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After their houses collapsed, many Haitians set up makeshift shelters on this soccer field in Port-au-Prince. Among the many who now call this field home are handicapped orphans from St. Vincent's Center, which the Christ Episcopal Church in Middle Haddam supports.

Area Groups Raise Funds for Haiti

by Katy Nally

Although the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti happened thousands of miles away, the stories of those who lost their homes, families and even lives, still impact the people of Connecticut.

After seeing countless images of the destruction and loss Haitians endured, several organizations in the area took the initiative to fundraise for the relief effort.

Three churches in Colchester and East Hampton already had ties to Haiti through mission programs, so when the earthquake struck, many parishioners donated a little extra to the collection.

Christ Episcopal Church in Middle Haddam has routinely donated to the St. Vincent's Center for Handicapped Children in Port-au-Prince, which was severely damaged by the earthquake. It was a school for 350 children who are deaf, blind or otherwise handicapped and helped many children with missing limbs, said Clive Tucceri of the church's mission committee. It was also a home for 150 of those children who were orphans.

Unfortunately, six children and adults from the St. Vincent's Center perished in the earthquake's wake, Tucceri said.

The remaining children and staff have migrated to a field near the National Palace and are living in tents. They do not have much food because the center was looted after students fled

to their new makeshift home. They are without vital basics like clothing, toothpaste and soap, Tucceri said.

In September, the Episcopal Order built a second floor of classrooms atop the brace and prosthetics shop. The new floor is most likely significantly destroyed, like the rest of the school.

Now a pile of crumbled concrete and splintered wood, St. Vincent's Center was once a place to educate, house and provide handicapped children with vocational training. Tucceri said the students of St. Vincent's Center learn to read and write so they can work as scribes and write letters for illiterate people. She said they also learn to sew so they can refurbish prom gowns and rent them out as wedding dresses.

"These kids do amazing things," Tucceri said. "They have no arms but they can sew with their mouths. The have no legs but they can jump rope."

"They are educated and provided with the means to make a living," Tucceri said.

But for now the students and staff of St. Vincent's Center are only concerned with finding a suitable shelter. Tucceri said they have begun to move 70 miles north of Port-au-Prince to a town called Montrouis.

Christ Episcopal Church recently held a special collection for the people of Haiti. For a church of under 200 members, it raised \$600 dollars last weekend during its services. "That's quite amazing for us," Tucceri said. There will be another special collection this weekend.

The church will also begin its annual medical supplies drive on Feb. 17, Ash Wednesday.

See Haiti on Page 2

Ousted Hebron Finance Director Sues Town

by Lindsay Fetzner

Hebron's former finance director Jim Day, whom the town fired last year, has sued the town, claiming it violated state statutes in terminating him for whistle-blowing and practicing his right to free speech.

Also named in the suit, which was filed Jan. 5 in New London Superior Court, is Acting Town Manager Andrew Tierney. Defamation, invasion of privacy, and infliction of emotional distress are being brought against Tierney.

The first count Day is suing the town for falls under the state whistleblower statute (C.G.S. Sec. 31-51m), which states that no employer shall "discharge, discipline or otherwise penalize" any employee because the employee or a person acting on their behalf reports "a violation or a suspected violation of any state or federal law or regulation or any municipal ordinance or regulation to a public body, or because an employee is requested by a public body to participate in an investigation, hearing or inquiry held by that public body, or a court action."

In February 2009, the town hired Day, a Lebanon resident, to fill the finance director position. Approximately one month after the start of his employment, Town Manager Jared Clark resigned and a management team of Tierney, also the town's Public Works director, Town Planner Michael O'Leary and Executive

Assistant Donna Lanza took over the responsibilities of Clark's position.

According to the litigation, in April 2009, Day discovered that the town had spent an excess of \$61,000 to complete the Village Green Road capital project without being authorized to do so. This amount was in excess to the money the town received from the State of Connecticut. Day brought this expenditure, which he believed to be illegal, to the attention of multiple town employees, including O'Leary, Tierney, Financial Administrator Elaine Griffin, Accounting Clerk Sue Hushin, and finance board members Malcolm Leichter Jr. and Michael Hazel.

The litigation states that in July, the matter was brought up at a board meeting but as of Oct. 15, "the expenditures and an appropriation transfer have still not been raised at a Town meeting for the taxpayers to approve."

Day also alleges in the suit that in May, he found the team, who had received a pay increase due to the promotion to town manger status, had been paid an excess of \$700 each in the March 28 payroll. Day put together a memorandum, given to Tierney, O'Leary and Lanza, highlighting the overage.

The suit also claims that, during his first six months of employment, Day "discovered accounting practices that were less than transpar-

ent, budget overruns, negative funds, and instances in which Town monies were distributed prior to receiving bond monies." Among those instances were what the suit alleges was misuse of town property by Lanza and Griffin, as well as nepotism involving the relatives of Tierney, Lanza and Griffin. (The suit didn't go into any details on the alleged misuse or the nepotism, and Day could not be reached for comment for this story.)

According to the litigation, at a meeting with the team in August, Day was informed that his employment probationary period as finance director was being extended by 90 days, through Nov. 12, and that progress reviews would be completed during this time. The reasoning behind the extension was "that he was not a team player, was argumentative and confrontational," according to the suit.

Also, an evaluation of Day's performance was conducted by Tierney, O'Leary and Lanza, as well as four employees. The litigation stated Day was told he received negative comments from his evaluation, giving him a rating of 2.5 out of a possible 5.0. When Day asked to see the evaluations, the litigation said he was told they had been destroyed, an action taken to protect the evaluators.

After the review, Day provided a letter to See Director on Page 2



Pastor Shirley Ellis of Abundant Life of the Assemblies of God in Colchester stands with three children from an orphanage in Mariani, Haiti, just outside of Port-au-Prince.

Haiti cont. from Front Page

Donations made to the Christ Church will fund first-aid supplies and replacement wheelchairs, walkers and crutches for the students of St. Vincent's Center.

Over in Colchester, another small church of about 110 members raised \$1,200 at last week's service. Like Christ Church, the Abundant Life of the Assemblies of God is also affiliated with an orphanage in Haiti, on the border of Port-au-Prince in a town called Mariani.

Pastor Shirley Ellis visited the orphanage just days before the earthquake and returned home on Saturday, Jan. 9. She left for Haiti on Jan. 3 with 10 others. Two women from her group stayed after the earthquake hit to provide medical attention to the orphans.

Ellis said Tuesday the two women, one from Meriden and one from Manchester, had returned Friday, Jan. 15, because "they thought they were taking valuable resources from the kids." On their way home, Ellis said, the car carrying the two women into the U.S. Embassy was almost overturned by people who were looking for valuable supplies.

The 132 orphans of the Christian Haitian Outreach made it out of their cracked building safely, Ellis said. The orphanage did not collapse, but its two-story concrete school was demolished. The children and staff have not gone back into the orphanage because it could crumble in an aftershock, so they too are living in tents.

Ellis said "communication is an absolute nightmare," but the church did receive word that the children had water. As far as food, Ellis said the orphans were eating one meal a day and surviving on Pop-Tarts. "It was probably some of the snack food we left behind," she said.

The school, through the Christian Haitian Outreach, teaches children all the basics, Ellis said, including reading, writing and math. "The teachers are really excellent with the resources they have," Ellis said. "They do a great job." The teachers not only educate the children at the orphanage, but they also teach members of the community, Ellis said.

The Abundant Life of the Assemblies of God, located in Colchester, held a spaghetti dinner to raise money for the orphans on New Year's Eve. Sherrie Fowler, the women's ministry director, said the dinner raised \$200, which provided food for the children before the earthquake struck.

"It was a fun night and at the same time we

were reaching out to the needy," Fowler said. "I'm very glad the orphans are okay. It's really tragic over there."

The Abundant Life of the Assemblies of God will hold another special collection this week-end. Ellis said the money will help feed and provide water for the orphans.

The church is also planning a May mission trip to Haiti. Ellis said her crew would work on fixing the orphanage to make it livable and repairing the school would come later.

About 100 miles west of the earthquake's epicenter, in the mountain village of Jérémie, another facility is being helped by Connecticut locals. St. Andrew's Parish in Colchester has supported the Haitian Health Foundation (HHF) clinic by providing medical supplies for over 15 years.

Father Michael Giannitelli of Colchester said the clinic is a two-story structure with dorm-like rooms on the top floor and a treatment center on the ground floor. Giannitelli said the clinic was not damaged during the earthquake, but some houses in Jérémie were.

Since the earthquake struck, "all of a sudden the Haitian Health Foundation has enormous need for extra food, extra nurses and extra medical supplies," Carol Pettit, director of the youth ministry, said. Many people from Port-au-Prince are slowly making their way to the HHF clinic, Pettit said.

For the past 17 years, St. Andrew's Parish has held its rock-a-thon to raise money for the clinic. This year's event was on Sunday, Jan. 17, and as of Wednesday night, Pettit said over \$28,000 had been collected.

This is about \$6,000 more than last year's rock-a-thon. "It's a very generous parish," Giannitelli said. "It takes very little encouragement from me."

In the past, the proceeds have funded nurses for the clinic, who receive a yearly salary of \$3,500, Pettit said. This year, the rock-a-thon raised enough to fund two more nurses, though it has not been decided how the money will be spent.

Julia Ryan, a 17-year-old who participated in the event, said she was thrilled with the rock-a-thon's turnout. Ryan actually worked in the Haitian clinic last September and said she was very motivated to promote this year's fundraiser. "I was always shy about asking for money, but now it's about me pushing me," she said.

Ryan said her experience in Haiti deeply

changed by her. For a week she helped out HHF's founder Dr. Jeremiah Lowney by treating severely malnourished children and pregnant women.

"It was heartbreaking, but at the same time the Haitian people have the ability to be strong," she said. The 17-year-old Bacon Academy student said she grew attached to the Haitian people during her visit. "They have a kind of joy I don't see much in America," she said.

Because of her experience at the clinic, Ryan said she is more driven to help others. "It felt so much more important because I met the nurses and saw the work they're doing with dying children and saw the difference they were making," Ryan said. "I definitely learned that helping one person can make a difference."

The HHF clinic opened in 1988 and ordinarily serves 350 to 400 patients per day. "For Dr. Lowney to love the Haitian people the way he does and to see so many he can't help, this is why his heart aches," Pettit said.

Like Lowney, Ryan said she felt helpless since hearing about the earthquake. But, she said her spirits lifted a bit when she was counting the donations from the rock-a-thon. "I was so glad we had such a large response," Ryan said.

The parish will hold another special collection a few weeks from now, Giannitelli said.

Even organizations that are not affiliated with Haiti have helped the relief effort. Students and staff at Bacon Academy began fundraising last Friday morning with a \$1,000 goal in mind. By 7:30 a.m. that goal was not only met, but surpassed, said English teacher Karen Christianson. "The bottom-line was it was a school-wide effort," she said.

By the end of the day \$3,200 had been donated. Christianson said some students gave their babysitting money, their lunch money or anything to help out. "It was overwhelming, the kids just felt so good," Christianson said.

Some even deposited "gobs of cash," slipping \$20 and \$50 bills in the donation containers, she said.

Ryan came to school that day and said the amount of effort to help Haitians was "mind-boggling." She said she saw "tons of people" donating and one girl who "emptied her whole wallet."

"I was amazed to see so much caring," she said.

"I just think everyone was struck by the images coming across the media and they felt so bad," Christianson said.

But taking the initiative is nothing new for Bacon students, Christianson said. "We have a culture here at Bacon of stepping up when times are dire," she said. "It was a chance to feel like a family – that's something Jeff [Mathieu, the principal] is always pushing."

Several students in Christianson's Community Activism class had been to Haiti on mission trips and were participants in St. Andrew's rock-a-thon. For those students to see their school and their church both help the people of Haiti, Christianson said they "felt buoyed by the whole school." "It was springboard for them right before their rock-a-thon," she added.

The school will give the donations to several charities, Christianson said: HHF, Doctors without Borders and Partners in Health.

Similarly, Portland High School will hold a carnation sale during the week of Jan. 25 to benefit earthquake victims. The Greenhouse Club will sell the flowers just in time for Valentine's Day, for \$1 a piece and \$10 for a dozen.

When someone gives \$1 they will receive a paper brick, \$5 a hand and \$10 a heart. Students from the club will assemble the bricks, hands and hearts on the wall to spell out "Help 4 Haiti," Pat Ponko, a co-adviser for the club said.

All proceeds will go to the Clinton Bush Haiti Fund. Money raised from two more events, Mardi Gras Day and the Valentine's Dance, will go to the same charity.

As reports filter in, the death toll in Haiti continues to rise. Some estimated it will reach 200,000 and already thousand of bodies have been buried. For now, many Haitians who survived the quake are injured and homeless. Aid is slowly making its way to the country and more will be needed.

For more information about the organizations and charities listed in this article call the East Hampton Christ Church at 860-267-0287, the Friends of St. Vincent's at 860-521-5756, the Abundant Life Assemblies of God at 860-537-3082, the Christian Haitian Outreach at 786-573-0850, St. Andrew's Parish at 860-537-2355 and the Haitian Health Foundation at 860-886-4357.

Director cont. from Front Page

various board members, stating "the issues he was having with the team," the problems he discovered during the first six months of his employment, and the "retaliation" he was subject to as a result," according to the litigation. Day wrote another letter on Oct. 8, to the Board of Selectmen (BOS), where he "detailed the numerous financial improprieties" that had been discovered "as well as the response that he was receiving from the team," the litigation states.

On Oct. 13, Tierney told Day he was going to be put on paid administrative leave. The reason for the leave was "due to an investigation currently being conducted" and that on Oct. 15, the situation would be discussed during an executive session of the Board of Selectmen.

The BOS later terminated Day, the reasoning stated in a letter read by Tierney at the meeting. According to the lawsuit, Tierney said in his letter that the Day "presented a confrontational and argumentative attitude toward his staff, other Department Heads and the Management Team." Additionally, the litigation stated that there were "instances of derogatory comments" and concerns brought by staff members that comments made by Day could be considered sexual harassment.

According to the litigation, the investigation completed by Tierney was "a sham, replete with personal bias and false allegations and incomplete." The suit says that newspaper stories throughout October about the topic caused Day to feel "emotional distress" as well as isolation and shame as a result of the allegations, according to the litigation.

The litigation stated that the town's violation of the statute was the source of Day's "suffered damages including economic losses from the loss of his employment, mental anguish, emotional distress, humiliation and embarrassment, loss of enjoyment of life, harm to reputation and attorneys' fee and costs." The lawsuit says Day is seeking damages in excess of \$15,000, although no exact dollar amount is given.

The second count brought against the town is a violation of C.G.S. Sec. 31-51q, referring

to an employer's liability for the discipline or discharge of an employee when exercising their freedom of speech.

Day claims that as a result of speaking out on the "illegal and unethical practices" of Tierney, the team and other employees, he was terminated. The litigation states the town "fabricated reasons to fire" Day in order to "cover up its true motivation" for letting him go, actions that were "malicious, intentional, willful, wanton and/or in reckless disregard" of Day's rights, according to the litigation.

Day is also suing Tierney on one count of defamation and one count of invasion of privacy. The litigation states that Tierney "maliciously and intentionally published false information" regarding Day, relating to the reason for his termination." Furthermore, the lawsuit says, Tierney "intentionally and recklessly represented to the Board of Selectmen, the public and the press" that Day "was involved in making comments that might be considered sexual harassment." The litigation states that "the information provided was false." Day claims Tierney created a false impression of him, one that "would be highly offensive to a reasonable person."

Counts five and six brought against Tierney are for the intentional infliction and negligent infliction of emotional distress. The litigation states that the defendants' "intentional and reckless conduct was extreme and outrageous." In addition, Day's "distress was foreseeable and severe enough that it might result in illness or bodily harm," citing the termination process as the cause of distress, according to the litigation.

BOS Chairman Jeff Watt said this week he was "not surprised" by the lawsuit brought against the town and Tierney.

"We will have to let the legal process work through," Watt said. "We are looking forward to the new town manager hiring a Board of Finance director."

Tierney said they were not able to comment on the pending litigation.

Colchester PZC Discusses Complaints Over Big-Box Proposal

by Katy Nally

At Wednesday's meeting, Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) members addressed several big-box development complaints that were raised at the close of the public hearing on Jan. 6.

However, the commission did not vote on the plans and will continue its deliberation at their next meeting, PZC chair Joe Mathieu said.

"We got a lot of information at the hearing and we're just digesting the comments," Town Planner Adam Turner said.

The commission spent the most of the time discussing the "three-pipe issue." During the public hearing process – which stretched from Dec. 16 to Jan. 6 – it was brought to the commission's attention that there are three drainage pipes shown on the project map, while in the same spot, there are only two shown on the applicant's plans. Turner said the state had no record of ever maintaining a third pipe.

PZC member James Miller was unrelenting

about this discrepancy because omitting a drainage structure would be a violation of the town's regulations, he said.

"A third functioning pipe would be a major change to the plans," Miller said. "Right now, as far as I'm concerned, we have a violation of our regulations."

PZC members debated awhile on Wednesday about the significance of a third pipe and how it could affect runoff.

Turner said if the pipe was there and it had an impact on the site, it would be addressed. Zoning Enforcement Officer Craig Grimord said having a third pipe would not change the amount of water to leave the site, instead, the water would simply "have another avenue."

Mathieu offered his two cents and said the commission could still approve the application under the condition that the town and state would investigate the three-pipe question further. "I see it as an issue, but not one that can

derail this," Mathieu said.

The commission decided to ask the town engineer, Sal Tassone, to see if the third pipe existed and what impact it would have on the site. PZC member John Rosenthal said it was a good idea to "make everyone aware" because "this thing has been dragged to court for lesser stuff than this."

Turner also addressed whether or not Colchester's emergency services could handle a project of this magnitude, which was a complaint from at the last PZC meeting. Turner said Fire Marshal Reed Gustafson reviewed the plans and returned them without making comments. Turner said the fire marshal's lack of comments was taken to mean he would not make any changes to the plans.

But PZC member Mark Noniewicz said it would be in the commission's best interest to receive a written statement from the marshal about his approval. "We've got two weeks, why

not ask him," Mathieu agreed.

Both Turner and Grimord reassured PZC members that the plans had been extensively reviewed by not only them but by Public Works Director Mark Decker and Tassone. "We spent more man-hours reviewing this than anything else," Turner said.

One reason the application may be going through such scrutiny is that it has been taken to several different courts since it was first approved by the PZC in 2002.

Grimord said most of his comments were minor and addressed things like typing errors.

"We're fortunate in this town to have such senior reviewers," Turner said.

After addressing complaints, the commission agreed to postpone action on the application and will further discuss the three-pipe issue at their next meeting.

The next regularly scheduled PZC meeting is set for Wednesday, Feb. 3.

WPCA Finally Passes Sewer Regulations

by Katy Nally

After working on them off and on for four years, the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) passed the regulations last Thursday, Jan. 14, for the sewer project first approved by voters in 2002.

But, before giving the final okay, WPCA members made still more minor revisions to the regulations. In fact, this last revision marked the tenth time the WPCA had made changes to the 81-page manual of regulations in the past year.

"This will be your final boarding call," said WPCA chair Jack Murray, in anticipation of approving the regulations. "Speak now or forever hold your peace."

The last changes, which were suggested by First Selectman Bill Black and Murray, were minor, said Town Planner Peter Hughes, and mostly involved changing commas and plurality of some sections.

With the regulations finally approved, a public hearing to pass the \$216,894 operations and maintenance (O&M) budget will be held Thursday, Feb. 11, at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall El-

ementary School.

After the public hearing, a 90-day connection notice will go out to residents in the sewer district, probably in mid-February, Hughes said. After that, residents can connect to the sewer or defer the connection up to three times, in 30-day installments, Hughes said. Once connected, the yearly pro-rated fee of \$542 will kick in. But, since the fiscal year ends June 30, residents would only pay for the months when connected.

If residents connect in March, the fee would be \$181 and in June it would be \$45.

After the O&M public hearing, Hughes said another hearing date would be set for the benefit assessment. He said the town is still working with appraisers, but the hearing would take place in about eight to 10 weeks.

When Marlborough residents connect to the sewer, they will seal the deal on a project that began in 2002. The \$12.02 million project was approved in November of that year through a town referendum.

Since plans were first approved, the amount

paid per EDU (equivalent dwelling unit) per year has increased from about \$850 to about \$1,250. Over time the sewer district shrank and the cost of construction increased, said Hughes in September.

The original sewer project was partly funded through a grant from the Clean Water Fund, which was pulled by former Gov. John Rowland. From 2003-06, plans for the sewers were at a standstill.

In 2007, planning resumed and the town embarked on the sewer design phase. Now, nearly three year later, Marlborough residents may soon begin to hook up to the long-awaited sewers.

Before the WPCA passed the regulations, board members discussed surcharges attached to non-residential EDUs (equivalent dwelling unit). According to Hughes, a surcharge of 15 to 25 percent would ensure non-residential EDUs "carry their share of the O&M costs."

Hughes said Tuesday 38 properties produce about 45 percent of the flow, so a surcharge is needed.

The total O&M budget is \$216,894, and split up between 400 EDUs, the yearly cost comes out to \$542 per person. This rate will be revised and set by the WPCA for each fiscal year, Hughes said.

Murray had some concern that a 25 percent surcharge for a small business would not be "defensible," he said at the meeting. But Hughes reassured him saying, "It is defensible because they're generating more flow."

The board eventually settled on a 20 percent surcharge subject to change. "If 20 percent is not enough, 25 percent sounds as good a number as any," Murray said.

The WPCA also heard an update from Jim O'Brien of the engineering firm Weston and Sampson. According to O'Brien, 20 grinder pumps still need to be tested for leaks. "Before they quit for the winter, we want to have everything tested," he said.

The next WPCA meeting is set for Thursday, March 11, at 7 p.m., at Town Hall, 26 North Main St.

Hebron BOE Hears Kindergarten, Special Ed Presentations

by Lindsay Fetzner

A large crowd turned out to last Thursday's Board of Education (BOE) meeting to hear discussions about the proposed \$12.22 million 2010-11 budget.

Special education and all-day kindergarten were given particular attention at the Jan. 14 meeting. It was the latter that generated the most comments from parents in the audience, as well as debate over the most efficient kindergarten option for the town.

Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz presented three different kindergarten options for the 2010-11 school year. One would move a .5 pre-kindergarten position to kindergarten, citing lower enrollment as the reasoning behind the decision. This recommended move would mean there would be five teachers teaching full-day kindergarten and one teaching half-day kindergarten, for a total of six kindergarten teachers in town, according to the proposal. The second would include three full-day sessions, with a .5 position from pre-kindergarten moved to kindergarten, and a 1.0 reduction of new staff. The last option would maintain the current 2.0 full-day programs and include a 1.5 reduction in staff and benefits, according to the proposal.

Out of the 108 families surveyed, 97 preferred full-day kindergarten, nine preferred half-day kindergarten and two were undecided.

"The amount of interest in full-day has gone higher and higher," said Kathy Veronesi, Principal of Hebron Elementary School.

Veronesi said the exact number of interested parties needs to be known to decide what the best option is for the students. She suggested asking parents to make a definitive decision to

get a firmer grasp on the situation, as many parents often change their preference as registration and enrollment draw closer.

"It appears the community seems to be supporting the full-day program," Cruz said.

Cruz agreed with Veronesi and said that going back and re-surveying parents to come up with more accurate numbers was necessary. Cruz said the subject was to be discussed in more detail at the next BOE meeting, which occurred last night, Jan. 21, after press time.

Many parents voiced their opinions on whether they supported the half-day or full-day programs during public comment.

Leslie Bednar was against the half-day kindergarten program. She said she felt children should get the "same opportunity across the board." In light of the lottery system currently in place, Bednar said she feels the kids enrolled in the half-day program could fall behind because of the time constraint as opposed to those in the full-day program.

"I support the full-day," she told the board.

Laura Bordic, however, said she wanted to alleviate any fears other parents might have when enrolling their children in half-day kindergarten. Bordic's children went through half-day kindergarten and she said "it worked." She told the board there shouldn't be a panic and applauded the teachers and staff who run the half-day program.

"Whatever they are doing right, we need more of that," Bordic said.

Veronesi told the board she has tried to be receptive to what the Hebron community has said and will need to have more conversation

on the lottery system in the future. She said she too was surprised at the amount of interest in the full-day program but noted that every year the interest fluctuates.

* * *

Also at the Jan. 14 meeting, Lisa Wheeler, the new director of special education and pupil personnel services, provided a detailed overview of the main areas of the special education budget. Wheeler said in her presentation that local boards of education must provide service to any "exceptional child," as mandated by the state Board of Education. The least restrictive environment (LRE) is always considered first, Wheeler said, to prevent the removal of children from a normal classroom setting if it's not completely necessary. A regular classroom setting is the primary consideration made by a planning and placement team, with access to the general education curriculum equally as significant, Wheeler said.

If a child is put into the special education program, there are numerous services that are available to the child. Among those are pre-school, academic support, behavior support (school psychologists and behavioral analysts), extended school year services, and other related services (occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech/language, and a school psychologist), according to Wheeler.

Three main areas of the special education budget were touched upon. Wheeler referred to them as "part of the larger picture," as they do not encompass the full areas of the whole bud-

get. Purchased professional services, transportation and tuition were the three areas Wheeler detailed in her presentation. Seven components make up the purchased professional services, including: independent evaluations, \$4,000, a school physician, \$2,000, occupational therapy, \$61,560, physical therapy, \$34,884, summer physical therapy/occupational therapy, \$4,250, aural rehabilitation, \$15,000, and a consultant for PDD/Autism, \$10,000. These components totaled \$131,694.00.

For special education transportation, \$107,057 was allotted. Wheeler said the Hebron Special Education department is currently cooperating with RHAM to share vans in the interest of saving money. Preschool students identified as special needs, Gilead Hill and Hebron Elementary students in need of special transportation, outplaced students and students in the Partial Hospitalization Program (PHP) all will be provided transportation, according to Wheeler. Outplacements can occur for a variety of reasons, such as a placement by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), where the town is recognized as the nexus, or the home district.

The budget called for \$71,175 for the tuition of special education students, Wheeler said. The special education department is responsible for paying for the services of DCF students, where Hebron is recognized as their nexus. In addition, outplacements and Magnet School tuition include special education and any related services, Wheeler said.

Marlborough Youth Has ‘Come a Long Way’ Since 2008 Explosion

by Katy Nally

It has been nearly two years since resident Jordan Hyde was badly burned in a backyard explosion at his home. Since that February 2008 accident, Jordan has gone through 21 surgeries to heal the burns and will continue to receive skin grafts as he grows.

Still, the 12-year-old RHAM Middle School student has managed to maintain a positive outlook.

Jordan underwent his most recent surgery at the Shriners Burn Facility in Boston, where doctors used skin from his stomach and grafted it above his lips, his mother, Leslie Hyde, said.

But despite the intensive procedures and the grueling recovery process, Jordan's aunt, Tracey Meeker said his "will to live" has remained. "He's really come a long way in his battle," she said.

Meeker said the worst part for Jordan is the anticipation of pain from the skin grafts. "The most difficult hurdle is the fear when he wakes up after every surgery," she said.

On Feb. 8, 2008, Jordan and his dad, Mike Hyde, were working in the backyard and used a fire contained in a steel barrel to keep their hands warm. According to Meeker, the fire was lit with gasoline and the gas can was left near the barrel. Meeker said the fumes from the can ignited and "backsplashed" onto Jordan.

Mike Hyde tried to smother the flames, but Jordan's jacket caught on fire and acted as an "accelerant," Meeker said. She said the father and son could not get the jacket off so Jordan began to roll on the ground. But the flames persisted, Meeker said. Mike Hyde even put mud and snow on Jordan, then finally picked up his son and carried him to a nearby pond. The two jumped in and the fire was extinguished.

According to previous reports, Jordan's jacket had melted onto his body, and he suffered third-degree burns over 45 percent of his body including his face, legs, back, stomach and hands. His father was also burned on his hands and face, Meeker said.

When the accident happened, Jordan's mom, Leslie Hyde, took several months off from work to tend to her husband and son. And even now, she said, she has exhausted her vacation days to visit Jordan when he is in the hospital.

Recognizing the emotional and financial

stress the Hyde family was going through, the Marlborough community stepped up to the plate after the accident. Throughout the spring and summer of 2008, there were many fundraisers, dinners and events held in Jordan's honor. The Marlborough Moose Family Center held a spaghetti dinner and a raffle in April of that year, the Marlborough Public School District sponsored an art auction and RHAM High School held a comedy show in May.

"The Marlborough people have been the nicest, most giving and most supportive people," Meeker said. "The Marlborough community – we've never seen anything like it."

Meeker even set up the Jordan Hyde Family Fund through Bank of America, so residents could make donations.

In April 2008 Chris Walz, the junior youth group director at the Marlborough Congregational Church, organized a rock-a-thon and a basket raffle with her kids who knew Jordan. "This was a way to help him and maybe [the youth group kids] would feel better and not feel so helpless," Walz said.

When the accident first occurred, Walz said the youth group was concerned and anxious to help out. "The first year especially, the kids were really worried," she said.

The goal of the all night rock-a-thon and the basket raffle was to raise \$5,000, but the community came together and beat the goal by \$1,200, Walz said. "We were just in utter shock, we couldn't believe it," she said.

When the check was ready, Walz said she and her youth group kids drove up to Jordan's house in the church's purple bus to deliver it. The kids filed out of the bus and stood together to sing *Lean On Me* and held up signs saying "You rock Jordan" and "Keep up the good work."

"It was very sweet," Leslie Hyde recalled. She said Jordan had just come home from his initial surgery and he was welcomed by many kids he knew from school. "It was really nice," she added.

Later that year, Jordan was also the benefactor of a July fundraiser held by Holley Chrysler Dodge Jeep in Middletown.

However, by 2009 the number of events held in Jordan's name began to dwindle. Walz said

she recognized the slide and decided to hold another rock-a-thon for the Hyde family. "Of course it was in the middle of a recession, so we were unsure how it would do," Walz said.

But the junior youth group once again surpassed the \$5,000 goal and raised \$5,200. Andrew Ketchem raised \$2,100 on his own and won the chance to throw a vanilla cream pie in Walz's face. Even Jordan watched as Walz was pie-ed. "He got a big kick out of the pie," she added.

Walz said she decided to help two years in a row because she knew the family was still struggling through tough times. She said she recognized the Hydies had traveling expenses from their trips to the medical facility in Boston and would miss work occasionally. "At least for the last couple of years, he's been supported," she said.

Walz said youth group parents were so willing to help out both years perhaps because they had children the same age and sympathized with the Hyde family. "You would hope the same would happen if you were in that situation," she said.

Even though Jordan and his family are not members of Marlborough Congregational Church, the church, its youth group and the community, were able to raise over \$11,000 to help with his recovery. "It's like the little church that could," Walz said.

"I don't know if the family would have done as well as they have if they didn't live in Marlborough," Meeker said.

"It makes me very happy to be part of a small town," Leslie Hyde said. "Thank you very, very much from the bottom of my heart."

Since 2008 the fundraisers for Jordan have slowed, but Meeker said the Bank of America account she set up still receives "trickles" of donations.

Although much of the state is facing tough financial times, Meeker said "the family still needs help from Marlborough."

"We're in the same position as a lot of people," Leslie Hyde said, referring to the toll the recession has taken on much of Connecticut.

Surgeries for Jordan will continue. Accord-



Jordan Hyde

ing to Meeker, doctors estimated Jordan will undergo 100 surgeries by the time he is 21.

As the 12-year-old grows, he will need more grafts. Meeker said Jordan will likely grow to be very tall, like the other men in his family. He also might later seek cosmetic surgery to help with the scar tissue. "The scarring will always be there, but it will be less marbled than it is now," Meeker said.

"It's an emotional process to get better," Meeker said. "As a kid he's dealt with it really good."

Meeker said Jordan is doing well. She said he still has the "little kid laughter" and has a great sense of humor. "It took him a while to go get it [sense of humor] but he found it," she said.

Walz, who is also a clerk at RHAM's school store, said she sees Jordan, who is now in the seventh grade. She said he's smart, active and sociable.

"He's really full of life," Walz said.

Colchester Dealing With Mini-Budget Freeze

by Katy Nally

Town departments and organizations have had to scrimp and save for the past month, as the town is currently under a mini-budget freeze.

"All in all, the staff here is fully aware of the budget climate and know how important every nickel and dime is," First Selectman Gregg Schuster said last Thursday, Jan. 14.

The Board of Selectmen (BOS) imposed a freeze on all discretionary spending at its Dec. 17 meeting in an attempt to offset overspending in a few areas. Schuster said last week he was concerned over some areas of spending so he did what he could without making cuts. "There's only so much we can cut before we cut services," Schuster said. "We're trying to avoid that at all costs"

The discretionary items are those that do not need to be purchased immediately and can be "put off," Schuster said. Only with the first selectman's approval can town employees purchase things like office supplies, toner and ink. "Discretionary does not mean wasteful," Schuster stressed.

Hiring new employees for several town positions has also been frozen. "It's just something to alleviate the eventual problem we're going to have to solve," Schuster said.

The freeze, Schuster said, is caused by a few non-discretionary items. In particular, there are two items that have gone over budget for this

fiscal year: overtime for snow removal and legal fees.

Colchester's location in eastern Connecticut is sometimes referred to as "the snow belt" because it gets pounded by snowstorms during the winter months. This year was no exception. The town has budgeted for funding snow removal, but since many storms occurred on the weekends, the town paid snow-removal employees overtime.

"A lot of the situation comes from the fact that it continues to snow and ice up on the weekends and the holiday weekends," said the town Chief Financial Officer Maggie Cosgrove.

Schuster estimated last Thursday the town has spent 54 percent of funds allocated for snow-removal overtime, which is an issue because there will likely be more snowstorms to come. "It's a typical or maybe above average New England winter, but we're doing what we can," Cosgrove said. "With the kinds of storms we've been having, these guys have worked 12-hour days."

Another area that has gone over budget is legal fees, Schuster said. As of Nov. 30, the town has spent \$115,000 on legal fees, which is about 96 percent of the total allotted amount of \$120,000. "We're on the precipice of going over," Schuster said.

However, for the first selectman, going over in legal fees was no surprise, considering it has

been the pattern since fiscal year 2006-2007. Even during the last fiscal year, the town budgeted \$160,000 and spent \$182,000. "Going over the budget on this was expected," Schuster said.

But Schuster discussed one idea to reduce legal fees at the Jan. 7 Board of Selectmen meeting. Currently the town uses lawyers for many of its human resources (HR) issues. Schuster said asking lawyers simple HR questions is not cost-efficient.

Between the school and the town, about 500 people are employed by the town. "I am the HR director for the town and Karen [Loiselle] is the HR director for the schools and that is a problem," Schuster said at the Jan. 7 BOS meeting.

Schuster said last Thursday he was exploring the idea of utilizing an HR firm to handle employee matters. He said maybe eventually the town would hire an HR director. "We're looking at what's out there and what's offered," he said.

The discretionary-items budget freeze will continue until June, Schuster said. After that, organizing the town's budget for the next fiscal year will depend on the state's budget. "There's a strong likelihood there will be a cut in this year's and next year's [state] aid," Schuster said.

Since the announcement of the budget freeze, all town departments have had to adapt and

change some purchases. Cosgrove said her department will purchase office supplies only on an as-needed basis instead of in six-month installments.

Colchester Senior Center Director Patti White, director of the senior center, said her department has taken similar saving precautions. "We're all just really scrimping and we're being mindful about sharing resources," White said. "Luckily the center has a long history of being able to get by on very little."

For Cragin Memorial Library, books are discretionary items, so library staff will have to get creative when it comes to purchasing new ones.

Kate Byroade, director of the library, instituted the Best Sellers Book Club to help offset the budget freeze. Now patrons can purchase a new best-selling title through Cragin at the library's discounted purchase price, which is typically 46 percent off retail.

According to Byroade, the library will then order and process the book on a rush basis and call the donor as soon as the book is ready to be borrowed. Most orders will be filled within three business days. The donor will be the first person to read the book and may claim a tax deduction.

For more information about the Best Sellers Book Club, contact the library at 860-537-5752.

Andover School Board Passes \$4.07 Million Budget

by Lindsay Fetzner

The Board of Education Wednesday unanimously approved a \$4.07 million budget for the 2010-11 fiscal year, a spending plan that represents a \$76,400 – or 1.91 percent – increase over the current year’s budget.

“This was a very difficult year putting the budget together,” Superintendent of Schools Andrew Maneggia said. “My obligation is to provide a budget that will at least allow us to maintain where we are, not to regress and to hopefully move forward without a tremendous increase in our budget.”

The bulk of the increase is due to unforeseen special education costs. Maneggia said there are new students in the elementary school in need of special education services. Despite the increase in this part of the budget, Maneggia said it would have been more significant if the town had not taken advantage of grants, some of which came through special education.

“We are providing a good program for the students and saving a lot of money,” he said. “If we had to send them out of the district, we

would be paying a lot more.”

The 2009-10 fiscal year budget allotted \$91,646 for the bulk of the school’s contracted services. Maneggia proposed \$155,322 for the 2010-11 year, a difference of \$63,676 or 69.48 percent, from last year.

“We have a responsibility to serve every student who comes before us,” Board of Education Chairman Jay Linddy told his fellow members.

The contracted services covered in the budget include student services (occupational therapy, physical therapy, a psychologist and AHM), legal fees, and other related services for the elementary school. The addition of a special education consultant added an increase of \$44,261. The consulting services will be used for those students taken care of inside of the district, Maneggia said.

Maneggia proposed \$228,786 for line items including special education outplacement and magnet school tuition, bus contracts and other services related to telephones, advertising and

printing. This is a 7.43 percent decrease from last year’s budget. Another significant decrease to the budget was for heating costs, textbooks, and instructional supplies. Maneggia proposed a \$40,141 cut, or 17.24 percent decrease. The biggest decrease, Maneggia said, was due to heating oil and diesel fuel.

The school board was in favor of the superintendent’s proposed budget.

“The budget serves the students, the staff and the taxpayers,” Linddy said.

Maneggia also presented the board with the current statistics of kindergarten enrollment. For the 2009-10 school year, there are three teaches, with an enrollment of 46 children. Enrollment projections for the 2010-11 year are for 30 students. Maneggia asked board members if they were comfortable with three kindergarten classes of 10 students each, or would prefer two classes of 15 students. Three kindergarten classes have been budgeted for, but Maneggia felt the topic was “worthy of discussion.”

“Every year, we have a hard time projecting who is coming in,” Linddy said. “I think it would be a bad decision to recommend going down one teacher.”

School board member Scott Sauyet agreed. He said that, at this point, he is certainly not considering letting a teacher go and noted that, over the years, the town has seen enrollment grow quite a bit through the summer months. Historically, the town would usually be nudging at 40 children, but is only currently at 30. Although a final decision on the topic was not made, Maneggia said it was something he thought the board should be aware of.

“It is an integral part of the budget,” Maneggia said.

The superintendent’s proposed budget, which was approved 5-0, will be presented to the Board of Finance at 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 28, in the Community Room at Town Hall, 17 School Rd.

Lifelong Portland Resident Leaving Chatham Court

by Michael McCoy

Barbara Payne is being forced out of Chatham Court after a 35-year residence, but she largely refuses to point fingers.

After a mix of financial misfortunes, Payne must be out of her home by Jan. 31. For the last decade, Payne has worked with patients with substance abuse and mental health problems. She has made her career out of such work.

However, since October, Payne has been placed on temporary disability from her job. Due to a paperwork glitch, she said she didn’t receive disability pay for about three weeks, and that sort of pushed her already-precarious financial situation over the edge. In November, she received a final eviction notice from the Portland Housing Authority, due to non-payment of rent.

Payne was quite candid in accepting the bulk of the responsibility, explaining that she spent out of her means by helping to support her son, Naji, and granddaughter. “I just burdened myself,” she said.

Speaking about her son, who works at the Dunkin’ Donuts in town, she said, “He’s there every day. He doesn’t like missing work.”

“I’m an advocate; that’s what I do,” said Payne, whose volunteer efforts include working with Portland Youth Services. “I love my work,” she added, and was clearly excited to return to her job working with patients next

month.

“They’re uprooting me,” said Payne, a lifelong resident who graduated from Portland High School in 1970. She has lived in Chatham Court since 1975, shortly after it opened.

Payne explained that, financially, she falls into a sort of no man’s land. Her wages were low enough to let her into this mess, but high enough to make her rent one of the highest in the development. (Chatham Court’s rent varies from resident to resident, and is largely based on income.)

“I still can’t believe it,” said Payne. However, she would not blame any government agency, from national to local, least of all the Portland Housing Authority itself. In a letter tendering her resignation from their board of commissioners, she said, “I would be remiss if I did not mention that the PHA staff, especially [director] Jackie Frazee, demonstrated patience, leniency and tolerance throughout my entire ordeal.”

“They’re willing to work with people,” she said of the PHA.

She further complimented Frazee, saying, “She’s been good about keeping the riff-raff out of Chatham Court.”

Furthermore, though First Selectmen Susan Bransfield and PHA officials have noted the lack of federal funding in recent years for de-

velopments like Chatham Court, both Frazee and Payne said this had nothing to do with Payne’s plight.

Instead, noting her aid to her family, problems budgeting and the disability mishap, Payne figured, “It just all kind of converged together.”

“I feel very bad about this,” said Frazee, who’s known Payne since coming to work for the PHA in 1989. She had no shortage of warm remarks for Payne, saying, “There isn’t anybody who’s lived here who’s done more for Chatham Court than Barbara Payne.”

“I wish there was someone out there who could help her,” said Frazee, who, like Payne, recognized that under Housing of Urban Development policies, leniency could only go so far. “We go out of our way not to evict good tenants,” said Frazee, “way out of our way.” Of Payne, she added, “She’s the last person I would have wanted to see leave.”

“I think this is just tragic,” Frazee surmised; however, like Payne, she said she didn’t know where to point the finger.

Bransfield has also known Payne for about 20 years and seemed saddened by the news. “She’s not a self-centered person,” said Bransfield. “She’s always thinking of others.” She thanked Payne for her efforts in town, particularly in Chatham Court and said she hopes Payne finds a way to remain in town.

There is some good news to Payne’s tale. First, the housing authority has allowed her to live with her son in the development provided she actively continues to seek another permanent home. (She also has a daughter, Asia, who lives in New Haven.) And Payne said this week she has found an apartment on Airline Avenue that she thinks will work out. Payne said she expects to be approved for a federal program that would pay her security deposit and first month’s rent at the new place.

Also, there will be a farewell reception for Payne Tuesday, Jan. 26, at 4 p.m., at Chatham Court’s Payne/Chester Center, named after Payne and the late father of her children.

Though Payne’s demeanor remains nobler than her situation might suggest, notes of despondency poked through. After so far unsuccessfully seeking a new home she can afford, she expects to end up in Middletown.

“I don’t think I’ll see these people again,” she said of her friends at Chatham Court. Payne remarked on their tight community, and said of the kids in the neighborhood, “I’m gonna miss them bad.”

Payne remained upbeat considering the circumstances, and seemed hopeful that this could be a new beginning for her. “I’m going to do what I have to do to survive it.”

Colchester Police News

1/12: Angel Reyes, 20, of 104 Mumford Ave., Groton, was charged with reckless driving, operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license and having invalid registration, State Police said.

1/12: Giovanni Reyes, 19, also of 104 Mumford Ave., Groton, was charged with interfering with an arrest, State Police said.

1/12: Jose Reyes, 40, also of 104 Mumford Ave., Groton, was charged with reckless driving, State Police said.

1/13: Brian Couture, 40, of Settlers Ln.,

turned himself in for risk of injury to a minor, third-degree assault and disorderly conduct, State Police said.

1/17: Joseph Stankiewicz, 40, of 240 Lebanon Ave., Apt. 4, was charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct, State Police said.

1/19: A 17-year-old was charged with possession of less than four ounces of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia, State Police said.

Marlborough Police News

1/17: Stephen Vincenzo, 45, of 1075 Poquonock Ave., Windsor, was charged with sixth-degree larceny, State Police said.

1/17: Daniel Bridgett, 39, of 130 Roxbury Rd., New Britain, was charged with sixth-degree larceny, State Police said.

Salem Police News

1/15: At about 1 p.m., there was a two-car accident on Route 85 just south of Beckwith Hill Rd, State Police said. Anthony Rosemond, 46, of Windsor, was traveling southbound on Route 85 when he took his eyes off the road, crossed the double yellow center lines and side-swiped Corey Pacheco’s vehicle. Pacheco, 22, of Oakdale had Michael Ling, a 40-year-old man from New London, as a passenger.

The three men were all taken to Backus Hospital for minor injuries, State Police said.

East Hampton Police News

1/6 — Cynthia Singer, 49, of 62 Haddam Neck Rd., was issued a ticket for creating a public nuisance, East Hampton Police said.

1/7 — James Harris, 22, of 284 Hog Hill Rd., was arrested for possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, police said.

1/8 — Arsenio Sanchez, 20, of 72 Barton Hill Rd., was issued a ticket for operating an ATV on a public highway, police said.

1/8 — Andrew Corson, 39, of 72 Young St., was issued a ticket for creating a public disturbance, police said.

1/10 — Jason M. Bernard, 30, of 38 Wangonk Tr., was arrested for traveling unreasonably fast, misuse of plates, operating without insurance

Portland Police News

1/16 — Susan Randall, 37, of 341 Main St., was charged with second-degree failure to appear, Portland Police said.

Proposed Portland School Budget Calls for One Teacher Layoff

by Michael McCoy

The Portland Board of Education (BOE) came out of the gate this budget season with another austere budget request that includes one teacher layoff.

During a Jan. 12 special meeting, the BOE voted 7-0 to recommend an \$18.22 million proposed budget to First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield. The proposal represents an increase of \$525,541, or 2.97 percent, over current year spending.

The request is identical to what Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen presented to the BOE one week earlier, continuing the board's tradition of keeping in synch with Doyen. (BOE Chairman Chris Phelps credited her with a "laser-like focus on efficiency.")

During that week's interim, the BOE held three budget workshops before voting on the budget last week.

Doyen said the district was unsure of just where the layoff would come from, but explained that the current eighth grade is rather large, while next year's eighth grade is average in size. Doyen said next one of the current

eighth grade teachers will be moved elsewhere in the district, bumping out another one.

Aside from the layoff, no single figure seems to jump out. One of the larger increases percentage-wise is tutor salaries increasing 117.83 percent, a \$20,001 jump. Doyen explained that some of this goes to special education cost, but the lion's share is to assist students academically that are home or hospital-bound for whatever reason. Doyen explained the spike, in that they are aware of more students in this condition than is typically.

The largest percentage increase came by way of professional developments costs. Though the figure is only up \$4,630 from the current budget, this marks a 146.33 percent increase. Doyen explained that the district decided last year to prune the fund back to almost nothing, and the increase would restore it to its former place.

Finally, textbooks are down 33.08 percent, while workbooks are up 29.52 percent, a veritable wash that Doyen explained was merely cyclical.

The proposed budget's overall increase amount is just under what was cut last year

between the BOE's request and what was passed by voters. (It's only fair to note that only half of those cuts came from insurance rates coming in lower than expected.)

However, when questioned as to what the result of a similar cut this year would be, Phelps refused to stoop to scare tactics or offer a "nightmare scenario" as an implied ultimatum. "This is the starting point of the budget process," he said. "If that cut comes, that cut comes," he figured, acknowledging that the town will have to come up with a budget everyone can live with, schools, politicians, and taxpayers alike.

But Phelps did analogize, "There's only so far you can stretch a rubber band before it snaps."

However, Phelps also noted, "There's absolutely nothing new in this budget request," a stand still he seemed willing to live with given the situation. Phelps illustrated this by saying there are computers in the district that should perhaps be replaced, but the BOE decided to hold out another year.

Phelps said the budget is "about as tight as it gets," but said the BOE and Doyen did this

without "undercutting our educational programs." Instead of trimming programs, Phelps said the BOE has consistently cut positions through attrition while largely managing to avoid layoffs. This year's request include the elimination of 3.5 positions, including two paraprofessionals who retired, a vacant half-time custodian position and the reassigned teacher.

Similarly, in a letter attached to her budget proposal, Doyen said, "Our attempt is to keep the budget as reasonable as possible while maintaining the excellence that is the hallmark of our school system."

Doyen later explained the smooth collaboration with the BOE by saying, "I don't create a budget in a void," but said the whole process is collaborative. "There aren't a lot of surprises."

The next step is Bransfield's submittal of her budget, which must be no later than March 1. Then the Board of Selectmen will hold a public hearing on the budget Tuesday, March 9, at 7 p.m., in the auditorium at Portland High School, 95 High St..

Two Charged in Attempted Portland Robbery

by Michael McCoy

Two East Hampton men came up with three charges a piece after an unsuccessful Dunkin' Donuts heist, according to Portland Police

According to Portland Police Officer David Bond, in the aftermath of the nighttime breach, Jacob Dorflinger, 21, of Abbey Road in East Hampton was charged with first-degree criminal attempt to commit robbery, criminal attempt to commit sixth-degree larceny, and breach of peace. Nino Simoni, 22, of Coughlin Road in East Hampton, was charged with conspiracy to commit robbery, conspiracy to commit sixth-degree larceny and breach of peace.

Bond said the incident began at 8:30 p.m. Jan. 7. One of two employees at the Dunkin' Donuts located at the corner of routes 66 and 17 was preparing a coffee for a drive-through order when she heard a knock at the window. Bond said she opened it to find a young white male wearing a ski mask. She asked, "Can I help you?" to which he replied, "Give me all your money."

Bond said the employee chuckled, but the masked man lifted his coat to reveal a silver semi-automatic weapon, showing he was indeed not joking. (Bond said a search later revealed it was merely a BB gun, but added that it appeared "very authentic" and anyone in that situation would assume it was real.)

Instead of retrieving money, the employee ran to the back of the store, said Bond, and alerted the other employee working in the store at the time.

Both employees ran out the back door and locked themselves in the abutting hair salon with several of the salon's employees, and called the police. Bond said the would-be robber stuck around about two minutes before realizing no bounty was on his way.

However, before running to the salon, the employee working the window told the customer who ordered what was happening. "Okay, I'll call the police for ya," he responded. This proved disingenuous as, Bond said, the man was in fact the driver of the getaway vehicle.

Bond said he and Lieutenant Ron Milardo, along with three Middletown police officers and a K9 unit, responded to the scene. Bond said police came up with no answers that night, although they took "some good surveillance from the Dunkin' Donuts." Bond, who led the investigation, was going over the footage the following morning when he realized the driver ordering coffee was a diversion.

So, he took the footage to F40 Motorsports, an exotic automobile restoration and retail shop in town. Proprietor Wayne Carini and his crew confirmed that the vehicle was an Audi S4. Upon returning to the police station, just about noon, Bond saw the same car pull into Bank of America, located just next to the station. Bond explained the car had the same rims and molding, and even had "Carlo" spelled across the top of the rear windshield, which matched the surveillance footage. Bond recalled saying to himself, "You gotta be kidding me; this is too easy."

The white male driving the car turned out to be Simoni, who later confessed to driving the getaway car, Bond said. (Bond said the car legitimately belongs to Simoni, but is registered to a family member.) Bond also said that upon initially approaching him, Simoni asked, "Oh, is this about the robbery at Dunkin' Donuts?"

Simoni was arrested that day, and directed police to Dorflinger, who was arrested by the evening shift. Bond said Dorflinger confessed to being the gunman at the drive-through window. Bond also said they recovered the mask and gloves he wore after searching his residence, along with the BB gun in the Audi, which was seized.

Bond said he believed one or both were supporting an addiction to prescription drugs.

The Middlesex Superior Court criminal clerk's office said both men appeared in court Jan. 11, and are scheduled to appear again today, Jan. 22. The office reported that on Jan. 11, Simoni posted a \$35,000 bond, while Dorflinger posted one for \$50,000.

Vandalism Discovered on Unfinished Andover Bridge

by Lindsay Fetzner

Vandalism featuring a racial slur occurred in town this past weekend, according to State Police.

Andover resident Jay Kamins said he was driving Saturday morning when he discovered the words "Kill N—ers" spray-painted across an unfinished bridge structure at the intersection of route 316 and 6. A backward swastika was also painted, Kamins said.

The sight of the vandalism was a shock to Kamins, who called the words "disgusting" and the display "a kick to the stomach".

"I hadn't seen anything this overtly hateful in a long time," Kamins said. "It was so overwhelmingly rotten."

Initially, Kamins said it didn't occur to him to tie the incident into Monday's holiday in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. At the time he saw the vandalism, Kamins had been listening to the radio about the recent earthquake in Haiti and the efforts of the Americans to help. In a letter to the editor that appears in this week's *Rivereast*, Kamins wrote, "Despite those who spray their hate in the shadows, we are a country full of kind, compassionate souls."

First Selectman Bob Burbank said that, after receiving a call Sunday from a resident informing him of the vandalism, "it was taken care of in a few hours." The Fire Department

initially tried to hose the paint off, but was unsuccessful. Two Public Works staff covered the area with a concrete mix, Burbank said.

The materials and overtime compensation for the town workers to cover the vandalism will cost the town "a couple hundred dollars," Burbank said. He hopes that, in the event the vandals are caught, they will "be made to reimburse the town."

Pleased with the quick response of the town to the incident, Kamins said the area now looks "like [the vandalism] pretty much was never there."

Andover Resident State Trooper Kevin Reed said this type of vandalism is uncommon in such a small town like Andover and could have been someone from out of town. Bolton has experienced more cases of vandalism than Andover overall, he said.

"This occurs very seldom," Burbank said. "We get very little of this."

There was a similar vandalism incident this past summer on Route 6, near Bunker Hill in Andover. A swastika was spray-painted on a dilapidated, abandoned building, according to Reed.

The incident is currently under investigation by the State Police, Reed said.

"No matter what, it is still wrong," Reed said.

EH High School Briefly Evacuated After Fire

The East Hampton Volunteer Fire Department's visit to the high school Tuesday morning, resulted in the building's evacuation for a mere 20 minutes.

According to Superintendent of Schools Judy Golden, a motor inside of one of the classroom heating units caught fire around 7:30 a.m., and began smoking. The smoking was apparent to all in the room, the fire alarm sounded, the building was vacated, and the fire department doused the small fire. Golden reported that no flames were visible.

The fire actually interrupted midterm exams, which are being administered this week. However, Golden said, staff and students returned to the building at 7:50 a.m., the students using the room of the fire, were relocated for the rest of the day. Subsequently, the motor in question was replaced.

Golden said all met the brief episode with cooperation and orderliness.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

In 1996, Al Franken wrote a book entitled *Rush Limbaugh is a Big Fat Idiot*. Well, it's been 14 years and Limbaugh is still a big fat idiot; this much is not news, I know. But his comments the past week or so about the situation in Haiti have been nothing less than abhorrent.

Limbaugh accused President Obama of seeing the tragedy in Haiti as "a political opportunity," and said the president will "use it to burnish his credentials with minorities in this country and around the world, and to accuse Republicans of having no compassion." He said the earthquake played right into Obama's hands, and said the president's response will boost his standing "in the light-skinned and dark-skinned black community in this country."

And in the middle of a mini-rant about people donating to Haitian relief via whitehouse.gov – don't do it, Limbaugh said, as the money might not even get to Haiti and all you'll do is wind up on a mailing list for future Obama campaign literature – Limbaugh even stupefyingly said, "We've already donated to Haiti. It's called the U.S. income tax."

Look, Limbaugh *hates* Obama. I get it. I mean, on the day the man was elected, Limbaugh was blustering on the radio that he hopes he fails. But to take this tragedy, this absolute tragedy, one that claimed 200,000 lives and left over a million more homeless, and to say Obama will just use it to further his own political gain. . . well, it's sickening.

Limbaugh's comments came not long after Rev. Pat Robertson made his own disgusting remarks about the situation. And his were actually even worse, as he seemed to be implying the Haitians are basically getting their just desserts. On his TV show, Robertson said that, a long time ago, when they were "under the heel of the French," Haitians "got together and swore a pact to the devil. They said, 'we will serve you if you will get us free from the prince.' True story. And the devil said, 'OK, it's a deal.'" Robertson said the Haitians revolted and threw out the French, but, he said, "ever since they have been cursed by one thing or another."

Not surprisingly, Robertson's remarks have been roundly criticized. As well they should be. What he said was absolutely terrible. Haiti is being punished by God? *That's* the message a man of the cloth is sending right now?

Thankfully, people like Limbaugh and Robertson seem to be very much in the minority. The vast majority of people appear to recognize the devastation in Haiti for what it is: a terrible, terrible tragedy. As you probably saw on the cover, reporter Katy Nally has a story this week detailing efforts of various churches and schools in the area to help provide relief for Haiti. People are banding together, doing what they can – large or small – for a people so desperately in need.

There are still an awful lot of good people in this country. They just don't always have their own talk shows.

* * *

Well, barring some last-minute reversal, it looks like tonight will be Conan O'Brien's last installment ever of *The Tonight Show*. And Conan's last show for NBC, period.

I wrote at length about the Conan situation last week, and I'll be briefer today, but I figured I'd give a brief update. While it hasn't been signed as of my writing this (Tuesday night), it looks like NBC and Conan are nearing a deal that will get him off NBC. According to an Associated Press report, NBC and Conan's side are still at odds over how much of a severance package to pay Conan's 200 staffers (many of whom followed Conan when he moved from

New York to Los Angeles last year). But that'll probably get ironed out, and Conan will get a cool chunk of change (\$32 million, according to *The Wall Street Journal*) to walk away from NBC, and stay off television altogether until September.

Like I said last week, Fox is rumored to want Conan for an 11 p.m. show. But that might not be so easy either. Currently, Fox shows nothing in the 11 p.m. hour. That time belongs to its affiliates, many of which run syndicated repeats (like *Seinfeld* or *Simpsons*) that make the stations money. The affiliates might not be so eager to scrap those profitable repeats. (And remember, unhappy affiliates played a large part in this whole Leno-Conan fracas to begin with.) So Conan to Fox is not a done deal, by any means.

However, if Conan does land a show somewhere else, be it Fox or a cable channel (ABC has already said they're not interested), he'll have to be careful what he says. Rumored to be part of Conan's buy-out deal with NBC is a strange little clause forbidding him from publicly trashing the network. Apparently, NBC execs have been fed up with the way Conan's trashed them ever since this mess started. (During one show last week, for example, Conan cracked, "In the press this week, NBC has been calling me every name in the book. In fact, they think I'm such an idiot they now want me to run the network." I don't know how long Conan will have to play nice, but it certainly is an odd wrinkle. I bet NBC wishes there was some way it could impose such a restriction on David Letterman, who has been eating this whole thing up.

In a rather ironic twist – considering his ratings were one of the main reasons behind this whole story – Conan's ratings have skyrocketed during this debacle. On Monday, for example, in that 18-49 demographic advertisers covet so much, Conan's rating was double that of time-slot competitor Letterman.

So, at least Conan's going out with a bang, both ratings-wise and guest-wise. His guests for tonight's installment are scheduled to be Tom Hanks and Will Ferrell. Ferrell was actually Conan's first guest on *The Tonight Show* way back in.....June 2009.

* * *

Finally, some staff news to report: this week's *Rivereast* is the last for reporter Michael McCoy. For a while now, Mike's been taking graduate school classes to become a teacher, and next week starts a gig student-teaching at RHAM High School.

Mike, like his wife Sarah (who left last month), was one of the reporters I inherited when I took over as *Rivereast* editor in mid-2007. Mike had already been covering the Portland/East Hampton beat for a couple of years, and one of the first things I noticed about him was how well-liked he was in those two towns. They loved him. Even when town officials didn't see eye to eye with each other (as has often been the case in East Hampton during his time here), there was an almost-universal fondness for Mike.

That enthusiastic, good-natured repartee Mike had with the people in his towns served him well as a reporter; it's an attribute not all reporters have.

That enthusiasm also spilled over into his writing. Mike had a gift for description that could really sometimes give you the feeling that you were at the meeting he was at, or at the fair he covered, or even at the business that got robbed.

And I'm sure that enthusiastic approach will continue to serve Mike well at RHAM, and wherever his teaching career takes him. All of us at the *Rivereast* wish Mike the best of luck.

* * *

See you next week.

Obituaries

Colchester

George W. Campbell Sr.

George W. Campbell Sr., 82, of Colchester, passed away Monday, Jan. 18, at his residence. He was born on March 5, 1927, in Readfield, ME, son of William and Rosa Stipham Campbell. George was an inspector for United Nuclear for many years. He was a veteran of World War II, serving in the U.S. Navy.

Surviving is his son, George W. Campbell Jr. of Torrington.

Funeral services will be Saturday, Jan. 23, at 3 p.m., at the Belmont/Sabrowski Funeral Home, 144 South Main St., Colchester, with visitation one hour prior to his service, followed by full military honors.

Burial will be held in the spring at Readfield Corner Annex Cemetery in Readfield, ME.

Marlborough

Richard A. Nowsch

Richard A. "Pop" Nowsch, 83, of Marlborough, beloved husband of the late Irene (Dowd) Nowsch, died Wednesday, Jan. 13, at the Hospital of Central Connecticut in New Britain. Born July 8, 1926, in Hartford, he was the son of the late Max and Lottie (Milton) Nowsch.

Richard had served his country in the U.S. Navy during WWII and was the owner of a flooring company for many years. He had been a member of the Marlborough Congregational Church and the Talcotville Congregational Church, and a member of the Loyal Order of Moose Lodge 1631 in Marlborough.

He is survived by his son, Richard Nowsch and his wife Sandi of Coventry; two daughters, Lorraine Marvin and her husband Renny of Colchester, Teri Strickland and her husband Kenneth of Marlborough; three sisters, Rita Rankl of Maine, Shirley Strickland of New Hampshire and Frances Hodge of Marlborough; six grandchildren, Carolyn Marvin, Brian Marvin, Jennifer Nowsch, Peter Nowsch, Dennis Marvin and Richard Marvin and 11 great-grandchildren.

He was predeceased by five brothers, Milton, Wesley, George, Robert and Melvin Nowsch.

Funeral services were held Saturday, Jan. 16, at 10 a.m. in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, with the Rev. James Ameling officiating. Burial followed in Marlboro Cemetery. Friends called at the Spencer Funeral Home Friday, Jan. 15, from 6-8 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Susan B. Koman Breast Cancer Fund, P.O. Box 650309, Dallas, TX 75265, the American Heart Assoc., 1 Union St., No. 301, Robbinsville, NJ 08691-4183, or the Talcotville Congregational Church, 10 Elm Hill Rd., Vernon, CT 06066.

To leave online condolences, visit www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Portland

Blanche (Richardson) Brahen

Blanche W. R(Richardson) Brahen, 72, of Cromwell, formerly of Portland, wife of Edward P. Brahen, passed away Monday, Mon. 18. Born on March 10, 1937, she was the daughter of the late Earlon and Wilhelmina Richardson.

Besides being a proud wife, mother and grandmother, she also enjoyed her career as a CAN for over 30 years, touching many lives at Portland Care and Rehabilitation Center.

She is survived by four daughters, Leona Brahen and her companion Robert D' Aquilla of Monson, MA, Wilhelmina Brahen and Karen Cordeau, both of Holliday, TN, Marjorie Barrett and her husband Tim of Portland. She is also survived by seven grandchildren, three sisters, three brothers, two brothers-in-law and many nieces and nephews. She also leaves behind her longtime friend, Liss.

A funeral service will be held Monday, Jan. 25, at 11 a.m. at Trinity Episcopal Church in Portland. There will be one calling hour at the church prior to the service from 10-11 a.m. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Middlesex Hospital, Weiss Hospice Unit, c/o Development Fund, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457.

Arrangements are under Rose Hill Funeral Home.

Colchester

Lillian Theresa Blanchette

Lillian Theresa Blanchette, 83, beloved wife of Donald, of Colchester, formerly of Jewett City, passed away Friday, Jan. 15, at Harrington Court in Colchester, surrounded by her loving family. Born Nov. 10, 1926, in Taftville, she was a daughter of the late Frank and Florida (Manville) Bradshaw.

Lillian married Donald H. Blanchette on April 5, 1969, in Griswold where they raised their family. They owned and operated Blanchette/French Cleaners in both Jewett City and Norwich for over 25 years.

Lillian was a communicant at St. Andrew's Church in Colchester. She enjoyed gardening, reading, bowling, golfing and camping with her family. Most importantly, she will be remembered by her family as a devoted and loving wife, mother, grandmother and great grandmother.

In addition to her husband of 40 years, survivors include four children and their spouses, Judith and Timothy Hershberger and Donna Bergeson of Norwich, Deborah and William Desmond of Colchester, John and Diane Blanchette of Zyperhills, FL; two stepchildren, Maureen Blanchette of Quincy, MA, Denise and Tony DelVecchio of Billerica, MA; 10 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; and numerous extended family and friends.

She was predeceased by a sister, Lorraine Bradshaw, a son, Richard Kennedy, and a grandson, David Cameron.

Friends and family attended memorial calling hours on Thursday, Jan. 21, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral liturgy was celebrated later that morning at St. Andrew Church, Colchester. Burial will be at the convenience of the family in St. Mary's Cemetery in Lisbon.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to VITAS Innovative Hospice Care, 255 Pitkin St., East Hartford, CT 06108.

For online condolences, visit www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

Lorraine A. Ellis

Lorraine A. (Hotchkiss) Ellis, 85, of East Hampton, widow of the late Albert T. Ellis, died Sunday, Jan. 17, at Middlesex Hospital. Born Feb. 4, 1924, in Manchester, she was the daughter of the late Ernest and Augusta (Roessner) Hotchkiss.

Lorraine had proudly served her country in the U.S. Navy during World War II. She had retired from the Travelers Insurance Company where she had worked as an analyst. Lorraine was a resident of East Hampton since 1949 and was a member of the East Hampton Congregational Church and a past member of the East Hampton Grange.

She leaves to mourn her passing her son, Paul Ellis of East Hampton, a sister-in-law, Jeanne Hotchkiss, and two nieces, Christine Hotchkiss and Kathryn Lowe.

Funeral services were held Wednesday, Jan. 20, in the East Hampton Congregational Church with the Rev. Thomas Kennedy officiating. Burial will follow in Rose Hill Cemetery. There were no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to East Hampton Congregational Church, P.O. Box 237, East Hampton, CT 06424.

The Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, has care of arrangements. To leave online condolences, visit www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

East Hampton

Mildred C. Peltier

Mildred C. (Zukauskas) Peltier, 77, of East Hampton, beloved wife of George Peltier, died Tuesday, Jan. 19, at her home, surrounded by her loving family. Born March 24, 1932, in New Britain, she was the daughter of the late Anthony and Antoinette Zukauskas.

Mildred leaves to mourn her loss her husband, George, of East Hampton; three sons and their wives, George and Lissa Peltier Jr. of Colchester, Christopher and Lisa Peltier of East Hampton, and Patrick and Kathleen Peltier of East Hampton; a sister, Joanne Szymanski; and six grandchildren, Ginger, Tabatha, Steven, Lauren, Emma, and Zachary.

A graveside service will be held today, Friday, Jan. 22, at 11 a.m., in St. Mary's Cemetery in New Britain.

The Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, has care of the arrangements. To leave online condolences, visit www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Richard Allan Herman

Richard Allan "Dick" Herman, born in Hartford Dec. 3, 1929, son of Ann and Sam Herman of West Hartford, passed away of natural causes Dec. 29, 2009, in Colchester.

Dick was raised in West Hartford, with a brief period in Miami, FL, during his high school years. He attended Hall and Weaver High Schools. In January 1950, he married Barbara Jane Weinstein of Hartford, settling in East Hartford in 1957. For many years, he was an active member of the Elks Lodge.

Dick spent his career in sales of automotive parts and tools, beginning in the parts department of Dworin Chevrolet, then joining Acme Auto Supply in Harford, and managing its Bloomfield store for many years. He co-managed Tool and Equipment Distributors, Inc., (TEDI) location in East Hartford until it was acquired by Acme Auto and moved to West Hartford. Dick retired from TEDI in 1995. His many customers in the retail and wholesale markets considered him a "prince" and indeed, he was beloved by all who knew him.

Dick leaves his sons, Michael and wife Susan, of Sunnyvale, CA, and Paul and wife Karen, of Bristol; as well as his brother, Morton and wife Reva Herman of Delray Beach, FL; cousins, Cheryl and husband Peter Scheinblum of Old Saybrook, Jules and wife Phyllis Herman of Houston, TX, and Jimmy and wife Heather Molans of Sedona, AZ. Dick also leaves six grandchildren, Sara and Megan of Bristol, and Edward, Beth, Andrea and Eva of Sunnyvale, CA. Dick is survived by his longtime companion June Merkent of West Hartford, presently residing in Colchester.

Memorial services are planned at St. James Episcopal Church in West Hartford May 15 at 11 a.m.

Donations in his memory may be made to the charity of your choice.

Taylor & Modeen Funeral Home, West Hartford, has care of arrangements.

Colchester

Freda Blanche Sweet

Freda Blanche Sweet, formerly of Glastonbury and widow of Henry Earl Sweet, passed away peacefully on Saturday, Jan. 16, at the Apple Rehab in Colchester. She was born in Caribou, ME, on May 29, 1917, daughter of the late Samuel D. and Louise Anna (Wright) Bird. She grew up in Mexico, ME, before moving to Glastonbury.

Freda was a very active member of the First Church of Christ Congregational in Glastonbury. She loved gardening and belonged to the Glastonbury Garden Club. She retired from Pratt and Whitney in East Hartford after 35 years.

Freda leaves a sister Grace Lloyd of Yucaipa, CA; her daughter Margaret Monroe and her husband Julian of Lyme; her three grandsons, Douglas Monroe and his wife Jody, Brett Monroe and his wife Kathleen, and Garth Monroe; and three great-grandchildren.

Along with both her parents and husband Henry Earl Sweet, she was predeceased by her siblings, a brother Robert Bird and her sisters Elsie Farace and Dorothy Doherty.

Funeral services will be private with burial in the family plots in Athens, VT.

Freda's family would like to extend their sincere gratitude and appreciation to the staff at the Apple Rehab in Colchester for their kind and compassionate care over the last few years.

Memorial contributions may be made in Freda's Memory to the charity of donor's choice.

To share stories and condolences online, visit www.glastonburyfuneral.com.

Hebron

Anthony Charles Don Aroma

Anthony Charles Don Aroma, 94, of Hebron, widower of the late Martha (Weiss) Don Aroma, passed away Tuesday, Jan. 19, at home. Born May 8, 1915 in New Britain, he was a son of the late Pasquale and Philomena (Russo) Don Aroma.

On May 8, 1942, he and Martha were married in New Britain and shared 42 years of marriage before she predeceased him on March 22, 1985. Mr. Don Aroma served proudly with the U.S. Navy during World War II and was a former member of the American Legion.

Tony was self-employed and owned and operated Don Aroma & Son for many years and was a member of the Local 1 Bricklayers Union before moving to Hebron in 1971. He then served as road foreman for the Town of Hebron for 10 years before his retirement. Mr. Don Aroma was a former member of the Hebron Lions, a member of the Newington Auxiliary Police Department and was a volunteer firefighter and EMT.

He is survived by his son, Paul Don Aroma and his girlfriend, Joan Avery of Hebron; his son-in-law, Roger Thibodeau of Hebron; his girlfriend, Diane Turgeon of Hebron, who was his caregiver 24/7 until his passing; two grandchildren, Michelle Lasisko and Michael Thibodeau; his younger sister, Dorothy Bellizzi of New Britain; his younger brother, Pat Don Aroma of Ocala, FL; two sisters-in-law, Frances Don Aroma of New Britain and Santina Don Aroma of Bantam; and numerous extended family members and friends.

He was predeceased by his daughter, Linda Thibodeau; five sisters, Assunta, Maria, Cora, Julia and Anna and four brothers, Frank, Ralph, Edward and Paul Don Aroma.

Many thanks to around-the-clock visiting nurse, Debbie; homemaker, Bambi Petrello; nurse's aide, Petra Morales; and to all the personnel of VITAS Hospice Care for your love, dedication and tender care. Tony is now pain-free and at peace, reunited with his loving family.

The memorial liturgy at the Church of the Holy Family in Hebron, followed by burial with full military honors in the Gilead Cemetery, will be observed in May and announced at a later date. There are no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105.

Care of arrangements has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester. For online condolences, visit www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

