



Southington all right as Gov. Rell looks to cut back on bonded items, Page 3

Cardboard sleds take over Mount Southington for the day, Page 16

Unified Sports to receive funding and support from UNICO, Page 17

Gymnasts are back on top



VINNY ROSSITTO

On Saturday, Feb. 27, the Lady Knight gymnastics team earned their fifth Class L title in six years. See story, page 17 and photos, page 18.

Legislators meet with school officials

By ROB GLIDDEN
STAFF WRITER

Southington's local legislators discussed educational concerns with the Board of Education during a recent breakfast event.

State Representatives Zeke Zalaski (D-81), John "Corky" Mazurek (D-80) and Joe Aresimowicz (D-30) sat in front of an audience full of teachers, administrators and even some students. State Senator Sam Caligiuri (R-16) was unable to attend.

Though the meeting was informal and friendly, the news from the state level was far from positive. The state legislature anguished over their two-year budget last year, but school districts are already being affected by newer cuts made to try and balance the numbers.

"The budget that got put together was a house of cards," Mazurek said. "It collapsed almost immediately."

A decrease in funding from the state, particularly for mandated special-edu-

cation costs, plays a large part in the increase in this year's proposed education budget. In addition to that, other mandated expenses, such as the infamous in-school suspension legislation, continue to increase the financial burden on the schools.

"When suggestions are made at the bureaucratic level, they really need to be evaluated," said board

See BREAKFAST, page 4

Weichsel seeks \$45 million

Budget request upsets Board of Finance

By ROB GLIDDEN
STAFF WRITER

Town Manager John Weichsel has submitted his annual budget proposal, and the requested increase seems unlikely to sit well with the Board of Finance.

Weichsel has asked for a total budget of \$45,093,339, which amounts to an increase of \$2,592,272, or 6.1 percent.

"We have to bring that number down," said

Finance Board Chairman Wayne Stanforth. "I'm not sure yet where we will cut, especially because the state is making things so much harder for us. It's going to be difficult like it always is."

Several issues with the state government are also cited in the note by Weichsel that introduces the budget. The town will be required to conduct the expensive process of revaluation during the next budget year,

despite protests. This adds a \$200,000 increase to the budget for the Assessor's Department.

Like the Board of Education, the town is also struggling with health insurance costs that rise year after year. This year, these costs added \$205,000.

One of the largest increases had to do with a change of the state's proce-

See BUDGET, page 4

STEPS starts youth committees

By ROB GLIDDEN
STAFF WRITER

Southington's Town Wide Effort to Promote Success (STEPS) is beginning a new project which encourages the youth in town to take a leading role in the group's future.

STEPS is establishing a group of "youth committees" to further involve local kids.

Southington High School teacher Dan Hart is one of the STEPS leaders most involved in this new initiative.

"We got STEPS started and a lot of kids were involved, but it was mostly about planning the big events," Hart said. "We wanted more of their ideas and more input. It shouldn't be about adults deciding

what work we should do in the community for kids. They should have a say in what we do."

Similar to how they are structured in local government, the various committees will be given specific areas to focus on, and will periodically report to the STEPS board at large.

See STEPS, page 4



TAMMI KNAPIK

Christopher Agostino, of Transformations, paints the face of Krysta Tsangarides during a recent event at the Southington Library.

Step Inside

Arts	14	Good Times	13	Obituaries	12
Classified	26	Listings	12	Police	5
Editorial	6	Milestones	10	Sports	17

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