

Business Spotlight

Filippetti joins board of directors of Charter Oak Federal Credit Union

WATERFORD — Paul Filippetti, a partner with the accounting firm Hoyt, Filippetti & Malaghan LLC, of Westerly and Groton, has been appointed to the board of directors of Charter Oak Federal

Credit Union. Filippetti has served as a member of the credit union's supervisory committee since January 2012.



Filippetti

Filippetti, of Mystic, received his accounting degree from the University of Connecticut. He has been a member of the credit union since 1984 and has more than 30 years of experience with not-for-profit organizations. He is active in professional and community organizations, including the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Connecticut Society of CPAs, and is the treasurer for the Groton Parks Foundation and the Groton Housing Authority.

He is filling a board vacancy created by the death on Dec. 13 of Pierre "Pete" Brochu, a director since 1981 and past chairman. Brochu, 84, of Waterford, worked for 45 years at Electric Boat, retiring in 1995 as a design engineering supervisor. Filippetti was appointed by the board and is one of three volunteer directors facing election at Charter Oak's annual meeting in April. His term would be for three years.

The board chairman, Guy Henry, of Oakdale, said that Filippetti's "extensive experience in the accounting and financial-services field combined with his knowledge of Charter Oak as a supervisory committee member will be strong assets to our board."

— Bob Laux-Bachand

Restaurant and bar sales up 4 percent in Westerly

Figures released last week by the Rhode Island Department of Revenue show that sales recorded by Westerly's restaurant and bar industry in the first four months of fiscal 2017 were running 4.1 percent higher than the same period a year earlier. The figures, compiled by the Office of Revenue Analysis, are derived from the state's 1 percent meal and beverage tax, which is returned to the municipality.

From July through October 2016, the Westerly businesses had meal and beverage sales of more than \$44 million, compared with \$42.3 million in the same months of 2015. The town's take thus amounted to \$440,189. Of that total, the Westerly tax collection in October was \$67,429, up 11.6 percent from October 2015. For September, the number was \$98,600, up 11.2 percent. The business in September nearly equaled the tax collections of the first full month of the summer, in June 2016, which totaled \$98,846.

The year-to-date tax collections due to be rebated to other area towns are as follows: Charlestown \$87,038, up 13.7 percent for the first four months of fiscal 2017; Hopkinton, \$15,791, down 26 percent; and Richmond, \$51,954, down 4.8 percent.

— Bob Laux-Bachand

PNC to host tax preparation session on Thursday

PAWCATUCK — The Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center at 27 Chase St. will be the host site for a tax preparation session on the afternoon of Thursday, Feb. 9. Six tax preparers with AARP will be on hand to help seniors. Call Kim Buck for an appointment at 860-599-3285 ext. 13.

Warren report on Westerly shows 13.4 percent gain in single-family home sales

Final 2016 figures for home sales in Westerly, as compiled by The Warren Group, show a 13.4 percent increase over 2015, the firm reported last week.

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Participants, all wearing helmets, successfully escape from a submerged aircraft simulator during a training exercise at Survival Systems USA in Groton. The exercise was part of an underwater egress certification program. Safety divers were in the pool to assist participants, if needed.

| Photos by Harold Hanka, The Westerly Sun

Stress builds skills and confidence

Survival Systems expands courses to team and leadership development



By Catherine Hewitt
Sun staff writer

GROTON — Worst case scenario: Your plane has crashed into water and is rapidly sinking. How do you react?

Aviators and everyday people are learning to face crises like that one with clarity and confidence through training courses at Survival Systems USA, located at 144 Tower Avenue across from the Groton-New London Airport.

"It was scary being flipped upside down in a pool like that but in the last couple of go-rounds it wasn't scary anymore."

Luke Groskin, Science Friday

The company, established in 1999, specializes in underwater egress certification and has expanded the principles of its basic survival course into a leadership and team development program.

Much of the training takes place in an indoor pool using the Modular Egress Training Simulator, a life-size model of the cockpit and passenger area of a helicopter or small plane. The simulator is raised and lowered into the pool with a crane attached to a steel beam that runs along the ceiling. For added realism, the simulator can also spin so that it stops upside down or sideways in the water. Other machines can add high winds, rain, smoke, fire, and darkness.

Students begin with three or four hours of training in the classroom and then move on to the pool where their first exercise is



Two of the trainees are instructed in the proper method to engage emergency exit windows, before being submerged in the pool. The aircraft fuselage simulator was spun upside down, forcing the participants to use survival skills they had been taught.

to be strapped in and flipped upside down in a "dunking chair" from which they have to escape.

"I expected to be terrified and uncomfortable and that's exactly what I was," said Luke Groskin, an in-house video producer for Science Friday in New York City, who recently did the survival skills training because it was a requirement for an upcoming trip to coastal Alaska with a polar bear researcher. "It was scary being flipped upside down in a pool like that but in the last couple of go-rounds it wasn't scary anymore, it was confidence-boosting."

Mastering the dunking chair is a steppingstone to getting into the simulator, said Keith Wille, development manager at the company.

"It's where they experience disorientation — the 'up the nose,' a little bit of panic — this is where they experience this in the first time," he said. "Once they're successful in the chair, it's a small win and they're starting to gain a little bit of confidence, so then they move on to the next

exercise, which builds toward the next one, getting a little bit harder each time."

Whether the students are pilots, crew, or passengers with some type of overwater flight risk, or corporate workers doing the leadership training course, no one knows exactly what to expect during the exercises. It levels the playing field, Wille said.

"If someone's in their late 60s who's been in a job for 30 years, and a millennial in their early 20s who has no work experience, when they get in that pool, they have the same level of knowledge, so I think it breaks down a lot of barriers in the workplace," he said. "It puts them on the same page when they start — they're all 'new' employees when they walk in here and it gives them the opportunity to face something they've never faced before and to succeed."

One of the most important lessons for students is to orient themselves using physical markers to find their way out of a submerged vessel.

"They learn how to use refer-

ence points, which are the things we use to replace your sense of vision," said Wille. "Even when hanging upside down, the last step after locating the best egress is to remove your seat belt."

Remembering that step is difficult, even after multiple trainings, said Craig Stein, a lead captain pilot for Jet Aviation Holdings USA of Teterboro, New Jersey, who flies AW129 helicopters over water on a regular basis. Because his company requires recertification required every two years, Stein has taken the class three times.

"It's still stressful but I know each time when you go in there and you're upside down, don't touch that seat belt, stay oriented and stay calm," said Stein. "We're flying 80 percent over water, so if I'm ever put in that situation, I have the skills and the confidence to deal with it."

For students in the leadership course, the training de-emphasizes survival skills and focuses on how the exercises translate in the workplace.

"It's dealing with emergencies and stress at work," Wille said. "The idea is the more you experience a situation like this, the better you're prepared to handle something unexpected at work, whether it be an emergency, a temper, or an argument."

The team development exercises include trust-building experiences like getting into a raft as a group without leaving anyone behind and swimming across the pool while linked together.

"The person who is normally sitting back in the corner, not participating, doesn't have a choice, they have to participate," said Wille. "Nobody's got a cellphone here so we've got 100 percent of their attention — that, in combination with making them all work together, puts them in a bonding situation that they don't experience very often."

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FINANCIAL FOCUS

On Valentine's Day, consider financial gifts for loved one



By Frank Wallington

Last year, Americans spent more than \$19 billion on Valentine's Day gifts, according to the National Retail Federation, with the majority of this money going to flowers, candy, cards and an evening out. These gifts were thoughtful, of course, and no doubt appreciated, but they were also somewhat disposable, for want of a better word. On the other hand, some financial gifts can have a pretty long shelf life.

Beyond simply enclosing some money in a card, what sort of financial gifts can you give? The answer depends somewhat on the recipient. For example, if your sweet-

heart is also your spouse, some of the gifts suggested below may be redundant to the financial moves you make together. However, if you aren't married, or if you and your spouse maintain separate finances, these ideas may make excellent Valentine's Day presents:

■ **IRA contributions:** Technically, you can't contribute directly to someone else's traditional or Roth IRA, but you can write a check to your loved one, keeping in mind that he or she is free to use the money for any purpose. Like most people, your valentine may not usually contribute the yearly maximum amount. In 2017, it is \$5,500, or \$6,500 if you're 50 or older, so your check should be quite welcome. A traditional IRA can grow on tax-deferred basis, and con-

tributions may be tax-deductible. (Taxes are due upon withdrawal, and any withdrawals you make before you reach 59½ may be subject to a 10 percent IRS penalty. A Roth IRA's earnings are distributed tax-free, provided withdrawals aren't taken until the account owner is 59½ and has had the IRA for at least five years.)

■ **Charitable gifts:** Consider making a gift to a charitable organization supported by your loved one. When you send cash to a qualified charity, you can get a tax deduction, but you might gain even bigger benefits by donating appreciated securities you've held for more than one year. By doing so, you can generally deduct the value of the securities, based on their worth when you make the gift. Plus,

neither you nor the charity will have to pay capital gains taxes on the donated investments.

■ **Contributions to an emergency fund:** It's a good idea for everyone to maintain an emergency fund to cover unanticipated expenses, such as a major car repair, a new furnace or out-of-pocket medical bills. If your valentine doesn't have such a fund, consider helping him or her establish one, with the money going to a liquid, low-risk account.

■ **Gym membership:** Although not actually a financial gift, a gym membership can nonetheless bring some positive economic results to your valentine. For one thing, the insurance industry is providing more incentives to encourage people to exercise and live healthier

lifestyles. But even if a gym membership doesn't give your loved one a break on insurance premiums, it can nonetheless result in better physical conditioning, which, in turn, could ultimately result in lower medical costs.

On Valentine's Day, you may still want to get your sweetheart something associated with the holiday. But if it's within your means to do so, also consider one of the above suggestions for financial gifts. Your generosity will still be felt long after the chocolates are eaten and the flowers have faded.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones financial adviser. Frank Wallington is an Edward Jones financial adviser in Westerly. 401-596-6100.