

Local News

RTM vacancy in District 6

The Representative Town Meeting, Greenwich's legislative body, has a vacancy to fill in District 6/Old Greenwich. The district's boundaries extend south of the Post Road to the shoreline, and east of Arch Street to the Stamford border. One must be a registered voter in District 6. The interim election will be held during the district's meeting at 8 p.m. Jan. 12 at First Congregational Church, 108 Sound Beach Ave. For more information, contact District 6 Chairwoman Coline Jenkins at 203-249-5885.

Football contestant just misses big prize

One ball. That's how close 20-year-old Greenwich High School graduate Courtney Brand came Thursday to making it to the final round of a competition for a \$100,000 scholarship. Brand, who is studying Chinese language and culture at Georgetown University, finished third in a preliminary contest of five competitors throwing footballs into an over-

sized Dr Pepper can in Arlington, Texas. The top two finishers moved on to a head-to-head showdown at halftime of the AT&T Cotton Bowl Classic on Friday. Brand missed second place by one football. "The experience has still been amazing and having gotten to know the other contestants and heard their amazing stories made me realize that any one of them was deserving of the scholarship money," Brand said after Thursday's event. Brand will receive a \$2,500 scholarship from Dr Pepper for her efforts.

Alliance Francaise film course

Alliance Francaise of Greenwich is sponsoring its first-ever film course: "Close Up on French Cinema." Hosted by Anne Kern, professor of film studies at Purchase College, the class will feature three guest speakers: Greg Taylor, Habiba Boumlik and Agustin Zarzosa. If you are passionate about French film, AFG invites you to join from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Jan. 26, Feb. 16 and March 15 at the Purchase College

campus. Each class will feature a specific film chosen by the speaker. For more information, including cost, contact Rebecca at the AFG office at 203-629-1340 or at education@af-greenwich.org.

Author speaks at Christ Church

Author Christian Crouch will speak on the topic, "Playing God: Creativity, Faith and the Dangerous Gift of Power," on Saturday at Christ Church Greenwich, 254 E. Putnam Ave. The lecture is from 6:30 to 9 p.m. On Sunday, he will be guest preacher at the 9:15 a.m. service and will hold a talk and book-signing beginning at 10:10 a.m. For more information or to RSVP, call 203-869-6600. The talks are part of the church's Courage and Faith series.



In left photo, Sensei John Mirrione, creator of Harmony by Karate, directs stand-in victim Laith El-Tayyeb, 10, of Greenwich, in red shirt, to stand up and say "stop" to stand-in bully Joseph Frangione, 11, of Stamford, during the Harmony by Karate Program's national Stop Bullying Campaign offered at the Greenwich Boys & Girls Club on Thursday. At right, Maxine Petate, 10, of Greenwich, practices saying "stop" to stand-in bully Jonathan Gonzalez, 8, of Greenwich.

STANDING UP TO BULLIES



AMY MORTENSEN/FOR GREENWICH TIME

FORMER GREENWICH SUPERINTENDENT

Freund abruptly leaves Westchester job

By Lisa Chamoff
Staff Writer

Looks like Greenwich isn't the only town that's gotten the "Freund-ian slip."

Sidney Freund, who abruptly resigned in May after serving two years as superintendent of Greenwich Public Schools, has already left a similar post in nearby Greenburgh, N.Y.

In November, Freund was appointed interim superintendent of schools of the Greenburgh Central School District No. 7 in Hartsdale, N.Y. On Wednesday, just as Freund was slated to take over, the Greenburgh school district announced on its website that Freund and the town's school board had "mutually agreed" Tuesday night to void Freund's contract — worth a reported \$117,613 over six months.

Assistant Superintendent Susan Sciascia will take over as acting superintendent until a new interim candidate is selected.

"This will not affect the education of our children," school board President Terry Williams said in a statement. "The district will be in the capable hands of Dr. Susan Sciascia, while we conduct a search for an Interim Superintendent."

Williams could not be reached for further comment Thursday.

Williams told Westchester County news outlet LoHud.com Wednesday that Freund, chosen to temporarily replace retired Superintendent Ronald Smalls, suddenly pulled out of the job, and did not attend a special board meeting Tuesday night.

"He decided not to come, basically," Williams told LoHud. "We were expecting him to be there."

Freund, who lives in Edgemont, N.Y., which borders Hartsdale, did not return messages left by Greenwich Time Thursday seeking comment. He had previously served as Greenburgh's interim superintendent in 2007-08, after retiring as the schools chief in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.



FILE PHOTO

Freund

Freund's departure from Greenwich took place just as the board was preparing to enter negotiations with him on a new contract, despite the objections of two former members of the Board of Education, Republicans Peter Sherr and

Marianna Ponnas Cohen.

The district's fourth schools superintendent in 11 years, Freund later wrote that he chose to resign in part because of the discourse generated by two unnamed board members "became accusatory, disrespectful and uncivil."

Ponnas Cohen said Thursday that Freund's most recent departure shows he does not honor his commitments.

"He has established a pattern of rash unprofessional departures," Ponnas Cohen wrote in an email. "Six board votes in his pocket notwithstanding, Freund quit the Greenwich Public Schools. His departure from Greenwich, like that from Greenburgh, had nothing to do with the school district or the board, and everything to do with him and his modus operandi. Case in point, with Greenburgh, he did not have anyone to blame and any excuse, and he still left."

Greenwich PTA Council President Lisa Beth Savitz said

she didn't know enough about the circumstances surrounding Freund's most recent exit to comment on it.

Sherr agreed. "I don't know what to make of it," he said. "There may be a good reason."

Sherr did note that it indicates what the Greenwich school board should look for in a new schools chief.

"I think we really need to focus on how to we find someone who's likely to stay and be committed," Sherr said.

In an interview with Greenwich Time after Freund's appointment in November, Williams, the Greenburgh school board president, said Freund was "well-regarded" in the district, and his abrupt departure from Greenwich wasn't a factor in the board's decision to hire him.

"It wasn't our concern," Williams said. "For us, it's a no-brainer. Stuff happened, and that's between him and Greenwich. We're happy."

4 'THEY SAY THEY DIDN'T MEET THEIR SALES QUOTAS'

Greenwich Victoria's Secret devotees lament closure

By Lisa Chamoff
Staff Writer

Around this time of year, the semi-annual sale at Victoria's Secret gives the store a look of a business about to shut its doors, several bins overflowing with deeply discounted bras and bikini bottoms.

This time, it's different — the Greenwich Avenue lingerie retailer will actually be closing in a couple of weeks.

Customers reacted to the news that the Victoria's Secret on the Avenue would be shutting its doors on Jan. 15 after two decades, saying it would be a loss for the shopping district.

"They just told me. I was really sad about that," said Melissa Kneschaurek, 19, an au pair from Germany who lives in Cos Cob, as she left the store with a big pink shopping

bag Tuesday morning.

Though Kneschaurek has only lived in town for six months, her fellow au pairs also shop at the store, and had recommended it. There is a Victoria's Secret at the Stamford Town Center mall — the Greenwich Avenue location is one of 16 Victoria's Secret stores in Connecticut, according to the retailer's website — but it's not the same, shoppers said.

"It just takes a few minutes to come here, and there are other nice stores," Kneschaurek said.

Vanessa Lemus, who works as the store's temporary manager, said there are a lot of customers who go out of their way to shop at the Greenwich store. One woman Lemus helped with a price adjustment expressed her disappointment about the pending closure, saying the sales staff in Greenwich of more than a dozen people is

friendly, and other stores crank up the music so it's way too loud.

"We have a lot of loyal customers who constantly come here, so that's going to be a big loss," said Lemus, who lives in Stamford.

Employees were notified of the closure Friday by the store's manager, who also told workers that the retailer was not meeting its sales quotas, according to a person familiar with the plan, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the person was not authorized to speak on the matter.

Lemus declined to comment on the reason for the closure, but some people speculated that the high rents Greenwich Avenue landlords can command played a role.

"They say they didn't meet their sales quotas. I believe the rent is too high here on Greenwich Av-

enue," said Stamford resident John Pinkowski, 22, who was shopping with a friend Tuesday morning. "It sucks. Fifteen people are going to lose their jobs."

Lemus told the customer she was helping that some employees may get transferred to other stores, but they still don't know what their fate is.

Ron Brien, director of commercial leasing for MH Heaven Real Estate, said it was common knowledge in real estate circles that the store was going to close, and that the space was quietly being marketed. Space on the Avenue rents from \$85 to about \$120 per square foot annually, he said.

"To pay the rent on Greenwich Avenue, you really have to sell things that cost a lot of money," Brien said. "It's hard to pay the rents with lower-cost products."



HELEN NEAFSEY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Victoria's Secret on Greenwich Avenue, above, is expected to close Jan. 15, according to a source.

The building that houses Victoria's Secret also saw another national women's retailer, clothing store Ann Taylor, leave nearly two years ago. The former Ann Taylor space recently housed a temporary tenant, The Cashmere Sale, which had a two-month lease.

Jason Palmer, who owns Petticoat Lane, a store at

347 Greenwich Ave. that sells lingerie and handbags, agreed that high rents mixed with a sluggish economy makes it tough to get by, even for a national retailer.

"Once things get difficult, they start looking at the bottom line for each and every store," Palmer said.