

# RUTLAND NEWS

## Voting results

Continued from page 1

A second question asked the town to hire two paramedic/EMT firefighters. It was also defeated, 323 to 222.

"I'm disappointed," said Fire Chief Thomas Ruchala. "I thought it would be on the positive side, but unfortunately it wasn't."

The two paramedic/EMT firefighter positions were not contingent upon the override. At the special town meeting January 9, voters had approved to fund the two additional positions from April 1 through the end of this fiscal year.

Selectman Donald D'Auteuil, who put the article on the January warrant, said that the board is going to have to work the funding into the budget to keep those two positions on. "The funding will have to come from free cash or stabilization [fund]," he said.

—A.B.

## Irish music, stories to fill the library

Tom O'Carroll will entertain us with an evening of song, stories and history of Ireland Tuesday, March 14, at 7 p.m. at the library. The event is sponsored by the Rutland Cultural Council. The library book discussion group will meet at 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. March 28 to discuss "The Book-seller of Kabul" by Asne Seierstad.

## Recreation offers junior golf classes

Rutland Recreation introduces Junior Golf. New this year, the program is for beginner golfers, ages 6-13, who want to get a head start before the season begins. Instructor is Tim Bishop. The program for 6- to 9-year-olds will take place on Mondays, March 27 and April 3, and Wednesdays, March 29 and April 5, in the Naquag Elementary School gym from 3:45-4:45 p.m. Cost is \$45/student. Registration deadline is March 20. Class size is limited to 20. The program for 10- to 13-year-olds will take place at the Rutland Community Center on Wednesdays, March 15, 22 and 29 from 5:30 to 6:15 p.m. Cost is \$45/student. Registration deadline is March 6. Class size is limited to 20. For more information, call (508) 886-0048 or email recreation@townofrutland.org.

[www.thelandmark.com](http://www.thelandmark.com)

## From giving heart attacks, to preventing them

### Spook Walk maestro creates health-themed game

BY ALICIA BESSETTE  
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You know him as Mr. Spook Walk. Now he's taking on another identity: Mr. Heart Attack.

Or more accurately, Mr. Heart Attack Prevention. John Blanchette's new board game makes plain the do's and don'ts of heart health and is the latest enterprise of the Rutland resident who gives us Spook Walk, the annual Halloween fright fest.

Heart Attack has the qualities you might expect from a man who scares the dickens out of multitudes each year; the game is unpredictable and fun.

But there's a serious educational component as well, and that is very important to Blanchette. At 18, he was diagnosed with high blood pressure after unexplained dizzy spells sent him to the doctor. Ostensibly he was healthy, an athlete, and like the typical teenager, felt invincible.

That doctor's visit was a wake-up call and made Blanchette even more conscious about his eating and exercise habits. He began taking daily medication to regulate his blood pressure (which he still takes) and he researched the condition and became somewhat of an expert on cardiac health.

"This game takes all the information I have and makes it available to people in a format different than a book or a brochure," he says. "I made it palatable for kids, so that they can absorb the information better."

The object of the game is to avoid having a heart attack. Players begin with a healthy heart. As they make their way around the board, different squares and cards dictate them to either add or subtract cholesterol, represented by little white tubes, from their hearts.

If you eat ribs, you gain cholesterol. If you do aerobics, you take some out.

When your heart gets packed with the bad stuff, you end up in the hospital for heart surgery. And each time you return for surgery, it becomes harder to get out of the ICU.

Blanchette spent about five years perfecting the flow of the game, leveling the playing field so that a cardiac specialist has no better chance at winning than a six-year-old who can't spell cholesterol.

Most important was to make it "non-boring," he says.

His wife and two teenaged children served as guinea pigs, playing the handmade prototype over and over, testing variations of the game. When family friend Gary Librandi of Rutland came over for an evening of Heart Attack, he agreed to help finance the game, and thus began the process of trademarking, copyrighting and patenting.

Health teachers in Worcester tried it and by a show of hands unanimously voted to incorporate Heart Attack into the Worcester public school curriculum.

The move was supported by Congressman James McGovern and made official during a press conference at McGrath Elemen-

tary School on Grove Street earlier this month.

Webster Five Cent Credit Union sponsored Heart Attack, purchasing 42 games and donating them to the schools.

"The older you get, the more set in your habits you become," Blanchette says. "If we can make an impression on kids at an elementary school level, the chances of reaching them long-term are better."



The object of the game created by John Blanchette is to avoid having a heart attack.

Steve King photo

He says the game is easy to learn and full of useful information, including memorable lessons on the effects of secondhand smoke and illegal drug use on the heart.

Before Blanchette goes the retail route, he and Librandi are marketing to health educators. They've taken out ads in trade magazines and established a web site, [www.heartattackgame.com](http://www.heartattackgame.com)

Blanchette says the game is first and foremost a teaching tool for the prevention of heart disease, stroke and obesity. "But even if you don't care about health, you could play Heart Attack purely for fun."

See the web site for more information or to purchase the game.

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