

# The Norwalk Hour

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## Even brain cancer couldn't stop a UConn tailgate tradition



MIKE ANTHONY  
COMMENTARY

STORRS — As Norm Myers lay in a Hartford Hospital bed in September, moments before being

wheeled away for surgery to remove a cancerous brain tumor, he became wonderfully distracted by his family's playful and ambitious ways. Their record for pizzas cooked at a UConn football tailgate party stood at 40. Looking up at his wife, Peg Myers, Norm said they really ought to make 50 at the next game.

Then he was pushed into an operating room and

put under anesthesia. Part of his skull was cut out by doctors working the delicate process of removing that tumor, the size of a kiwi and pressed into his frontal lobe. He awoke after two hours and soon got back to thinking about Saturday mornings, about friends and family and gatherings, about sending grill smoke up into the East Hartford air. He upped the ante. Next tailgate,

he told Peg, "We're going to do 60 pizzas."

So they did.

Peel back all the front-facing success and you'll find the deep core of UConn athletics energy, the real vibrancy of a state enterprise that shapes our collective personality. The men's and women's basketball teams win titles and own the national stage, of course, and the

*Myers continues on A4*



Courtesy of Peg Myers  
Norm and Peg Myers met as students at UConn and have been together since. Norm played football for the Huskies and Peg played basketball. Both of their children played sports at UConn, too. Tommy Myers played football and Kelly Fields was on the track team.



Jim Shannon/Hearst Connecticut Media

D'Yanna Wallace talks about the events surrounding a car crash that left her seriously injured and that killed her friend, Jayan Bryan, the driver, in 2021. Wallace, who was trapped in the car for more than five hours before help came, spoke at her home in Hartford on Jan. 16.

## They crashed and no one saw them

Why deadly wrecks have gone unnoticed in Connecticut

By Christine Dempsey

STAFF WRITER

D'Yanna Wallace's shoeless, sockless left leg poked through the windshield of her friend's crumpled Nissan after it crashed into a bridge abutment next to Interstate 84 hours earlier. Her right leg was stuck in

the twisted metal, with part of her femur "popped out," she said.

The bloody 23-year-old was trapped in the wreck for more than five hours in the cold, pre-dawn darkness of Feb. 20, 2021. While she kept fading in and out of consciousness, she remembers hearing nearby traffic and

her friend Jayan Bryan, the driver, "breathing really hard."

Until she wasn't.

"I heard her take her last breath," Wallace said. "It was quite a while before she took her last breath. She tried to hold on."

No one saw the wrecked car, which was partially

down a slope in a poorly lit area, until after dawn — not even the state trooper who responded to an overnight call about debris on the highway, which turned out to be part of the 2015 Nissan Sentra's trunk.

Shortly after the sun rose the next morning, around 7

*Wrecks continues on A6*

## FEMA reimburses CT DOT \$4.4M for 2021 sinkhole repair

By Mary Ellen Godin

STAFF WRITER

CROMWELL — The Federal Emergency Management Administration has reimbursed the state \$4.4 million for repairs it made to the Wethersfield Secondary Freight Line after a 2021 hurricane opened a massive sinkhole next to the golf course that annually hosts the PGA Tour Travelers Championship tournament.

"It covers emergency restoration following the remnants of Hurricane Ida in September 2021," said David Bednarz, a spokesman for Gov. Ned Lamont. "Extreme rainfall overwhelmed drainage systems, causing a massive washout ... that left the tracks suspended over a collapsed embankment

between the TPC River Highlands golf course and the Connecticut River."

Bednarz said the massive sinkhole was 120 feet long, 60 feet wide and 80 feet deep, located near the 13th hole at the golf course.

This funding, he said, ensures the structural integrity of this vital freight corridor.

The Cromwell site was part of \$105 million in FEMA funds to support recovery for past disasters in five New England states, according to a press statement announcing the grants. The projects included debris removal, emergency protective measures and the repair or replacement of public infrastructure damaged by recent disasters. This regional funding is part of a broader ef-

fort announced by the Department of Homeland Security. In this past week alone, DHS and FEMA approved more than \$2.2 billion in public assistance projects to communities across the U.S.

The Cromwell rail line project was the only grant in the state of Connecticut.

Railroad operations on the Wethersfield Secondary Branch resumed in 2019 after a decade-long break. The line, which runs from Middletown to Hartford, is operated by the Providence and Worcester Railroad Co., a subsidiary of Genesee & Wyoming.

The railroad runs parallel to the Silas Deane Highway and has 22 crossings in Wethersfield, according to the DOT.

*Repair continues on A7*



Courtesy of CTDOT  
Damage to the Wethersfield Secondary Freight Line in Cromwell between the TPC River Highlands golf course and the Connecticut River.