

Business news

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Business

The Hour

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IN BRIEF**Rosen to speak at Council event**

STAMFORD — Rae D. Rosen, senior economist and assistant vice president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, will be the keynote speaker at "The National Economic Outlook and Regional Forecast," to be held on Thursday, Jan. 10, at the Holiday Inn Select in Stamford.

Presented by The Fairfield County Information Exchange, an initiative of The Business Council of Fairfield County, with the support of Deloitte, the event will begin with a reception at 7:45 a.m. Breakfast will be served from 8 to 8:30 a.m., and Rosen is expected to begin speaking between 8:30 and 8:45 a.m.

Rosen will provide an in-depth look at the tri-state economic outlook, with special emphasis on Fairfield County. She is principally involved in research and analysis of economic issues relating to the tri-state region. She is responsible for developing the bank's quarterly analysis and forecast of the regional economy.

Reservations for Business Council of Fairfield County members are \$40 per person or \$360 for a table of ten. The non-member rate is \$50 per person. Reservations and further information may be obtained by contacting The Business Council at (203) 359-3220.

GreenDrinks sets**December meeting**

NORWALK — GreenDrinks returns to Papaya Thai & Asian BBQ in Norwalk at 24 Marshall St. at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 12. GreenDrinks in Connecticut quietly started a couple of years ago at the Papaya Thai tiki bar with Remy Chevalier, founder of Greenburbs, and Brian Howard, editor Hearst's The Daily Green.

For more information or to sponsor a GreenDrinks event, email fcgreen-drinks@yahoo.com.

Santa to visit**Rio Border Cafe**

NORWALK — Rio Border Cafe in Norwalk (in Best Buy Center at 330 Connecticut Ave.) will feature visits from Santa on Sundays in December from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Children's menu includes chicken fingers, kid taco, kid burrito, mexican pizza and kid cheese quesadilla. Free photos with Santa.

For more information call (203) 855-9577.

Aetheria Spa offers**holiday special**

NEW CANAAN — Aetheria Spa is offering a special whereby customers who bring in a new, unwrapped toy will receive a \$25 gift certificate that can be applied to a Naughty and Nice Holiday Spa Package or any spa treatment or gift certificate valued at more than \$100.

The toys will be donated to the Kids In Crisis Holiday Gift Drive. Kids In Crisis distributes holiday gifts to more than 2,000 children and families each year. Suggested donations for the toy drive include arts and crafts supplies, books and journals, clothing, gift certificates, school supplies, sports equipment, toys and board games and baby items. This year, the organization is most in need of gifts for adolescents, such as gift certificates to Old Navy, The Gap, Best Buy, Sports Authority, Target, Foot Locker, and Borders.

Call (203) 966-6650 or go to www.aetheriaspa.com.



Former Norwalk resident Tina Hill has created Kizsack, an environmentally friendly product children can color again and again. Above right, Hill works on sewing one of the backsacks. She made the first 100 herself by hand. Above, the product comes with eight non-toxic, washable markers. Left, a child wears one of the Kizsacks.

Crafty product, made in the USA

By **CHRIS BOSAK**
Hour Staff Writer

NORWALK — Tina Hill encourages kids to carry their artwork around on their backs.

The former Norwalk resident has launched Kizsack, an eco-friendly, made in the USA backsack that kids can color over and over again with non-toxic, water-based markers. The kit — which includes the sack and eight non-toxic markers — is available locally at The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk and the Darien Sports Shop, and is coming soon to Stepping Stones Museum for Children.

"Kizsack is washable, so when the kids get tired of their art work, they can wash it and start over again," said Hill, now a resident of West Newbury, Mass. "If you don't wash it, or it doesn't rain, the colors will last a long time. You really

get your money's worth."

As a mother of four children, the 1982 Norwalk High School graduate found herself constantly running kids around and trying to keep them occupied with creative activities.

"Whether it's the soccer field, baseball stands, or gymnastics waiting room, looking for that last-minute activity to keep my kids busy and happy when we're out and about is a priority," she said. "Anyone who's had to bring siblings along to sporting events knows what I'm talking about. I started my company with the hopes of combining the need for a fun, creative activity and offering an eco-conscious product that both parents and kids would love."

Kizsack is made of 100 percent recycled cotton/poly and is large enough to carry a soccer ball, books or toys. Each sack is screen printed with an original design —

underwater, sports or castle scene — to color and has an inside pocket.

After designing and making Kizsack, Hill had to figure out a way to sell the product. That meant, "a lot of phone calls and sending samples. I'd like to be in zoos, museums, aquariums and hospital gift shops."

Hill attended Gibbs College in Norwalk and then the Fashion Institute of Technology before becoming a professional designer. She then got married and moved to Massachusetts. With four children and family financial obligations mounting, Hill wanted to come up with a way to contribute to the family's coffers. Kizsack seemed the perfect solution.

"I'm a very creative person and we needed extra income," she said. "Also, everyone is becoming more environmentally conscious, so that seemed to be a good

direction to go in."

Hill did an initial "test run" of the product at a popular craft fair at her daughter's school. Each of the items at the fair, however, had to be handmade, so Hill made the first 100 Kizsacks by herself. She sold out at the fair.

Not wanting, or even willing, to have her product made in China, Hill then searched high and low through the United States for a factory to make Kizsack. She eventually found one in Massachusetts.

"They could make them in China for 50 cents each, but I didn't want to do that," she said. "It didn't want it to look like it was made in China and I didn't want it have 'Made in China' written all over it. It's a good U.S., eco-friendly product."

For more information, visit www.kizsack.com or e-mail tina@kizsack.com

Webster steps up to sponsor free concert series

Staff Report

NORWALK — Webster Bank has joined forces with the Talent Education Suzuki School (TESS) to sponsor a free concert series entitled Chamber Players to be held at First United Methodist Church on West Avenue.

TESS had sponsored concerts by Duo Vivo and the Elkins Duo in the fall; however, continuing the series was beyond its resources. John Lindgren of Webster Bank saw the value in the concert series as they are free and open to the public — with children especially encouraged to attend. TESS received corporate funding this month to ensure the concert series would continue.

"Being a community-minded bank we like to help out organizations within our community," Lindgren said. "This series benefits young people in Norwalk and the surrounding area."

The next concert, featuring à Dué, will

be held at 5 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 19. This duo is comprised of Jane Shelly, flute, and Peter Press, classical guitar. Shelly is assistant principal flute with the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra and principal flute of the Greater Bridgeport and Wallingford Symphonies.

According to TESS CEO Becki Christopherson, it was important to collaborate with another Norwalk arts organization, such as the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra. Shelly is also the executive director of the NSO.

"Webster Bank recognizes the importance of the arts in Norwalk," Christopherson said. "This was an opportunity to highlight two of our community's essential arts organizations."

Shelly is also co-founder of Wilton Music Studios where she has a large studio of private flute students and conducts several flute choirs. An active chamber musician, Shelly has recently performed with

the Mirror Visions Ensemble at Merkin Hall in New York and with the Guastavino Trio.

Peter Press performs with a wide array of distinguished ensembles including the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the New York Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra.

The remaining concerts in this series are on February 9 with cellist Justin Elkins and pianist Marija Elkins as the Elkins Duo, March 8 with Duo Vivo (Gary Capozziello, violin and Claudia Cali, piano), April 12, featuring Dr. Paul Levi and his wife Cathy Waldham as the Four Hand Band playing piano duets, and May 10, the premier performance of the SoNo Trio.

All concerts take place at 5 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church. For more information, contact Becki Christopherson at TESS at (203) 354-2740 or visit Web site, www.musicatdess.com.

Internet buyer beware this holiday season

Holiday shopping season has officially begun and is in full swing. Sales abound everywhere including the Web and as the sales increase so do the number of scammers out there just waiting to land their big purchase, you.

More and more, holiday scammers are perfecting their art in their attack strategy — you'll increasingly find approaches like e-mail blasts combined with well researched and focused attacks. And with more people than ever buying holiday gifts online, attackers are finding even more ways to be at the receiving end of their credit card purchases.

Here are a few tips to make your holiday shopping safer and ensure that the only surprise you get this holiday season is under the tree or menorah or

wherever you exchange gifts!

Beware Google and other Web searches. If you are doing a broad search for a specific item don't just click on the first link you see. Scammers are learning how to get their fictitious sites to appear at the top of the lists and when users click on these links, which impersonate legitimate-looking holiday sites, they are brought to malicious sites that install any and all kinds of malware. So check where the link directs you to BEFORE you click. If it looks strange, don't click.

Watch out for dangerous greeting cards. Not all e-cards are created equal. Expect a rise in malicious e-greeting cards that install spam-bots and viruses on your computers. The best way to prevent this one is make sure the greeting card

really comes from someone you know and trust and stop clicking on all the ones that other's forward to you because it might not actually be forwarded knowingly by them.

Buyer beware at auction sites. Not all sellers are legit. If you do not have a history with a seller, check the seller ratings before you buy and be aware of prices that are just a little bit better than everyone else's. Lat year scams abounded on the Playstation 3. People thought they bought the gifts but nothing ever arrived and their credit cards and identities were compromised. My guess would be that the Wii would be this year's item to watch.

Don't call that number. Your bank, credit card or online retailer will not send you an email with a phone number or

link to verify credit card information. If you have recently placed an order or completed a transfer from your bank and you receive an email saying there was a problem, call the bank, credit card company or e-retailer on the phone number on your statement, back of your credit card or on their web page that you went to yourself, not from an email link. More identities are stolen with this "Phishing" method than almost any other and yet it is the simplest to prevent. Don't respond to email requests for info. Ever.

All the above being said, or more appropriately, written, use common sense when shopping online this holiday season. Make sure your anti-virus and anti-spyware software is up-to-date. Run all available updates

UBS writes down \$10B

By **ERNST E. ABEGG**
Associated Press

ZURICH, Switzerland — UBS AG will write off a further \$10 billion in losses from the U.S. subprime lending market, the Swiss bank said Monday, and raise billions in capital through share sales to Singapore and an unidentified investor in the Middle East.

UBS said it will post a loss for the fourth quarter and may now record a loss for the full year as well. That comes on top of the 4.2 billion francs written off in its third quarter, including 14.2 billion francs (\$12.6 billion) in writedowns from the subprime crisis by UBS this year.

The Government of Singapore Investment Corp., a sovereign-wealth fund, is investing 11 billion Swiss francs (\$9.75 billion), while an undisclosed strategic investor in the Middle East is contributing 2 billion francs (\$1.77 billion).

As recently as the middle of November, UBS had predicted a profit for the fourth quarter despite ongoing speculation about its subprime holdings.

"Conditions in the U.S. mortgage and housing markets have continued to deteriorate, and we have updated our loss assumptions to the levels implied by the current distressed market for mortgage securities," Chief Executive Officer Marcel Rohner said in a statement.

"In our judgment these writedowns will create maximum clarity on this issue and will have the effect of substantially eliminating speculation," he said.

In October the bank downgraded the value of some assets by more than 4 billion francs (\$3.4 billion) because of exposure to bad U.S. mortgages. The writedown led to losses of 830 million francs (\$712 million) in the period ending Sept. 30, the time in nine years the bank reported a quarterly operating loss.

Western banks have lost billions on exposure to U.S. subprime loans. Cash-rich sovereign funds have been stepping in to help them boost capital and claim a chunk of company ownership.

Last month the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, the sovereign investment fund of the Gulf Arab state, acquired a 4.9 percent stake in Citigroup Inc., the largest U.S. bank, for \$7.5 billion.

Tony Tan, deputy chairman of GIC, said the 9 percent stake does not mean Singapore is seeking control of the Swiss

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HIGH TECH**LAURA STEWARD**

that Microsoft and Apple have to offer, install a firewall and look before you click!

Happy holidays to all and to all safe shopping!

Laura Steward is the founder of Guardian Angel Computer Services, LLC a full service Technology Solution Provider based in Norwalk that helps businesses use their technology more effectively at a fixed cost. For further information or to make suggestions for an article, call (203) 866-0100 or send an email to lsteward@gangel.com. To sign up for AngelWire, our e-newsletter, go to www.gangel.com.