

The Hour



Happy New Year

The Hour extends warm wishes to our readers and sponsors for the coming year.

Sports

Jets beat Raiders; head to the playoffs

A13



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The Independent Voice of Our Community for 136 years

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50¢

Tech / A19



Low cost laptop's software could be more revolutionary than price.

World / A23



U.S. death toll in Iraq reaches 3,000 as hundreds flock to see Saddam's gravesite.

Editorial / C8

Brand-new year brings with it new challenges.

Reader Poll

Hour Poll
How do you think the execution of Saddam Hussein will affect the situation in Iraq?
Submit your answers online at thehour.com

Calendar



Check out *The Hour's* online community calendar for events in your area. Go to www.thehour.com.

Weather / A2



Rain today, with highs in the mid-50s. Mostly cloudy tonight with lows in the upper 30s.

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LIVING on the EDGE

By Noelle Frampton

This is the fifth in a series of articles about the lives of and issues regarding at-risk children and young adults living in Norwalk, funded by a fellowship grant from the Norwalk Children's Foundation. The articles, written exclusively under editorial oversight of *The Hour*, will appear approximately every two weeks for three to five months.



Above left: Pamela Banks, mother of 3, talks about the challenges of being a single mother while Kyla Jones, 9, contemplates what it's like to be the child of a single mother. Banks uses her experiences to encourage the single mothers at Malta House of Good Counsel in Norwalk, where she works, that it is possible to succeed.

Responsibilities of going solo

Mellodye Briggs had the world at her fingertips. At 18, she was a beautiful, vivacious model with dreams of the spotlight.

Then she got pregnant. The responsibilities of single motherhood crashed down as she realized that she couldn't go out with her friends like she had before and expenses started piling up.

"I ... fell in love and lost my mind, and when I came to my senses I had a baby boy," she said. "No turning back. You have to give up a lot of things. I have to work — there's no way out. I hustle my skills and try to pay my bills. Some days I thought it was only God because I ran out of energy."

Briggs' "hustling" means working both the corporate world, in her full-time job at a stock market trading company in Stamford, and the world of music and film production, where she's known as "Sweets." On the side, she's a cosmetologist.

She manages to afford a \$1,650 per month apartment in East Norwalk, keep a middle class standard of living in high-cost Fairfield County and pay Pee Jaye's tuition and transportation to the Institute of Audio Research in New York city.

Briggs isn't the norm, though.

"It's important that we just do what we have to do, as single mothers, because ... there's progression if you struggle. There is a light at the end of the tunnel."

Mellodye Briggs
Norwalker, single mother

In Connecticut, where the cost of living is high, single mother-headed households are about seventeen times more likely than two-parent households to live in poverty, and more than half of the state's single-parent families do, according to the state Department of Social Services. There were 3,994 households with children under 18 in Norwalk that were headed by single mothers at the time of the 2000 Census — more than one third of the city's total family households with minor children. Statewide, single moms led nearly 22 percent of such households.

The proportion of single mother households, which vastly outnumber those headed by single fathers, to married couple households has significantly increased over the past 25 years nationwide.

Sociologists say the rise in unmarried parenthood is due in part to increasing views among young people that parenthood and marriage are separate undertakings, and that a child can be a path to self-actualization and purpose.

"They want to be loved but they figure they can't get it, so they go and have a baby ... that they're going to love and they'll be loved back," said Chaquita Stephenson, executive director of Malta House of Good Counsel in Norwalk, a temporary housing and support facility for pregnant women and their children.

Tangela "Tangie" Huckabee, 17, plans to make a good life for herself and her 19-month-old son, Deshaun Smalls, without marrying Deshaun's father, whom she's been dating for more than three and a half years.

Huckabee, with a soft smile and steady manner, seems mature beyond her years. Aside from letters back and forth to prison and minimal contact, she grew up without her father and has been a mainstay to her mother, Beatrice Huckabee, who never married.

She juggles Deshaun's care with her senior year at the alternative

See LIVING, A5

Americans: Outlook grim for '07

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Another terrorist attack, a warmer planet, death and destruction from a natural disaster. These are among Americans' grim predictions for the United States in 2007.

Only a minority of people think the U.S. will go to war with Iran or North Korea over those countries' nuclear ambitions. An overwhelming majority of those surveyed think Congress will raise the federal minimum wage. One-third see hope for a cure to cancer.

These are among the findings of an Associated Press-AOL News poll that asked people in the U.S. to contemplate what 2007 holds for the country.

Six in 10 people think the U.S. will be the victim of a terrorist attack. An identical percentage thinks it likely that a biological or nuclear weapon will be unleashed somewhere else in the world.

Seventy percent of people in the U.S. pre-

See POLL, A5

Iraq war voted top news story

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The convoluted, increasingly costly war in Iraq was chosen the top story of 2006 by U.S. editors and news directors in The Associated Press' annual vote, followed closely by the U.S. election in which debate over Iraq played a pivotal role.

The war received 176 first-place votes out of 242 ballots cast. The election, in which Democrats seized control of Congress, received 46 first-place votes and was the overwhelming pick for the No. 2 story.

Last year's top story was Hurricane Katrina and the other devastating Gulf Coast

See IRAQ, A12

Westport year in review

By JEANNE HOFF
Hour Staff Writer

WESTPORT — In 2006 Westport struggled to hold onto its small town milieu; with the McMansion frenzy, push for affordable mixed income housing, relocation of the YMCA and a nearly 4 percent tax increase, this suburban town had a substantial serving of urban development.

First Selectman Gordon Joseloff, even before being elected, has always stressed the

See AFFORDABLE, A5

Top Weston stories

By JEANNE HOFF
Hour Staff Writer

WESTON — The arrest of former FBI consultant and Internet piracy expert Bruce Forest along with the litigious war waged between Weston police officer Dann McInnis and the Westport Police Departments as well as the town of Weston are two preeminent disputes that rattled the town of Weston in 2006.

Forest, 49, of 10 Spring Valley Road was arrested in the driveway of his home on March 24.

Police had been investigating Forest for

See WESTON, A12

Living with Lymphoma or Hodgkins Disease

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