

Journal Inquirer

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The JI tells it like it is. Somebody has to.

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Shutdown extended to May 20

Order covers schools, businesses unless testing becomes widespread

By Eric Bedner

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Schools will remain closed and restrictions on businesses will continue until at least May 20 and potentially longer unless widespread testing for the coronavirus becomes available to determine whether people remain at risk of contracting or

spreading the disease, Gov. Ned Lamont said Thursday.

An additional 1,003 Connecticut residents tested positive for the virus Thursday, bringing the total to 9,784, with 380 total deaths and 1,464 hospitalizations.

Although 45 more people died from COVID-19 on Thursday, hospitalizations increased by only 46, which Lamont said

may be an indicator that Connecticut might be beginning to flatten the curve.

Nonetheless, schools in the state will be closed and restrictions on businesses, such as bars and restaurants, will remain in place until at least May 20, Lamont said.

“May 20th would be earliest we would consider opening anything,” he said during

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ELLINGTON

Virtual variety show to be held for residents **PAGE 5**

BUSINESS

Milk market dries up for region’s dairy farms **PAGE 17**

Tolland Chamber Choir sends uplift around world

By Olivia Regen

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TOLLAND — Twenty students in the local high school’s Chamber Choir and two alumni have joined in a virtual choir to sing “A Million Dreams” in a hope-inspiring video that has been viewed by people in six countries and 26 U.S. states.

Many have been inspired by the choir’s performance of the song, which is from “The Greatest Showman,” a movie about Connecticut native P.T. Barnum starring Hugh Jackman. The song is about holding on to dreams in difficult times.

“We are really hoping to find a light in the situation,” said Jordan Dube, a junior in the choir. “It is dreaming about feeling better about the world and becoming better in the situation. It is dreaming about the end of the pandemic.”

Superintendent Walter Willett said the video is uplifting.

“It is a soothing and inspiring activity by our young adults to show that every segment of our community, whether young or old is playing a part in getting through this situation,” he said.

The video has been viewed more than 11,000 times in countries that include Italy, Canada, Macedonia, Ireland, and the



Screenshot by Noah Fields

A screenshot of nine videos blended together by Tolland High School Choir Director Noah Fields shows nine students singing “A Million Dreams” as part of the virtual choir in the video posted to YouTube. From left, top row is Isabelle Collins, Katie Miller, and Nick Machuga. Middle row, from left, is Abby Castonguay, Allyse Ernest, and Mary Singer. Bottom row, from left, is Sara Carey, Jordan Dube, and Sean Duff. **See more photos, Page 3.** Additional photos are available on the JI’s website.

United Kingdom.

Noah Fields, the choir director, blended separate videos of students and alumni singing “A Million Dreams” from their homes to create the virtual choir seen in the YouTube video, which has been widely shared.

Fields was exploring the idea

of a virtual choir in the fall. After the COVID-19 pandemic began, he decided this was the best time to have the students join together in working on the project even as they stayed physically apart.

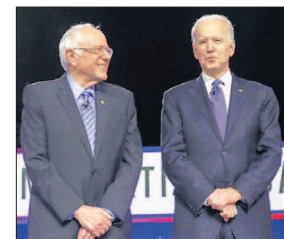
He gave each student a week to record a video of the song.

Then, in 20 hours, he blended the videos into a final presentation.

Fields, who has taught at the local high school for two years, said music is a universal language that breaks down cultural barriers and brings solace in

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NATION



Biden backs Sanders’ agenda

PAGE 8

SPORTS



Manchester’s Fogarty is at home in net

PAGE 40

CONFIRMED CASES OF COVID-19

U.S.

427,460

CONNECTICUT

9,784

BY TOWN

ANDOVER

1

BOLTON

6

COVENTRY

7

E. HARTFORD

86

E. WINDSOR

10

ELLINGTON

12

ENFIELD

99

GLASTONBURY

43

HEBRON

7

MANCHESTER

110

SOMERS

18

S. WINDSOR

27

STAFFORD

33

SUFFIELD

29

TOLLAND

17

VERNON

33

WINDSOR

68

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Another virtual choir video is planned

■ **CHOIR**

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difficult times.

“People can connect with it,” he said.

He said many people need a coping mechanism, and the song provides that uplifting outlet for them.

Delaney Glyman, a junior, said she finds the message of the song comforting.

“For me, when I sing it provides warmth and reminds me of happier times, and it allows me to free myself of all struggles when you put yourself in the moment of the piece,” she said. “When we are singing the song we are connected.”

She said “A Million Dreams” especially helps her feel connected to those she can’t physically see right now. “The warmth I feel when I sing reminds me about being surrounded by those people,” she said.

Erin Bidorini, a sophomore, said that, when she sang “A Million Dreams,” she thought about her dad, whom she can’t see because of the stay-at-home order. But when she reflects on the song’s words, they give her hope that her dream of seeing him again will come true.

She was referring to the song’s chorus: “Cause every night I lie in bed. / The brightest colors fill my head. / A million dreams are keeping me awake. / I think of what the world could be. / A vision of the one I see. / A million dreams is all it’s gonna take.”

“A Million Dreams’ is not just my dreams,” she said. “It is your dream. It is everyone’s



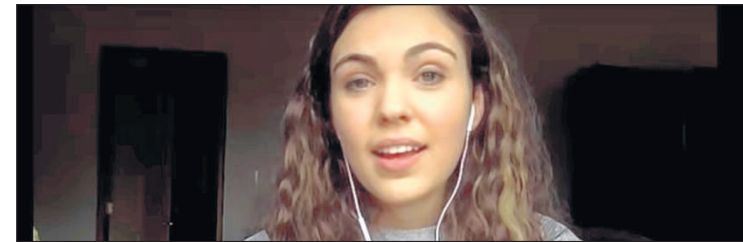
Screenshots by Noah Fields

Noah Fields, choir director at Tolland High School, blended together separate videos of students and alumni singing “A Million Dreams” from their homes in order to create the virtual choir seen in the YouTube video. Above, from left, top row, is Nick Machuga and Sean Duff. At bottom, from left, is Andy Fox, Jude Reagan, Tony Uriano, and Mary Singer. Below, Tolland High School senior Emily Bliss sings solo.

vision for the world we are going to make, which entails we are going to come through this and are going to be able to move on and create new memories and new friends and learn and grow as human beings.”

Emily Bliss, a senior, said she loved the project because she felt closer to her classmates.

“It is really nice to see our school community physically separated but still supporting each other emotionally,” she said. “I don’t think we could ask for anything more. At a time when we are overwhelmed by uncertainty and social distanc-



ing, we are still able to come together and maintain that sense of normalcy that goes along with singing.”

Board of Education Vice Chairwoman Christina Plourd said she was moved by the video.

“These students overcome adversity to help heal the world,

and that is what will help everyone get through this,” she said.

Fields said he is planning another virtual choir video in the future. He hopes to have 75 students participate.

The choir’s video of “A Million Dreams” is available at <https://youtu.be/zH4VxGDkA2s>

State Correction Department is looking at options for ambulances

By **Alex Wood**

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The state Correction Department says it is exploring “options to expand 911 ambulance services to the state prisons in the north end of the state.”

But for now, the department said Thursday in an email to the Journal Inquirer, it will continue to use local ambulance services “when an emergent medical issue arises for either an incarcerated individual or one of our employees at any of our facilities.

“The town of Somers and surrounding area ambulance services have a legal obligation to respond to 911 calls,” the department added.

Sen. John A. Kissel, whose district includes all three northern Connecticut towns that host prisons — Somers, Enfield, and Suffield — says he raised the ambulance-service issue Tuesday with state correction Commissioner Rollin Cook.

The discussion took place during a meeting at which Correction Department officials explained

the department’s plan to move most prisoners with COVID-19 to the Northern Correctional Institution in Somers.

In a subsequent statement, Kissel called the decision to house the ill prisoners at Northern “prudent.”

But he said he also stressed at the meeting that Somers ambulance volunteers “should not be used in the transportation of any offenders, and I am confident that my message was heard. I believe we are all on the same page on this issue.”

The Correction Department told the Journal Inquirer that it “will continue to manage all non-emergent medical transportations from our facilities.”

Somers Fire Chief John Roache explained Wednesday that routine transports are scheduled in advance. If an inmate needs to be taken from a prison to a hospital for a condition such as difficulty breathing or a high fever, he said, that would be considered an emergency transport and would be handled by a town ambulance crew.