



BIG NEWS IN 2026

I would like to start off by thanking each of you for your help and support and to wish you and your families a Happy New Year.

As many of you are aware, the new Legislative session begins the first week of February and the Tourism Coalition along with our partners at the CT Art Alliance, CT Humanities, CT Lodging Assoc., and the Sports and Convention Building we will be working closely with the Chairs of the Finance and Appropriations Committees to see if we can obtain some additional funding to market & promote all that CT has to offer. This will not be easy, and I will be reaching out to you to ask for your help with Legislators in your District.

For those of you who have not yet heard, Anthony Anthony, the State marketing Director is leaving his position on Feb 6, 2026 to pursue an opportunity in the private sector and I wanted on behalf of the members of the Tourism Coalition to thank him for all that he accomplished and attempted to do to help obtain additional funding for arts, Culture, and Tourism. He will be missed.

No replacement has been chosen at this time to replace Anthony.

For those of you who have not yet had the opportunity to review the 2024 Tourism Economics Report I am enclosing a copy for your review. Please take the time to review the report because many of our talking points with Legislators will be coming from this report. It makes a **STRONG** Case for adding additional funding for Tourism.

Lastly, I would like to remind all of you about our CHAT program (CT Hospitality Awareness Training) which is a 90-minute on-line training program that can be used as part of an orientation or Training program for your organization. This is a Seven Modular program that deals with teaching our staff how to deal with Customers and to provide good customer service. At the completion of the program there is a test and those who pass receive a certificate from The Tourism Coalition. If you would like a sample of the CHAT program sent to you to review, please let me know. I am enclosing some information about CHAT in the newsletter.

Stay Healthy,

Frank Burns
Executive Director



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:



New London, Connecticut, is a historic,, 10.59-square-mile coastal city located on the Thames River and Long Island Sound. Known as "The Whaling City," this vibrant, diverse community of over 27,000 residents features a revitalized downtown, a deep-water harbor, the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, and Ocean Beach Park. It acts as a regional hub for transportation, arts, culture, and education.

The city operates under a mayor-council government and serves as a central, cultural, and com-

Key Aspects of New London:

History & Landmarks: Settled in 1646 and incorporated in 1784, New London boasts 24 properties on the National Register of Historic Places, including the Hempsted Houses and the 1844 Hygienic Building.

- **Maritime & Military Presence:** As home to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy and the Barque Eagle, the city has deep roots in maritime defense and industry. It is located near the Navy's submarine base in Groton.
- **Culture & Arts:** The city hosts the Garde Arts Center, the Lyman Allyn Art Museum, and a thriving downtown area with independent restaurants, shops, and galleries.
- **Transportation:** New London acts as a major hub, with a train station, and ferry services to Block Island, RI, and Orient Point, NY.
- **Geography:** It is situated on the Thames River, which flows into Long Island Sound, providing extensive waterfront access.

Recreation: Key spots include the Ocean Beach Park, which is noted as one of the finest on Long Island Sound, and Fort Trumbull State Park.

CHAMPION SPOTLIGHT:

State Representative
DAN GAIEWSKI

Proudly Serving Groton, New London



Dan Gaiewski is an American politician who has been the member for the 40th district in the Connecticut House of Representatives since 2025. He is a member of the Democratic Party.

Gaiewski grew up in Groton, Connecticut and went to Robert E. Fitch High School. Gaiewski attended Franklin and Marshall College, From 2023 to 2024, he was the assistant Track and Field coach at Wesleyan University. Prior to being elected he worked for the Connecticut House Democratic Caucus.

Political career

Gaiewski was elected as a Democrat to the Groton town council in November 2023,^[2] after being appointed in August of that year.^[1]

On January 7, 2025, Christine Conley, who represented the 40th district in the Connecticut House of Representatives, resigned after being nominated as an administrative law judge for the Workers' Compensation Commission. Gaiewski was the Democratic and Working Families nominee in the election. He defeated Republican Robert Boris with 68.9% of the vote in the February 25 special election.

Train Your Team with CHAT

Connecticut Hospitality Awareness Training, or CHAT for short, is an innovative, educational program developed by the Connecticut Tourism Coalition to train frontline personnel who work at attractions, hotels, restaurants, and other businesses that make up the Connecticut tourism industry.

The CHAT program features an **introductory video** and **seven interactive, online modules**. The program takes under 90 minutes to complete, although participants can learn the material at their own pace. Once a participant receives a score of 70% or better, they have successfully completed the CHAT program. A **Certificate of Achievement** will be awarded from the Connecticut Tourism Coalition at a future tourism event.

CHAT's core curriculum features training on guest service and insight on why tourism matters. Module topics are outlined on the back side of this flyer. With greater knowledge, employees will understand how to best serve our valued guests. It is essential that Connecticut personnel are educated in their field to best represent our tourism industry.

Companies can sign up their employees to take the CHAT program for a package price of \$10 per participant. Contact Frank Burns at the Connecticut Tourism Coalition at flburnsjr@yahoo.com. You will then be assigned a promo code to enroll your team in CHAT at chatcertificate.com.

CHAT will **educate frontline service workers** on how to ensure that Connecticut's tourists will enjoy a **positive visitor experience**.

CHAT is Connecticut's first online training program to educate workers on the **fundamentals of hospitality service** and the **significance of tourism** in our economy.



Become a Connecticut Tourism Champion

The Connecticut Tourism Coalition is proud to announce the creation of an award-winning Hospitality Awareness Training program for Connecticut. This educational program benefits everyone who works directly with visitors.

Earn your industry-recognized visitor service certificate, earn service excellence and become a Connecticut Tourism Champion. Earn your certificate and the other program benefits by completing the CHAT program and achieving a passing score.

Having a great job is a great experience. It's a great experience to be a part of a team that is dedicated to providing the best possible visitor experience. This is the goal of the Connecticut Tourism Coalition.

LEARN MORE



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Thank you to our sponsors who underwrote the development cost for CHAT



For more information, contact Frank Burns, Executive Director • flburnsjr@yahoo.com • 518-573-0103

FOR MORE INFO ABOUT THE CT TOURISM COALITION OR TO BECOME A MEMBER, PLEASE VISIT TOURISMCT.COM

The Connecticut Hospitality Awareness Training (CHAT) program will help your staff create positive visitor experiences for your guests. CHAT will help instill your employees with the skills and passion to do their jobs well. Lessons learned will help reinforce important concepts needed to help your team develop and grow their hospitality skillset.

There are seven modules in the CHAT program. Each covers a different aspect of working in the hospitality industry:



Module 1 is a basic framework of tourism and the impact it has on the Connecticut economy. This module also covers why those in the tourism industry make a difference in their interactions with customers and visitors to Connecticut.



Module 2 encompasses what tourists are looking for when they visit CT and approaches all the different ways that a tourism professional could help the visitor have a memorable experience.



Module 3 is all about getting your visitors where they want to go. This section goes over communications with guests and how to provide appropriate resources and directions to visitors.



Earn Your Certification

Sign up for the official Connecticut Hospitality Awareness Training program today! This is a free and classroom program that the student will receive a certificate of completion in a future lesson. The program includes the following modules: Module 1: Why is this important?; Module 2: What visitors want to know; Module 3: Find out what interests them; Module 4: Get them where they want to go; Module 5: Get them more than what they expect; Module 6: Engage them every chance you get; Module 7: We do a difference to them; and a Conclusion: Congratulations & Good Day!

Take pride in fostering Connecticut Tourism!

Name

Email

Company

Office Phone

Cell Phone



Online Training

Welcome to the official Connecticut Hospitality Awareness Training program! CHAT's successful completion of this online and classroom program will result in the student receiving a certificate of completion in a future lesson. The program includes the following modules: Module 1: Why is this important?; Module 2: What visitors want to know; Module 3: Find out what interests them; Module 4: Get them where they want to go; Module 5: Get them more than what they expect; Module 6: Engage them every chance you get; Module 7: We do a difference to them; and a Conclusion: Congratulations & Good Day!



Module 1
Why is this important?



Module 2
What visitors want to know



Module 3
Find out what interests them



Module 4
Get them where they want to go



Module 5
Get them more than what they expect



Module 6
Engage them every chance you get



Module 7
We do a difference to them



Conclusion
Congratulations & Good Day!



Module 4 is a guide on showing interest in visitors and creating a relationship that shows you care about them enjoying themselves. This includes targeting questions that may help you better understand their goals for their visit to CT and providing recommendations.



Module 5 is about going above and beyond customer service. This includes knowing your area and other things in the area that your customers may be interested in taking part in. It's about staying in the know in your area and community.



Module 6 includes tips on how to diffuse an upset visitor, how to go over and above for optimal customer service and providing empathy.



Module 7 How to create a positive visitor experience. How to respond to inquiries and keep them coming back!

Sign your team up today!
CHATCertificate.com

For more information, contact Frank Burns, Executive Director • flburnsjr@yahoo.com • 518-573-0103