

City leaders: we support skatepark

By KARA DUMOND and CASSIE NOWAK
The Tattoo

With strong backing from local teens, city officials said recently they support building a skate park in Bristol.

Mayor Frank Nicastro said he's "100 percent" for the project because it is for children and will help keep them occupied so they don't get into alcohol, smoking and misadventures.

Though officials say they back the idea, the key test will come in the next couple of months when City Hall prepares a proposed budget for the fiscal year that starts next July. If they want a skate park, they'll have to include funding for it in the annual spending plan.

Finance Chairman Rich Miecznikowski, the chairman of the Board of Finance, said the city needs more activities for young people.

But, he said, funds have to be available before a skate park can be built.

Bristol is already behind the curve on creating a municipal skate park where local skateboarders,

inline skaters and trick bikers could practice and hang out.

New Britain, Farmington and Wolcott are among the nearby towns that already have parks. Skate parks are in the works in West Hartford, Simsbury and Glastonbury.

They typically cost between \$50,000 and \$75,000 to construct.

Although Tom Conlin, vice chairman of the Board of Finance, said he hadn't heard of any proposal, he said he wouldn't rule it out.

"Skating looks like lots of fun," Conlin said. "Any more the city can do for people enhances the town and provides an opportunity for younger people to do something in their spare time." Expense is an issue, he said, but it would be another service for taxpayers' money.

Councilman Ken Scott said he backs building a skate park in town.

"I think we need to have something in our city for the teens to do to occupy their time," Scott said.

"It should happen," said Republican Party

Chairman Gary Schaffrick, because it would be so popular.

"I'd be a millionaire if I had the money to do it," he added.

Councilman Gerard Couture said if a skate park is done properly, he would like to see it built.

Nicastro said the project would need the proper insurance and other legalities. He said he is looking into the cost and potential locations for a park.

Schaffrick said the downtown revitalization plan could focus on a skate park because it would draw young people to the city center - where many already come to skate illegally on the Barnes Group property.

Former Mayor Bill Stortz said there has to be more recreation for young people in Bristol. But, he said, he isn't sure where to put a park and figures insurance will be a problem.

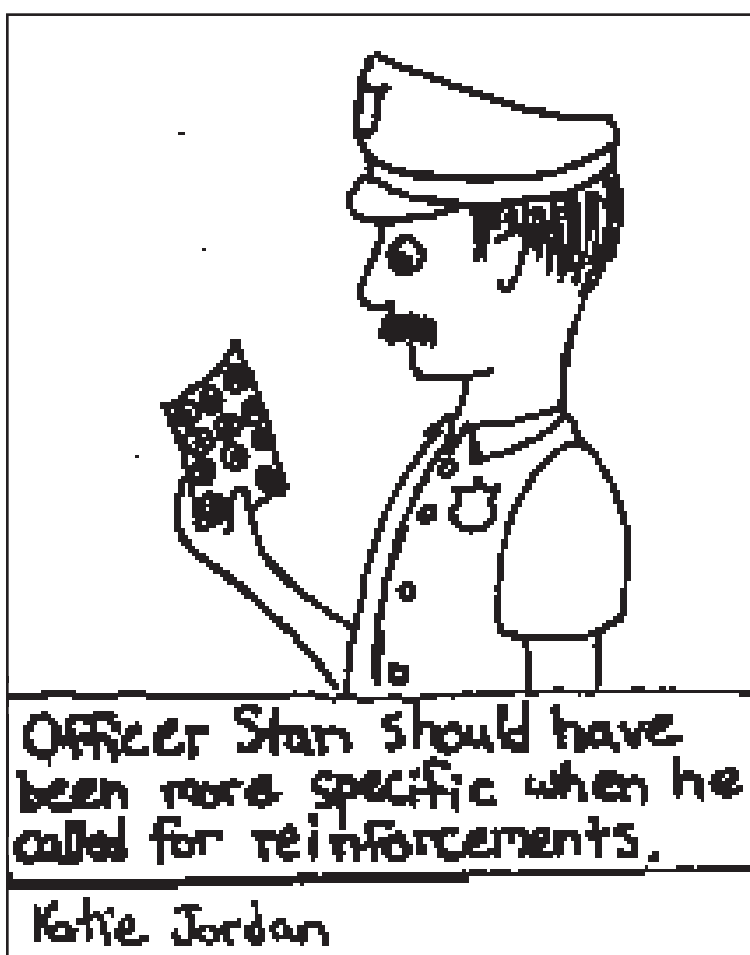
"There may good reasons not to" do it, Stortz said. The skatepark might not be as popular in a few years, he said.

On the other hand, Stortz said, some kids play ball "and others ride on skateboards. You can't exclude one or the other."

He said the city should put it where it would be most effective - and where you could have the best transportation for young people to get to it.

The first test for the proposal will be whether the parks commission decides to put money in its budget plan, something that could be decided in mid-January.

I'd be a millionaire if I had the money to do it.
- Gary Schaffrick, city Republican party boss



Katie Jordan / The Tattoo

Tattoo journalists win regional awards

Twelve student writers for *The Tattoo* took home awards this year from New England's premier high school journalism contest, the Scholastic Press Forum at American International College.

Bristol Eastern High School graduate Joe Wilbur, now a student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, captured four honors, including the WEEI Enterprise Award that recognized his work for *The Tattoo*.

The Tattoo garnered seven different awards in the annual competition, which attracted more than 2,400 entries from more than 300 high schools in New England and New York.

The Tattoo won in the news feature category for its four-issue series starting in August 2000 called an Insider's Guide to High School, which sought to tell students what they really need to know to survive successfully all the way through their senior year.

Also in the news feature category, Bristol Eastern High School freshman Katie Jordan nabbed a medal for her piece on the local popularity of Harry Potter.

In the editorial category, Eastern graduate Jessica Norton

grabbed honors for a column on teen driving that ran last spring. Norton is now studying at the University of Connecticut.

A California contributor, Noel Fahden, topped the cartoon category for an illustration she did that ran in *The Tattoo's* 2000 Insider's Guide. Fahden is a student at the University of Pennsylvania.

Wilbur won awards in the columns and feature categories. His column, warning teens not to get lost in the system in high school, was part of the Insider's Guide. The feature writing award that Wilbur secured was for freelance work he did for The Bristol Press covering the 2000 Memorial Day celebrations.

A number of *Tattoo* writers shared in the news feature honor for the entire Insider's Guide.

They were Bristol Central High School freshman Danielle Letourneau; Eastern students Katie Jordan, Mike Nguyen, Franco Garzone, Natalie Minor, Jen Rajotte and Sam Yosafi; Fahden; Wilbur; and former Eastern students Hila Yosafi and Sarah Jordan, now both UConn students.

Teens skate on, despite boy's death

Friend recalls trick bike rider as 'daredevil' who tried dangerous stunts

By KAISHI LEE
The Tattoo

SINGAPORE - Three days after a 14-year-old boy doing bicycle stunts died during a practice session, ESPN's Asian Xtour, local boarders at Skate Park were still performing stunts.

But some were talking about Harry Chau, too.

Dino Noordin, a 12-year-old skateboarder who knew Chau, said his friend - whom he was confident would eventually turn pro - was playing around with his bike just last week.

"I've seen him do dangerous stunts like pancake whip, can-can, 360, no-hander and low-footer," Noordin said.

"He's a half-daredevil. Sometimes, when he attempts a dangerous stunt, he'd brake halfway and say 'scared,'" Noordin said.

Chau died Dec. 6 after crashing during a trick on the BMX Park course at the Ngee Ann

City Civic Plaza. His handlebars slammed into his chest and knocked him unconscious, according to the Straits Times, Singapore's major newspaper. He died a little later at a hospital.

Because of the death, police cancelled the ESPN competition in Singapore.

Boarders gathered during term break at the Skate Park, located at the heart of Orchard Road in the mall district.

"Skate Park's a great place to socialize. Tertiary students usually come here," said 19-year-old Lawrence Lee.

When asked if the authorities had the right to cancel the Asian Xtour competition, four boarders there nodded their heads - another indication that Singapore's worldwide reputation as a nanny state is probably deserved.

"Harry died and they (the authorities) are concerned about safety regulations," Lee said.

The four boarders said they

were undeterred by the freak accident that claimed Chau's life.

"It just doesn't affect me at

and elbows. Rick Dovey, the managing director of ESPN Star Sports said in a statement that the com-

Harry died and they are concerned about safety regulations.

- Lawrence Lee, 19

all," said skateboarder Alvelyn C. Koh, 15. "I don't take it (skateboarding) to the extreme."

Lee said that minor accidents can happen to anyone and every stunt means getting hurt with scratch and bruises.

Effendi Hazali, 14, who's been skateboarding for the past two years, said there is a 5 to 10 percent chance of having some sort of accident when trying tricks.

For a skateboarder, the teens said, the dangerous stunts are the 360-degree flip, the K-grid, the board slide and hand flips.

Hazali said his worst injuries were bloody gashes on his knees

pany is "deeply saddened" by Chau's death "and we extend to his family our heartfelt sympathy during this difficult time." Mai Tatoy, an ESPN Star Sports spokeswoman, declined to answer specific questions from *The Tattoo*.

Chau's death is the first in the six-year history of ESPN extreme sports competition, which includes the X Trials event held in Bristol last June.

Kaishi Lee, a Tattoo staff writer, is a high school student in Singapore.

Merry Christmas from The Tattoo

By SARA GREENE
The Tattoo

As the holidays approach, most everyone starts thinking about presents, school vacation, and parties. But some teens during this holiday season are barely scraping by. They can't look forward to unwrapping presents or going to parties. To some of them, an unselfish concern for their families is what matters most.

The Tattoo's Christmas Presence project hopes to help struggling Bristol teens have a happier holiday. The Family Center and the Bristol Emergency Shelter found teens who were in dire financial straits, and *Tattoo* writers profiled them.

Donations of money or gifts for these needy teens can be dropped off at The Bristol Press, 99 Main St. Checks can be made out to *The Tattoo's* Christmas Presence, and sent to *The Tattoo*, c/o Steve Collins and Jackie Majerus, P.O. Box 483, Bristol, CT 06011-0483. Help us show these teens that their community cares.



Joe Keo / The Tattoo

Hey, it looks a lot better in person, so go to the Children's Library and check out *The Tattoo's* offering in the Festival of Trees, an annual event of the Friends of the Bristol Public Library. Our tree is on display through New Year's. Its ornaments show children's book characters reading newspapers and books.



Calhoun finds the right pieces to UConn puzzle

By T.J. O'CONNOR
The Tattoo

Think back to March of 1999. Try to remember something that happened in the state of Connecticut at this time that seemed out of the ordinary. I'll admit I can only recall one thing: the UConn men's basketball team won the national championship. I bet even if you're not a sports fan you remember the Huskies shocking the college basketball world by defeating the heavily favored Duke Blue Devils in Tampa, Florida.

That's right - UConn was the underdog and they defeated all odds by not only going to their first "Final Four" but by actually winning the whole "kit 'n caboodle."

What was it, though, that made UConn into a championship team that year? Many factors led to the coaches' National Championship run, but Coach-ing was the main one that season.

Jim Calhoun made the 1999 team into a championship team. Calhoun didn't just wake up one morning in the '98-'99 season and say, "I'm going to make this team a national championship team."

Calhoun started to create this team many years before - by recruiting and getting kids to play for UConn, getting the right coaching personnel, and by attracting fans.

Calhoun never got much credit for the championship. Critics gave most of the credit to Richard Hamilton and Khalid El-Amin (a Minnesotan who was about to attend the University of Minnesota until Calhoun persuaded him to come to Storrs.)

Along the way Calhoun, put the pieces of the puzzle together, and this was no ordinary puzzle. Calhoun carefully crafted his plan. He recruited two big men, Jake Voskuhl and Kevin Freeman, to lead his frontcourt along

with Hamilton.

The coach searched long and hard before 1999 to come up with players that would fit into his program and who would complete the team he had in mind. When Calhoun had his team set his team set for the '98-'99 season, he set out a game plan for the entire year. This plan said the Huskies would go as far as they could and they went all the way.

But success did not come easy for UConn. Along the way to the national championship, the Huskies lost two games and came close to losing a few more, including a game that could have cost them their national title in the "Elite Eight" to a "Cinderella team," the Gonzaga Bulldogs. The Huskies squeaked by with a 67-62 win and went on to face Ohio State in the semifinals. UConn beat the Buckeyes and

advanced to the championship game where they made history by becoming the first team to win the NCAA championship in their first "Final Four" since Texas Western in 1966.

Evidentially Calhoun found the right pieces to his puzzle in the '98-'99 season. Calhoun seemed to be the only one who knew UConn would be there at the end, competing for a national championship.

Calhoun guided his team as if they were really a group of huskies attached to a sled. He let them go and then when they got too cocky and excited he pulled on the rope to hold them back. When the championship game came around, Calhoun was ready - he'd been preparing for years for that moment. He let go of the rope and let his team explode.

After years of preparation, Calhoun could let his team show their stuff because they were in the national championship game. The end of the season would come for the Huskies after the

game, no matter what happened. UConn took advantage of the situation and claimed the title.

Now, at the start of the 2001-2002 season, UConn is already recognized as a quality team. Calhoun added two young stars to the roster, Emeka Okafor and Ben Gordon. The leader on the team is Caron Butler, a 6'7" forward out of Wisconsin who the Huskies look to when they need a big score.

The future looks bright for Calhoun's squad. Not only does he have good freshmen and sophomore players on his team this year, but next year another batch of talented players are expected to come to Storrs.

It's been almost three years since the Huskies won the national championship. If you pay attention to what Calhoun is doing on the bench now and what he is doing during the off season in his recruiting, you can tell that he is building another puzzle. He just has to find the right pieces for it.