



# The Trumbull Times

## So far, so good

### School construction comes in under budget

By Bettina Thiel  
Staff writer

Construction at Trumbull High School is continuing on schedule and coming in under budget, according to Al Barbarotta, the liaison between the contractors and the school administration.

Most recently the bid for mechanicals came in \$1 million under budget. Barbarotta said that was "ecstatic news."

"The first selectman, the superintendent, everybody is

very excited," he said.

Combined with other savings, the project now is about \$6 million under budget. "That's pretty significant," Barbarotta said.

The original allocation for the as-new renovation of the 30-year-old building was for \$68 million. However, Town Council last week added \$800,000 in alternates, that will now be added to the project.

Those include replacement of the gym floor, replacement

of bleachers and additional seating at the football stadium, Barbarotta said.

Starting this week, Phase II of the building restoration will begin with demolition of the old auditorium. It will be set up to serve as "swing space," Barbarotta said. This is where 11 temporary classrooms set up to house classes under construction.

They are planning to work on classrooms one house at

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Lots of natural light is part of the new auditorium design at Trumbull High School. Members of the Board of Education got a tour of the construction site Tuesday night. (Photo by Bettina Thiel)

## Relay unites community in fight against cancer



By Victoria Smey  
Intern

Cynthia Held became a cancer caregiver when her 14-year-old son Brandon was diagnosed with leukemia.

She stood on the stage at Relay For Life at Masuk High School on Friday evening and enlightened the crowd with her experience as a caregiver. Her biggest piece of advice for cancer patients and fellow caregivers: "Take one day at a time."

She conveyed how important it is to have faith, tell jokes, and

"make inappropriate comments just to see that smile on your loved one's face." But Held left the crowd guessing how Brandon's battle with cancer had ended, until she exited the stage and embraced her now 21-year-old son.

"I am in remission," said Brandon, an accounting major at the University of Connecticut. "Most cancer survivors celebrate the day they were diagnosed, kind of like an anniversary." Brandon just celebrated his sixth.

After Trumbull and Monroe

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Brandon Held celebrates his victory over cancer in a Relay For Life lap at Masuk High School. (Photo by Victoria Smey)

## Student helps rebuild lives in China

By Amy Robertson  
Correspondent

Trumbull resident Olivia Plouffe, 20, is headed to China's earthquake recovery zone this summer.

She won't be rebuilding houses. She'll be rebuilding lives as an English teacher.

More than 7,000 schools collapsed during the earthquake that hit the Sichuan province in May 2008, killing more than 5,000 teachers and students; and leaving a gaping hole in the province's educational system.

Plouffe, a TESOL student at Briercrest College and Seminary in Caronport, Saskatchewan, Canada, will help fill that hole this summer along with three of her classmates from Briercrest. They'll join a team of six teachers from the English Language Institute-China (ELIC). For four and a half weeks, they'll teach 160 middle school English language teachers in Deyang who survived the quake.

Plouffe first became passionate about English language teaching as a teenager in Trumbull. She volunteered as a conversational English teacher, but soon learned the value of professional training. This summer, she hopes to expand her skills and set her students up for great success.

She's also looking forward to the relationships she'll build with her



Olivia Plouffe

students. "The teacher-student relationship can be such an incredible bond," she said, explaining that ESL students often look to their teachers for much more than just language skills. They look for help, survival skills, care and affirmation.

"I have a feeling I'm going to fall in love with my students," she said.

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The family of Army Spc. Tyanna S. Felder killed April 6, 2004 receives flowers at the Fallen Heroes event in Trumbull. (Photo by Wayne Ratzemberger)

## Remembering those lost creates special bond

By Scott Finger  
Intern

U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Mark Graham knew his audience would be able to relate to the sentiments of his speech about losing his two sons in military service.

But all the preparation in

the world would not have been enough for him to keep his emotions in check when talking about his losses and the struggles they have put him through.

"You can see why I wrote this speech down and don't just say it," he said. "This is hard."

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# Trumbull High's top grads proud and ready to move on

By Scott Finger  
Intern

Kristi Oki may be ranked number two in her class in terms of academic achievement, but she does not flaunt her status.

Rather, the salutatorian carries herself in a manner that Guidance Department Chair JoAnne O'Connell describes as humble.

"She doesn't wear a sign like other people in her situation might," said O'Connell. "Being humble is her gift."

Humble may not even be a strong enough word to describe Kristi.

"I think everyone in the top 2% of the class should be recognized equally," she said. "We all worked so hard to get here."

Kristi and a small group of high-achieving class members gathered in a conference room June 9 to talk about their time at Trumbull High, being ranked at the top of the class and their college and career plans.

Although she would not claim greatness, Kristi was not shy about disclaiming myths

she heard from her fellow students.

"People think [academic success] comes easy for me, but I have to study and make sure I'm prepared," she said. "It's nice to know that working so hard for the past 12 years has paid off."

Top-10 students Hilary Nigrosh and Kay Labella have also worked hard to achieve their rank.

"We always hear, 'Oh, you guys don't have to work hard or study,' but that couldn't be further from the truth," Kay said.

"We've all been working so hard since freshman year, and before that even," said Hilary. "The school recognizes us, but sometimes our classmates don't appreciate the work because it's not noticeable."

Top-10 student JoAnna Suriani agrees with her classmates.

"It's cool to be recognized for working so hard," she said. "We're not out there scoring all the touchdowns and earning all the glory."

Kristi attributes some of her success and work ethic to her parents.

"My parents always supported me," she said. "They never expected greatness, only that I do the best that I can. And that's nice to have for me to accomplish my goals."

JoAnne expressed the same sentiments of the lack of pressure contributing to success.

"You have to enjoy high school to be this high up," she said. "We're not all crazy bookworms; we have stuff outside of school."

Balancing school and the outside "stuff" is not an easy task, and creates a tight schedule. On top of her usual five to 10 hours of studying per week, and homework, Kristi has also worked part time at an allergist's office for the past two years and has participated in high school gymnastics for the past four.

Add that to her other hobbies such as pottery and ceramics, and piano, which she describes as "something I can take with me for the rest of my life," and it becomes even more impressive how she was able to achieve such access in her high school career.

Kristi is not the only one working hard, and top-10

student Billy Obuchowski is impressed with what he and his fellow classmates were able to achieve.

"We have a really smart class," he said.

Although the students are proud of the achievement of being at the top of their class, they were more proud of themselves and the choices they made.

"It's not about how well you did, it's how you managed your life," Hilary said.

## Moving on

Now that their high school careers are nearly over, the grads are ready to move on, further their education and experience college.

Top-10 student Robin Lo plans to attend the University of Virginia and study biology and chemistry, get into medical school and eventually become a doctor.

Hilary, planning to attend Connecticut College, is going to school with "an open mind," but wants to do something in the arts. She said that high school has helped prepare her for what college will be.

Kay, planning to attend

Tufts University, is also undecided as to what area she will study, but keeps her options open and varied with her top-two choices right now being international relations and chemistry. She wants to do something with forensics and also wants to continue writing. She also hopes to study abroad in Japan, again — she studied there as an exchange student as a part of the American Field Service Intercultural Program. JoAnna, who will attend the University of Maryland Honors College, plans to study government and politics, and hopes to intern at the nation's capital as well as studying abroad in England.

Billy, planning to attend Clemson Honors College, plans to study mechanical engineering and to acquire a master's degree after which he may move into physics.

Kristi is going to attend Yale University, partly because of the proximity it is to home and how it allows her to be near her family, whom she is close with. She plans to study chemical engineering, and also continue studying Spanish, and possibly start

studying Japanese. She hopes to study abroad in a Spanish-speaking environment such as South America.

She enjoyed her high school experience and said the teachers were supportive, but she is excited to move on and experience campus life. Her life experiences and academic work, such as the Academic Placement courses, have helped prepare her for life after high school, but for the rest, she says she will have to go to college to experience.

She learned much over her four years at Trumbull High, and advises those who wish to achieve high academic success to start preparing for college freshman year, take honors courses if possible and to get involved with extra-curricular activities because "colleges like to see that."

*The Trumbull Times would like to hear from the class of 2010 and their plans for the future. Send written statements to [Trumbulltimes@hersamacorn.com](mailto:Trumbulltimes@hersamacorn.com) or [Scott.Finger@sfinger917@grwu.edu](mailto:Scott.Finger@sfinger917@grwu.edu).*

## High School –

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a time. The switch of classrooms will occur about every three months over the next two years.

Board of Education members on Tuesday took a tour of the new auditorium under construction, which is scheduled to be finished by September, just about a year after the project was launched.

The vast space will hold 1,100 seats, said John Barbarotta, brother of Al, when he gave Board of Education members a tour of the site.

"Technically, it's like Broadway," he said.

One unusual feature is the use of natural light, which can flood into the auditorium through a large window. A motorized curtain will allow the space to be darkened when necessary.

The project is designed to conserve energy and attain LEED Silver certification, Barbarotta said. He said they are also converting the process to green cleaning standards, a state mandate for 2011. This is the first time the contractors are using new products for stripping paint and other preparation work. "It's new territory for everybody," he said.

## Plouffe –

Continued from page 1

Plouffe is grateful for the preparation she's received at Briercrest thus far, describing her education as very "holistic."

"The Briercrest philosophy fosters a learning environment where students are built up academically, professionally, emotionally and spiritually," she said.

"We are so pleased that our TESOL students can play such a significant role in this region of the world," said Dr. David Catterick, one of Plouffe's pro-

fessors at Briercrest. "Because of the circumstances in 2008, this is a very sensitive but vital project. We are excited that both ELIC and the host institution in China considered our students ready for the job."

Plouffe's group begins orientation in Beijing on June 30 and will travel to Deyang on July 7. They return to Canada on Aug. 7.

Plouffe is set to graduate in April 2011.

This will be her second trip to China in the last two years. In 2008, she went to Beijing with Athletes in Action to support the athletes at the Olympics.

## Trumbull students named 'Best of the Best'

Three Trumbull students at Housatonic Community College were honored Wednesday, May 26, at the 39th Awards Night ceremony honoring the "Best of the Best" of the Class of 2010.

Student Meghan M. Ryan walked away with three awards: Academic Dean Prize for maintaining a perfect 4.0 average, the

Dale Ward Scholarship, and the Dale Ward Endowed Scholarship.

Other students who won awards include: David B. Panfili, winner the Housatonic Scholar award; and Hannah N. Pham, who received a Certificate of Accomplishment in Business Administration: Finance.