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Fairfield family wins contest

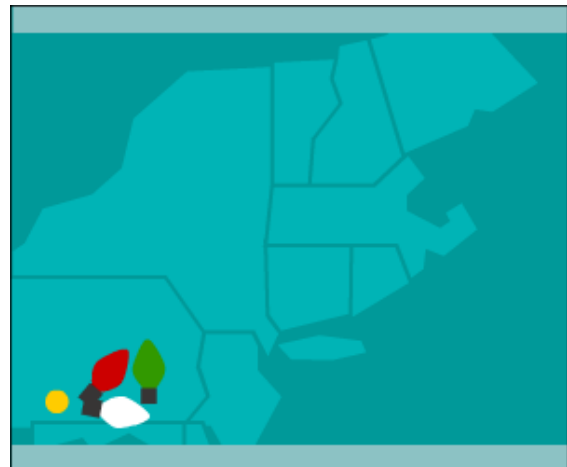
Rob Varnon, Staff Writer

Published: 09:33 p.m., Thursday, December 16, 2010

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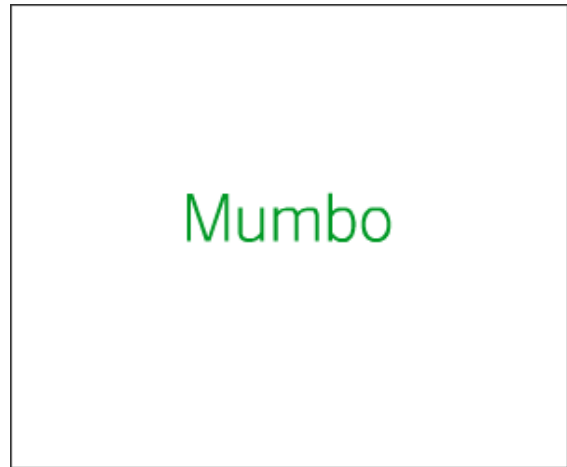


Golden Globe nominations



Metrodome collapse

Pepe and Anita Soto-Ortiz pose for a photo with their furnace. The family won Gault Energy's annual Oldest Boiler Contest and will have a new boiler installed in their home. Photo: Lindsay Niegelberg / Connecticut Post | Buy This Photo



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Pepe Soto-Ortiz, 64, is wearing a sweater vest, striped shirt, neat slacks and tasseled loafers, while classical music plays on the radio in his Fairfield home. He looks like a college professor on break for the holidays, but he's actually an unemployed corporate finance professional who could use a lucky break.

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And that's what he got Thursday, when Gault Energy installed, for free, a high-efficiency

boiler to replace the 113-year-old one his family had been using for the 33 years they've lived at their house.

"In forty years of marriage, it's the first thing we've ever won," said Soto-Ortiz, standing in the kitchen while Gault employees worked in the basement.

He and his wife entered Gault's Oldest Boiler Contest after learning about it through newspaper and radio ads. Their boiler was declared the winner soon after a 77-year-old technician told the couple he hadn't seen a model like that since the 1970s.

"We really enjoyed doing it," company President Sam Gault said.

The new boiler should cut the Soto-Ortiz family's oil usage by more than 50 percent, according to the Westport-based company, which has been serving the community for 147 years.

The prize comes during a fragile economic recovery that has left many residents struggling to pay their bills as the state unemployment rate hovers at about 9 percent. The



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New health director appointed



On pause from governing, mayor mentors Stratford youth

U.S. Department of Energy reported that the national retail average for heating oil topped \$3.24 this week amid dropping temperatures.

"Extremely tight" is how Soto-Ortiz, who is originally from Spain, referred to the family's finances as income has fallen by more than half since he lost his job at Norwalk-based Xerox Corp. as a financial compliance officer.

This is a new experience for Soto-Ortiz who came to the United States when he landed a position at the United

Nations. He stayed when he met Anita and the two were married in 1970. He became a U.S. citizen in 1973, and went on to work for a list of firms, including Pricewaterhouse-

Coopers, Nestle and Philip Morris.

The new boiler will allow Soto-Ortiz and his wife to keep the heat on in a home that's warm with memories.

"For us, the most important thing we did was bringing up two children here," he said.

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