

# COMMENTARY

The Sunday Hour

**The Hour**

Chet Valiante PUBLISHER  
Donna Bertoli EDITOR  
John P. Reilly EDITOR EMERITUS

## Approval overdue for hospital bid to expand care

Once again, Norwalk Hospital is seeking to bring expanded care to area residents in need of emergency angioplasty treatment, something it has been denied in the past by the state Office of Health Care access.

That body will hold a hearing on the application Dec. 4, and we see no reason for it to be denied.

At present, Norwalk Hospital patients needing this treatment must be taken to another hospital at a point when time is most critical to survival.

For that patient it means a trip by ambulance to an out-of-town hospital, using up precious minutes that could be devoted to immediate care.

We can understand the view of the state agency that it seeks to avoid overlapping services, but apparently members of that body never had to drive on the Lodge Turnpike (I-95) during rush hour.

This application is not an attempt to compete for business with other area hospitals — it is an effort to meet an urgent need in this city. Nor is it in any way a rap on the care offered by those hospitals.

In a recent letter to the editor, a local resident reported on a relative who need emergency angioplasty care. After going to Norwalk Hospital, it was necessary to transfer the patient to St. Vincent's Hospital in Bridgeport for the appropriate care. Ironically, the doctor who performed the procedure in the hospital in Bridgeport has his office in Norwalk.

Tremendous advances are being made in the treatment of heart conditions. The need for greater availability of such care is brought on by not only a growing population in the Greater Norwalk area but by an aging population that most surely will need such care at some point.

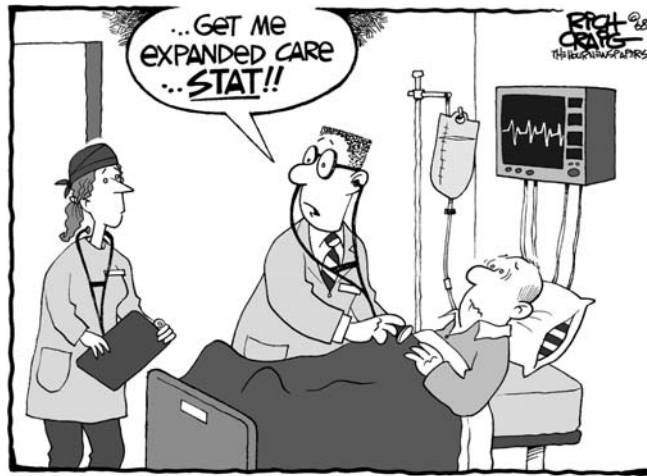
Norwalk Hospital not only serves this city proper, but it provides medical care to those communities that surround us. They, too, are growing in population and rely on the hospital for elective and emergency care.

At the present time, according to one hospital official, about one patient a week is transferred to another hospital for such treatment, treatment that could be provided right here in Norwalk.

We know that hospital officials will be on hand for the hearing to press their case. We would hope that they would be joined by our elected state officials and city officials to support this application.

Should the state agency approve the application, hospital officials feel they could begin offering the procedure by the end of December.

Even that may not be soon enough for some emergency patients.



## What parents can teach us about their children's education experiences

By RODOLFO JOSE ROSADO

With all the discussions between educators, academia and think tanks about the state of our education system, sometimes it helps to go straight to those who are the closest to it. And so, it was in this spirit that early in 2008 the Norwalk Education Foundation (NEF) organized a series of focus groups to give the community an opportunity to share their views about our children's educational experiences. The Youth Voices project, a collaboration between NEF and Norwalk Community College, was comprised of a panel of parents, as well as groups from elementary schools, middle schools, and high school students.

Below are some of the discussion topics and what we learned: What are the important elements in general child development? It was emphasized that children would do well if they were surrounded by many loving adults, in addition to their parents. It was highlighted that children were natural learners and we should help them maintain this curiosity. Building on that, our parents stressed the need to instill a love of learning, by reading to children and emphasizing the importance of education.

How successful is formal education at helping prepare your children to eventually become independent adults? Our panel gave mixed reviews regarding this area. There were youths who complained that they could not see how their classroom lessons related to real life skills. There were also concerns about the lack of technology in the schools, causing parents and their children to wonder whether students would be prepared to work in a technologically advanced world.

But there were parents who were very pleased and said that their children's education was much better than their own childhood school experiences. This included opportunities and special projects where kids could apply learned knowledge in relevant settings. For example, one parent described how her daughter's class developed a Spanish

restaurant allowing students to learn how their lessons had practical value in a real world setting.

Are the schools successful at connecting children with their passions? All of the parents spoke about the importance of inspired teachers who were able to instill excitement and enthusiasm in their children. They described great teachers as loving both teaching, as well as their subject areas. It was noted that inspired teachers often gave students extra work, because it was considered necessary and important. Although the kids verbally complained (as kids often complain about homework), they were responsive and followed through. Conversely, parents believed that kids did not take courses seriously when teachers allowed them to coast through uninspired classes.

There was unanimous support for identifying and recognizing exceptional teachers, holding them up in the community as models that others should follow.

Identify the positive and successful aspects of your children's education. The parent panel spoke excitedly about the music programs, language arts, and science classes. Parents also pointed out that a positive and nurturing school environment had an impact on both their children's learning and in areas beyond school. Unfortunately, the quality of the school community was not viewed as consistent throughout the system.

Parents also praised the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Norwalk School System. It was believed that this diversity helped prepare and familiarize children with the broader culturally diverse world.

Identify aspects of the educational system you want to change. Parents believed that teachers needed additional support and resources. This specifically included having classroom assistants and aids that would ease the burden of teachers, create a more comfortable environment, and allow all of the children to benefit from more individualized attention.

Parents emphasized that it was

necessary to increase parental involvement in the schools. Some parents spoke positively about classroom volunteer opportunities to assist children in their studies and in developing reading skills.

Our parents identified a significant basic weakness in the system. In most cases, parents interacted with teachers when their children had learning or behavior problems. The Youth Voices parents wished for a system that allowed them to join with teachers to catch their children doing something right. This would bring about better parent-teacher relationships in a way that encouraged and gave attention to youths who were doing well.

Parents also noted their own responsibilities in becoming more involved in their children's education such as learning about the child's activities, and helping with homework. It was noted the importance of supports for children with working parents such as after school programs and mentoring opportunities.

NEF hopes to expand on this project and reach out to other parents to help us further develop after school programs and other projects to serve our children. Working together through effective communication and collaboration between our parents, educators, and youth, we can strengthen our children's education.

Rodolfo Jose Rosado, Ph.D. is a psychologist and a member of the Norwalk Education Foundation's Board of Directors.

The Norwalk Education Foundation is an independent non-profit organization committed to quality education for all of Norwalk's children. We effect positive change by providing programs and funding for innovative classroom instruction, teacher and technology training, and a variety of learning opportunities beyond the school day. For more information call (203) 854-4068 or visit [www.norwalkeducation.org](http://www.norwalkeducation.org).



## Paying taxes is our patriotic duty

To the Editor:

I am one of those people who may pay higher taxes under Barack Obama's tax plan. And while no one likes to pay more taxes, I am proud I am able to. Here's why: I grew up in subsidized public housing in New Jersey. When I was young, I was able to spend four weeks at a county-run camp for low-income kids who needed fresh air. We also received medical checkups and dental care. I attended a public, taxpayer subsidized college and was able to receive some aid. I worked weekends and summers and was able to cover the rest, because my parents were unable to.

I have been very fortunate

and grateful that our government was able to help my family. I received so much. But that help has also allowed me to give so much back. I have been paying taxes since I was 16. I am able to provide for my family, pay for my child's college education and support my community and non-profit groups in need. To me, paying more taxes does not mean "spreading the wealth" It means giving something back to the people of a country that supported me and means so much to me.

Bob Sabo  
Wilton

## Ballot initiative not dead

To the Editor:

We are extremely disappointed that the amendment for a constitutional convention did not pass on Election Day. We hope you will do whatever you can to help us with direct ballot initiative when the time is appropriate.

Thank you for supporting the convention.  
Mr. and Mrs. Steven Tafuro  
Wilton

## Support voter initiative law

To the Editor:

Although the constitutional convention did not succeed, it is clear that many citizens do want direct voter initiative legislation. In a democracy, ALL citizens should have a voice. The opinions and values of judges and legislators should not be the only consideration in how our society is formed. Please support direct voter initiative legislation.

Carol Zukowski  
Shelton

## LETTERS