Salute to sacrifice

Memorial Day crowds keep those who gave lives in mind

By STEVE COLLINS
STAFF WRITER

On a beautiful Memorial Day Monday, Central Connecticut buzzed with backyard barbecues, ballgames and the banter of friends and family enjoying a rare holiday with unbeatable weather.

It was, for many, all too easy to forget the somber roots of the holiday that marks the unofficial start of summer in New England.

But for others — including thousands who attended parades in Berlin, Bristol and Forestville — the connection between today's freedom and the sacrifices of yesteryear was all too obvious.

During a ceremony on Memorial Boulevard, when he heard his father's name read aloud in the roll call of Bristol veterans who have died in the past year, Jeff Robillard said, "This big, tough guy started..."

Hospital opens updated orthopedic, spine center

By JUSTIN MUSZYNSKI
STAFF WRITER

BRISTOL — Bristol Hospital recently opened its new Center for Orthopedic and Spine Health, putting three of the hospital's programs under one roof on the Brewster Road campus.

The 8,000-square-foot outpatient center began serving patients with muscle and skeletal issues this week after about $400,000 of renovations. It replaces the hospital's Comprehensive Pain and Spine Center.

Orthopedic surgeon Dr. David Rubins, the hospital's director of joint replacement, has already moved his team from the medical office building at 25 Newell Road into the newly renovated facility.

Dr. Mark Watson, who specializes in physiatry and rehabilitation...
Bristol’s homeless numbers up slightly

By LISA BACKUS
STAFF WRITER

Homelessness has decreased across the state but increased in Bristol and New Britain, new figures released by the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness show.

Based on a 2015 “Point-in-Time” count conducted by the coalition in February, the number of homeless people in Bristol increased slightly, while New Britain’s numbers either rose or remained about the same.

Overall, state officials, including Gov. Dannel P. Malloy, are calling the results a milestone.

“We’re nationwide leaders in ending homelessness because we’re making smarter decisions today for a brighter Connecticut tomorrow — and this report is a complete validation of our efforts,” Malloy said in a statement.

According to the report this year’s count, overall homelessness in the state has dropped 10 percent from 2013. The report also said the number of people living in shelters is down 4 percent from 2014 figures, while the number living on the streets is down 32 percent compared to 2013.

The unsheltered population is counted every other year. Volunteers fanned out statewide in February to count people living on the streets. The last count of the unsheltered homeless took place in 2013.

Officials are crediting the efforts of the governor and the legislature in making funding available for more permanent supportive housing and veterans housing among other initiatives for the decrease.

“I think it’s a combination of factors,” said Lisa Tepper Bates, the executive director of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, which compiled the figures for the count as part of a federal Department of Housing and Urban Development requirement.

Bates pointed to lower unemployment this year, more funding from the governor and the legislature, the new Coordinated Access Networks rolled out in the past year and initiatives by several cities and counties in staging 100 Day Challenges to house 100 people in 100 days.

“New Haven has housed 180 people since their 100 Day Challenge,” Bates said.

Bristol’s 2015 numbers remained fairly steady with 48 adults in shelters or transitional housing, nine adults with 17 children in shelters or transitional housing and no adults living on the streets.

In 2014, Bristol reported 42 adults in shelters or transitional housing 10 adults with 14 children living in shelters or transitional housing and no adults living on the streets.

In New Britain, the numbers remained fairly steady or increased with 10 adults unsheltered, 113 adults in shelters or transitional housing and 19 adults with 30 children in shelters or transitional housing for a total of 172.

The 2014 count figures indicated 17 adults with 29 children in shelters or transitional housing, 102 single adults and 10 unsheltered adults who were counted in 2013, for a total of 158.

New Britain and Bristol are part of the central Connecticut Coordinated Access Network, which also serves Plainville, Southington and Berlin. The switch to processing within the network for homeless people may have slightly increased the numbers, said New Britain Mayor Erin Stewart.

“What we have seen since the CAN started in the summer of last year is a more accurate way of being able to track homeless individuals in the city,” Stewart said.

New Britain is the recipient of 40 units of supportive housing from both HUD and the state as part of Malloy’s initiatives. Many people have not yet moved into the housing. Stewart and the city’s Building Hope Together Plan to end homelessness hope to add more units in the North Street area.

Hospital opens new orthopedic and spine center

The medical team at Bristol Hospital’s new Center for Orthopedic and Spine Health includes (from left): physician assistant Matthew Sobolewski, Dr. David Rubins and Dr. Mark Watson.

Continued from Page 1

medicine, relocated from the Bristol Hospital Wellness Center on Clark Avenue.

By summer’s end, hospital officials hope to have completely moved the programs for joint health, spine health and sports medicine into the new center. An anesthesiologist and a sports medicine expert will be added later this year to complement Rubins, Watson and their assistant.

“These are the final pieces we needed to provide for our community the coverage for muscle and skeletal care,” said Dennis Perrone, director of Bristol Hospital’s orthopedic and bariatric services. “It’s one center and it’s all under one roof. Everything is right on campus.”

Catherine Annuli, director of operations and quality for Bristol Hospital and its Multi-Specialty Group, called the new spine center more of a “team-based approach to treatment.”

The Center for Orthopedic and Spine Health “brand” was launched in 2013 when Rubins joined the hospital, but was really more of a “virtual program,” Perrone said. “With this center, it becomes bricks and mortar.”

The facility contains 11 exam rooms and an X-ray suite.

Valet parking is available for patients with mobility issues. The renovations aimed to make the facility more compatible for such patients.

For convenience, patients are encouraged to enter the center using the hospital’s Newell Road entrance, officials said.

Patients do not have to be referred to the facility by a physician. Just call the office at (860) 585-3333, and a staff member will determine which doctor represents the appropriate choice, Perrone said.