

Putnam Villager

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Complimentary

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"Sometimes we need to remind ourselves that thankfulness is indeed a virtue."

Friday, November 20, 2009

Hospital confirms H1N1 death

FIRST IN WINDHAM COUNTY

BY MATT SANDERSON
VILLAGER STAFF WRITER

PUTNAM — Day Kimball Hospital officials confirmed on Monday, Nov. 16, the first swine flu death in Windham County. It is the state's seventh death related to the H1N1 virus since the end of August. The individual was in the 25- to 49-year-old age range for those likely to be affected by the virus, as well as had underlying medical conditions. The test results for H1N1 were confirmed positive by the Connecticut Department of Public Health laboratory last weekend.

"We regret to report the first H1N1 flu-related death at Day Kimball Hospital," said Dr. Douglas Waite, infectious disease specialist and vice president of medical affairs and quality at Day Kimball Hospital. "This death reminds us of the seriousness of both H1N1 and seasonal influenza. We extend our sympathies to the patient's family."

Due to privacy regulations, Day Kimball Hospital will not be releasing the deceased's name, age or residency. Patrick McCormack, interim health director for the Northeast District Department of Health, said that privacy regulations also include not releasing the deceased's actual date of death. Charlene L. Leith-Bushey, director of Communications for Day Kimball Healthcare, would only confirm the death occurred last week.

Six deaths associated with the H1N1 flu virus have been reported in Connecticut between Aug. 30 and

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LATE BLOMBERG'S PAINTINGS ON DISPLAY AT SOCHOR ART GALLERY

An artist discovered



Courtesy photo
Aino Linnea Koskinen Blomberg, who died Nov. 28, 2007, at the age of 95.

BY STEPHANIE JARVIS
VILLAGER STAFF WRITER

When Elaine Collins was growing up, she would watch her mother draw at night, but little did she know that stored in the attic were numerous portraits painted in the 1930s that, some 70 years later, would be for sale at a local gallery.

Fifteen paintings by the late Aino Linnea Koskinen Blomberg are on display at the Sochor Art Gallery of Arts & Framing in Putnam. The paintings, as well as 15 others, were rolled and stored in a paper bag in

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Stephanie Jarvis photo

Sheri Sochor, owner of Arts & Framing and the Sochor Art Gallery in Putnam, displays two portraits and a still life by the late Aino Linnea Koskinen Blomberg, who lived in Pomfret Center. The paintings are among the several that she completed while in art school but were stored in an attic, unbeknownst to her family.

Rell concedes '10 run

BY MATT SANDERSON
VILLAGER STAFF WRITER

HARTFORD — The governor of Connecticut has announced that she will not run for re-election in 2010.

"The past five years I have had the incredible honor to serve as the 87th governor of Connecticut," said Gov. M. Jodi Rell. "I came in at a troubling time in our state's history. We had been through much, and we needed a new start, a new renewed sense of faith in public officials and a



Courtesy photo
Gov. M. Jodi Rell

recommitment to integrity in our government. Working together, we steadied our state, and we passed landmark ethics reform and cam-

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Olivia Braaten photos

Putnam's Deputy Mayor Richard "Peter" Place pauses in a moment of reflection, sharing memories of paying final respects to a fallen soldier.

Putnam ceremony honors veterans

BY OLIVIA BRAATEN
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

PUTNAM — Attentions turned to local veterans during a Sunday, Nov. 15, appreciation event in Putnam.

Hosted by the Elks Lodge No. 574 in recognition of Veterans Day, the celebration included a line-up of local and state officials, including Miss Connecticut 2006, eager to offer thanks.

"The sacrifice you gave our country is amazing," State Rep. Shawn Johnston (D-North Grosvenordale) told the 100 or so gathered for the

spaghetti dinner.

"If you think about a veteran, that really is a love story," he continued. "We always talk about a veteran's courage and valor, but it's also a definition of 'no greater love.'"

Uttering three wishes — a hope that leaders are making right decisions in handling the war on terror, a hope that soldiers in the battlefield meet success, and a hope that each will come home safely — Johnston said he believes the

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WESTVIEW REHAB

Book enthusiasts flock to children's fair

BY BLANCHE GOSSELIN
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

STORRS — Under the theme "Celebrating Children and the Books They Read," the Connecticut Children's Book Fair drew patrons from all parts of the state and beyond.

On Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 14 and 15, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., traffic into the Rome Ballroom, South Campus, at the University of Connecticut, was non-stop.

A Putnam couple had a very special reason for being at the event.

For more than a decade, graphic designer Gail Merrill has served at the university as marketing coordinator for the Department of Dining Services. When she received an e-mail from the UConn Co-op, asking for volunteers to do arts and crafts with children, Merrill thought it was something she'd like to do. Easily she enlisted her husband Brian, an art teacher in the Hebron school system, to accompany her.

"It was a fascinating and rewarding experience," Merrill said at the end of their session. "For me, it was a great opportunity to get back in touch with young children."

The Merrills' daughter, Gillian, employed at the Putnam Public Library, will graduate from UConn in December and pursue graduate studies in library



Blanche Gosselin photos

With open arms, Stella Luna invites children to come to him.

science. Their younger son, Zack, is actively developing his musical gifts.

Besides the children's nook, several rooms had been designated for specific purposes: for storytelling, for author presentations and for book signings.



Putnam residents Brian and Gail Merrill (left) volunteer to help children do crafts at the Connecticut Children's Book Fair.

The whole day had been organized in such a way as to leave no time for boredom.

The program cover noted that the Connecticut Children's Book Fair was a project of the UConn Co-op and the

Thomas J. Dodd Research Center; the back flap gratefully acknowledged the generous support of the SBM Charitable Foundation Inc., the C. E. S. Foundation, Mohegan Sun and Rockville Bank.



Diane deCroat, co-author of "Dogs Don't Brush Their Teeth," explains the innovative writing of the book on computer.



At dozens of well-stacked tables, shoppers choose from a wide selection of books.



Author Janet Lawrier reads from a book chosen by one of her listeners.

Late Blomberg's paintings were stored in attic for years

BLOMBERG

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the attic of a Pomfret Center home, where Collins currently resides. It wasn't until after Blomberg's death in 2007 that the family discovered the canvases even existed.

Mostly portraits, the paintings were completed in the 1930s while Blomberg was a student at the New York City Free Academy of Design.

"They're basic studies of portraits, but they're very well done," said Sheri Sochor, owner of Arts & Framing and the Sochor Art Gallery. "... All of the ones that I have are studies of nudes, of the human body. The flesh tones are perfect. I think they're excellent. I think they're done very well for someone who was in school."

Blomberg, whose first name means "the only" in Finnish, was born July 2, 1912, in Helsinki, Finland, to Carl and Sofia Koskinen. When she was 14, her father and older sister moved to the United States, working and saving money so the family could join them. Two years later, when Blomberg was 16, she and her mother left Finland for Brooklyn, N.Y.

Although she attended art school, Blomberg was never able to pursue a career as an artist. After meeting her husband Enoch in 1934, they were married Oct. 3 of that year. She tried to get a job with Walt Disney, but the company would not hire women at the time, for fear they would most likely want families and would then leave work, Collins said.

"She devoted her life to raising her family," Collins said. "She couldn't go out and promote herself as an artist."

Blomberg instead drew greeting card designs and hand painted compacts and other souvenirs, which Slush and Housman, in New York, sold across the country. She would also paint designs on trays and give these as gifts.

"She would work on the compacts at night and we would see her at the easel. I would see her drawing at night. She taught me a few things," Collins recalled. "... She would stay up half the night."

By then, Blomberg and her husband had their three children (they had lost another son shortly after his birth); they were living in a home they built in Pomfret Center; after residing in New York and then in New Jersey, they had moved to Connecticut in 1950 to be closer to Blomberg's parents, who lived in Brooklyn.

Once Blomberg's children were grown, she began working in a textile printing plant, painting the rollers that were then prepared to be etched. After that job, she worked for Belding's mill, and on weekends, she was employed at Day Kimball Hospital, first as a food server and then as a nurse's aid. In her spare time, she used to make drawings on wood for Putnam artist Henry Rondeau. He would then carve the picture into the wood for her to paint it. She continued that work for some time, even after her retirement from the mill and the hospital in 1979.

"She did use her ability, but not to the extent to which she could have," Sochor said.

Blomberg passed away Nov. 28, 2007, at the age of 95, following the death of one of her sons in 1979 from an airplane crash and of her husband, who died in 1987. It wasn't until Collins' grandson was

cleaning the attic that the canvases were found stored in a paper bag. Although surprised at the portraits' good condition, Collins said she had no idea if the paintings would be worth anything. A neighbor, who is an artist, helped her stretch the canvases, but suggested Collins leave the paintings unframed in case she did try to sell them.

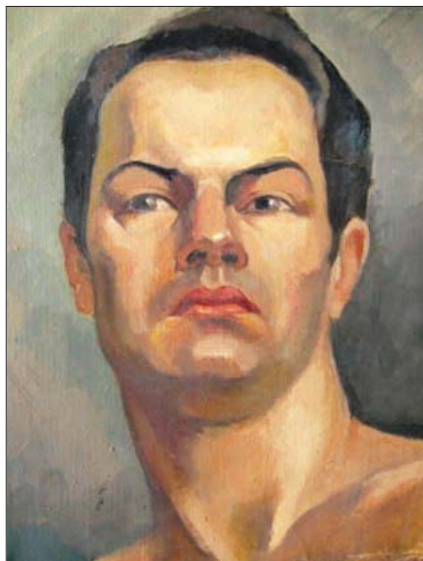
One day this summer, Collins was driving past the Golden Lamb Buttery and saw a sign in the window for an exhibit by the Northeast Connecticut Art Guild. She stopped in to inquire about the possibility of showing her mother's work there, but with the Art Guild's exhibit, the Golden Lamb wasn't able to commit at that time, Collins said. Instead, the Art Guild directed her to Sochor's gallery, which Collins contacted in August.

Sochor is pleased to exhibit the paintings, saying, "Just the mystery of it all is intriguing. What if she had been able to go on [and pursue an art career]? If she was this good in art school..."

A reception, open to the public, will be held from 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21, in the Sochor Art Gallery. Collins will be in attendance, as will her brother, George Blomberg, who lives in Dayville.

"My mom was a person that everyone seemed to like," Collins said. "... She always was a very giving person. She didn't have much to give, but she gave what she could. We're all very proud of her and miss her a lot."

For more information about the exhibit or the reception, please call Sochor Art Gallery at (860) 963-0105 or visit online at www.artsand-framingputnam.com. Regular gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Courtesy photo

A portrait painted by the late Aino Linnea Koskinen Blomberg. It is one of 15 on display at the Sochor Art Gallery of Arts & Framing in Putnam

Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays and 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Fridays, or by appointment.

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