was handing out \$20 bills and telling his story. There wasn't a dry eye around. I mean, telling the story is one level. Actually seeing Frank and interacting with him was very emotional. It was very inspiring," Gilmano said.

When driving home,

Gilmano drove past the soup kitchen and thought it could be a good place to donate Frank's money. Having worked in the past with Ray Aramini, a volunteer at the soup kitchen, he contacted him to share the story of the encounter.

Kimberly Clark, another volunteer, ultimately joined them in what they now call the "Friends of Frank Club." They discussed the creation of a fund, where

Frank's donation could grow. Gilmano added some money to the fund and shared the story to his friends, hoping to see the \$20 grow into something bigger.

Clark said most of the time people donate in memory of someone they knew and loved, or to support an event. But what she liked about Frank's story is that helping others is part of his

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'Go Red for Windham' event

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The event will focus on heart health and bring the community together.

"Heart health is a critical issue, and we're proud to host this event to raise awareness and encourage

preventative measures," said Donna Handley, senior vice president of Hartford Healthcare. "We look forward to welcoming everyone for an evening of education, fun and community spirit."

Three-alarm fire on Cameo Drive

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surrounding communities included the three Windham volunteer fire departments, Mansfield Fire Department, UConn, Columbia, Coventry, Scotland and Lebanon.

According to Scrivener, the third alarm started a response from Norwich, but they were turned around when the fire was under control.

The fire was declared under control by 3:56 p.m.

Two adults and three children were displaced and assisted by Windham Human Services, the Red Cross and the Willimantic Department Social Worker.

Other town Departments, such as the Willimantic Police Department, Water Department, Building

Officials and Town Manager's Office, provided further scene assistance. "This fire had the potential to devastate the entire building," Scrivener said. "Through the skill and hard work of our firefighters and mutual aid, we were able to contain it to just three apartments."

Apartments 15, 17 and 19 were heavily damaged and cannot be reoccupied. Apartment 17 was under renovation and not in use.

The building has 11 cold-style apartments.

"I am proud of our firefighter and grateful for the help of our neighbors and other town departments and supporting agencies," Scrivener said.

The Fire Marshal's office is conducting the investigation.

Ashford Winter Farmers Market

The Ashford Winter Farmers Market continues to be a bright spot for the community in the midst of cold weather.

The indoor market is held at Knowlton Memorial Hall at the Babcock Library on February 16th, March 2nd, March 16th, and April 6th. The hours of operation are from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Knowlton

Memorial Hall is located at 5 Town Hall Road.

The indoor market features locally made and produced crafts and provisions.

In the spring, the outdoor Farmers Market series will return to the grounds of Pompey Hollow Park at 25 Tremko Lane.

For more information on the markets, email wwfcsa@gmail.com.



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Figure skating coaches who died in plane crash remembered in Connecticut: 'You will never be forgotten and forever loved'

LORI RILEY
HARTFORD COURANT

SIMSURY — About 150 people gathered Monday afternoon at the International Skating Center of Connecticut for a national moment of silence for the figure skaters, coaches and families who were killed in the American Airlines plane crash last Wednesday night in Washington, D.C.

Two of the coaches who died, Russian Olympians Vadim Naumov and Evgenia Shishkova, had skated as professionals and coached at the Simsbury ice rink from the time they moved to the U.S. in 1998 to 2017, when they moved to Boston to coach at the Skating Club of Boston.

Naumov and Shishkova were on their way home from Wichita, Kansas, where the U.S. Figure Skating Championships had taken place. They had stayed later for a training camp for younger skaters; their son Maxim, who finished fourth in the competition, had flown home earlier.

Hockey players, figure skaters and others who had

been on the plane

were unbelievable. They were just such good people. They were so nice. They really cared about their students. They had so much passion. If you had the opportunity to know them, you were so lucky."

There was a tribute to

the couple in the lobby of the center, a table filled

with flowers and notes and a video screen showing clips of the couple competing.

Naumov and Shishkova won the pairs title at the 1994 world championships and competed twice in the Olympics. They were married in 1995 and arrived in the U.S. in 1998 after growing up in Russia. Their son Maxim, who won the junior world title in 2020, was born in Hartford.

According to a 1998 article in The Courant, Naumov resisted switching partners when he was introduced to Shishkova in 1985. But after his pairs partner became ill, he skated with Shishkova and eventually the two became a team.

"When they moved to Boston, I would go to Boston and see them once a week," said D'Amours, 22. "It's been a little while. But I spent a lot of time with them. I spent my entire childhood with them. They watched me grow up. Every single day, hours a day."

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After they retired from competition, they began to coach. Naumov was the director of figure skating at the center from 2011-2016.

Naumov talked about his love for coaching on the Skating Club of Boston's website: "I love to create an environment where students have fun while working hard. I also believe that helping and

guiding athletes through their emotional challenges, ups and downs during training and competing, is a coach's responsibility."

Dawn Sader-Harden was at the rink Monday with her son Paul Sader, who had been coached by the couple, along with her other son John-Michael Harden, who is currently training in Indiana.

The two boys started training in Simsbury when they were 5 or 6 years old and continued until the couple moved to Boston.

"Genya (Shishkova) worked on the spins," Sader-Harden said. "Vadim worked on the jumps."

"There's a very close relationship through the years with them. They grew up with their son Max. Max was their idol."

There were many cards of condolence on the table in the lobby. One read: "With deepest love for the many years you gave to our children — like second parents to them at the ice rink — you will never be forgotten and forever loved."

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Dying man helps feed the community

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last wishes, and how this could move people in supporting the soup kitchen's mission.

"I don't know if there's anything nobler, more admirable, than to feed people and to share food," Aramini said.

They hope Frank's story

will inspire others to donate to the soup kitchen. It's not about how much you give, they say, it's about the idea that everyone can contribute in their own way — whether it is by donating or being involved in the community or volunteering at the soup kitchen.

"The soup kitchen is built on community. That's the only way this works," Clark said. "We're well supported by our local community, and we want to be able to participate in honoring [Frank's] life."

One of the goals of the soup kitchen is to provide access to basic services to people in need. This is a mission that never stops, and volunteers are working 365 days a year to provide for those who need it.

"It's an incredibly generous community that gives



Contributed Photo
A close-up of the \$20 bill given to Tom Gilman and his wife by a stranger named Frank.

to be a cook.

"We had this great exchange where he couldn't buy everybody breakfast, but he could come and prepare breakfast. And the pride that you got to see when he got to serve," Clark said.

Clark said 75% of the donations are made by the local community, whether it is individuals, civic or church groups.

"We are completely dependent on the community, and they have never let us down, and therefore, we're always here to be able to provide support," she said.

The soup kitchen takes pride in giving people the opportunity to give and receive. Clark gave the example of a man who came in early in the morning to take part in the soup kitchen's breakfast service. Clark was running late but wanted to make eggs for breakfast. One of the guests offered to help and explained he used

to be a cook.

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is still
too high
to drive.

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