

Fill the pod event slated for end of May

Community Dining Room to collect canned goods and more

By Lisa Reisman

BRANFORD — When Dennis Malavasi of Branford's Ace Trailer Leasing called Judy Barron offering to donate a storage pod to the Community Dining Room, the CDR executive director said sure. She might need it for extra storage, she reasoned.

Besides, this was just another example of the generosity shown by the community since mid-March, one that most recently had the CDR prevailing over 139 non-profits in the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Contest and the Branford Virtual Road Race selecting the dining room as among the recipients of its proceeds this June.

When, a few days later, Barron first caught sight of the 20-foot-by-8-foot-by-8-foot container in the CDR parking lot, she blinked. Her eyes widened. She saw possibility. She found herself calling celebrated singer-songwriter Sal Annun-

ziato.

To mark the CDR's 35th anniversary, she had enlisted Annunziato to provide entertainment at a fundraiser in Stony Creek slated for Memorial Day weekend.

That was before the pandemic canceled the plan.

She told Annunziato about the pod, about its sheer size and dimensions. Let's stuff the pod, she said. Let's do it in late May.

Let's do it, he repeated. "Within an hour, he created the event and started plugging it," she said.

As it happened, the timing couldn't have been better, it seems.

With the CDR's "soft reopening" on May 20, "we'll be able to bring in a few more volunteers in the kitchen which means we can get back to cooking," she said, adding that the dining room will be reverting to the regular-service policy of one meal per person.

"If we're going to get back to cooking, we've gotta stuff that

pod."

Canned goods, paper towels, napkins, and laundry detergent are vitally needed. For the CDR's complete wish list, visit communitydiningroom.org/how-to-help.

To hear Barron tell it, helping the CDR stuff the pod couldn't be easier.

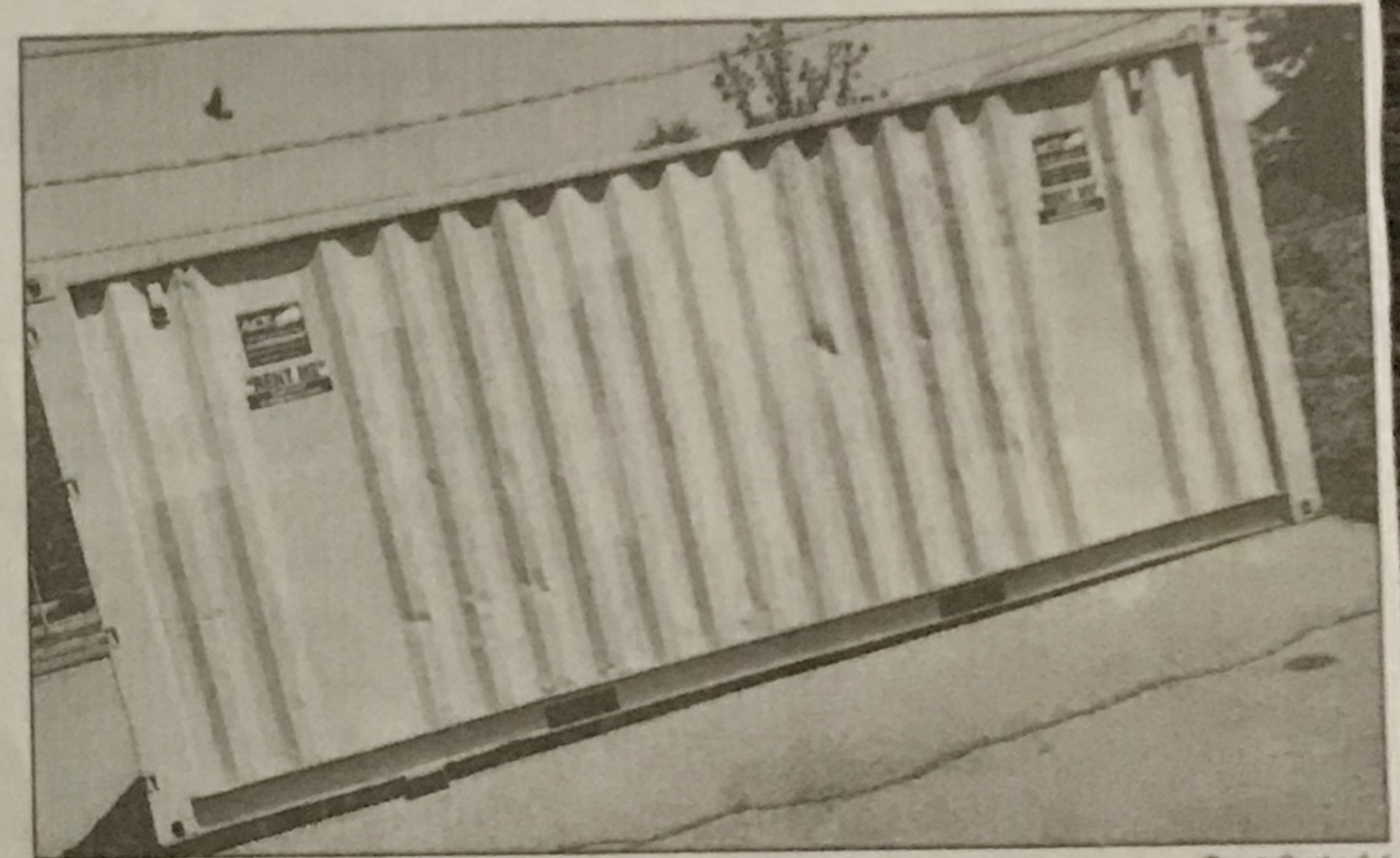
Between 1 and 4 p.m. on Saturday, May 30 and Sunday, May 31, those interested should head to the CDR on Harrison Ave. in Branford, where the lively strains of Annunziato and Roland Pepin (Nunz & Pepin) will fill the air.

"You don't have to get out of your car," she said. "All you have to do is drive by. We'll have volunteers out there taking bags of food."

Whether the effort results in filling the pod entirely or not, Barron expressed optimism about the "new new normal" that's starting with the soft reopening.

"This community — the volunteers, the participants, everyone

5/29/20



Contributed /

The storage pod donated by Ace Trailer Leasing in Branford that the CDR will be seeking to fill with canned goods, paper towels, napkins, and laundry detergent, as well as the items on its wish list at the Fill the Pod event Saturday, May 30 and Sunday, May 31.

who's donated — they've all been so amazing over a trying two months," she said. "I have no doubt that will continue. My heart is full."

» FILL THE POD will take place

between 1 and 4 p.m. on Saturday, May 30 and Sunday, May 31. For more information, visit "fill the pod for community dining room" on Facebook or call 203-488-9750, ext. 4.