

Brush up on your 'R.I. skills' with the experts

The Learning Connection is perhaps the state's main resource for community education, and I always get a kick out of their catalogs.

The current one includes such typically amusing classes as: "Shower Singing in Public." "Get Michelle Obama's Arms."

And: "Exploring the Paranormal." What makes it compelling is that anyone with an expertise can be a teacher.

Indeed, the catalog had an intriguing "Help Wanted" announcement:

"We're always looking for great course ideas and instructors," it said. Adding: they'd love to offer "Exotic Dance," "House Flipping 101," and "Rollerblading."

I think they can do better. The state is full of folks with unique "Rhode Island skills" who are perhaps too shy to promote themselves. So today, I'd like to suggest a few.

■ "How to get your business bankrolled"

Have you been frustrated in attempts to start your own



Mark Patinkin

company? Turned down by private venture firms? Feel it's unfair that investors say you don't have enough expertise in the field? That your proposed cash-burn rate is unsustainable? That you're shooting for the moon with one big high-risk product? Then this course is perfect for you. It'll teach you the simple truth that if you dangle the promise of bringing a few hundred jobs to Rhode Island, state government itself will give you money. A lot. Like, oh, \$75 million. With zero oversight. You can then go spend it like a drunken sailor and walk away if the business goes bankrupt. After all — it's not your risk. The class meets for only one 10-minute session, since all you need is the address of Rhode Island's economic development people. **Instructor: Curt Schilling.**

■ "How to retire like a million-dollar CEO without being one"

In these challenging economic times, we all face the dilemma of how we'll make it during our golden years. But this being Rhode Island ... why wait that long? No need to retire like normal people at 65 when you can do it far earlier. I know — you're thinking that means accepting a lower pension or half-funded 401(k). Not here.

This course will show you a humble approach to a far-from-humble pension. Step one: Work your way up to Providence fire chief. Step two: Retire at age 55. Step three: Make sure the retirement board is stacked with union sympathizers happy to raid the city treasury. Step four, and this is the good one: Make sure you get the "Providence Special" of 5 percent and 6 percent cost-of-living-adjustments, compounding every year. That way your initial disability pension of \$63,510 — lucrative enough — will balloon to what your instructor draws today: \$196,813. Oh and he'll give you one other great tip. Make

sure you retire on "disability" so you don't have to pay taxes. You'll get all these great tips from the real-life former Providence fire chief who achieved all these great things. **Instructor: Gilbert McLaughlin.**

■ "How to stay in shape while permanently and totally disabled"

Have you been medically declared no longer able to work? Because of some grievous physical injury so catastrophic you have to take the rest of your life off on taxpayer support? Well, no reason that should keep you from activity. This course will show how you can still stay in the game, even with something as terribly debilitating as ... *a hurt shoulder*. Of course, when the system agrees it's impossible for you to work, it only follows that you'd better avoid physical activity. Not necessarily so! This course will show how you can still go to a muscle gym, just as your instructor did despite his bad shoulder, and did the following exercises: Lifted 205 pounds on an incline bench; performed shoulder exercises with

75-pound dumbbells in each hand; and hung by his arms to do leg raises. And no worries that if someone sees you, the retirement board might decide you have to go back to work for a living. Our instructor was secretly filmed by WPRI-Channel 12 doing his workout ... but a new doctor later assigned to review his case nevertheless concluded he was still too disabled to work! It's a great system! Here's your chance to learn from the actual retired Providence firefighter on disability who did all these things, and has been living the super-active, tax-free "disabled" life since his late 30s. **Instructor: John Sauro.**

If you can think of any other experts with similar Rhode Island skills, please let me know.

Meanwhile, if by some chance you can't get into the above classes, check out the Learning Connection anyway — they have many experts teaching the odd local concept of how to support yourself by earning your own money through real work.

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THEATER

One-act drama at Matunuck is all about parenting

By CHANNING GRAY
JOURNAL ARTS WRITER

Being the parent of a 4-year-old son has helped Kevin Kraft develop his role in "God of Carnage," which opens in previews Thursday at Theatre By The Sea.

But Kraft, who calls himself a "warm and fuzzy dad from Maplewood, N.J.," is very different from Alan, a high-powered lawyer who doesn't have much time for kids.

Yasmina Reza's Tony-winning play focuses on two couples who have come together to discuss an argument between their 11-year-old sons, during which one knocks out two of the other's teeth with a stick.

But the parents don't seem to be able to behave much better than their kids, and the night goes from bad to worse.

Kraft said he has always worried about his son being bullied, because he was subjected to taunts as a military brat who moved from place to place. He was always the new kid at school. But now, in rehearsals, he has had to confront the notion of his son being the bully, which is something he hadn't thought about before.

"I'm the only parent in the cast," said Kraft, who moved to New York in the mid-1990s to be the stand by for the lead in "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" on Broadway.

"And that has completely affected how I do my work."

When it was suggested that Reza's play, a rare chance to see a non-musical show at Theatre By The Sea, has a lot of similarities to "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf," Kraft agreed that both plays deal with two couples in a meeting that ends badly, and both involve drinking. But, he said, "God of Carnage" is not quite so brutal. There's more humor, and it's not as dark as the Albee play, he said. It's also one act.

It was when Kraft was in "Forum" back in the 1990s that he met Amiee Turner, who's directing "God of Carnage." But that didn't help him get the job in Matunuck.

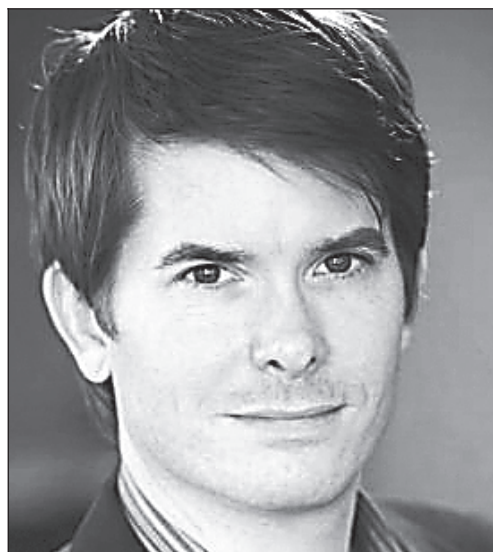
He had to audition, just like everyone else. Kraft is making his Theatre By The Sea debut, but he has been to Rhode Island a couple of times before, first as a clown for Ringling Brothers in 1988, then as a member of Massachusetts Rep, when it was based at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth in the early 1990s.

He said he will be returning to New Jersey on days off to visit his son and wife, a fitness trainer who is busy getting her Pilates certificate while he's in Matunuck.

"There were a lot of parenting negotiations for me to get here," he said. Kraft said life in the theater is a lot like

"I'm the only parent in the cast"

Actor Kevin Kraft



Kevin Kraft plays one of the fathers in two couples in conflict in "God of Carnage."

the military, where you go from post to post and your social life tends to be the work environment.

"It's the only life I've known since I was born," said Kraft, whose father was a Navy pilot. "It's very gypsy-like."

Kraft said he was not terribly familiar

"**God of Carnage**" opens Thursday in previews and runs through Sept. 16 at Theatre By The Sea, 364 Cards Pond Rd., Matunuck. Tickets are \$30-\$49. Call (401) 782-8587, or visit theatrebythesea.com.

BOOKS

Pentagon threatens to prosecute former SEAL over Bin Laden book

By ROBERT BURNS
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon's top lawyer Thursday informed the former Navy SEAL who wrote a forthcoming book describing details of the raid that killed Osama bin Laden that he violated agreements to not divulge military secrets and that as a result the Pentagon is considering legal action against him.

The general counsel of the Defense Department, Jeh Johnson, wrote in a letter transmitted to the author that he had signed two nondisclosure agreements with the Navy in 2007 that obliged him to "never divulge" classified information.

"This commitment

remains in force even after you left the active duty Navy," Johnson wrote. He said the author, Matt Bissonnette, left active duty "on or about April 20, 2012," which was nearly one year after the May 2011 raid.

By signing the agreements, Bissonnette acknowledged his awareness, Johnson wrote, that "disclosure of classified information constitutes a violation of federal criminal law." He said it also obliged the author to submit his manuscript for a security review by the government before it was published. The Pentagon has said the manuscript was not submitted for review, although it obtained a copy last week.

Johnson said that after reviewing a copy of the book, "No Easy Day," the Pentagon concluded that the author is in "material breach and violation" of the agreements.

The book is to be published this week by Penguin Group (USA)'s Dutton imprint. The Associated Press purchased a copy Tuesday.

Johnson addressed his letter to Mr. "Mark Owen," using quotation marks to signify that that is the author's pseudonym. His real name is Matt Bissonnette.

Bissonnette referred requests for comment about the letter to his publisher, which was not immediately available.

The Pentagon has not

revealed how it got a copy of the book.

Johnson noted that "copies of the book have apparently already been released." He added, "further public dissemination of your book will aggravate your breach and violation of your agreements."

In his book, Bissonnette wrote that the SEALs spotted bin Laden at the top of a darkened hallway and shot him in the head even though they could not tell whether he was armed.

Administration officials have described the SEALs shooting bin Laden only after he ducked back into a bedroom because they assumed he might be reaching for a weapon. Military experts said

Wednesday that if Bissonnette's recollection is accurate, the SEALs made the right call to open fire on the terrorist mastermind, who

had plenty of time to reach for a weapon or explosives as they made their way up to the third level of the house where he hid.

BOOKS CALENDAR

The Providence Public Library, 150 Empire St., holds "Back-to-School Amnesty Days" Sept. 4-15, during which normal fines for overdue library materials (books, CDs, DVDs, etc.) returned will be waived. Previous overdue fines or those accrued for lost or damaged materials are not eligible for waiving. For more information, call (401) 455-8000.

Providence Public Library, East Providence Public Library and the William Hall Public Library, Cranston, are collaborating to offer a five-part reading and discussion series titled "Let's Talk About It: Making Sense of the American Civil War."

An opening reception, lecture and discussion will be held at the Lippitt House, 199 Hope St., Providence, on Wednesday, Oct. 10, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. with keynote speaker and Civil War scholar Michael Vorenberg of Brown University. Three discussions will be led by scholars from local academic institutions at each of the partner libraries in October. A closing panel discussion with the

program scholars will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 4, at the William Hall Library.

The program is free and open to all; those who register for the entire five-program series will receive free copies of the books to be used for discussions. Registration is limited and requested by Sept. 15 to ensure materials.

For more details, to register and to obtain copies of the program materials contact the program coordinators at the individual library: Louise Moulton, (401) 455-8134, lmoulton@provlb.org (Providence); Joyce May, (401) 434-2453, eplibraryjoyce@yahoo.com (East Providence); John Bucci, (401) 781-2450, johnbucci@yahoo.com (William Hall).

Books on the Square, 471 Angell St., Providence, welcomes **Paul Caranci**, the author of "North Providence: A History And The People Who Shaped It," Thursday, Sept. 6, at 7 p.m. Caranci is a third generation resident of Centredale, a neighborhood in North Providence. He has served as Rhode Island's deputy secretary of state since 2007 and served on the North Providence Town

Council from 1994 to 2011. **Steven Manchester** will discuss and sign his book "Twelve Months" at Books on the Square Friday, Sept. 7, at 7 p.m. For more information go to booksq.com.

Providence author **Jon Land** will sign copies from his Caitlin Strong series, including his new release "Strong Vengeance," Saturday, Sept. 8, from noon to 2 p.m. at Wakefield Books, 160 Tower Hill Rd., Wakefield Mall.

Book of Local Interest

Robert Grandchamp, an eleventh-generation Rhode Islander now living in Vermont who earned a master's degree in American History from Rhode Island College, has written his ninth book, "Rhode Island and the Civil War: Voices from the Ocean State" (paperback, The History Press, 160 pages, \$19.99). Rhode Island supplied more than 23,000 men for the Union infantry, cavalry and artillery units between 1861 and 1865.

MIKKI CATANZARO

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