

RHODE ISLAND

2008 DICK REYNOLDS H.S. WINTER SPORTSMANSHIP AWARD

In conjunction with the Rhode Island Interscholastic League Injury Fund

High School coaches and officials: Call 401.277.8142 for an official nomination form and details.

LOVE STORIES

BY CONNIE GROSCH



ELLEN LENOX SMITH AND STUART BURNS SMITH

“Ellen’s condition didn’t have a major impact on us immediately,” says Stuart Smith. His wife of almost 35 years was diagnosed in 2004 with Ehlers Danlos syndrome, a rare genetic disorder. “She had surgery on her arms that we thought were injuries from swimming. We thought, ‘It’s going to be over and then our life will get back to normal.’ ”

“It affects the connective tissue,” says Ellen, 57, who now has casts on both lower legs after having surgery on her feet and ankles. “Every bone, every organ is affected. The tendons and ligaments get looser and looser.” She has just endured her 15th surgery, 5 of them in the last 18 months, with more on the horizon.

In January 2007, Ellen had to leave her job as an eighth-grade teacher in Burrillville. She says it was the hardest thing she’s ever done. “I wasn’t ready to leave my career. It was a huge financial loss for us, and I felt so responsible that I was creating a burden in my marriage. I always believed in my heart that not only would I find out what was wrong with me but that I would get myself better. I pushed myself for years, but at some point there was no choice. The realization that I wasn’t going to get better was the biggest jolt. I went from master swimmer, swim coach and teacher, to disabled.”

Stuart, 60, who had worked for the Department of Children, Youth and Families for 30-plus years, retired in June. “The impact on our lives is much different now that we know it’s a disability,” says Stuart. “It’s the loss of dreams, the things we had hoped to do

in retirement. But you give that up and then you start looking for another life.

“It took a long time for me to realize my wife is disabled. I kept thinking she’s going to walk again, we’re going to swim together again, we’re going to take a train trip across Canada, and the reality is we’re probably not going to do that stuff or at least not in the way we thought.”

“We would be happy to go to the beach together and have me walk in the sand. Now I sit in my wheelchair on the edge of the sand and Stu takes his walk.”

“It would be really difficult if you did not have a strong marriage. We’re pretty happy every day. I feel incredibly lucky: we have four healthy sons and we’re still in love.”

Ellen writes poetry now. “I write a poem when I can’t get past something, am fearful about my condition, and emotionally, it gets me through it,” she says.

“Stu has never made me feel guilty or insecure about his love. If someone had told me we would be living this way, I would have said, ‘I don’t know how I’ll do that.’ But you just dig deeper and when you think there’s no more down there, you dig deeper yet. There’s always more.”

“Ellen doesn’t talk about the pain.”

“Sometimes he looks at me and knows I’m struggling. He touches me and asks, ‘Are you okay?’ and the tears just start flowing.”

“I don’t say, ‘It’s going to be all right,’ ” says Stu. “I just say, ‘I’m going to be with you.’ ”

If you have a love story, contact Connie at cgrosch@projo.com

Bidding hearings begin this afternoon

BY CYNTHIA NEEDHAM
JOURNAL STATE HOUSE BUREAU

PROVIDENCE — A Senate committee is poised to begin investigating the way the state hires builders for certain public projects, following a Superior Court ruling that the policies violate state bidding law.

The Government Oversight Committee, set to convene the first in a series of hearings this afternoon, will focus its attention on what are known as alternative bidding practices — those used in place of sealed lump-sum bids.

“You don’t need to be a genius to see that there are a lot of contracts out there called into question,” said Sen. J. Michael Lenihan, D-East Greenwich, who called for the probe and is the committee chairman.

The inquiry follows last year’s months-long Oversight Committee investigation of

SEE HEARINGS, C5

Torch relay to put light on China

BY JOHN CASTELLUCCI
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — Roger Williams Park will be the site next weekend of an event intended to heighten awareness of what organizers say is China’s dismal human rights record.

The Rhode Island Human Rights Torch Relay is part of a worldwide campaign by the Coalition to Investigate Persecution of the Falun Gong, a 15-year-old religious movement banned by the Chinese government in 1999.

It will take place 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, beginning with a 5K walk and race and culminating in a rally featuring musical performances and a roster of speakers expected to include prominent Chinese dissident Xu Wenli.

Organizer Al Iannotti, a practitioner of Falun Gong, says the event is being staged

SEE TORCH, C5

State House celebrates two saints

BY CYNTHIA NEEDHAM,
KATHERINE GREGG
and EDWARD FITZPATRICK
JOURNAL STAFF WRITERS

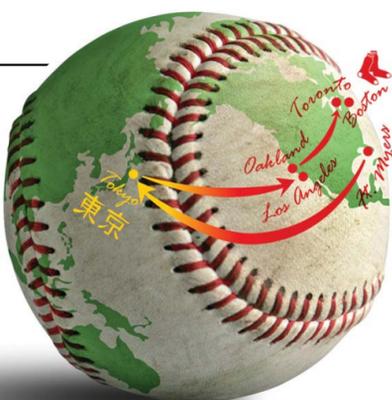
If the close of last week marked a solemn occasion, the beginning was anything but.



POLITICAL SCENE

With celebrations throughout the state commemorating St. Patrick’s and St. Joseph’s days, there were green beer and zeppoles aplenty in the Ocean State. Nowhere was the merriment more, well, merry, than in the House of Representatives chamber where members held their annual “Two Saints” celebration.

SEE SCENE, C5



Sox coverage from Japan

In projoSports and online at projoSports.com

Find blog entries, pictures, audio reports and slideshows from projoSports writer Sean McAdam and photographer Bob Breidenbach.

Plus, follow the games, live, pitch by pitch this Tuesday and Wednesday morning — starting at 6:05 a.m. “our time”— at projoSports.com/redsox

