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## GETTING BETTER



The Connecticut Children's Medical Center in Hartford is just one of many places where cases of COVID, RSV, and the flu are declining and the demand for beds is dropping.

Connecticut Children's Medical Center

## A lack of space in East Windsor

### Senators tour facilities after town receives federal money for community center project

By Collin Atwood

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### FEDERAL FUNDS

**WHAT:** East Windsor was awarded \$4.7 million from the congressional omnibus bill that was approved in December.

**PROJECTS:** The town received \$2.75 million to expand the Scout Hall Youth Center to create a multigenerational community center, \$750,000 for the Connecticut Trolley Museum to develop it into a living history museum, and \$1.2 million for the School Hill Water Association to connect 31 homes and 87 residents to the Connecticut Water Co. public water system.

**EAST WINDSOR** — With the town awarded \$2.75 million in federal funds to create a multigenerational community center, Sens. Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy visited the Senior Center and Scout Hall Youth Center on Friday to tour the facilities, which town officials say lack the space needed for residents.

The funding comes from the \$4.7 million that East Windsor was awarded from the congressional omnibus bill approved in December.

First Selectman Jason Bowsza said that Connecticut received 99 awards in the \$1.7 trillion appropriations bill, with East Windsor receiving three of those awards.

Along with the \$2.75 million for the community center, the town received \$750,000 for the Connecticut Trolley Museum to develop it into a living history museum, and \$1.2 million for the School Hill Water Association to connect 31 homes and 87 residents

to the Connecticut Water Co. public water system.

"The competition for these congressionally directed spending grants is fierce," Blumenthal said.

Bowsza said that the current Town Hall Annex and Senior Center lack resources and space for programming and storage.

"You can't do two things at once in this room," Murphy said, speaking to citizens at the

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## Tripledemic threat fades

### Covid, flu, RSV cases declining in hospitals

By Fenit Nirappil

The Washington Post

So many patients sick with RSV had inundated Connecticut Children's Medical Center that they had to be treated in hallways and playrooms. Facing their busiest season in memory last fall, hospital leaders floated a plan to enlist the National Guard to set up

tents outside. Doctors braced for a dire winter — a looming disaster some dubbed a "triple-demic" — with flu season revving up, coronavirus roaring back and the holidays providing fuel for viruses to spread.

But no such surge materialized. The RSV wave has receded in Connecticut and across the

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### STATE

UConn student's death probed

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### MANCHESTER

Man sentenced for basement arsenal

**PAGE 5**



### NATION

Video released of Memphis beating

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### PERSONALITIES

He's the star of "Sewer Divers"

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## PERSONALITIES

# Commercial diver cleans up

Sees new TV show as an opportunity to have people think before they flush

By Tim Leininger

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COVENTRY — For most people, the idea of traveling up a city's sewer system would sound like a foul, disgusting experience, but for Rick Simon, it's just another day at the office.

Simon's business is Shoreline Diving, a locally-based firm that does much of its work either doing salvage projects offshore, or sewer maintenance in major cities throughout the state, a task that is now being featured in a new series on Discovery Channel called "Sewer Divers."

Originally from Manchester, Simon lives in Coventry where he keeps the home office of his business.

"I grew up in the dive industry, so it's kind of all I've known," he said. "My father was a commercial diver, so it's what I know. You do what you're good at. So I'm very lucky that I get to do what I love every day."

Diving, Simon said, has been his whole life. **Outside of participating in Scouts, diving, he said, is all he's ever done.**

"We would go on the boat for fun diving on the weekends, and he would go off to work diving," Simon said of him and his father. "When it's come time to find a job, you'd do what you're good at and what you know. So it was a kind of a natural fit."

His work and experience has given him opportunities to travel around the world and visit some of the major shipwrecks of history, he said, like the HMHS Britannic, a sister ship to the ill-fated RMS Titanic. The Britannic sunk in the Aegean Sea in 1916 after striking a German mine. He's also visited the RMS Lusitania, which was torpedoed by a German U-boat in 1915 off the coast of Ireland.

"I've been all over the world exploring shipwrecks, Simon

## RICK SIMON

**WHO HE IS:** Owner of Shoreline Diving in Coventry, a commercial diving company.

**LATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT:** Featured on Discovery Channel's "Sewer Divers."

**QUOTE:** "People just don't think about what they put down the storm drain."

said. "I've been able to dive for fun and then for work to pay for it all."

About a quarter of his workload, he said, involves repairing sewer systems.

"It kind of changes day to day," he said. "Most of our work is emergency based. A town has a problem, we come in and figure out what the problem is and fix it. Most people don't think about, what's under the street until it's coming up from under the street. You don't see it. So it's not your problem."

Discovery Channel's new series "Sewer Divers" premiered Jan. 1, and is available on The Discovery Channel and for streaming on Discovery+.

Simon saw the show as an opportunity to get people, particularly kids, interested in diving again, as well as tell people about what is dumped into the environment through sewer systems.

"(Children) don't have 'Sea Hunt' or Jacques Cousteau or any of those old shows," he said. "When Discovery Channel approached us to do the sewer divers thing, it was like, maybe we can make divers cool again."

Granted, leading with the word "sewer" does potentially raise some eyebrows.

"Commercial divers do everything," Simon said. "One day you might be diving in the ocean, you might be in paper pulp, you might be in raw sewage. It really doesn't mat-



Tim Leininger / Journal Inquirer

Rick Simon of Coventry, who owns Shoreline Diving, finds that his job takes him "into the pipe," sometimes into sewers. He is featured on the Discovery Channel's new series, "Sewer Divers."

ter to us what the liquid is. Our suits encapsulate us so nothing wet touches us. It's worse for the guys topside who have to scrub you down."

Simon said that people need to realize that when you flush your toilet, what you flush goes somewhere.

"I think COVID really put a big number on our sewer systems," he said. "Everybody was home and flushing things that they shouldn't have been flushing. Then they clog up a pipe or a valve and they call us."

What Simon and his team does, though, isn't what your local plumber does.

"Joe Plumber deals mostly with the small clogs and small pipes," Simon said. "When someone has to go into the pipe, they call us."

The sewage pipes Simon goes in are usually around 48

inches in diameter, but sometimes get as tight as 24 inches.

"One of the jobs that they'll show later on in this series is us in a 2-foot by 4-foot box culvert under a road and it's filled with sand," he said. "It's filled with water and it's backed up. We've got to go in there with a vacuum truck and vacuum it out so the street doesn't flood."

Simon said what he's seen in storm drains puts into perspective what people don't consider when responsibly handling their waste.

"People just don't think about what they put down the storm drain," he said. "We're crawling through broken glass, hypodermic needles, mixed with sand and salt. All that has to go somewhere from the human perspective. It's kind of sad when you're in the sewer and you see all the

garbage. How messy a society have we become?"

Still, Simon said he looks at the bright side.

"The nice thing is we can change how we handle our waste and our garbage and what we do," he said. "The average person has an effect."

Simon said that though some of the action in "Sewer Divers" is played up and edited for dramatic effect, the overall effect of the show is positive.

"I think the people running the show did a pretty decent job of portraying things accurately," he said. "To me, if you're gonna get people to notice and change what they're doing, they've got to understand and educate themselves. So if you can help control the narrative, I think it's always better than just letting it be."