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Hebron residents Nate Pitruzzello, 14, and Andrew Breckel, 15, both Hebron Interfaith Human Services volunteers, assisted with fresh produce distribution on Tuesday when the mobile Foodshare van came to town.

Helping to Feed Area Hungry

by Lindsay Fetzner

As the doors of the mobile Foodshare opened on Tuesday, tucked in the back of the First Congregational Church of Hebron, pounds of fresh produce were emptied into bags to fill hungry stomachs that lined the parking lot.

Hebron Interfaith Human Services (HIHS), in collaboration with Foodshare, the Food Bank of Marlborough and the Andover Department of Social Services, offered fresh produce to 62 residents from Hebron and surrounding communities this week.

Several volunteers came out for the cause, and were on hand to assist the visitors and fill bags.

"We had a good turnout of volunteers and people coming in," said HIHS Vice Chairman Rick White.

A wide array of vegetables and fruit, as well as other food, were available, including fresh tomatoes, corn, peppers, yogurt, oranges and plums. Hebron-based Gumby's Garden, run by David Johnston, also donated tomatoes, peaches and corn as well.

HIHS volunteer Donna Ziegler said Tuesday afternoon that she was very pleased with the way the event turned out. "I thought it went well," said. "There was more people there than I thought, at least initially."

Sixteen-year-old brothers Greg and Scott Bento, from Hebron, have volunteered their

time at HIHS over the past year in many capacities, be it stocking shelves or helping out at local events.

"We just like helping out the people who aren't as fortunate as us," Greg said. Scott agreed, and added, "It feels good to know I'm making a change."

For Hebron resident Sandra Hart, who took an array of fruits and vegetables, the Foodshare van "especially in this economy" is "a blessing to a lot of people." Hart said even with both a mother and father working, a family can still struggle.

"Even though it's a small town," she said, "a small town needs all the help it can get."

Hebron resident Louise Caisse and Columbia resident Donna Godbout agreed the event was something to be thankful and appreciative for. "It's an awesome thing they're doing for everyone," Godbout said.

"I think it's a terrific idea," Caisse said. "It's great that people are taking advantage of it."

Andrew Breckel, 15, has been volunteering with HIHS this summer, and said his time with the organization has been rather eye-opening.

"It shows the effect of the economy today," he said. "I see people I know [at HIHS]. It affects everybody."

Agency Services Representative Kai See **Helping Page 2**

Reimondo Sues East Hampton to Get Job Back

by Claire Michalewicz

Laid-off East Hampton Police Chief Matthew Reimondo is suing the town to be reinstated to his job.

The lawsuit, dated Sunday, Aug. 15, accuses Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe and three other town officials of conspiring to remove Reimondo in retaliation for handling allegations against O'Keefe.

In the suit, Reimondo's lawyer Leon Rosenblatt alleges that O'Keefe conspired with Acting Police Lieutenant Michael Green, and Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel and Vice Chairman John Tuttle, to remove Reimondo from his job.

Reimondo had recently passed accusations of harassment and other misconduct by O'Keefe from three town employees on to the town attorney. According to Rosenblatt, the accusations included sexual harassment, gender discrimination, sexual assault and misuse of public funds.

In addition to reinstatement to his job, Reimondo is also requesting damages "in excess of \$15,000, including compensatory damages, costs, counsel fees, and punitive damages." Since being laid off on June 22, Reimondo "has suffered loss of property and/or liberty interests, including damage to his stature in the community," Rosenblatt said. Reimondo has incurred legal fees and suffered emotional distress, Rosenblatt said.

Rosenblatt said the amount of damages was "a lot more than \$15,000," and would be determined later in the legal process.

Among the seven legal claims Rosenblatt made in the lawsuit is a writ of quo warranto, which claims that Green and O'Keefe usurped Reimondo's position and should be removed. In addition, Rosenblatt claimed, Reimondo was denied his right to the hearing he was entitled to under state law. (On Wednesday, however, O'Keefe agreed to give Reimondo a hearing, at a date that has yet to be determined.)

Moreover, the lawsuit alleges, O'Keefe and the Town Council acted illegally in laying him off. The town's charter and ordinances specifically require the town to have a police chief, and neither Green nor O'Keefe is qualified or certified to be chief, Rosenblatt said in the lawsuit. O'Keefe is not a police officer, Rosenblatt said, and Green, though an officer, has been disciplined for dereliction of duty, and lacks the education and training necessary to be chief.

Rosenblatt said the June 22 Town Council special meeting, in which the council voted to offer Reimondo a severance package and appoint Green to acting lieutenant and O'Keefe to interim police chief, was illegal. Under the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act, Rosenblatt said, the council should have informed Reimondo that they would be discussing his employment at the meeting and offered him a chance to speak.

Along with Reimondo, another plaintiff, Kim Mager, is also named in the suit. Mager is a resident and taxpayer in East Hampton, Rosenblatt said. She is not one of the three

employees who made the complaints against O'Keefe, Rosenblatt said, but is a supporter of Reimondo.

"I'm behind Matt, 100 percent," Mager said. "What's going on in town is ridiculous." She explained that she had known Reimondo since he started on the East Hampton police force, and felt O'Keefe and the Council were ignoring residents' demands.

"They're supposed to go by what we want," Mager said. "But it's falling on deaf ears."

According to Rosenblatt, the conspiracy started in late April after Reimondo delivered the three female town employees' complaints about O'Keefe's behavior to Town Attorney Jean D'Aquila. Reimondo and D'Aquila agreed to pass the statements on to Engel and Tuttle, Rosenblatt said.

But rather than take action to start investigating O'Keefe, Rosenblatt said, Engel and Tuttle told O'Keefe about the allegations.

Engel and Tuttle, Rosenblatt said, "then combined and conspired to create a scheme whereby the plaintiff would be removed from office so he could not initiate or support an investigation of O'Keefe's alleged sexual harassment, gender discrimination, sexual assault, and misuse of public funds."

Along with Green and "some other members of the Town Council," Rosenblatt alleged, O'Keefe, Engel and Tuttle decided to reorganize the police department, removing Reimondo



Matt Reimondo, shown here at a July meeting, has sued East Hampton to get reinstated as the town's police chief.

to protect O'Keefe from these allegations.

In the lawsuit, Rosenblatt described the three employees' complaints. On April 21, Rosenblatt said, O'Keefe gave a town em-

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Reimondo cont. from Front Page

ployee a ride from Town Hall to the Stop & Shop parking lot, and “rubbed and squeezed her left upper thigh to within inches of the vaginal area.”

When the woman complained to Reimondo about O’Keefe touching her, Rosenblatt said, another female employee overheard them and said O’Keefe had touched her leg “in a manner she believed was sexually aggressive.”

A third female employee had been keeping a journal of what she perceived as sexist and offensive behavior from O’Keefe since 2008, when he started work in East Hampton. This woman said O’Keefe repeatedly treated her and other female employees unfairly, and said O’Keefe was seen by other town employees dancing with a cocktail waitress in New Orleans, where he was attending a conference. Also, according to the lawsuit, the journal also reported O’Keefe “had disappeared from the conference for two days and his companions believed he went off with a prostitute rather than attend the conference.”

Attorney Mark Sommaruga, who represented O’Keefe and the town in the aborted July 2 hearing into Reimondo’s dismissal, said the town had sent the lawsuit to their insurance company for review, but had not yet chosen an attorney.

When asked about the lawsuit after Monday’s Town Council meeting, Tuttle declined to comment on it, explaining that it was a legal matter. Engel, out of the state for the week, said she hadn’t yet read the suit and had no response to it.

O’Keefe also declined to comment. Green said he was surprised to see himself named in the lawsuit, explaining that he had nothing to do with removing Reimondo from his job.

“It almost looks like I was a part of some big conspiracy and I can assure you I was not,” Green said.

Reimondo said the lawsuit “speaks for itself,” reiterating that he felt he was removed from his job for retaliatory reasons, and would let a

jury decide the case.

“It has mobilized the town in a way I have not seen in 25 years,” Reimondo said, thanking the hundreds of residents who have been attending meetings since he was laid off.

* * *

On Monday, the Town Council held a special meeting to discuss the amendment to Chapter 109 of the town’s ordinances, which outlines the structure of the police department and the duties of the chief.

However, the council voted not to change the proposed amendment, and to delay the scheduled Aug. 31 public hearing about the ordinance change. By delaying the changes for 30 days, council member Thom Cordeiro explained, the Town Council can seek further legal opinions about the change.

The decision to delay action was met with cheers and applause from the over 150 residents who attended the meeting.

The meeting was originally scheduled for 7 p.m. at Town Hall, but about 60 residents packed into the meeting room and dozens more spilled out into the hallway. At first, Tuttle, who was conducting the meeting since Engel was absent, said that since there was no public comment on the agenda, people interested in knowing what happened could listen to a recording of the meeting afterward.

Cordeiro objected, explaining that they had to move to a larger venue. After several minutes of seeking alternate venues, the meeting was officially moved to the high school.

When the meeting resumed at 7:35 in the high school auditorium, Tuttle explained that the council had called the meeting to address reports that the new ordinance would make the town manager the police chief. Sommaruga, he said, had drafted another version of the ordinance. Under these changes, the town manager would only have administrative oversight, while the lieutenant managed all the chief’s former duties, Tuttle explained.

Under the clarified ordinance, Tuttle said the town manager would have “authority over the police department as he or she possesses for all other town agencies, offices and departments.” This authority would include appointing all police officers, “on merit and fitness alone,” a duty the town manager already has.

The lieutenant, meanwhile, would handle day-to-day management of the police department, and assume all responsibilities the Chief of Police holds under the current ordinance, Tuttle said.

Cordeiro said he had concerns about the legality of changing the ordinance, and asked that the council wait 30 days. With the extra month, Cordeiro said, the Council could have a second or third legal opinion on the ordinance, and also review how the changes would affect the town’s charter.

Though Cordeiro expressed concerns about the ordinance, he explained that he still supported O’Keefe’s decision to downsize the police department.

“I believe this rightsizing is the right way to save money in the years to come,” Cordeiro said after the meeting. “This town could be well-managed under the authority of Lt. Green.”

Other council members disagreed, asking Cordeiro what they could save by delaying the decision. Waiting, Barbara Moore said, could “hurt the town.”

“This is not about any person in particular,” Engel said via phone. “It’s the right thing to do economically.”

“I want to make sure from a legal perspective that this is the right thing to do,” Cordeiro said. “What is hurt by waiting 30 days?”

Also joining the meeting via speakerphone, Council member Sue Weintraub said she agreed with Cordeiro’s decision to delay the changes, though she said she did not feel comfortable making any changes at all. Since Reimondo was laid off, Weintraub has repeatedly spoken out

against O’Keefe’s actions, demanding that Reimondo be reinstated to his job.

Weintraub explained that while the town manager had the ability to appoint a police chief, he did not have the authority to restructure the department or remove the chief. According to the town’s charter and ordinances, Weintraub said, the town manager can only make financial recommendations to the Town Council or to the Board of Finance, but cannot legislate changes.

“We’re not getting rid of the police chief,” Weintraub said, calling the change from a chief to a lieutenant “just semantics.”

“We’re not here to debate that,” Tuttle responded.

“Yes, we are!” shouted several audience members.

Tuttle expressed new concerns at the end of the meeting, explaining that he did not feel comfortable voting on a proposed change to an ordinance with two Council members on the phone. The motion to change the language of the proposed ordinance failed, with Engel and Moore voting in favor of the change and Weintraub, Cordeiro, Tuttle and Christopher Goff voting against it. The two other motions, to wait 30 days to review the ordinance and to cancel the public hearing, both passed unanimously.

Sommaruga explained that the council could continue reviewing and revising the ordinance’s language for as long as they wished, though they were required to have a public hearing before voting to officially adopt any changes.

Since the Aug. 31 hearing has been canceled, it is not yet clear when the Town Council will next discuss the ordinance revision. As of press time, the next Town Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Sept. 14, at 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall.



Nearly 20 volunteers from area communities came together and lent a hand to fill the bags of 62 visitors to the Foodshare mobile van.

Helping cont. from Front Page

Loundon said Foodshare has been looking for a location where it could service Tolland County, which is one of two counties Bloomfield-based Foodshare covers. The other is Hartford, where he said much of the food goes. In 2009 alone, Loundon said Foodshare distributed 12 million pounds of food, which went to residents living in the greater Hartford area.

“It is an opportunity to provide mostly produce with very few questions asked,” Loundon said. He added that the event was “blessed with volunteers.”

Many volunteers were from RHAM High School and from HIHS, as well as other surrounding towns.

As for the future, Ziegler says she hopes to raise the amount of visitors to the mobile van to 100. “If enough people don’t use it,” she said, “we don’t keep it.” But, Tuesday’s numbers were promising and with word of mouth, Ziegler said she is hoping a larger population of people will be coming in the forthcoming weeks.

The mobile Foodshare was stationed at the

First Congregational Church, at the junction of routes 85 and 66, which White said was “the best place in town” to distribute the food. This will be the location for all further dates.

The mobile Foodshare van will return every other Tuesday and will run all year long. The next dates are as follows: Aug. 31, Sept. 14 and 28, Oct. 12 and 26, Nov. 9 and 23, Dec. 7 and 21, Jan. 4 and 18, Feb. 1 and 15, March 1, 15 and 29, April 12 and 26, May 10 and 24, June 7 and 21 and July 5 and 19.

Hebron Food Bank hours are Tuesdays from 9:30-11:30 a.m. and Thursdays from 9:30-11:30 a.m. and 3:30-5:30 p.m., every other week. It is located at 20 Pendleton Dr. The weeks that the food bank is open coincide with the weeks the mobile Foodshare van comes to town.

For additional information or to volunteer, contact HIHS at 860-228-1681 or hihs@att.net. For information on Foodshare, visit www.foodshare.org.

Marlborough Selectmen Still Considering Sewer Referendum

by Katy Nally

Selectmen held a special meeting last Friday, Aug. 13, to further discuss the sewer referendum question, proposed by the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA).

Selectman Joe La Bella said this week the board was deciding “whether or not to bring this request forward as suggested by the WPCA.” However, no action on the referendum question was taken last Friday.

The proposed question would ask voters to approve a \$1.95 million project to complete sewer installations around Lake Terramuggus, on Lake Road, Coleman Lane and Old Cider Mill Lane, and extend sewers to the rest of North Main Street. The total estimate budgets two years worth of inflation and 5 percent contingency.

The \$1.95 million would use \$487,500 from the Clean Water Fund, and the town would take out a loan with a 2 percent interest rate to be paid back over 20 years, to cover the remaining \$1,462,500, or 75 percent of the project.

The WPCA had previously discussed plans for a larger version of the project, but decided not to include it in this year’s question. That project included extending sewers across Route 2 and the Jones Hollow bridge, as well as creating a force main to North Main Street from the Marlborough Commons.

La Bella said the board discussed how to include the business park in proposed sewer plans. One idea was to carry sewers to at least the threshold of the park and maybe include a pump station.

Even though nothing was decided at the meeting, La Bella said “everyone was in agreement that completing the sewers is desirable.”

Marlborough voters first approved \$12.02 million for Phase I of the sewer project in 2002 by a referendum vote. Construction was stalled from 2002-06 when the state’s Clean Water Fund, which partially funded the project, was canceled.

By 2007, the size of the project decreased by about half and the price of sewers for residents inside the district went up, because there were fewer people to share the cost. Residents began hooking up to the sewers earlier this year.

At the Aug. 10 Board of Selectmen’s meeting, WPCA member Bill Lardi said this new referendum question would continue sewer construction to finish the first part of the original proposal.

“For us, this is really still kind of Phase I,” Lardi said.

La Bella said selectmen still plan to adhere to the schedule that would put a referendum question on the November 2010 ballot. “Putting it out another year would put off groundbreaking another year,” he added.

By Sept. 2, the town clerk must submit the question to the Secretary of State’s Office.

As of press time, no Board of Selectmen’s meeting to discuss the referendum question was posted on the town website, www.marlboroughct.net. However, La Bella said selectmen would have to “have a special meeting to discuss this further.”

Hebron School Board Gives Superintendent a Raise

by Lindsay Fetzner

The Board of Education unanimously extended the contract of Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz – and also gave her a 1.52 percent raise – at its meeting last Thursday, Aug. 11.

An evaluation of the superintendent was conducted over the span of several board meetings, and concluded last month.

Board of Education (BOE) Chairwoman Jane Dube said a wide variety of areas were reviewed, including student growth, communication and resource management, among others.

“The overall evaluation results demonstrate that Ellie has met or exceeded the board’s recommendations,” Dube said.

Cruz’ salary will reflect a 1.52 percent increase, for a total annual salary of \$133,245. The contract was extended one year to maintain the three-year contract from July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2013. Cruz said this week her contract is negotiated each year, and extended for one year. This will be her sixth year in the district.

Board member Kathy Shea drew attention to the recent “difficult budget season” and the fact that Cruz went without a pay increase this past fiscal year. “I do feel that Ellie does deserve an increase because [of the] sacrifice last

year,” Shea said, adding that everything else, such as medical insurance and vacation time, was frozen in the contract, with the exception of the salary.

“We appreciate what you do for the district,” Dube added.

Cruz’ salary is comparable to other superintendents in the area. RHAM Superintendent of Schools Robert Siminski earns \$138,986, covering two schools; East Hampton superintendent Judith Golden earns \$142,359 (but will take three furlough days to return approximately \$2,000 to the BOE), covering four schools; Portland superintendent Sally Doyen earns \$149,590 (but will not be receiving the full amount to help with budget cuts), covering five schools; Glastonbury superintendent Alan Bookman earns \$154,835, covering nine schools, Colchester superintendent Karen Loisselle earns \$139,229 covering four schools and Bolton superintendent Paul Smith earns \$130,000 covering two schools.

In other news, Cruz announced that the district met Adequate Yearly Progress on the Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMTs) this year. According to the state Department of Education (DOE), Hebron was part of approximately 72 percent of Connecticut schools that met this year’s performance standards under the No

Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The state overall made improvements across the board, as this year’s percentage is about 12 percent points higher than the last two years, which sat at 60 percent. Reading and math scores on both the CMT are what the results are based on.

This year marks the fifth year that public school students were tested, as required by federal law. In math, the CMT standard requires 82 percent of students to score at or above proficiency. In reading, the CMT standard is 79 percent at or above proficiency, according to the Connecticut Department of Education.

In Hebron, with the exception of third grade reading, each grade level for every subject tested had proficiency scores above 90 percent, according to the CMT score results.

Also at the meeting, there were three new teacher hires and the acceptance of a resignation from Elizabeth McLaughlin, a part-time special education teacher at Hebron Elementary School. Hannah Sheppard will replace McLaughlin as a .5 special education teacher. Rebecca Campbell was hired as a teacher for the Clinical Day Program and Heather Wright, as a Gilead Hill School special education teacher. Wright will replace Gina Dolan, who retired at the end of this past school year.

The board discussed a list of recommended

actions for the 2011-12 budget process. “We need to start the process now,” Dube said, offering suggestions on how to tackle the issue early. Dube recommended reaching out to the boards of finance and selectmen to “talk about where we all are and to really try to avoid some of the miscues that happened last year.”

Board member Mark Allaben said one of the issues in the past has been that residents start to “get fully engaged” in the budget process in the March timeframe. He suggested that in the September, October and November months, when families have returned from vacation and “school is fresh on their minds,” that the board have public forums surrounding the budget.

Allaben suggested discussing the standards the students are expected to learn at each grade level and how that affects the budget process, and other informational items such as how to contact the board members and how to send information to the members, among others.

“What we learn we can take as inputs in the budget process in December/January,” he said. “We really think that we need to start this process early and have a continued dialogue throughout the year.”

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the BOE is Thursday, Sept. 16, at 7 p.m. at Gilead Hill School, 580 Gilead St.

Hebron Awarded for Financial Reporting

by Lindsay Fetzner

For the sixth consecutive year, the Town of Hebron has received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting.

The award, administered by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA), is for the town’s comprehensive annual financial report for the 2008-09 fiscal year. Hebron was one of more than 3,000 municipalities that were recognized, according to GFOA Senior Manager James Falconer.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said this week that she is “thrilled” for the entire finance department to be the recipient of the certificate of achievement, “especially when they were down a director. “They did an awesome job,” she said.

This certificate, according to GFOA, is “the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting.” It was established in 1945 to “encourage and assist state and local governments to go beyond the minimum requirements” of accounting principles to prepare the comprehensive annual financial reports (CAFRs), according to the GFOA.

For their work in preparing the “award-win-

ning CAFR,” GOFA honored Financial Administrator Elaine Griffin and Accounting Clerk Susan Hushin.

“We were very happy because we were in such a state of flux last year with no finance director or town manager,” Hushin said. “It was very gratifying.”

While the town had both a finance director and – for part of the year – a town manager in the 2008-09 fiscal year, the financial report for that year was not completed until mid-December 2009. And by that time, both the finance director and the town manager were gone.

Finance director Jim Day was fired in October 2009, and one month later Griffin was appointed as the interim finance director. Earlier this month, Lisa Hancock started as the town’s new finance director.

As for the town manager, Jared Clark left in March 2009, and was replaced for a year by a trio of employees – Director of Public Works Andy Tierney, Executive Assistant Donna Lanza and Town Planner Mike O’Leary. Therrien was hired this past April.

Griffin said there are certain parameters that must be met from each applicant for the award, including the way the audit report is prepared

and the way the financials are disclosed. Even though an audit is performed, the municipality is not necessarily eligible for the comprehensive award. Being the “most prestigious award the GFOA grants,” Griffin said it’s important that “all your ‘I’s are dotted and all your ‘T’s are crossed.”

“People generally know when they have an award-winning CAFR and is enough to send into the program,” Falconer said.

The town had to meet several eligibility requirements, dealing with such areas the type of report and audit requirements to the demonstration of legal compliance. According to the GFOA, the report submitted must be the published CAFR. Furthermore, the financial section of the CAFR must include an independent auditor’s report on the financial statements as well as be in accordance with “generally accepted auditing standards.”

Falconer said applicants must adhere to the “checklist with asterisk items” and noted, “there is no hidden agenda” in determining the winners.

Although the town was hesitant to apply for the award, given that they were void at the time of a permanent town manager, Griffin said, “We

figured we’d go for it.” Griffin said she knew the town met the criteria and the financial obligations to qualify, but was unsure if GFOA would permit the circumstances.

The award “just proves that we’re disclosing our financials the way that we should be,” Griffin said. “We’re not hiding anything from the taxpayers.”

The town had to submit the application and copies of the report by the end of January. Griffin said the audit has to be completed by the end of the calendar year, which occurred in mid-December of 2009. After that was completed, the town submitted their application.

Reports are then reviewed by members of the GFOA staff and the GFOA Special Review Committee (SRC), comprised of people with experience in public-sector financial reporting, according to the GFOA. Included are auditors, financial statement preparers and other finance professionals, who are all volunteers on the SRC.

The GFOA is a nonprofit professional association with offices in both Washington, D.C. and Chicago, IL. Falconer said members work for both local and state governments. For more information, visit www.gfoa.org.

Beloved Longtime Andover Teacher Calls it a Day

by Lindsay Fetzner

After 24 years at Andover Elementary School, fellow teachers, colleagues and students bid farewell to Joan Disco at the end of this school year, as she entered into retirement.

Disco will leave a post that, she says, she wanted to pursue since a very young age.

“Since first grade, I wanted to be a teacher,” she said this week. “It’s funny; for some reason I always knew.”

Disco, a Ledyard resident, was a student teacher at Andover Elementary and after teaching for a year in Ledyard, came back to town, where she remained a constant for many years.

“To know Joan Disco, you have to know her love for the students,” said Board of Education (BOE) Chair Jay Linddy. “You can’t say enough about it.”

Disco taught a wide variety of grades including first, fourth, fifth and sixth, but it was in the fifth-grade where Disco primarily taught.

One of her fondest memories was a yearly three-day camping trip fifth-graders used to take that took them to various camping locations across the state. Disco remembered camping at both the 4-H Camp in Pomfret and Paul Newman’s camp, the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, where teachers collaborated together and did cross-curricular teaching in conjunction with the Department of Environmental Protection. One of the highlights of the trip was taking the students on a dig, where they would find an old foundation in the woods and see

what they could find. Campfire songs, along with the recently retired Karen Krinjak, a former music teacher at the elementary school, were another favorite pastime.

“We made so many connections with kids that way,” Disco said. “It was so fun.”

Linddy said Disco “shined” with the students, who respected her very much, and “made them feel good about themselves.”

Disco said the first-grade also holds a special place in her heart because of the growth she saw the students made over the course of the school year.

“First grade was amazing because kids came and most couldn’t read,” she said. “From when you get them to when they leave, they grow up so much.” Despite the hard work the first grade entailed, Disco said, “the growth was just amazing to see.”

A graduate of Eastern Connecticut State University, Disco has devoted many years to sports, especially softball, which she played at the university. Disco tied sports into learning in the classroom and said each year, she featured a new theme that was centered around sports.

One year, Disco said, the theme was “Never let the fear of striking out keep you from the playing the game” and another, “You will always miss 100 percent of the shots you don’t take.”

“They really enjoyed having a theme,” Disco

said. “Whenever we’d get stuck on something, we’d remember our theme. The kids enjoyed it.”

BOE member Christina Tamburro said Disco “was very well-liked by the students” and “a lot of fun.”

Through sports, Disco said she had a way of relating to her students and remembers several competitions she had with the kids pertaining to baseball. “I am a big Red Sox fan,” Disco said. “It was always fun to have that little competition between the Red Sox and the Yankees.”

And, during the winter months, Disco tied sports into the probability curriculum. She said she would take the football score and have her students use probability to predict the winner of the following week, using the scores and standings.

“It was a fun way to get into probability,” she said.

Another theme students and fellow teachers will forever remember about Disco was the presence of cows in her classroom. Having grown up on a farm, Disco said, “I brought that with me,” and still to this day continues to add to her collection.

“It was so funny,” said BOE member Kim Hawes, who remembers cows hanging from the ceiling of the classroom as she walked through the door.

“She was a fabulous, wonderful teacher,” Hawes added, who “will be missed.”

Disco said cleaning out her classroom this week “was really hard” and “pretty emotional.”

“I met my husband, and had all my kids while teaching,” she said.

And it will be her colleagues and lifelong friends she made along the way that she will miss the most. “The families in Andover have been really good to me,” Disco said, adding that she will also “certainly miss my friends.”

“She was a wonderful, caring teacher and I think will be very much missed,” said Tamburro. “She got to know the students each very well and put a lot of dedication into her job and a lot of energy into getting to know each kid individually.”

One of the perks of being at the school for so many years, Disco said, was teaching the children of some of the students she taught early on in her career.

“The kids I had when I first started teaching, some of their kids are in school now,” Disco said. “It was neat to see them as adults.”

In her retirement, Disco said she will continue to be involved with children in the Ledyard community, through an activity she is quite familiar with – sports. Disco is currently the director of a basketball league within her church and plans on continuing in that position for a while.

“I am very involved in my community and my church,” Disco said. “I can do a lot of that from using my experience with kids.”

Caring, Dedicated East Hampton Tax Collector Remembered

by Claire Michalewicz

Residents and former colleagues this week remembered a devoted community member, loving mother and “tough-as-nails” tax collector.

Marie Durkin, the town’s collector of revenue from 1974 until her retirement in 2008, died of cancer Aug. 2.

Family and friends remembered Durkin for her caring manner and sense of humor, and her dedication to her family and her job.

In his eulogy for Durkin at her funeral Aug. 6, Red McKinney explained how Durkin was working as the assistant tax collector when her predecessor decided to retire. All Durkin had to do, McKinney explained, was win an election, “which she did, hands down.”

“She was Marie, and once you talked to her – could you really find a reason not to support her?” McKinney said. McKinney explained that Durkin went on to win six more elections until a charter change made her position an appointed one. She retired in 2008, and her longtime assistant Nancy Hasselman took over.

“I don’t know if anybody could fill her shoes,” Hasselman said. “They were unfillable.”

Durkin’s son Brian said that while it was clear his mother loved her job, she never complained about it at home. Sometimes, Brian said, taxpayers would complain to her and make a fuss about paying their taxes, but “it never rattled her.”

“She was always calm, cool and collected,” Brian Durkin said, explaining that other town hall employees appreciated her composure. “She accorded everybody with a high level of respect. She didn’t play favorites at all.”

Hasselman said Durkin was like a mother to her and other Town Hall employees – loving, fair and firm.

“We couldn’t get away with anything,” Hasselman joked. But, she said, Durkin had a soft side. One of her great passions was organizing parties, and Hasselman said Durkin was distraught as they changed their office party schedule from weekly to monthly to quarterly. Durkin also loved Halloween, Hasselman said, explaining that it was always a treat to see what creative costume Durkin would put together.

“It was all about the nice little touches,” Hasselman said, explaining that Durkin would frequently treat Town Hall employees to her homemade cookies or lemonade or coleslaw.

Another thing Durkin loved was her work as a justice of the peace, Hasselman said, and

she was proud to have officiated at the first civil union in East Hampton. Sometimes Durkin would recruit Town Hall employees to be witnesses at weddings, Hasselman said.

Durkin loved traveling, her family and friends said, and loved taking trips to destinations as far away as Europe or as close as her beloved beach house in Old Lyme.

Durkin’s daughter Martha Lawton said she wished her mother had had more time to enjoy her retirement, explaining that Durkin became sick shortly after leaving her job.

“She really loved her job,” Lawton said, adding that Durkin was happy to see so many people from the community visit her in her retirement.

Maria “Marie” Assunta Louisa Bordonaro was born in 1931 in Hartford. She graduated from Buckley High School with honors, and attended Hillyer College to study business. She later graduated from the University of Connecticut, studying tax collection practices and procedures. She had lived in East Hampton since 1954, when she moved here shortly after marrying Jack Durkin. The Durkins raised five children in town, and now have nine grandchildren.

Jack Durkin said he was devastated from losing his best friend. “I don’t think I can say much more than that,” he said. “It’s hard to talk about.”

Marie Durkin’s involvement in the community went well beyond her work at Town Hall. She was a member of St. Patrick Church and a member of the church’s Women’s Guild. She also served on the Board of Directors of the East Hampton library, and was a longtime member of the town’s Democratic Town Committee.

Hasselman and Alan Bergren, East Hampton’s former town manager, both said Durkin had a knack for teaching, and she taught certification classes for the Connecticut State Tax Collectors Association, for which she also served on the Board of Directors.

Bergren said Durkin was a “wonderful” tax collector, and the two shared a close working relationship in the decades they worked together.

“It’s a great loss to the community,” Bergren said, calling Durkin a “dedicated public servant.”

Durkin, Bergren said, had a special ritual each year when she printed the tax bills. She would bring his bill to him personally, to set an



Former tax collector Marie Durkin, who died earlier this month, loved to travel. She’s seen here on a visit to the Grace Kelly Garden in Monaco.

example about paying taxes. He would always make sure to pay his taxes to Durkin the next day, Bergren said.

Bergren said Durkin was also great with children when school groups came into Town Hall on field trips. The students, he said, were always surprised to learn that the greatest portion of taxes went toward education. Durkin was adept at explaining taxes in a way that children could understand.

As a tax collector – and as a person – Bergren said, “Marie was just a great one.”

Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel – who was also Durkin’s neighbor – said she remembered Durkin as a tough but sweet woman with a good sense of humor. Engel said Durkin always took time to mentor new employees in the town hall and make them feel welcome. Engel said she would have a proclamation for Durkin’s family to recognize her decades of service at the next Town Council meeting.

“She was the best tax collector this side of

the Rockies,” Engel said, pointing out that Durkin had an unusually high 99 percent collection rate for many years.

“She was just a warm, friendly person who could be tough as nails when it came to her job,” Engel said.

Hasselman agreed.

“She stood her ground, she knew her facts,” she said. “It’s not always the easiest job, but there was a soft side.”

Daughter Linda Legassie said she and her family appreciated the support they’d received from the community.

“We’re just so grateful for all the cards and letters and little notes we’ve gotten from people,” Legassie said. Even when her mother was in the hospital, Legassie said, she never stopped caring for other people.

“Marie was the most thoughtful, caring wonderful person you could ever wish to deal with,” McKinney said in the eulogy. “Marie’s life was well lived and she leaves behind the gifts that make our lives worth living.”

Colchester Bistro Draws Crowds with Sundaes, Sandwiches and More

by Katy Nally

Tim Damaj isn’t the only name that everybody knows at Tim’s Bistro. At the family-oriented restaurant on South Main Street, employees know many of the customers by name, and for some regulars, their orders are made and ready even before they step inside.

Kelly Damaj, who took over the restaurant July 1, named the eatery after her son Tim, who will be a seventh-grader at William J. Johnston Middle School this fall. Tim, who has Down syndrome, recognizes the large yellow sign with red letters that reads Tim’s Bistro every time he comes in for an ice cream, Kelly said.

“We wanted him to have a connection to the restaurant,” she said.

Tim is non-verbal and knows about 500 signs, which he uses to order his favorite meal – a plain bagel with cream cheese, orange juice, chips and two scoops of vanilla ice cream, his mom said.

“Here he can go and practice life skills,” Kelly said. “You can’t really do that anywhere else.”

Like Tim, Kelly said customers feel an “immediate comfort level” at Tim’s Bistro.

In addition to serving breakfast, lunch, ice cream and pastries, the bistro offers free Wi-Fi and a variety of seating, both indoors and out. Kelly noted the restaurant does not serve alcohol.

Tim’s father, and Kelly’s business partner, Akram Damaj, said it was their goal to create a restaurant with a “friendly atmosphere.”

“It’s like a big family here,” he said.

Akram and Kelly said they can recognize one regular from East Hartford when he’s in the parking lot, and employees scoop out his coffee ice cream even before he steps inside.

But coffee is just one of 30 flavors offered at Tim’s Bistro, which serves Gifford’s Ice Cream

from Maine. There are also 20 choices when it comes to toppings, to make virtually any frosty combination. However, one menu item, the peanut butter cup parfait, has captured more customers than most other ice cream combos.

The parfait has three alternating layers of vanilla and peanut butter cup ice cream, interlaced with four layers of hot fudge and peanut butter sauce, and of course, topped off with whipped cream and sprinkles.

People are also “going crazy for” chocolate or strawberry dipped ice cream, Kelly said.

On the sandwich side of the bistro, customers can’t seem to get enough of The Gobbler, an oven roasted turkey sandwich with stuffing, cranberry sauce, lettuce and mayonnaise.

“We’re always experimenting with the menu,” Akram explained.

And customers can help Kelly and Akram conjure up different meal ideas for the menu board. After several people asked for chicken salad, Tim’s Bistro created, and now sells, a chicken salad with cranberries and walnuts.

Akram said the menu is also changing to keep up with what’s in season. Right now, with raspberries ripe for picking, Akram said the raspberry cream cheese pastries are very popular. Zucchini bread might also appear on the menu board soon, he said.

All the pastries are baked daily at the restaurant.

So it might be the parfait, the giant sandwiches or the flaky pastries that keep people coming back to Tim’s Bistro, but whatever the enticement factor is, Kelly noted “the community has been so supportive.”

“Everyone just wants us to be successful,” she said.

So much so in fact, “if people come in once,



The restaurant at 467 South Main St., Colchester, now called Tim’s Bistro, offers breakfast, lunch, pastries and ice cream. Pictured above is the restaurant’s owner, Kelly Damaj.

we see them over and over and over,” Kelly added.

On recent weekends, Kelly and Akram said there was “standing room only,” as the restaurant was entirely packed.

“If people give us a chance,” Kelly said, “they’ll be back.”

For more information about Tim’s Bistro, visit timsbistro.com.

The restaurant is located at 467 South Main St., Colchester, in the former Bagels and Beyond and Austin’s Ice Cream building. It is open seven days a week from 6 a.m.-3 p.m. on Mondays; 6 a.m.-9 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays; 6 a.m.-10 p.m. on Fridays; 7 a.m.-10 p.m. on Saturdays, and 7 a.m.-9 a.m. on Sundays. For more information, visit or call 860-537-6974.

Colchester Vet's Sights Still Set on Golden Age Games

by Katy Nally

Although his efforts were interrupted Saturday, Aug. 7, when three men allegedly stole his collection box, Martin Lopez says he's determined to continue fundraising as long as it gets him to next year's National Veteran's Golden Age Games.

"See, I know what I must do to go to the games," Lopez said last week.

Lopez is the team captain for the CT Mullett Marauders, which was named after a 94-year-old team member, Don Mullett. Every year veterans age 55 or older, who use the Department of Veteran Affairs, attend the games, which are organized like the Olympics.

Last May, Lopez and his teammates traveled to Iowa to compete against more than 700 other veterans. Lopez returned home with medals in horseshoes and nine-ball and also participated in table tennis and shuffle board.

"These games are my world now," Lopez said.

About 17 years ago, Lopez had a stroke that stole his ability to speak and left him with limited use of his right hand. However, the former Air Force and Vietnam veteran, still communicates by typing with his left hand.

"So I never quit," Lopez said. "I'm determined to go on with life."

And his sense of competition – something instilled in him when he was a centerfielder for the Los Angeles Dodgers from 1964-66 – never quit either.

"I enjoy sports of all kinds," Lopez explained. "That's why these games mean so much to me."

"This, to him, has given him other opportunities to engage in sports and competing, and he thought that had been eliminated in his life due to the stroke," Lopez' coach for the games Pam Moran said this week.

But attending the yearly games comes with a hefty price tag. To commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Golden Age Games, the 2011 event will be held in Honolulu, HI. Lopez estimated the weeklong trip could cost \$4,000 for him and his wife Connie to attend.

"I tell the team, you all have to do what's necessary to go," Lopez said. "I feel, especially this year, because it will be our 25th year."

For the past eight years, Lopez has sold raffle tickets for food gift certificates outside the Stop & Shop on Linwood Avenue, raising money to attend the games.

However, on Saturday, Aug. 7, while Lopez was selling tickets in his usual spot, he went inside the supermarket briefly, and while his collection box was unattended, he said, three men made off with it.

Lopez said there was only change inside the box, but since his fundraising was temporarily halted, he estimated he missed out on making about \$200. State Police listed his loss at \$280.

When asked last Thursday if he was nervous to continue fundraising outside the supermarket, Lopez, who is also a former prison guard, easily shook his head in response. He said he planned to stand in his usual spot Friday, Saturday and Sunday of last week.

"I do not think they would've done this if I was there, but drugs could change their minds," Lopez said of the alleged perpetrators.

State Police said the three men, two from Colchester and one from Franklin, used the money to buy drugs. All three men were found the day of the alleged robbery and charged with sixth-degree larceny and possession of drug paraphernalia. One had an additional charge of possession of a controlled substance/narcotics.

But almost as soon as Lopez incurred the loss, his community and citizens began to rally around his cause. Stop & Shop donated \$250 to Lopez last Tuesday, Aug. 10.

"S&S, I can't say enough about them," Lopez said. "They're so willing to help anyone." Noel's Market on Broadway has also been supportive, he added.

And it seemed Lopez and his wife couldn't go anywhere without being recognized, once his story appeared on TV. When in Glastonbury last week, Lopez said a stranger recognized him and donated \$100.

A Norwich orthodontist, Jeremiah Lowney, also donated \$100. Lopez said, at first he didn't want to accept the money, but because Lowney was "very insistent," Lopez agreed to send him \$100 worth of raffle tickets.



Connie Lopez, left, shows off her husband Martin's bronze medal he won in nine-ball at the 2010 National Golden Age Games in Iowa. Martin Lopez raises money to attend the games by selling raffle tickets outside the Stop & Shop on Linwood Avenue.

"Things like this make me feel humble," Lopez said of the donations.

Bacon Academy also offered to raise money for the veteran, but Lopez said he declined the offer and simply encouraged everyone to come and purchase tickets.

"Colchester is really great to all vets," he said.

But, rather than dwell on the what happened to him outside Stop & Shop, Lopez said he'd like to use the publicity he's been getting as a platform to "get the word out" about his games.

For Lopez, the Golden Age Games are more than just a sporting event.

"I feel it's my chance to see this wonderful country I fought so hard for, up close and personal," Lopez said. "That means a lot."

"I'd say he's the epitome of the games: what it does for people and how they get involved with it," Moran added.

Lopez almost missed the event when he broke a hip two years ago and doctors told him he wouldn't be healed in time. But, about one month later, they recognized his zeal and strides made in recovery and let him attend. Similarly, a team member had a heart attack, but five months later, he participated in the games.

"These vets can get so fired up for the games, nothing can hold them back," Lopez said.

And nothing will hold back Lopez – not even a robbery – from raising enough funds to attend the 2011 Golden Age Games.

For more information about the games, visit www.veteransgoldenagegames.va.gov.

Connecticut veterans are eligible to join the Marauders if they are at least 55 and use the services of the Department of Veterans Affairs. For more information, e-mail Lopez at leaddog123@sbcglobal.net.

New Farm Owner Finds Portland Property Vandalized with Slurs

by Claire Michalewicz

A man who won a Portland horse farm in a sexual assault settlement found his new property vandalized when he took possession of the farm earlier this week.

When Andrew Srb went to Quarry Town Stables on Monday morning, he found windows smashed, hateful messages spray-painted on walls and horse manure and garbage spread throughout the property, said his attorney, Gerald Sack.

Robert Johnson, the stable's former owner, said this week he "left a mess" for Srb before he left the property on Sunday. Johnson would not elaborate on exactly what he had done.

Srb was awarded the farm last month after suing Johnson for damages, alleging that Johnson sexually assaulted him when he was taking riding lessons at the farm in the 1980s.

In the horse stall where Johnson allegedly assaulted Srb, Sack said, someone had spray-painted "Andrew Srb is a lying pile of s—" on the wall, and left a pile of horse manure and a basketball. The basketball, Sack said, was significant because Srb had been a star basketball player in high school, before he was allegedly assaulted.

"Whoever did this was a deranged, sick individual or individuals," Sack said. "There was obvious rage involved."

There were also children's toys left around the property, even though Sack said he wasn't aware of any children having lived there. Other messages spray-painted on barn walls said Srb would go to hell, and called him a "fag."

The house was full of rotting food and other garbage, Sack said, creating "just a disgusting environment." A tractor had been filled with the

wrong kind of fuel, which Sack said could have broken the tractor or started a fire, and an above-ground pool was removed and a hot tub filled with paint.

Near the hot tub, Sack said, a book called *Degrees of Guilt* was left out, Sack said. Sack said it was the only book prominently displayed in the house, and he said it was clearly a message for Srb.

Sack said that while all the damage could be cleaned up, whoever did it was trying to intimidate Srb.

Srb was awarded Quarry Town Stables in a settlement reached last month. Initially, a jury granted Srb \$1.27 million in April, and Judge Mary-Margaret Burgdorff later added another \$400,000 in additional damages. But since Johnson's farm was facing foreclosure and he was uncertain if he could pay the damages, Sack and Michael Dwyer, Johnson's attorney, reached an agreement that granted Johnson's property to Srb. The value of the farm, Sack said at the time, did not approach the \$1.67 million in damages, but was "a reasonable solution."

Johnson said he vacated the property on Sunday, the day the settlement required him to leave.

"I left a mess," he said Thursday. "It was a little messy."

He said he was supposed to leave the property in clean condition, but wanted to leave a mess behind for Srb. Johnson said the mess he left did not constitute "damage," explaining that it could be cleaned up.

Johnson said he had not yet signed any papers that granted the property to Srb, so he felt he could do what he wanted with the property.



Andrew Srb discovered his Portland horse farm vandalized with hateful messages when he went to the property Monday morning. Robert Johnson, the stable's former owner, said he "left a mess" for Srb before vacating the farm Sunday.

"I don't know what his big deal is," Johnson said. "He has no right to say anything."

Johnson said he suspected Srb would take him back to court. "He just likes to mess with me," he said. "He just cries every time something's not to his liking."

Portland Police Officer Fran Ahlquist said the case was currently under investigation, and would not comment on what he had found so far.

Dwyer did not return calls for comment. Srb also declined to comment on the case.

Test Scores Reviewed, Praised at Portland School Board Meeting

by **Claire Michalewicz**

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Sally Doyen reviewed Portland's Connecticut Mastery Test scores and Connecticut Academic Performance Test at Tuesday's Board of Education (BOE) meeting, and said she was pleased with students' performances.

Doyen said she planned to bring department heads from the high school to a BOE meeting next month, so they could update the BOE about what they've been doing in class to prepare students for the test.

Connecticut Academic Performance Test scores in all subject areas increased from last year's performances, Doyen said. Forty-four of the 10th-grade students achieved the goal or advanced score in all four subject areas, including 15 who met the advanced score in all subjects.

"It's really tremendous progress," she said, crediting the teamwork between middle and high school teachers for the students' success.

At Brownstone Intermediate School, over 90 percent of sixth-graders met goal in math and reading, Doyen said. Fifth-graders scored in the top 10 to 20 percent of the 29 schools in Portland's district reference group (DRG), which includes towns of similar sizes and de-

mographics. Portland students performed better on the tests than students in larger towns, Doyen said. The high scores, Doyen said, meant that very few students were struggling academically.

At Gildersleeve School, Principal Eileen Katz wanted Portland students to score in the top 25 percent of schools in the DRG, and "generally speaking, we're there," Doyen said.

Middle school students didn't perform as well in science as they did in other subject areas, but, as Doyen pointed out, science was the most recent subject to be added to the Connecticut Mastery Test.

At the meeting, the BOE also reviewed a revised set of facilities usage guidelines, which outline the procedures for outside groups who wish to use school property. Under the new rules that Parks and Recreation Director Sean Dwyer drafted, Doyen said, groups can rent a gymnasium or field for a single use or for a set schedule over an entire season. The fee would be \$60 per use, she said.

BOE member Chris Bongo said he wanted to make sure that Portland groups had priority over other groups when registering for the facilities, which fellow BOE member Ben Srb echoed.

"I don't want to charge them \$60 to use our fields," Srb said, pointing out that the facilities would be maintained with or without the usage fees. Bongo suggested creating a discounted seasonal fee, so groups could pay a nominal amount without putting a large burden on the families of children on the teams.

"You're not hitting the kid, you're hitting the organization with one fee," Bongo said. Phelps agreed, explaining that the town could work out a fee schedule that would ensure revenue for the town without pricing people out of participating in activities.

The BOE also voted to officially accept a \$10,000 Community Renewal Team Grant, though Doyen explained the money was already being used to run a six-week summer enrichment program for children in the Chatham Court housing development. Doyen explained she received an unexpected call in early July explaining that the grant money was available, and scrambled to get staff to run the program for the next week.

The money was used to offer academic and social activities for 25 to 30 children from kindergarten through middle school, Doyen said, as well as providing breakfast and lunch to any

child or teen from Chatham Court.

Doyen also updated the BOE that retired teacher Mary Hurlburt had been reimbursed by the Teacher's Retirement Board (TRB) for interest she had to pay for them. When Hurlburt tried to start collecting her pension earlier this year, she discovered that someone had made a clerical error in the 1970s, and she could not collect her pension until she paid the outstanding balance. The BOE declined to reimburse Hurlburt at their last meeting on July 6, but Doyen said TRB realized their error and re-funded her.

"Mary got her money back, and she was very happy," Doyen said.

Before the meeting adjourned, Bongo updated the BOE on the operations subcommittee meeting earlier that evening. The roof at Brownstone Intermediate School had a bad leak, Bongo said, and Director of Buildings and Grounds Paul Bengston was researching ways to patch it. If the project needed approval, Bongo said, the BOE might have to call a quick meeting so Bengston could get to work quickly.

The next BOE meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Sept. 7, at 7 p.m. in the high school library.

Portland Selectmen Discuss Goopy Brownstone Roof

by **Claire Michalewicz**

The roof at Brownstone Intermediate School is in need of repairs, as the Board of Selectmen (BOS) discussed at their meeting on Wednesday evening.

"The roof has been an ongoing problem," BOE member Andrea Alfano said, explaining the problem to the selectmen. "We've patched it here and patched it there." The current problem with the roof, Alfano said, was that there was "black goo" falling into some fifth-grade classrooms. Alfano said Director of Buildings and Grounds Paul Bengston said a patch job would cost about \$14,000, and was already looking at ways to patch it.

"There is a substantial amount of damage on the roof and we need to address this," Alfano said. Alfano said the BOE might have enough money to replace the roof in their budget, since the teachers' union had agreed to split their salary raises over two years to save the town money. If the roof was to be replaced, Alfano said, the town would have to move children to another facility while repairs were underway.

In other school-related business, the BOS chose members for the School Facilities Study Committee.

Residents Amy Collins, Michelle Donahue and Frank Magnotta will be regular members of the committee, and fellow residents Denise Schneider and Stephanie Tatro will be alternates. The other committee members are se-

lectmen Sharon Peters and John Anderson, and BOE members Christopher Bongo and MaryAnne Rode.

The committee, which will start meeting in September, will study the use of space at all schools in the town except the high school. The committee is scheduled with drafting a final report by February, and making a presentation to the BOS and BOE in April. Among the questions the committee will discuss is whether to continue using the Brownstone building, or look into moving fifth- and sixth-grade students to another facility.

In other business at the meeting, the selectmen reached a consensus not to participate in an energy efficiency program with Siemens. The selectmen heard a presentation about the program at the last meeting, but First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said she had spoken to Superintendent of Schools Dr. Sally Doyen, who said she felt the school buildings could do enough to be energy-efficient without entering into a contract with Siemens.

"At this point, she feels the effort they've put together is adequate," Bransfield said.

"We should just keep playing along and doing the best we can," selectman Carl Chudzick agreed.

The next BOS meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Sept. 1, at 7:30 p.m. at the Portland library.

Hebron Crash Sends Two to Hospital

by **Katy Nally**

A two-car crash on Route 85 sent two to the Marlborough Clinic Saturday, Aug. 14, at about 6 p.m., State Police said.

Lynette Valentine, 47, of 106 Tulip Dr., Meriden, was traveling southbound on Route 85 in a 2005 Chrysler Town and Country, when she turned into the oncoming path of another vehicle at the intersection of routes 85 and 207, State Police said.

One of her three passengers, Kevin Valentine, 49, also of 106 Tulip Dr., Meriden, was transported to the hospital, State Police said. The two other passengers, a 5-year-old and an 8-year-old, were listed as not injured.

The driver of the other car, a 17-year-old from Marlborough, was not injured. His 2001 Honda Accord sustained front-end damage. One of his four passengers, a 17-year-old from Andover was transported to the hospital, State Police said. The other three passengers, all 17 years old, two of Hebron and one of Marlborough, were listed as not injured, State Police said.

Lieutenant Jeff Schiavi from the Hebron Volunteer Fire Department said the injuries sustained in the accident were not "life-threatening."

One lane on Route 85 was closed for about an hour, Schiavi said.

Resident Charged with Being Fugitive from Arizona

by **Lindsay Fetzner**

Christopher Moquin, 47, of 67 Hillcrest Dr. was charged with second-degree criminal mischief, State Police said, as well as being a fugitive from Arizona.

Moquin was arrested on Tuesday, Aug. 10, at 8:03 p.m. after allegedly damaging the vehicle of a Lebanon resident, who was not injured, according to State Police.

He was also listed as being "arrested as a fugitive from justice in Arizona," State Po-

lice said. Arizona State Police would not release Moquin's criminal history. Connecticut State Police did not return calls for comment.

Moquin was held on a \$100,000 bond and had a court date in Rockville on Aug. 11. His criminal mischief charge was a \$500 nonsurety bond, State Police said. The next court date listed for him on the state judicial website is Sept. 8.

Colchester Man Drowns in Griswold

by **Katy Nally**

A man found dead in Ashland Pond in Jewett City last Friday, Aug. 13, was identified by police as Colchester resident Craig Athorne Jr.

Athorne, 41, was reported missing earlier that day, at around 2 p.m., Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) spokesman Dwayne Gardner said this week. He was last seen in Hopeville Pond State Park in Griswold. (Jewett City is a borough of Griswold.) Hopeville Pond is near Ashland Pond, Gardner said, and the two bodies of water are connected by the Pachaug River.

Around 5 p.m. last Friday, a citizen found Athorne and notified the DEP, Gardner said.

Because Athorne was not found in a state park the DEP turned the investigation over to the Norwich Police Department and the Connecticut State Police.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner said Athorne's cause of death was an accidental drowning.

Athorne was a member of the Bacon Academy Class of 1988. He was married with two children and two stepchildren.

A full obituary appears on page 8.

Calling hours were held Wednesday, Aug. 18, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home. A memorial service was held the Thursday, Aug. 19.

Obituaries

Colchester

Craig Athorne Jr.

Craig Athorne Jr., 41, of Colchester and formerly of Moosup, passed away unexpectedly on Aug. 13.

Born in Middletown Dec. 21, 1968, he was the son of David and Barbara (Lane) Hock of Colchester. Craig attended school in Colchester and graduated from Bacon Academy with the Class of 1988.



He wed Donna S. (Grous) on April 24, 2000. Mrs. Athorne survives him.

Craig worked in several vocations including landscaping, construction and most recently for Gillman Bros. He held an avid love of baseball, fishing, bowling, and playing Internet Texas Hold'em. Most importantly, he is greatly loved and will be truly missed by his parents, wife, children, sisters and extended family.

In addition to his wife, Donna, and his parents, survivors include a son, Todd James Athorne of Moosup; a daughter, Paige Bohli of Taftville; two stepchildren, Catherine Thibodeau of Moosup and Gage Cormier of Taftville; three sisters, Carol Ashman of N. Guilford, Frances Uhrig of Dayton, OH, Sharon Floyd of Colchester; a nephew, Charlie Uhrig of Plainfield; and numerous extended family and friends.

Memorial calling hours were held Wednesday, Aug. 18, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A memorial service and celebration of Craig's life was held Thursday, Aug. 19, at the funeral home. Burial private.

His family requests, in lieu of flowers, donations in his memory be made to the Colchester Hayward VFD, 52 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester 06415 or the Colchester Baseball Little League, P.O. Box 114, Colchester, CT 06415.

For online condolences, visit www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

Ruth Dow Berwick

Ruth Dow Berwick, a resident of One MacDonough Place, Middletown, formerly of East Hampton and Portland, passed away Wednesday, Aug. 4.

On Aug. 4, 1936, she and her loving husband, Peter F. Berwick, were united in marriage – a 71-year union that lasted until Peter's death in January 2008. Born on July 15, 1915, in Providence, RI, she was the daughter of Helen (Sherman) and Edgar Dow. Ruth graduated from Bryant College with a degree in Secretarial Sciences.

Ruth and Peter were residents of East Hampton for 41 years, where they raised their family. Ruth was involved in PTO activities and worked as a part time secretary at the East Hampton High School. She was also an assistant to the town clerk and worked at Travelers Insurance Company. She moved to Portland in 1993, where she and Peter resided for 15 years. Upon his passing, she moved to One MacDonough Place. She was a member of the East Hampton Congregational Church. Ruth will be fondly remembered for her quiet presence, patience, strength and devotion to family.

She is survived by her children: Glen and his wife Joan of Westerly, RI, Stephen and his wife Karen of Groveland, FL, Beth Sargent and her husband Douglas of Portland and Helen Curylo and her husband David of East Hampton. In addition, she leaves 11 loving grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held today, Aug. 20, at 11 a.m. at the Congregational Church of East Hampton. Burial will be at Swan Point Cemetery, Providence, RI.

Memorial contributions may be made to the East Hampton Congregational Church, Main Street, East Hampton, CT 06424 or Middlesex Hospice & Palliative Care, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457.

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

Portland Police News

8/9: Keith Breault, 32, of 88 Great Hill Pond Rd., was charged with operating with a suspended license, Portland Police said.

8/11: James Granata, 52, of 80 Hillside Ave., Middletown, was charged with second-degree failure to appear, police said.

East Hampton Police News

7/31: Joseph A. Camerato, 40, of 47 Old Turnpike Rd., Northford, was arrested for disorderly conduct, criminal mischief, threatening and cruelty to animals, East Hampton Police said.

Colchester

J. Wayne Bozsum

On Saturday, Aug. 14, J. Wayne Bozsum, 64, of Moira, NY, formerly of Colchester, passed away. He was the son of the late Anthony Bozsum and Lillian Burbine of Groton.

He is survived by his wife of 36 years, Mary Bozsum, three sons, Edward Kreder of Florida, John Kreder of Middletown, Wayne Bozsum Jr. of Connecticut and four daughters, Sharon Thomas of Amston, Lisa Scrivani of Norwich, Lori Kreder of Ashford and Susie Jacobs of Norwich. He had 16 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Also, survived by three brothers, Ronald Bozsum of Montville, Robert and Anthony Bozsum of Groton.

He had worked at Electric Boat in Groton, Carpenter Hayes Paper Box Company and worked at landscaping for awhile. He loved to do gardening, carpentry, fishing and cooking, especially on HIS grill in the summer. He loved lots and lots of snow. He plowed in the winter and mowed in the summer. He liked the quiet of the country life here in New York. He loved country and gospel music.

He missed his family back in Connecticut and we would visit when we could. We like the trip to Connecticut and back. He loved his grandchildren and great grandchildren very much. He did what he could for his family always.

Everyone who met him, whether it was in the hospital, church, etc., loved him. All who cared for him did a great job and made him very happy. He had a way of making anyone he met laugh, especially little children. The last days of his life were spent at St. Regis Nursing Home in Massena, NY. A week before he passed was spent with his family at an outing. He had a special day with us all. I will always remember his last words to me. He opened his eyes, looked at me, and said, "I love you," and slipped away.

He had a great love for his dog, Sammy. He was special from the day Wayne got him as a puppy. Wayne would take Sammy everywhere. There was a special bond between the two of them. Sammy, also, passed away this past January. It was a very hard time for Wayne.

We will be having a memorial service sometime the end of August or beginning of September.

Mary Bozsum

Hebron Police News

During the week of Thursday, July 29, a home on Fox Ridge ane was forcibly entered by an unknown person or persons and several items were taken, State Police said. Jewelry, some bicycles and a musical instrument were reported stolen.

Anyone with more information regarding this investigation is asked to call Troop K at 860-537-7500.

Marlborough Police News

8/17: Stephen Kriksciun, 19, of 50 Stage Harbor Rd., was charged with third-degree criminal mischief and disorderly conduct, State Police said.

Colchester Police News

8/10: An unknown person or persons reportedly stole an iPhone from a vehicle in a commuter lot on Lake Hayward Road sometime on Sunday, Aug. 8, Colchester Police said.

8/10: An unknown person or persons stole money from the inside of a vehicle on Park Road sometime on Tuesday, Aug. 10, Colchester Police said.

8/10: Raymond Fournier, 28, of 71 Sonstrom Rd., Bristol, was charged with first-degree criminal attempt of burglary, third-degree assault, threatening, disorderly conduct and criminal mischief, State Police said.

8/10: Guidobono Lawrence, 48, of 11 Geoffrey Rd., East Haddam, was charged with two counts of threatening and three counts of disorderly conduct, State Police said.

8/12: Sheryl Wilhelm, 50, of 87 Burnham Rd., Lebanon, was charged with disorderly con-

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

I was walking from my car to my apartment building last Friday when a brief gust of wind brought down several leaves from a big tree in the front yard. As I watched the leaves flow to the ground, I noticed they'd already begun to change color.

Colored leaves, falling from the trees? These are the sights of late September and early October, not the middle of August. Don't get me wrong, I love autumn – the climax of the baseball season followed by the always-exciting playoffs, the start of the new fall TV season and, of course, the various fairs and festivals in the area – but I'm not ready for it quite yet.

Fortunately, or I guess I should say unfortunately, the autumnal appearance of the tree had little to do with the changing of season, and more to do with just how dry it's been as of late. And it has been darn dry.

I generally roll my eyes when newscasters start to bemoan the lack of rain; after all, they're always the first to go, "All this rain, when will it ever end? Tune in at 11 and find out." However, lately, they've had a point.

According to weatherunderground.com, as of this past Tuesday, Aug. 17, Windsor Locks – home of the state's official recording station at Bradley International Airport – has seen .50 inches of rain the entire month. In an average August, 2.13 inches has fallen. July was off too, but not nearly as much as August; 3.29 inches of rain fell in July, compared to the normal July total of 3.67.

The extremely dry August has left us with grass that, unless it's been regularly watered, has been either yellow or brown, and even giving off a little bit of a crunch sometimes when you walk on it. And, as I mentioned, it's now affecting the trees too; the lack of rain has just caused too much stress on area trees, causing leaves to yellow and fall to the ground before their time. It's just not natural to be raking leaves when it's 90 degrees out.

And, oh yeah, it's been 90 degrees out. A lot. While you might see me – eventually – complain about dry summers, I won't complain about hot ones. Summers are supposed to be hot. And this one has been. Tuesday marked the sixth day this month the temperature has been 90 degrees or higher. And if that's impressive, July was even better; according to Fox 61 meteorologist Rachel Frank, there were 15 days of 90-or-higher temperatures in July, including the first two consecutive days of 100 degrees or more since 1991. It tied with July 1994 as the warmest on record.

Not only have I loved this summer, I think we've earned it after last summer which, you may recall, sucked, with highs in the 70s and low 80s and the threat of rain just about every day.

So while I've been loving this heat, my enjoyment of it is tempered a bit by the acknowledgement that, yes, we really do need the rain. And I'm sure we'll get some, probably sooner rather than later. In the meantime, enjoy these last remaining 90-degree days. Even if you're not quite as jubilant about them as I am, trust me: come December when you're scraping a thick layer of frost off your windshield, you're gonna miss it.

Last season, some of you may recall, was one of great suffering for both the Mets and their fans; serious injuries to key players on the team left the team limping to a 92-loss

year. While this season hasn't seen quite the number of injuries, and the team likely won't finish with an excess of 90 losses (indeed, the Amazin's even gave their fans a tremendously exciting June that made a lot of us think fall baseball was a possibility), it's in many ways been a disaster.

The offense has suffered an utter blackout for the past month and a half; Carlos Beltran missed the first half of the year recovering from knee surgery the team didn't want him to have but he went ahead and had done anyway; Oliver Perez, whom the Mets are foolishly paying \$12 million a year to, has been so bad he should be sent down to the minors but he won't let the team do so; and Johan Santana, the team's star pitcher, was accused of rape (although it should be noted no charges were filed).

But this past week has to represent the low point for the team. It has too.

Last Wednesday, Aug. 11, after the team suffered a demoralizing loss, its closer, Francisco Rodriguez, attacked his fiancée's father, in an area of Citi Field designated for ballplayers' families. It wasn't the first fight he's gotten into since the Mets signed him after the 2008 season – he got into a heated argument with a member of the team's staff last season, and earlier this year got into a scuffle with the team's bullpen coach – but it was by far the worst. In front of the wives and children of several players, Rodriguez reportedly punched the man several times in the head and face and slammed him against the wall. Rodriguez was arrested and charged with third-degree assault.

As if attacking the father of your grandchildren at your place of business and in front of other children wasn't bad enough, it got better this week, when it was learned that, while he was issuing his Wednesday night beatdown, he tore the ligament in his thumb, and needed season-ending surgery.

The Mets, this past Tuesday, announced K-Rod (although perhaps his new nickname should be KO-Rod?) has been placed on the disqualified list, rendering his contract "non-guaranteed;" in other words, they won't have to pay him the rest of his salary this year. The Mets made the move because the injury was not sustained in any baseball-related activity; Rodriguez even admitted he tore his thumb during the fight. (Lest anyone worry about Rodriguez and his ability to get by without the \$3 million or so owed him the rest of the season, the MLB Players' Union immediately announced it would file a grievance.) The Mets have said they expect Rodriguez to be fine by spring training, and have even indicated they want him back.

I'm not so sure they should. While it's true he's still a good closer, if not quite the elite one he was in Anaheim a few years back, I think the Mets might be wise to turn the page. They'll likely be starting 2011 with a whole new manager and coaching staff – I can't see Jerry Manuel coming back next year – and while of course there will be other reminders of 2009 and 2010, Rodriguez will be the biggest one. I'm guessing the Mets could find a closer who could approach – maybe not equal, but approach – Rodriguez' 2010 numbers and wouldn't have all that baggage.

And, at this point, it's a lot of baggage.

See you next week.