

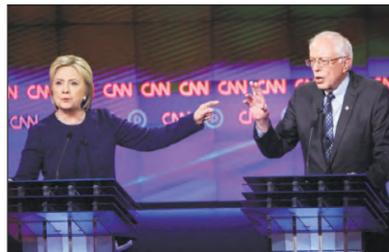
Malloy aims to cut funds from state elections panel

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Former first lady Nancy Reagan remembered

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Democrats debate

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HEAD INJURIES IN CONNECTICUT

Data show extent of sports concussions

Thousands of state students suffered brain injuries last year, hundreds at high school level of interscholastic sports

By Ken Dixon

HARTFORD — More than 5,500 Connecticut schoolchildren sustained concussions last year, including 434 in the town of

Fairfield, according to the first statewide tally of the serious head injury. The data on 140 school districts, obtained by Hearst Connecticut Media under the state Freedom of In-

formation Act, indicates hundreds of concussions occurred at the high-school level of interscholastic sports, but many more occurred during activities and sports outside school and

were reported by parents to administrators and teachers.

"I'm very surprised at the number of concussions," said state Rep. Diana Urban, D-Stonington, co-chairman of the Legislative Committee on Children, where most of the concussion reforms have originated in recent

years. "The data is incredibly important."

State lawmakers, who in recent years have raised the standards of care for athletes and mandated education for coaches and parents, said the data is disturbing — and solid evidence of the need to expand awareness and training to

parents of even the youngest children taking part in sports.

But the surveys, now being studied for a forthcoming report by the state Department of Public Health, are incomplete. Numbers reported from some towns don't always

See Injuries on A5

GAMBLING

Study pitches Fairfield County casino

Gaming facility between Greenwich, Bridgeport would generate money, create about 5,000 jobs

By Jim Shay

A new study has found building a casino off Interstate 95 in southwestern Connecticut would generate more money for the state and create more jobs than constructing a new gaming facility in the Hartford area.

The Oxford Economics study was commissioned by MGM Resorts International, the company that plans to build a casino in Springfield, Mass.

The General Assembly passed legislation last year that opens the door for adding a third state casino, run by the Mashantucket Pequot and the Mohegan tribes near the Massachusetts border, that would reduce the loss of revenue and jobs in Connecticut.

MGM said it commissioned the study "to contribute to a broader foundation for discussing expanded commercial gaming in Connecticut."

A southwestern Connecticut casino would also be about 100 miles away from MGM's planned Springfield casino.

In recent years, Mohegan Sun in Uncasville and Foxwoods in

See Casino on A2



Lisa Weir / For Hearst Connecticut Media

With pure maple syrup season underway, Ben Stiles monitors the evaporator while the sap is cooked down to maple syrup at Ragland Farm in Southbury on Sunday. The farm is owned by the Stiles family.

SOUTHBURY

A short, sweet season

Wednesday's warm weather could end this year's flow of sugar-maple sap

By Katrina Koerting

SOUTHBURY — Sharon Stiles approached a sugar maple at Ragland Farm, drilled a hole into the trunk about 4 feet off the ground and within seconds, a steady drip of sap flowed from the tree.

She and her daughter, Sarah

Stiles, 19, quickly added a metal quill to direct the sap into the white plastic bucket hanging on the tree, where the sap will be collected before it is turned into syrup. But the Stiles family doesn't anticipate the sap will flow like that much longer. If the forecast is correct, Ragland co-owner Ben Stiles predicts the

season will end this week, about three weeks shy of the usual end date.

"The 70-degree weather on Wednesday will kill it," Ben Stiles said about the approaching season's end.

The warmer weather will turn the sap yellow and attract bugs, Sharon Stiles added.

This winter's fluctuating temperatures have made this year's syrup season challenging, experts said.

The ideal conditions are tem-

peratures in the 20s at night and 40s during the day.

Typically, the season starts in late February, around George Washington's birthday. This year, most maple syrup producers started tapping at the end of the January or the first week of February. This has led to an unpredictable season, particularly at Ragland Farm.

So far, the farm's roughly 200 trees have yielded about 1,600 gallons of sap, which boils down

See Syrup on A2



Carol Kaliff / Hearst Connecticut Media

Scott, 39, and Carla Johnson, 40, set up a T-shirt charity to benefit children from Sandy Hook Elementary School. The charity, Newtown Strong Fund, is donating the \$22,000 it raised over the last three years to the Newtown Scholarship Association on Friday.

NEWTOWN

T-shirt sales benefit high school scholars

Troubled by Sandy Hook shootings, Bethel businessman tries to help those most affected

By Rob Ryser

NEWTOWN — Bethel businessman Scott Johnson was one of those fathers of a first-grader who couldn't sleep after the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012.

He was one of many parents in the Danbury area who wanted to do something to help during the terrible days following the deaths of 20 first-graders and six educators, but

"It was a great feeling to raise the money, but this was also about the community coming together and showing our strength."

Scott Johnson, Bethel businessman

he didn't know what.

"I was up at two and three in the morning, not knowing what to do, but my wife, Carla, was really instrumental," said John-

son, 39, who grew up in Southbury.

"She said, 'Keep thinking. You're creative. You'll think of something.'" She was right.

The father of two decided to sell T-shirts to benefit the students most directly affected by the tragedy, a mission that, over three years, embraced a wider vision to assist college-bound Newtown high-school students with scholarships.

Today, 600 T-shirts later, Johnson is eager to see the money raised from the T-shirts sales help students build their futures.

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