

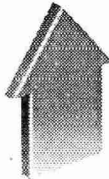
## Highs and lows from last week

The coming together of four local social service agencies with the intent to better service those in need makes a good deal of sense. The WARM Center, the Jonnycake Center, Wood River Health

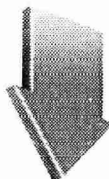


Services and Westerly Adult Day Services have for years cobbled together the town's — really the region's — social service component. Now through a three-year United Way grant they are able to share case workers, which should make the provision of service and the search for service more efficient for all involved. This is a good approach to vital services that more and more among us are finding necessary to seek out.

Legislate civility? A bill sponsored by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara, D-Warwick, Cranston, would make statements, writings or benevolent gestures by a health care provider — to a patient or their family — inadmissible as evidence of liability in a civil lawsuit. One asks where has all the civility gone when a doctor can no longer express sympathy for a life lost. And where are we that we have to legislate such language? But the representative has the right idea. It should be OK for a physician to say "I am so sorry for your loss" without having to worry about consequences.



Russell Kirby is being retried. This is an embarrassment to the legal system and a ridiculous waste of taxpayer money. Kirby, who is charged with kidnapping schoolteacher Leslie Buck, goes back to court early next year. Buck, who died a few days after the kidnapping under mysterious circumstances, made statements to Stonington police and a call to 911 stating handyman Kirby



was responsible for the kidnapping. Kirby was convicted. The conviction was subsequently and wrongly overturned when those statements from Leslie Buck were thrown out as evidence. Kirby said his right to question his accuser was violated. He has remained in prison, along with Buck's husband Charles, who is charged with killing his wife. Her call to 911 and statements to police should be allowed as evidence. It was her own tes-



timony that convicted Kirby the first time. Her words should not have been buried with her death. Prosecutors, under the circumstances, are right to pursue a second trial.

Stonington leaders had to make a tough decision when it became apparent the majestic trees that line North Main Street were far from majestic on the inside. The old maples are in sad shape and apparently the threat of one of them crashing down on a motorist or jogger is more real than imagined, so they'll be taken down. A decaying tree is part of nature, though the strip of tar that has crowded the root systems for decades has likely shortened the life spans in this case. Selectmen didn't take this situation lightly, getting two professional opinions before making the final decision to axe them, but it was a no-win situation and it will be a sad day when they come down.



It is true that those on parole or probation have brought hardship upon themselves, but that doesn't mean their lives should be forever ruined. A new program, the Westerly Re-entry Council, is working to make things smoother for ex-prisoners. The last thing we need are former prisoners forced to return to crime because they can't get a home or job. The goal is noble, and we expect the effort will make a difference in our community.

