

# SCHOOLS

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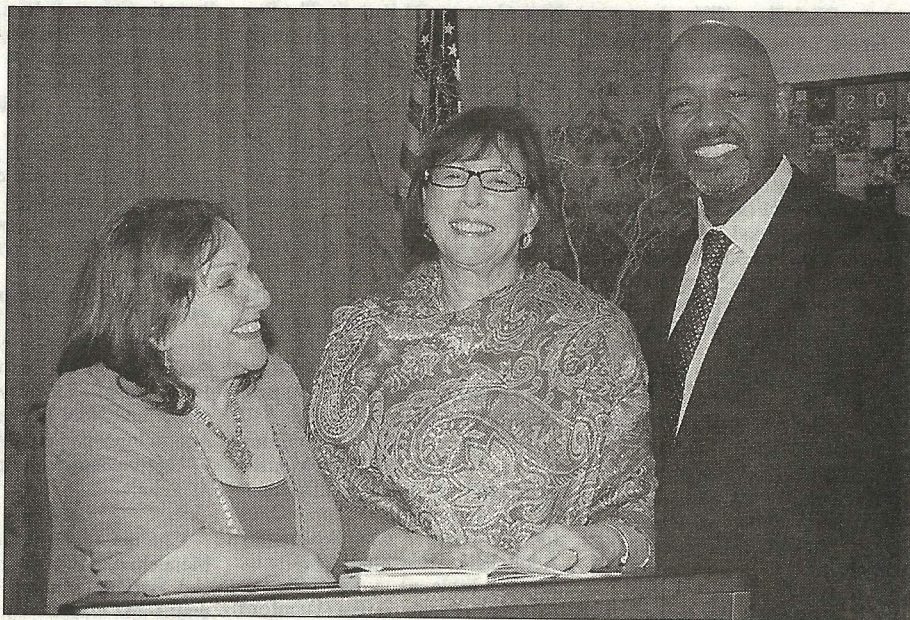
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## School parents return to share their story

On United Nations Day, Monday, October 24, New Canaan Country School welcomed back two former parents who had met on campus in the early 1990s while practicing a skit for their then fifth-grade sons: Mahru Ghashghaei, a Muslim who back then had recently emigrated from Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran, and Sue Snyder, a Jewish Ph.D. author and educator. They came back to share their story with parents, faculty, friends and neighbors, as part of the school's Multicultural Conversations series, organized by Paul Mayo, the director of diversity, and the Parents' Association.

As Country School parents, Ghashghaei and Snyder became friends and the story of Ghashghaei's difficult childhood and eventual escape from Iran unfolded in their kitchens, ultimately becoming a book, "Nine Rubies."

"Nine Rubies" took almost 20 years to write, as the stories of Ghashghaei's painful childhood memories slowly emerged, according to the school. She was born in Ardebil, Iran, near the Russian border in 1946, during the Azerbaijan Crisis. Her mother was the daughter of a well-to-do businessman and community leader. Her father was an officer in the army, but like many of his generation, a member of the secretive, underground Communist party. After her father gave away most of her mother's wealth to the cause, and escaped



Pictured, from left, are Mahru Ghashghaei, a Country School parent and former Iranian, Sue Snyder, also a Country School parent and longtime friend and author of a book about Ghashghaei, and Paul Mayo, director of diversity at New Canaan Country School.

to Russia, she moved to Tehran with her mother and two sisters. Once a family of privilege, her mother became the servant of a wealthy family, and Ghashghaei lived between the worlds of servitude and entitlement.

"This unique vantage point allowed her to witness the rapidly changing Iranian society," the school said. She ultimately left Iran and moved to the United States, settling in New Canaan and enrolling her son in New Canaan Country School.