



Locked out? Don Finch of Finch's Lock Service holds the key to the solution

# The Sunday Hour

Serving Norwalk, Weston, Westport, Wilton and Stamford

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF OUR COMMUNITY FOR 140 YEARS

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2011 Vol. 140 No. 51 \$2

## Wind gusts take down trees, wires

**NORWALK**  
By **ROBERT KOCH**  
Hour Staff Writer

The region paid the piper Saturday for the spring-like temperatures the day before. Winds gusting up to 50 mph knocked down wires and trees and left one particularly large pile of lumber along East Avenue opposite City Hall. A branch measuring a foot in diameter was split off

a tree shortly before noon and blocked the southbound lane. Police blocked the section of road and traffic was re-routed. "Some trees are coming down. Right now, a tree came down right in front of City Hall. We're on the way," said Norwalk Police Sgt. Andre Velez immediately after police received the call. Also "wires

see WIND, A5

Below, Adrian Ibarondo, with Norwalk's Department of Public Works, cuts through a large limb that fell across part of East Avenue during a gusty Saturday morning.

Hour photo / ERIK TRAUTMANN



## RISING NUMBER OF WOMEN, CHILDREN SEEK SAFE



Hour photo / ERIK TRAUTMANN

Cyndy Goldberg, director of SafeHouses and Programs for the Domestic Violence Crisis Center, stands in one of the center's safeHouses for victims of abuse.

## Local domestic violence shelters full

**NORWALK**  
By **CHASE WRIGHT**  
Hour Staff Writer

One is a well-educated, financial whiz with young children and a steady income. Another is a 70-year-old woman with grown kids and grandchildren. And another is a 19-year-old who

is unemployed, enrolled in school and expecting her first child. These women are all victims of domestic violence, and they may be hiding from their abuser in your neighborhood. "If you look at the intersections that you have with people in your life, we're very transitory. We have a high degree

of mobility as a people ... That's what the population of the SafeHouses are," said Rachele Kucera Mehra, executive director of the Domestic Violence Crisis Center (DVCC). "It's really different than your own neighborhood DVCC, which covers seven townships in lower Fairfield County, operate

see L6

## Report takes Housing Authority to task

Directors to discuss criticisms on policies at next board meeting

**NORWALK**  
By **ROBERT KOCH**  
Hour Staff Writer

The Norwalk Housing Authority board of directors next month will discuss a report that

casts criticism on many of the authority's policies and practices. "We've put the report on the agenda for the next board meeting and asked that we invite (the city's fair housing officer) and other members of the (Fair Housing Advisory) Commission, and anybody else to come over and talk about these things," said Curtis O. Law, Housing Authority executive director. "We are all about trying to help the same

clients, and we are all about trying to do it in a way that is fair, that is consistent with whatever the procedures and policies may be. What may happen from time to time, in past conversations between individuals, is that reasonable people will just disagree." Curtis' comments come days after the Norwalk Fair Housing Advisory Commission accepted Norwalk Fair Housing Officer

see REPORT, A7



State Rep. Chris Perone, D-137, speaks with The Hour editorial board about Dannel Malloy's budget Thursday.

## Perone discusses state budget

# Report takes Housing Authority to task

From A1

Margaret K. Suib's Annual Report Fiscal Year 2009-10. The annual report outlines housing discrimination, barriers to housing, levels of affordable housing and compliance with housing laws.

The policies and practices of the Norwalk Housing Authority, which oversees more than 7,000 units in Norwalk, figure heavily in Suib's 2009-10 report.

Among other things, the report concludes that the Housing Authority no longer trains its residents and Section 8 participants on their rights as tenants; prefers Norwalk residents over others for admission to public housing; sometimes fails to return tenants' security deposits; and requires unreasonable proof of residency before removing a tenant from a lease.

According to Suib, the NHA requires multiple forms of proof of where someone has moved, such as a new lease, utility bill and driver's license, in order to remove them from a NHA lease. If the tenant doesn't have or refuses to provide such information, is out of contact with his or her family, or living informally with roommates, the NHA will not remove the person from the lease, and the rent for the remaining Housing Authority tenant is not recalculated.

"This occurs, despite the fact that the NHA is mandated by (the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development) to recalculate rent and unit size whenever household membership changes," Suib wrote.

Law said the Housing Authority instituted that policy as a result of its experiences, rather than out of a desire "to make life miserable for tenants."

"What would happen over the years is someone would come in and say, 'They don't live there. They've moved out.' And their rent was adjusted accordingly (for the remaining tenant/s)," Law said. "And then we would find out that they were in fact living there."

In her report, Suib concludes that a truancy policy instituted by the Housing Authority several years ago "may be fun afoul of Fair Housing Laws as well as other laws." Questions and concerns include "whether the NHA has the legal authority to condition tenancy upon school attendance or performance; the consequence to the rest of the children in the family if the family is evicted due to one child's truancy (since homelessness negatively impacts education)," she wrote.

"And if, as the NHA says, no family will actually be

evicted under the proposed policy, then the appropriateness of threatening people when there is a stated intent not to actually carry out the threat," Suib wrote.

The Norwalk Fair Housing Advisory Commission, chaired by Jeffrey A. Ingraham, voted to accept Suib's report last Tuesday after reviewing it and making several language adjustments.

Law said he spoke with Ingraham, who happens to be the vice chairman of the NHA board of directors, on Friday morning and that Ingraham suggested that the Housing Authority's board take up the report at its March meeting.

Ingraham, speaking to The Hour later Friday, said his role as chairman of the city's Fair Housing Advisory Commission and vice president of the Norwalk Housing Authority's board of directors "does seem awkward." But he

added that he separates the two responsibilities and is optimistic that the issues raised in Suib's report will be addressed.

"What is being proposed is us sitting down together at the table, the Fair Housing Advisory Commission and its fair housing officer, and the board of the Norwalk Housing Authority. We've never done that before," Ingraham said. "What I'm hoping, as a result of this meeting, is that the issues should be resolved. ... It is our responsibility (as the Fair Housing Advisory Commission) to see that the entire city is in compliance (with fair housing laws)."



Rehearsal Dinners, Anniversaries  
Showers, Business Meetings, Celebrations

## Weddings

**Norwalk Inn**  
99 East Avenue, Norwalk CT 06851  
203.838.2000

## Fullam's Window Treatments

American Made

# Window Shades

IN STOCK — CUT WHILE YOU WAIT  
Blackout or Translucent • Starting at \$19.99 • 37 1/4" width x 6' height

*Shop The Rest, But Buy From The Best!*

[www.fullamswindows.com](http://www.fullamswindows.com) | [www.fullams-shutters.com](http://www.fullams-shutters.com)

104 WALL STREET, NORWALK  
Monday - Saturday 9:30-5:00 Ph: 203-853-3501



Mov  
Liquor

We are |  
37