

INSIDE today's news

LOCAL



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SHELTER FOR WOMEN earns accreditation. A3

SPORTS



▶ **CHRIS HERREN** pulls no punches in 'Basketball Junkie.' B1

WEATHER

52 Tonight
Mostly cloudy. Low around 52.

62 Saturday
Becoming sunny. High around 62.

Details, A7

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COMING THIS WEEKEND



▶ **USA WEEKEND** focuses on summer travel.

NEW FIRE BOAT to honor firefighter who died during a rescue.

LOCAL RESIDENTS earn advanced degrees from URI.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Civil unions halfway home

Six county representatives vote for legislation that now will go to Senate

By Joe Baker
Daily News staff

PROVIDENCE — Using quotes from the Greek poet Virgil, former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson, abolitionist Theodore Parker and even the Pledge of Allegiance, an unlikely coalition of conservative and liberal lawmakers overwhelmingly approved leg-

islation Thursday to allow civil unions for same-sex partners.

After nearly two hours of often-emotional debate, the House of Representatives voted 62-11 to approve the bill (H6103), sponsored by Rep. Peter J. Petrarca, D-Lincoln. The legislation grants gay couples all state rights heterosexual married couples enjoy, including the ability to make medical decisions

for a partner or to make decisions about where he or she should be buried.

Newport County lawmakers voting for the bill were Reps. John G. Edwards, D-Tiverton, Raymond E. Gallison Jr., D-Bristol, J. Russell Jackson, D-Newport, Peter F. Martin, D-Newport, Daniel P. Reilly, R-Portsmouth, and Deborah L. Ruggiero, D-Jamestown. Absent from the daily House session was Rep. Daniel P. Gor-

don Jr., R-Portsmouth.

Approval came after two polar-opposite amendments were ruled out of order by Speaker of the House Gordon D. Fox, D-Providence, who said they were not "germaine" to the issue of civil unions. One offered by Rep. Arthur J. Corvese, D-North Providence, would have included

UNIONS A7



Jacqueline Marque ♦ Daily News staff photos

Mary Geisser, a gallery coordinator and resident artist at Sandywoods Farm, talks about Saturday's grand opening of the Sandywoods Gallery. The gallery will feature works by resident and visiting artists.

SHOW TIME

Sandywoods Gallery at the Sandywoods Farm artists community in Tiverton will hold its grand opening on Saturday.

By Marcia Pobeznik
Daily News correspondent

TIVERTON — The white paint on the walls still was drying when paintings, dainty blown-glass vases, jewelry, ceramics and quilts were dropped off earlier this week at the Sandywoods Gallery, which will hold its grand opening on Saturday.

Thirteen members of the artists co-op at the Sandywoods Farm artists community will display work in the show and sale that will open with a reception from 5-8 p.m. at the gallery at 63 Muse Way. The public is invited to attend.

The gallery opening is the first public event at the artists and agricultural complex off Bulgarmarsh Road. Fifty units of affordable housing were filled soon after the development was completed late last summer.



Ceramics by resident artist Mika Seeger will be among the works featured at the Sandywoods Gallery.

SHOW A7

NEWPORT

'I'm leaving with my chin high'

City's fire chief to retire on June 1 after 30 years in department

By Sean Flynn
Daily News staff

Newport Fire Chief Harry J. Hallgring Jr., a 30-year veteran of the department and chief for the past three years, gave notice this week that he will be retiring from the force effective June 1.

He said he is shifting careers and will be working for a firm in the private sector. He declined to name the firm or the job, saying he would

leave that up to his new employer.

"I will be walking into a great opportunity in a couple of weeks," he said. "I'm leaving with my chin high."

Since he became chief on Jan. 10, 2008, he has been locked in either arbitration or negotiations with the firefighters union in an attempt to agree on a labor contract, but that is not the reason for his departure, he said. The city and the union now are in Superior Court in a dispute over minimum staffing of Fire Department platoons, a source of tension, but also not a reason for his leaving, he said.

"Those are the issues that get the media attention, but there is a lot of good work being done in the Newport Fire Department," he said. "I'm proud to be a Newport firefighter."

During his time as chief, Hallgring worked on implementing the 800-megahertz statewide communication system locally, as well as the pending Code Red emergency notification system.

"I'd like to stay a couple more weeks until that is rolled out, but it doesn't work out," he said.

"My decision to retire does not come easily for many reasons, but after lengthy conversations with my family, it

became apparent it is the right thing to do," Hallgring wrote in a memorandum sent out to all Fire Department personnel on Thursday. "Looking back over nearly 30 years, I can say that my time with the department was filled with great memories. I think I can speak for all of us by saying the fire service is arguably the most rewarding profession one can choose; we have the opportunity to change people's lives on a daily basis."

"I encourage you to continue on the path that will not only carry on tried and proven tra-

CHIEF A7

PORTSMOUTH

DEM chief addresses concerns about landfill cap

By James A. Johnson
Daily News staff

The director of the state Department of Environmental Management has responded to concerns Portsmouth residents have raised about the covering of the former town dump in Island Park.

"The Portsmouth town dump site requires remediation and closure to address existing threats to the environment and public health," DEM Director Janet Coit said in a recent letter

to the Town Council. "DEM is confident that the work approved — that is currently moving forward — will result in a cleaner, safer environment."

Her letter was in response to concerns raised repeatedly about the level of arsenic allowed in the soil being used to cover the dump, which closed in 1972 when the town opened the solid waste transfer station on Heddy Street. Residents have complained that winds coming off the nearby Sakonnet River are blowing soil containing

arsenic that is dumped in piles on the site into neighboring yards and houses.

Other complaints lodged by residents involve water runoff from the site that carries some of the dumped soil onto streets and into storm drains. That runoff flows across the beach area on Park Avenue and into the Sakonnet River. Residents also have said the storm surge from a hurricane would wash away the two-foot cap and spread the fill containing arsenic throughout the area.

But the chief complaint of residents from the beginning has been the raising of the level of arsenic in material to be used for the grading and shaping of the cover under the 2-foot cap of clean soil.

Originally, the amount of arsenic in that material was limited to 7 parts per million, but was raised earlier this year to an average of 20 ppm with a maximum of 40 ppm.

In her letter to Town Council President Joseph W. Robicheau, Coit said a special commission

of the state House of Representatives found the 7-ppm standard had a negative impact that disproportionately affected the residents of Aquidneck Island. As a result, the permitted levels of arsenic were raised.

"This approach is consistent with the approach adopted years ago by the state Department of Health to address the lead contamination prevalent in the properties around our old houses," Coit said, adding that DEM's

LANDFILL A7



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