

## Your Views

## Southington says

## Who is your best friend?



"Amanda, she is a kind and caring person."



"Alize. She is always there for me good times and bad. I remember she was there for me when I felt bad about not making the basketball team."



"Ryan, I have been playing baseball with him for three or four years now. We have known each other for quite a while."



"Garrison. We have known each other since pre school. We do everything together."



"Jasmine. I have known her since I was a baby. Our moms went to college together. She is the most genuine person I know."

Photos by  
Tammi Knapik

Alize Rodriguez  
Southington

Amanda Delorme  
Southington

Aaron Mallett  
Southington

Paul Schweiger  
Southington

Brianna Rainey  
Southington

## Prom dresses sought

Kristen's Kloset, a program sponsored by Southington Youth Services that provides Prom essentials for students with financial or other difficulties, is now accepting donations of gently used prom gowns, shoes, jewelry and purses. Cash

donations to help with tux rentals and prom bids are also welcomed.

The program is in its sixth year and is named for Kristen Warner, a 13 year old honor student and gymnast, who was tragically killed in a car accident in 2004. This

program honors her memory.

Donations can be dropped off at the Youth Services office at 93 Main Street, Mondays through Fridays from 8:30a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information, call Southington Youth Services at (860)276-6281.

## Group offers scholarships

The Lions Club of Southington has announced that it is again offering three scholarships to graduating high school seniors who will be furthering their education at a college or university of their choice. Each scholarship is valued at \$2,000.

Qualifying students must be Southington resi-

dents attending any of the area high schools, and accepted at an accredited 4-year college or university. Applications will be evaluated based on academic accomplishments, community service, financial need, and rules as defined on the application. Application forms will be available to

SHS students in their Guidance Dept., while seniors attending other area high schools can request applications via email to southingtonlionsclub@yahoo.com.

Applications must be received by the Lions Club Scholarship Committee by March 15, 2012.

## Letters

## Ice skating rink is set up

To the Editor,

Southington now has a new recreational activity to pursue - ice skating! A temporary ice rink has been installed at Memorial Park thanks to the work of volunteers and the generosity of several local businesses and private donors.

As many residents who install similar rinks in their backyards know, temporary rinks do not cause damage to the underlying ground. Instead, they provide an opportunity for skating enthusiasts to enjoy the sport and the fresh air during the long winter months year after year.

This new community offering could not have come about without the generosity of seven donors who immediately stepped up to fund the rink.

Donations came from ESPN, Billy Carlson Heating & Air Conditioning, PTE Energy, The Calvanese Foundation, Ray Gorman and family, an anonymous local donor and Yarde Metals. Pete Rappoccio of Sign Pro donated the signage at the rink site.

Also invaluable were our volunteers who donated their time and efforts to install the rink over the New Year's weekend. Thank you to the following volunteers: Joe and Jake Miceli, Marylou, Zach and Shane Domian, Matthew and Connor Stifel, Corey Kosienki, Tad Rogala and Fire Chief Buddy Clark. Thank you also to various town hall staff, boards and commissions for the collaboration on this project, including Recreation Director Dave Lapreay, Assistant Superintendent of

Parks Mike Manware, Highway Superintendent Steve Wlodkowski, Parks Dept. employees Steve Pompei and Gary O'Hala and the Southington Fire Dept. crew, manned by Cpt. Pete Kurtz.

Once Mother Nature cooperates, the rink will be open daily to the public until 10 p.m., the same hours as the park. Moreover, Southington North Baseball League has generously offered the use of its snack stand for civic groups to sell hot chocolate to skating enthusiasts.

Thank you again to all who brought this idea to fruition for our great community. Start sharpening your skates and we'll see everyone at the rink!

Michael Domian  
Dawn A. Miceli

## Op/Ed

## Looking within D-SNAP

By JOE MARKLEY  
Special to The Observer

Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or D-SNAP is given around the country as disaster relief to those in need following a Presidential major disaster declaration. The program is part of the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

One only needed to show up to a DSS office, present identification and fill out an application including information about earnings and family size.

Intake workers would then assess the information and give out debit cards on site to qualified applicants.

Back in October, news reports showed scenes of chaos with long lines at the numerous State Department of Social Services processing centers. I personally called upon the State auditors to look into this as it seemed to me the process was flawed and those who were being left in the dark. The auditors said earlier this month that a total of 74,230 people received the aid. (Their final audit has yet to be released.)

Eligible households were to receive food aid ranging from \$200 for a single adult to \$1,202 for a family of eight.

The maximum month-

ly "take-home income and liquid assets" an applicant could have for the covered 30-day period was: \$2,186 for a single adult, \$2,847 for a household of two, \$3,272 for a household of three, \$3,859 for a household of four, \$4,245 for a household of five, \$4,753 for a household of six, \$5,116 for a household of seven and \$5,479 for a household of eight.

About 800 state employees obtained the assistance, 44 are under close review and dozens face disciplinary hearings and even criminal investigation for filling out fraudulent applications. An additional 29 employees already have been cleared of any wrongdoing.

This is all well and good, but when do we start looking into the agency and the workers who may have allowed the fraud to take place?

After the storm, the state Department of Social Services announced that \$12.4 million would be made available through the D-SNAP program, for any damages or expenses that resulted from the storm including: replacing spoiled food, loss of income, health care expenses, temporary shelter costs and property repair.

It has been widely reported that some state employees had not accurately listed their assets or even added the names of

deceased relatives on the application in an attempt to qualify.

This is not an honest mistake, this is fraud.

Since the state is their employer, their salaries are known and can be easily compared to what was listed on the D-SNAP application. I suspect some will be fired for taking aid that wasn't rightfully theirs.

However, we should also be looking into the agency to see if the department was prepared to administer the program with all the oversights necessary.

Were managers or intake workers allowing the fraud? How many applicants were well intentioned, but may have had their applications fraudulently or negligently approved by DSS employees, as some news reports have suggested?

It is hard to imagine all of the suspected state employees who received aid - were falsifying documents on their own. It is even more difficult to imagine that this is the first time a program geared to help the most vulnerable was taken advantage of. We have an obligation to maintain the public trust.

We shouldn't just focus on those who stood in line. The folks on the other side of the counter may be just as culpable.

Joe Markely (R-16) is Southington's state senator.

## Send us your letters!

We welcome letters to the editor from all of our readers. Send your letter to editor Ed Harris at eharris@SouthingtonObserver.com. Deadline is 5 p.m. Friday for the following week's edition. The editor reserves the right to edit all letters for length or grammar.