

The Newport Daily News

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April 14, 2010



Juliette 'Judy' McLennan grew up in the nation's capital, but feels right at home on Aquidneck Island. She is one of three winners of this year's Daily News Community Service Award.

Jacqueline Marqué
♦ Daily News staff

THE NEWPORT DAILY NEWS 2010 COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

Winner believes in giving back

By James J. Gillis
Daily News staff

When Juliette "Judy" McLennan attended boarding school as a teenager, a teacher told her she never would amount to anything. McLennan, who struggled with reading as a result of undiagnosed dyslexia, relayed the story to her parents and told them: "Just watch."

Since then, McLennan, 64, has

raised two children, served as a United Nations ambassador, is an avid skier and sailor, established an annual regatta for sailors with disabilities and is one of three winners of The Newport Daily News 2010 Community Service Award. She will be honored along with Nikki Vazquez of Newport and the late Donald Booth of Newport. The three were chosen from among 16 nominations submitted by Daily News readers and local organizations. A committee of

TO GO

What: The Newport Daily News 2010 Community Service Award presentation and banquet.
When: Tuesday, April 27; cocktail hour at 6 p.m., dinner at 7 p.m.
Where: Atlantic Beach Club, Middletown.
Cost: \$35 per person. Tables of 10 or 12 can be reserved with payment in advance.
More info: See the advertisement on Page A2 of today's paper or go to www.NewportDailyNews.com and click on the 'Community Service Awards' link.

WINNER A8

HISTORY CAST IN BRONZE

A replica of a 17th century horse trough takes its place in Washington Square in Newport.

By Sean Flynn
Daily News staff

NEWPORT — People passing through Washington Square on Tuesday morning got a sneak peek at the new bronze horse trough being installed there before it was hidden in a plywood box until its official unveiling 11 days from now.

Howard and Mary Newman, owners of Newmans Ltd., were busy overseeing the trough's assembly as workers with a crane lowered first the base, then the bowl, then the central post and lantern. Altogether, the piece weighs 838 pounds.

"That's pretty damn neat, isn't it?" said Howard Newman with a big smile on his face as the lantern was put in place.

The Newmans recreated this city icon of the past by carefully analyzing historical photographs. From the 17th century until the arrival of the horseless carriage at the beginning of the 20th century, a horse trough was located at the foot of Washington Square, near the Opera House.

The new public art piece is located on the triangle that was covered in bluestone last summer.

"It anchors this space as open space for the enjoyment of the public," said Lilly Dick, chairwoman of the Washington Square Advisory Commission, which has overseen the federally funded \$4.5 million restoration of Washington Square that has been ongoing for the past several years.

"It is hard to preserve open space," she said. "If we didn't put anything here, it could be a parking lot again in 10 years."

Pieter Roos, executive director of the Newport Restoration Foundation, watched the instal-



Jacqueline Marqué ♦ Daily News staff

Howard Newman, right, looks on as Alex Rodriguez of Patrick Alan Contracting & Transportation installs the frame for a gas lamp that will top the 838-pound replica bronze horse trough in Washington Square in Newport. Newman and his wife, Mary, designed the trough, which will be officially unveiled Sunday, April 25.

BRONZE A8

PORTSMOUTH

School is out

Despite opposition, Elmhurst to close

By James A. Johnson
Daily News staff

ALSO

♦ Other School Committee news. A4

Elmhurst School in Portsmouth will close for good at the end of this school year.

The School Committee approved the closure Tuesday night on a 4-3 vote during its meeting at Portsmouth Middle School before a group that overwhelmingly was opposed to the closing.

The proposal calls for moving fourth- and fifth-grade classes to the middle school and housing pre-kindergarten through third-grade classes at Hathaway and Melville schools.

The closing of Elmhurst in the southern part of town was proposed two weeks ago by School Superintendent Susan F. Lusi as a way to cut a deficit of about \$583,000 in the \$36.6 million budget the School Committee approved recently for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

The closing would result in a savings of about \$92,000 in fiscal 2011 and about \$136,000 in future years. A savings of about \$450,000, mostly in salaries, benefits and custodial costs, would be offset by an increase in the cost of busing, additional monitors and one-time moving expenses.

Opponents of the closing said the actual saving would be closer to \$67,000 because of the costs of maintaining the empty building.

Christopher Bicho of 96 Diane Ave. said he doubts the School Department would realize even that much in savings.

"We recognize this is a very difficult decision," Bicho told the committee. "It's a challenge, no question about it."

But he said the Elmhurst PTO had a "vibrant and lengthy discussion" Monday night and suggested that the decision be delayed for one or two years. "We feel the process did not establish trust between the committee and the overall community," he said. "People feel if there was more time it would be a better experience."

It is frustrating to face the closing this late in the year, he said, adding that parents will have to change schedules.

Committee Chairman E. Richard Carpender had imposed a three-minute limit for speakers, but when Bicho's three minutes were up, a woman in the audience said, "He can have my three minutes."

Bicho went on to question how the closing fits in with the school facilities plan, which calls for closing Elmhurst and expanding Hathaway and

SCHOOL A8

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

House OKs plan to restrict pensions, raise fees, cut aid

By Eric Tucker
Associated Press

PROVIDENCE — Rhode Island lawmakers early today approved a budget that restricts pension benefits for future retirees, raises fees for some services and slices millions of dollars in aid from cities and towns — though not nearly as much as the governor had proposed.

The House of Representatives passed the mid-year spending plan by a 56-15 margin. It now heads to the Senate for approval.

The budget plan revises an earlier proposal from Gov. Donald L. Carcieri aimed at closing a \$220 million deficit in the fiscal year ending June 30. Democrats hold a veto-proof majority in the General Assembly

and can rewrite the Republican governor's budget plans at will.

The budget would limit annual cost-of-living increases to the first \$35,000 of a future retiree's pension payments. That amount would be indexed and rise annually. Carcieri had proposed eliminating such increases entirely to save about \$42 million.

It also cuts millions of dollars in aid to cities and towns, while still restoring much of the funding Carcieri had proposed cutting. The funds are meant to reimburse municipalities for the scaling back of the motor-vehicle excise tax, which helps support local government. The budget restores roughly half of the \$33 million in fourth-quarter reimbursements Carcieri wanted

to cut. The third-quarter reimbursements have been restored in full.

Rhode Island is grappling with a 12.7 percent unemployment rate — one of the highest in the nation — and a sluggish economy that began souring well before the national recession.

"We are feeling that on all fronts, stresses on revenues, stresses on expenditures," said Rep. Steven Costantino, D-Providence, chairman of the House Finance Committee, which endorsed the budget last week. "There's no doubt of what we face."

The budget includes some fee increases, raising the cost of obtaining a State Police report on a car accident from \$10 to \$15. It

HOUSE A8

House members wheeled, dealt to try to save tax reimbursement

By Joe Baker
Daily News staff

PROVIDENCE — Despite repeated creative attempts by some of its members, the House of Representatives defeated budget amendments that would have fully restored the motor-vehicle excise tax reimbursement program for cities and towns.

Gov. Donald L. Carcieri proposed eliminating the last two quarterly payments for this fiscal year in his plan to close a \$219 million deficit. But the governor had to issue the third-quarter payment in February when legislative leaders signaled they would not go along with that part of his mid-year budget proposal.

TAX A8

COMING attractions
Some things you won't want to miss

THURSDAY

>>> **TEACHER OF THE YEAR** to be announced for Middletown schools.

THEN & NOW looks back at the origins of the Glen in Portsmouth.

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WEATHER

43 Tonight, mostly clear. Low around 43.

62 Thursday, mostly sunny. High near 62.

Details, A6

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Jacqueline Marquie ♦ Daily News staff photos

Above are details of the doors for the base of the horse trough. The doors allow access to plumbing and electrical connections. At right is a closeup of the dolphins, designed by Andrea Hollis of Newport, from which water will stream into the trough.



Bronze

Continued from A1

lation of the horse trough and immediately thought of the cars that once occupied the space.

"It's a lot better than the parking lot that used to be down here," he said.

"I'm glad somebody remembers," Dick said.

The bowl of the horse trough will be a fountain with streams of water flowing from the mouths of four bronze dolphins. Passersby early Tuesday stroked the noses of the dolphins, created by local sculptor Andrea Hollis.

"The noses will be a shiny bronze by this time next year," Dick predicted.

Inside the trough's base are electrical,

gas and water lines that need to be connected. Water from the fountain in Eisenhower Park will be circulated in a loop to the horse trough and back, Dick said.

The total cost of the bronze trough is \$151,000, she said. The commission was able to raise all but \$5,000 from private donations and grants, she said. Donations to help make up the balance may be sent to the Washington Square Horse Trough Fund, c/o C. Cleary, Newport Finance Department, 43 Broadway, Newport, RI 02840. Contributions qualify as charitable donations because of the city's municipal nonprofit, tax-exempt status.

The City Council appropriated \$14,300 for the project, but that money was used to create the foundation beneath the horse trough, Dick said.

The official unveiling of the horse trough will take place on Sunday, April 25,

beginning at 12:30 p.m. Businesses, and historic and cultural sites located around Washington Square will sponsor special events throughout the day in conjunction with the unveiling, Dick said. Horses may be at the event, she said.

The Washington Square restoration project is expected to be completed this year, with the creation of 8-foot wide sidewalks covered in bluestone on the north side of the square—in front of Yesterday's restaurant, Jonathan's Ocean Coffee Roasters and other businesses, extending up to 50 Washington Square. This was done in front of Citizen's Bank last summer, and the same sidewalk width will be extended east. The road also will be repaved.

Send reporter Sean Flynn e-mail at Flynn@NewportRI.com.

House

Continued from A1

also increases the fee of obtaining a state identification card from \$15 to \$25. Rep. Robert Watson, R-East Greenwich, angrily denounced the fee increases, saying they'd generate only meager revenue while gouging average citizens.

"You get in a car accident, it's not bad enough? You get nickel and dimed while you're at it," Watson told his colleagues. "You're raising taxes and you're raising fees, and you should be held accountable in November."

Earlier Tuesday, Rep. Joseph Trillo, R-Warwick, said he would submit an amendment to require municipal employees to pay a minimum of 15 percent of their health costs. That provision was stripped from the budget approved by the House Finance Committee last week, but Trillo and others argued that it deserved to be put back in.

However, House Speaker Gordon Fox, D-Providence, ruled that the amendment was not germane to the budget because it contained no savings. Fox's ruling was upheld on a vote of 60-7.

George Nee, president of the

Rhode Island AFL-CIO, said the measure would do nothing to help the state's economy and would burden those who already give back.

"Our responsibility, our mission, is to try to improve the standard of living for the workers of the state of Rhode Island—their wages, their benefits and their working conditions," Nee said in an interview. "I would suggest that if people feel different, this democracy is a wide-open process."

The budget also relieves the Twin River gambling parlor in Lincoln of a requirement that it host greyhound racing. The slot parlor, whose owners sought bankruptcy protection last summer while struggling to repay a half-billion dollars in debt, has said it annually loses millions of dollars on racing. Carcieri also has proposed abolishing dog racing.

"The (state's) third-largest source of revenue is at risk if we don't pass this," warned Rep. Timothy Williamson, D-West Warwick.

House Majority Leader Nicholas Mattiello, D-Cranston, added: "Why don't we start making intelligent decisions with respect to this facility— not look back, look forward and protect the taxpayers' interests."

'I grew up taught that you get involved in your community.'

Juliette 'Judy' McLennan

Winner

Continued from A1

local residents and previous winners reviewed the nominations and selected the winners, who will be honored during a banquet on Tuesday, April 27, at the Atlantic Beach Club in Middletown.

McLennan, who lives in Portsmouth, grew up in Washington, D.C., but spent her childhood summers in Newport from the age of 6 months. "It was a big part of my life," she said. "I still have friends from my days as a girl on the beach."

McLennan, who served as managing director of Blair House, the official guesthouse of the president, became involved in politics in the 1970s, working on President Gerald Ford's failed re-election bid. After Ronald Reagan defeated President Jimmy Carter in 1980, she returned to political life, staying on with President George H.W. Bush as an administrator on the status of women. That post turned into an ambassadorship to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

"It gave me an opportunity to travel and meet some wonderful people," she said.

A self-described "John Chafee Republican," McLennan retired from political life after Bill Clinton knocked off the first President Bush in the 1992 election.

In 2002, McLennan moved to Maryland's Eastern Shore, near where she grew up. But she realized she'd be happier on Aquidneck Island, a big part of her childhood, where her family sailed and

her mother helped establish a junior sailing program at the Ida Lewis Yacht Club.

She spends three seasons a year on the island and her winters north of Montreal, where she skis. Locally, she volunteers with the Redwood Library, the Potter League for Animals (she owns two yellow Labs) and the Seamen's Church Institute.

"Before I even moved up here, I had a friend getting me involved in the Redwood," she said. "I grew up taught that you get involved in your community. You do what you can and you give back. My parents felt strongly about that."

Annette Bourbonniere of Newport is one of several people who nominated McLennan for the award. Bourbonniere, a 2003 winner of the Community Service Award, praised McLennan for starting the C. Thomas Clagett Jr. Memorial Regatta in 2003. The event, named in honor of McLennan's late father, will be held this year from Aug. 22-26.

The regatta provides sailors with disabilities an opportunity to compete at a very high level. "In organizing the event," Bourbonniere wrote, "she sought out the best available coaches and the best race management available."

The event has grown to include three Paralympic classes of boats and the Blind National Sailing Championship.

"It's a little difficult to find an area of this community that has not benefited from her efforts," Bourbonniere wrote. "She is instrumental in bringing others together to support her causes, making her efforts go farther."

Jack Grant, superintendent of Sea-

men's Church Institute, said McLennan has been a big part of the mission's fundraising efforts. "Her commitment to making a positive difference in the world, whether it is at the Seamen's or through the many other activities she is involved with, is truly inspirational and unpretentious," Grant wrote.

McLennan said it is important to help the people who work on the waterfront and the waterways. "The Seamen's last year served 40,000 people in one fashion or another," she said.

"Judy quietly fights for the underdog," Christie M. Smith, executive director of the Potter League for Animals, wrote in supporting McLennan's nomination, "whether that be athletes with disabilities, women or animals."

The daughter of a mining executive father and a mother who competed in sailing and was a regular volunteer, McLennan is divorced and has a son Travis, who lives in Mexico, and a daughter Stephanie, who lives in Portsmouth.

"There is nothing more important to me than my family and my friends," McLennan said. "To be able to keep friends for many years is a rare experience these days."

McLennan said she plans to maintain her full schedule of community projects. Volunteering made her feel comfortable as soon as she made Aquidneck Island her year-round home. "I love Newport," she said. "This is a wonderful place to live."

Send reporter James J. Gillis e-mail at Gillis@NewportRI.com.

School

Continued from A1

Melville schools to house pre-kindergarten through fourth grade.

Bicho said it is unlikely the town would approve a \$31 million bond issue for that project. Next year's configuration will last for a long time, he said.

Despite the PTO's opposition to the plan, he said there was "genuine interest and absolute passion" within the PTO to ensure the best possible situation for children in September.

Bicho was the first of many speakers who came out against the plan to close the school, which has an enrollment of about 370 children in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade.

They expressed many of the same issues that were voiced last week before the Finance Subcommittee. The objections included having fourth-graders in a middle school setting and having fourth- and fifth-graders riding the same school buses as seventh- and eighth-graders.

Others objected to the length of the bus ride, which could be as much as an hour each way.

Parents wanted to know how the children would be divided into the two schools and the transportation details. They were told that would be worked out during the summer.

The only person to support the closing was John McDaid of 65 Gormley Ave. He called it a reasonable decision and said his fourth-grade son is excited about the opportunities he will have in the middle school.

Noting that the committee members expressed their position on the school closing before a motion was made and before hearing from the audience, some speakers said the committee members had made up their minds and the audience's views didn't matter.

Indeed, six of the seven committee members expressed support for the closing at the beginning of the discussion.

Only committee member Cynthia S. Perrotti spoke out against the closing. She read a three-page statement, using up the

10 minutes that each committee member was allotted.

"I do not support this motion," Perrotti said. "I recommend the committee consider multiple alternatives to solve the fiscal year 2011 budget deficit and to revise the facilities plan to eliminate the costly renovation and additions that are needed if fourth-graders are located in the middle school."

She received a standing ovation. After committee member Michael Budemeyer made a motion to close Elmhurst at the end of this school year, Perrotti sought to table the motion until the cost of additional busing was known and when the projected enrollment will be low enough to allow all pre-K through fourth-graders to fit into two elementary schools. Her motion to table was defeated 4-3. Joining her were committee members Angela Volpicelli and Marilyn A. King.

The motion to close Elmhurst passed with those three members opposed.

Send reporter James A. Johnson e-mail at Johnson@NewportRI.com.

CORRECTIONS

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Tax

Continued from A1

Last week, the House Finance Committee approved its own budget correction plan that restored half of the fourth-quarter payment.

Enacted in 1998, the program sought to gradually phase out the excise tax on vehicles by increasing the amount of their valuation that was exempt from local property taxes. The program has been frozen several times during lean budget years, but this year residents did not have to pay property taxes on the first \$6,000 of their vehicle's value. The state, in turn, paid cities and towns the revenue they lost from the program, amounting to about \$130 million this fiscal year.

Some legislators fought to restore full funding of the program, saying cutting the program would force communities, with a little more than two months left in the current fiscal year, to raise property taxes to recoup the lost revenue.

"This was a direct payment to the taxpayers," said Rep. Joanne M. Giannini, D-Providence, who co-sponsored the 1998 legislation. "Twelve years of work is gone."

Rep. Scott Guthrie, D-Coventry, started the battle by introducing an amendment that would have frozen the so-called flat tax on wealthy residents. That would have generated \$32 million, he said, which would have fully restored the motor-vehicle excise program. The rest of that revenue could be used to keep the state from dipping into its "rainy day fund" to plug this year's deficit, he said.

But Finance Committee Chairman Steven M. Costantino, D-Providence, called the proposal "a gimmick," because it would be using revenue generated next year to close this year's budget gap.

"That's horrible financing," Costantino said.

Rep. Robert B. Jacquard, D-Cranston, countered that the supplemental budget already dipped into next year's revenue twice—once by using \$16 million of the rainy day fund, which must by law be paid back next year, and again by using federal stimulus funding.

"And there is no mechanism to say how we're going to reimburse those funds," Jacquard said.

Guthrie said the flat tax,

'What we're doing is giving tax breaks when we can least afford to give tax breaks.'

REP. ROBERTO DA SILVA

D-East Providence

which allows wealthy residents to choose between different taxing options, depending on which one allows them to pay the least taxes, gave rich people tax breaks on the backs of average property taxpayers. He pointed out that state departments overspent their budgets this year by more than \$80 million.

"It almost makes me believe this is almost orchestrated overspending and they are hijacking money from cities and towns," Guthrie said.

"What we're doing is giving tax breaks when we can least afford to give tax breaks," said Rep. Roberto DaSilva, D-East Providence.

Rep. Laurence W. Ehrhardt, R-North Kingstown, argued that freezing the flat tax one third of the way through the fiscal year would be unfair for those taxpayers counting on the current rate.

Guthrie's amendment was defeated on a 46-27 vote. Rep. Amy G. Rice, D-Portsmouth, voted for the amendment. Reps. John G. Edwards, D-Tiverton, Raymond E. Gallison Jr., D-Bristol, J. Russell Jackson, D-Newport, John J. Loughlin II, R-Tiverton, Peter F. Martin, D-Newport, and Deborah L. Ruggiero, D-Jamestown, voted against it.

Jacquard tried again with an amendment that would have required all taxpayers with income greater than \$250,000 to use the flat tax instead of having an option. That would have generated about \$35 million for the state. But House Speaker Gordon D. Fox, D-Providence, ruled the amendment was not germane to the supplemental budget because the revenue would not be generated in this fiscal year.

An attempt to find the money by scooping surplus funds from all quasi-public agencies in the state also was defeated 51-21. Rice and Loughlin were the only local representatives to vote for that amendment.

Send reporter Joe Baker e-mail at Baker@NewportRI.com.

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