



The Southington Observer

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FREE



Southington YMCA graduates its first Livestrong class, Page 2

Relay for Life holds kick-off dinner, plans for event, Page 3

SHS wrestlers honor alumni, showcase new spotlight, Page 20

Taking the plunge



Photo courtesy of SOUTHLINGTON YMCA

The Southington YMCA Polar Plunge went off without a hitch Saturday, despite several inches of snow and an unfrozen pond. Still, the plungers were able to raise \$20,000 for Camp Sloper scholarships.

Above, Gumby and friends take the plunge. For more photos, see page 18.

School board to face tough decisions

By ROB GLIDDEN
STAFF WRITER

The Board of Education has begun to examine the \$82.7 million budget request from Superintendent Dr. Joseph Erardi, a process that will require them to make difficult decisions.

The proposed budget is about \$3 million more than the current budget, an increase of 3.88 percent. About a third of this increase is attributed to the "funding cliff" left behind by a one-time federal grant of \$1.16 million that the school district used in the last budget process.

Other factors contributing to the increase are more

familiar, including contractual salary increases, decreased state assistance, rising transportation costs and increases in magnet school tuition.

Erardi said he believed an increase over 4 percent would simply be asking too much of the community. Ultimately, he proposed the elimination of 22 full-time positions throughout the district, which reduced the budget request by about \$773,000.

"This is a recommendation that I do not support," Erardi said. "It is brought out of necessity. But we are still not talking about closing any schools or any major areas of instruction. It maintains what

I think is most important – the core teaching and learning in our schools."

Four positions at Southington High School, one from each middle school, nine positions at the elementary schools, and 7 special education paraprofessional positions would be eliminated.

School administrators were confident the reductions would have only a minimal impact on class size, but the issue was still a major point of concern for the board.

"I'm really uncomfortable with the staff piece," said

See BUDGET, page 16

Sewer public hearing set Residents upset with doubling price

By ROB GLIDDEN
STAFF WRITER

A public hearing on the problematic Sewer Assessment 34 is set for the Town Council's meeting on Feb. 14, but some residents in the area got an early start on voicing their concerns during Monday's meeting.

Sewer Assessment 34 refers to three projects which were completed in 2009. The first project was on a section of West Street that is almost entirely com-

mercial. The second project was for a small neighborhood on Williamsburg Drive. The third was for a series of small streets, including Annelise Avenue, Skyline Drive, Cedar Drive and Reussner Road.

The three projects involve 72 sewer customers. During public hearings for these projects, residents in these areas were told they would be assessed between \$60 and \$80 per foot of street frontage on their

property, with a one-time lateral charge of \$750. The projects were completed, but the property owners have yet to be billed.

In the meantime, assessment and lateral fees have doubled, meaning that when the bills are finally received, they could be twice as much as the original estimates.

"All of you would be appalled if I quoted you a

See SEWERS, page 16

Southington Reads author selected

By ED HARRIS
Editor

Dr. Yvonne Thornton, a national best-selling author of two autobiographies, was chosen as the 2012 Southington Reads author. This is the first year that the event will feature two books, "Ditchdigger's Daughters" and "Something to Prove."

"We thought it would be beneficial for everyone to get the whole story," said Southington Library Adult Program Coordinator and Publicist Jeanne Chmielewski. "It is an awesome story. It's a touching story."

Thornton is listed in *Who's Who in America*, *Who's Who in the World*, the *Best Doctors in the New York Metro Area* and was recently listed as *New York Magazine's* top six specialists in her field in New York City. She has hosted her own television show and has appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and *Good Morning, America*.

Thornton was named one of the five most influen-



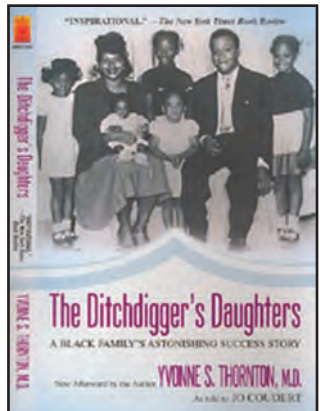
Dr. Yvonne Thornton

tial black women of 2011 by Shecky's online magazine. The other honorees were Oprah Winfrey, Michelle Obama, Halle Barry and Jennifer Hudson.

She and her family, including five sisters, also performed in an all girls band, the Thornton Sisters. The group performed at the Apollo and briefly signed with Atlantic Records before her father urged his daughters into the medical field.

"I love to speak about learning and education,"

See AUTHOR, page 16



This is the first year that the library will showcase two books.



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