

Mansfield-StorrsPatch



Patch Picks

By **Stephanie Summers** January 13, 2011

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Silk City Chorus: Tight Harmonies and Paternal Roots

Iron Chefs at UConn, Comic Hypnotist in Somers

Silk City Chorus director Todd Lamson joined the group as a singer at age 11, prompted by his dad, Alan Lamson of Wethersfield. They'll both be among the 85 members of the circa 1963 barbershop group appearing in two concerts Saturday, Jan. 15, at Manchester High School.

"It's a nice way to spend time with your dad," Todd the director says.

And that's not all. Silk City sweetens the pot by featuring two top barbershop quartets – Ringermasters, a 20something quartet from Stockholm, and Old School, the group that came in second at the 2010 international barbershop contest in Philadelphia. Ringmasters took third. Silk City, which draws singers from about 30 towns in Connecticut and a few from Massachusetts, consistently places in the top five in competitions in its district, which covers New England, eastern New York and the Atlantic provinces of Canada.

"Imagination" is the theme of this 49th annual concert, a "lighthearted, Broadway-style" trip through time in a story of a father's commitment to his daughter, Todd says. The large chorus and guest quartets will alternate numbers in presenting the story. Silk City will do a medley of swing favorites "Sing Sing Sing" and "It Don't Mean a Thing," a tear-jerking "Danny Boy" and "Imagination."

The importance of fatherhood crops up over and over in this indoor sport. "It's a big theme of barbershop in general," says Todd, a third-generation barbershopper. "It tends to be a very paternal sort of group." When he joined Silk City 25 years ago, "a lot of the guys were uncles and grandfathers to me back then, even if they weren't genetically."

The females in the family are also musical. Todd's grandmother sang women's barbershop in the Sweet Adelines, and he met his wife at State University in New Hampshire. Who knows what's ahead for his 2½-year-old daughter, who lives with mom and dad in Portland?

Silk City Chorus and friends will perform at 1:30 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday in the 1,100-seat Bailey Auditorium at Manchester High School for seniors and students, and \$23 for reserved seating. To buy tickets or reserve seats, call 860-328-1876 or visit silkcitychorus.org. These tickets go on sale in advance and arrive early.

Another UConn Competition, But in the Kitchen

Chefs with a Big East-caliber competitive spirit will toque up all day today, Jan. 13, in the 11th annual culinary competition organized by the Dining Services Department. Curious foodies can stop in at the Rome Ballroom, third floor, throughout the day to see three main events: a recipe contest, a food styling competition and the popular Boiling Point, a test comparable to the Iron Chef. Boiling Point will go on from 12:15 to 4:45 p.m. and will feature a demonstration of Basketball, Wayne Norman of WILI radio, Willimantic. In this headline event, teams of three chefs from UConn dining halls will have to prepare three tapas from a mystery box of ingredients and minor extras from the pantry. At 8:30 a.m., competing cooks will prepare appetizer, each yielding 12 portions. At 10:30 a.m., cake decorators will create edible artworks matching the theme "Under the Big Top: Clowning Around." Bentley, program director at Lincoln Culinary Institute, will give a demonstration. At 12:30, authors Linda Giuca (longtime former Harford State) and Nancy Freeborn and Kyle Pedersen will speak and sign books, and assorted cookbooks will be for sale at the UConn Co-op. Food sampling will be available throughout the morning at the free event, which has been conceived by Robert M. Landolphi, author of "Gluten Free Every Day Cookbook." For more information, call 860-486-1580 or visit <http://www.dining.uconn.edu/docs/scheduleemail.pdf> (<http://www.dining.uconn.edu/docs/schedule>)

He'll Leave You Sleeping in the Aisles

If you fall asleep during this show, it's a good thing. Southeastern Connecticut comedian hypnotist Jim Spinnato will leave you laughing



PHOTOS (7)



Saturday night, Jan. 15, at 7 at Somers High School. Spinnato, who commonly plays the casinos – in fact he'll be at Foxwoods' Comix C has charmingly controlled audiences at UConn, MIT, Emerson College, Trinity College, various corporations and high schools. This eve door and will support the Somers Booster Club. The school is at 5 Vision Blvd, Somers. For information, call 860-749-2270 or visit <http://schools/high/> (<http://www.somers.k12.ct.us/schools/high/>).

Get a Seat for an Undiscovered Broadway Hit in the Making

For those who love dwelling on the cutting edge, take a drive to the Goodspeed Opera House in East Haddam this weekend, Jan. 14-16, brand new works at the Sixth Annual Festival of New Artists. Check out *Room 16*, a work about the unlikely friendship between G. Gor Hunt against a Watergate backdrop. Or *Hello! My Baby*, a Great American Songbook musical with updates. Or *Nobody Loves You*, a stc a culture that prizes popularity. Maybe you'll have a chance to be smug in the future when you can say you saw that Broadway blockbu musicals-in-the-making, attractions include opera house tours, famous flops, insider stories behind the scenes of *Dreamgirls*, a chance library of Goodspeed productions or the *Annie* collection, theater investing tips and a symposium on the future of the genre, moderate winning producer of *Memphis*. You can see a play for \$15, \$10 if you're a student, or spend \$79 for the full weekend with extras. The G East Haddam. For information, call 860-873-8664 or visit <http://www.goodspeed.org> (<http://www.goodspeed.org/>).

Interested in a follow-up to this article?

About this column: *Stephanie Summers serves as your guide to the best weekend events in Tolland County and beyond. Summers is a journalist who was formerly managing editor of Northeast magazine, features and specialties editor at The Hartford Courant. She now covers the Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts and hosts a weekly interview show for Charter Cable Channel 14 called "Artist local choral groups and is an active participant in the arts. Stephanie lives in Willington.*

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