

Hoffman DECADES

SPRING 2011

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Hoffman DECADES

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On the cover: pictured left to right; chefs Billy Grant of Bricco Restaurant, Grants and Bricco Trattoria, Kevin Cottle of Jordan Caterers, Noel Jones of Polytechnic ON20, David Sellers of Max Fish and Tyler Anderson of Copper Beech Inn are on a "wild" ride in a new Audi A5 convertible to support the American Heart Association.

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WELCOME TO OUR spring issue of Decades!

With the long, cold, snow-filled days of winter behind us, spring marks the return of warm weather, blooming flowers and outdoor fun. It's a time of year when Connecticut truly blossoms.

In this issue, you'll meet Connecticut's top chefs who will be serving up their amazing cuisine at the "Wild at Heart" fundraiser, which benefits the American Heart Association. Hoffman Audi is proud to be the presenting sponsor of the event that takes place on Saturday, June 4th at the showroom. We also talk with two of the participating chefs about their meeting with First Lady Michelle Obama and some of the ideas they brought back to fight childhood obesity that are being implemented at local schools.

We'll also take a look at the history of the Miss Connecticut Scholarship Program, an official preliminary event of the Miss America Organization, which is the leading achievement program and provider of scholarship assistance for young women in the country. Miss Connecticut provides an empowering opportunity for young women to gain skills and experience that will provide a foundation for their future success. We even have some former Miss Connecticut's showing off some of the hottest convertibles that are perfect for warm weather driving.

Speaking of Miss Connecticut, the first runner up in 2009's Outstanding Teen competition was none other than Katie Stevens, the 19-year-old singing sensation from Middlebury who was a finalist during Season 9 of American Idol! We'll catch up with Katie for an update about her post-Idol life, writing and recording music in L.A. and living a dream come true.

Take a drive with us down memory lane with a look back at the history of the Berlin Turnpike. This iconic, legendary, and sometimes notorious part of Connecticut's heritage exemplifies American life and culture – past, present and future.

We'll also introduce you to Hartford's unconventional leader, Mayor Pedro Segarra, who believes that faith and a commitment to community is bringing the people together, and providing the spark needed to ignite the city's bright future.

You've seen them – the Hoffman Auto Group's "signs of excellence" on billboards, in our showrooms, and when you pull in for service. While our reputation and accolades are rooted in our promise to deliver peace of mind to customers thanks to a job well done, our ongoing Project HX will ensure all ten dealerships continue to meet the Hoffman standard of excellence as they have for nearly 100 years.

Finally, we'll introduce you to the two "biggest losers" who were the big winners in Hoffman Auto's Weight Watchers Challenge. Their stories will inspire all of us to follow the road to healthier eating and lifestyles that can positively impact our lives.

We hope you enjoy this issue. Thank you for your continued loyalty and support.



PHOTO BY LANNY NAGLER

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Jeffrey S. Hoffman
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I. Bradley Hoffman
Co-Chairman

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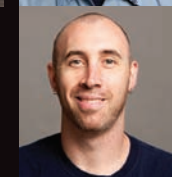
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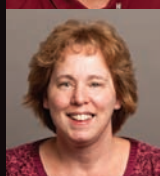
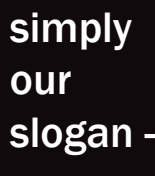
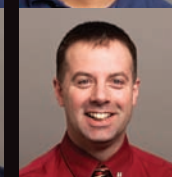
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Employees pictured have been with Hoffman Auto Group for at least 10 years; some as many as 43 years!



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ENGINE LIGHT ON? THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

Your "to do" list is long enough. You certainly don't want to make a special trip just to determine the mysterious reason why your "check engine" light just came on. The Kiwi Bluetooth is a plug and play wireless device that easily connects to your car's OBDII port (right below the steering wheel.) Once the device is connected, you can download one of two recommended car diagnostics apps from the Android Market and begin to monitor all sorts of stats about your car. You can use it in any model sedan, truck, SUV, or even a hybrid from 1996 on. There is a similar device for iPhones called the GoLink Cable. Both devices are \$99. The Kiwi is available at ThinkGeek.com and the GoLink is available at Walmart.

CRANK IT UP

This portable power supply unit gives you more than just backup power for your home, car or boat when you need it most. It's just right for camping, tailgating and traveling as well. An essential accessory for every automobile, it is the definitive backup power source for up to seven hours in any emergency situation. It features regular household plugs and USB ports to power TVs, computers, radios, cell phones, MP3 players and more. A built-in super-bright LED flashlight provides illumination and security in dark areas, plus it includes cables for jumpstarting. It's easy for anyone to carry with its built-in handle. Just keep it fully charged by plugging it in at home . . . but if the charge runs out, no worries. Simply turn its crank and you're back in business. \$199.95 at Brookstone.com.



IT'S ALL ABOUT THE SHOES

Piloti may be Italian for racing drivers. But even amateur driving enthusiasts will appreciate the rounded heels on these specially-designed racing shoes that give you a well-executed, heel-and-toe downshift and a high-speed fashion statement. \$75 to \$180 at Saferacer.com.



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HOFFMAN AUDI OF NEW LONDON HOSTS BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

Hoffman Audi of New London hosted the Chamber of Commerce Eastern Connecticut 2010 Business After Hours event on January 5. The annual networking event was a huge success, with more than 150 people in attendance. Guests enjoyed cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and raffle prizes.

Upper photo above, pictured, left to right: Dianne Kent, People's United Bank; Christine Haase, People's United Bank; James F. Ryder, Jr., Homestead Funding Corp.; Chuck Banton, People's United Bank.

Lower photo above, pictured, left to right: Diane Delauro, Diamond Mortgage Group, LLC; Darlene Guillot, Chelsea Groton; Susan E. Shepherd, Diamond Mortgage Group, LLC; Donna Stefanski, Chelsea Groton; Sandra A. Montanari, Chelsea Groton



HOFFMAN PORSCHE RECOGNIZED AS A PREMIER DEALER FOR THE THIRD YEAR IN A ROW

Hoffman Porsche is pleased to announce that in 2011, for a third year in a row, they have been named a Premier Porsche dealer. Of the 250 Porsche dealers in North America, only 25 – or roughly 10 percent – qualify for premier status. Dealerships are judged in literally every aspect of their business, and they must provide a superior experience for their customers from start to finish. Customers are surveyed after sales and service appointments, and Porsche uses these surveys to determine the level of care dealerships provide to their customers.

Pictured above: Hoffman Porsche staff



HOFFMAN WELCOMES NEWEST MEMBER OF LEXUS FAMILY; PARTNERS WITH BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION

On March 3, 2011 Hoffman Lexus hosted the CT 200h Viewing Party in the Hoffman Lexus showroom. Featured at the event was the new hatchback hybrid CT 200h. The new Lexus model boasts 42 mpg and five drive modes. The event was held in conjunction with the Brain Injury Association of Connecticut. Guests were able to get to know the new CT inside and out, and learn about the work that the BIAC does in our community.

The event also kicked off Hoffman's month-long partnership with the BIAC. March is Brain Injury Awareness Month, and to celebrate Hoffman donated \$100 for every new and used Lexus sold during the month. All proceeds benefitted the BIAC.

Pictured above: I. Bradley Hoffman and Jeffrey Hoffman, Hoffman Auto Group co-chairmen; Christine Buhler, development & marketing director, BIAC; Julie Peters, executive director, BIAC; Richard Shechtman, esq.; Matthew Hoffman.



HOFFMAN WORKS WITH MADD TO ELIMINATE DRUNK DRIVING

During the month of December for the last 15 years, Hoffman Auto Group has been tying red ribbons on every one of their vehicles to raise awareness – and money – for Mothers Against Drunk Driving. For 2010, the auto group presented Janice Heggie Margolis, director of MADD, and Paula Dagostino, program specialist, with a check for \$12,825. Hoffman is the largest local contributor to MADD, and to date has raised over \$200,000 to eliminate drunk driving. Their contributions directly impact the local community through education and victim services.

Pictured above: Paula Dagostino, program specialist; Jeffrey, Matthew and I. Bradley Hoffman; Janice Heggie Margolis, director of MADD.



VETERAN RECOGNIZES HOFFMAN FOR ITS SUPPORT

Bryan Chiarappi, Hoffman Auto Body of East Hartford appraiser, presented his colors to Jeffrey and I. Bradley Hoffman during a flag ceremony hosted by Hoffman Audi of East Hartford in February. Chiarappi, who returned home in November from active duty in Afghanistan, has been an appraiser at Hoffman for more than eight years. The American flag, which flew over his base in Torkham on his last day of active duty, was only recently sent to Chiarappi. He presented the flag, along with a certificate of authenticity, to the Hoffman's as a thank-you for their continued support.

Pictured above: Hoffman Auto Group Co-Chairman, Jeffrey Hoffman; Pvt. Chiarappi; and Co-Chairman, I. Bradley Hoffman



HOFFMAN AND CRT BRING HOLIDAY CHEER

For more than 25 years, Hoffman Auto Group has donated 200 holiday baskets – containing all the fixins' for a classic holiday feast, including a full-size turkey – to local families in need, in partnership with the Community Renewal Team, Inc. The tradition was started by Burton Hoffman, and today is continued by his sons, Jeffrey and I. Bradley Hoffman, co-chairmen of Hoffman Auto Group. Both Jeffrey and Bradley deliver the baskets to CRT themselves – they've been known to help unload the truck in their business suits.

Hoffman employees take part in the giving, too. All 430-plus employees at the company receive the same holiday baskets as CRT. Thanks in part to the culture of giving that Hoffman has created in the company, many employees choose to donate their baskets as well. On average, CRT receives about 225 baskets from Hoffman, at a value of \$50 each.

Pictured above right: Hoffman Auto Group Co-Chairman, Jeffrey Hoffman; Nancy Shapiro, development & marketing specialist; Hoffman Auto Group Co-Chairman, I. Bradley Hoffman.



HOFFMAN AUTO EXCLUSIVE AUTOMOTIVE SPONSOR OF CONNECTICUT WHALE

Hoffman Auto Group was proud to be the exclusive automotive sponsor of the Connecticut Whale's inaugural 2010 - 2011 season. The company enjoyed complimentary tickets, public announcements during games and signage on the rink as part of their sponsorship.

Hoffman Audi was also an exclusive automotive sponsor for the CT Whale and February's Hockey Fest. The outdoor event set the record for attendance at an AHL game, with more than 21,000 fans in the stands. Hoffman Ford also supplied the 2011 Explorer for the Hoffman-sponsored shoot-for-a-car contest.

Pictured: Co-Chairman, I. Bradley Hoffman and Donna Zakewicz.



HOFFMAN AUDI HAS A WHALE OF A TIME

Hoffman Audi was proud to host the Connecticut Whale at our Whale Bash in March. Players and Pucky joined guests for photos and autographs, noshed on chicken fingers and French fries, and sipped apple juice. The first 50 guests received a pair of tickets to a Whale game, and seven lucky winners walked away with four tickets to a game.

Pictured right to left: CT Whale player Derek Couture, Hoffman Auto Body of East Hartford employee Dawn Barden and her daughter, Courtney, Pucky & CT Whale players Dov Grumet-Morris and Jared Nightingale.



A Chef Jared Calderone creation



A Chef Ryan Jones creation

Top Chefs Get Ready for Wild at Heart Benefit

Gala hosted by Hoffman Audi benefits the American Heart Association and promotes healthy lifestyle choices.

BY ELLIS PARKER

The phrase “wild at heart” was most famously used by playwright Tennessee Williams in the 1941 play “*Stairs to the Roof: A Prayer for the Wild at Heart That Are Kept in Cages.*”

This spring, Wild at Heart is the name given to the American Heart Association’s benefit being held at Hoffman Audi in East Hartford on June 4th, 2011.

Although the phrase is sometimes misunderstood to mean someone whose behavior is untamed, an even better use of the phrase might be to refer to someone who yearns for life’s adventures and isn’t afraid of its challenges.

But Wild at Heart, the fundraiser that helps raise money for heart research and education, certainly isn’t about taking risks with one’s health. Supporters of the A.H.A. never lose sight of the fact that heart disease and stroke are the number one and number three killers in America.

Many committed individuals have helped make this event happen and it’s impossible to shine the spotlight on every one of them. But there are some whose contributions must be recognized, beginning with its primary sponsors—the Hoffman Auto Group.

“As a leader in the community, Hoffman Auto Group is always searching for new ways to get involved. My brother, Jeffrey, and I saw the Wild at Heart event as a wonderful opportunity not only to give back to our community, but also to help raise awareness of the importance of heart health,” says I. Bradley Hoffman, co-chairman of the company.

“We believe a healthy, strong community is beneficial to everyone,” adds Jeffrey S. Hoffman, Hoffman Auto Group co-chairman. “That belief has been a driving factor in our business for almost 100 years, and will continue to play a major role in the decisions that we make as a company.”

Shaun Formica, an event director for the A.H.A., has nothing but praise for the contributions of the civic-minded Hoffmans.

“The Association is very excited about the new Wild at Heart event and we are so appreciative of Hoffman Auto for its support.”

Another individual who has played a prominent role in bringing this project to fruition is Michael Guinan of 360 Marketing & Events. A longtime A.H.A. supporter, Guinan started off on day one as a member of the Event Committee, and after his dedication to the cause was recognized, he was elevated to chair of the event.

His wife, Sylvia Guinan, chairman of the board for the Eastern Connecticut Division of the A.H.A., is similarly motivated. “Over my years of service, I have come to realize the effect that issues of heart health have on our local communities. The Wild at Heart event will help to make available the resources necessary to have a positive impact while providing local organizations and volunteers with a new and fun way to support our efforts.”

Don’t get the mistaken impression, however, that Wild at Heart will be a somber affair. Says Formica, “Although this event is about raising funds for education and research



Chef Noel Jones of PolytechnicON20 at work on a stunning crab and avocado salad appetizer.

of heart disease, the focus of the evening will be having fun, enjoying the delicious food of local chefs, and dancing the night away at one of central Connecticut's finest auto dealerships." Now that seems like a fitting usage of the phrase "wild at heart!"

Ten of central Connecticut's finest chefs have proven to be Wild at Heart. The talent roster includes Billy Grant of Bricco Restaurant, Grants and Bricco Trattoria; Noel Jones of PolytechnicON20; Tyler Anderson of Copper Beech Inn; David Sellers of Max Fish; Kevin Cottle of Jordan Caterers and a Hell's Kitchen runner-up; Billy Carbone of Dish Bar & Grill and Dish 'n Dat; Jared Calderone of Ginza Restaurant Group; Vinnie Carbone of Carbone's Ristorante; Ryan Jones of The Mill at 2t and The Market at Hartford 21; and Christopher Kube of The Hartford Club. (Read the accompanying interviews to learn what makes these gentlemen tick and how they approach questions of heart health while surrounded by so many culinary temptations.)

Two Chefs Take the Fight for Healthy Eating to the Schools

Two of Connecticut's top toque-wearers have taken lead roles in the fight for healthy eating. Invited by Michelle Obama to join her "Chefs Move to Schools" initiative in Washington, D.C. last year, Billy Grant and Tyler Anderson are tackling the very root of the problem. They are helping to improve the food choices that are available in the schools, change the eating habits of our youth, and inculcate in them a healthier mindset. "One in four children relies on school meals for the bulk of their nutrition," says Grant. "And schools are setting negative dining patterns that last for life. No wonder childhood obesity is becoming such a problem."

Anderson relates that he has been working on a farm project. He has held demos at schools explaining where food comes from and how it gets to the restaurant. He has even

invited some kids to come into the kitchen. But he hasn't yet been able to commit to a particular school.

Grant says he has held a demonstration in the New Britain school system and is looking to get involved with actual schools, but to date has no ongoing role. "The problem is complex and resistant to easy solution," Grant explains. "There's no money in town budgets for this. There are training issues, health department issues. It may be necessary to take vending machines out of schools. It's a bigger problem than just a chef going in."

The Participating Chefs Offer Healthy Menu Items in Their Restaurants

As Americans dine out more often than ever, restaurant meals account for a growing part of the overall nutrition picture. Unfortunately, restaurants are notorious for serving food in excessive portions that contain too much fat and sodium.

In the last few years, major dining chains have begun offering healthier, low-calorie menus. An April 13, 2011 article in USA Today noted that, until recently, the public was apt to ignore the healthier choices that they had called for in surveys. But now, according to Mike Archer, president of Applebee's, casual dining chains are "seeing a sea change in consumer behavior." Applebee's top selling entrée for the first two months of 2011 "was a sirloin and shrimp entrée from the chain's diet menu."



Chef Billy Grant cooking healthy

That's the kind of news that will get restaurateurs' attention. Of course, fine dining establishments already have a leg up on the casual chains because of their emphasis on quality ingredients. As Anderson of Copper Beech Inn notes, "We serve clean pure food

cooked with a very good raw product."

Echoes Kube of the Hartford Club, "we try to offer a clean dish without preservatives or anything added to it unless we make it here. We use lots of fresh vegetables and grains while trying to avoid heavier cream-and-butter-based foods to promote heart health."

Chimes in Grant, "We have heart-healthy options, but not a specific space devoted to them. With scratch cooking restaurants like ours, educated clients know they can pick a good path through the menu."

Says Sellers of Max Fish, "Our main ingredient is fish, which is low fat and healthy. We make a super effort to use a lot of local produce." Jordan Caterers' Kevin Cottle says, "We've been the number one caterer in Connecticut the past 11 years, but we just redid our entire menu structure. We'll be doing smaller portions with more flavor, not just your big starch. You'll even be able to do a party with just Connecticut sourcing."

Vinnie Carbone of Carbone's Ristorante reports similar progress. "We will be introducing a Mediterranean menu by the beginning of May. This menu is being done in conjunction with a nutritionist and will feature healthy but flavorful selections along with nutritional and allergy information."

Noel Jones of PolytechnicON20, who doesn't buy into the new chef trend of refusing to make substitutions, states "There's always something healthy on our menu. If you want to lower your fat intake, we can adjust



Chef Tyler Anderson with his roasted beet and goat cheese appetizer

our recipes to accommodate that need."

Still, there will always be real temptations in restaurants. As Bill Carbone of Dish Bar & Grill, home to a killer Maine lobster pot pie, points out, "We have plenty of healthy options—and plenty of others." **H**

COVER STORY



Chef Billy Grant



Chef Noel Jones



Chef Tyler Anderson



Chef David Sellers

CHEF INTERVIEWS

The chefs participating in the Wild at Heart event at Hoffman Audi in East Hartford were asked a series of questions. Here are some of their more interesting answers.



Chef Jared Calderone



Chef Vinnie Carbone

If you weren't a chef, what do you think you would be doing for a living?

BILLY GRANT, Bricco Restaurant, Grants, Bricco Trattoria: A deejay at a high-energy nightclub.

NOEL JONES, Polytechnic ON20: In the military or the State Police, because of my discipline.

VINNIE CARBONE, Carbone's Ristorante:

Teaching and coaching.

RYAN JONES, The Mill at 2t, The Market at Hartford 21: Importing furniture.

CHRISTOPHER KUBE, The Hartford Club:

It's the only thing I can imagine. I was 13 when I started working in a restaurant.

ANDERSON: David Kinch of Manresa in Los Gatos, California.

SELLERS: Eric Ripert of Le Bernardin.

COTTLE: Eric Ripert.

B. CARBONE: Alfred Portale of Gotham Bar & Grill.

CALDERONE: Anthony Bourdain.

V. CARBONE: Lidia Bastianich.

R. JONES: Anthony Bourdain: no matter what, we'd have a blast.

KUBE: Anthony Bourdain because of his wit and ability to party and because he can still cook.

What three ingredients couldn't you live without?

GRANT: Olive oil, salt, Parmigiano-Reggiano.

N. JONES: Salt, Kosher salt, Maldon salt.

ANDERSON: Mustard, fennel, butter.

SELLERS: Cheeses, eggs, butter.

COTTLE: Tomato, garlic, basil.

B. CARBONE: Olive oil, bacon, sriracha sauce.

CALDERONE: Chocolate, bread, any kind of nut.

V. CARBONE: Olive oil, Pecorino Romano, native tomatoes.

R. JONES: Salt, pepper, lemon.



Chef Kevin Cottle



Chef Christopher Kude

TYLER ANDERSON, Copper Beech Inn:

Still something with food, probably a farmer.

DAVID SELLERS, Max Fish: Probably in music as a recording technician, or in outdoor sports (I worked in ski areas).

KEVIN COTTLE, Hell's Kitchen runner-up, Jordan Caterers: I'd probably have my own lumber yard on Martha's Vineyard or do oceanography. I grew up on the ocean.

BILL CARBONE, Dish Bar & Grill, Dish 'n Dat: I went to medical school, so probably a doctor.

JARED CALDERONE, Ginza Restaurant Group: F.B.I. or Special Forces.

If you could live anywhere else, where would it be?

GRANT: The coast of Italy.

N. JONES: My first love is Ireland. But I have already lived there, so it would be Italy or the south of France.

ANDERSON: Probably Napa Valley, due to the foods available to chefs and the length of the growing season. Here, there's not a plethora of local products in fall and winter.

SELLERS: Either the mountains here or in Italy.

COTTLE: Either back home on the Cape or in Vail, Colorado.

B. CARBONE: Back in New Jersey where I'm from.

CALDERONE: New York or Prague.

V. CARBONE: Somewhere warm.

R. JONES: The Caribbean, maybe St. Barts.

KUBE: France, Spain or South America.

If you and your loved ones were marooned on a tropical island with the chef of your choice, who would it be?

GRANT: Daniel Boulud.

N. JONES: Thomas Keller.



Chef Ryan Jones



Chef Bill Carbone



A Chef
Kevin Cottle
creation

KUBE: Fresh thyme, pork products, chocolate.

What would your last meal request be?

GRANT: A porchetta sandwich on the wharf in San Francisco.

N. JONES: A meal with my wife.

ANDERSON: To have all of my cooks do a tasting menu for me.

SELLERS: Spanish roasted suckling pig.

COTTLE: Striped bass with garlic bread. My Dad's president of the Cape Cod Fly Fishing Association.

B. CARBONE: Grilled rib-eye with caramelized Brussels sprouts.

CALDERONE: A bread and olive oil party.

V. CARBONE: A tenderloin steak Gorgonzola sandwich on sourdough bread with fried onions.

R. JONES: My wife's chicken Marsala.

KUBE: A tasting meal at Paul Bocuse in Lyon, France.

Other than your own restaurant or restaurants associated with the other participating chefs, what's your favorite place to eat in Connecticut and why?

GRANT: I like what Sean Farrell's doing at Firebox, using so much locally grown produce. And I really like the décor.

N. JONES: Winvian. Chris Eddy's one of the best chefs around. He's about the food, and that's it.

ANDERSON: Taste of China in Clinton.

SELLERS: I haven't eaten much in Connecticut since I got here, but I like Pho 150, the Vietnamese noodle place in East Hartford.

COTTLE: Luce in Middletown. We tend to eat there a lot. It's near our house and not too expensive.

B. CARBONE: Salute in Hartford. Those are old friends from Hot Tomato's.

CALDERONE: River Tavern in Chester for a quiet and relaxing evening

V. CARBONE: Caseus Restaurant in New Haven because chef Joe D'Alesio's food is inventive, fresh and delicious.

R. JONES: Treva in West Hartford.

Everything's well made, the flavors are right on, and it has a great cocktail list.

KUBE: I'm new to the area and don't have one yet.

What do you think might be the next big trend in food?

GRANT: I think the comfort food trend will continue. Also, the healthy trend. I think the days of food for entertainment are out.

N. JONES: Hopefully, I'll help set it. That everyone will experience fine dining, that it's not out of their league.

ANDERSON: Special restaurants are coming back.

SELLERS: It's already happening. A return to more family-oriented, well-made, home-style cooking.

COTTLE: I'll tell you what we're pushing for dessert: Whoopie pies for a simple little treat.

B. CARBONE: Smaller plates and simpler foods.

CALDERONE: Using seasonal ingredients from different countries and cultures.

Everybody's trying to eat new and healthy. What's popular comes in fads and phases.

V. CARBONE: I believe there will be a continued emphasis on local fresh products. Portions should come back to a more normal state. We will see more demand for high-quality products simply prepared.

R. JONES: Pop-up restaurants. We're going to do a four-day one. Also, grilled cheese.

KUBE: Other than the continuation of the localized farm-to-table movement, an even smaller revolution of people hosting their own kind of dinners and forming into a restaurant, more of a communal kind of eatery.

You're about to participate in a heart-healthy event: do you take good care of yours?

GRANT: No, I don't. I eat too much prosciutto and salami.

N. JONES: I take good care of my heart. I work out almost every day. I watch what I eat and I have a lot of fish.

ANDERSON: Yes, relatively. I've lost 50 pounds. It's not easy to do the Michelle Obama thing if you're a fat chef. You have to not look like a hypocrite and you have to be there for your kids when they grow up.

SELLERS: I think I do, but it's a stressful occupation.



An Italian pastry tray from Mozzicato's

COTTLE: I do, but I indulge in more butter than I should. I try to shave fennel, I use more vinegar and less oil. I try to move around a lot and participate in sports.

B. CARBONE: As much as I can.

CALDERONE: Yes, I try to eat no fat and no artificial ingredients.

V. CARBONE: Reasonable, but I could always do better.

R. JONES: It depends on the day. Recently, yes.

KUBE: I try to, and especially during the summer. When I lived in Manhattan, I rode my bike to work. **H**



A Chef David Sellers creation



A Chef Vinnie Carbone creation



A Chef Bill Carbone creation

Deserving of the Crown

Miss Connecticut is more than just a title. She is a woman who reflects a tradition of style, sophistication and above all—service.

BY RAYMOND BECHARD | PHOTO BY JOSEPH RIVERA

The summer of 1921 was ending and the businessmen of Atlantic City had a problem. They were about to lose the vast majority of tourists who brought millions of dollars to their “Boardwalk Empire” every weekend. How could they keep people coming back in September?

The answer was simple enough: the “Inter-City Beauty” Contest. Drawing nearly 100,000 people that first year, the judges and the public chose Margaret Gorman of Washington D.C. as the overall winner. One year later the enormously popular event was renamed “Miss America.”

“Miss America represents the highest ideals,” said hotel magnate and Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce President Frederick Hickman. “She is a real combination of beauty, grace and intelligence, artistic and refined. She is a type which the American Girl might well emulate.” While a seemingly typical male perspective of the times, his words have become ironically prophetic as our culture and the Pageant have evolved over the past 90 years.

In that time both Miss America and Miss Connecticut have suffered, adapted and ultimately succeeded through shifting cultural norms, financial crises, wars, liberation movements and even scandal.

When irrational growing criticism about “loosening morals” in the United States focused criticism on the Miss America Pageant, its officials decided to shut down the event in 1928. When it began again during the Depression, the only Miss Connecticut to ever win the title of Miss America was crowned in 1933.

A short time prior to that event, Marion Bergeron was asked if she wanted to compete in a beauty contest at the Rivoli Theatre in New Haven. It was a last minute request because they were short one girl for the stage. “Marian put her bathing suit in a bag and walked over,” to the hotel, wrote Newsweek Magazine. “She walked back home carrying a dozen roses and a trophy. A few weeks later, she became Miss Connecticut, and a few weeks after that, Miss America.”

So rushed was the process that Pageant officials did not discover she was only 15 years old — the youngest winner ever — until after Marian was crowned. “I’d never been on a date!” she remembered years later. Her crown “was so big it came right down over my eyes.”

From then on the Pageants began to grow up. They reached their Golden Age in the 1950s and early 1960s, during which “The Miss America Pageant” was the most watched television program in the nation for several years — a title now claimed annually by the Super Bowl.

Once again, changing attitudes put the Miss America Pageant and individual state competitions, including Connecticut, at risk. There seemed to be no place for a “beauty

pageant” in an era when women were rightly demanding equality. It seems most people did not know the true nature of the event, a false perception that lingers even today.

In 1945 the Miss America Pageant began awarding substantial scholarships to its winners. This substantially changed the very nature of the competition and the motivation for young women to participate in it. By 1974 Miss America Rebecca King used her scholarship for law school. A year later, winner Sheila Cothran earned a Ph.D. in education with hers. By 2010, the Miss America Organization was giving \$45 million annually for tuition, making it the largest single source of scholarships for women in the world.

Then, after the 1984 Vanessa Williams scandal once again tarnished the competition, the Miss America Organization added a social platform requiring contestants — even at the local level — to present a personal social cause they planned to champion during their reign. As the women progress up through the competitions, the State and National Organizations then take on the winner’s cause as their own during her reign.

In 2010 the Miss Connecticut Scholarship Program awarded the State’s crown to Brittany Decker — formerly Miss Hartford County — whose platform is “One World: Global Awareness for Global Prosperity.”

“It’s about the importance of encouraging others to become global citizens and to think about life in a broader perspective,” Miss Decker explains. “My two main initiatives are to raise funds for the Sok Sabay Medical Clinic



Lorine Zdanowski (left), Miss Connecticut 1985 shares a similar passion of helping others with Heidi Voight (right), Miss Connecticut 2006.

— where I serve on the board of directors — to hire a doctor and provide health care needs to the villagers. My second is to raise funds for the Christian Haitian Outreach Orphanage in Haiti.” Proving that being Miss Connecticut is synonymous with leadership and service, Brittany has traveled to both Haiti and Cambodia in her “One World” quest.

www.hoffmanauto.com

Finally, each contestant entering town and other local competitions from every community across America is required to garner a donation of \$100 to Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals. There is no entrance fee; only this donation in support of ailing children. If the women win locally, they must raise \$300 for the hospitals to compete statewide. And

whoever wins there raises another \$700 to compete in Miss America.

“Connecticut Children’s Medical Center is proud to be associated with the Miss Connecticut Scholarship Program through our affiliation with Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals,” says Scott Organek, Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals Program Director,

Marian Bergeron. In 1933 she was the first and only Miss Connecticut to become Miss America.



for the Connecticut Children's Medical Center in Hartford. "These wonderful young women not only work hard on their own to raise money for us, but they also support existing events and make frequent visits to our patients. They truly care about helping our young patients."

Since starting their local support here in 2007, the Miss Connecticut Scholarship Program has raised more than \$16,000 for Connecticut Children's Hospital.

Mac Mackay of Southington, who has worked with Connecticut's program since 1965 says "it's difficult to say" what makes a successful Miss Connecticut in the 21st Century. "But you kind of know. You can tell. They are very genuine, very authentic. Most are in college, half way through, or going on to graduate school. Most are here for the scholarship, not to break into entertainment. These women go into business or some high level of public service."

Heidi Voight, Miss Connecticut 2006, is the quintessential model of the modern Miss Connecticut. Her platform was – and remains – "Educate, Empower, Eradicate: Stop The Violence," focusing on sexual assault prevention. She bravely and openly speaks to groups of young women about being sexually abused by a family friend as a teenager and date raped at 15 years old. "They need to understand their unique abilities and rights," Heidi explains. "I want them to know the extraordinary power they have to face challenges, overcome obstacles and become the great women they were meant to be."

Lorine Zdanowski, Miss Connecticut 1985, shares a similar passion to help others, especially children. Twenty-six years after her reign, she sees that through the Connecticut program she "learned the power and importance of continued personal growth and development." Reflecting further, she tells us, "Through my years as a special education teacher, and then as a sales consultant for a Franklin-Covey company, I have always taught my students the importance of setting goals in life and working to be the best we can be! We are not limited by our circumstances. It is our thoughts and actions that truly impact where we go."

Finally, reflecting the "highest ideals" of Frederick Hickman in 1921, the current Miss Connecticut, Brittany Decker, not only inspires us, but truly captures this modern day empowerment program for women, saying, "I want my legacy to be a Miss Connecticut and essentially a Miss America that serves as a universal figure making a global impact."

And this is the real beauty of Miss Connecticut. **H**



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A Thing of Beauty, Helpfulness and Joy Forever

The Berlin Turnpike tells a story that travels through time.

BY RAYMOND BECHARD

James MacDonald looked back at the enthusiastic parade of brightly decorated cars behind him. He couldn't help but smile at the revelry. Despite having been cited for speeding just days earlier — and the disturbing facts that the roadway they were about to open wasn't fully constructed, contractors were demanding payment, the State of Connecticut hadn't accepted it, and he didn't know who was going to maintain it — the Highway Commissioner was determined to enjoy this beautiful autumn day.



Cruise Nights on the Berlin Turnpike have drawn classic car enthusiasts to "The Strip" for decades.

Sitting in the lead car, MacDonald looked to his chauffeur behind the steering wheel of his Hartford-made Pope-Hartford "Model L." Along with companies like Corbin, Columbia, Kelsey-Motorette, Locomobile, and more than 100 others in Connecticut, Pope-Hartford was one of the most prestigious builders of automobiles in the state.

Beginning the race at Cedar Hill Cemetery, MacDonald's automobile darted out from the

other cars and started driving south on the new road at about 30 miles per hour, "the correct rate of speed at which to manipulate a high-powered automobile on a billiard-table road."

Looking ahead as they drove toward Berlin, MacDonald could see the roadway's best attribute: it was absolutely straight for nearly eight miles. Part of the Old Post Road between Port Chester, New York, and Boston, Massachusetts, this section had been cut in

a straight line 111 years earlier, in 1798. Nothing but a "cow path" then, MacDonald took satisfaction in knowing that it was now "the greatest single piece of road making ever undertaken and accomplished in the state of Connecticut."

After driving for 20 minutes he saw a makeshift barricade across the road in Berlin. This was it; the moment he had been waiting for and working on for nearly 13 years. The

To this day, nearly 40 motels line the 12 mile stretch of the Berlin Turnpike. Many still hail customers with bright, vintage neon.



Photo by Joseph Rivera

Pope-Hartford slowed down and rolled to a stop just short of the simple blockade. James MacDonald opened the door, stepped from his vehicle, and approached the flimsy obstacle on foot. Then, “without any ceremonies of a formal nature . . . broke down the fence.”

With that, the Berlin Turnpike was open. The date was October 22, 1909.

That night, at the banquet hosted by the Automobile Club of Hartford, awards were presented, speeches were given, and James MacDonald was honored along with his new \$100,000 road, calling it a “masterpiece” and “the best eight miles of state highway in Connecticut.” Later he would write, “This road, in its splendid condition, shall remain as it is — a thing of beauty, helpfulness and joy forever.”

If you look closely, over a century of American history and culture are ensconced

along this single roadway. It is an iconic, legendary, and sometimes notorious part of Connecticut’s heritage. “The Turnpike is one of those old roads, one that is in some ways Connecticut’s own Route 66, if only for a short distance,” writes Bob Carr, a long-time fan of “The Pike.”

In its heyday this was the place to be — whether to take the family out for dinner and ice cream or to take the hot rod out to show off. “The Strip” was home to wildly popular restaurant destinations like the Cricket, Wonder Bar, Puritan Maid, Olympia Diner, Tina’s Parkway Diner, Uncle Ezra’s Hotdogs, the Red Coach Grill, and two Howard Johnsons, among many others.

Yet from its earliest days, this “oasis” has also seen more than its fair share of purely American drama.

On his way to rehearse his new play at the Parsons Theater in Hartford, the “Father of the American Musical Comedy,” George M. Cohan, collided his Packard with a garbage-hauling horse and wagon. The Packard and its passengers survived. The horse did not.

Its original gravel surface was replaced with pavement just in time for travelers making their way to the 1920 Yale-Harvard game in New Haven. It was also paved in time for illegal liquor shipments being made during Prohibition, since sticking to delivery schedules often meant life or death. “A large truck loaded with beer hidden in new sugar barrels was seized late last night by the state police on the Berlin Turnpike,” was typical of many stories reported at the time.

The “Open Road” was an entirely novel concept for law abiding citizens as well.



One of the few remaining eateries of the Berlin Turnpike's "Golden Age" of the 1950s and early 1960s, the Olympia Diner is an iconic Connecticut landmark.

Families started packing their new cars with large tents and leisurely driving to "tourist camps," which began springing up along the Berlin Turnpike and other roadways across the nation. The Hartford Kiwanis Club built one of the best tourist camps on the Pike in 1922, boasting restrooms, showers, electric lights, and a pavilion. It was an instant success and enterprising developers saw an opportunity. Soon, little camps of tiny white cabins began sprouting up along the length of the Turnpike. The cabins were a bargain for "auto tourists" who eagerly abandoned their tents in favor of the cozy structures, which usually resembled something from Hanzel and Gretel.

First known as "motor hotels," travelers soon referred to them simply as motels.

A quick glimpse of mostly forgotten events taking place along the Berlin Turnpike illustrates the fascinating evolution of American culture along its highways throughout the 20th century.

"Big Chief Frank" was elected King of the American Gypsies during a national convention filled with "ceremonies, bizarre and barbaric" along the Pike in 1922. Baseball legend Babe Ruth had car trouble while traveling north on the roadway in 1923. Late for a game in Boston, he left his car and wife behind in Berlin and hopped on a train.

Perhaps its proudest moment came on May 22, 1921 when Albert Einstein visited Hartford, "a motorcade of 500 automobiles from throughout Connecticut met at the Berlin Turnpike to escort them to Hartford, where 15,000 spectators lined the streets of the city to greet them."

Having displayed a scale-model of their "filling station of the future" at the Chicago World's Fair in 1935, the "Woolridge Brothers" built the enormous, "strictly modernistic" structure in Wethersfield. Along with sparkling gasoline pumps, the bold new business offered "two completely equipped service rooms for oiling and greasing cars, a large office, and display room for automobile accessories."

In 1942, with the home front effort to support soldiers fighting the battles of World War II at full throttle, the Berlin Turnpike was expanded dramatically "from its original width of 62 feet to approximately 200 feet, to accommodate a four-lane divided highway." The road became one of the most vitally important and well-traveled routes in the entire Northeast.

As the War drew to a close the Berlin Turnpike continued its evolution, becoming a central and common destination for families, travelers, drag racers, businessmen and shoppers. Along with drive-in theaters, nightclubs, ice cream shops, more motels – and dozens of gas stations – the Turnpike also saw 15 gambling arrests at a nightclub called Matarese Circle in March 1947, an ordinance banning youth from loitering wherever pinball machines were installed in 1948, and multiple "cow shootings" at remaining farms along the Pike in 1949.

In 1947, daily traffic along the Berlin Turnpike was 11,000 cars. By 1953 that number was more than 30,000. Developers couldn't build new motels fast enough. As one Connecticut writer observed at the time, "One needs only drive down the Berlin Turnpike, with its wide variety of splendid motels, to

realize the money that has been invested in this industry and the popular appeal of these accommodations."

By the mid '60s the Turnpike was home to thriving nightclubs, lounges and dance halls. It was the height of the "rat pack" era and the Berlin Turnpike was Connecticut's version of the Las Vegas Strip and in its prime.

Then on October 27, 1965 the cars went away. Not slowly, but all at once. The day after Interstate 91 opened, traffic on the Berlin Turnpike dropped by 75 percent. The once thriving strip, so filled with American promise and delight, began to die.

After five years no hint of James MacDonald's "thing of beauty, helpfulness and joy" remained. "By the late '70s, the virtually dormant Turnpike, once proudly known as 'the Gold Strip' and 'Gasoline Alley,' had earned nicknames like 'Death Valley' and 'Torch Alley,'" observed the New York Times. As it continued to decompose, many of its businesses, some there for decades, quietly slipped away. Many of the aging buildings were simply left to rot.

The pace at which the Berlin Turnpike came back to life was painfully slow. Throughout the '80s and '90s its decay began to reverse. While many of the old motels and businesses remained, new retailers and services arrived. People started coming back as the Pike shed the stigma left behind by years of stagnation and abandonment.

Now, many businesses along the Berlin Turnpike – large and small, old and new – are thriving. With more than 40,000 cars traveling sections of the route each day, "Big Box" retailers like Walmart, Toys "R" Us, Loews, Home Depot, Best Buy – along with Stew Leonard's famous grocery store – have found tremendous success as have restaurants like Bertucci's, Ruby Tuesdays, Ruth's Chris Steak House, Panera Bread, and the oldest surviving McDonald's in Connecticut, which first opened in 1959.

Once again proving that the Berlin Turnpike exemplifies American life and culture, the rejuvenation of the roadway illustrates the nation's promise and resilience. Its story is not at an end, but merely at one point on a long journey filled with memories of yesterday and those yet to be made. The joy it offers us lies not in reaching our destination, but in the adventure we find along the way. **H**

Hoffman Dealerships Bring Home Multiple Awards

All Automobile Dealerships Are Not Created Equal

BY ELLIS PARKER

When most people hear about the awards that a particular automobile dealership has won, they often assume that all dealerships receive these awards. Many suspect that these accolades are intended to make the dealership look good, raise the sales staff's esprit de corps, and help sell more cars. Most people believe that these awards don't really mean much.

So to set the skeptics straight, these awards are in fact coveted by automobile dealerships. The recognition motivates them tremendously and influences how they conduct every aspect of their business. However, all automobile dealerships do not receive these honors. These awards must be earned. All automobile dealerships are not created equal.

Toyota President's Award

Hoffman Toyota in West Simsbury has been basking in the pleasure of winning the prestigious Toyota President's Award for 2009 when the dealership was informed that it had won the 2010 award as well!

Photos by Ellis Parker



Each year, Toyota recognizes its top dealerships with this prestigious award. It's an honor accorded only to those that have demonstrated a commitment to maintaining the industry leader's high standards for customer satisfaction. Out of 1,221 dealerships nationwide, only 470 (just 38 percent) were winners.

Toyota explains that it emphasizes the entire ownership experience. "We want to help ensure that our customers are satisfied not only at the time of purchase but as long as they own their vehicles," the automaker says. "Dealerships which meet every requirement receive our beautiful President's Award—the Tiffany crystal trophy."

Audi Magna Award

The last couple of years were also award-winners for Hoffman Audi in East Hartford. Out of 270 Audi dealerships operating nationally, Hoffman Audi was one of just 58 dealerships (21 percent) that won 2009 Magna Society awards.

Audi explains, "Our Magna Program honors the very best Audi dealerships in America. To earn this prestigious award, Audi dealers must meet both business and customer service objectives. As well, "To qualify, dealerships can't simply meet or exceed sales targets. They must also maintain a solid financial foundation, earn high customer satisfaction scores, and show their facilities and staffs represent the progressive Audi culture. Thanks to dealerships like Hoffman Audi, the Audi brand is stronger than ever."

Porsche Premier Dealer Program

You'll find the same kind of excellence at Hoffman Porsche in East Hartford. Only here, the numbers tell an even more elitist tale. Out of approximately 200 American dealerships, the Porsche Premier Dealer Program singles

Photos by Joseph Rivera



out the top 30. That means only 15 percent of all American Porsche dealerships qualify.

What's more, Hoffman Porsche has received this illustrious honor for the last three years.

Porsche explains, "Our enthusiasts are driven, successful people who demand the very best. Owning a Porsche is a reflection of their

values. Driving a Porsche connects with the very essence of their psyche. This deep-rooted link between car and driver must also be forged between the company and the customer in order to create an ownership experience that is every bit as satisfying as the Porsche driving experience itself."

A Premier Dealer is a champion of the brand who "lives and breathes" Porsche. Premier Dealers set themselves apart by exhibiting an entrepreneurial spirit in their approach to customer service that epitomizes the independent mindset of Ferdinand Porsche himself. **H**



Weighing In on

Hoffman Auto's Weight Watchers Challenge winners talk about the big benefits of being the "biggest losers."

BY ANNE WITKAVITCH | PHOTOS BY JOSEPH RIVERA

"I feel great!" Those were the sentiments of Steve Shields and Caroline Brandoli when asked how it feels to be pounds lighter and leading healthier lifestyles after winning the Hoffman Auto Group's Weight Watchers Challenge. The two were the top winners, and each earned a \$2,000 cash prize.

"I have more energy to do things," Shields says, having lost an impressive 11 percent body fat off his 5'10" frame. "I used to struggle to get in and out of chairs. Getting off the couch was a real chore. This has made a big difference."

In fact, it was a conversation Shields, who is body shop manager in East Hartford, had with Sam Pines, Hoffman Auto Group's fixed operations director that sparked the idea for the "Biggest Loser" type of contest that combined a Weight Watchers program with a challenge from Hoffman Auto Group — lose the greatest percentage of body weight and win a cash award. In addition to the top prize, which

would go to one male and one female, the two second-place winners would take home \$1,000 apiece, and the third-place winners \$500.

"When people see me, they say, 'Wow, Steve, what's going on? You're losing weight.' I tell them I'm on Weight Watchers but then I also tell them about the company's contest and the \$10,000 my employer put up to award the winners. They are amazed that two fellows would care about their employees that much."

Brandoli, a warranty administrator, also notices she has more energy to do things but has a different motivation for losing the pounds. "I grew up in a household where everyone was losing or gaining weight," she says.



Participants in Hoffman's Weight Watchers Challenge wear big smiles after adopting healthier eating and lifestyle habits. Pictured left to right: Elliot Matos (3rd place men), Joshua Dworman, Alan Simon, Kathy Halpner, Lou Haddad, Robin Golightly, Frank Pietlock, Caroline Brandoli (1st place women), Jeanne Maloof, Craig Tracey, Lauren Deschaine (2nd place women), Pete Cistulli (2nd place men), Margaret Edes, Dawn Barden, Steve Shields (1st place men), Chrissy Pakutka

Healthier Living

She also has two sisters who have undergone gastric bypass surgery. "When my clothes started to get tight, I refused to buy bigger clothes. I knew where I wasn't going," Brandoli lost 42 pounds, or 23.3 percent body weight, hitting her goal. Since then she's down a total of 50 pounds from her highest weight or about 28 percent by her estimate.

Before the Weight Watchers Challenge, Brandoli had never dieted. "This was my first time," she says. Although her family was always trying to lose weight, gaining for her was not a concern until later in life. "I've learned that as you get older, you gain weight. No one notices because they're around you every day and you don't see it yourself. But even after I lost the

weight, friends look at photos and say, 'That wasn't you, that is not what you looked like.' I say, yes, it was!"

Both Shields and Brandoli feel they have not only lost weight, but have also adopted healthier habits. Eating right and regular exercise are at the root of their success.

"Up until the contest I wasn't exercising to any extent or with any regularity," says Shields. He purchased a treadmill and bicycle for his home and got guidance from the Weight Watchers instructors. They told him, "Exercising is one thing. Exercising and sweating is another thing."

Shields started out at a half mile and next day would try to beat the time. He built up to a

mile and continued from there. A combination of distance, endurance and speed were keys to his success.

Shields also changed his eating habits. "I wasn't big on junk food but I wasn't big on quality food either," he says. For example, he used to purchase a muffin off the coffee truck; now he eats carrots and apples. "Muffins aren't horrible," he says, "but carrots and apples are better."

Brandoli makes sure she eats from the basic food groups first. "I get in my veggies, fruits, dairy and two healthy oils. Then I ask myself, is it really worth it or not?" According to Brandoli, it's all about choices. Should she go for the cookie or the orange? For her, it's about

choosing the healthier path, which isn't as much fun, but better.

Brandoli also exercises more. She admits that she owned a walking tape "forever" and never got past one mile. Now she faithfully does three to four miles a night, or walks about 20 miles per week. It may take her 15 minutes or an hour, but she gets in a total upper and lower body workout.

Another benefit has been the positive effect on her anxiety levels. "I used to have anxiety attacks but have hardly had any since I started the program; it helps me to refocus," she says. Every night when Brandoli gets home, she exercises and takes time for herself. "There's no chance to let worries build up before I go to sleep," she says. "I'm focusing on a different path."

Both Shields and Brandoli credit the support of others in helping them achieve their success. "Every Monday when I came back from my Weight Watchers weigh-in, my co-workers would ask how I'm doing and cheer me on," says Shields. "There was a lot of laughter, no

doubt about that. Families joined in, people shared recipes."

Brandoli also felt support from her family, particularly her children. In fact, Brandoli achieved another goal since the contest – running with her 15-year-old son, something she has always wanted to do. She's also turned into a cheerleader for her sisters who call on Brandoli when they are at a standstill. Each of them has lost more than 100 pounds.

Shields also achieved other on-the-job benefits. For one, he's more agreeable to walking between the four Hoffman buildings instead of sending someone else to take care of things. He's also made more friends among his co-workers, which has made working together more enjoyable. On a personal level he can now bend over to tie his shoes.

"I was totally surprised by the contest and the effect it would have on my life," Shields says. "The Hoffman's have big hearts and take care of their people. They're all about helping the community and helping their own."

Brandoli didn't expect a Weight Watchers

Challenge. "Usually contests at work are tied to sales, not to a personal achievement. But being healthier helps you in the workplace," she says. "It was fantastic that it took place here and that meetings were held at lunch time. It made it easier."

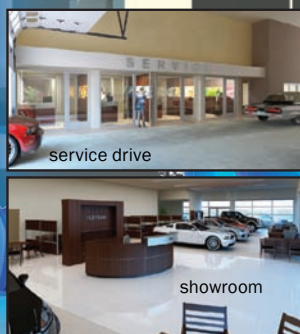
The contest is not over yet. Because the Weight Watchers Challenge is not only about taking off weight, but keeping it off – and making lasting lifestyle changes – the winners were awarded just half of the money. They must maintain their weight loss, or continue to lose weight, for another 17 weeks. If they do so, they receive the remainder of their cash award on May 31st.

Shields achieved great results and plans to continue. "I changed clothing sizes three times during the contest," he says. "I was on my third size within 20 weeks." He is taking advantage of employee coupons to join the JCC and looks forward to doing more cycling outside this summer.

Brandoli feels maintaining the weight will be no problem. "I choose in advance how I'm

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going to eat," she says. "I eat what I want but make healthier choices."

What would Hoffman's two "biggest losers" tell others in need of inspiration to lose weight and live healthier?

"Buddy up with somebody rather than doing it yourself, even if the person doesn't need to lose the same scale of weight," says Shields. "You provide each other with consistent inspiration."

"Stop the excuses," says Brandoli. "Set a goal and do it. Don't worry about a time limit and don't get discouraged if it takes longer. If you have to walk away and start again, that's OK. As long as you're moving in the right direction, the end result will be sweet. Don't let a bad week or two bother you."

Though sharing the crown of the "biggest losers," both Hoffman employees agree that everyone has made big gains with the Weight Watchers Challenge. "When you lose weight you affect your own life," says Brandoli. "At some point it comes together. Don't give up." **H**



Pictured: Theresa Dragon, Diana Fuller, Jill Corey, Colleen Dickey, Linda Cooper and Brenda Scully (3rd place winner for the women)

The all new 2011 Nissan Quest.

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Life in the Fast Lane

Connecticut's Katie Stevens is anything but "idol" as she pursues her dream.

BY ANNE WITKAVITCH | PHOTOS BY CATHERINE FIEHN

Katie Stevens is on her way to the airport, heading back to Los Angeles after a visit home. With her are her mom, Clara, and two friends who are joining Katie on the west coast during their spring break from college. For Katie, it was good to be home in Connecticut, but it's even more exciting to be bringing her friends back to L.A. with her. She can't wait to show them around the city.

Life is in full gear for Katie since she advanced into the Top 8 during American Idol's ninth season on television. After being voted off, she made a number of appearances and toured with the show. She then decided to move to L.A. where she is working hard to build on

she's now waiting for the ultimate reward — a record deal. It's a full life.

"Things are going well," she says. "I'm working hard."

Though she misses Connecticut, Katie recognizes that a move to L.A. was important

While she waits to sign with a label, Katie continues to work hard, recording music, learning to dance and act, and making new friends. She stays busy on Twitter and Facebook, which she finds is the best way to stay in touch with her rapidly growing fan base.

the success of her Idol experience and pursue her music dreams. Her life today consists of writing and recording her music, working with different songwriters and producers, taking both dancing and acting lessons to round out her skills, and — at least for a week — showing her friends firsthand what it's like to live in L.A. Already signed with an agency to represent her,

for networking and to advance her career. "You find people in the industry," she says. "You meet people, and you can pick their brains." Katie admits when she first arrived, she had no idea about the business and what it entailed. But immersing herself in the industry and the culture has helped her learn quickly and adapt. "Being in a major city like L.A. has been a


bit of a culture shock," says Katie, who grew up in quiet Middlebury, Conn. "What I miss most about Connecticut is seeing my family and friends every day. But I'm living my dream. I wouldn't give up any of it for the world."

That dream took off when Katie auditioned for the popular Fox television show where singers compete for a chance to become solo recording artists. A panel of judges critiques the performances but viewers vote for their favorite "Idol." For Katie, an aspiring singer since the age of eight, there was no question that when the time was right, auditioning for the show would be the right move. So when she turned 16, she and her mother headed to Boston where she auditioned in front of the judges.

"I always hope for the best but prepare for the worse," says Katie. "Music has always been my dream so I took a leap of faith and just went there to try. I never expected to move forward or go as far as I did."

Looking back, Katie still can't believe it happened.

"Each step of the way my mom and I had a philosophy — take it one ticket at a time," she says. "Every week that I got through to the next level was a blessing."



Middlebury's Katie Stevens
pursues her music dreams in
L.A. but still loves coming
home to Connecticut.

Photo by Catherine Fiehn

American Idol wasn't Katie's first experience facing the competition. During her high school years she was named 2009 Westbury Outstanding Teen and went on to place first runner up in the Miss Connecticut's Outstanding Teen pageant, another accomplishment Katie did not expect.

"I never even planned to compete in the local pageant," she says. "My mom came home and told me she had signed me up for Miss Westbury. I thought, Oh my gosh, a beauty pageant? Mom, what are you getting me into?"

Katie realized, however, that the pageant was more than a competition based on looks; it was a way to learn how to be poised and well-spoken, skills she thought would be put to good use when she began going on college interviews. Instead, they helped her convey confidence when interacting with the American Idol judges and during the many interviews and public appearances that have followed. She also realized that the experience was about empowering women to believe in themselves and do their best. "I was honored just to be considered among all these girls who were so smart and beautiful," she says.

Katie's favorite moment, however, was when she was named Miss Congeniality. That honor meant more to her than anything else. She also recognizes that had she won the statewide competition, American Idol would not have happened. Life as she knows it today may have still been a dream. "Everything happens for a reason," she says.

While she waits to sign with a label, Katie continues to work hard, recording music, learning to dance and act, and making new friends. She stays busy on Twitter and Facebook, which she finds is the best way to stay in touch with her rapidly growing fan base.

"I try to tweet at least once a day," she says, "and I post to my Facebook page whenever possible. I want to keep everyone up to date about everything that's going on. It's important



Katie Stevens was first runner up in the Miss Connecticut's Outstanding Teen Pageant.
Photo by Catherine Fiehn

“Being in a major city like L.A. has been a bit of a culture shock,” says Katie, who grew up in quiet Middlebury, CT. “What I miss most about Connecticut is seeing my family and friends every day.”

to let the fans know what’s happening. They’ve been so incredibly supportive.”

She also keeps up to date with some of her fellow American Idol competitors, particularly those in L.A. “We’re all incredibly busy but try to text each other now and then.”

For those thinking of following in her footsteps and auditioning for American Idol, Katie has this advice:

“If it’s what you want to do, go with it. Practice hard and show your passion.” Katie is quick to mention that it’s not only about advancing and making it through the voting; it’s about taking that leap of faith and that first step by going to audition. Trying your best is all you can do. “Do it just for the experience of it. If I hadn’t made it, I still would have never regretted the experience.”

Whatever your passion or goal in life, Katie’s advice is to do it with confidence. “Believe in who you are,” she says, “Go for it.”

One thing is for sure; Katie’s future includes many trips back home. For her, it’s a chance to relax and stay connected to a life that is so important to her.

“I love coming home to Connecticut,” she says. “I grew up here. It’s where my family and friends are. It’s my comfort zone.” **H**

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Mayor Pedro Segarra participates in a ribbon cutting ceremony at the St. Joseph School of Pharmacy in downtown Hartford.

With the People, For the People

Hartford's Mayor Pedro Segarra believes a better future is rooted in community and commitment.

BY ANNE WITKAVITCH

Prior to taking the oath of office, Pedro Segarra had to confront reality. "You're going to be mayor of Hartford," he thought. Having always had high expectations and strict standards, he recalls that "the office of mayor made me incredibly nervous." To get focused, he did the only thing he could think of – he locked himself in the bathroom for 10 minutes and said an intensive prayer. A man of deep faith, he knew that when the time came to step on the podium "God would see me through."

Mayor Pedro Segarra knows how important it is to have faith, especially during tough times. Growing up in poverty and having once been homeless, the attorney and former city councilman, who spent 37 years as part of the Hartford community, stepped into the role of mayor when his predecessor, Eddie Perez, resigned after being convicted on corruption charges. Segarra, who was city council president at the time, knew it took a strong belief in one's abilities as well as hard work

to survive life's challenges. Now he would have the chance to put that wisdom to work again, only this time to benefit his beloved city.

Segarra recalls standing at the podium with two things on his mind. First, would the people come together in the interest of the city? Gaining their support was essential to help Hartford get through these difficult times. Second, how significantly would his own life change? The job of mayor, particularly at this time, required a person who would be devoted, dedicated and willing to give up everything to do the best job possible. Segarra knew the sacrifices. He was ready.

During his first days in office, the Mayor had a plethora of items demanding his attention, including a deficit to resolve, a line of people anxious to talk with him, and the usual duties involved with leading a city – budgeting, managing, lobbying

and developing a future vision. He knew that some changes would take a matter of

months but social change would take much longer.



Mayor Segarra leads his City Hall dragon boat race team to victory and a medal.

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Mayor Segarra welcomes the Visa Gymnastics Championships to Hartford.

The Mayor had three initial priorities. The first was to reassure the community. The city was in crisis and his predecessor's conviction had brought morale down even further. The second was to figure out how to manage under such difficult circumstances. He had to build bridges and convey optimism, but at the same time recognize the challenges and be honest with his constituents. Transparency would be extremely important. "You can't 'sugar coat' the situation," he says. "You need to be responsible and let the people know where things are at." Third, he had to deal with the fiscal situation but still leave room for creativity and growth – keys to Hartford's future.

"The overwhelming majority of people want to make things better," he says. "What gets in the way are poverty and desperation, the lack of opportunity and jobs, and leaders who want to change things but fall prey to old habits." He notes that some problems took so long to develop, they can't be resolved overnight. "But we must have the passion to get things done," he adds, "and to bring the people together."

Segarra recognizes how critical the support of corporate and social institutions is for an active and dynamic city. "Our people work, live and play here. There

needs to be a more efficient transportation system. There needs to be a more efficient government that's not there to protect its own interests but those of the people it's responsible for. We need people who value education, not for economic advantages but to make us a better community. We must recognize its inherent value above the economy."

Despite the challenges, there have been plenty of good things to keep Mayor Segarra optimistic. For example, his idea for an ice rink in Bushnell Park was a big hit. "To see kids from the inner city skating with kids from outside the city was inspiring," he says. "There was no fighting, no issues. Everyone skated together, and had a good time."

The Mayor also sees the vibrancy of the arts coming alive in Hartford, unleashing talent and inspiration. He proudly notes that two current Broadway productions had their start in the city. He talks about ArtSpace, which offers affordable living and studio space to artists, as well as gallery space for displaying their works.

When it comes to a brighter future, Mayor Segarra is quick to note it will take a collaborative community effort and a combination of things to make it happen. There needs to be various sources of energy people can look for and tap into to get the

city to a better place. "Government can't do it alone," he says. "The Mayor cannot do it alone. I need the help and support of the people."

While Hartford continues to face serious challenges and tough financial times, Mayor Segarra remains positive. When reflecting upon the city's future, his eyes widen. "There's all this energy and opportunity," he says. "It's all about getting people to work together, harnessing and supporting the talent that lives here."

Although he originally intended only to finish the term he took over for Perez, Mayor Segarra has announced he will run in the next election. "I stepped in to bring back a sense of looking forward for the people," he says. "But when no one stepped forward with the skills and experience to continue the job, I realized I could be that person." He's received a lot of encouragement – people are continuously telling him "you should really run." Because of the enthusiastic response, he has decided to continue to be a champion for the city if the people choose to elect him to another term. "A lot of suggestions are taking root and working," he says. "But ultimately it's up to the people."

He believes leadership is important. "Leaders have to be committed and show their commitment through actions and words. But they also need to listen and then listen again. Leaders must also be educators," he says. "If there is a problem, they must come up with a solution and show how to make it work, how to get it done."

The key to Hartford's future is a combination of things, but Mayor Segarra strongly believes community is at its core. "Hartford's gift is 375 years of incredible people – past, present and into the future. There is tremendous talent here now to be harnessed and supported."

"These are incredibly challenging times," he continues. "It is our sticking together that will get us through. That's what community is all about. Things will get better."

Mayor Segarra is recognized as being a non-traditional politician, a leader who brings a unique, rare and unconventional approach to his role. "I've had to make a lot of changes in my personal life in order to be Mayor," he says. "But what I will not change are my principles and values."

Another thing that he will not change is his reliance on his faith in his abilities, in God, and in the people of Hartford. After all, he refers back to the words of Hartford's motto to reflect his vision for the future: "Post Nubila Phoebas."

"After the clouds, the sun."



Mayor Segarra supports the "Shop Hartford" campaign that promotes jobs and sustaining the local economy.

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Events Calendar

Greater Hartford hosts a variety of special events throughout the year — from street festivals and art shows to major concerts and sporting events. Here is a sample of events that may be of interest to you.

May 12-June 5. "The 39 Steps." Mix a Hitchcock masterpiece with a juicy spy novel, add a dash of Monty Python and you have this hilarious Tony Award-winning hit! A beautiful spy leaks a deadly secret to a man she's just met. With that, our hero suddenly finds himself embroiled in a high-speed chase across England and Scotland, dodging police, charming ladies, and uncovering clues at every turn. The mind-blowing cast of four plays over 150 characters. Tickets \$10-\$65. *Hartford State/Main Stage, 50 Church St., Hartford; 860-527-5151; www.hartfordstage.org.*

May 14. "Easter Seals 9th Annual Walk With Me." This fundraising event is about putting hope within reach for people with disabilities. Participants are partnered with an Easter Seals Honorary Ambassador, a child or adult with a disability who has benefited from the organization's services and sent photos and personal stories, then meet on the day of the walk. Pre-event festivities include a light breakfast; after the walk there will be music, food and fun activities for the whole family. Parking is free and plentiful. Registration fee \$25. Event takes place at the *Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration, 55 Coogan Blvd., Mystic; 860-552-2002 x152; www.hartford.easterseals.com.*

May 13-June 18. "Last of the Red Hot Lovers." A comedy by Neil Simon. Middle-aged and married, overworked and overweight, Barney Cashman wants to join the sexual revolution before it's too late and arranges three seductions: the first, Elaine Navazio, proves to be a foul-mouthed bundle of neuroses; Bobbi Michele is next, a 20-ish actress who is too kooky by half; finally comes September and Jeanette Fisher, a gloomy, depressed housewife who happens to be married to Barney's best friend. *Connecticut Cabaret Theatre, 31 Webster Square Rd. #33, Berlin; 860-829-1248; www.ctcabaret.com.*

May 15. "Puccini's Tosca." In Puccini's aching tragedy, Floria Tosca, the beautiful opera singer, finds herself torn between the painter she loves and the loathsome chief of police who holds her lover's fate in his hands. A classic tale of lust, torture and vengeance set in the tempestuous political environment of 19th-century Rome. Presented with live orchestra, in Italian with English supertitles by Connecticut Lyric Opera. Orchestra \$52, Loge \$60, Front Balcony \$40, Rear Balcony \$32 (please note: event price subject to \$4 Internet convenience fee.) *Garde Arts Center, 325 State St., New London; 860-444-7373 ext. 1; www.gardearts.org.*

June 2. "My One and Only." Enjoy springtime on the Connecticut River with the Goodspeed Dining Cruise and Theatre Package! Includes a leisurely cruise and sumptuous buffet aboard the Lady Katharine and a ticket to the 2pm performance of "My One and Only," a zany 1920s tap dance spectacular about a flying ace romancing a bathing beauty. The Gershwin score is filled with hits like "S Wonderful" and "Funny Face." Tickets \$82. *Goodspeed Opera House, 6 Main St., East Haddam; 860-873-8668; www.goodspeed.org/tickets.*

June 11-12. "Celebrate! West Hartford." This two-day, family-oriented event features top notch entertainment, a fabulous food court, an amusement park, a 5K road race and a juried arts and crafts show. It's also a showcase for West Hartford's civic, school and service organizations. *Town Hall Common, 50 South Main St., West Hartford; 860-561-7512.*

June 3-July 10. "This." Jane's dating life's a shambles and her friends are only making it worse. Jane is not certain she is OK with "this." This bright comedy captures the uncertain steps of a circle of friends backing their way into middle age. Written by Melissa Jane Gibson. *TheaterWorks, 233 Pearl St., Hartford; 860-527-7838; www.theaterworkshartford.org.*

June 20-26. "Travelers Championship." A ticket to the 2011 Travelers Championship is your opportunity to experience a world-class PGA Tour tournament. Tickets may be purchased online. *TPC at River Highlands, 1 Golf Club Rd., Cromwell; 866-840-8821; www.travelerschampionship.com.*

June 24. "John Edward-Psychic Medium." A "group" reading event. Ticket information online. *Connecticut Convention Center, 100 Columbus Blvd., Hartford; 860-249-6000; www.jobnedward.net.*

June 10-11. "Beauty & the Beast." The Garde Broadway Series. The Broadway smash hit musical love story comes to New London for the first time! Disney's Beauty and the Beast features the animated film's Academy Award®-winning score with music by Alan Menken and lyrics by the late Howard Ashman, with additional songs by Alan Menken and lyrics by Tim Rice. Tickets Orchestra \$64, Loge \$71, Front Balcony \$52, Rear Balcony \$44. *Garde Arts Center, 325 State St., New London; 860-444-7373 ext. 1; www.gardearts.org.*

July 9. "Independence Day at the 31st Annual Riverfest." Part of Riverfront Recapture's 30th Anniversary Season! Entertainment and activity for all ages, food and other vendors. Fireworks will be shot from THREE barges on the Connecticut River at 9 p.m. Rain date for fireworks only is Sunday, July 10. *Mortensen Riverfront Plaza, 300 Columbus Blvd., Hartford and Great River Park, 301 East River Dr., East Hartford; 860-713-3131; www.riverfront.org/events/festivals.*

July 2. "A Prairie Home Companion at Tanglewood with Garrison Keillor." Ticket range \$21-\$71. *Tanglewood Music Center, 297 West St., Lenox, MA; 617-266-1200; www.bso.org.*

July 6-31. "The Producers." The story concerns two theatrical producers who scheme to get rich by overselling interests in a Broadway flop. Complications arise when the show unexpectedly turns out to be successful. Adapted by Mel Brooks and Thomas Meehan from Brooks' 1968 movie of the same name; lyrics by Brooks and Glen Kelly. *Ivoryton Playhouse, 103 Main St., Ivoryton; 860-767-7318; www.ivorytonplayhouse.org.*

July 13-24. "Chicago." A universal tale of fame, fortune and all that jazz with show-stopping songs and astonishing dancing. The late Bob Fosse's staging marked this sharp-edged satire with a dazzling score. Music by John Kander. Lyrics by Fred Ebb. Tickets \$15-\$32.50. *Playhouse on the Park, 244 Park Rd., West Hartford; 860-523-5900; www.playhouseonpark.org.*

July 24. "Rockstar Energy Mayhem Festival." The touring metal festival comes to Connecticut. Tickets range \$42-\$353. *Comcast Theatre, 61 Savitt Way, Hartford; 860-548-7370; www.livenation.com.*

August 13. "13th Annual Hartford Area Chamber Hot Air Balloon Rally." Mark your calendar for this great family event! *Hartford Municipal Airport, Hartford; 262-673-7002; www.hartfordchamber.org.*

August 5-September 18. "The Understudy." A hilarious exploration of the existential vagaries of show business and life... a dazzling and humanistic look at people trying to do what they love in the face of overwhelming obstacles, including a stoned lightboard operator, an omnipresent intercom system, producers threatening to shutter the production, and the ever present question: will the show go on? Ticket prices vary by performance; ages 16-17 free thanks to the Lincoln Financial Foundation. *TheaterWorks, 233 Pearl St., Hartford; 860-527-7838; www.theaterworkshartford.org.*

August 13. "30th Anniversary Dance Caravan." Presented by Connecticut Ballet and hosted by Riverfront Recapture. Connecticut Ballet returns to the Riverfront for its fourth annual appearance. The event is a mixed program of greatest hits from the company's repertoire. Connecticut Ballet was voted Best of Connecticut Ballet by Connecticut Magazine in September 2010. Food and beverages, including beer and wine, will be available for purchase. Rain date August 14, 2011. *Mortensen Riverfront Plaza, 300 Columbus Blvd., Hartford; 860-293-1039; www.connecticutballet.com.*

August 19-21. "Newport Winefest." The largest outdoor wine and food festival in New England. This one-of-a-kind event will offer an ultimate wine and food experience with tastings from hundreds of world-class wines, specialty beers and gourmet dishes prepared by celebrity chefs and the finest regional chefs. Produced by 360 Marketing & Events. For tickets call 888-481-8555. *Newport Yachting Center, Newport, RI.*

August 30. "Kenny Loggins and The Boston Pops." Celebrate baseball, movies and rock 'n roll with the "Hollywood Hits Tour," an outdoor concert that is traveling to 10 minor league ballparks from Birmingham to Buffalo. Tickets range from \$41.50 general admission to \$81.50 VIP field level seating. *New Britain Rock Cats Stadium, 230 John Karbonic Way, New Britain; 860-224-8383; www.rockcats.com.*

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