

## 'Senior' Prom offers intergenerational fun at Ansonia High School

By Patricia Villers

If I had a bucket list, I could cross off go to prom, because last Thursday I finally went.

Since I didn't go to my prom in high school (read: wallflower) I knew I had to attend and write about the "Senior" Prom at Ansonia High School for "senior citizens."

The prom was presented by members of the Human Relations Clubs from Ansonia, Derby, and Shelton high schools, and Eli Whitney Tech in Hamden.

It was held in the cafeteria, and it was a blast. More than 50 senior citizens enjoyed dinner, dancing, and lots of intergenerational fun.

Smiling students politely greeted prom-goers at the door, pinned corsages on them, and escorted them down to the cafeteria.

Students and seniors learned steps from each other as they danced to a variety of tunes that spanned decades - from the 1940s to present day. JMG Music of Monroe provided the entertainment, which included a popular photo booth.

Shelton High School sophomore Jackie Sullivan said, "I love this idea." She was accompanied by her grandparents, Bob and Joan Caperon of Stratford.



Ansonia High School sophomore Yao Dong also liked the idea, and said the prom brought "entertainment and excitement" to the older generation. Classmate Ebony Morris, said she enjoyed "greeting the seniors and being respectful."

I was greeted by Derby High School junior Queshon McDaniel. He also liked the intergenerational concept, and said students "get to experience what (seniors) did, and they can teach us."

Derby High School freshman Brian Liriano said an event like the prom "helps the seniors rejuvenate and they get to experience a good time."

State Rep. Linda M. Gentile, D-Ansonia, stopped by for a visit. She commented, "It doesn't matter if you're young or old, at the prom you always have fun."

Lillian Bartolotta, member of Ansonia High School class of 1948, danced with Liriano. "I taught him to dance," she said. "I pulled him closer to me."

Human Relations Club advisor and retired educator Nick Colliceli said, "This is a rip-roaring success." He founded the club at Ansonia School High in 2007. The club seeks to reduce prejudice and discrimination, stop bullying, and host intergenerational events.

The group has grown to almost 250 students in four towns. "We can learn from one another, and make history come alive," Collicelli said.

He commended Ansonia schools' food service director Dominick Golia for serving a delicious dinner. Guests dined on chicken, twice baked potatoes, green beans and an ice cream dessert served in a chocolate shell. "He said tell me what you need and I'll make it work," Collicelli said.

Derby High's Human Relations Club co-president Tiana Figueroa, a junior, said the prom was a good idea because "the younger generation can learn from the seniors' stories." Co-president Akshar Patel added, "We want them to have a prom like us. It's nice for the community."

Milford residents Walter and Dorothy Scott spent a lot of time on the dance floor. They have been married 62 years and they said they have enjoyed dancing through the years.



## Singer / Songwriter kicks off Read Across the Valley

By Patricia Villers

SHELTON - Think you know how to sing the alphabet? Well, maybe you do, but it's doubtful you've ever *woofed* through your ABCs.

Singer/songwriter Al deCant led more than 90 educators, librarians, elected officials, and nonprofit representatives in song last week at a Read Across the Valley breakfast.

The annual event sponsored by The Early Childhood Task Force of The Valley Council for Health and Human Services was held at Brownson Country Club.

Orange resident deCant is a retired educator. These days he works as a children's entertainer. "I've reinvented myself," he said.

"Reading is such a vital foundation for children," deCant said. He talked about Read Across the Valley, an initiative that grew out of Read Across America that is held each year in March.

The National Education Association's Read Across America celebrates reading on March 2 each year, birthday of the late children's author Dr. Seuss.

When reading to young children, deCant said, "your role is to engage those kids to get excited about reading."

Pamela Lorenzo, chair of The Early Childhood Task Force, said the group focuses on "early care and education throughout the Valley" so that "all children are ready to go to school to learn and succeed."

See the video of the singer and dog singing the alphabet at: <https://youtu.be/oi1A4ioPJQw>



Heard the one about the dog singing the alphabet?

## The Great Give is back for 2016

This year, the Valley Community Foundation (VCF) is again participating in **The Great Give®**.

The 2016 event is being hosted by the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven (CFGNH), and is the seventh community-wide online giving event to raise funds for local nonprofits serving Greater New Haven.

Over a 36-hour period from May 3 at 8:00 am to May 4 at 8:00 pm, gifts made to over 400 participating nonprofits will be eligible to be matched on a pro-rated basis with additional funds by CFGNH and VCF.

In 2015, VCF non-profits raised nearly \$230,000 in Valley-related giving combined with matching gifts. This was a 43 percent increase in giving over the 2014 event.

In 2015, well-known Valley nonprofits raising funds for the Great Give 2015® included: Center Stage Theatre, Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley, BHcare, TEAM and Griffin Hospital.

Organizations receiving the most gifts were the Valley Independent Sentinel, Seymour Pink and the Shelton High School Robotics Team. Learn more about giving to area non-profits at <http://givegreater.guidestar.org/>, and visiting their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/giveGreater/>



### About the Valley Community Foundation

The Valley Community Foundation (VCF) serves Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour and Shelton, Connecticut. It was launched in 2004 to be more responsive to the Valley's unique five cities and towns.

VCF has close to \$18 million in assets in more than 110 charitable funds which have been established by individuals, families, nonprofits and for-profit businesses in the Valley.



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