

WESTERLY THE SUN

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Council plan under fire from ACLU

Citizens' comments proposal would stifle free speech, group says



By Dale P. Faulkner
Sun staff writer

WESTERLY — A proposal under consideration by the Town Council to prohibit citizens from discussing town employees' job performance and credentials "undermines free speech rights"

established by the U.S. Constitution, according to the state branch of the American Civil Liberties Union.

In a letter sent to the council Friday, Steven Brown, Rhode Island ACLU executive director, urges the council to reject the proposed amendment to its rules of procedure and notes his organization has succeeded in court challenges of similar policies in other municipalities, including Providence and Tiverton.

In question is a policy that, if adopted, would prohibit "any member of the public [from addressing] matters that pertain to the job performance or credentials of any particular employee by name, position or implication." According to a draft, the policy would protect municipal employees' "rights to privacy" and would "prevent and protect them from vicious and unwarranted public attacks, harassment, defamation and humiliation."

Violations of the policy would be followed by a request for the speaker to leave the council chambers. Instead of speaking in public, citizens would be encouraged to seek out the town manager to communicate concerns about town employees. Town Council President James Silvestri said the proposed change evolved out of an earlier discussion by the council and appears to be based on a memorandum developed by Town At-

See ACLU, A5

The Week Ahead

CAST YOUR BALLOTS

There may be only four names on the ballot but local Democrats have a primary Tuesday for their U.S. Congressional and state General Assembly candidates. Three locations will serve as voting spots for the primary: The Bradford Citizens Club, Westerly Middle School and Springbrook School. For information, stop by Town Hall or call the Board of Canvassers at 401-348-2503, or visit elections.state.ri.us.

THE UNLIKELY THERAPY DOG

Stop by the Savoy Bookshop Wednesday to hear a talk by author Jean Baur, who'll talk about Bella and her book "Joy Unleashed: The Story of Bella, An Unlikely Therapy Dog." The event is free, and Savoy will donate a portion of the book sales to Stand Up for Animals. A raffle is included with prizes donated by Fleming's Feed.

MANIACS IN MISQUAMICUT

Hear one of the original alternative rock bands, 10,000 Maniacs, which put "Candy Everybody Wants" on the charts, this Saturday when the Misquamicut Business Association presents Fallfest 2016. Visit misquamicutfestival.org for details and tickets.

PADDY'S OLYMPICS

Break the ice with your teammates Sunday during the first-ever Paddy's Beach Olympics, a benefit for the Lions Club of Westerly at Paddy's Misquamicut Beach. Cost is \$200 per six-person team. Each team must have at least two women. Call 401-596-2610.

COCKTAILS FOR A CAUSE

Pop on over to Pods Hilltop Café Thursday when Westerly Health Center will host "Cocktails for a Cause," a fundraiser to promote Alzheimer's awareness. Tickets are \$10 and include an appetizer buffet. All proceeds will benefit Alzheimer's Association.

MINECRAFT ADVENTURES

Join West Kingston native Sean Fay Wolfe, author of the "Unofficial Minecraft-Fan Adventure Series: The Elementia Chronicles," Thursday at 6 p.m. at the Westerly Public Library. He will discuss the ins and outs of being a teen author. There will be a book-signing after the talk.

FAIRY TALE TABLEAUX

Enjoy a viola and piano concert Sunday at the North Stonington Historical Society when Alison Holt and Aymeric Dupré la Tour present "Fairy Tale Tableaux, Childhood Scenes, and an Alpine Idyll" at the Stephen Main House in North Stonington. Two concerts, at 4 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$20 per person and reservations are required. Call 860-599-3608 or Laurie at 860-245-5322.

— Nancy Burns-Fusaro

Surf gives back ring with a little help

Family wedding band unearthed at Westerly Town Beach

By Nancy Burns-Fusaro
Sun staff writer

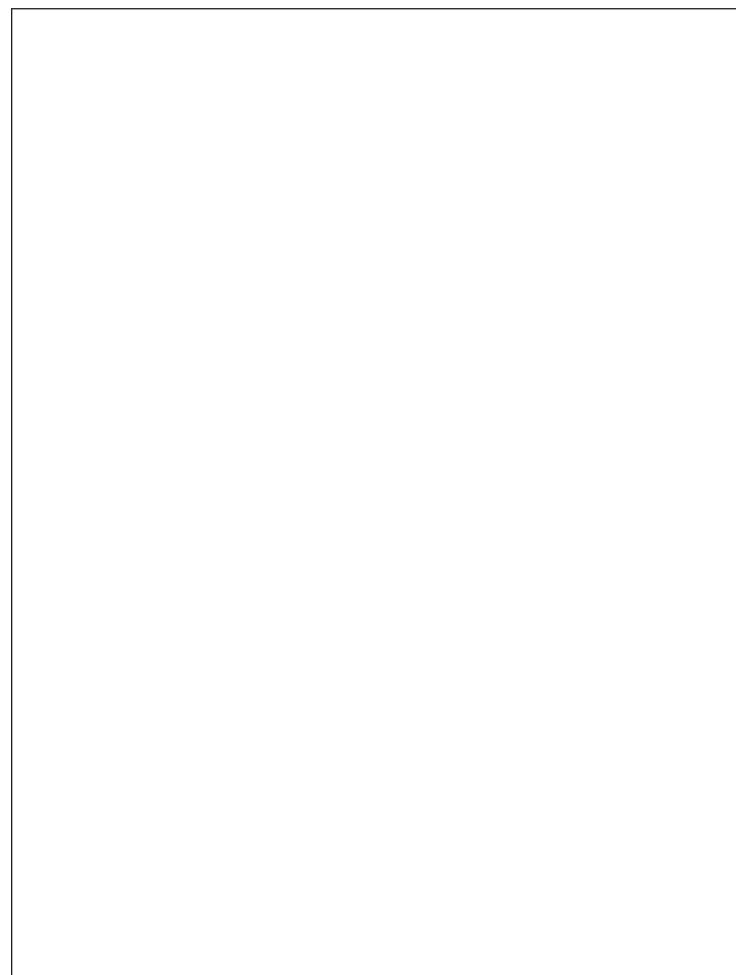
WESTERLY — Ellen and Michael Stefanski had their share of losses last month, but following a visit from Keith Wille and his XP Deus, a little something meaningful was found.

The Stefanskis, who grew up in the Westerly-Stonington area and now live in San Diego, had come back home for the funeral of Michael's brother, Louis, a Stonington High School hall of famer and popular athlete who died unexpectedly in August at the age of 55. On their somber visit, they also lost a symbol of their love in the waters off the Westerly Town Beach.

That was after the funeral, and after the Stefanskis — who have been married for nearly 30 years — drove down Liberty Street in Pawcatuck to see an empty space instead of the church where they were married in November 1986.

They remembered that St. Michael's was slated for a renovation, but seeing the empty lot, they said, added to their grief.

Then, days later, despite Ellen's reservations, Michael hopped on an old 10-speed bike and pedaled to Westerly Town Beach to meet his niece Kaitlyn. He was registered for a charity swim back in San Diego and was de-



Groton resident Keith Wille, of the Ring Finders, found Michael Stefanski's wedding ring, above right, after Stefanski had lost it at Westerly Town Beach last month. | Photos submitted

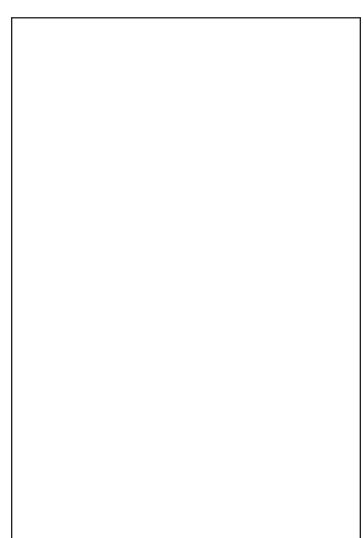
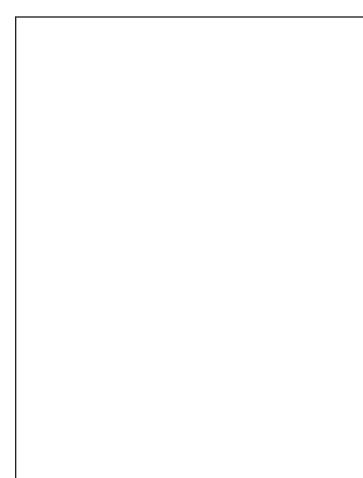
termined to keep up with his training.

He wasn't 50 yards out, he recalled, when he had a "sinking feeling."

His wedding ring had slipped off his finger and disappeared in the ocean below.

No ordinary ring, Michael's wedding ring once belonged to his father, the late John Stefanski, and had been in the family for generations, Michael said.

When they were married, they used the same ring, inscribing their initials and wedding date, said Ellen, a 1969 Westerly High School graduate who changed



Ellen and Michael Stefanski

her last name from Barton to Stefanski when she married Michael.

Initially, Michael, a 1976 Stonington graduate, thought he could dive down and find the ring.

See Ring, A5

'Leaf' the beaten path for stunning foliage

Associated Press

The Northeast's fall foliage dazzles locals and draws millions of tourists, but many flock to the same tired vantage points.

Those willing to venture off the beaten path will be rewarded with stunning and comparatively uncrowded autumn vistas — and some killer selfies.

Here's your guide to the best corners of New England and upstate New York for leaf-peeping:

Rhode Island

For an urban leaf-peeping experience, there are few places more picturesque than historic Benefit Street in Providence, Rhode Island. Hundred-year-old elms and other mature trees

provide a canopy of spectacular color over brick sidewalks.

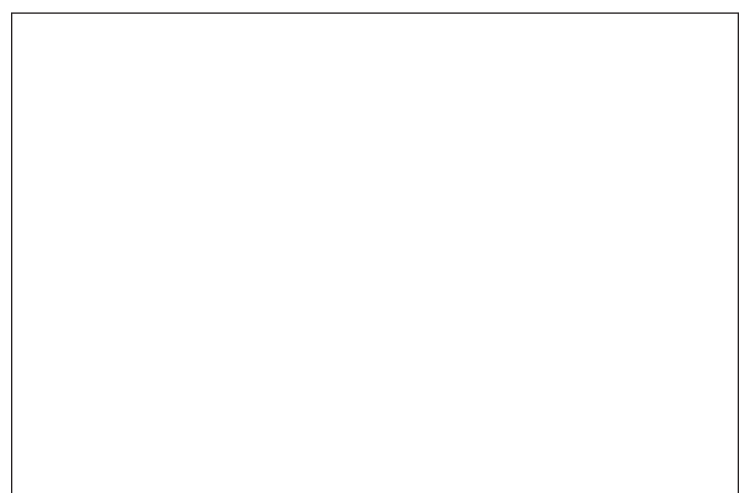
The mile-long street runs past a collection of Colonial, Federal and Greek Revival-style homes, and several historic churches, including the First Baptist Church in America. Situated midway up the steep College Hill, it offers occasional glimpses of a more modern downtown, the Rhode Island State House and rivers below. Above it is the main campus of Brown University, another lovely spot for fall color.

— Michelle R. Smith

Connecticut

The Heublein Tower in Sims-

See Foliage, A5



Elms and other trees provide a canopy of color in the fall on historic Benefit Street in Providence. The mile-long street runs past a collection of Colonial, Federal and Greek Revival-style homes and several historic churches.

| N. Millard, GoProvidence via Associated Press

INSIDE

Stonington sees mixed results in Smarter Balanced test scores. **A3**

Republicans vie for seats on Chariho School Committee. **A3**

Highs and lows: Stonington zoning eyes tweaks for digital age. **A4**

Westerly man dies after motorcycle crash on Potter Hill Road. **A5**

Abby, **B5**
Classified, **B7**
Comics, **B4**
Crossword, **B5**
Lottery, **B8**

Movies, **A7**
Obituaries, **A5**
Opinion, **A4**
Public Notices, **B7**
Nation & World, **B6**

LOCAL



Westerly WARM Center holds Clambake. **A3**

FRONT PORCH NEWS



Florence Marie celebrates 100th birthday. **A8**

SPORTS



Connecticut runners win Surfdown marathon. **B1**

NATION & WORLD



Campaign casts shadow over 9/11 anniversary. **B6**



High 75
Low 55

Weather: **B8**

123rd year, No. 35

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