

The Gazette

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TURNING ON THE TOWN LIGHTS



PHOTO BY BILL DOAK

SEVEN-YEAR-OLD Julian Ramos of Francis Street was selected to turn on the lights decorating the Christmas tree on the Town Green Friday, officially kicking off four days of Holiday Fest. Above Julian gives WTIC traffic reporter Mike Allen a 'high five' as Holiday Fest coordinator Pat Sirols, right, looks on.

'Thank-you' note singled him out

JAG student's resume, interview took top national honors

John Drew, a senior at East Hartford High School, won Second Place in a national employability contest this weekend at the JAG National Student Leadership Academy in Washington, D.C.

John is a participant in EHHS's brand-new Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) CT program. He travelled to the national event with four other students from Manchester, New Britain and New Haven.

The national Employability Skills event involved developing a letter of application, and a

resume, for a simulated job opening. Candidates then took part in an interview. The contestants were rated on neatness, spelling and grammar, content and completeness, and personal presentation.

All the students attending also took part in extensive leadership training sessions with other JAG students from around the country, and each will deliver a presentation to classmates and school administrators upon their return.

JAG came to EHHS in January as an elective, teach-

ing professional workplace skills and offering individual mentoring and counseling. Students take part in a "Career Association", designing and carrying out community service projects. After completing the program each can take advantage of a year of follow-up services. The JAG program has smaller class sizes and helps with personal employment and career plans.

John enrolled in JAG in September. He was elected

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East Hartford Chamber weighs merger decision

By Bill Doak

After 100 years, the East Hartford Chamber of Commerce may be a relic of the past - but long live the Connecticut River Valley Chamber of Commerce!

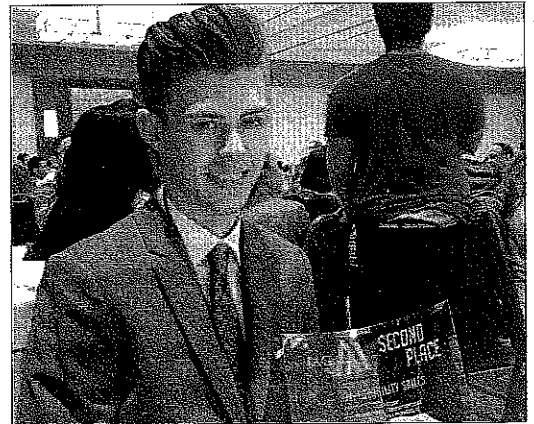
December 21 the membership will be asked to vote at a 5:30 p.m. meeting at Goodwin College whether to merge with similar business advocacy groups in neighboring Glastonbury, South Windsor and the town of Marlborough to form one entity. The board of the four organizations have been ironing out the details of the merger for two years, and have developed a plan offering both local business councils and the more powerful larger organization that, if approved would become the fourth-largest chamber of commerce in Connecticut.

East Hartford Chamber Board Chairman Joe Bierbaum

explains that the merger plan sought to keep the new organization local and responsive, expanding regional opportunities for what would be an organization of nearly 900 members, and offering better engagement for members to enhance networking and business opportunities.

The merger talks accelerated with the departure of the executive director of the East Hartford Chamber, Timothy Coppage, 12 months ago, and then the leader of the South Windsor Chamber left. Since the beginning of 2015 management of the East Hartford Chamber has been handled by the Glastonbury Chamber of Commerce with an office preserved on Main Street and staffed part-time. Bierbaum said the East Hartford Chamber Board voted unani-

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EHHS senior John Drew with his award in Washington, D.C.

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JAG student from EHHS tops in nation

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president of his class Career Association.

In placing Drew among the top JAG students in the nation, judges observed that he "went an extra mile" and were impressed that he delivered a hand-written thank-you note after his interview.

The experience appears to have made a lasting impact.

"JAG has made me realize the definition of hard work," John reflected. "It's made me realize that when you put 100 percent effort into everything you do, good outcomes will result... Before, I was that one kid in the back of the class who

would do nothing and cause disruptions... JAG is what unlocked that special part of my brain and made me realize that good things aren't going to just come to me. If I want to pursue a successful future, the beginning of that road starts now."

JAG CT is a program of the Hartford Consortium for Higher Education, and is funded with a contract with the state of CT Dept. of Labor - with support from the Court Support Services Division and state departments of Education, Social Services, Children and Families, Correction, and Economic Development. For more than

35 years the program has helped young people graduate from high school and continue their postsecondary success, leading to quality jobs and careers. In Connecticut the JAG program is offered in six schools: East Hartford, Manchester, New Britain and New Haven.

The JAG program just held its first recognition program at EHHS in a session that featured an address by Congressman John B. Larson and other local community leaders.

For more info visit
www.jagct.org
www.jag.org or

**Santa could
use some toys,
helping hands**

To the Editor:

As you celebrate Christmas on December 25 with your family and friends, many homeless men, women and children will be celebrating at the Manchester Country Club

with Santa. Following a meal prepared by volunteers, gifts for the children will be handed out by Santa as adults have an opportunity to choose clothing, shoes, toiletries such as shampoo, after-shave, hand

HOLIDAY HOURS:
SUNDAY, 12/20: 10AM - 6 PM
THURSDAY, CHRISTMAS EVE 12/23: 8AM-9PM
M-W, 12/21 THRU 12/23: 8AM-9PM
CLOSED CHRISTMAS DAY
SAT, 12/26: 9AM-9PM, SUN, 12/27: 10AM-6PM
MON, 12/28 THRU THURS, 12/31: 8AM-9PM



PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR!
CHRISTMAS, HAPPY CHANUKAH
SUPER LIQUORS