

One final bow

Last curtain call approaches for legendary theatre in Bridgeport. **CONNECTICUT, A3**

Stricken ship evacuated

Americans will be taken to Nebraska site for monitoring. **NATION & WORLD, A7**

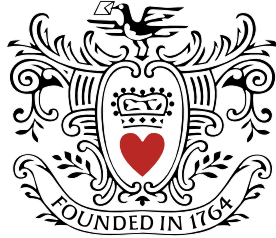
Bust out the brooms

Knicks sweep 76ers, reach second straight conference finals. **SPORTS, B1**

Donning a director's cap

Favreau hopes to re-create his feelings of seeing first 'Star Wars' movie. **LIVING, B6**

Hartford Courant



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DCF crisis sparks call for action

Advocates warn urgent action needed following recent cases of alleged child abuse, deaths

By Livi Stanford
HARTFORD COURANT STAFF

Though legislation including sweeping reforms to the Connecticut Department of Children and Families sits on Gov. Ned Lamont's desk awaiting his signature, child advocates warn that urgent action is needed to protect children in the agency's care.

Following recent cases of alleged child abuse and deaths in Connecticut, lawmakers passed HB 5004 to increase oversight and support of the agency, its workers and foster families.

But while acknowledging the legislation represents progress, child advocates warn that high turnover, a less experienced workforce and a lack of foster parents represents a crisis in the child welfare system. Some also are troubled by DCF's policy permitting some caseworkers to work from home 80% of the time.

"This is life and death work and I think it's clear to everybody, including the Department of Children and Families there are some very urgent problems and so it's got to be all hands on deck," said Sarah Eagan, executive director of the Center for Children's Advocacy. "We can't fight anymore over the narrative crisis. We have to accept this is where we are. What can we do right now to centralize recruiting, to fast track individualized supports for foster parents to address some of the bureaucracy

that gets in the way of meeting individual children's needs in foster care?"

Advocates say more funding may be needed and even recommended a fiscal analysis to determine whether there are opportunities to "draw down federal dollars to support better outcomes for older youth who are aging out of foster care."

Sen. Ceci Maher, a Wilton Democrat, who is not seeking re-election and served as co-chair of the Children's Committee, said that the need to address issues in the system is urgent.

"We need to be moving as though everything is falling apart," she said. "We need to be moving quickly and this is not a time to be talking about processes and procedures. It is time to look at what is not working and fix it. We need to make sure they're making

the most informed decisions when they are working with children."

Eagan said, "We have been underfunding human services at massive levels that impact the ability of DCF to do their work. And we have to roll up our sleeves and commit to scaling up this mountain," she said.

Lawmakers and advocates have been scrutinizing whether DCF acted appropriately in the cases of Jacqueline "Mimi" Torres-Garcia, 11, whose malnourished body was found in New Britain last year, and Eve Rogers, 12, who died in her home Enfield recently. Eve's case was referred to the agency just a week before her death while Mimi's family was initially involved at her birth. And in a third case, of a Waterbury man allegedly held captive in his

See **DCF** on Page A2



Beaches and buckets beckon

We are just 41 days until summer (depending on how you count it) as the summer solstice occurs on June 21. Today is likely to remain in the low 60s in Connecticut but we might see some nice 70s starting Saturday. Meanwhile, our beaches beckon and, for some of us, seashells continue to fascinate. Get out your buckets!

Above: Charlie Taylor, 3 1/2, of Cheshire, runs a shell he found on the beach to a bucket at Jacobs Beach in Guilford.

Right: Charlie Taylor digs for shells while exploring with his father, Mike Taylor, and grandmother, Gia Taylor, on May 7. **AARON FLAUM/HARTFORD COURANT**



Experts say it could be a historic year for El Niño

Meteorologists warn drier weather spikes wildfire risks

By Stephen Underwood
HARTFORD COURANT

AccuWeather meteorologists say that it is increasingly likely that a rare "Super El Niño" may form over the eastern Pacific Ocean this month, bringing potentially a milder and drier year for much of the Northeast, increasing chances of drought and fire risk.

El Niño is a periodic warming of water in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean that can affect global weather patterns for months, according to Tyler Roys, senior meteorologist with AccuWeather. There have been 27 El Niños since 1950, with one happening on average every three to four years. The last one, a mild El Niño, happened from summer 2023 into early spring 2024.

The latest probabilities from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center indicate a 61% chance of El Niño developing this spring into early summer and a 25% chance of a very strong El Niño by the end of the year. Roys said that AccuWeather forecasts suggest there is at least a 20% chance this El Niño could become a "super El Niño," one in which ocean surface temperatures are at least two degrees warmer than average. The last Super El Niño occurred in 2015-16, Roys said.

See **EL Niño** on Page A2

Congressional endorsements surge ahead of convention

By Christopher Keating
HARTFORD COURANT

With an important convention Monday, Congressional candidates are touting endorsements as they jockey for support in a multi-faceted race.

Three candidates are seeking to oust longtime U.S. Rep. John B. Larson of East Hartford, who has served for 28 years in Washington, D.C. A Democratic primary is expected on Aug. 11, but it is still unclear how many candidates will qualify.

Former Hartford mayor Luke Bronin was recently endorsed by former presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg, while state Rep. Jillian Gilchrest of West Hartford has been endorsed by an online group called Progressive Victory that has backed candidates around the country from Alaska to Texas to New Jersey.

Political insiders predict that Hartford attorney Ruth Fortune will not reach the threshold of 15% of the delegates to qualify

See **ENDORSE** on Page A2

Trump rejects Iran's reply to US plan

President offers no details as reports of drones test ceasefire

By Jon Gambrell and Samy Magdy
ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran sent its response to the latest U.S. proposal to end the Iran war via Pakistani mediators on Sunday, but President Donald Trump quickly rejected it in a social media post as "TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE!" — the latest setback to efforts to resolve the standoff in the Persian Gulf that has throttled shipping and sent energy prices soaring.

Trump's rejection of the Iranian response included no details.

Iranian state television reported that Tehran rejected the U.S. proposal as



Iranians walk past a pro-Iran mural in the capital Tehran on Sunday. **ATTA KENARE/GETTY-AFP**

See **IRAN** on Page A5

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WEATHER FORECAST

Early clouds, and sunshine later. **HIGH OF 64, B12**

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