

RIVEREAST

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Tom Saunders stands proudly in front of his most recent work, a Fenway Park toy box that he spent six months on and made from scratch for his one-year-old grandson.

Colchester Resident Builds a Mini-Fenway for Grandson

by Kristina Histen

An avid Red Sox fan hopes to pass on the love of the team to his one-year-old grandson by giving him a Fenway Park toy box he built from scratch.

For as long as he can remember, Colchester resident Tom Saunders has been “the biggest fan” of the Boston Red Sox. He’s watched countless games throughout his life and cheered on for numerous members of the team. Although he likes every player the same this year, his all-time favorite is Fred Lynn who, in 1975, was named both Most Valuable Player and Rookie of the Year. However, there are plenty more players he could go on about that have made the team what it is today.

Saunders even still remembers exactly what he was doing when the Red Sox won the 2004 World Championship after a losing streak of 86 years.

“I was standing there holding onto the couch during that last pitch,” he said last Thursday, shaking his head with a smile, “but the World Series was anticlimactic. The Yankee series was the best [when the Red Sox beat the New York Yankees in game 7 for the American League Championship]. And they won on Mickey Mantle’s birthday too. It was just the per-

fect year.”

Saunders of course had no complaints about their win again last year.

It’s no shocker that Saunders wants his one-year-old grandson raised a Red Sox fan; fortunately, his son-in-law agrees with him. So, Saunders, a self-taught wood worker, spent six months building his youngest grandson a toy box that is an exact replica of “New England’s holy land.”

Saunders has been a resident of Colchester for the past 11 years. His home on Raven Road is covered with Red Sox banners and even has a little fenced in area called “Fort Fenway” that he built himself. He was known as “the dump guy” during his 19 years as the operator of the Glastonbury Transfer Station. Before retiring last year, he had collected various pieces of scrap wood for his hobby of woodworking throughout his time there.

In the last 20 years, he has built around 30 to 50 wooden boxes, with some looking like trains, locomotives and/or dollhouses, keeping some, giving others away to charity and even selling a few. For each one of his eight grandchildren, he has specifically designed a wooden toy box for them at some point in their lives, becom-

ing something they will always have to cherish for years to come.

The Fenway Park toy box is 30 x 2 x 20 inches in size, with incredible detail. Because Saunders is the “folk art type,” he pieced everything together as he went along, causing the box to be “unique and one of a kind.” Although he used a Fenway Park blueprint as a reference picture, everything was made from scrap wood given to him that he measured and cut himself.

Each line was burned in with a wood burner, including every brick and door, and all the handles and hinges were made to fit. He painted it a stained rustic red to match the brick color and to look older like the original building with green doors and silvery white windows. Since the box is “rock solid” with a mahogany bottom, he covered the front with Plexiglas, so his grandchild can jump and play on it or in it all he wants.

Last Thursday, July 24, Saunders, decked out in Red Sox gear, stared proudly at his most recent work of art, admitting he didn’t want to give it up. He was even tempted to put it on eBay, just to see how much it could be worth. However, in order to keep up with the family tradition, his

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youngest grandchild received the box this past Sunday at his birthday party in East Hartford.

On Tuesday, after the party, Saunders said he "had quite the day." The toy box was such a big hit that even the Yankees fans present (which accounts for half of the family) fell in love with it. His son-in-law's mother, who doesn't even watch baseball, was acting like she owned the thing herself, he said. All the kids at the party were jumping in and on it and truly "loved it," Saunders said.

Saunders said he initially didn't know what to construct next, after the Fenway project was out of the way, because it's gotten to the point where he doesn't even know where to put all of his work anymore. However, with Fenway Park becoming the "last old original stadium," he's thinking about building the old Yankee Stadium before it gets torn down completely.

But obviously not because he likes the Yankees.

Lawyer: Hebron Golf Courses Have Been 'Very Forthcoming'

by Sarah McCoy

The lawyer for the two local golf courses that are suing Hebron over their tax assessments said this week his clients have been more than cooperative with the town to try to reach a settlement.

In last week's *Rivereast*, there was a story about litigation the owners of the Blackledge and Tallwood country clubs have brought against the town over discrepancies in the golf courses' tax assessments. In that story, Hebron Assessor Robert Musson was reported to have said both businesses refused to give the town information as to the number of holes played on each course, so appraisals of the property were conducted using estimates.

But Robert Wynne, a partner in the law firm Gould, Killian and Wynne in Hartford, said the two country clubs have been "very forthcoming in sharing personal and financial documents with the town."

He added that he and his clients are "confident with their position."

In 2006 the town concluded its townwide, state-mandated revaluation where they found Blackledge Country Club to be valued at \$8.18 million and Tallwood at \$4.38 million.

The two golf courses then hired Wellspeak, Dugas, and Kane, a real estate appraisal company specializing in golf courses, to conduct their own assessment. Their results were about half of what the town's figures for the golf courses were.

The two sides are scheduled to go to court on Nov. 19, 20, and 21, unless a settlement is reached beforehand. Wynne said his clients are "always willing to discuss a possible settlement, however no discussion has come."

Last week Town Manager Jared Clark said that the Board of Selectmen would like to see the town develop its commercial base. "We don't want to be seen as anti-business but we want everyone to pay their fair share," Clark said.

Increased Clients Leads to More Needs at HIHS

by Sarah McCoy

She's never seen anything quite like these last three months.

In her 16 years as director of Hebron Interfaith Human Services (HIHS), Terry Young has never seen her client base increase so much so fast. "It's been growing since I got here but not all at once like now," she said.

HIHS is a nonprofit organization helping people with whatever they need. Be it groceries, fuel, back to school supplies or help with budgeting, Young and the HIHS volunteers are poised to help. In the last few months, however, they've seen an increase in the number of people now needing help.

For example, Young said, in 2007 and the first half of 2008, HIHS provided about 300 bags of groceries to Hebron residents each month. But since May, that number has grown to over 500 bags.

That's a far cry from the 12 clients served when Young first arrived at HIHS in 1992.

As a result of the growing client base, HIHS is facing needs of its own. The 8,000 pounds of food Hebron boy scouts donated in March is gone. There isn't a jar of peanut butter or can of tuna left on the HIHS shelf. And, the canned fruit that Young used to purchase for \$1.29 is now \$1.99.

Everywhere you look costs are rising and money is tighter.

Young said that she sees the current economic conditions affecting a wide array of individuals. "Seniors living on fixed incomes, single parents, those who are terminally ill, and even people who've been working for years and all of a sudden find themselves unemployed," Young listed.

Coming to HIHS, or any food bank for that matter, takes courage. "It's a humbling experi-

ence," Young said.

And Young would know. She, too, relied on donations to get by as a single parent working towards self-sufficiency. "I know what it's like to walk in that door," Young said. "My job is to try and make everyone feel comfortable and welcome."

To do so, Young relies on volunteers and donations. HIHS receives no local, state or federal funding. Right now the list of needs is growing, especially for non-perishable food items and back to school supplies. HIHS will supply 35 students with items for school, but still needs things like erasers, lunch boxes, juice boxes, notebooks, and calculators. HIHS also welcomes produce donations from those with an abundance in their garden.

Young considers herself lucky to be able to help others. She loves telling people about the former HIHS client who, for years, relied on the food bank and has now finished schools and volunteers at HIHS. Or the 16 year-old who made a special trip in to thank Young for a donation that enabled him to take his girlfriend to dinner and a movie for Christmas.

"It's about having them feel good about themselves and being self-sufficient," she said of HIHS' mission.

HIHS is open to Hebron residents; eligibility is based on an individual's current income. Donations are welcome Monday-Thursday from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Food may be picked up Tuesdays from 9:15- 11 a.m. and Thursdays from 10:30 a.m.-noon and again from 4:30-5:30 p.m.

Hebron Interfaith Human Services is located at 20 Pendleton Dr. and can be reached at 228-1681.

Hebron Park Construction On Time and On Budget

by Sarah McCoy

"On schedule."

That's how Parks and Recreation Director Rich Calarco this week described the park construction along East Street.

Last month the town began construction on a \$3.4 million park project on the 171-acre parcel known as the Lombardi property. The town purchased this land, which is also home to the Peters House, in 2004.

Last fall residents approved a \$4.49 million park plan that includes rehabbing the town's existing fields, installing a network of trails on town property behind The Church of the Holy Family, and constructing a five-field athletic field complex on East Street.

On June 11, the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) awarded the town its final permits, signaling the beginning of construction.

Calarco can hardly contain himself.

Where some might see a flattened layer of dirt, he sees nine inches of fine sand and another nine inches of loam making for an ideal drainage situation. Where some might see a large pile of concrete, he sees material for irrigation channels. Yes, things are moving along on East Street.

And they're moving along within budget, Calarco said.

Each day approximately 15 contractors from Simscroft-Echo Farms of Simsbury work on a piece of the future park. On Wednesday some were digging out a trench for the irrigation on the lacrosse/football field. Another was moving loam through a belt to rid the fine soil of rocks.

Initially, Calarco thought the town would be about three weeks behind schedule, due to delays in getting the project out to bid earlier this year. But now, he believes, Hebron is right where it should be. "The DEP usually takes 30 days to award a final permit," he explained. "We got it in just nine because of the solidness of

our contractor, the solidness of our plan and the solidness of our engineering reports."

On Aug. 18, the irrigation work will begin; Calarco estimated this week take three to four weeks. When that's done it will be time for the seeding to begin across the park. If all continues to go according to schedule, the fields will be seeded in September and ready for use next fall.

"Our main focus right now is creating an environment that will best allow for future growth," Calarco said. Through careful selection of soils and a properly designed irrigation system, Calarco believes this park is destined to promote activity and cut down on the number of games cancelled because of weather.

To accomplish this feat without running over budget, Calarco has worked with other town departments to fulfill his needs. Over 8,000 yards of fill were moved from within Hebron to the East Street location to save the town an excess of \$75,000. The fire department pitched in to burn demolished wood. And the Inland Wetlands committee has been involved from the start, to ensure that the park disturbed as few wetlands as possible.

"Townpeople of Hebron should be very pleased with the level of cooperation that exists here," Calarco said. "It's not like that in other towns."

The park will occupy less than 30 acres of the 171-acre parcel. The remaining land will remain as open space. "The concept was to create a park for everyone," Calarco explained. "One day we'd like to get fishing going in the pond and more trails."

But Calarco's doesn't want to get ahead of himself. Once the East Street park is open, that will allow the Parks and Recreation Department to take other fields across town off-line for improvements. This includes the fields along Old Colchester Road and both elementary schools. The trails at town-owned property along Church



Parks and Recreation Director Rich Calarco (in the hard hat) speaks with a contractor from Simscroft-Echo Farms at the future home of the five-field athletic complex along East Street. Calarco said this week the project is running on-time and within budget and expects a fall 2009 opening.

Street, Calarco hopes, will be created over the winter.

In addition to the fields at the East Street location, the town will also construct a pavilion, restroom facilities, and convert an existing structure into a parks operation center. The pavilion will be paid for using a Small Towns Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant, and the bids for the remaining structures are due on Aug. 11. Calarco hopes construction on these will commence around March 1 of next

year.

Any additional structures, such as scoreboards or dugouts, will be the responsibility of the youth associations in town.

Next year at this time, Calarco hopes to be planning a grand opening ceremony for the East Street park. "It's really up to God and Mother Nature, but I think we could see fall sports out here next year," he said.

Until then, Calarco will continue to work in the dirt.

Potential Cutback on Streetlights to be Discussed Next Week in Portland

by Michael McCoy

Portland is exploring the possibility of shutting off some of its streetlights in an effort to save money and conserve electricity, and residents will get the chance to put in their two cents on the matter next week.

During budget deliberations this year, the selectmen discussed the potential cutback on streetlights, and actually included in their budget the elimination of 25 percent, or 182, of the town's streetlights. The budget was passed by the town last May. This yielded a savings of \$30,000 to the town.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield commissioned Director of Public Works Rick Kelsey to look into the matter and compose a list of potential streetlights to be turned off.

Kelsey's list, which is available online at www.portlandct.org, actually consisted of 311, or 43 percent, of the total streetlights, so that town officials would have a large pool to choose from. This list does not include lights that are considered absolutely integral to public safety, including those at intersections or in cul-de-sacs. Speaking about the latter, Bransfield said, "If people don't know the area, they need to see where the road ends."

Bransfield said the lights on the suggestion list are spread throughout the entire town, and are not limited to rural areas or the center of town. Streetlights targeted for possible deactivation include five on Route 66, four on Route 17, and 39 on Main Street.

During a July 16 meeting, Kelsey reported that deactivating all 311 streetlights would result in \$49,000 worth of savings to the town. Furthermore, Connecticut Light & Power will not charge the town for the shutdown of the lights, he said.

Though this matter came up while selectmen were looking for ways to save taxpayer dollars, Bransfield said that economics was

not the only reason for this initiative. She also attributed it to "increased awareness of the need to be conservative." She continued, "As a policy, the town does its best to conserve energy."

"It's not the way it was in the 1960s," Bransfield said about energy concerns.

On a side note, Bransfield mentioned she hoped the town would soon install the solar panels it has earned through the efforts of the Clean Energy Task Force. Bransfield had expected these panels to be installed atop Valley View School months ago. However, taking precaution to not damage the roof has delayed that.

In addition to posting it on the town website, Bransfield also submitted the list of targeted streetlights to the police and fire departments, requesting their input. Bransfield said that as of Wednesday, she had received one call and about six e-mails from residents who were concerned with the potential shut-offs.

"For some people, they think this is something... brand new," Bransfield said, noting that this was discussed at public meetings during the 2008-09 budget process.

And, she added, "We're not looking to cause an unsafe situation."

Bransfield and Kelsey will present more information on the matter during a public hearing at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 6, at Portland Library, 20 Freestone Ave. At that time, residents will also be given the chance to ask questions and share their feelings.

Though Bransfield said the selectmen are aiming to eliminate about 25 percent of the lights, theoretically, depending on how the public hearing proceeds, all 43 percent may be deactivated, she said. On the other extreme, she said, none may be deactivated.

Bacteria Found in Portland Water System Deemed Harmless

by Michael McCoy

The town of Portland issued a press release July 24 warning resident about bacteria in the water system. However, the matter apparently is not as dire as it sounds.

On July 21 and 23 of last week, the town's water department conducted water tests that yielded the discovery of total coliform bacteria. Such tests are administered every Monday at eight sites across the town. The samples are then examined by a certified laboratory in Wallingford.

Portland Public Works Director Rick Kelsey explained that total coliform is an "indicator bacteria" that is not harmful in and of itself. However, it suggests the possibility of other bacteria in the system.

When tests yield results such as these, the town is required by the state Department of Public Health to alert the public within 30 days. "What we chose to do," said Kelsey, "is to notify our customers immediately."

Total coliform bacteria's less benevolent counterpart is fecal coliform bacteria, which Kelsey said, "can be harmful." However, this type was not found in Portland's system.

Kelsey said the water department added more chlorine to the system in an effort to combat the bacteria. "Most water systems are chlorinated," Kelsey said, adding that extra treatment has been administered since July 21. But, he said, "It takes time for that chlorine to get through the water system."

The system was also "flushed," which means that the town opened up a hydrant in an effort to get the water moving throughout the system. In addition, the pump stations have also been inspected.

The water was tested once more on Monday, July 28, and Kelsey was hopeful that no total coliform bacteria would be found. However, the results, which were delivered the following day, came back positive.

"We've had this before," Kelsey said of the discovery of such bacteria, citing the most recent instance as occurring last year. In his 13 years with the town, Kelsey estimated such bacteria has been found three or four times.

Kelsey chalked this incident up to a "severe water main break" that happened several days prior to the testing. This, compounded with the hot weather, as well as the

extra water use brought on by hot weather, accounts for the bacteria, Kelsey said.

On Wednesday, First Selectman Susan Bransfield, speaking on the cause of these findings, said, "We can't pinpoint it at this point. What we know is these are all factors that may contribute to the situation."

Kelsey reiterated, "The bacteria we found is not a harmful bacteria," but pointed that "some people are more susceptible than others" as it applies to their body's reaction to this sort of thing.

He suggested that those who are concerned could either acquire bottled water from an alternative source or boil the water for about a minute.

On Tuesday, First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield issued a release that said "there is no immediate health risk to those ingesting the water." It also vowed, "The Portland Water Department is working with the State Department of Public Health and the Chatham Health District to correct this situation."

"Once we knew that the tests had proven to be essentially the same, we met with [Chatham Health District director] Thad King," Bransfield said Tuesday.

Part of the reason the origin of the bacteria has been hard to pin down is that, while three out of the eight testing sites have consistently reported the bacteria, it has not been the same three each time.

Still, Bransfield again said, all tests for harmful bacteria have come back negative, but she added, "It is a water quality issue."

"Once we have more information, we'll be sending out written notices to our customers," Bransfield said.

On Tuesday, town officials met with their town engineer, Bernie Baker, as well as another engineer, Paul Ritsick, who specializes in drinking water. Then, on Wednesday, town officials met with the State Department of Health and Thursday met with the Metropolitan District Commission. In a letter to the editor in this week's *Riverast*, Bransfield said the Board of Selectmen would discuss the situation at its meeting next Wednesday, Aug. 6.

Health concerns related to this incident may be directed to Thad King at 267-9601.

Belton Native Starts New Salon

by Michael McCoy

East Hampton native Lauren Hebler has returned to her hometown to start her own business – at the ripe old age of 22.

Hebler is the proud owner of Salon d'Amore, located at 21 West High St. After graduating East Hampton High School in 2004, Hebler said she "started working full-time because I wasn't sure what I wanted to do."

A year later, Hebler began attending Manchester Community College with an aim to teach, but after a year decided it simply was not for her. So, at the behest of a friend, she enrolled at the International Institute of Cosmetology. "One of my good friends was a hairdresser," Hebler said. "I checked out the school and was very impressed."

Hebler subsequently enrolled in November 2005, and the school educated her in the ways of hair, nails, and makeup. She graduated and received her cosmetology license in the fall of 2006.

While attending the International Institute of Cosmetology, Hebler worked at Sharon's Salon in Middletown, and after graduating, she took a job at Hair Unlimited in Cromwell. However, in July 2007, Hebler moved up to Cape Cod to be with her boyfriend and began working at Heather's Hairport.

The notion of Hebler opening a salon of her own crept up during that time. My mom and I were talking about it even while I was living at the Cape," she said.

She remembered that, as an attempt to coax her back home, her mother told her, "If you move home, I'll open a salon." That was this past January, and, Hebler said, "a couple days later, I moved." But, she said, "February is when we got really serious."

Hebler's mother Laraine is a realtor, and therefore was invaluable during the process of finding her own business, Hebler said. Before long, they found out that Simply Hair, located on Route 66, would be closing. "We got a little excited," Hebler remembered, noting that she and her mother immediately became eager over the idea of revisiting their "old ties" in East Hampton. Previously, they had been looking for something in Wethersfield, which is where both Hebler and her mother currently live.

When the time came to check out the location, Lauren and Laraine made an offer that very day. Hebler gave no shortage of gratitude to her mother, as well as her father Peter, and said, "Without them, I would not have this place."

Starting up her own business "was very, very overwhelming," Hebler said. "I wasn't sure what I was getting into."

However, Hebler does not spend her days in the salon alone. Rianne Miner rents a chair at the salon. As it happens the two have known each other for quite awhile, as Hebler and Miner's younger sister Leah graduated high school together and are close friends. (Incidentally, Leah Miner, who is even younger than Hebler, also owns her own business, It's So Ranunculus, a flower shop in Marlborough.)

Rianne Miner worked for Simply Hair for a year and a half before it closed. "It was comfortable coming in here knowing Rianne," Hebler said.

The period between the closing on the property and opening day was a family affair as Hebler, her parents and her brothers (along with their girlfriends), installed new floors, new sinks, new stations, installed blinds and painted extensively. Furthermore, they transformed what was a tanning room into a private pedicure and waxing area.

While the salon opened in late April, it didn't hold its official grand opening until Sunday, June 1. This event, Hebler estimated, attracted around 75 people during the course of the day, including Economic Development Commission (EDC) Vice Chairman Jack Heslen and EDC consultant Chris Edge.

Though Hebler seems encouraged by the start Salon d'Amore has gotten off to, she admitted it has been somewhat slow, and chalked it up to the economy. Also, she said, she has frequently received the response, "Oh, I didn't know this place was here!"

Hebler said that, since coming back to town to start her business, she has run into many high school friends and acquaintances. "It's nice to see faces that I haven't seen in a long time," she said.

Hebler's just a little more than three months into opening her own business and, she said,



Hometown girl Lauren Hebler is back in East Hampton, and this time she's her own boss. Hebler opened Salon d'Amore in April.

"I'm still trying to put everything together." However, she did sound relieved with the fact that her mother is handling much of the financial end of the operation and added, "I want to focus on hair."

In the future, Hebler hopes to put together special packages for weddings and proms and is thinking about running a back-to-school haircut promotion.

Hebler owns up to enjoying the freedom running your own business affords you. This includes pricing. "There is a markup in every business, but I feel you get what you pay for," Hebler said of Salon d'Amore. "I'm not going to charge \$150 for something that's not worth that."

As far as the name goes, Lauren said that she and her family sat down one evening trying

to brainstorm and someone came up with it. However, Hebler did mention that she is especially fond of it given her Italian heritage."

Salon d'Amore caters to men, women, children, and provides a plethora of services in addition to haircuts including coloring, highlights, relaxing/straightening, various perms, updos (a formal style common for weddings, proms and the like), various manicures and pedicures and waxing services.

While Miner uses a range of products, Hebler exclusively uses Paul Mitchell products, which are available for sale at the salon.

Salon d'Amore accepts appointments as well as walk-ins. It is open from 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. on Thursday and 8 a.m.-2 p.m. on Saturday. The salon can be reached at 267-2933.

Three RHAM Youths Charged with Schools Break-In

by Sarah McCoy

Charges have been filed in connection with a break-in last month at the RHAM middle and high schools.

According to State Police, a 14-year old was charged July 16 with four counts of third-degree burglary, first-degree criminal mischief, third-degree criminal mischief, fifth-degree larceny, sixth-degree larceny, sixth-degree criminal attempt to commit larceny and reckless burning. Another 14-year-old was charged with three counts of third-degree burglary, first-degree criminal mischief, fifth-degree larceny, sixth-degree larceny and reckless burning, while a 12-year-old was charged with third-degree burglary, first-degree criminal mischief, fifth-degree larceny and reckless burning.

The charges stem from a break-in to the schools over the July 4 weekend, Superintendent of Schools Robert Siminski said. Cabinets and desks were damaged at both schools and the youth apparently tried to set a fire in one classroom. Siminski guessed that the boys were "probably looking for money."

The schools' surveillance video caught the students in the act, leaving no doubt as to who committed the crime, Siminski said. He said the regional school district is seeking restitution through their insurance company and disciplinary actions will be handled in accordance with the RHAM Board of Education's policies.

The RHAM middle and high schools serve residents of Andover, Hebron and Marlborough.

Hebron Police News

7/24-Thomas Bailey IV, 18, of Hebron, was charged with disorderly conduct and threatening, State Police said.

7/24-Kaylee Bailey, 21, of Hebron, was charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct, State Police said.

7/26-Michael Truax, 44, of 84 Bear Swamp Rd., Andover, was charged with driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, State Police said.

Marlborough Police News

7/24-Roy Cranfield, 50, of 120 West Road, was charged with breach of peace and littering, State Police said.

Colchester Police News

7/26-Brendon Griffin, 21, of 43 Lions Way, Windham, turned himself in on the charges of third-degree assault and breach of peace, State Police said.

7/27-Joseph Olbrias, 44, of 185 Windham Ave., was charged with third-degree burglary and third-degree criminal trespass, State Police said.

Salem Police News

7/26-Bruce Lynn Jr., 38, of 54 Forest Dr., was charged with two counts of assault of peace officer, third-degree criminal mischief, disorderly conduct, two counts of interfering with an officer, second-degree strangulation, threatening and weapons in vehicles, State Police said.

Colchester Police: Woman Stole Cruiser to Go Home

by Kristina Histen

A Rocky Hill woman stole a police cruiser in order to get home after a drunken driving arrest early last Friday, State Police said.

Around 1 a.m. Friday morning, July 25, Stefanie Smith, 22, of Rocky Hill, was pulled over on Route 2 westbound in Colchester for driving at a high rate of speed, State Police said. After failing a sobriety test, she was charged with DUI and reckless driving, police said. She was processed at the Troop K barracks in Colchester and released about five hours later.

Around 6:30 a.m. that same morning, state troopers realized a police cruiser was missing and had been taken from the parking lot, state police spokesman Lt. J. Paul Vance said. Because of a technological tracking device inside the vehicle, the cruiser was found almost immediately at a Rocky Hill apartment complex, Vance said. Through the guidance of a police dog, troopers were led to Smith's

apartment at 500 Cold Spring Rd., No. 422. Needing a ride home after her arrest, Smith had apparently seen that the keys were available to the cruiser and opted to take it, Vance said.

So, Smith was brought back to Troop K, and charged with first-degree larceny and operating a motor vehicle under suspension, Vance said.

Since Smith was in possession of the vehicle for only a short time, no damage was done to it, and Vance said he believed the "appropriate action was taken by having her arrested."

"There will absolutely be an internal investigation of the trooper assigned to the cruiser to locate as to how the vehicle was accessed and to make sure proper department procedures were followed," Vance said.

In his 35 years of service, Vance said, he doesn't recall that he has seen a situation like this before.

East Hampton Woman Seeking Resolution to Pension Issue

by Michael McCoy

The fallout of a tragedy early this year has one Portland resident at her wit's end with East Hampton Town Hall – and raising accusations of forgery.

Jill Deane, a mother of five who is also a part-time caregiver to one of her neighbors, is the daughter of the late Joyce Krauth. Krauth, a longtime Town Hall employee who retired in 2006, died this past January after being struck by a car in a hospital parking lot. Aware that her mother had a pension through Prudential, Deane contacted the insurance company in February, assuming that half of her mother's monthly pension would now go to her father, Bill.

But, Deane said, Prudential told her there was no money. Deane said the company also told her, "There's nothing we can do. All we do is administer it." She said she felt this was "copping out."

So, Deane called Lisa Seymour, Town Hall's human resources person, and asked her where the money was. According to Deane, Seymour told her that her mother chose a "Life-No Death Benefit Option," which forfeits the paying out of the pension once the recipient dies. However, written in next to the corresponding checked box is "Modified Cash Refund," which Deane said the plan does not technically even offer.

Krauth did sign this form, but the spot for "signature of plan's authorized representative" was left blank. When Deane asked acting town manager Bob Drewry about this, she said he told her that representative "would have been Alan [Bergren, former town manager] but that's no big deal."

Deane said she could not imagine why her mother would authorize this option.

"Why would she take my father's coverage?" she said.

Deane also found in her mother's belongings a form titled "Joint and Survivor Normal Form Waiver of Coverage/Spousal Consent," which was necessary to switch to the pension plan that would deny Bill Krauth half the monthly amount. Deane said she has no idea who filled the form out. However, the form appears to be signed by her father, as well as assistant town clerk Donna Marsden, who also apparently notarized the document.

This document is dated Dec. 29, 2006, the same day as Krauth's going-away open house in Town Hall. According to Deane, her father was never there.

Deane said that when she asked her father if he signed such a form, he said he had not. Deane said she responded, "Are you sure?" Her father said, "I didn't sign anything!"

"I've got blobs of pictures," Deane said of that day. "My father was never there."

Deane eventually found a copy of the form in question with her mother's things. Deane said it was actually her husband Dan who first examined the form and said, "That's not your father's signature." Upon looking at it, Deane came to the same conclusion. She admitted the signature is close, but certainly not his: "The signature sort of looks like his." One difference

she pointed out is how her father never connects the "u" and the "t" in "Krauth." The signature on the form does.

"I have no idea who signed it," said Krauth, who doesn't seem to be pointing any fingers concerning that detail. However, she said, Seymour and Marsden "have to know who signed it."

Furthermore, Deane holds, "The signature is forged."

Deane also said that during a conversation with Drewry on Feb. 15, he said, "We don't need spousal approval," as it concerns waiving payment upon death.

Deane said, "I have not spoken to him since, because he got legal counsel."

Krauth worked at Town Hall for 31 years, 11 of which were spent as executive secretary to then-town manager Bergren. She retired in December 2006.

On Jan. 29, just over a year later, Krauth was struck by a Lincoln Navigator in the parking lot of Farmington's UConn Health Center and died about five hours later. She was 71.

The driver of the vehicle that hit Krauth was identified as Jose Guerrero, 45, of Flushing, NY. Deane said Guerrero was at the hospital to visit his mother, when he saw a parking space, and struck Krauth while heading for the space.

According to Carolyn Pennington of the UConn Health Center communications department, police arrested Guerrero on April 16 and charged him with misconduct of a motor vehicle, reckless driving, unsafe backing and obstructed view. He was released on a \$15,000 cash bond, and is currently on Hartford GA-14 Court's pre-trial list. His next court appearance is set for Aug. 18.

After learning of the pension issue in February, Deane said, "I wasn't understanding, if my mom worked for 31 years and received this wonderful pension [and then] she only received [it] for 12 months, where was the money?"

Nearly six months later, she still doesn't understand it. Deane has contacted Attorney General Richard Blumenthal's office, the Connecticut Department of Labor, the U.S. Department of Labor, all of whom have said that only the Town of East Hampton has jurisdiction of the matter. According to Deane, no one is claiming to be accountable for this matter, and all fingers point to the Town of East Hampton. However, Deane said there is no pension specialist or board in town to handle such matters.

"How can they be in charge of a pension?" Deane said of Town Hall.

For the past several months, Deane says she has been trying daily to contact various people to resolve this matter, including Marsden, Seymour, Drewry, town pension attorney Bruce Barth and, most recently, Town Council Chair Melissa Engel. But, Deane said, her phone calls are seldom returned, and when they are, no one will give her any definitive answers.

"We wanted to [resolve this situation] quietly, because it involved two town employees," Deane said, but eventually Deane retained a

pension attorney. And during the attorney's research, she found another glitch.

According to Deane's attorney, town employees who started prior to July 1, 1996, are to cease having pension contributions withheld when they hit the age of 62. Krauth paid until she retired at 70. So, by the attorney's calculations, she overpaid by just over \$25,000. Deane said this same overpayment applies to any number of town employees.

As for that sum, Deane received a letter from Barth saying the town would pay the \$25,000, upon signature of a "properly executed release" letting the town off the hook for the monthly pension payment.

Barth admitted as much in a July 8 letter to Deane's attorney, which reads, "...the Town mistakenly overwithheld employee contributions from Mrs. Krauth after her normal retirement date. Accordingly, those amounts are refundable to her estate upon a receipt of a properly executed release."

But, the letter continued that "the Town has no basis on which to conclude that the signatures on the various elections that were made are not those of the parties. Accordingly, it is relying on the genuineness of all those signatures in making this decision. The Town does not see an appropriate reason to change the conclusions previously reached. Accordingly, the Town has concluded that no monies were payable from the Plan to Mr. Krauth upon the death of Mrs. Krauth."

Barth concluded his letter by writing, "...please do not contact any employee of the Town in connection with this matter, because the Town is represented by counsel."

"I don't understand why [the town is] holding that check" for \$25,000, Deane said.

Though Deane does not seem to be suggesting any initial malice on the part of any town employee, she is alleging that mistakes were made and inappropriate measures taken.

"The problem is [Seymour and Marsden] aren't being forthcoming," Deane said.

Deane said that when she questioned Marsden as to just when her father signed the document or was even present during its notarization, her response was "I don't remember."

But remembering, Deane said, "should be the responsibility of a notary." Deane suggested there must be some sort of log someplace, or another record of the procedure. "You have to show ID when you have something notarized," she said.

Last week, Bill Krauth, 73, filed a complaint with the town's ethics commission.

"We want the council to make a decision," Deane said, who said she has referred the matter to Engel. "We hope they expedite the process."

However, the Town Council is not scheduled to meet with Barth on the matter until an executive session on September 9.

Communication has been further stalled as, Deane said, Barth commanded Drewry not to speak with Engel, or anyone else for that mat-

ter, about the dispute.

"All I want out of this is the truth," Deane said. "I want to know what happened."

And now she appears to have just about reached her wit's end. "Not one person has shown an ounce of concern," she said.

Furthermore, Deane said she and her father, who is executor of Krauth's estate, have "piles of bills we have to pay," which most notably includes funeral expenses that go back to February, and now, attorney fees.

Deane also said, "It's been terrible to deal with this...I have no time to grieve," adding that dealing with this pension issue is "all I've done since Feb. 11."

Engel would not comment much on the matter, but did say, "This is the first issue I've ever heard of relating to the pension plan." She also said that the reason Town Council will not hear about this issue until September is because of scheduling concerns among both Barth and members of the council.

Engel said she doubted that the council would make a ruling that night, and was not even so sure they would be able to make a decision at another time either. "I don't think there's anything we can do," she said.

Engel added, "If there's something we can do as a council, we certainly will," assuming the council finds the existence of wrongdoing.

However, if the Town of East Hampton is the only entity that oversees such pensions, and all employees ultimately answer to the Town Council, Deane wondered how the Town Council would not be able to rule on the issue.

When asked to comment, Barth replied, "I'm sorry, I can't talk about that...It's a legal matter."

Marsden declined to comment, while Drewry and Seymour did not respond to phone calls.

"Our goal hasn't been to embarrass anybody," Deane said, but admitted, "I'm appalled by how the town is run. ... I don't know how they sleep at night." However, she made note that this judgment does not pertain to the Town Council, who just received the information relatively recently.

"My mother wasn't on bad terms with anybody," Deane said. "She was loved by everybody." When recalling her mother's retirement party, Deane said, "It was a lovely day." Noting the large number of friends and well wishers at that event, Deane said, "There are probably 50, 60, 70 people who can attest that [my father] wasn't there."

Of course, the possibility exists that this matter could wind up in court. "We're willing to go all the way," Deane said. However, she seemed quite sincere when adding, "I hope it doesn't go to litigation. It shouldn't have gone this far."

Deane is also hoping that matters are not complicated further when this falls in the lap of the new town manager next month.

"I hope this doesn't happen to anybody else," Deane said, "because it's awful."

Obituaries

Winsted

Christine F. Valli

Christine F. Valli, 79, of Deer Path, Calabash, NC died Wednesday, July 23, 2008.

Born in Winsted, CT on March 28, 1929 she was the only child of Rosario and Jennie Costello Falzone. She was retired from the State of Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles as a supervisor.

Surviving are her husband Louis F. Valli of the home and numerous cousins.

A funeral mass will be celebrated at 9:00 AM Monday, July 28, 2008 in the St. Brendans, The Navigator, Catholic Church. Inurnment will be in the church columbarium.

Memorials may be directed to St. Brendan, The Navigator, Catholic Church Building Fund-PO Box 2984 Shallotte, NC 28459 and/or the Calabash EMS, PO Box 4711 Calabash, NC 28467.

Online condolences may be sent to the family at www.brunswickfuneralservice.com.

Brunswick Funeral Service & Crematory, Shallotte, NC

Colchester

Robin F. Taranto

Robin Falbowski Taranto, 46, of Colchester, beloved wife, mother, daughter and sister, passed away unexpectedly on Thursday, July 24, while on vacation with her family in Charleston, RI. Born Dec. 25, 1961, in Hartford, she was a daughter to Robert Falbowski of Colchester and the late Geraldine (Roska) Falbowski. She was a 1979 graduate of St. Bernard High School in Uncasville and a 1983 graduate of Ona Wilcox School of Nursing.

Robin was a respected RN in the nursing field. She also had a love of flowers and gardening and owned the former Portland Florist in Portland. She was wed to Mark Taranto on Sept. 24, 1993 in St. Andrew R.C. Church in Colchester. She was a member of the St. Joseph Polish Club in Colchester.

Along with her father and husband, she is survived by a son, Thomas R. and daughter, Geraldine L. Taranto, both of home; sisters Virginia F. and husband Tgerence P. Dominick Sr. and their children Terence Jr., Henry and Joseph; Judy B. and husband Russell Wall and their children Kathryn and Jason; Bonnie Falbowski Suh and children Robert, Edward and Andres. She is also survived by a brother-in-law and wife Judith Taranto and children of Lebanon, sister-in-law Paula and husband Kenneth Baudner and children of East Haddam and sister-in-law Christine Taranto of East Haddam; also several cousins.

A Memorial Mass of Christian Burial will be held Friday, Aug. 1, at 1 p.m. from the St. Andrew R.C. Church in Colchester. Burial will be private at the convenience of the family. Arrangements entrusted to the Belmont Funeral Home, 144 S. Main St., Colchester.

Colchester

Richard Francis Nielsen

Richard Francis Nielsen, 57, of Colchester, passed away Saturday morning, July 26, at the Middlesex Memorial Hospital Hospice in Middletown. Born June 25, 1951 in Hartford, he was a son of the late Walter B. and Rhoda S. (Ericson) Nielsen.

Richard served with the U.S. Marine Corps during the Viet Nam war. Most recently, he worked as a tube bender for United Tool & Die in West Hartford. Richard was an avid fisherman and he loved to play cribbage with friends and family. Most importantly, he will be remembered by those who knew him well, as a man who enjoyed the simple life, loved the outdoors, reeling in that 5 lb. bass and spending time with his family.

Survivors include two children, Cortnee Rushlow and her husband Chad of Rock Hill, SC, and Ryan Nielsen of Gainsville, FL, two brothers, Walter B. Nielsen of Harwinton and his twin, Robert A. Nielsen of Middletown; a sister, Patricia Santasiere of Colchester; a special niece and nephew, Lauren Moroch and Craig Kupper, both of Colchester and numerous extended family and friends.

A memorial service was held Wednesday, July 30, with a calling hour followed by military honors and a memorial service. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations in his memory be made to Middlesex Hospital Hospice, Office of Philanthropy, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457.

Portland

Giovanna L. Wilk

Giovanna L. "Jennie" Wilk, 96, wife of the late Edward Wilk, of Middletown and formerly of Portland, died Monday, July 28, at the Middlesex Hospital. She was born Nov. 10, 1911 in Middletown, daughter of the late Michael and Anna (Passamano) Augeri. She was a member of St. Sebastian Church. Jennie enjoyed family and friends and was a very social and outgoing person. She was an avid Boston Red Sox fan.

She is survived by a brother, Joseph Augeri of Middletown, two sisters Anna Anderson and Rosemarie Vecchitto both of Middletown, her sisters-in-law, Ann Bourne, Palma Wilk and Jenny Wilk all of Portland, a very dear friend, Blanche Dumeer and many nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by a brother, Michael Augeri and two sisters Josephine Pasquale and Carmen Sullivan.

Funeral services will be held Saturday morning, Aug. 2, at 9 a.m. from the D'Angelo Funeral Home, 22 South Main St., Middletown, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at 10 a.m. at St. Sebastian Church. Burial will be in the family plot in St. Augustine Cemetery, South Glastonbury, at a later date. Relatives and friends may call at the funeral home Friday, Aug. 1, from 5-8 p.m. Donations in her memory may be made to the Renovation Fund of St. Sebastian Church, 155 Washington St., Middletown, CT 06457.

East Hampton

Lynne Bisi

Lynne (Dexter) Bisi, 65, of East Hampton, beloved wife of Robert L. Bisi, passed away unexpectedly Monday, July 28, at Yale New Haven Hospital. Lynne was born in Hartford, daughter of the late Alvin and Lois Dexter and resided in Glastonbury for many years, moving recently to East Hampton.

Lynne leaves her brother and his wife Robert and Amy Dexter of Coventry, her sister-in-law, Nancy Allison of South Windsor, her brother-in-law and his wife Kenneth and Susan Bisi of Middletown and many nieces and nephews.

Lynne was employed for many years at Pratt & Whitney as a secretary and enjoyed her retirement gardening, bowling and spending time with her "canine friends" Quincy and Katie. Lynne was a member of St. Augustine Church and sang in the choir. She was also a member of the Oldies But Goodies Bowling League. Lynne was known for her compassion, both for people and pets. She was the consummate caregiver and was a loving wife, sister, aunt and friend. Remember Lynne: Never bid 4 without the Jack. Here's to you: "The best daughter-in-law ever".

A Mass of Christian Burial was Thursday, July 31, in St. Augustine Church, 55 Hopewell Rd., South Glastonbury. Burial followed in Neipsic Cemetery, Glastonbury. Friends may call at the Mulryan Funeral Home, 725 Hebron Ave., Glastonbury, Wednesday, July 30. In lieu of flowers, donations in Lynne's memory may be made to Adopt-A-Dog, 849 Lake Ave., Greenwich, CT 06831; or to Labrador Retriever Rescue-CT, PO Box 461, Bridgewater, CT 06752.

Portland

Sandra Ann MacDonald

Sandra Ann MacDonald, 52, of Portland, passed away Thursday, July 24, at her home. Born Aug. 10, 1955, in Middletown, she was the daughter of the late Julius and Carolyn (Tripp) Sabalefski.

Sandra lived in Portland for the majority of her life and enjoyed working at Cobalt Lodge. She is survived by her two daughters, Melissa and Casey MacDonald both of Portland. Sandra was predeceased by her twin brother, Thomas Sabalefski.

A graveside service for Sandra and her twin brother, Thomas, will be held on Monday, Aug. 11, at 4 p.m. in St. Mary Cemetery in Portland with the Rev. John Ashe officiating. There will be no calling hours and in lieu of flowers friends and family may make donations in Sandra's memory to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 5635 Fishers Lane, Room 2015, Bethesda, MD 20892-9304.

Messages of condolence may be sent to the family at www.doolittlefuneralservice.com. The Doolittle Funeral Home, 14 Old Church St., Middletown, is handling the arrangements.

Colchester

Allison M. Giannitelli

Allison M. Giannitelli, 72, of Colchester and formerly of Onset Beach, MA, went home to Heaven on Wednesday, July 30. The Funeral Liturgy will be celebrated 11 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 2, directly at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave. Friends may call at the church one hour prior to Mass.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the church. Care of arrangements has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester.

East Hampton

Sally A. Miner

Sally A. (Sartre) Miner of the Cobalt section of East Hampton died Tuesday, July 29. Born in East Hampton, daughter of the late Kenneth and Grace (Maxwell) Sartre, she had lived in the family home in Cobalt all of her life. Sally was formerly employed at the Gong Bell toy factory in East Hampton and later Standard Knapp for 40 years until her retirement.

She is survived by her husband and soulmate, Robert G. Miner with whom she had shared her life for 55 years. Sally is also survived by her beloved family, a brother Norman C. Sartre, a sister Beverly S. Walton and her husband Matthew, all of East Hampton and a sister Janice Littlefield and her husband George of Canon City, CO, her nieces and nephews Kim Nelson, Lonna Walker and Vaughn Littlefield all of Colorado, Kenneth Sartre and Tammy Sartre of Montreal, Canada, Quentin Walton and his wife Raquel and Melanie Walton and her love Coleman Carden, all of East Hampton, several great nieces and great nephews. She was predeceased by her sister Nancy Bradway.

Sally's greatest joy in life was family and she was there for each and every one of them during good times and bad. She would shop 12 months a year for those tons of gifts she and Bob gave on Christmas Eve; however there was never any gift that you could give her. Her tree would be chosen early and her home decorated. She would prepare a buffet and all would come on Christmas Eve to share her joy. Anyone who knew Sally would have heard her stories of mischief and accomplishments of her great nephew and niece, Pierce and Lauren Walton, who always brought a smile to her face. Her family will miss her presence but cherish those happy times she gave to each and every one of them.

There will be no calling hours. A graveside service will be held today, Friday, Aug. 1, at 11 a.m. in Lakeview Cemetery in East Hampton. The Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton has care of the arrangements. To leave online condolences visit www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.