

Hoffman DECADES

Autumn 2010



BIG DREAMS

Local celebrities let us in on a secret – what's on their "bucket list."



INSIDE

Wondering about the top 2011 cars on display at Hoffman Auto Group dealerships this fall? We take you on a tour of the best. *Page 28*

Nothing like your neighbor's crossover. Introducing the new Audi Q5 2.0T

Distinctively different in its appearance and performance, this crossover is taking on an entire category. With features like the exclusive Audi drive select, you can customize your driving experience by instantly adapting the way the vehicle handles and responds to the road. Add this to its striking, stylized appearance, LED lights and the power of quattro®, and you'll realize the Audi Q5 is anything but your typical crossover. A test-drive awaits you at an Audi dealer today. audiusa.com/Q5



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BEST OF
Hartford
MAGAZINE
2010



Hoffman DECADES

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Events throughout Hartford County.

On the cover: ESPN anchor Hannah Storm has several fascinating items on her bucket list, but none dearer to her heart than establishing a wing at a children's hospital dedicated to helping kids born with birthmarks and other vascular anomalies. *Photo by Brian Ambrose.*

WELCOME TO OUR autumn edition of *Decades!*

Have you ever given thought to the things you'd like to accomplish in your life? Not necessarily your next big work project, but the things that light you up, the things you dream about, the things that make you say to yourself, "Someday..."

This issue, we bring you a story featuring the dreams and desires of seven local "celebrities" – people who, while they may not necessarily be famous, are prominent in their fields. From landing a role on a soap opera to traveling on the Orient Express, they shared their secret and not-so-secret "bucket list" items.

We also introduce you to a young female basketball player who harbored big dreams for her athletic career throughout her school years – and whose dreams came true when she found herself, as a freshman at Villanova, playing in the Big East tournament. That ambition was realized with the help of a very special coach, whose own basketball career was cut short by a tragic accident. It's an inspiring story of triumph over adversity that we hope you enjoy.

And we tell you about a company that is turning an ambitious dream for South Windsor into reality. California-based Pacifica Ventures is proceeding with the construction of a \$65 million high-tech movie studio and production facility studio expected to create not only movies, but thousands of jobs. Groundbreaking is anticipated this fall, and if all goes well, movies may be in production there by the middle of next year.

We also take you on a European restaurant road trip, by introducing you to seven Connecticut restaurants that make you feel as if you've been transported to continental Europe, without ever leaving the state. Don't have the budget to indulge in a whirlwind trip to Spain, Portugal, Italy, Austria, Germany, Poland and Greece? No worries. Just follow our roadmap for a taste of each one.

And speaking of eating, we'll tell you about an innovative program, just launched at Hoffman Auto, that is offering employees some enticing incentives for eating more healthfully and losing extra pounds.

Is a new car on your bucket list for 2011? Come along for the ride as we unveil some of the best new cars of the coming model year. There are plenty of great options sure to rev your engine.

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



PHOTO BY LANNY NAGLER

Jeffrey S. Hoffman
Co-Chairman

I. Bradley Hoffman
Co-Chairman

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COMPLIMENTARY HOLIDAY SHUTTLE SERVICE BEGINS NOV. 15th to and from the Avon Auto Park (Honda - Toyota - Nissan) to the Shoppes at Farmington Valley 3 times daily: 10, 12 and 2pm!

NEW! SCHEDULE APPOINTMENTS ON LINE. Schedule your next service appointment with the ease of our 24/7 appointment scheduler. View your service history, and reserve a loaner car. Try it today at **hoffmanservice.com!**



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This space-saving charger fits into your cupholder, plugs into your vehicle's cigarette lighter and powers both 12v and USB devices. Use the two 12v outlets and two USB outlets to charge phones, PDAs, MP3 players, radar detectors and more. With a handy LED battery indicator light. \$19.95, www.autosportcatalog.com.



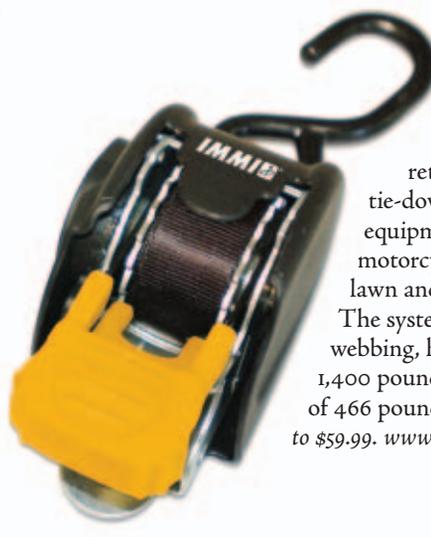
Canine Cover Door Shield

Provide your pup with fresh air while protecting your door panels with durable coated polyester fabric. Canine Covers prevent pet hair, claw marks and stains from ruining your interior. The machine washable shields easily attach with tabs that slide between the window glass and door panel. 2 sizes, 22-inch or 26-inch width, in four colors. \$32.95, www.caninecovers.com.



Bluetooth Hands Free

Jensen is taking Bluetooth wireless technology right to the dashboard, making cell phone communication safe and seamless. The BT380's 2.6-inch x 7-inch LCD display shows caller information and phone information. It includes a phone book and offers a selectable backlit display. \$94.99, www.audiovox.com.



The Cargo Buckle

The CargoBuckle 1-inch retractable, ratcheting tie-down is ideal for securing equipment to trailers, including motorcycles, ATVs, UTVs, and lawn and garden equipment. The system comes with 6 feet of webbing, has a breaking strength of 1,400 pounds and has a working load of 466 pounds. Prices range from \$11.99 to \$59.99. www.cargobuckle.com.

Gorillatorch

This 65-lumen LED flashlight comes with flexible leg joints and rubberized grips for maximum flexibility when changing flat tires, or any project where you need a hands-free light. It weighs less than 9 ounces and is 8 inches tall. \$29.95. Available at *L.L.Bean*, *Target*, *Best Buy* or www.joby.com.



Hoffman is not simply an automobile company.

For us, it's about our extended family -

our customers, our friends, exceeding all their expectations,

protecting their investment and ensuring that their experience is unique.

Driven by trust is not simply our slogan -

it's our way of life.

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



Hoffman Driven by trust. SM



HOFFMAN AUDI OF EAST HARTFORD VOLUNTEERS AT HOLE IN THE WALL GANG CAMP CHALLENGE RIDE

Five Hoffman Auto Group employees and three Audi Q7s did their part to help raise more than \$200,000 during the second annual Team Hole in the Wall Gang Challenge Ride in Ashford.

With over 250 cyclists riding to benefit the Paul Newman Hole in the Wall Gang kids' camp, SAG vehicles and volunteers were in high demand. Hoffman Audi was the first Audi dealership in the state to step forward and donate not only horsepower, but manpower as well.

Volunteering with **Elliot Matos**, service manager for Hoffman Audi, were service technician **Brian LeDoux** and Audi E.H. Shop Foreman **Joel Kowaleski**; **Marlene Zychowski**, director of marketing for Hoffman Auto Group; and **Katie Bushey**, director of public relations for the company. All five spent Saturday night at the camp, taking tours and learning about the wonderful opportunity the camp provides to children who may be ill with anything from cancer to blood diseases to immunodeficiencies. All five employees volunteered for the 62-mile route, helping in positions such as lead vehicle and sweep vehicle.

Shown, from left, are: **Pete Matos**, LeDoux, Bushey, Zychowski, Elliot Matos, and Kowaleski.



HOFFMAN PORSCHE PARTS AND SERVICE RECOGNIZED FOR BUSINESS PRACTICES

Steve Gough, Porsche parts manager, left, and **Elliot Matos**, Porsche service manager, have won a three-night stay in Sonoma, CA as part of the Porsche AfterSales Spring Challenge 2010. The program recognizes dealerships that exemplify outstanding parts and labor sales on a national level.

The two managers, as well as their spouses, will spend four days in November at The Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn & Spa in California.

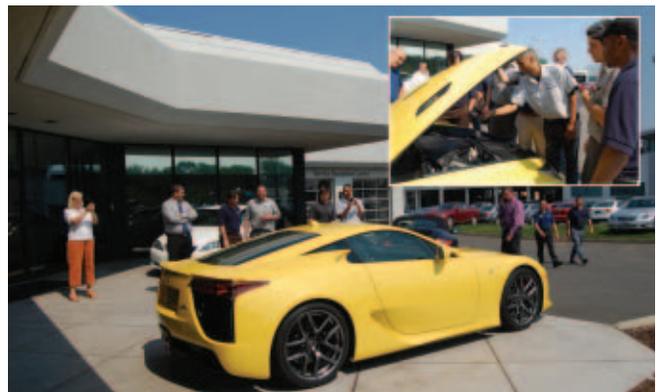


HOFFMAN FORD RECOGNIZES FIVE SENIOR-LEVEL MASTER TECHNICIANS

Hoffman Auto Group would like to recognize the outstanding achievements of **Tim Crowe**, **Bobby Wilcox**, **Kevin King**, **Keith Owen** and **Bruce Moore**. All five are Ford Certified Senior-Level Master Technicians. Among them, they represent more than 50 years of experience and, combined, have more than 20 years at Hoffman Ford. With the exception of King, all are natives of Connecticut and cultivated their careers throughout the state.

Master Level Technicians are certified in three areas: power train, electronics and drive train. To maintain this certification, each must complete a required number of online programs per month. Despite their high level of expertise, they must constantly adjust their training in order to keep up with the ever-changing technology in today's vehicles. Hoffman Ford is the only dealership in Connecticut to employee five Senior-Level Master Technicians.

Shown, from left, are: Moore, Crowe, Owen, King, and Wilcox.



LEXUS LFA, ONE OF ONLY TWO PROTOTYPES IN THE USA, ROARS INTO HOFFMAN LEXUS

On September 1, 2010, Hoffman Lexus hosted the new Lexus super car prototype – the Lexus LFA. The concept car has been in the works, so to speak, since 2000. With a top speed of 203 mph, the vehicle boasts a 4.8 liter, V-10 engine; it does zero to 60 in 3.6 seconds.

Scott Biggers, the Lexus representative who drove the vehicle, said his favorite aspect of driving the \$2 million prototype was "not crashing."

Only 500 of the vehicles will be made worldwide, and pricing will start at a cool \$375,000. The LFA attracted media attention as well; WFSB Channel 3 included it in that night's news broadcast, and Jim Macpherson, of the *Hartford Courant*, featured the car – and Hoffman Lexus – in his weekly column, "Wednesday Wheels."



RENOVATION OF FORD/SAAB, PORSCHE BUILDINGS TO BE COMPLETED BY SPRING OF 2011

Project HX, the \$32 million Hoffman Auto Group renovation project, began in 2007 with the renovation of Audi of East Hartford. Now, more than three years later, the end of the project is finally in sight.

Porsche and Ford/Saab are the only two dealerships that have yet to be renovated. Construction on the buildings, beginning with the Ford/Saab showroom, is expected to be finished by the spring of 2011. Ford/Saab will receive a complete renovation of the interior and exterior of the showroom, as well as the customer lounge. The Ford/Saab service bays will also be redesigned to accommodate a drive-through service bay. The Porsche show room will be completely renovated as well.

Ford/Saab amenities will include flat screen televisions and Wi-Fi in the customer lounge, as well as a children's play area. The service bays will be climate controlled, and will allow for quick and easy drop-off and pick-up for service customers. This is the first time that the Ford/Saab building will receive exterior renovations since it was built in 1968.



HOFFMAN AUTO GROUP SPONSORS CONNECTICUT ARTHRITIS FOUNDATION'S HAT TRICK REUNION DINNER WITH FORMER HARTFORD WHALERS

On August 13, 2010, Hoffman Lexus sponsored the Arthritis Foundation's Hartford Whaler Hat Trick Dinner.

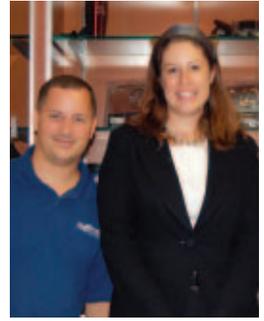
The Arthritis Foundation works to raise awareness of the disease, offer support to those afflicted, and fund research. In Connecticut alone, 700,000 residents suffer from arthritis symptoms; 3,400 of those are children.

Held at the Marriott Hartford Downtown, the VIP cocktail reception was a veritable who's who of former Hartford Whalers. In attendance were Ron Francis, Kevin Dineen and Mike Rogers, among others. Howard Baldwin, the founder of the WHA's New England Whalers – precursor to the Hartford Whalers – announced that his firm was taking over business operations of the Wolf Pack and renaming the team the Connecticut Whale.

I. Bradley Hoffman, a long-time supporter of the Arthritis Foundation, a die-hard Whalers fan, and co-chairman of Hoffman Auto Group, initiated the idea for the Whalers-themed event. Shown, from left are: **I. Bradley Hoffman**; **Howard Baldwin**, CEO Baldwin Entertainment; and **Michael Guinan**.

HOFFMAN LEXUS PARTS AND SERVICE REWARDED FOR COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

As part of Lexus' Best of the East incentive program, Mike Harris, parts manager, won a weekend trip to Dove Mountain, in Tucson, AZ. Hoffman Lexus' dedication to customer satisfaction and the continued growth of the parts and service departments contributed to the winning of the prize. Harris, along with his spouse, will stay the Ritz-Carlton from October 21 to 24. Shown, from left, are: Harris and Andrea Kennedy, district Service and Parts manager for Lexus.



HOFFMAN AUTO GROUP RECOGNIZES EMPLOYEE DEDICATION AT ANNUAL LUNCHEONS

Once a year, Hoffman Auto Group hosts employee awards luncheons in each dealership. The luncheons celebrate employee longevity, in five-year increments. Each employee is given a list of gifts to choose from, based upon his or her length of service at the company.

This year, Hoffman Auto honored 38 employees who had served with the company for periods ranging from 5 to 30 years. More than 25 percent of employees have been with Hoffman for more than five years, and the company has honored three employees who have more than 40 years with the company.



BURTON C. HOFFMAN GOLF CLASSIC CONTINUES TO SUPPORT CONNECTICUT CHILDREN'S

On Monday, June 7, Hoffman Auto Group hosted the 12th annual Burton C. Hoffman Golf Classic at Tumblebrook Country Club in Bloomfield to benefit Connecticut Children's Medical Center. "It is because of the generosity of the Hoffman family and everyone who supports the Burton C. Hoffman Golf Classic, that we have been able to build the Hoffman Day Surgery Center," said hospital president and CEO Martin J. Gavin. "The center has allowed us to transform our registration area, family lounge and pre- and post-operative areas into a physical space that creates a more inviting and comfortable environment for our families during their stay at the medical center."



PHOTO BY KIM WILLIAMS

Continental Flavors

Embark on a European restaurant tour – close to home.

BY SPENCER CALDWELL

The phrase “staycation” recently entered the popular lexicon, describing the phenomenon of people who may not have the budget to travel but are looking for ways to feel as if they had enjoyed a vacation trip while staying close to home.

This trend, of course, has led to individuals reacquainting themselves with the resources in their own region. For those who enjoy great food, there’s some equally great news. Within easy reach, there are seven Connecticut eateries so evocative that they may “transport” their patrons to continental Europe. Fasten your seatbelts as we embark on a European road trip – staying in Connecticut as we visit Spain, Portugal, Italy, Austria, Germany, Poland and Greece.

Ibiza Tapas & Wine Bar

In the eyes of many experts, Spanish food has eclipsed French in recent years. The Spanish draw from a tremendous culinary tradition, with regional diversity astonishing for a country just 25 percent larger and more populous than the state of California. Molecular gastronomer Ferran Adrià, considered by many the world’s top chef, has shone a spotlight on the astounding creativity of Spanish cuisine.

Despite the high degree of innovation, it remains an ingredient-driven cuisine. Spanish chefs draw from the bounty of both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Iberian wines, vinegars and olive oils rank among the world’s best. Spain’s produce and livestock are exceptional. No country can match its cured meats.

The Spanish are knowledgeable about food, intolerant of inferior quality, and understand that good food costs more.

It’s as difficult to find bad restaurants in Spain as it is easy here. But any Spaniard would be delighted by Ibiza Tapas & Wine Bar in Hamden, the more casual and less expensive alternative to its vaunted New Haven sibling, Ibiza Restaurant.

Open a little over a year, Ibiza Tapas has already developed a devoted following and seems to be making new converts every day. Owner Ignacio Blanco, a Galician native, recently opened an Ibiza Tapas in Northampton, Massachusetts, and plans to open maybe a dozen tapas restaurants in all. Located on a busy stretch of Dixwell Avenue just three blocks south of Exit 60 on the Wilbur Cross Parkway, Ibiza Tapas offers a vibrant European atmosphere with a colorful and modernistic décor.

Ibiza Tapas is open seven days per week, but only for dinner. Thirty or more bottles on the wine list are priced \$30 or less, and the Sangría is the best around. Every tapa on Blanco’s menu costs less than \$10, and some are surprisingly filling. But it’s the authenticity, quality and variety of the offerings that define the Ibiza Tapas dining experience.

Customer favorites include: gazpacho;

codfish croquettes; chorizo with lentils; ceviche; Nevat goat cheese toasts with fig, walnut and truffle oil; piquillo peppers stuffed with baby lamb; grilled pork belly with puréed red cabbage; sea bass with carrot and potato confit, mushroom, tomato, pine nuts and raisins in paprika oil; braised short ribs in a caramelized-garlic-and-oatmeal-beer sauce with smoked bacon potato purée; and chocolate almond croquettes with coconut foam and lemon gelatin.

Ibiza Tapas & Wine Bar

1832 Dixwell Avenue, Hamden
(203) 909-6512
www.ibizatapaswinebar.com

Santos' Restaurant

Naugatuck is one of those Valley towns whose manufacturing base constricted after World War II and whose downtown was decimated both by the Flood of 1955 and construction of the Route 8 Expressway. But the pretty town still has a lot going for it. It has surprising nightlife, frequent festivals, and even meet-ups for Jets and Giants games.

But one of the best things Naugatuck has going for it is its Portuguese community. And one of the favorite places for the Portuguese community to come together is Santos' Restaurant, which is located in the heart of downtown Naugatuck and down the street from a municipal parking lot.

Santos' opened in 2004 in the space that was previously occupied by Estoril, also a Portuguese eatery. The handsome restaurant is named after brothers Steve and Charlie Santos, its owners. The siblings were born in the United States, but their parents hail from the mountainous Chaves area. Depicted in a dining room mural, Chaves is an attractive town about an hour north of Lisbon and just a few miles south of the Galician border.

Santos' sign advertises continental cuisine, but it's Portuguese through and through. The menu offers traditional starters like kale soup, clams in green sauce, codfish cakes, and grilled chouriço flamed with aguardente. Entrées include classics like steak with egg, pork with clams, seafood casserole, seafood rice, paelha, and several appealing bacalhau preparations. The food is well cooked, the prices are incredibly reasonable, and the portions are gigantic. The house specialty is "steak on a rock," a large rib-eye seasoned with coarse salt and garlic that cooks rapidly before your eyes on a superheated piece of marble.

One of the restaurant's chief attractions is its loyal and friendly clientele, which is happy to make food recommendations to newcomers. Santos' offers

karaoke on Fridays. The restaurant is open six days a week for lunch and dinner, but closed on Tuesdays.

Santos' Restaurant

152 Church Street, Naugatuck
(203) 729-7850
www.santos152.com

Skappo Italian Wine Bar

Connecticut has a plethora of Italian restaurants, but possibly none that so captures that country's spirit as Skappo Italian Wine Bar, located in New Haven's Ninth Square district.

The name Skappo has its origins in a 13th-century poem by Giovanni di Bernardone, more commonly known as Saint Francis of Assisi. Skappo matriarch Anna Gambacorta grew up in that historic Umbrian town. It was in Assisi's Piazza Minerva in 1973 that Anna met her husband-to-be, a young American student named Thomas Sincavage.

Thirty-seven years and three children later, the Sincavages have one of Connecticut's most authentic Italian restaurants. Don't go there looking for a typical dining experience. Open Wednesday through Sunday for dinner, Skappo seats just 30 customers. There are four small tables and two long communal tables. You're likely to be seated cheek-to-jowl with complete strangers, and the nice thing about Skappo is that by the end of the meal, they may be your newest chums. Lasting friendships have been forged at those tables.

In many ways, closeness is what defines Skappo. Anna has dedicated the restaurant to the joy she saw in her parents' lives in Assisi. Skappo is a family operation, with all three children – Michael, Yvette and Marc – closely involved. Both sons

proposed to their wives at the restaurant. Marc and his band periodically perform tributes to different musical artists.

The legacy of Saint Francis lives on at Skappo. He is not only recognized as the first Italian language poet but as the patron saint of animals and the environment. "Mother Nature comes first," Anna says, "and we only use what she gives to us. We try to present the quality, flavor and tradition of Umbrian culture."

Skappo's does not offer the usual Italian menu. It includes dishes like farm-raised rabbit braised in a white wine reduction with pancetta, meltingly soft sun-dried-tomato-and-ricotta gnocchi, and sausage medallions in a reduction of plump raisins and red wine. But my favorite item is an appetizer of housemade walnut bread topped with fresh Mozzarella, Umbrian black truffles and mushrooms.

Skappo Italian Wine Bar

59 Crown Street #1, New Haven
(203) 773-1394
www.skappo.com

The Watch Factory Restaurant

A brief drive through Austria left a lasting impression on me. Castles perched atop strategic hilltops. Verdant valleys skirted below alluring snow-capped peaks that made me want to "climb every mountain." Handsome year-round chalets with amazing views dotted the slopes.

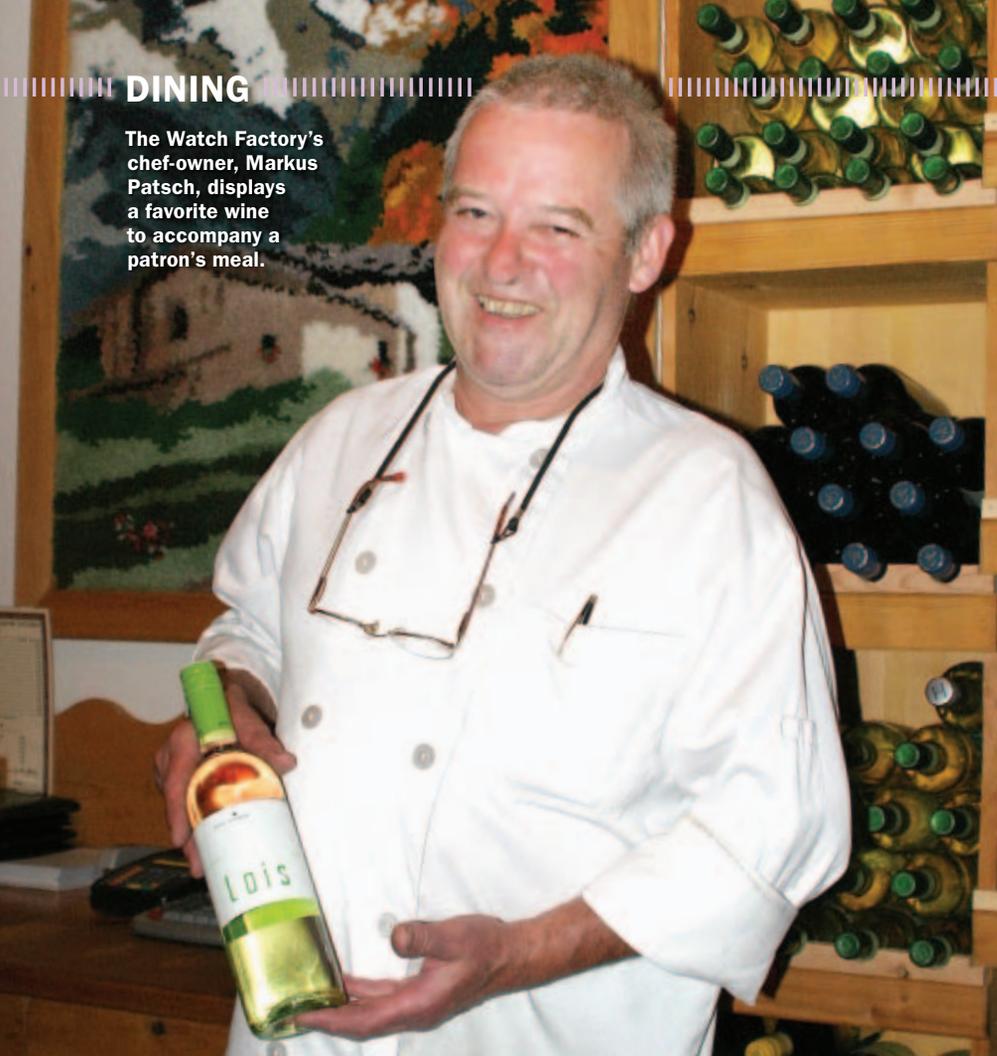
I spent a night in Villach just across the border from Slovenia, enjoying hearty pub fare for dinner. There were banners announcing an upcoming asparagus festival. In historic Salzburg, I threaded my way through rainy traffic to photograph the famous Pferdeschwemme (Horse Pond) from under an umbrella. Afterwards, I

Skappo Italian Wine Bar is one of Connecticut's most authentic Italian restaurants.



DINING

The Watch Factory's chef-owner, Markus Patsch, displays a favorite wine to accompany a patron's meal.



dined on memorable venison in blackberry sauce and other Austrian delights.

I don't know if I will ever make it back to Austria. But I feel as if I can recapture the experience any time by visiting The Watch Factory Restaurant in Cheshire. The Watch Factory may be one of Connecticut's most underrated restaurants, a real hidden gem with a cozy atmosphere and handsome woodwork. From Brixen im Thale in the Tyrolean Alps, chef-owner Markus Patsch first came to the United States as a chef to famed musician and funnyman Victor Borge. He operated a Darien restaurant called The Gourmet Table, before opening The Watch Factory in the mid-1990s.

Like Borge, Patsch is pretty much a one-man show. Everything that comes out of the kitchen passes through his hands. Everything except the bread is made in house. As one of his small staff said, "Markus doesn't care about turning tables. He doesn't advertise and he isn't interested in self-promotion. His approach is, *If he cooks it, they will come.*"

Yes, his is a Kitchen of Dreams. Dishes I especially recommend include mussels in a mustard cream sauce, spaetzle with Gruyère cheese and crispy onions, the shrimp and artichoke crêpe, the trout with capers and

brown butter, and the veal jäger schnitzel. I want to come back to try roasted monkfish in garlic cream, duck leg in red wine sauce, and rack of lamb with tarragon sauce.

Patsch is also an impressive pastry chef, producing his own Sachertorte, rich chocolate mousse, Black Forest berry roulade, and an apple strudel that will spoil you for all others. The Watch Factory is open Tuesday through Saturday for lunch and dinner. Reservations are recommended.

The Watch Factory Restaurant

122 Elm Street, Cheshire
(203) 271-1717
www.watchfactoryrestaurant.com

East Side Restaurant

Probably no Connecticut eatery can top East Side Restaurant in New Britain for atmosphere. East Side has been continuously family owned and operated for the last 70 years. Nick, Barbara and Shari Augustino took over the business in 1999 from Bill and Ruth Bloethe, who themselves purchased the business from Steffi and Eddie Walters 40 years before. The Augustinos have invested more than \$2 million into the premises since 1999, and the money appears well spent.

Of course, East Side isn't just selling food; it's selling a whole dining experi-

ence. "It's like traveling to Germany – no passport required!" the web site exults. In the entrance of the restaurant is a gift shop that sees plenty of activity. The main dining room, with its wall-length mural of Old Heidelberg, is without doubt one of Connecticut's most entertaining places to dine. The new beer garden upstairs is pretty lively, too. There's an accordionist at all times. The Augustinos could charge admission.

Of course, it's not just the setting but the way customers respond to it. That accordionist can induce great nostalgia with classics like "Those Were The Days" or whip customers into a froth with the primitive chords of "Sunshine Of Your Love." Costumed staff members periodically stir up the crowd by calling out, "Tiki tiki tiki tiki," and the crowd faithfully shouts back, "Hoy, hoy, hoy!"

Although dinner prices start in the mid-twenties, they're actually quite reasonable because they're full dinners. They include coleslaw and cottage cheese spread served with Saltines; good bread and butter; a choice of chicken liver pâté, tomato juice cocktail, chilled fruit cup or soup of the day; a salad; red cabbage; cooked vegetables; choice of starch; an entrée; and finally, a slice of cream pie. Leftovers are likely.

Additionally, customers can order terrific sides like crab-stuffed mushrooms or marinated herring, or great desserts like apple strudel and Black Forest cake. The knockwurst and the bratwurst are made in the basement. And let's not forget the great draught beers served in the appropriate glassware!

East Side is open six days per week, but closed on Mondays. Reservations are a must.

East Side Restaurant

131 Dwight Street, New Britain
(860) 223-1188
www.eastsiderestaurant.com

Staropolska Restaurant

I recently shared a Bethel condominium with a Polish woman for the better part of a year. Allie embodied everything that was good about immigrants to this country. A pretty woman in her late 20s, she was a hard-worker with the kind of integrity that Americans once were known for. Scientist by day and salsa dancer by night, Allie balanced a no-nonsense personality with a sense of humor and joie de vivre. I was relieved when Allie was rewarded with a green card. The United States would be a better and stronger country if it could attract more people like her.

Allie was also a good cook who missed

the foods of her homeland. We heard good things about Staropolska in New Britain, but we never made it there. Owner Bogdan Malinowski hails from Gdynia, an important seaport on Gdańsk Bay in the Baltic Sea, less than 80 miles from Russia. I recall Allie describing how she and her schoolmates were required to learn Russian but resistant to it, retaining very little.

Staropolska is a relatively small restaurant with nice patio seating and a dining room well separated from the bar. It's closed on Mondays, but open for lunch and dinner the remaining days of the week. Staropolska means "Old Poland," and the restaurant faithfully reproduces classic Polish dishes, making virtually everything from scratch. Tempting daily specials augment an already extensive menu.

We stuck to standards, accompanying them with two different half-liter Polish beers (a Lech and a Żywiec) recommended by our attractive waitress, Ewelina. As well as being very reasonably priced, the food proved to be subtler, fresher and better than that of any Polish restaurant I had previously visited. A beef tripe soup was hearty and flavorful, while red borscht with two dumplings in it was light and beautifully balanced. A Polish platter came with a perfect potato pancake, the best bigos (hunter's stew) I'd ever had, flavorful kielbasa, golabki (stuffed cabbage) with a nice tang, and three pierogies (meat, cheese and sauerkraut dumplings).

Staropolska's desserts are also homemade. An impressively fresh very berry Napoleon was the coup de grâce, with leaves of house-baked pastry layered with cooked berries and pastry cream. I was so thrilled with the meal that I dialed Allie up from the

Staropolska offers tempting daily specials in addition to its extensive regular menu.



www.hoffmanauto.com



The house pizza at Cavos features gyro meat, Feta, tomato and Greek olives.

restaurant and told her all about it.

Staropolska Restaurant
252 Broad Street, New Britain
(860) 612-1711
www.staropolska.net

Cavos Tavern & Pizzeria

Our peregrinations have taken us across much of Europe, but now we finish our European tour in Greece, with a visit to Cavos Tavern & Pizzeria of Newington. The Milios family that owns Cavos hails from Gennadi on the scenic island of Rhodes, at the far southeastern end of Greece (and Europe).

The restaurant is a multigenerational enterprise. Filip Milios had retired from the restaurant business after developing numerous successful restaurants around

the state. His son, Yianni, urged his father out of retirement. Says Filip, "Yianni took to the business and is now the head cheese." Yianni's grandmother, Despina, is still in the kitchen every morning making the bread and rolling out the phyllo dough. His sisters, Kyrstin and Alyssa, help out when they're not attending college.

Opening in July of 2008, Cavos was an instant hit, winning Best Restaurant and Best Pizza Place from Hartford Advocate voters in 2009. Yet it's still a work in progress. Patio seating for 80 and upstairs seating for up to 50 are scheduled for spring. Cavos is also pursuing an upgrade from beer and wine to a full liquor license. The catering business is expanding rapidly. Cavos is closed on Mondays, and open the remaining days of the week for lunch and dinner.

What accounts for the restaurant's great start? It's not just the family atmosphere but the food. Everything I have had at Cavos has been terrific, but I can especially recommend the stuffed grape leaves, spanakopita, grilled calamari, shrimp Santorini, lamb chops, and house pizza (a white pie with gyro meat, Feta, tomato and Greek olives). And on weekends, Cavos roasts lamb outside on a spit over coals, serving it with garlic bread, a Greek salad, lemon oregano roast potatoes and grilled zucchini in Santorini sauce.

"To be successful," Filip says, "a restaurant has to reach the hearts of the people who are eating." Like the other six restaurants I have recommended, Cavos has certainly reached mine.

Cavos Tavern & Pizzeria
2414 Berlin Turnpike, Newington
(860) 667-9200
www.cavostavern.com

H

Big Dreams

Local celebrities let us in on a secret – what’s on their “bucket list.”

BY SARAH WESLEY LEMIRE | PHOTOS BY BRIAN AMBROSE

In the 2007 film, *The Bucket List*, Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman portray two men who have both been diagnosed with a terminal illness. They meet when they are forced to share a hospital room, and become friends.

Knowing he doesn’t have long to live, the character played by Morgan Freeman draws up what he calls a “bucket list” of things he’d like to do in his life prior to “kicking the bucket.” The remainder of the film shows Nicholson and Freeman traveling the world together, checking items off their bucket lists until they have completed almost all of them.

The concept of having a bucket list has infiltrated pop culture and become a common way for people to articulate the dreams they hope to fulfill in their lifetime. Whether the list items are lofty, altruistic or simply fun, to learn someone’s bucket list is to gain insight into who they are, and what their secret – or not-so-secret – desires are.

And there are probably no two people with the same items on their list. Did you know that UConn women’s basketball coach Geno Auriemma’s bucket list includes flying a fighter jet, completing marine boot camp and playing in a PGA Tour event?

Intrigued by the concept, *Decades* magazine decided to find out what’s on the bucket lists of some of the Hartford region’s other notable personalities.

HANNAH Storm

From her anchor seat at ESPN’s *SportsCenter*, things look pretty good for veteran sportscaster and newscaster

Hannah Storm. For more than 19 years, she has been in the public eye, having been the host of CBS’s *The Early Show* for five years, along with hosting the network’s popular news magazine, *48 Hours*. In addition, she spent 10 years at NBC Sports, where she hosted four Olympic Games and was the first female host of CNN’s *Sports Tonight*. But like most everyone else, there a few things that she’d still like to accomplish.

Topping Storm’s bucket list is the dream of opening a wing at a children’s hospital where children can be treated for birthmarks and other vascular anomalies. Having been born with a port wine stain over her eyelid and under her left eye, she underwent several painful treatments as a child and knows firsthand what it feels like to have a birthmark and all the subsequent implications. She started her own nonprofit for the cause, the Hannah Storm Foundation. But she’d like to take it one step further by opening a wing for children where both children and their parents can receive medical support and assistance.

After being in both sports and news for so many years, Storm also aspires to appear in front of the camera as an actor rather than an anchor. She appeared on a couple of episodes on *As the World Turns* and loved it. She imagines herself at the age of 70 appearing on a daytime soap, portraying a glamorous diva – much like Erica Kane from *All My Children*. She’d also be happy with a small role in a movie, preferably a comedy. “I’ve always loved singing and act-

ing. It’s something I really liked and would like to do again,” she said.

Because she finds people fascinating, she also hopes to one day produce her own interview show. She’d prefer to do so in the style of Barbara Walters and Roy Firestone, whose method of interviewing she calls “timeless.” When asked who her first guest would be, she thinks for a moment and answers, “The Dalai Lama.”

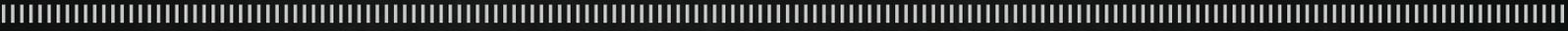
A fourth bucket list item is recapturing her former involvement in art. She used to sketch a lot and enjoyed working with oils. She hopes to take classes in the future and learn the one thing she never accomplished. “I never learned how to draw people. I would really like to learn to draw people’s faces.”

DR. STEVE Perry

Acclaimed principal and founder of Capital Preparatory Magnet School in Hartford, Dr. Steve Perry, has a bucket list that speaks volumes about his passion: education. A national authority on the subject, he has appeared on CNN, MSNBC and Fox News, has written five books and travels all over the country as a public speaker.

He admits that he’s accomplished many of the things that might otherwise have been on his list but still pursues his dream of changing education for the better. All three of his bucket list items are a reflection of that dream.

The first thing to be crossed off Dr. Perry’s list is to open more schools. He holds a deep belief that essential to the



Dr. Steve Perry
wants to improve
education.

Restaurateur
extraordinaire
Rich Rosenthal
would one day
love to play
golf in Ireland.

NICKI Mathis

She was named one of *Hartford Magazine's* Black Women of Achievement, and her larger-than-life photograph on the façade of the West Capitol Building was viewed by hundreds of thousands of drivers on Interstate 84 West at the Asylum Street Exit.

Jazz singer Nicki Mathis, an El Paso, Texas native, came to Hartford, where she formed her own "Afrikan Amerikan" jazz band in the 1980s. While continuing to perform to rave reviews, she's since begun producing The Many Colors of a W*O*M*A*N Jazz Festivals, which showcase jazz women and their contributions to the genre. She also formed a nonprofit organization called The Many Colors of a Woman, Inc.

Mathis dreams of going to Haiti. "I'd like to do that because that's the only country that is a black country, managed by black people. I expect to find it beautiful," she said. Like her mother before her, Mathis loves to travel and has done so extensively.

She also hopes to someday travel to Madrid and make a return trip to Africa, where she's already been several times. While there, she'd like to see Mosi-oa-Tunya (translated as "The Smoke that Thunders") – also referred to as Victoria Falls, located in Zimbabwe. The falls are considered by some to be one of the seven natural wonders of the world.

Beyond her travel desires, Mathis would like to establish closer relationships with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who are scattered throughout the U.S. With family in Texas, New York and California, she feels that everyone is too far apart and she wishes for more time to spend together. She hopes that they will eventually all live closer and be able to spend time together as a family.

Finally, Mathis wishes to take her music to the next level. "My bucket list venue is to take my jazz women on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and perform for the Oprah's audience. And after that? To perform at the White House for President Barack Obama. Beyond that, Mathis wouldn't mind being an international celebrity and having a platinum CD to her name.

In addition, Mathis has always wanted to be a dancer. She cites Lavinia Williams, an African-American dancer and dance educator who was still dancing at the age of 70. At that age, Mathis said, "I'd be moving slowly, but I'd still do it."

pursuit of happiness is a good education, and that everyone should have access to that. Since opening his magnet school, Perry has been approached by various cities and states to recreate it in other places in the U.S. where the need is great.

Until now, Perry and his staff had not been ready to take the school and its concept to the next level, operating under the belief that their focus needed to be on Capital Prep. But the time has come, and they've determined that they are ready to create and open more schools based on the school's successful philosophy.

"We are ready to help and explore what that could mean. It could mean more Capital Preps in the not-so-distant future."

Next on the list for Perry is to open a residential school. After studying private schools and modeling Capital Prep after them, Perry has come to the conclusion that most private schools offer residential, or "boarding," programs, and that this approach can greatly enhance the achieve-

ments of students. He believes that everyone should be offered the chance to attend a residential school, not just the elite.

"It seems like an unachievable expectation, but what I've seen is that we can make miracles happen every day ... why not that? Those schools tend to make the biggest impact on children's lives. [Opening a residential school] will prove that when all children are given the exact same access to education, they can all perform at the same level," he said.

His final wish is to "change education as we know it," and he explained why. "The founding fathers [of our country] were really smart. We don't give them enough credit. They said, 'Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.' They understood that it's not the consumption of something, but the pursuit of it, that makes you whole. When it's all said and done, no matter how much money you make, where you live ... people want to pursue happiness. And when you have access to quality education, you are in pursuit of it."

RICHARD Rosenthal

Restaurateur and co-owner Richard Rosenthal of the Max Restaurant Group – which includes all the Max restaurants and the Trumbull Kitchen in Hartford – has his own list of bucket items. He is already planning to accomplish them in the not-too-distant future, explaining that he's not a procrastinator when it comes to pursuing his desires. "I'm a big believer in doing things. So when opportunities come, you do them."

In the fall of 2011, Rosenthal will cross off one important final bucket list item. The Fat Duck restaurant, located in the village of Bray, outside of London, has won countless culinary awards, and is considered by many to be the best place to eat on the planet. The dishes are designed to transcend ordinary dining by engaging all the senses, including smell and sight, throughout the four-hour meal. Among the menu items are "Pommery Grain Mustard Ice Cream," "Salmon Poached in Liqueur" and "The 'BFG,' which is kirsch ice cream and the smell of the Black Forest.



Nicki Mathis wants to be an international celebrity and travel the world.

It is at The Fat Duck, created by renowned chef Heston Blumenthal, that Rosenthal would like to dine. "It's been declared the best restaurant in the world and, being in the restaurant business, I want to see [it]. The restaurant is known

for being very theatrical, very interactive with the senses as much as the palate."

He also has a strong desire to visit Wimbledon with his wife and watch the tennis championship in person. "Before I was a golfer, I was a tennis player. I

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don't play anymore, but I love to watch. Wimbledon is the crème de la crème of tennis tournaments." With tickets difficult to come by, Rosenthal isn't sure when or if he'll get there, but he plans on trying.

Another item on his bucket list involves his longtime wish to play golf in Ireland with his friends. "Ireland is a great spot for golf and is one of the oldest courses in the world," he said. Intrigued with both the people and pubs of Ireland, he is planning to visit in the near future and is excited by that prospect.

KELLIE Burke

Designer, artist and owner of Kellie Burke Interiors in West Hartford, Kellie Burke specializes in high-end residential interiors. She has designed restaurants, to much acclaim, for the likes of chef Billy Grant, among her many other design and artistic accomplishments.

With an "embrace it all" attitude and a lust for life, she admits that she is already living her bucket list every day, and that if there's something she really wants to do, she makes it happen. But still she has a few items that she'd like to cross off if she's able.

For years, the chance to meet Michael Jackson topped Burke's list – until his

untimely death last year put an end to the dream.

She unabashedly admits that it is still her desire to live out a real movie moment. A movie buff and a huge fan of *Grease*, she relishes the idea of everything being sung and danced like a real-life *High School Musical*. "I wish we could be in *Grease* where everything is sung and danced. I want to do choreographed dance."

As part of that dream, she also imagines herself someday getting a walk-on part (a big one) in some sort of light-hearted movie, the kind that would star Cameron Diaz. She'd also love to land a role in one of the popular *Twilight* movies, of which she is a self-professed fan.

Her next list item is to someday have a studio with tall ceilings and paintings everywhere. She studied art in college, and after graduating, began painting as a job. But over time, her art became "work," and eventually, it lost its luster. She put her paintbrushes down and never picked them back up, but she dreams of a someday studio that she could fill with her paintings, which she painted for the pure pleasure of it.

Due to her love of antiquity, old homes and things with a past, completing Burke's list is the dream that she might someday create something that leaves her own indelible mark for years to come. "I want to do something, paint something, create something, that people will see throughout time. I want to stamp something out there that lasts, that says: Kellie Burke did it."

finish my career by working in the public sector on issues of public importance. They might be real estate related, like community development, or might be in a different area altogether."

He knows that giving back is something that he'd like to do. "I've spent most of my working life primarily focused on doing well, but I've reached the point where I think about doing good instead. Something more involved, more intense and more lasting."

After visiting Italy on several occasions, Wiener fell in love with that country and his next bucket list item reflects that affection. He would like to learn to speak fluent Italian and then spend a year living there to fully experience the culture beyond just a vacation. "I've loved it when I've been there. I would like to live there, understand it and adapt to the pace. The pace of life there was fuller, with an emphasis on enjoying the simpler things in life."

Another item on his bucket list is to someday travel with his entire family to some yet-to-be determined destination. It's a trip he'd like to take when his sons are grown and have families of their own. He envisions a vacation with his children and someday grandchildren for the opportunity to simply spend some time together. "The most important thing to me is family, and it would be an opportunity to get people together for a long period of time with no agenda, to relax and be together. It's something I've wanted to do for a long time."

ROBERT Wiener

Real estate developer Robert Wiener of JDA Development in West Hartford has an impressive array of credentials to his name. A managing partner of Blue Back Square in West Hartford, Wiener has a variety of other projects with his stamp on them, including several grocery-based projects in New Jersey and New York, along with many other notable retail developments throughout New England.

For a long time, Wiener has wanted to do something to make a difference in a neighborhood or community, and says that it is the first thing on his list to be accomplished. "I want to

JUDITH Ivie

Author Judith Ivie has always been a writer. She produced three nonfiction books before writing her first murder mystery novel, *Waiting for Armando*, in 2002. Since then, she's released three more (*Murder on Old Main Street*, *A Skeleton in the Closet* and, most recently, *Drowning in Christmas*).

Mindful of her struggles to break into the business, and wanting to help other aspiring writers, she decided to establish her own Glastonbury-based publishing company, Mainly Murder Press, which currently publishes 17 other authors. "I can't think of anything more fun than calling hardworking, hopeful writers to let them know that they're about to be published, and I get to make one of those calls each and every month," she said.

Ivie's longtime dream was realized



Robert Wiener wants to make a difference in a neighborhood, and travel with his family.

when she published her first book. "Becoming an author was always number one on my wish list, so getting that first title went a long way toward shortening my bucket list, and every one published since then was pure gravy."

While it's short, she still has a bucket list of items that are yet to be accomplished – though she said she'd have to hit the lottery before completing them. If she did strike it rich, the first thing Ivie would do, after paying off her mortgage, would be to anonymously donate \$11 million to Our Companions, a nonprofit organization that works to find homes for pets. "That way, I could be a gleeful onlooker as those good people enjoyed building their long-planned sanctuary for abandoned and abused domestic animals," she said.

After that, Ivie would purchase two tickets for the Orient Express and "revel in that exotic and luxurious train trip with my husband."

Completing the author's bucket list is what Ivie calls the "only truly achievable item on my list." Though she's been to many theaters and shows on Broadway, she's never had the chance to see a show at Carnegie



Designer Kellie Burke would love to have her own art studio.

Hall in New York. "I would buy tickets to something glorious at Carnegie Hall. I've been to dozens of theaters on Broadway

over the years, but somehow have never made it to this concert hall." That, she said, would be a dream come true. *H*

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Rachel Roberts with former coach Steve Emt.

Playing to W



The day after Rachel Roberts arrived at Villanova University to begin her freshman year, she went to the gym to work out, but instead found herself just sitting on the floor, looking around. She couldn't believe where she was, how far she had gotten and everything she'd gone through to get there.

A few short months later, the disbelief intensified when she pulled the jersey over her head to play her first non-redshirt game with the Villanova women's basketball team. But before she headed out to the court, there was one person she needed to talk to.

"Steve, I'm playing a game tonight."

"Yes, I know. You have a game against George Washington."

"No, Steve, I'm playing tonight. I'm *playing*."

And in that one moment, the dreams of an athlete and her mentor – who had shared a common goal for more than seven years – came true.

Rachel Roberts was a rambunctious, competitive child whose parents, Zane and Cora, struggled to find something that interested her. But that all changed when she was eight years old. "The minute she touched a basketball, that was it," her father said.

Rachel agreed. "I loved it, every second. I couldn't get enough; I wouldn't get off the court. I wouldn't stop shooting. I'd be alone in my driveway, it was dark out, and [my parents] would be telling me to come in."

Eventually, her father put a basketball hoop and a cement floor in their Marlborough barn, and that's where young Rachel spent most of her free time. Her father recalled that in the dead of winter, she would be out there in shorts and a T-shirt, shooting for hours while he shivered and waited for her. She remembers those cold winter nights shooting baskets with her father as some of the best nights of her life.

Soon, it became obvious that her all-consuming passion for the sport wasn't going away. But while passionate, she didn't see a future in basketball and she joked that she was still considering her possibilities of acting on the Disney Channel. Then she realized she liked to play and she liked to win – a lot. So she kept at it, playing more and going to basketball camps in her drive to get better and move up.

At 11, she was playing on the high school varsity girls' basketball team at The King's School in Bolton. By the time she reached seventh grade at RHAM Middle School, there weren't any girls' basketball teams competitive enough to match her skill or ambition; so she joined the Marlborough eighth grade boys' travel team. "I just wanted to play travel basketball and I wanted to

play at the best level I could, and against the best people. And I wanted to prove that I deserved to be out there."

College sophomore and former Marlborough travel teammate Joe Cunningham recalled what it was like playing with Rachel. "I loved it. She made the team better. When we'd play other teams, everyone would say, 'I've got the girl' and then they would be, like, 'Whoa!' when she started playing."

One day, she was walking in the hallway of RHAM Middle School when she heard someone call out, "Hey." That someone was Steve Emt, eighth grade math teacher and coach of the RHAM High School varsity boys' basketball team.

A Promising Career Cut Short

Born in Hebron, Emt was a natural athlete. Upon graduating from high school, he held the titles of All New England Soccer Goal Keeper, All State in basketball, and all-time leading scorer in basketball for RHAM, a record which has yet to be broken. He went to West Point Military Academy but left two years later, after the unexpected death of his father.

In the fall of 1991, he ended up at the University of Connecticut, where was spotted by UConn Huskies Assistant Coach Glen Miller while playing intramural basketball at the field house. Ultimately, Coach Jim Calhoun invited him to be a walk-on to one of the best

teams in men's college basketball.

For two years, he traveled and played with the team – a time he considers "the two best years of my life." While he spent just 38.7 seconds of actual playing time on the court, he has no regrets. "It was a blast. I wasn't there because I was good. I was there because I had a big heart. I'd get knocked down and get back up again. I was a hard worker and gave 100 percent. I never gave up."

After college, he worked for an environmental company. On a chilly night in March 1995, his life was irreparably changed forever. Out at a bar with friends, he drank too much and not long after, passed out at the wheel while driving 85 miles an hour on I-84. He hit a bridge embankment and cart-wheeled his truck 75 yards into a ditch. He was in a coma for two days.

When he woke up, he was on a respirator. A doctor

A young basketball player makes the cut at Villanova and takes to the court in the Big East tournament – thanks to a coach and mentor who will never play again.

By Sarah Wesley Lemire
Photos by Brian Ambrose

in

Zane Roberts, left, encouraged his daughter to never give up her dream.



reason, and he only looks forward. "It was my time. It was my time for something bad to happen, and it happened."

The accident didn't end his career in sports, however. Today, in addition to teaching and coaching, he runs various basketball camps throughout the year and speaks all over the U.S. about his accident – in the hope that by telling his story, he might change someone's life.

When Emt heard about the seventh-grade girl playing on the boys' travel team, he was intrigued. When he saw her in the hall, he asked her if

she'd like him to mentor her and help her work out.

She immediately said "yes." Rachel laughs as she recalls that time, saying she practically became a stalker, calling him often to help her train. But he didn't mind. He was impressed with her single-minded passion. To him, she was like a younger sister, and to her, he was a second father and one who understood her passion for basketball.

And so almost every morning, they'd meet at the school gym, where he'd help her work out and train. The regimen was a tough one, and she put it above everything else. She'd be in bed by 8 every night, and shaking her father awake at 5 a.m. to drive her to the gym. She remembers sleeping in her basketball clothes so that she wouldn't have to waste time in the morning getting dressed.

"It made me realize that if you want to do things, want to be successful, you have to get up before anyone else, you have to work out before everyone else is working out," she said. "If you want to be special, stand out and be different, you have to have heart and you have to eat, sleep, breathe and dream about where you want to go and where you want to be, and who you want to be when you look at yourself in the mirror."

Pursuing The Dream

Rachel transferred to Mercy High School in Middletown but still went to Hebron every morning to train with Emt. During her junior year, recruiters began seeking her out. While she had a multitude of scholarship offers from other schools, her

came into his hospital room and said, "Steve, you've been in a bad automobile accident. You'll never walk again." At 25, he was permanently paralyzed from the waist down and underwent months of recovery and rehabilitation to learn how to start life over in a wheelchair.

Despite all he's been through, he has no regrets about what happened that night. He believes that everything happens for a

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dream was to play for Villanova.

In the winter of her junior year, she was offered a full scholarship to play basketball at the Pennsylvania college. Just one month later, she tore her anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), one of the knee ligaments that joins the upper and lower leg bones. It was a devastating setback. Rachel recalls that she was crying in her hospital room when Emt came in.

"He said, 'You'll be fine. You'll be good.' I thought about everything he's come through, everything he had to go through to get to where he is, and the peace he has. And I thought, 'If he can do it, I can do it.'"

It took almost nine months, but she recovered and graduated from Mercy High with the honor of being First-Team All-State Player four times in a row. Last fall, she started her freshman year at Villanova. She was nervous at first about playing for a Big East team, but then realized it was still basketball and that was something she knew how to do. Like most freshman, she was on redshirt status. It's an NCAA rule that players can only play four out of five college years, so often, players redshirt for one year. They attend practices and games – they just aren't allowed to play.

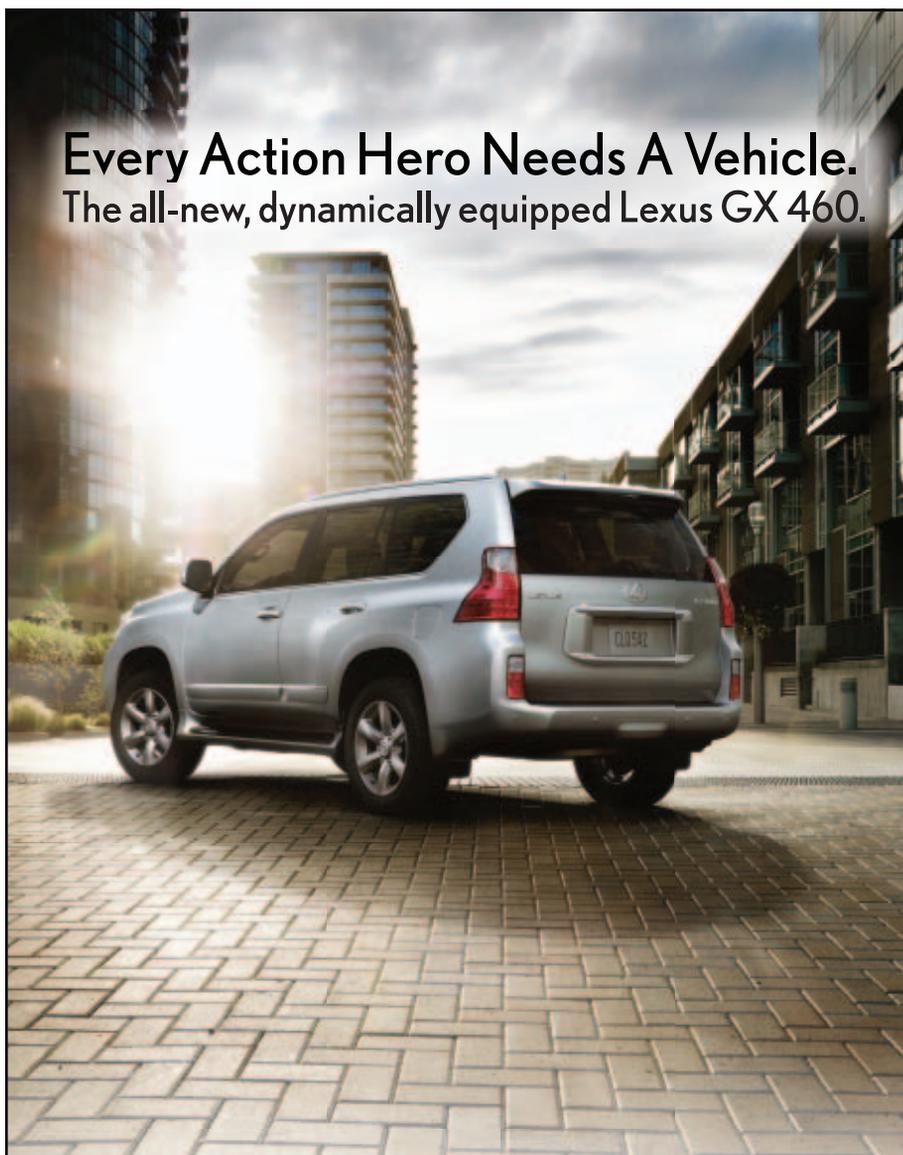
When several of Rachel's teammates were injured this past winter, her coach asked if she wanted to play. She agreed to take off the redshirt and suddenly found herself pulling a Villanova jersey over her head and getting ready to play her first Big East game. Sitting in the locker room, there was one person she knew she had to tell. She texted Steve Emt.

Rachel finished her first season in March, and recalls how surreal it was to hear her name and number announced when she ran out onto the court at the XL Center in Hartford for the Big East tournament with thousands of spectators looking on.

She credits Emt for being instrumental in helping her live out her dream. They agree that through their mutual love of the game, they've developed a special relationship that transcends mentor and athlete. When asked about Roberts' success, his eyes well up with tears. When asked if eventually he's going to train the next Rachel Roberts, he answered confidently, "There will never be another Rachel Roberts."

As for Rachel, she can't begin to place a value on what Emt has taught her about the game – and about life. "He taught me a lot from his 38.7 seconds [on the court] – that when you're out there, you've got to give it all you've got. It's all you can do. You have to go out there and just enjoy it." **H**

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Lights, Camera, Action!

South Windsor's movie studio project is moving forward.

BY JOEL SAMBERG

Despite some unanticipated delays, developers are proceeding with plans to transform a 60-acre property in South Windsor into a major motion picture studio that has the potential to boost the state's economy by hundreds of millions of dollars and generate as many as 4,600 new jobs.

In 2008, Santa Monica-based acquisition and development company Pacifica Ventures proposed creation of a high-tech movie studio and production facility called Connecticut Studios. Last October, Pacifica, in partnership with a Rhode Island-based acquisition group, took title to 23 acres in the triangle between Route 5 and Interstate 291, in a ceremony attended by Governor M. Jodi Rell and many state and town officials. The government-owned property, together with an adjacent 40-acre parcel of private land, will provide the space needed to move forward with the studio project.

Groundbreaking had initially been planned for March 2010 and movie production was expected to begin this fall. But with funding challenges, environmental inquiries, traffic concerns and a daunting economic climate, a delay was practically built right into the script from the very beginning.

The latest word from Pacifica Ventures is that groundbreaking on construction will be later this fall, and that productions will be ready to roll by mid-2011. Motion picture industry professionals, skilled laborers, and hundreds of other hospitality and retail workers will one day travel in

quite impressive circles within the studio's enchanted triangle, for the complex is slated to include several massive sound stages, craft shops, offices, technical facilities, a hotel, a restaurant and retail shops.

While the delay in getting started may be making some people skeptical that this ambitious project will ever come to pass, others argue that the roadblocks encountered to date should simply be considered part of the process.

"It doesn't surprise me in the least that various problems delayed this dream. We're living in tough times," said Mark Lamos, artistic director at the Westport County Playhouse, a cultural landmark in the state that is not unfamiliar with the complexity of fiscal survival. As tricky as that can be for a 79-year-old, 578-seat theatre, it is inevitably much more difficult for a \$65 million movie studio, particularly since nothing like this has ever been tried in the state of Connecticut before.





Plans for a new movie studio in Hartford County are drawing closer to reality.



Ready to Roll

Local film commission hopes to lure Hollywood to the Farmington Valley.

By Stephen M. Emirzian

Three years ago, two Farmington Valley professionals noticed that outside productions were starting to film in the seven core towns that make up the valley (Avon, Canton, East Granby, Farmington, Granby, New Hartford and Simsbury). The sudden interest in these bucolic hamlets got Liz Banco of Simsbury and Nancy Anstey of Avon thinking about the possibilities of creating a satellite film commission that would lure outside producers.

Now, more than two years later, the dream has become a reality. The Farmington Valley Film Commission (FVFC), based in Avon, has gone from an initial handful of volunteers to an average of 40 at each monthly meeting. The meetings are where local artists, filmmakers, actors and writers all gather to discuss upcoming projects and volunteer their time to meet the arts organization's needs.

Though most of the volunteers come from the seven core towns, there are those, like producer Lisa Durkee, who have come from as far away as New Haven, just to see what the FVFC is all about. "It's really a great networking opportunity," said Durkee, who helps to locate actors through her casting company.

In a nutshell, the FVFC wants to promote local businesses as well as media professionals who live in the area and would like to be included on the web site's online database (www.farmingtonvalleyfilm.org).

The past 10 years have brought various Hollywood and New York productions to the area. The long-running drama *Gilmore Girls* was set in the fictitious town of Stars Hollow but was actually based on Collinsville, where a second unit team from Warner Brothers came and shot some test footage to get a feel for the town. ESPN has shot numerous commercials in the area, and the Syfy Channel's *Ghost Hunters* filmed in Simsbury two years ago.

Big budget productions are not the only game in town, either. Anstey, one of the founders of the FVFC, said if enough smaller productions and student films come to the area, it can be a boost to the restaurants and hotels, too. "We'd love a constant stream of multimillion dollar films shooting here, but the reality is probably something much smaller," she said. "If we can get 10 or 12 productions a year that have a \$30,000 or \$40,000 budget, that's something we would enjoy, as well."

Local independent filmmakers, some with a budget of less than \$5,000, are making a name for themselves, thanks to the film commission's presence. Last July, about a dozen filmmakers entered their short films into the FVFC's first film festival, held in Collinsville. The film festival was held at the new entertainment venue known as "Forty-One Bridge Street" and was, by all accounts, a huge success.

Craig Murphy is a video producer from West Hartford who spent his early years in Farmington. Murphy, who submitted a short film set in WWII called *Broken Heroes* to the film festival, said he loves shooting films in the valley. "Growing up in Farmington allowed me to appreciate all the natural landscapes and vistas the valley has to offer in terms of locations," he said.

"If you are an actor, director, writer or work anywhere in the industry, this is the perfect venue to let outside producers know you're here," Anstey said. "It also helps to have a list of lodging and transportation services and other local businesses that tend to increase their revenue whenever a film production comes to town."

With the web site up and running, visitors can view picture galleries of what the towns have to offer in terms of locations and vintage architecture. The online database makes it easy to locate specific freelancers such as scriptwriters, actors, singers or prop makers. The site's blog has weekly updates of job opportunities, production schedules and networking parties.

Katie Ouellette and Deb Herz, both of Farmington, have been instrumental in getting the web site to be user friendly as well as visually interesting. "We want to let people know we're here and show the film industry exactly what we have to offer," said Ouellette. "It would be great to disprove the myth that you need to be in New York or L.A. to make it as a filmmaker," added Herz.

The next challenge for the FVFC is to get volunteers with a film or video background to help produce a series of short promos explaining in more detail why the Farmington Valley is such a great place to film. "Still photos from our gallery tell part of the story when visitors see the web site," said Anstey. "We're hoping a 30-second or one-minute video showing the beautiful landscapes of our valley will be even more enticing to outside producers."

The Farmington Valley Film Commission holds meetings every month. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer or would like more information, visit www.farmingtonvalleyfilm.org or call Nancy Anstey at (860) 676-8878.





The site plan shows the planned phases of the movie studio project in South Windsor.

spokesman for Pacifica, emphasizing his company's enthusiasm for coming to New England, reiterated the fact that Connecticut has one of the strongest tax incentive programs for the motion picture industry in the entire country, if not the world. "Our decisions about where to locate new facilities are driven by where our clients want to film their productions, and they're the ones telling us that Connecticut is very appealing," he said at the time.

Our decisions about where to locate new facilities are driven by where our clients want to film their productions, and they're the ones telling us that Connecticut is very appealing.

—Pacifica Ventures spokesperson

Engineering and construction management firms had already been selected long before the original groundbreaking day was penciled in. Financing initially involved a combination of South Windsor's commitment of future tax revenues pledged against loans or bonds, private sector involvement, bank investments, and funds from the acquisition and development

firms. Earlier this year, it was reported that about 70 percent of the necessary funds had been committed – a number that seems to have remained relatively constant through the delays.

Those delays have been attributed to a variety of things, including the integrity and viability of the land with respect to commercial usage, in addition to some challenges in securing the balance of the funding.

Nevertheless, "the Connecticut Studios

project continues to move forward in South Windsor," said Craig Stevenson, an economic development advisor who has been part of the team working to bring the studio to fruition. "It has survived the Great Recession and is poised to complete its financing package in the next few weeks."

In a departure from the original plan, the project will be built in at least three

phases. Phase one will include a few sound stages, offices, storage and a commissary. Phase two will see the addition of more sound stages. Phase three will welcome the hotel, restaurant and retail outlets.

"All regulatory approvals are in place, including a State Traffic Commission Certificate that was added in August 2010," Stevenson said, "and the South Windsor Town Council is working on a proposal to provide Tax Incremental Financing." The traffic certificate had not been part of picture when the first groundbreaking date was still on the calendar, even though traffic concerns had been mentioned by various observers as being a potential problem. That certificate has effectively turned another red light green, as has the developer's ability to anticipate the balance of the funding, thanks to several encouraging developments.

One of them – one that potentially could have sped up the project had it come about earlier – was the mid-September unanimous vote by the steering committee of the MetroHartford Alliance to include Connecticut Studios as a priority project on what's called the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. This is an important federal planning document

that establishes the economic strategy for a federally designated Economic Development District. Being listed as a priority project is a requirement for funding from the federal Economic Development Administration.

As confident as company personnel were earlier this year, they seem even more confident now, as evidenced by such recent news as the hiring of a manager to run the studio – an industry veteran by the name of Mark Miller, who has been involved in movie and television production for more than 35 years. It has been reported that Miller is already working to line up productions to film at Connecticut Studios.

“I look forward to the thousands of jobs that will be produced and the creation of a new film industry right here in South Windsor,” said state Senator Gary LeBeau, who is co-chairman of the state legislature’s Commerce Committee and has been working on developing the property for many years.

Along with Stevenson and Katersky, LeBeau contends that Connecticut Studios will become an unparalleled economic

generator for the region, a statement that takes on even more relevance now than it did during the first groundbreaking date in light of the recent downsizing news from Mohegan Sun and Pratt & Whitney. As Pacifica Ventures likes to point out, its studio in New Mexico has been linked to \$480 million in state income resulting from the movies produced there – and some experts say that it could be even more in Connecticut.

Westport County Playhouse’s Lamos, who works with a skilled acting community that would love to see more professional action in New England, contends that the creation of a “Hollywood East” location in our state makes perfect sense. “So many films seem to use Connecticut locations anyway,” he said. “And too many use other locations that merely masquerade as Connecticut.”

Why put on a masquerade when the real thing will do just fine?

That, of course, was part of the thinking behind the state’s initial interest in allowing a Hollywood studio to set up shop in north-central Connecticut. It would be a tremendous boon to the statewide

economy, provide jobs and, as a bonus feature, boost tourism, support educational initiatives in conjunction with many of our universities, and further brighten the Nutmeg spotlight.

All the key players in this project eagerly state at every opportunity how there has always been a strong desire on the part of the community, the state and the developer to see this studio dream come true; red lights, they strongly imply, do not end dreams; they might just slow them down a bit.

“If more production companies are enticed to film here, the boost to our economy will be obvious – as would the boost to our state’s profile around the world,” said Lamos, who knows the value of attracting prominent and distinguished players to add luster to any particular municipal project, cultural or otherwise. And a state-of-the-art movie studio in South Windsor would certainly bring along with it a galaxy of creative luminaries, both in front of and behind the camera. “I wish them luck in avoiding any further bumps in the road, because it certainly seems like a good investment to me.” *H*

Oh look, it's blushing.

A lot of compliments have been paid to the smart fortwo, most notably:

One of the Top 10 Safest Small Cars
Forbes.com (February 2010)

Most Fuel Efficient Gasoline-Powered Vehicle in America
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

95% Recyclable
smartusa.com/greenlife

Rated One of the Least Expensive Vehicles to Insure
Insure.com

Top "Green" Machine
CNN Money

One of Top 10 Greenest Vehicles
ACREE Green Book Online

Voted as Top 10 Micro Car
MSN Autos

The 2009 Consumer Top Rated Small Convertible
smartusa.com/greenlife

2009 Top 10 Coolest New Cars Under \$18K
Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com

Rated Top Ten Pet Safe Vehicles of Choice
Bark Buckle Up

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2010**

Hoffman | **smart**

Weigh to Go!

Weight Watchers leader Noreen Gill addresses Hoffman employees.



Hoffman Auto Group inspires its employees to become healthier through an exciting and potentially lucrative fitness challenge.

BY CARMEN SLAYBAUGH | PHOTOS BY LISA BRISSON

To the Hoffmans, “Driven by Trust,” isn’t just a company slogan. It is their way of life. So, when they realized that a group of their employees needed a little motivation to get their “engines started,” they had no problem dangling a golden carrot.

At the end of September, Hoffman Auto Group launched the Hoffman Weight Watchers Challenge. This 17-week contest, while offering some pretty tempting prizes, is more about helping their employees all be winners by becoming healthier and happier people, co-chairman Bradley Hoffman said.

But first, the prizes. At the end of the contest, the top two contestants (one male, one female) who lose the greatest percentage in weight will each win \$2,000. The two second-place winners will get \$1,000 apiece, with third-place winners receiving \$500. There will be weekly raffles held at both the East Hartford and Avon Hoffman locations for a variety of gift baskets.

There’s a catch, though. The challenge is really about changing the contestants’ lives,

not just a one-time rush to the finish line. Winners will receive only half of their cash winnings at the end of the challenge. If they maintain their weight loss or – even better – continue to lose, they get the remainder after an additional 17-week period.

About 40 employees have signed on to participate.

Though being overweight or obese is one of those topics not often discussed in polite company, it isn’t exactly something that can be shoved in a closet, either. The Surgeon General calculates that obesity costs the nation about \$147 billion in annual healthcare expenditures, and is directly related to 300,000 deaths per year.

Two people who weren’t afraid to talk about it were Sam Pines, Hoffman Auto Group’s fixed operations director, and

Steve Shields, body shop manager for the East Hartford location. Knowing the tremendous impact that being overweight has a person’s health, they decided to do something about it. Between the two of them, they came up with the idea of combining a Weight Watchers program with a “Biggest Loser” type of contest.

Pines said it was only a matter of getting hold of his assistant, Chrissy Pakutka, to get things started. Once they received “over the top support from the Hoffmans,” as Pakutka put it, she, along with Pines, human relations director Robin Golightly, and public relations director Katie Bushey, all sat down and developed the Hoffman Weight Watchers Challenge rules and guidelines.

Based on the traditional Weight Watchers program, there will be weekly meetings at the East Hartford and Avon locations. Contestants must attend them for confidential weigh-ins or go to an approved Weight Watchers center. They are only allowed to miss two weigh-ins during the entirety of the contest.

During an informational meeting held at the East Hartford Hoffman location, Weight Watchers leader Noreen McGill told a group of potential contestants that they would be given new guidelines each week, geared toward helping them achieve the highest level of success. "For instance, during the holiday time, when people typically put on a few pounds, [we] will give you strategies to deal with that." She added that the weight-loss organization "comes up with a new pamphlet each week that reinforces what we will talk about in the meeting."

A Weight Watchers member herself, McGill really captured just what great changes were in store for them. After losing 50 pounds with the program, McGill went out one day to buy some bird seed. "When I picked up that 50-pound bag, I thought to myself, 'Oh my God. How did I carry around that extra 50 pounds more of me every day?'" When the contestants reach their goals, she reminded them, all of the energy that they once used to carry the extra weight can be used to do fun and exciting things.

McGill explained that Weight Watchers teaches you about yourself and how you eat, as well as how to think healthfully. She said many people have a "negative dialogue" running through their heads during the day, which greatly impacts how they eat. Weight Watchers helps turn this thought process around, positively reinforcing good eating habits.

This is exactly why Jeffrey Hoffman, co-owner of Hoffman Auto Group, enthusiastically supported the entire concept of the challenge from the start. Sitting on the board of four hospitals, Hoffman has seen insight into how important healthy choices are for people. "So many things start with a

healthy diet. And if people would just take a walk at lunch, they would be amazed how much it would benefit them."

Once an avid runner, Hoffman now walks. He knows the importance of keeping up with an exercise program and watching his diet. He also understands and sympathizes with his employees, knowing it can take tremendous willpower to push away from the table. "I can't force them to eat better, but I can give them a reason to try," he said.

His brother, Bradley, agrees, remembering something their father always told them: "If you don't have your health, you don't have anything," Hoffman said he wished he had come up with the idea years ago. From a businessman's perspective, he knows that having employees who feel great and are healthy and fit translates into delivering better and more creative customer service. "We are very determined in our efforts that every individual who visits a Hoffman dealership has his or her needs met and exceeded," he said. "We want them to have that signature moment."

He is proud of his employees for taking the challenge. "The better they feel about themselves, the more effective they will likely be in all areas of their lives – on the job, at home, socially, and health-wise. It takes guts to do this program," Hoffman said. "Everybody who takes part in the contest will be coming out a winner. It's impossible to lose. Well, except the weight, of course."

Matthew Hoffman, vice president of Hoffman Auto Group, summed up the real perk of the challenge. Yes, there are some nice prizes and everyone stands to lose weight, while gaining in confidence and self-esteem. But the real kicker is, "They get to do it all on company time." *H*

Weight-ins and discussions about healthy food choices are part of the plan.



Shop instead of waiting.

Hoffman of Avon's courtesy shuttle service to and from Canton's Shoppes at Farmington Valley begins November 15.
from the Hoffman Auto Park in Avon:
(Honda, Toyota, and Nissan Service Depts.)

Departs
3 times daily:
/// **10 am**
/// **12 noon**
/// **3 pm**
goes to the Shoppes, then returns back to the Auto Park.

THE SHOPPES
at Farmington Valley



Ten for '11

Wondering about the top 2011 cars on display at Hoffman Auto Group dealerships this fall? We take you on a tour of the best.

BY KEITH GRIFFIN

The 10 brands that Hoffman sells at its 11 dealerships are generating lots of excitement this year – from electric cars to high performance sports coupes to new minivans and a totally fresh look for the classic sports utility vehicle. Model year 2011 is shaping up to be a great one in automotive manufacturing.

Audi

Where to begin with the 2011 Audi A8? It's a stunning combination of technology. On the outside, this fourth-generation model has the Audi Space Frame, made of aluminum and weighing 40 percent less than a comparable steel frame. It also offers 25 percent more torsional rigidity than its predecessor, for superior handling.

On the inside, it has an optional Bang & Olufsen Advanced sound system with 19 speakers, 19 channels and more than 1,400 watts of B&O-patented ICE-Power

output for a theater-like sound experience. Audi was committed to delivering the optimal aural experience with this sound system, developed as part of the overall design process.

It also has the industry's first full-LED front headlamps, with high and low beam, daytime running lights, cornering lights and turn signals in LED. In addition to great functionality, LED headlamps allow more design flexibility. The light modules can be arranged as part of the design of the car, and do not require the traditional round look of xenon headlamps.



2011 Ford Explorer

Ford

How significant is the new Ford Explorer? It's on the short list for North American Truck of the Year and it's not even available to the media or general public yet. (It debuts in November.)

Ford has reinvented the Explorer SUV with best-in-class fuel economy, improved driving dynamics and terrain management system – all wrapped in a modern, weight-saving design. It also has a class-leading array of airbags, including industry-first inflatable rear seat belts, Trinity front impact structure, AdvanceTrac with

RSC (Roll Stability Control) and Curve Control functionality.

The all-new Explorer also features MyFord Touch driver connect technology, and an SYNC integrated communications and entertainment system to help keep a driver's eyes on the road and hands on the wheel. Explorer offers more technology than in-class competitors, rivaling content found in premium SUVs.



Honda

The minivan market is showing resurgence and Honda is positioning itself to stay at the top of buyers' shopping lists with the 2011 Honda Odyssey. It's a minivan truly lacking for nothing, including space. A 6'4" adult can comfortably sit in the third row, which for years was a space delegated only to small children.

Honda has taken the second row and perfected it. The best part is that the row can be widened by up to 1.5 inches, which allows three car seats to be placed side-by-side. The second row can also handle two car seats while allowing access to the third row.

The Odyssey is lacking for nothing. Leading the list would be the optional rear entertainment system with a 16.2-inch ultra-wide split-screen display and an auxiliary High-Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI) video input.

Fuel economy numbers are strong, too. With the six-speed automatic transmission that is standard on the Odyssey Touring, the minivan is rated at 19-mpg city and 28-mpg highway by the EPA. (The five-speed automatic transmission is rated at 18/27.)

Lexus

The new CT 200h introduces Lexus' unique synthesis of unparalleled quality, sophistication and high technology to the premium compact segment for the first time. It combines revolutionary, full hybrid drive with the comfort, convenience, and carefully considered drive interaction that lies at the heart of the Lexus ownership experience.

The CT 200h features a unique, front

and rear lateral performance damping system that is a first for Lexus. It's designed to absorb and minimize undesirable body vibrations, offer a more linear steering feel and further contribute to ride comfort.

The CT 200h features a bespoke suspension design which combines a proven MacPherson strut front system with a new, fully-independent, double wishbone rear suspension for comfort and handling stability.



Nissan

The Nissan Leaf is the first mass-market electric vehicle to hit the U.S. market and it's generating a lot of buzz. It is the world's first affordable, zero-emission car.

Designed specifically for a lithium-ion battery-powered chassis, the Leaf is a medium-size hatchback that comfortably seats five adults and has a range of more than 100 miles to satisfy real-world consumer requirements. As a reminder, extensive consumer research demonstrates that this range satisfies the daily driving requirements of more than 70 percent of the world's consumers who drive cars.

Nissan Leaf is powered by laminated compact lithium-ion batteries, which generate power output of more than

90kW, while its electric motor delivers 80kW/280Nm. This ensures a highly responsive, fun-to-drive experience that is in keeping with what consumers have come to expect from traditional, gasoline-powered automobiles.

Nissan's approach makes charging easy and convenient. Nissan LEAF can be charged up to 80 percent of its full capacity in just under 30 minutes with a quick charger. Charging at home through a 200V outlet is estimated to take approximately eight hours – ample time to enable an overnight refresh for consumer and car alike.

Porsche

Paying homage to the first Porsche model to bear the Speedster name – the 356 Speedster – Porsche introduced a new 911 Speedster at the Paris Motor Show in early October. Significantly different from other members of the 911 family, this two-seat roadster features a 2.36" lower, more raked windscreen and the characteristic speedster double-bubble hardcover for the manual soft top.

Helping to define the striking profile of the new 2011 911 Speedster, the 1.73 metre wide-body from the AWD 911 models makes the rear-wheel-drive only Speedster stand out even more. The production run of this special car will be limited to 356 units worldwide, with approximately 100 heading to the U.S.

Its 3.8-liter flat six engine delivers 408 horsepower, 23 horsepower more than the 911 Carrera S Cabriolet, yet is EPA rated the same at 19-mpg city and 27-mpg highway. The 2011 Speedster reaches 0-60 mph in 4.2 seconds with Sport Chrono Plus and has a top-track speed of 190

2011 Lexus CT 200h





2011 911 Speedster

mph – all courtesy of Porsche Intelligent Performance.

Saab

The new Saab 9-5 is simply a stunning sedan that easily matches up to anything in its class. What’s best about this new full-size sedan is that it finally feels full sized and not just a small step up from the 9-3. Sure, it’s been largely developed through its partnership with GM, but it’s something true Saab fans have been waiting for – a new Saab.

This is a stunning car, with aggressive styling both front and rear. The Aero trim, the highest level offered, is powered by a 2.8-liter V-6 that produces 300 horsepower and 295 lb-ft of torque. It’s got the grunt to get you where you want to go, but provides a luxurious ride at all other times.

Scion

Following a successful first-generation model, Scion introduces the all-new 2011 Scion tC sports coupe. With premium style and features, the new tC redefines its segment to meet the desires of the evolving sports coupe buyer.

The all-new 2.5-liter inline four-cylinder engine offers the latest in efficient, lightweight technology, including Dual Variable Valve Timing with intelligence (VVT-i), roller rocker arms and a Variable-induction Intake Manifold System that changes the length of the air-intake pipe to supply more torque on demand.

The new engine produces 180 horsepower, 19 more than the previous model, and 11 additional lb-ft of torque.

Performance is further improved through a new intake-manifold design and a sport-tuned lightweight exhaust system that delivers a noticeably bold and aggressive sound.

The second-generation tC offers drivers the choice of two all-new six-speed transmissions, each adding driving excitement and excellent fuel economy. The manual transmission features confident shifts that are direct and precise. The automatic transmission boasts sequential shifting, providing an additional fun-to-drive element. As a result, the 2011 tC has quicker acceleration, and an increase in fuel economy over the previous generation tC.



Toyota

Toyota has significantly revised its popular Highlander and Highlander Hybrid crossover sport utility vehicles for 2011, giving them enhanced styling, additional standard amenities and new user technology.

The 2.7-liter four-cylinder engine, which was available only in the Highlander Base grade model for 2010, is now also offered in the SE, the most popular grade (front-wheel drive only). The Highlander Hybrid debuts a more powerful and advanced 3.5-liter V6

gasoline engine, along with a standard Tech Audio Package and unique exterior design elements. Yet, it still receives EPA estimated fuel economy ratings of 28-mpg city and 28-mpg highway.

The 2011 Highlander Hybrid is more easily distinguished from the gasoline model by its own unique grille and bumper design. It shares the new fenders and hood with the gas Highlander, but features color-keyed rockers with chrome accents, plus vertically stacked fog lamps. The projector beam headlights and redesigned taillights feature blue lens covers. Daytime running lamps are now standard on all Highlander models.



Smart

Make your smart fortwo look exactly like you want it to. smart USA is putting the power of creative expression into the hands of all smart fortwo owners with a new program that allows for vehicle customization. “smart Expressions” offers an unlimited palette of paint color choices and a variety of body wrap designs which allow owners to transform their smart fortwos into mobile masterpieces.

Owners can choose from 93 environmentally friendly, waterborne-based PPG Aquabase Plus and Aquabase Plus Tri-Coat paint colors. Additionally, owners can custom match any shade by bringing a color swatch to any dealership. Thanks to the “Any Color You Want” program, owners can color match the car to anything – from their favorite sports team color to that of their house, dog or favorite fashion accessory.

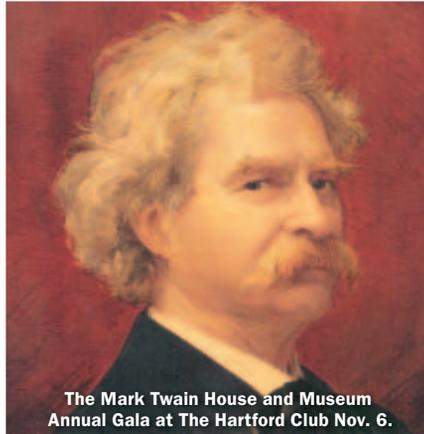
smart Expressions also offers a variety of full vehicle wrap designs. Vehicle wraps are made of laminated 3M vinyl and are available in two finishes, matte and gloss. Owners can select from a variety of pre-designed patterns. In addition, owners will soon be able to submit their own creative wrap concepts to their dealer for the ultimate customization. Wraps include a 3-year manufacturer warranty against fading, peeling and cracking. Partial vehicle wraps are also available. **H**

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.

□ **Through Jan. 2, 2011. Robots + Us.** Sure, robots are part of your everyday life. But have you ever built a 'bot? Or manipulated the mind of a robot? The Connecticut Science Center's newest featured exhibit is about the making of machines like us, and how our relationships with those machines may help us, change us, and teach us about ourselves. Great for ages 6 and up. \$14 to \$17. *Connecticut Science Center, 250 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford; 860-724-3623; www.ctsciencecenter.org.*

□ **Nov. 6. The Mark Twain House and Museum Annual Gala.** When Mark Twain celebrated his 70th birthday, he did it with style at the famed Delmonico's in New York City. As Hartford celebrates its famed resident, who would have marked his 175th birthday this year, the city is doing it in style too, at The Hartford Club. This event benefits the author's Hartford home and educational programs pre-



The Mark Twain House and Museum Annual Gala at The Hartford Club Nov. 6.

sented by the museum. 5:30 p.m. \$250. *The Hartford Club, 46 Prospect Street, Hartford; 860-280-3112; www.marktwainhouse.org.*

□ **Nov. 7. Connecticut Veteran's Day Parade.** The parade draws more than 25,000 spectators and has 40 veterans groups, 25 bands and over 3,500 marchers from 96 units and 49 towns. It is consid-

ered to be the largest veteran's parade in New England. 1 p.m. Free. *Trinity, Asylum and Main Streets, Hartford; 860-986-7254; www.ctveteransdayparade.com.*

□ **Nov. 10 - 21. Brighton Beach Memoirs.** Neil Simon continues his tale of growing up in a Jewish-American family in this funny and poignant semi-autobiography. In this story, 15-year-old Eugene Jerome, who wants to be a writer, keeps a daily journal documenting his infatuation with girls and baseball. Times vary. \$20 to \$32.50. *Playhouse on Park, 244 Park Road, West Hartford; 860-523-5900; www.playhouseonpark.org.*

□ **Nov. 13 - 14. Open Studio Hartford Weekend.** Celebrate the arts with four different events as artists and musicians gather to share their talents. On Nov. 13 and 14, Hartford will host the Open Studio Weekend for a self-guided tour at several spaces throughout the city, featuring works by local artists (11 a.m. to 5 p.m.).

4Runner 2011

Backpacking.
Hiking.
Camping.
Fishing & hunting.
Mountain biking.
Rock climbing.
Skiing and snowboarding.

The 5th Generation 4-Runner. See the possibilities with a test-drive today.

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HAPPENINGS

Three other events, at the ArtSpace Galley, include an opening reception and kickoff celebration (Nov. 4, 6 to 8 p.m.), a Massive Group Show (Nov. 5 to 12, gallery hours), and the First Annual CT Poetry Celebration (Nov. 6, 2 to 4 p.m.). Free. Galleries around Hartford; 860-295-0433; www.openstudiohartford.com.

□ **Nov. 26 - Dec. 30. "A Christmas Carol."** This performance has become a holiday tradition for many Hartford area families, and the show has gotten bigger and bet-

ter through the years. Come watch this classic Dickens' tale as Ebenezer Scrooge comes to life and learns valuable lessons from the ghosts of Christmas' past, present and future. With music, snow and flying spirits, it's sure to be a great time. Times vary. \$25 to \$60. *Hartford Stage, 50 Church Street, Hartford; 860-527-5151; www.hartfordstage.com.*

□ **Nov. 26. Disney Live! "Mickey's Magic Show."** Mickey, Minnie and a host of Disney friends come together with world-

class magicians to perform magic from legendary Disney films right before your eyes. See the Fairy Godmother transform Cinderella's rags into a beautiful ball gown in a split second; the spectacular levitation of Aladdin's Princess Jasmine; and the enchanted dancing brooms of Fantasia. This is a one-of-a-kind stage show you'll never forget. Times vary. 15 to \$65. *XL Center, 225 Trumbull Street, Hartford; 800-745-3000; ticketmaster.com.*

□ **Dec. 3 - 5. LEGO KidsFest.** Packed with activities, information and fun for the entire family, this event features main attractions that include: life-sized and miniature LEGO models built by Master Model Builders, intricate model and cityscapes built by LEGO fans, hobbyists and clubs; LEGO brick build and play tables; racecar ramps; and a LEGO Club Zone. The event also hosts private LEGO Club Meetings. *Connecticut Convention Center, 100 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford; 860-249-6000; www.legokidsfest.com.*

□ **Dec. 7 - 9. Cirque Dreams Holidaze.** This new musical extravaganza features an international cast of acrobats, aerialists, singers, dancers and musicians who perform astonishing feats that celebrate the holiday season and showcase pageantry and breathtaking artistry. Add the pomp, cirque-umstance of gingerbread men flipping through the air, toy soldiers marching on thin wires, and reindeer soaring high above a landscape of holiday wonderment and you will see why this show makes the perfect gift of entertainment. *Palace Theater, 100 East Main Street, Waterbury; 203-755-4700; www.palacetheaterct.org.*

□ **Dec. 8 - 19. That Holiday Feeling.** Chestnuts roasting. Sleigh bells ringing. Snowflakes falling. The sights and sounds of the season we all know and love. This evening of song, dance and music is guaranteed to give you that holiday feeling. *Playhouse on Park, 244 Park Road, West Hartford; 860-523-5900; www.playhouseonpark.org.*

□ **Dec. 18 - 19. The Nutmeg Ballet's Nutcracker.** Enjoy yourself this yuletide season as you travel with young Clara to the enchanted Land of Sweets. The Nutmeg Ballet brings Tchaikovsky's traditional version of The Nutcracker back to The Bushnell. This holiday favorite brings to life toy soldiers, dueling mice, princesses and sugarplums – a delicious treat for the child in all of us. Family-friendly pricing and times. *The Bushnell, 166 Capitol Avenue, Hartford; 860-987-5900; www.bushnell.org. H*

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