

Man loses life savings in ATM Bitcoin scam

In world of unregulated cryptocurrency, there's no getting it back

By Alex Putterman

Around the time Joe Samuels deposited the last of his life savings into the Bitcoin ATM in a Hartford convenience store, he began to wonder if he'd made a mistake.

Samuels, an 84-year-old artist and Hartford resident, had found more than \$20,000 in his checking account and been told to return it to its rightful owner through a strange kiosk. He hadn't realized that the money had actually come out of his sav-

ings account and that the people telling him to deposit the cash were scammers taking advantage of the untraceable and unregulated world of cryptocurrency.

It wasn't until Samuels called
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Arnold Gold/Hearst Connecticut Media
A Bitcoin of America ATM inside a Connecticut store.



GLOWING AND GROWING TOGETHER



Christian Abraham/Hearst Connecticut Media

Kelly Peterson, above right, leads participants in the mindfulness and yoga parent/child retreat "Glowing and Growing Together," held by the Greenwich Alliance for Education at North Street School on Saturday. More photos on page A9.



Hearst Connecticut Media file photo
Natalie Grainger claims the Westchester Country Club fired her for being a whistleblower.

Squash champ sues club

By Robert Marchant

GREENWICH — A squash coach from Greenwich is suing the Westchester Country Club in Rye, N.Y., claiming that she was fired for reporting sexual wrong-doing among members to club management.

Natalie Grainger was once ranked the No. 1 woman's squash player in the world and spent eight years as president of the Women's International Squash Players Association. Grainger has also been an instructor at Chelsea Piers in
Squash continues on A4

Region braces for potential outages

Nor'easter takes aim at Connecticut

By Peter Yankowski

A powerful and prolonged nor'easter may dump up to 18 inches of snow in parts of Connecticut, and bring heavy rain and gusty winds that could cause more than 125,000 power outages, officials said.

The storm started as rain Monday morning and afternoon before switching to snow after midnight. Snowfall rates of 1 to 2 inches per hour were possible Monday night into Tuesday morning. The heavy snow has
Outages continues on A8

Gov. Lamont wants more birthing centers for expectant parents

By Ken Dixon

HARTFORD — Expectant mothers could save thousands of dollars under legislation pushed by Gov. Ned Lamont on Monday to create more birthing centers affiliated with hospitals at a time where the shortage of OB-GYN physicians is forcing some health care executives to curtail maternity units, particularly in rural areas of Northwestern and Northeastern Connecticut.

The bill would also create a path for doulas to become licensed like those in 15 other states, and join midwives in helping Connecticut mothers in the prenatal phase, to give birth at a time when people of color have 45 percent of the state's births, but more than 60 percent of the fatalities among mothers and babies, according to recent data. The proposal would also expand on a model
Centers continues on A4

Bills seek to restrict gender identity

Advocates: A 'nationwide coordinated attack' on LGBTQ youth

By Jordan Nathaniel Fenster

Five bills proposed this year in the Connecticut state legislature would, in various ways, restrict the expression of gender identity or shield organizations that seek to do so.

Advocates say the proposed measures are part of a "nationwide coordinated attack" on gender identity.

The issue entered the national discourse last week when conservative commentator Michael Knowles, a Yale graduate, said during the Conservative Political Action Conference that "trans-



Hearst CT Media file photo
Five bills proposed in the state legislature seek to restrict gender identity.

genderism must be eradicated from public life entirely, the

whole preposterous ideology, at every level."

A bill in Arizona, for example, says that a public school employee may not "knowingly address" a student using "a pronoun that differs from the pronoun that aligns with the student's biological sex." That bill was approved by the Arizona state Senate, as was similar legislation in North Dakota. Both resemble a bill proposed by Connecticut state Rep. Joe Hoxha, R-Bristol.

Hoxha's proposed bill would "require public school educators to recognize each student by the
Bills continues on A4

GLOWING AND GROWING TOGETHER



Kelly Peterson, center, leads participants in a mindfulness and yoga parent/child retreat called, “Glowing and Growing Together,” at North Street School in Greenwich on Saturday. The retreat was hosted by the Greenwich Alliance for Education.



Luka Puac, 7, makes his own glitter bottle for calming as his mom Priya Prashad watches during a mindfulness and yoga parent/child retreat called, “Glowing and Growing Together,” at North Street School in Greenwich on Saturday. The retreat is hosted by the Greenwich Alliance for Education.



Psychologist Alina Boie, above, leads participants in breathing exercises during a mindfulness and yoga parent/child retreat.



Above, Kelly Peterson, left, leads Stephanie Martin and her son Xavier Kelly, 9, as they and others participate in a mindfulness and yoga parent/child retreat called, “Glowing and Growing Together.”

Photos by
Christian Abraham
Hearst Connecticut Media



Above, at right, Psychologist Alina Boie helps participants create their own glitter bottles for calming during a mindfulness and yoga parent/child retreat called, “Glowing and Growing Together,” at North Street School in Greenwich on Saturday.



‘That’s how he learned’

Stew Leonard’s places family member in senior exec position

By Alexander Soule

From singing animatronic characters along store aisles to plopping a grocery store in an old-school mall, Stew Leonard’s has never been shy to upend the standard supermarket formula. But the company’s newest senior executive — a nephew of CEO Stew Leonard Jr. — admits the chain’s experiments haven’t always gone according to plan, recollecting an attempt last year at vegan chocolate chip cookies it still hopes to sell one day.

“It sounded great — but you can’t get away from a real chocolate chip cookie,” said Jake Tavello, the newly installed chief operating officer of Stew Leonard’s based in Norwalk. “If you go down there today, you’re not going to see vegan chocolate chip cookies. But at Stew Leonard’s, we have an entrepreneurial spirit where we encourage people to try stuff. That item didn’t work — but you’re going to see 10 new items down there.”

With Tavello’s promotion, Stew Leonard’s is sticking with its time-tested recipe of family management in addition to family ownership. Through his mother Jill Leonard Tavello who formerly led human resources at Stew Leonard’s, Tavello is a grandson of Stew Leonard Sr. who founded the company in Norwalk in 1969. Stew Leonard’s has seven supermarkets today in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey, with additional li-

quor stores carrying the Stew Leonard’s Wine & Spirits name. “Growing up it was just so part of our family,” Tavello told CT Insider this week at the headquarters store in Norwalk. “I would come in with my mom and be in here looking around as a little kid, with all the colors and the sights and the sounds. And what’s really cool is that I have a two-year-old now, and I’m bringing him in.”

Tavello acknowledged the challenge in approaching his uncle’s magnetic, ebullient personality that the company features regularly in videos on YouTube, Facebook and other channels, including this week in a kitchen tutorial on preparing lamb for Easter spreads.

“It’s hard to walk the stores with him, because every customer is coming up to him,” Tavello said. “But Stew told me that’s how he learned from his father, just going around the store with him and spending time with him.”

“More than being a great salesman, that’s what Stew has done — he’s kept a great, great culture,” Tavello added. “I want to make sure all of us keep that culture going.”

Stew Leonard Jr.’s daughter Blake Leonard is also a senior manager in the family business running Stew Leonard’s Wines & Spirits, after an apprenticeship at E. & J. Gallo Winery.

Tavello’s own managerial training ground was New York-

based Wegman’s, which chose a Connecticut Avenue site in Norwalk for its first Connecticut store that is currently under development. Tavello learned the ropes at Wegman’s first Massachusetts store, before returning to Stew Leonard’s as a store manager in Danbury, then opening the company’s first New Jersey store at the Paramus Park Mall.

Tavello lives in Westport where he grew up in and attended Greens Farms Academy, while working at Stew Leonard’s during free hours of the day. He went on to get an undergraduate degree from Salve Regina University, then joined Wegman’s for two years, before going on to get his MBA from Bentley University and returning to Stew Leonard’s in 2015.

There was no education like the crash course of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, with Tavello and other managers having to figure out problems on the fly ranging from protective steps like cleansing and Plexiglass shields at checkout, to keeping shelves stocked which was a continuing issue through last year with the baby formula crisis. Tavello was managing the Paramus Park Mall store in New Jersey when the pandemic hit, overseeing a staff that had only come together in September 2019.

“What I learned was how important communication is,” Tavello said. “Get a good group of



Ned Gerard/Hearst Connecticut Media

New Chief Operating Officer Jake Tavello at Stew Leonard’s Norwalk on March 8.

people together; figure out what are the options; problem solve; and ... as we listen to customers and more information comes in, adapt.”

As chief operating officer, Tavello will have responsibility for overseeing stores and back-end operations across three states. Other senior executives include Patrick Dentato, chief financial officer who Stew Leonard’s hired in 2016 after several years as CFO of King Foods and Balducci’s.

The company has regularly whisked the grandchildren off to retreats to coach them on the extra challenges faced by businesses run by families, to include the topics of working effectively together and ownership succession.

Most recently, Tavello said, the group traveled to Freeport, Maine, where they got exposure to L.L. Bean’s experience under

family ownership. The retailer hired its first non-family member as CEO in 2001, when Bridgeport and Redding native Chris McCormick got the top job. Stephen Smith is CEO of L.L. Bean today, after a retail career that has included roles with Walmart and Ahold Delhaize, whose subsidiaries include Stop & Shop and Hannaford Bros.

“As I think to the future, those values that made the business great — not just with innovation, but customer service and quality and having great people — those are the things that we really want to continue,” Tavello said. “It’s hard to do — but as a family business we’re fortunate that we can make long-term decisions like that.”

Includes prior reporting by Luther Turmelle.
Alex.Soule@scni.com; @casoulman