



MICHAEL WEISS/CITIZEN

AT THE AMERICAN LEGION ORATORICAL CONTEST, from left, Steve Bracy, Post Commander; Bill Firth, District 7 Commander; Cory Yelle, Belmont High senior; Dan Clary, Belmont High principal; and Christine and Woody Fogg.

Belmont High School student advances in oratory contest

By MICHAEL WEISS

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BELMONT— A Belmont High senior is moving onto the next round of the American Legion oratorical contest after he spoke in front of a small audience Thursday night.

Cory Yelle, 18, won a cash prize of \$75 for his presentation on the U.S. Constitution at the Belmont High competition.

Yelle presented in front of several American Legion members and was timed by Post Commander Steve Bracy.

Initially there were supposed to be six seniors from Belmont High, said Yelle.

However, clashing commitments forced the other five to drop the contest, Yelle said. That left him to present by his lonesome.

The American Legion oratorical contest is a nationwide competition in which high school students present speeches on the Constitution, said Bill Firth, District 7 Commander at the Legion. They are graded on subjects such as time and delivery.

The three best-ranking students from each high school will move onto the district competition. For the Lakes Region, that district is District 7, which includes high schools in Belmont, Laconia, Ply-

mouth, and other neighboring towns.

The next competition will be the District 7 competition on Jan. 9 at Belmont High School. The three winners will be heading to the New Hampshire state competition, which will be held at 8 a.m. Feb. 27 at St. Anselm's College.

The three winners of the state competition will go forward to the nationals, said Firth.

Ultimately, the three best-ranking students at the nationals will receive cash prizes of \$14,000, \$16,000 and \$18,000, Firth said.

Yelle says he is competing because the cash prize would be an enormous boon to himself and his family, especially since he has to choose a college soon. He is currently considering Ithaca College, Clark University, and the University of New Hampshire.

The Belmont High contest was divided into two segments.

The first segment is a prepared speech on any portion of the U.S. Constitution, including amendments, said Firth. The speech has to run from eight to 10 minutes.

Yelle's prepared speech addressed the Constitution as a whole, describing it as a document that "united colonists and brought them together."

In particular, Yelle focused on the first amendment and the poten-

tial it creates for the American people to come together. "We, the people, can create something beautiful," he said.

He finished at seven minutes and was docked a point for finishing early.

The second portion is an assigned speech of three to five minutes on a select Constitutional amendment.

Contestants are given three subjects in advance, but they don't know which of the amendments will be chosen for their speech until the contest, Firth said.

Yelle was assigned the 26th amendment, which grants the right to vote to citizens 18 years and up.

Yelle, who just turned 18, said that the 26th amendment was a vital part of the Constitution. "Voices need to be heard," said Yelle. "If people are silenced, the government can no longer function."

He finished at three minutes.

The judges gave Yelle positive feedback. Judge Christine Fogg noted that Yelle could improve his eye contact by focusing on the whole room, not just the center of the room. Despite this, Fogg said that Yelle's speeches were "a good job on the first time through."

Yelle says he intends to do even better at the District 7 competition.

TV station loses debate sponsorship over union fight

MANCHESTER (AP) — Democrats have dropped a New Hampshire television station as a debate sponsor over an ongoing disagreement between union workers and management.

The Democratic National Committee and the New Hampshire Democratic Party said Friday they will not include WMUR-TV as a sponsor of the Dec. 19 debate and will bar its talent from participating because the station has been unwilling to schedule contract negotiations between its parent company and production department workers.

"The right for workers to form and organize a union is a key principle of the Democratic Party, and is key to ensuring the economic safety of the American people by protecting their rights and benefits," said DNC Chair Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz and New Hampshire Democratic Party Chair Ray Buckley.

The candidates also have weighed in. Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders asked station officials this fall to reach a contract before the debate, and Martin O'Mal-

ley called on candidates to stop advertising on WMUR until negotiations begin.

The dispute goes back to April, when staff directors and production technicians unionized and began bargaining for raises and retirement plans. The union also represents photographers and satellite truck operators, and members had threatened to stage a picket line around the debate site.

While union officials have said Hearst is unwilling to negotiate, WMUR general manager Jeff Bartlett said both sides agreed two weeks ago on their next meeting date.

"We're disappointed that the efforts of the 140 WMUR employees in helping organize this debate will now be undone. Nevertheless, we'll continue to cover the debate, and the candidates and campaigns," he said. "As for the negotiations with this particular union, we will continue with the policy we've followed with the many prior union negotiations we've successfully concluded - to negotiate in good faith, and directly and not through third parties."

MUSIC

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on April 9 in a festival featuring the All-State Mixed Chorus, Women's Chorus, Band and Orchestra.

While awaiting the honor of performing with the All-State Women's Chorus, Huckins will stay busy with an array of other music activities at the high school.

"I'm in the Concert Choir, the school chorus, the LHS band and the Jazz Band," she said. "And I'm also a member of the Drama Club."

She said her personal taste in music is rather wide.

"I like Iron & Wine and Ella Fitzgerald," Huckins said. "I guess that my favorite song is 'I will follow you into the dark' by Death Cab for Cutie."

According to Huckins, she may have inherited some of her musical ability from her fa-

ther.

"My Dad's pretty musical and he sings when he thinks nobody's listening," she said. "He's pretty good."

Many of her friends also auditioned for the NHMEA All-State Festival, but only Huckins was chosen for the honor and she said that makes her sad.

But she's tremendously proud of her accomplishment and said that her friends are truly happy for her.

"They haven't asked me to sing for them as a result of this, but my grandmother has," Huckins said. "She asks me to sing to her all the time."

She's been accepted to a nursing program at Keene State University and has submitted other college applications, but Huckins said she hopes music will continue to be a part of her life.

"I like it and it helps me to de-stress," she said. "I couldn't imagine my life without music in it."

In overdose deaths, AG to pursue murder charges

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE

Associated Press

CONCORD — Responding to a spike in deaths from the powerful painkiller fentanyl, New Hampshire's attorney general plans to more aggressively pursue murder charges against the dealers of drugs that lead to overdose deaths.

"The message to dealers is: If you sell this stuff here and we can (figure) the facts out, you will be going to jail for a very, very long time," Attorney General Joe Foster said.

Drug deaths in New Hampshire are predicted to top 400 in 2015, with more than half resulting from people taking fentanyl, a powerful opioid that's being abused by addicts. It is at least 40 times as powerful as heroin, Foster said.

Prosecutors can already pursue a "death resulting" charge against dealers under the state's controlled drug act, a charge that can carry life in prison. But until now, it's been rarely used because it can be difficult to track dealers without a paper trail or witnesses willing to talk. Now, the attorney general's office is pushing a shift in mindset for law enforcement across the state, offering training on how to treat overdoses as crime scenes and urging the use of second-degree murder charges when a dealer can be clearly linked to a death.

Foster is asking lawmakers for \$115,000 to fund a new prosecutor focused on drug cases. He is also exploring using a federal grant to hire a second drug prosecutor.

The new policy aims to deter or appropriately punish dealers who are selling such a deadly drug. Foster also hopes the push will better inform dealers and users about the risks of fentanyl. It is difficult to distinguish between heroin and fentanyl by sight; sometimes they are combined and while some dealers may know they are selling fentanyl, others may not, Foster said.

Treating overdose sites as crime scenes may also help law enforcement trace how the drugs are coming into New Hampshire and allow investigators to work their way up the delivery chain to bigger suppliers, Foster said.

The focus isn't unique to New Hampshire. Prosecutors from New Jersey to Ohio have recently held dealers responsible

for causing overdose deaths.

The Drug Policy Alliance, a group focused on criminal justice reform and ending the so-called war on drugs, said charging low-level dealers is not an effective deterrent and might prevent people from calling for help in overdose situations.

"To the extent it's absolutely essential to treat overdose and that risk as a health issue, criminalizing and going after people who are involved in this market is the last thing you want to do," said Ethan Nadelmann, the group's executive director.

But Foster noted the very real consequences of dealing a drug as powerful as fentanyl.

"People who sell fentanyl are selling poison," he said. "It is so deadly."

GUILTY

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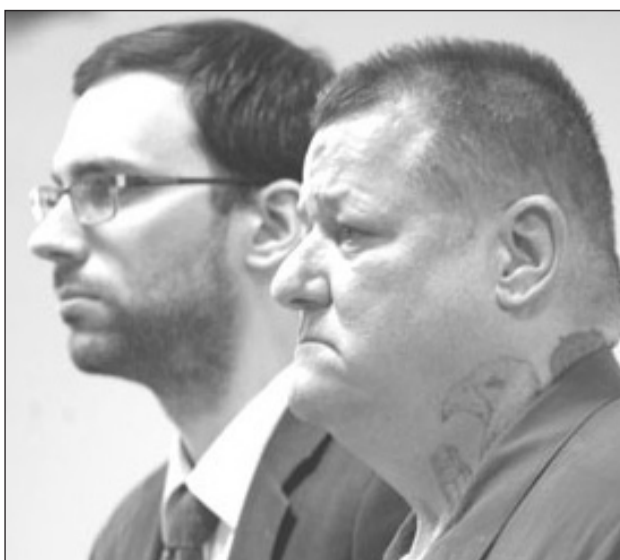
Under the terms of the negotiated settlement, the state declined to prosecute the more serious charge. The sentence is to be served concurrent with the 3 1/2 to 7 years he received in October. He was credited with 239 days of pretrial confinement and a \$620 fine was suspended on the condition of good behavior for seven years.

Batchelder agreed to withdraw his request for a three judge panel to review his sentence on the probation violation charge and in turn, the

state consented that it would not file additional charges against him regarding his alleged conduct with Hodgdon.

In asking the court to accept the terms of the plea bargain, Public Defender Eric Wolpin said Batchelder had taken responsibility for his actions. Wolpin also asserted that pretrial filings by the prosecutor acknowledged the difficulty the state would have in proving its case as its key witness "has proven far from reliable."

"He bears no ill will towards this young lady who is involved, wants her to get help, and not have to testify," Wolpin told the court.



BEA LEWIS/CITIZEN

NORMAN BATCHELDER JR., 58, formerly of New Hampton, foreground, listens as Judge James D. O'Neill III sentences him to 3 1/2 to 7 years in prison for drug possession.

FLAG

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That is, until Laconia resident Bree Henderson, the owner of the Polished and Proper Barber Shop on Main Street, watched a TED Talks program about flags that inspired her to bring an idea to the Laconia City Council about replacing the flag with a new one that actually can be flown during city events.

"I tried to find the flag and was concerned about its usefulness," she said.

Henderson appeared before the council last month and suggested updating the flag could help residents identify the city better and could be used to help further brand Laconia image during major events like the New Hampshire Pumpkin Festival and the New Hampshire Coffee Festival.

"The elements of a flag, such as that of the City of Chicago, is a great example of what

a well-designed flag can do," she said.

Henderson told the council it could even stage a new contest to design a new city flag, just like 50 years ago.

Ward 3 City Councilor Henry Lipman and Ward 5 City Councilor Robert Hamel said they think the flag design contest would be a great idea and asked if the issue could be put on the agenda for a city council goals setting session in January.

Decoster said he doesn't mind if his original design is updated or replaced and gives the project his blessing.

"To tell you the truth, it's been an honor to have had my design serve as the city flag for the past 50 years," he said. "It's had a good run and now maybe it's time for someone else to have that honor."

Henderson said she's thrilled that Decoster supports her idea to replace the city flag.

"I'm happy he's on board and I'm looking forward to revisiting this in January," she said.

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