

WESTIE WIRE

NEWSLETTER



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Who is Mayor O'Brien?

The city of West Haven has much to offer, from its beautiful boardwalk, beaches, and parks to its businesses, schools, and people. As the years pass, West Haven will continue to expand and its beauty will continue to grow. The man who has devoted his entire career to this purpose is Mayor Edward O'Brien.

O'Brien is more than "just" a mayor. He is an entrepreneur, a leader, an innovator, role model, mentor, father, husband, son, and human being. He was born and raised in the city of West Haven and plans to live out his life in this city, making him a true Westie. O'Brien began his professional career in the jewelry business, working for a manufacturing company called Goldworks. He was involved in most of the contract work for retailers across the country. O'Brien later became the president of the merchant's association, where he saw how the relationship between cities and businesses could be improved.

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O'Brien realized that West Haven was not trying to attract new business or maintain the businesses already in town. In the 1960s and 70s, West Haven served as a tourist location when it was the home of the Savin Rock Boardwalk in the early 19th century, when Savin Rock rivaled even Coney Island and Atlantic City. O'Brien witnessed the decline of his hometown and wanted to do something about it. After moving through the ranks of city government, he was elected Mayor on November 5, 2013. He wanted to build West Haven back to its former glory and address the needs of his fellow Westies: "It's just a great city that just needs some help moving forward," he said. The city of West Haven is a \$160 million corporation that falls under the responsibility of Mayor O'Brien. To this end, he has been battling West Haven's greatest issue: finances. In 2013, West Haven suffered a \$10 million deficit. Mayor O'Brien has been tackling this deficit since he was elected Mayor. By the year 2018, that deficit will be eradicated and the city will enter its first deficit-free year.

As a human being, O'Brien believes that diversity should be embraced. He describes America as a melting pot and sees West Haven as contributing different cultures, food, and people to that pot. West Haven has the largest Turkish-American population in the state, and the city is welcoming of every human being regardless of their background. The University of New Haven is a crucial contributor in the diversity of West Haven because it brings different populations of people into the city and beautifies it. For this reason, O'Brien believes the University and West Haven should come together: "It just really benefits everybody to work together for a better West Haven, to work for a better UNH. There's strength in numbers and



*Left to right:
Dr. Chris Haynes; John Lewis, Mayor O'Brien*

UNH provides the young millennial, educated, talented perspective that you need." The Mayor's Advisory Commission of West Haven at the University of New Haven was founded to help build this bridge between the communities.

The mayor is a community member just like the rest of us. He wants the city to change for the better and believes that collaborating with the University is the way to do so. He fully believes that we have the power to raise West Haven from the ashes of its former self like a phoenix. This is what sets him apart from other state officials and leaders who may only care about the monetary and political benefits of their position. Mayor O'Brien wants all students and community members to know: "West Haven is a great city. Come down, spend some time. Enjoy your time here. We are building West Haven back. It's doing great. Our financials are finally shaping up. The Haven and the Atwood right around UNH, that whole area is going to be transformed. Wait to see what's coming next."

By Carlos Soto

Meet Sierra Carlstedt

A freshman at the University of New Haven, Sierra Carlstedt is excited to begin working with the West Haven community.

I chose to attend the University of New Haven with much apprehension. But unlike many college freshman, my concern was not about sharing a bathroom with 11 other girls, or the independence of living on my own.... I was most concerned about finding a group of students that were passionate about the things I am passionate about.

As a Political Science major, I hope to change the lives of citizens for the better, and I hope to work with nonprofits similar to the West Haven Emergency Assistance Taskforce (WHEAT) or The West Haven Community House. I believe these programs are essential to enrich the lives of those in

the community that don't have access to the resources they need. One day, I hope to run my own nonprofit that encourages love and respect in the community, as well as providing homeless individuals with education and/or work experience.

When I found out about the Mayor's Advisory Commission, I knew it was something I had to become a part of. The individuals in the Mayor's Advisory Commission were the exact type of people I was hoping to meet. The Commission operates like a job, with each individual assigned specific tasks and deadlines. Currently, I am contacting local businesses to garner support for WestFest in September 2017.

I know that the experiential education I will receive at the University of New Haven will benefit me in the future.

By Sierra Carlstedt

Learning the New England Life



Savin Rock Beach - West Haven, CT

In the last few months, I have come to discover that Connecticut is a place that, while

being different from all the other places I've lived, becomes a comfortable home for just about anyone who lets it. Personally, I never would have imagined myself feeling at home in the Northeast.

My past has complicated my answer to the question "Where are you from?" The fact that I've lived in 5 countries in the last 12 years only adds to my own confusion. Having lived in places like Thailand, Indonesia, and Brazil, my own personal way of seeing the world and its people has been in a constant state of change as I've learned different things from each of the 20 countries I have visited. The variety of people with different world experiences that I met along the way made my life a mixture of these approaches to life as well.

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It probably doesn't come as a surprise that when I first came to Connecticut, I didn't know if it was the place for me. I had practically no experience living anywhere but in big cities, where most people did not have too much of a family connection to their homes.

Despite that, I surprisingly began to feel more at home in West Haven with every passing week. It's not every day that you can have dining options ranging from Brazilian barbeque to Sushi within a 30-minute walking radius the way you do here. Living in New England also taught me that people are way more accepting and open-minded than the critics around the world would have you think (though the love for American football is greater than I was expecting).

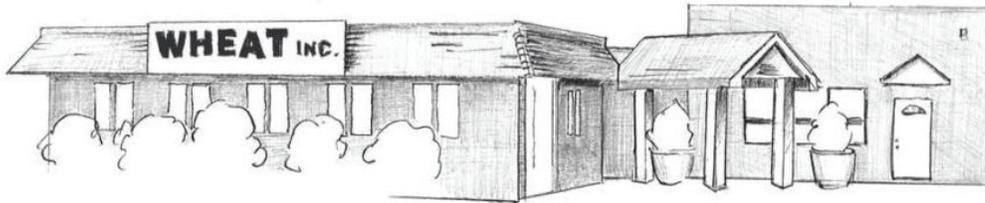
My first year of college has definitely been a learning process. But bit by bit, I

am still learning and adapting to American culture. Connecticut seems to be a place where people are genuinely interested in my surprising background, and a place where I can relax and deal with my unusual life in my own way. All the while, the people I've met and befriended continue to introduce me to things like fluffernutters, the Super Bowl, and March Madness.

Everything that I've experienced at the University of New Haven and in the West Haven community has given me a new appreciation of the decisions that I make from my gut. Although the cold weather will surely take some getting used to, I may have found a home-away-from-home in one of the places I least expected.

By Estefano Eichertopf Palazuelos

WHEAT: Changing Lives One Family at a Time



The West Haven Emergency Assistance Taskforce, commonly referred to as WHEAT, is a private, not-for-profit, tax-exempt program that subsists largely on donations of food, money, and the generous time and effort of volunteers. Founded in 1975 by the West Haven Clergy Association, WHEAT has become a central place that provides food for residents of West Haven in times of crisis. With a foundation on the belief that everyone has a

right to food, shelter, clothing and a living wage, the organization provides emergency services and referrals to other places to get food, free legal services, housing, clothing, furniture, etcetera.

The Connecticut Food Bank supplies 80% of WHEAT's goods. The rest comes from food drives held in West Haven and neighboring towns, including the University of New Haven, which has contributed to WHEAT many times through food drives held by sororities, fraternities

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and various other student organizations. Students at the University of New Haven have also volunteered their time at WHEAT, including some students of Helana Hoover-Litty, M.S., R.D. Ms. Hoover is a member of the Board of Directors and a volunteer at WHEAT providing nutrition education for all clients as well as individual nutrition counseling. She also serves as pantry coordinator, responsible for obtaining nutritious food for distribution.

Approximately 5,000 households were helped this past year, including 1,000 children. With new census information, WHEAT believes that they will have more clients this year, especially children. WHEAT is experiencing an increase in the number of legal immigrants who have settled into West Haven. Several West Haven companies and organizations have donated to the new "Sponsor A Shelf" program, helping to keep the 40 pantry shelves stocked. It costs \$100 a week to fill each shelf. The hard work of volunteers and the generosity of the

community has kept WHEAT's doors open for 43 years, even with the increase of need each year.

To donate, or get more information, visit www.wheatpantry.org, or contact WHEAT at 203-931-9877 or email wheatcharity@sbcglobalnet. Their facebook page is WHEAT of West Haven.

Monetary donations can be sent to WHEAT at 674 Washington Ave., West Haven, CT 06516 or made online at Givegreater.org. The link is on WHEAT's website.

West Haven Quick Facts:

- approximately 55,000 people reside
- 8,500 people are on food stamps
- 58% of children are eligible for free or reduced-price school lunches
- 38% participate in school breakfast programs
- 12% poverty rate
- 6% unemployment rate

By Sierra Carlstedt

A Slice of Italy Right Next to the University of New Haven: Cappetta's

West Haven has historically had a substantial Italian-American population. In the early 1900s, the prominent factories employed many Italian and Irish immigrants whose descendants make up much of West Haven today. Catering to this Italian population, the Cappetta family first opened shop in West Haven. Hailing from the town of Acerno in the



mountains of Salerno, Italy, the Cappetta family's first business was an Italian video and novelty store, located across the Boston Post Road from its current location right next to the new Atwood Apartments. The first shop also sold key chains, perfumes, and other Italian trinkets not available on the standard US market.

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Soon after moving to the current location in August 1989, the Cappettas changed their focus to providing West Haven with an Italian deli. Occupying an old bank building, the deli added a pizzeria by transforming the former drive-through section into a seating area and became Cappetta's Italian Imports Pizza & Catering.

Growing up working in the shop, Donato Cappetta has continuously upheld the legacy of his parents in everything he does in the shop. Along with his brother and business partner Luigi, Donato has continued to import exclusive Italian products such as authentic cheese, sauces, and even drinks. "I'll see customers in a few times a week getting the same niche products each time," said Donato, "These products just aren't available anywhere else, as we have to go through special suppliers that are not available below the commercial level."

To cater to some of the seniors, many of who hail from Italy, Cappetta's even has a home delivery service like Peapod. "Considering the unique nature of our products, there are sometimes shortages or products that are harder to get than others. But our customers are like family at this point, and understand that we do our best to meet their needs."

The restaurant section reflects this familial atmosphere and diversity by making products in house and offering far more than pizza and subs. Offering full pasta dinners to traditional Italian subs, Cappetta's has become a staple of family businesses in West Haven. Using his

mom's trusted recipes, Donato prides himself on maintaining the old-school feeling established by his parents, particularly the fact that he is in the shop every morning at 6 AM to make dough for the sub bread. "You're not going to see many other shops these days that bake their own bread each day," he commented. The sauce and many other ingredients are made in house as well.

In trying to grow with the town over the past few decades, Donato has made sure to become as involved with the University of New Haven as possible. Co-owner Luigi is a UNH alum, and Donato has appeared many times on WNHU on the Saturday Morning Sounds from Italy show, where he shares the local tunes from his hometown of Acerno. Cappetta's has also had a presence at WestFest, and is set to be the only Italian food at WestFest 2017. To encourage business from the University, Cappetta's offers a 10% discount to any faculty, staff, or student with a University ID.

A mere 3-minute walk from campus, and right next to the upcoming Atwood apartments, Cappetta's is one of the few eateries in walking distance from campus. With fresh food and authentic cultural cuisine, Cappetta's is the perfect option for a lunch for those wanting to try off campus. Visit them online and like Cappetta's on Facebook to get more info.

By Benjamin Atwater

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