



Gingerbread Houses on Parade... Third-graders at Jack Jackter Intermediate School in Colchester gathered last Friday, Dec. 16, to decorate 75 gingerbread houses. The houses will be on display at the annual "We Are the Children" party, being held in Hartford Christmas Day. A full story about the students' decorating efforts appears on page 13.

Finding a Tragedy's Silver Lining

by Geeta Schrayter

Two years after losing her dog in a devastating drowning incident, former Andover resident Mary Kozich can finally see the silver lining.

In May, Kozich started the not-for-profit Leashes Saves Lives (LSL) in honor of her late dog Murphy. The purpose of the organization is to raise awareness on the importance of keeping your pets leashed – something that could have saved her dog's life.

On an early January day in 2009, Kozich was walking with her partner Colleen McGarry and their four dogs near Burnap Brook in Andover, as they had frequently done before. One of their two pugs – Murphy – had been let off his leash, since he never strayed. Although the river was flowing nearby, it wasn't considered a concern because Murphy had been scared of water. But on that particular day, snow hid where solid ground ended and the river began, covered in a thin layer of ice. Murphy unknowingly wandered from one to the other, only to fall through shortly after.

Despite frantic attempts by Kozich and McGarry to rescue their beloved pug from the icy water, Murphy didn't make it, and Kozich spent the next two years coming to terms with the events of that day.

"When Murphy drowned, it just destroyed me," said Kozich, who added she took full responsibility for what happened and that it'd taken two years "to kind of regroup."

When things were at their lowest, Kozich, who now lives in Simsbury, said she'd become suicidal, and might not still be here if it weren't for the support of family and friends.

"It basically got to a point where I decided I'm either going to hurt a lot more people because of what happened to Murphy and cause a lot more distress, or I can turn it into a positive," Kozich said. "And so I turned it around."

And it's from that moment of clarity that LSL was born. The not-for-profit looks to "cultivate and strengthen an understanding of pet safety and leash awareness," to help ensure what happened to Murphy won't happen to other dogs, whether it be a similar drowning, getting lost, hit by a car, falling into something or being attacked by another animal.

After sitting down and planning out all her
See Silver Lining Page 2

Last Issue for 2011

This is the last *Rivereast* for 2011. The offices are closed next week, Dec. 26-30, and there will be no Dec. 30 issue.

The *Rivereast* will open again at 8:30 a.m. Monday, Jan. 2. Our first issue of 2012 will be dated Jan. 6.

Happy holidays from all of us at the *Rivereast*.

A Peek in Santa's Mailbag

As it does every year, Marlborough Girl Scout Troop 65220 collected letters from area kids to send to Santa Claus. And once again, before shipping them up to the North Pole, Troop 65220 let us at the *Rivereast* have a look.

The letters came from kids throughout the area – Marlborough, Colchester, Hebron, Portland, Glastonbury and more – and they were great, as always. So we decided to share some of them with you readers. After we typed them up (and yes, we left in the charming little-kid misspellings on purpose), we sent them on their merry way. Our inside source at Santa's workshop assures us the letters made safe passage, and the big man will try to fulfill as many Christmas wishes as possible.

Enjoy the letters, and Merry Christmas from all of us at the *Rivereast*.

Dear Santa,

How are you doing up at the North Pole? If you need help I bet my Mom and Dad would let me come there! For this Christmas can I have a Minnie Mouse House and just 1 doll, the pink princess one. Thank you Santa. We will have cookies milk and reindeer food when you get here this year!

Love, Reese

Dear Santa,

I have been a very good girl this year. I am going to school, I help Mom in our house and outside in the yard I help Papa with the lawn and working in the shed. I help Grammy feed our dogs and pick up my toys.

I really would like a kids camera, and real computer. I will leave you and the reindeer a nice snack on Christmas Eve.

Love,
Baylee

Dear Santa Clause,

You inspire me. You're my hero. I love you and I think it's amazing how you travel around the world in one night delivering presents to every good kid in the world.

My Christmas list:

1. iPod 4G
2. Making the poor be rich and have homes.
3. Help those in need.
4. Lap top

Laura

Dear Santa,

I've been a very good girl this year. I take care of my sister. I want a new baby doll, please. I love my family. I love everyone. I want a la-la-lupsy doll, please. And a new Ariel doll because I lost the other one. And please can my sister have a flashlight so we both can have one (one that's pretty).

Love,
Cora

Dear Santa

I just have a few questions and if my writing is messy please tell me. Well, back to the questions. how do you carry the presents? are they heavy? And how many min./hours does it take to give toys to connecticut?

P.S. can you please write back

- The top 5 things I would like are:
1. hess truck
 2. Wii
 3. Dog treats for lady
 4. Playstation game
 5. I pod 4th generation

Sincerely,
Adam

Dear Santa,
I wonder how do you make your reindeer fly?

Merry Christmas!

Love,
Aaron

See See Santa Letters Page 2



Santa Letters cont. from Front Page

Dear Santa Claus,

There is only one thing I want for Christmas – An ipod touch with a camera (the 4th edition). If that's all you got me for Christmas, I would be perfectly happy – or even the happiest girl on earth! I hope that your Christmas Tree up at the North Pole looks fantastic on Christmas morning at 12:00 a.m. Remember, I'll be tracking you on my "Santa tracker"! Have an amazing Christmas Santa! By the way, your awesome Santa!

Love,
Sarah

P.S. I only wrote this letter because our family missed the Santa breakfast. Or else I would have come to see you.

Dear Santa Clause and Mrs. Clause, Santa! It's Charlotte. I loved those Christmas toys you gave me last year! They were awesome! Thanks! But this year is a little different. You see, all I want is just a dog. I want it because their is two reasons. The first one is that ever sens I was a baby, I really, really, really wanted a dog. Now I am just dying for a dog. And the last one is that I want somebody to play with. I promise I'll take good care of him. I promise. My mommy says that you won't get me a doggy. But don't worry, I believe that you will. Sorry, but just need to tell you that I kind of just want a puppy first. I don't know what it is called but I will draw a picture for you: [Editor's note: Charlotte drew a puppy, followed by the words "Brown please!"] Now, I just need to tell you one more thing: You think you can get a detective kit for Emmeline, please? Thanks!

I'm your biggest fan! Bye Santa and Mrs. Claus!

Sincerely, Charlotte

Dear Santa,

I've been trying to be good all year, but sometimes I'm a freshy pants (but just a little). My wish list:

Stuffed wild horse, sleeping bag – princess one, princess blanket and sheets, fat crayons, books, camera

Love,
All

Dear Santa,

How are you? I hope you are doing well. How do reindeer fly? How much snow is on the ground now in the North Pole? Does the snow ever melt there?

I have been good this year. ("Was I, Mom?" he asked. Mom says, "Ethan is a very good kid. He helped out more this year with work around the house.") Back to Ethan. This year for Christmas I would like:

- 1) Any Legos with Star Wars including X-Wing fighter
 - 2) Nerf guns to shoot discs or ones with different tricks
 - 3) Mega Bloks, Army or Halo or Pyrates and Dragons
- Thank you very much.

Love,
Ethan

Dear Santa,

I want an egg with a dinosaur in it that last three days.

Love,
Maria

Dear Santa,

Our family missed the santa breakfast and I'm writing you to tell you what I want for Christmas – Air Hogs Hyperactives, Xbox 360, two controllers, Modern world fair 3 and Kinect, Warrior ice hockey stick, wipeout for Wii and I think I've been good this year!

P.S. I think you're really nice for giving kids presents all around the world! You're that nice so spend all your time going around to cities, states, countries and even towns to give people presents.

Love,
Matthew

Dear Santa Claus,

Hi! Is it cold up there? Are the raindeers well? For Christmas I would like a pillow ball, Kindle, books, Wii games, gymnastics mat, electric scooter, bike, American Girl doll, rubik's ball, and a D.S. I hope you have a holly jolly year.

Love,
Julia

Dear Santa,

I have a few great cookies waiting for you. I have a question for you: how do you make all the toys?

Hess truck, Squeakies DS game, Zuzu Pets, electric scooter, crayon maker, Dippin Dots, Control dog, MP3 player, LaLa Loopsy, Leap Pad

Gracey

Dear Santa,

How have you been? I have been good, I think. Anyways, this year for Christmas I would like:

1. Fender Telecaster and Orange Amp
2. Adrenaline lacrosse socks (two pairs, prefferably. Maroon and Gold)
3. Headphones (rasta earbuds. Skullcandy)
4. Lacrosse backpack
5. Black Nike Basketball socks
6. Saint Bracelet

I kept it short and sweet this year. Have a safe flight. Merry Christmas!

Mackenzie

Dear Santa,

I would like a: candy and a DS, because I like them

Love,
Jenna

Dear Santa,

May I please have Star Wars, city, halo lego sets.

May I please have a Yankees hat, shirt.

May I please have a purple watch.

May I also have a big remote control car

May I also have Star Wars Battle Front and Need for Speedshift Playstation three

Can I also have these games: Batman arkham city, also uncharted 1, 2, 3.

May I also have a 25 dollar gift card to Toys R Us

May I also have a giant dog book.

The game Wipeout

A Giant jersie

My mom says I was a very good boy this year but I dont meen to bother you but how many elves do you have?

From,
Chris

Dear Santa Claus,

How are you. I love you. And are you going to bring some cool stuff – presents for me?

I would like a lawn mower, Buzz Lightyear and a new crane – that's it.

Merry Christmas,
Connor

Dear Santa,

What are you doing for the holidays? Baking cookies, wrapping presents? I want whatever you bring me and for you to have a Merry Christmas

Love,
Ethan

P.S. Say "hi" to Mrs. Claus.

P.P.S. Please write back.

Dear Santa,,

Hi! My name is Sawyer. I am 1 1/2 years old. I have been a good girl all year. I hope that you can come to my house and have some cookies and milk. I would like anything Disney please!

Love you Santa!!!

Sawyer



Kozich, left, shown here with her partner Colleen McGarry, said her nonprofit organization has been her therapy following a tough two years after the loss of Murphy.

Silver Lining cont. from Front Page

thoughts for the organization, Kozich began investing into the idea: creating a website, having awareness stickers made for display on the doors of veterinary offices, cash registers or any place that's pet-friendly, as well as metal signs to be placed on different dog trails, near lakes and rivers. To date, Kozich said she's invested around \$2,000 into LSL.

Along with raising awareness through visuals, Kozich said the idea is to "walk the walk," and help make a difference by providing the leashes she considers it so important to use. Kozich has contacted various companies who manufacturer leashes including L.L. Bean and Orvis, who together gave her 1,500 leashes "to kind of start up." Those leashes are then donated to pet shelters, rescues and given out at events to other individuals who need them.

Kozich said that while L.L.Bean has not yet confirmed it, they're also planning to put LSL in the leash section of their 2014 catalog, and she's already partnered with some sponsors, including Brownstone Bakery for Dogs, Petals and Paws Pet & Garden and Oma's Pride Raw Pet Food.

"This is what motivates me and gets me out of bed every morning," Kozich said.

And as the second anniversary of Murphy's death approaches, Kozich has something else to look forward to – the inaugural LSL Community Dog Walk and Leash Drive, which will be held on the same day and at the same place that Murphy lost his life.

The event on Jan. 1, 2012, will take place at noon at the Hop River Greenways Trail in Andover off of Burnap Brook Road. The occasion will include a leash drive, a 2.5-mile walk for owners and their companions, a raffle, and refreshments provided by Oma's for both people and pets.

Donations of non-retractable leashes and collars are appreciated, said Kozich, but not required to participate.

"I'm running low on leashes," Kozich explained, adding 1,300 leashes had been distributed since August 2011. "It's just very expensive for me to keep buying them."

Kozich hopes this first event and others planned for later in the year will prove a successful way to spread the word about LSL, raise awareness and garner donations.

"I want to get as many people as I can to that walk," said Kozich. "It's a great way to start off the New Year."

While the upcoming event is Kozich's immediate focus – she said she'd love to see around 100 people turn up – she also has her

sights set on things for the future, including having legislature pass that makes it mandatory for dogs to be leashed in public areas and creating a line of LSL pet merchandise, the profits from which would go right back into the organization.

"Right now it's a nonprofit agency, but the goal is to get it into a nonprofit business to provide affordable leashes, collars and pet supplies to people while sending a message," she said.

She also has family, friends and even strangers who are working to spread the word and hold events all over the country, from Wisconsin to California.

But whether agency or business, local or national, Kozich's goal is simple and clear: protect your pets and know your surroundings.

"If one animal survives and doesn't drown or fall into something or get attacked because someone remembered to keep their dog on a leash... then [LSL] is doing its job," Kozich said.

And it's spreading that message, and helping ensure that happens, which has kept her alive in turn.

"I'm alive today, for some reason – for something..." she said. "And as embarrassed and humiliated as I have been to have gone from the top, literally, to rock, rock bottom, I feel like it all happened for a reason.... I think it's important for people to know that, with me, it was an animal that brought me to rock bottom, but it can be anything. But really, it is possible to bounce back and to do something really, really positive with something really, really tragic."

For more information on LSL and the upcoming event on Jan. 1, visit leashessave.org.



Kozich's beloved late dog, Murphy.

East Hampton Town Officials Meet to Discuss Recent Storms

by Joshua Anusewicz

With the memories of Tropical Storm Irene and the October nor'easter still fresh and wicked winter weather looming, a group of town officials and department heads met this Tuesday to discuss the recent storms and brainstorm ideas on improving emergency response in the future.

The idea for the meeting was hatched earlier in the fall by Town Council member Barbara Moore, who wanted a chance to go over the storm response and cleanup with the department heads that were most closely involved. This included Civil Preparedness Director Rich Klotzbier, Police Chief Matthew Reimondo, East Hampton High School Principal John Fidler (filling in for Superintendent of Schools Dr. Judith Golden), Fire Captain Rich Kelly, Chatham Health District Director Thad King, Public Utilities Administrator Vincent Susco, Facilities Manager Frank Grzyb, Director of Public Works Keith Hayden and Senior Center Director Jo Ann Ewing.

Presiding over the meeting was Interim Town Manager John Weichsel, who plainly described the meeting as a discussion of "what went right and what we need to improve on" in relation to the two storms.

Klotzbier, who serves as the town's emergency management director, said that, during Irene, the Red Cross opened the shelter at the high school overnight but that it received "minimal usage," likely due to the warm weather at the time. But during October's snowstorm, Klotzbier said the Red Cross did not open the shelter until almost a full day later, causing an inconvenience for residents. Klotzbier said that this was caused by some Red

Cross workers being stuck at their homes; East Hampton was extended an invitation by Portland to use its shelter at Portland High School, but Klotzbier said that no East Hampton residents utilized it.

Regional shelters have been mentioned for the future by the Red Cross, Klotzbier said, as opposed to town-based shelters, which would cut down on the need for volunteers. Weichsel, however, said that he was "skeptical" of proposing regional shelters, as down trees or wires could obstruct the route to the shelter.

"Any conversations you have [with the Red Cross], I would deemphasize the regional shelters," Weichsel said.

Klotzbier also spoke of the possibility of creating a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) in the future, which would require volunteer training. He also mentioned the possibility of Red Cross training for shelter volunteers.

Reimondo said that for the police department, there was better communication during Irene than during the October snowstorm. He also mentioned that emergency operations center (EOC) is "good and operational" at the Co. 1 Firehouse, but most residents call the Town Hall instead to get information, causing a lapse in communication.

Because of this, Weichsel announced that the EOC will be located at Town Hall going forward.

Fidler said the high school was able to provide "custodial coverage" to keep it functional as a shelter during the aftermath of the October storm. He also commended the work of the volunteers that worked at the shelter, which he

said virtually ran all aspects of its operation.

Kelly said the fire department had to respond to multiple calls, as expected, but had to respond the same incidents several times on multiple occasions.

"Our guys were worn out," Kelly said. "There were wires down, and we couldn't do anything because CL&P didn't respond right away. We were dead in the water."

With the elephant in the room finally pointed out, Weichsel responded. "Needless to say, CL&P did not get high marks for their response," he said. "We'll be watching that situation as we move on. And, obviously, we're not alone."

King said the health district first visited food service venues and public water systems to check for contamination after the storm, but added that private water systems were an area of concern. He said that generally there aren't issues with private water systems, but residents should "keep an eye on them more than they usually do" during power outages.

Susco said the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) established an emergency plan in 2010, after a crippling ice storm. At that time, Susco said CL&P told him that sewer treatment was not a priority for the town because they had a backup generator. He said the Village Center and Royal Oaks have water systems with backup generators, and the storm "went smoothly" for the residents and businesses in those areas.

Hayden said that during both the August and the October storms, the first priority was working with the police department to place stop signs at traffic lights that were out. After that,

Hayden said, Public Works obtained fuel to run the generators for the town buildings, and had a contact on regular rotation to keep the town with enough fuel.

After the storms, Public Works surveyed the damage of the roads in town and created a prioritized list of blocked roads for CL&P. He said the response during Irene took about eight days, but the response for the snowstorm was better. He also said removal of debris is "pretty much done."

Ewing stated that communication was the "biggest key" for the senior center, but not all of the seniors in town have been identified. She said that she and the senior center staff stayed during Irene and called over 500 seniors that were on her list, reaching about 200 of them. If they did not answer, Ewing said, she and members of the police department visited the homes of some seniors to make sure they were safe.

In the future, Klotzbier recommended using the town's Everbridge system, which sends out messages to residents' phones or computers in the event of an emergency. He said that roughly 11,000 people are listed in the system, but some residents don't have landlines or are unlisted. He recommended handing out forms in the mail and putting notices on the town's website urging residents to sign up for the service.

Klotzbier also recommended using flyers at local businesses and town buildings during an emergency to inform residents, as well as the town's 211 system.

The group intends to meet again to discuss emergency preparedness in the future, but no concrete plans have been made for another meeting.

Police Make Another Arrest in Fraud Investigation

by Joshua Anusewicz

On Tuesday, East Hampton Police made their 11th arrest in a two-year investigation into financial fraud that has bilked almost \$10,000 from the town.

According to Sgt. Garritt Kelly, Shamazz Perry, 23, of Middletown, was arrested and charged with first-degree larceny and first-degree conspiracy to commit. Kelly said that Perry is an "upper-level affiliate" of the organization that has been committing fraud against several municipalities around the state.

In all of the related cases, Kelly said, the fraud has followed a similar pattern. One of the members of the organization – a recruiter – will find a person willing to cash a fabricated check. Kelly said the "casher" is usually "a destitute person" that has an identification card and is willing to make money. Once the "casher" is secured, the recruiter sends the casher's personal information to the individual that fabricates the checks.

The checks are then made out for random amounts, Kelly said, that are just under \$1,000. Kelly said that because the checks are under \$1,000, the casher only needs to provide an identification card. The fraudulent check is then provided to the casher by the recruiter, who transports the casher to a Bank of America branch located a good distance from the municipality.

The casher then cashes the fraudulent check and returns the money to the recruiter, Kelly said. The casher and the recruiter each receive a share of the money, and the remainder is given to the upper-level members of the organization.

Currently, the town has lost \$9,863.98 from

the operation.

The EHPD has been investigating the operation with other federal, state and local law enforcement, Kelly said, and EHPD Officer Kevin Wilcox has been the lead investigator for the town.

In October, Kelly said the checks that appear to be from the town have "looked legitimate." He said that usually, by the time the loss of money is detected by the municipality, the fraud has already been completed.

When asked in October how the organization is able to obtain a check image from the towns, Kelly called it "the million-dollar question." He said that the assumption is there are individuals working "inside the bank" that are in on the operation, but admitted that the investigation "is not that far along yet." The investigation remains ongoing.

The overall investigation has resulted in 26 arrests total, with 11 of the arrests coming from the EHPD. The arrests, on a variety of fraud- and theft-related charges, include: Antonio Colon, 46, of New Britain; Rachel Sweeney, 39, of Middletown; James B. Anthony, 58, of Middletown; Sherry Webster, 23, of Waterbury; Wilfredo Rivera, 23, of Hartford; Terrilynn Sullivan, 42, of Clinton; Ebony Lockhart, 41, of Middletown; Yolanda Jones, 27, of Middletown; Claudia Ramirez, 28, of Middletown; and Doris Perry, 25, of Middletown.



Shamazz Perry

Portland Resident Alleges Discrimination by Voting Registrar

by Joshua Anusewicz

This past November's municipal elections were mostly uneventful, as most of the contested seats went back to incumbent candidates. With most of the candidates winning overwhelmingly, there was little talk of the results and town continued on while barely skipping a beat.

Today, at least one resident isn't happy with how the election turned out, but it has nothing to do with who was on the ballot.

After an alleged incident on Nov. 8, Cecilia Brucelis said she plans to file complaints with the Secretary of State and the State Elections Enforcement Commission after she felt she was discriminated against by Pauline Neumann, the town's Republican Registrar of Voters. According to Brucelis, Neumann did not allow her to be a poll worker during the elections, claiming that it was because she is Hispanic.

"I was totally humiliated and embarrassed by this," Brucelis said last week.

Brucelis alleged that on Monday, Nov. 7, the day before the election, she contacted the Registrar of Voters to inquire about open positions for poll workers for the elections. Brucelis said she spoke with Neumann, who informed her that there were vacancies and that Brucelis would have to be in her office by noon on Nov. 8 to be eligible. She said she arrived at 11 a.m. and told Neumann that they had spoken on the phone and that she was interested in volunteering.

At this point, Brucelis claimed, Neumann's "whole demeanor changed." Brucelis claims that Neumann did not know she was Hispanic before this point, and that is what caused Neumann's reaction. Neumann informed her, Brucelis said, that there were no longer any openings for poll workers and that she would

have had to apply months in advance and would need training.

"It was in the way she dismissed me," Brucelis said. "She could have at least been nice about it."

Brucelis, who is Puerto Rican, said she has lived in Connecticut for her entire life, moving from Hartford to Portland several years ago. She said that when she lived in Hartford, she volunteered as a poll worker as an outreach to the Hispanic community (she is bilingual) to "spread the importance of voting."

After the alleged incident, Brucelis said she met with First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield to explain what had happened. Bransfield said Monday that after she spoke with Brucelis, she spoke with Neumann about what took place, and added that Neumann has reached out to Brucelis.

"I don't think [Neumann] felt that she was treating [Brucelis] differently than anyone else," Bransfield said.

Bransfield said she believes most of the confusion came from the fact that this incident took place the day before the election, which she said is "a very busy time" for the registrars. She said Brucelis' name has been added to the list of volunteers for upcoming elections, which will give her opportunities to work at upcoming primaries, budget referendums and presidential elections.

Neumann could not be reached for comment for this article.

But Brucelis said she plans to stand firm and "take this as far as [she] can."

"I just don't want this to happen to anybody else, being humiliated like I was," Brucelis said. "It's why some minorities don't want to vote, because they feel discriminated against."

State Approves Funding for EH Historical Society Project

by Joshua Anusewicz

After five years of hard work, state Rep. Gail Hamm has announced that the State Bond Commission recently approved a request for funding of a major renovation project at the Chatham Historical Society on Bevin Boulevard. The money, which will be provided through a grant, will allow for various alterations, renovations and improvements to the historical society's building and grounds, and will be for a total of \$50,000.

"I want to thank Gov. Malloy and the members of the Bond Commission for honoring my request for this project," said Hamm in a statement. "The Chatham Historical Society is a nonprofit icon in town and will continue to enhance the lives of residents and children thanks to this funding."

According to Sandy Doran, president of the Chatham Historical Society, the funding, which was approved last Friday, Dec. 16, will be used for a new roof, siding, and insulation, replacement windows, electrical and security upgrades, ADA restroom compliance, tree work, a storage shed and repairing the historic Comstock covered bridge that is on display.

"We're finally going to be able to accomplish what we want to do," said Doran Wednesday. "We're very appreciative of all that work that Gail Hamm has done for us. She has worked tirelessly for this project."

Doran said that she originally approached Hamm about the project in 2007, and not long after that, the project was approved. With the current state of the economy, Doran said, securing the funding has been the difficult part. Usually, she added, the historical society has to do fundraising efforts on its own, and this is only the second grant the historical society has ever received since it was established in 1963.

State Sen. Eileen Daily also thanked Malloy and the Bond Commission for their consideration for a project that "directly benefits East Hampton residents and all those who visit the impressive facility."

"I have long admired the mission of the Chatham Historical Society," Daily said in a statement, "to maintain a connection between current residents and the legacy of this part of the state and I have always appreciated the volunteer efforts of its members who so painstakingly preserve this history."

The Chatham Historical Society operates a complex that includes an 1840 one-room schoolhouse and museum, housing artifacts and memorabilia telling the histories of East Hampton, Middle Haddam and Cobalt. It is located at 6 Bevin Blvd., and is open to the public on the first Sunday of every month from 2-4 p.m.

Doran said the society expects to receive the money after the holidays.



With the help of state Rep. Gail Hamm, the State Bond Commission and Gov. Dannel Malloy recently approved \$50,000 for renovations and upgrades of the Chatham Historical Society in East Hampton. Seen here, from left to right, are Don Burr, Chatham Historical Society President Sandy Doran, Gov. Malloy, and Debbie Day at last Friday's State Bond Commission meeting to approve the funding.

New Dugouts Complete at EHHS Softball Field

by Joshua Anusewicz

When the East Hampton High School girls' softball team steps on the field this spring, they will do so – finally! – with covered dugouts.

The Parks and Recreation Department announced last week that the dugouts at the high school softball field were completed, ending a project that has stalled several times over the past few years. The dugouts were built by Care-free Small Buildings Company of Colchester, who specializes in building sheds, gazebos and garages.

"They look great, don't they?" said Parks and Recreation Director Ruth Plummer of the dugouts, which still smell like brand new wood.

Plummer said the project has been in the works for several years, when she said money was put aside in the town's capital fund for the upgrades. Plummer looked into the matter after a softball tournament held at the school a few years ago; it started to rain, Plummer said, and some of the parents wondered why the softball dugouts were only uncovered benches and the baseball dugouts were larger and covered.

"Not only were the girls exposed to the elements, but some parents wondered if it could be construed as a Title IX violation," Plummer

said. "They were accurate to bring that up."

After the money was set aside for the project, Plummer said things stalled while the town tried to secure a design and a contractor. But after not hearing much progress, a resident, Mary Flannery, helped "bring it back to the surface," Plummer said.

Flannery, whose granddaughter plays on the high school team, visited Plummer's office and voiced her concerns, eventually bringing them to the Town Council over the summer. Once the issue was heard, the project began to gain steam again.

"Mary was quite instrumental in this project," Plummer said, adding that Flannery even visited other fields in the area and spoke with other towns' parks and recreation departments to gather ideas and research which design would be the best fit for East Hampton.

When the design and contractor were secured, the dugouts were ordered in September and delivered this month, Plummer said.

The result: brand new wooden dugouts that will house both teams and their equipment comfortably. And they may just be even nicer than the baseball dugouts, too.



The East Hampton High School girls' softball team will be ready to play ball this spring, complete with brand new dugouts that were built earlier this month. The previous dugouts were simply benches that exposed the players to the elements.

Colchester Officers Injured During Disturbance Call

by Bailey Seddon

Two officers were injured while trying to arrest a woman for breach of peace Monday, State Police said.

At 10:12 a.m. officers Kristen DiMauro and Shannon Owens responded to a disturbance call at a residence on Scofield Road. Once they arrived, the officers attempted to arrest a woman for breach of peace. However, the woman, Michelle Avery, 44, of 149 Mill Hill Rd., was "uncooperative and resisted arrest," according to a news release by Troop K.

According to Resident Trooper Supervisor

Marc Petruzzi, Avery attempted to go back into the house and when she opened the door two dogs came out of the home. In the scuffle that ensued DiMauro injured her wrist and Owens was bitten by one of the dogs. Petruzzi said the injuries were not serious but the officers will be out of work for several days.

Avery was taken into custody and charged with interfering with an officer, breach of peace and two counts of assault on a police officer. Because of the bite the dog is being placed in quarantine for 14 days, Petruzzi said.

Missing Colchester Hunter Found Dead

by Bailey Seddon

A hunter was found dead early Wednesday morning after he was reported missing, State Police said.

Teejay Wisiewski, 46, of Colchester was reported missing Tuesday evening by a friend when he did not return home from his hunting trip. He was located after a "heavy search" in a densely-wooded area off of Marvin Road at 6 a.m. on Wednesday, State Police said.

He was found unresponsive at the base of a tree with his rifle slung over his shoulder. Also at the base of the tree was a tree stand "commonly used by hunters," according to State Police.

No foul play is suspected. The state's chief medical examiner's office will conduct an autopsy on Wisiewski to determine the cause of death, State Police said.

Portland Resident Fighting Hartford Schools Over Dismissal

by Joshua Anusewicz

Joseph Dinegar isn't the type of person you quickly forget. His looks might turn heads, as he stands well over six feet tall with long reddish-brown hair and a long beard. He might look like a biker, but he probably feels more comfortable on a Schwinn than a Harley. He has a deep register that resonates and commands your utmost attention, as he speaks eloquently and passionately about his views on life, politics and education.

His passion, particularly for education, has carried him across years of instruction, a campaign for the Portland Board of Education, and, as you may have noticed, a series of letters on the subject that appear almost every week in the *Rivereast*.

He's certainly not your run-of-the-mill high school chemistry teacher. And for those who would seem skeptical of his vocation, you are actually, in a way, correct.

For the past three years or so, Dinegar says he has been blackballed from getting a teaching job in Connecticut, which he believes stems from his time teaching in the Hartford school system where he has "spoken his mind about crimes against education."

"As a teacher, I am a mandated reporter and have to report on the welfare of the students," Dinegar says. "But Hartford wants you to look the other way and say, 'I didn't know it was bad.'"

For six years, Dinegar taught in Hartford Public Schools, at Bulkeley, Weaver and Hartford Public high schools, eventually landing at Hartford Transitional Learning Academy (HTLA) in 2008. This, Dinegar said, is where his trouble started.

According to Dinegar, the problem started when a 19-year-old female student approached him and informed him that she had been abused by a school administrator and didn't know

where to go. Because he was a mandated reporter, Dinegar reported the incident to the Department of Education Special Needs Adjudication office.

Once he reported the incident, Dinegar says his time at HTLA was made "a living nightmare." He claims he was retaliated against by the administration of the school, which he said went as far as creating fake employment evaluations about him that were submitted to the office of the superintendent, who at that time was Steven Adamowski, who is now the superintendent of schools in Windham.

But the final nail for Dinegar at HTLA, he claims, was the HTLA administration contacting the Board of Education and requesting that Dinegar's certification be put up for non-renewal. At the end of that school year, Dinegar's three-year certification would have expired, but he would have qualified for an upgrade to a provisional educator certification that would be good for eight years.

When Dinegar submitted his application for the upgrade, it was listed as "unsuccessful" for almost a year, he says. By the time his certification was approved and sent back to him, he had already missed job postings for the 2009-10 year and was not working. Not only that, but his certification was a new initial certification, which was only good for three years.

Dinegar says that because he had taught for six years within the Hartford school system, he was actually tenured and his contract could not be non-renewed. "But Hartford Public Schools claimed I was not tenured, and unfortunately, my union just sat by and watched," he says.

Out of Hartford, Dinegar began to apply for other teaching positions around the state. But one by one, each position seemed less and less likely. It wasn't that he was getting rejected because he wasn't qualified or there were bet-

ter candidates – he wasn't even getting any interviews.

Dinegar says that since 2009, he has applied to positions in over 40 districts throughout the state and has had only a handful of interviews. Usually, he will send e-mails or make phone calls on the status of his application and never get replies. He says one of the districts was forced to give him an interview after it took down a posting for a job that he applied for, then reposted the same position shortly after and he reapplied.

"I'm a teacher in an area that Connecticut considers a high-need area," Dinegar says. Nationally, science is an area of need as well, which has forced Dinegar to apply to positions throughout New England, New Jersey and New York. But when he applies for a position he has to answer a question – "has your contract ever been non-renewed?" – and, even if he feels it was a wrongful non-renewal, he has answered it honestly.

But Dinegar doesn't just see this as a personal issue; he sees this as a growing trend among school districts around the country, Hartford included. He believes that schools are finding ways to remove experienced teachers – which earn larger salaries – and replace them with inexperienced and unqualified ones. As an example, Dinegar says his replacement at HTLA was a Teach for America intern whose mother just so happened to work on the Hartford Board of Education.

"They're moving these teachers around to deflect costs, and their creating this big slush fund to take money from," Dinegar says. "There's no cost-cutting going on."

So, not just for himself but, he says, for the teachers of Hartford, Dinegar has taken Hartford Public Schools to court. The case has now taken a life of its own, working all the way up

to federal court in Hartford.

In court documents, Dinegar has alleged that he worked under "dangerous and unsafe working, teaching and learning conditions" at HTLA, where students were abusive, lacked respect, and were not disciplined by the school administration. He also claims that in April 2009, the Board of Education conducted a hearing to determine whether the decision to non-renew Dinegar's certification was "arbitrary and capricious," and did not consider any evidence concerning Adamowski's reasons for doing so.

Later in 2009, Dinegar says he requested, but did not receive, his personnel file to use during the hearing, depriving him of using it in his defense. Dinegar says in his lawsuit that all of this violates his contract and First and Fourteenth amendments of the U.S. Constitution for free speech and due process.

Currently, the case is progressing, Dinegar says, and a jury trial is expected.

Hartford Public Schools did not comment on the matter.

"We do not comment on litigation or on personnel matters," David Medina, director of external communications for Hartford Public Schools, says in an email.

In the meantime, the job search continues for Dinegar. He has had the opportunity to continue his passion for educating, teaching a few classes at Capital Community College in Hartford. But he will continue to fight, both in the court and in the schools, to gain some semblance of the career he had before.

"There is not a lot for them to say other than to have to admit they have done wrong or that they have made an avalanche of uninformed decisions showing extremely poor judgment, at the very least," Dinegar says. "In which case, why is it they have the jobs they do and my career has been destroyed?"

Andover Welcomes New Assistant Principal

by Geeta Schrayter

Since Andover Elementary School's assistant principal and director of special education resigned in October, the search has been on for a fitting replacement. But that hunt came to an end recently, when the school board selected Dawn Davis.

Superintendent of Schools Andrew Maneggia said 16 applications for the position were received, and that number was narrowed down to five who were then interviewed by a screening committee chaired by Principal Dave Griffin and consisting of two Board of Education members, two teachers and one parent. Two finalists were selected by the committee to be interviewed by Maneggia, who then sent a recommendation for Dawn Davis to the Board of Education.

"I made a list of all the duties and responsibilities that we had here for that particular position," he said, adding, "I went through each [applicant] to see what kind of experience they had with each of these areas," and made his recommendation based on how well they fulfilled the qualifications.

The areas he examined included classroom teaching experience, experience with special education, previous administrative responsibilities and experience with preschool aged children. In the end, Davis was the frontrunner.

Davis started in her role Nov. 21, and Maneggia likes how things have gone thus far.

"She is really not wasting any time getting into her responsibilities and duties, so we're very pleased with her efforts and happy to have her onboard," he said.

Davis comes to Andover after spending a

year as a special education supervisor in Montville, where she lives with her husband Bert and two children.

She has a bachelor's degree in human development and elementary certification from Connecticut College, as well as a master's in special education and a sixth-year professional diploma in educational leadership from Southern Connecticut State University. Additionally, Davis is currently in the doctoral program at the University of Connecticut, also for educational leadership.

Before working in Montville, Davis was assistant principal at the Friendship School, a magnet school in Waterford. Both positions placed Davis with more students than Andover, and now, Davis said she's looking forward to being able to settle in and get to know everyone.

"I only have one office now, last year I had three," she said. "One of the things that excited me is getting to know staff, students and families at a much closer level."

"I really enjoy working with a small town," she added, "and overall, getting to become part of the community."

Since starting last month, Davis said she's been doing just that – getting to know everyone as well as the needs and concerns of families. She added that she plans to continue on in the same caliber as the previous assistant principal, Michelle Zeuschner.

"I'll continue to support in the same manner that my predecessor did," she said, adding that Zeuschner "left everything in a good place," so now, Davis said it was a matter of "picking up and keeping all the wheels turning."

Davis mentioned some of the challenges she'll have to face as transitioning to the common core curriculum and continuing to support students through the Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) program, which supports children struggling to learn early on as a way to help eliminate the need for them to be identified as special education.

"We're at a point where the program is very strong and healthy," said Davis, but she added teachers are always trying to work on more educational support for the students.

Goal-wise, Davis said one of the current targets is to continue to develop the pre-kindergarten program.

"I'm starting to do some collaboration with other agencies for professional development for pre-k teachers," she said, adding, "That's the big thing – and really, to continue to fine tune the intervention process for all of our students."

For the remainder of the year, Davis said she'll be focused on developing a good understanding of all the processes at the school, and continuing her introductions and integration in the community.

When she's not at work or busy being a doctoral student, Davis said she and her family are very involved in emergency services in Montville. Davis is a firefighter and an EMT. She said she also looks forward to exploring some of the local lakes in her canoe and kayak.

"Being from southeastern Connecticut, I don't get up this way much," she said, adding that she finds going out on the lakes "relaxing."

Principal Dave Griffin described Davis as a "delight" and "extremely knowledgeable," and



Dawn Davis

said Andover was lucky to have found her.

"I think that we've lucked out. She has the experience at the preschool which is a real gem for us, she had a special education background and she has an administrative background," he said, adding, "from my perspective, she's just kind of walked right in... and you know, [Zeuschner] was superb, and to be able to find a replacement that is such a smooth transition... we're very, very fortunate."

'Andover Village' Vision Discussed

by Geeta Schrayter

Accidents are nothing new on Route 6. Despite short-term improvements to the area in 1999-2005 that reduced accidents by 25 percent, from 2006-08 there were a total of 199 accidents on an 11-mile stretch of Route 6 encompassing Bolton, Coventry, Andover and Columbia. These numbers were presented at a public meeting on Dec. 15, and cited as a reason to improve various sections of the road in the future.

At the meeting, conceptual changes for this piece of road were discussed, as part of The Route 6 Hop River Corridor Transportation Study conducted by the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CROCOG) and the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

The study was initiated "to address safety, access management and development potential/growth" along Route 6 in those areas, it was explained on the CROCOG website.

Basilina Huang, who presented on behalf of CROCOG, stated the goals of the study were to "improve safety for all users, improve mobility and accessibility" while simultaneously preserving the character of the corridor.

Huang explained existing conditions in the area had been assessed, and at present, the study is in the concept development phase. The goal of this phase is to "develop solutions to needs and deficiencies throughout the study area," the CROCOG website explained.

Along with accidents, speed was also mentioned as a major concern. Jeff Parker, a representative from the engineering firm Clough Harbour & Associates, who helped develop the plan, said the average speed exceeded those posted.

In Andover, there were various areas on Route 6 where speeds tended to be over the limit. Westbound near Aspinall Drive, the average speed was 59 mph in an area where the posted limit is 50 mph, and the 85 percentile speed is 65 mph. Heading westbound east of Long Hill Road, the average speed was noted as 44 mph in a 40 and 45 mph speed zone, with an 85 percentile speed of 51. Eastbound near Shoddy Mill Road was also mentioned, with an average speed of 47 mph and an 85 percent-

tile speed of 53 mph.

Parker explained 15 percent of 20,000 cars – or 3,000 vehicles – "are approaching 60 mph" when driving along the corridor.

Potential changes were shown for the historic portion of Andover where the library, church and post office are located, and Parker said it was "identified as an area where potential opportunities for development" existed. He also stated the changes would address some transportation issues at the same location.

He mentioned it's a reduced speed zone where the limit drops from 50 mph to 40 mph and yet the road stays the same, meaning there's "not a cue" for people to slow down.

"That's an issue," he said. "It's an issue now; it could be an issue in the future."

Crossing areas and connections for pedestrians and bicyclists and access to the Hop River Trail and community buildings were other areas cited as in need of improvement – areas the presented plan would address.

The concept calls for a "village with split Route 6." The existing road would be narrowed and converted to a one-way lane heading eastbound, and a new westbound road would be created 300 feet to the north, closer to the Hop River.

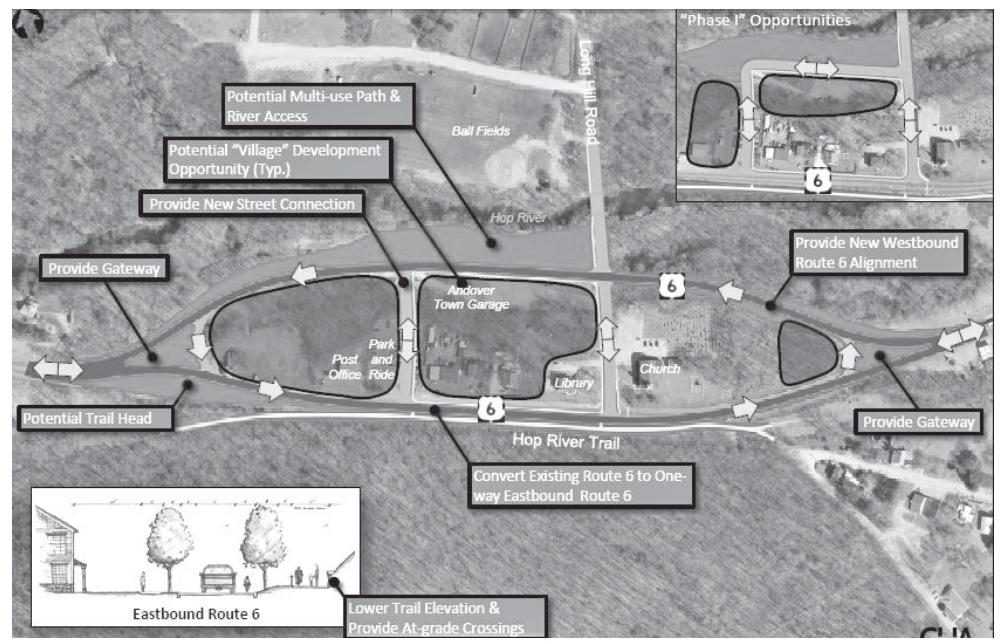
"We're also showing opportunities for street connections" between the two, Parker explained, stating it "creates, basically, a street network between which you can provide new development and redevelopment."

He added there were a number of opportunities that could be considered over a span of time to make better use of the area, "creating a character both with the street and the development that is more like a village than just your typical type of sprawl."

Parker said the changes would encourage reduced speeds due to developments closer to the roads, the addition of trees, sidewalks and roadside activity.

"You'll still have this traffic going through," he said. "You're never going to get away from that... [but] you can handle the traffic."

Daily, Parker stated about 14,000 vehicles travel the road on the eastern end in Columbia and upwards of 20,000 travel through in



Conceptual changes to portions of Route 6 in Andover such as splitting the road, creating street connections, sidewalks and streetscapes, were presented at a Dec. 15 public meeting and are shown in the above graphic.

Andover and Bolton.

Parker added the changes would allow for a bigger town center and create "an identity for historic Andover."

Since the concept would require such significant changes over a long period of time, the plan was broken down into phases – the first being to provide new street connections, sidewalks and streetscapes.

As First Selectman Bob Burbank stated at the beginning of the meeting, "this is something that's a long-term goal – it's not something that's going to happen next year or even the next two, three years."

He added it was about "looking to get the ducks lined up," and working along with the other towns to "upgrade Route 6 to modernize it" and make it more efficient.

Nothing plan-wise is definite yet either. In

an e-mail sent earlier this week, Huang mentioned the concepts are subject to change.

"We are still in the concept development process and will be making changes based on comments we received," she said.

At the meeting, she also implored residents to become involved with the process by attending various meetings on the subject. The Dec. 15 meeting was part of the second set of public meetings, and the next set will take place in spring 2012 where alternatives identified through the aforementioned comments and results of the concept development phase will be discussed.

More information on The Route 6 Hop River Corridor Transportation Study can be found at crocog.org/transportation/current_study/Route6.html.

Rivereast Towns Financially Healthy

by Geeta Schrayter

The results are in, and despite tough financial times for everyone, the Rivereast towns are in the clear in the eyes of the state.

The results of the Fiscal Condition Points Program, a tool developed as a guidance document for intergovernmental staff and Municipal Finance Services (MFS) with the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), were sent out earlier this month, and Rivereast got their hands on the results, which reflect points for 2010.

The automated program, which Gian-Karl Casa, Under Secretary for Legislative Affairs at OPM described as "a guidance document," assessed data from the June 30, 2010, financial audit reports to determine the fiscal condition of each municipality.

In the program, which Casa said is 90-95 percent automated, points are assigned "based on certain criteria that we have determined are unhealthy financial indicators," it was stated in a memo about the program. The more points a municipality receives, "the more likelihood of current or potential fiscal problems for the entity."

Criteria that would garner points include three for having a general fund deficit, three for receiving a Moody's Bond Rating lower than upper medium grade, two for a current and prior year general fund operating deficit, two for a low current year tax collection rate and one for a high reliance on revenues from state and federal sources.

A higher point assignment would cause MFS

to monitor and more closely scrutinize a particular municipality. The maximum points that can be received are 18, and Bridgeport, New Britain and West Haven were assessed the highest – each with 10 fiscal condition points. Hartford was close behind with nine and New Haven was assessed eight.

However, the Rivereast towns, as well as many other Connecticut municipalities, fell well below that. Colchester and Portland were among 25 towns to be assessed three points, and East Hampton was one of 27 towns to receive a single point. Andover, Hebron and Marlborough were each assessed a perfect score of zero, along with 51 other municipalities.

Portland's points were assigned for an internal service fund type deficit and an unfunded pension obligation. But finance Director Tom Robinson said the deficit was from an older medical fund that was addressed this year, and the annual declared contributions are made in the pension fund. Overall, he said, "from a standpoint of the fiscal indicator we're very pleased where we stand and I think we're doing a pretty darn good job."

In East Hampton, where a point was assigned due to the "Current Year under review General Fund Operating Deficit," finance director Jeff Jylkka said "they don't look deep enough in the numbers to understand why we had an operating deficit."

He added "we went down by about a half a million," but said that it was planned.

"We made a decision at the council and finance level that we appropriated \$455,000 to purchase land."

Jylkka went on to say that just by looking at the hard numbers "they may get the impression that we ran a large deficit, but we knew what we were going to end up with... I would argue that we should have zero," he said.

But it's noted on the memo that points assessed to each municipality "should be evaluated carefully by in-depth analysis before conclusions are drawn."

In Hebron, Marlborough and Andover, where no points were assessed, careful budgeting was mentioned as an attributing factor.

"I think a lot of it is just the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen being very careful with budgeting," said Hebron town manager Bonnie Therrien. "I know that we, for example, put a budget freeze on last year to make sure that we could make the year, so we're very careful with spending here - very careful."

In Marlborough, First Selectwoman Catherine Gaudinski mentioned conservative budgeting, maintaining an undesignated fund balance and a decreasing debt as factors contributing to the town's financial health.

"I'd say we have a conservative approach and we have good taxpayers... so I thank all the citizens and businesses for their taxes," she said.

Gaudinski also mentioned the RHAM partnership as something that helped all three towns. "I think we've all been partners, pitching in to

do the best we can," she said.

In addition to being assessed zero points for 2010, Andover was the only Rivereast town to have received zero the previous year, along with 17 other municipalities.

"I think it just shows that we are doing things properly in the town as far as our financial administration of the budget," said First Selectman Bob Burbank.

He mentioned when he first took over, the town "had literally scores of violations," that had since been corrected, including over-expending budgets, incorrectly attributing expenses and not tracking purchase orders.

Now, Burbank said they're going to continue to keep things in line.

"We're going to continue on the same track as we are. I mean, we always look at ways to make things run more efficiently, but we have to stay within the guidelines that are set forth by our charter and standard auditing practices," he said.

And while Andover, Hebron and Marlborough can say there are no indications of unhealthy financial conditions in town, all of Rivereast-land can rest assured. As Casa explained, the points the towns received aren't a cause for concern.

If the municipalities in question have ratings of three or below, "clearly there isn't anything in those communities that would cause the financial advisory to be concerned, certainly, in the short term," he said.

Hebron Lights up for the Holidays

by Geeta Schrayter

Matthew Troy remembers Hebron being lit up for the holidays. As a kid, he recalls the fire department decorating the town center when the festive season rolled around, but at some point, it stopped.

This year, however, he's brought it back with the help of the Beautification Committee and community members, and the center has once again received a sprinkling of holiday cheer.

And this isn't the first time Troy has initiated holiday decorating. During his senior year of high school, Troy got the National Honor Society together to light up the town.

"It was a success," he said, "but it wasn't really carried on as a tradition."

Now that he's graduated college, Troy said he thought he'd try once more "to brighten up the center of town."

And so, he got in contact with the Beautification Committee, presented a detailed plan for decorating, and then he did just that.

Troy, who has also been a member of the Hebron Fire Department for seven and a half years, is also a 2009 graduate of New York University, where he received a degree in filmmaking - lending a bit of an expert eye to the holiday plan.

"I play with light professionally," he said, "and I liked the idea of trying to do some architectural lighting."

Troy explained the goal was to bring spotlights to historical architecture in the center of town, on the houses along Main Street "building up to the Old Town Hall which I think is kind of the centerpiece for the whole design."

Additionally, wreaths purchased from the fire department were placed on various buildings, and certain trees were wrapped with incandescent white lights, which Troy said were specifically chosen.

"I felt that those were much more warm and inviting, and felt very New England-y," he said.

He wanted to provide "illumination and depth" to the center and said he considers the

decorations a success.

"I have heard some nice comments from people that drive through the center and say it's nice to see it lit up," he said, adding, "it's not as extravagant as some other displays, but I think we succeeded."

Troy said people tend to complain about how early it gets dark during this time of year, but for him it's an artistic opportunity.

"I see that as an opportunity to play with light in an artistic way, and I think people are enjoying [the result]," he said.

Beautification Committee member Loretta McDonnell agreed, saying it was a positive experience, "a win-win all the way around," and mentioned the cooperation of other community members including firemen and individuals on the historical society. She also mentioned selectman Dan Larson, who helped connect all the wiring, and Lara Bordick, who hand-painted the holiday sign over Old Town Hall.

Troy also said the Hebron Parks and Recreation Department decorated the gazebo and wrapped the lamp post, and both he and McDonnell expressed their appreciation to Hebron Ace Hardware for "accommodating our vision," said Troy, and offering a deal "that made it work... without their assistance it wouldn't have been possible."

Troy stressed it was really "a community event."

Funding for the decorations came from leftover money in the Beautification Committee fund, stemming from the town's 300th Anniversary. It was enough to get the job done, but not enough to implement everything Troy had in mind.

But the plan he presented included ideas for expansions in the years to come, and McDonnell said the hope is to start fundraising and collect donations a week or so before Thanksgiving so more could be done - and done earlier - next year.

In the future, Troy said he'd like to see additional spot lighting extending to the north side



The town center of Hebron is a little brighter and more festive this year because of resident Matthew Troy, who spearheaded an effort to decorate the area for the holidays. The project was a "community event," with the Beautification Committee and Ace Hardware lending a helping hand, as well.

of Main Street and leading down towards the anniversary rock wall. He also mentioned the area around Town Hall as deserving decoration.

"The Town Hall gazebo area is beautiful and I think if maybe we just focused on adding that next year and having an official town tree... I think that would be really appropriate," he said, adding, "it would be wonderful to see that used more by the community for the holiday season."

But whether or not Troy will be around to help is uncertain.

"I need to get back to [New York City] to continue my filmmaking career," he said, explaining that he currently commutes to the city for work. But he added "it's something I'd like to come back to assist with."

And for this year at least, he's going to enjoy seeing the town lit for the holidays as they were when he was growing up - and keep on perfecting the results of his plan.

"Every time I'm driving through the center, I find myself running over and tweaking something," he laughed.

New Road, Appointments and Contract Discussed in Colchester

by Bailey Seddon

Before its regular meeting, the Board of Selectmen had a public hearing on the possible acceptance of Carvalho Drive as a town road.

The board needed to accept the road because of a subdivision that was finished in September. The subdivision was partly in Colchester and partly in Salem because of where the town lines were. As of now there is only a spec house that the contractor built in the Salem portion; since Colchester had not accepted Carvalho Drive as a town road there was no certificate of occupancy available for anyone to build on the Colchester portion of the subdivision. With the approval of the road anyone can build houses in the subdivision.

Town Engineer Sal Tassone told the board Thursday that Carvalho Drive is in good condition and if the town was to accept it there would be a maintenance bond in place for one year on the road. With the approval the first half of Carvalho Drive will be in Salem and the second half is in Colchester; each town will maintain its respective half.

The road was accepted by the board as a town road.

The board next went on to do interviews and appointments for various boards in the town.

Alternate for the Commission on Aging, Herb Davis was interviewed to fill a vacancy left by Suzanne Maikshilo as a full member. The purpose of the commission is "to offer daily programs, activities, trips, meals, services, and transportation within the Town of Colchester to Colchester's senior citizens," according to the town website colchesterct.gov.

Davis said he wanted to continue on the commission because he still has a vested interest in the town. "There is a lot to be said for being

there for people," Davis said. He was unanimously appointed by the board.

Next James Miller was interviewed for the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC). Miller said he is retired and felt that he had experience. He said he would listen to the public and make decisions that are best for the town. The board said it would make a decision on his appointment as an alternate at its next meeting.

Jason Tinelle was interviewed last time for the PZC and was unanimously appointed by the board as an alternate Thursday.

Chuck Guarino was next interviewed for the Building Committee. Guarino said he was a civil engineer for the town of West Hartford and had been on the PZC in the early 1990s. Now that his kids are older Guarino said he would like to volunteer his time again.

"It just feels like home more when you volunteer and are part of a community," he said. The board will decide whether or not to appoint Guarino at its next meeting.

Lastly, the board discussed who among them would be liaisons for the Building Committee. It was agreed Selectwoman Rosemary Coyle would be the liaison for half the meetings, with selectman Greg Cordova the liaison for the other half.

The board next discussed the Energy Performance Contract that was discussed at the Nov. 17 special tri-board meeting. At the meeting Facilities Director Greg Plunkett told the boards of selectmen, education and finance that selectman Stan Soby helped to get the ball rolling by starting the Energy Conservation Committee when he was first selectman in 2007. While the committee is no longer around Soby said its purpose was "trying to identify ways we could

save money in terms of our energy use." This could mean making buildings more efficient or looking at possible sources of funding.

At the time the committee made a presentation to the Board of Selectmen but Soby said the board was not ready to go forward with a project then. Since Schuster became first selectman however, Soby said he has continued to pursue options based on the research that was done by that committee. Then in March of 2010, Plunkett said the Board of Selectmen had decided that "it would be to the town's advantage," to enter into a request for proposal (RFP) to help select an energy savings company.

This is what brought Chris Halpin, owner of Celtic Energy, a consulting company, to the November meeting. Halpin said his company helped towns get "good fair deals," when drawing up contracts with energy saving companies and had already helped Colchester to choose Honeywell as its energy saving company. Halpin's job also entails working on the town's behalf to put together the technical details for the "energy baseline." He also said it will be his job to know the technical work that Honeywell would be doing to make sure the town gets what they want. "That's what we're here for," Halpin had said. While the Board of Selectmen has done a RFP, they have not yet entered into an Investment Grade Audit (IGA) with Celtic Energy or Honeywell.

At the Dec. 15 meeting, selectmen discussed if any decisions could be made about whether the town should enter into the IGA. Soby said he felt they could not make an informed decision, because he and other members had just gotten information on the contract at 5pm that night, two hours before the meeting.

While there is no timeline for the contract, Schuster said he was hoping the board would enter into it in time for the May budget referendum. However, the town's chief financial officer Maggie Cosgrove told the board they have already missed this deadline. Schuster said the board would have to have a special referendum for the contract.

"Something as important as this... I just don't like rushing it," said Coyle. The board agreed to have a special meeting before the holiday to discuss the contract.

Also at the meeting, Building Committee member Paul Picard spoke in favor of the board not placing Norm Dupuis on the committee. A motion to appoint Dupuis failed by a 2-2 vote at the board's Dec. 9 meeting.

Picard stressed he was speaking as an individual, not a member of the building committee, and said while he agrees "that Norm is a smart man," he said he took offense to Dupuis' comments during his November interview by the selectmen that people on the committee do "not have a clue." He said the senior center is only one part of the project and while Dupuis may have knowledge of this part he would not make a good member of the committee. Picard went on to say that he had been on other boards with Dupuis in the past and he and others had trouble working with him.

"In the past he has been closed minded and argumentative" and slowed down committee's work, Picard said. "I believe his involvement would be detrimental to the community." Picard said he would not want someone that would cause problems for the committee. He commended the board for its decision.

Colchester Kids Decorate Gingerbread Houses for a Cause

by Bailey Seddon

With Christmas just around the corner, third-graders at Jack Jackter Intermediate School (JJIS) filled the school's stage room last Friday, Dec. 16, to decorate gingerbread houses.

A parent anonymously donated 75 pre-built gingerbread houses to the third grade, so that all 140 students could participate in the decorating. The parent made the contribution after learning of WTIC-FM 96.5 DJ Gary Craig's annual "We Are the Children" Christmas party. The party is being held Christmas Day at the XL Center in Hartford, from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Over 1,000 less-fortunate children are invited to the event, where they will eat, listen to music, partake in activities and each receive a bag full of toys, thanks to donations.

Among the various activities at the party are, according to JJIS parent Stacy Kelsey, who has volunteered at the "We Are the Children" party for the past three years, games, blow-up inflatables, a parade of costume characters and, of course, the top elf himself, Santa Claus.

"It's wonderful," Kelsey said. "They are kids that would not have a Christmas otherwise."

The gingerbread houses will not be eaten (which is good considering all the "tasting" that went on by students as they prepared them) but will aid in the decorations at the XL Center by lining its walls.

The students and teachers of JJIS were happy to help for a good cause.

"Naturally we wanted to help out," said third-grade teacher Judy Sullivan. "It's a good opportunity to learn a lesson of giving."

The children were just as happy as the adults to be helping out. They were in groups of twos and threes working together to decorate the gingerbread houses. Some students even finished in time to make a second house.

"We are actually helping the community and little children," said third-grader Alexis Barr.

"And make them more happier," agreed

Kailee Dickinson.

Sandy Schneider, who was volunteering with her son Andrew, said the decorating really got kids "into the Christmas spirit." When asked what his favorite part of the decorating was, Andrew responded, "Candy!"

This was echoed by student Lukas Kauffman, who looked at one of the gingerbread houses with big eyes and said, "I need to eat one of those...I love sugar!"

While they knew they were decorating for a cause, not all of the students seemed to be totally clear on what the cause was. Sam Fick said he was helping for "people that are homeless" for "this radio guy's party."

Fellow student David Tremblay also said he thought the houses were going "to some Christmas party."

"They are going to give them to people that don't have homes and stuff," said Brandan Cicero.

"We're making them for homeless people," said Avianna Ibrahim.

Parent Zander Weddal said he and his son, Dean, tried to make a gingerbread house at home but said they did not have as much success as they were having at JJIS.

"This one is coming out much nicer," he said. Fellow parent Matt Ciaglo laughed, watching his son Jack and other students licking their fingers.

"Half the frosting is going in their mouths," he said.

Denise Mikalonis was there with her daughter Sydney to "be a part of the Christmas spirit."

"It's a great idea," she said.

Kerri Gesiak came to help her daughter Samantha and was having a great time helping to decorate their house.

"Anytime the kids have something...I try to come down to help out," she said.

JJIS Assistant Principal Judy O'Meara said the decorating was a great opportunity for the



Third-grade students at Jack Jackter Intermediate School took time out last Friday to decorate gingerbread houses for the "We Are the Children" Christmas party at the XL Center in Hartford on Christmas Day. The 140 students enthusiastically festooned the houses with all matter of decorations (and snuck in a few bites in the process).

students. "They were able to work to...give back to the community," she said. It was "just a great atmosphere for the students to be a part of." In addition, O'Meara said the kids had a great time decorating the houses.

"Who wouldn't like building those gingerbread houses?" she laughed.

Third grade special education teacher Shelley Keirnan was "thrilled" when she heard about the donation. "It's just such a generous thing to do this time of year," she said. Once the decorating was done, students lined up to go back to their classrooms. However, before heading

back, Rebecca Kikar's class sat down to talk about what they had just done. Kikar told students they built their houses for "children that are...not as fortunate as us." She told the students that while it is fun to receive presents during the holidays, another nice thing about this time of year is giving. She then asked students how that made them feel, getting a variety of answers such as "happy to help," "sad," "proud" and even one "hungry."

One student, Kyle Mathena, said he helped to "make them feel happy so they won't be sad."

Why Colchester Schools are Working

by Bailey Seddon

The state's new education commissioner, Stefan Pryor, is going town to town to receive updates on how local school systems are doing. On Monday, this whistlestop tour brought him to Colchester, where he heard an upbeat message titled, simply, "Why it is Working in Colchester."

The meeting, which was held at William J. Johnston Middle School, featured various state and local officials, Board of Education members, teachers and even a student. Superintendent of Schools Karen Loiselle led things off by comparing Colchester to other towns. One example was that the district spends \$1,800 less per student than other communities, Loiselle said.

"The reasons" for this spending "are many," said Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein. Goldstein said it was thanks to the many people in the room that spending is lower because the schools are based on a "system of relationships." Colchester Federation of Teachers (CFT) President Frank Gionfriddo agreed.

"Our focus is one thing: kids come first," he said. Gionfriddo went on to say that he meets with Loiselle every month to discuss how the schools are running. He said the town relies on teamwork, saying, "it takes a village to educate a child."

"We do whatever it takes," said Gionfriddo. As an example he told the new commissioner how teachers have agreed to two-day unpaid furloughs in each of the last two years. He said this saved money and jobs for the school system. Furthermore, Gionfriddo said he could only remember one teacher voting against the

furloughs; all the other teachers agreed to do this and no attorneys were needed.

Pryor said this was "very impressive" as he had never heard of such an agreement without attorneys present.

Pat Walters, union representative for para-professionals, said how much she and others appreciate the work Loiselle does for the town.

"She respects her teachers, she cares about them," Walters said. She went on to say that she has been in the business for 24 years and never seen anything like that. Gionfriddo agreed saying he is always open to suggestions with Loiselle and the two always come to an understanding.

There was also high praise for Goldstein whom administrators said goes above and beyond his roles as chairman. Bacon Academy Principal Jeffry Mathieu said Goldstein even comes along on Student Learning Expeditions (SLE), or "learning walks," which occur every Thursday morning or afternoon in the district.

"Central Office administrators rotate our visitations to the schools so that we visit each school once a month. During an SLE day, we visit classrooms with building administrators and teachers," Loiselle elaborated in an email. "The purpose of the SLE is to observe instruction and to look for evidence of student learning. The focus is on looking at the engagement of students in the learning process, and on the tasks in which students are engaged."

"I don't think that is happening anywhere else," Mathieu said of Goldstein going on the SLEs.

Goldstein followed this praise by saying there are sometimes difficult topics that come up at

board meetings but members do their best to make sure everything works out. One example of this was when it was noticed employees were taking a large number of personal days around the same time, making it hard for the school to find substitutes and breaking from the student's lessons. Because of this, a meeting was held, said Loiselle. She said the problem was laid out and data was used to show why the personal days were an issue. After that, Loiselle said she saw improvement.

Pryor commended staff and officials on the language they were using at the meeting. "The vocabulary that you all are using is terrific," he said.

"The vocabulary helps create the culture," said WJMS Principal Christopher Bennett.

After the comments from administration, Pryor said he wanted to know about a teacher's perspective of the Colchester school system. Eleventh-grade U.S. history teacher Charles Hewes said Colchester schools are good at "putting the student at the center."

Student Joshua Kvasnik agreed. As a student member of the Board of Education he said he gets to see how it works on the student and administrative side. Goldstein said Kvasnik and the other student member, Emily Boucher (who was not present Monday), are more than just liaisons or reporters to the board - they actively participate in discussions.

"It provides a learning opportunity for someone like me," Kvasnik said. Pryor seemed very pleased with student members being on the board. "You're very articulate," he said to Kvasnik.

Next the commissioner asked First Selectman Gregg Schuster for his point of view on how the school system is working. Schuster responded that Colchester schools prosper because of the structure of the system. He also again brought up Goldstein going above his role as chairman to do the best job he could for the schools.

"It's all our collective responsibility," Schuster said. He went on to say how well the community and elected leaders work together.

"Colchester is truly unique," said state Senator Eileen M. Daily. Daily felt she could say this accurately as she represents 13 towns in Connecticut.

Charles Jaskiewicz, chairman of the state Board of Education, agreed, saying Colchester is not as concerned with "egos, turf and territory" as other towns are. "You're to be commended for that," he said.

Joan O'Donnell, the executive director of Colchester Alternative School Age Total Learning Experience (CASTLE), a childcare center, next spoke. She said she worked for 17 years in a different school system and she was amazed when she came to Colchester.

"It was like a breath of fresh air" coming to Colchester, O'Donnell said.

"This is all very helpful feedback," said Pryor. He then thanked everyone for coming. He said while there are always areas to improve upon, Colchester was "a district that has its act together...is focused on the big goal."

The meeting ended with Goldstein and Loiselle handing Pryor a Town Of Colchester mug.

Colchester Resident Starring in Holiday Special

by Bailey Seddon

Holiday specials are all over television this month, and one such program – a public-access television special airing this week and next – features a familiar name: Colchester resident Susan Mendee.

Mendee, an alumna of the Connecticut School of Broadcasting, recently came up with the idea for a Christmas special. She already had a list of “interesting” Christmas stories from the East Haddam Historical Society in East Haddam and decided to film them on her own.

“I thought, why not,” she said.

And just like that, *Christmas in Connecticut with Susan* was born.

The show features stories that are “significant for people to know about” because they are about Christmas in Connecticut from another time, she said. For instance, Mendee learned that Christmas did not become a federal holiday until 1870. Before then it was criminalized by the Puritans as a pagan holiday.

Connecticut School of Broadcasting let her use its equipment and studio space, and Mendee was on her way. She said she traveled around Connecticut looking for “unusual but interesting” stories. One of these was in Windham where a Victorian Building was made into a museum. It was here that she learned about how Christmas came to be. She was told that while he was president of the U.S., Ulysses S. Grant had declared Christmas a holiday after the Civil War, to try to unite the North and South.

Mendee also visited an abbey in Bethlehem, CT, for her story. There she met a nun, Mother Margaret Georgina, who is the granddaughter of legendary World War II Army general George S. Patton. The abbey where the nun now lives is an old brass factory and was turned into a crèche, a room filled with Mary, Joseph and Jesus and other figures who came to see the family at Christ’s birth. The factory was built in 1720 and has been restored in the last three years by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. During this scene Mendee has her daughter, local singer and songwriter Lisa Collins, singing “Ave Maria.”

Mendee also went to Hartford to film dance rehearsals of *Albano’s Nutcracker*, which is in its 49th year of production. It is performed at Central Connecticut State University, Mohegan Sun Casino and the Middletown High School performing arts center. There she talked to the play’s director, Joseph Albano, about what a large production the show is every year. Albano also plays Drosselmeyer, a magician in the play.

“At 72, he’s still dancing in the Nutcracker,” Mendee said. She also learned that there are more than 100 dancers and a 36-foot tree on the stage.

Another interesting story is the Boar’s Head Festival, which has been held at the Asylum Hill Congregational Church in Hartford for the past 42 years. The festival is about the celebration of good over evil. Originally a boar would be killed at Christmas because it was a “sover-

eign beast of the forest” and was considered evil. After killing the beast they would eat it as “part of their traditional meal,” Mendee said. There is also a 16-foot angel to complete the festival.

The festival is “a touching...emotional celebration,” said Mendee.

There are seven stories in all, which feature a variety of “historical and education topics,” said Mendee. *Christmas in Connecticut with Susan* is a half-hour long and, noting the program is commercial-free, Mendee stressed it is “pure show.” Mendee said she would have done more but did not have enough time before the holidays.

“There is so much to learn about the state...and Christmas,” she said. “It was so much fun to do; I met so many interesting people.”

Even though the segment is only a half hour long it was a lot of work, Mendee said. She had to decide what she was going to write about, then do the research, interview and film people, then edit the stories. She also did all the voiceovers for the film. Mendee said she started two weeks before Thanksgiving and finished Friday, Dec. 16. Fortunately, Mendee said she was not alone, but had two other people helping her; Middletown resident Karen Wasserman, who did reporting, and Southbury resident Nick Cipriano who did reporting and editing.

“They were fantastic,” Mendee said. Of Cipriano, Mendee said he was “particularly dedicated” and “the most reliable and creative guy.”

The show, Mendee said, was “a dream come true.” She said she had been wanting to do something in broadcasting for years and with this she got “to do exactly what I wanted to do on my own” with complete freedom, she said.

Mendee was also grateful that one of the men from the local public access show *Ralph and Friends*, Dave Oberson, was willing to give her his spot on the schedule, which made the airing of her show possible. The show was going to be playing the best of *Ralph and Friends* for the next two months while the production changed studios but decided to give Mendee the spot instead. She thanked them for “letting me have their time.”

“Everyone went way out of their way to help make my show special,” she said, also thanking the Connecticut School of Broadcasting for its cooperation.

Christmas in Connecticut with Susan will air on public access television stations on different days and times in the *RiverEast* circulation area. In Colchester, the special will air Dec. 26 and Jan. 2 at 5 p.m. on Channel 15. In Portland and East Hampton, it will air Dec. 27 from 9-10 p.m. (the show will play twice) on Channel 15. And in Andover, Hebron and Marlborough, the program will air Dec. 29 and Jan. 5 at 8 p.m. on Channel 5.

Colchester Police News

12/13: Brandon Jefferson Nalle, 24, of 309 Pixwell Ave., Apt. 43, New Haven, was charged with violation of probation, State Police said.

12/16: Kim Previti, 45, of 123 Prospect Hill Rd., was charged with failure to drive in the proper lane, DUI, failure to renew registration and unsafe movement, State Police said.

12/17: Police are investigating the theft of boat parts stolen from a 225 CC boat from Hilltop Marine, at 119 Loomis Rd. One Ray Marine C80 Sonar valued at \$2,000, one Icom radio valued at \$600 and one Jensen radio valued at \$300 were stolen. The theft occurred between

Saturday, Dec. 10 and Saturday Dec. 17, State Police said.

12/18: Police are investigating a burglary that occurred at Linwood Avenue. Entry was made through the front storm door, which police found broken. Upon investigation, it was evident that someone had been living in the home without the owner’s knowledge, State Police said.

12/19: Coty Jay Nichols, 23, of 674 Deep River Rd., was charged with violation of probation, State Police said.

Marlborough Police News

12/13: Police are investigating the theft of an undetermined amount of cash and a piece of jewelry from a home on Washington Road. There was no forced entry into the residence, State Police said.

12/16: Matthew A. Lewis, 21, of 228 Hammer St., was charged with DUI and speeding, State Police said.

12/18: Amanda Burns, 20, of 46 Hemlock Rd., was charged with speeding over 70 miles per hour, DUI and failure to drive in the proper

lane, State Police said.

12/18: Police are investigating the reported breaking of two car windows. Between late Saturday, Dec. 17, and early Sunday, Dec. 18, suspects allegedly broke windows in two vehicles in the commuter parking lot on Flood Road, off of Route 2 exit 12, State Police said. Anyone who may have seen anything suspicious is asked to contact Trooper Craig Fox at 860-537-7500 and reference case number 1100677160.

Portland Police News

12/10: Colin Kilpatrick, 29, of 16 Middle Haddam Rd., was charged with evading responsibility, insufficient insurances, operating with suspended license and failure to drive in established lane, Portland Police said.

12/14: Albert Catanzaro, 18, of 628 William St. Ext., was charged with reckless driving, police said.

12/16: David Frank, 48, of 311 Main St., was charged with sixth-degree larceny, police said.

12/16: Richard Smazer, 45, of 23 Main St., South Glastonbury, was charged with operating under suspension, operating an unregistered motor vehicle and second-degree failure to appear, police said.

12/18: Ryan Wilde, 28, of 371 Squaw Hollow Rd., Ashford, was charged with DUI and failure to drive in established lane, police said.

East Hampton Police News

12/10: Jason Pangretic, 31, of Groton St., Hartford, was arrested for first-degree criminal trespass, East Hampton Police said. In a separate incident on 12/12, Pangretic was arrested for disorderly conduct, sixth-degree larceny, first-degree criminal trespassing and interfering with a police officer, police said.

12/10: Sean S. Anderson, 21, of 17 Colchester Ave. was arrested for DUI and improper use of high beams, police said.

12/15: Willie James Prioleau, 29, of 76 No. 1st St., Meriden, was arrested on three separate counts of violating a restraining order, police said.

Hebron Man Attempts to Evade Police

A man attempted to evade police when they tried to pull him over Sunday, Dec. 18, State Police said.

According to police, when officers tried to pull over Carl Gillis Holmgren, 35, of 523 East St., he attempted to evade them by driving off the road and through the lawn of a residence. Holmgren then got out of his car and ran through the woods where he was caught by State Police K-9 unit. He was taken into custody and transported to Troop K.

Holmgren was charged with speeding, engaging police in a pursuit, DUI, failure to drive right, stop sign violation and interfering with an officer, State Police said.

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Happy Christmas – War is Over.

Well, one is anyway.

After nearly nine years, the war in Iraq finally came to a close last Thursday, Dec. 15. *NBC Nightly News* detailed the grim stats in its newscast that evening: 4,487 U.S. troops killed, with another 32,226 wounded (and more than 150,000 Iraqis killed). The cost in terms of dollars: \$800 billion, with some estimates at a trillion.

All that for a war we had no business starting.

Oh, the Bush Administration certainly made a case for attacking Iraq, saying Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction (he didn't), and implying there was some sort of connection between Saddam and the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 (there wasn't).

And so it was we invaded Iraq, and fought there for nearly a decade, and for what? I don't know – I don't think anyone knows. Saddam's dead. But the future of Iraq still appears very vague, very uneasy. A confident George W. Bush (he was never anything but confident, even when that confidence was utterly, utterly misguided) said in March 2003, shortly after the war started, that we would prevail. This certainly doesn't feel like a victory, though. The war didn't end with a defeat either. It just....ended.

And it ended rather unspectacularly too, with a simple ceremony in Baghdad last Thursday. No big pomp and circumstance, no ridiculous "Mission Accomplished" banner, no displays of arrogance and "U.S.A.! U.S.A.!" chest-thumping. As a friend of mine said, we ended the war by just slinking away from Iraq like a college kid departing a strange dorm after a night of drunken, misguided sex.

Of course, while the Iraq war comes to a close, the war in Afghanistan continues on. And while one can certainly argue it's become a boondoggle, I can at least agree with why we started it. After the horror that was 9/11, it was completely understandable why we'd want to get the man behind it.

But there was no such justification for the Iraq war; there never was and there never will be. Instead, what we're left with is a long, bloody, very regrettable but never forgettable chapter in our nation's history.

It being late December, it's the time of year when the "most-popular-[fill in the blank]-of-the-year" lists get announced. Last week, I wrote about baby names. This week, I saw that the folks at Merriam-Webster have determined "pragmatic" to be the 2011 word of the year.

There's really no specific quote that made the news this year that you can trace the popularity of the word to. According to Merriam-Webster, searches for the word at the company's online dictionary spiked in the weeks before Congress voted in August to increase the nation's debt ceiling, and again as the Congressional "supercommittee" tried to craft deficit-cutting measures this fall.

The president of Merriam-Webster, John Morse, speculated the word may have sparked dictionary users' interest because they'd heard it in conversations, and also because it signifies encouraging practicality over frivolity.

The word list I'm most waiting for unfortunately won't be released until next week. At the end of every year, Michigan's Lake Superior State University makes national news when it issues its list of overused words which should be banned from the American lexicon. The words never are banned, of course (the word it chose at the end of 2010 was "viral," and that word was just as prominently used this year), but the list is always fun to read.

Speaking of lists, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (more commonly known as ASCAP) recently released its list of the 10 most popular Christmas songs of 2011. It compiled the list through the use of the airplay monitoring service Megaguide, which tracked the songs played from Dec. 1-14 at more than 2,500 radio stations nationwide.

Leading the list, for the second straight year, was "Sleigh Ride," followed by, in order of airplay, "Winter Wonderland," "The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire)," "Let It Snow! Let it Snow! Let it Snow!," "Jingle Bell Rock," "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year," "Do You Hear What I Hear?," "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas," "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas."

I found it interesting that the most popular song – and indeed, three of the top four songs on the list – didn't really have anything to do with Christmas. In fact, I've heard all three of those played on the radio *after* Christmas as well, since, in Connecticut, snowy weather by no means goes away after December.

And that's that. As it says on the cover of this week's issue, this is the last *Rivereast* for 2011. The office is closed next week. Our next edition will be the Jan. 6, 2012, installment. Happy holidays to all of you.

Obituaries

Colchester

Geraldine C. Davis

Geraldine C. Davis, 91, of Colchester, wife of the late Rev. Dr. Lincoln J. Davis Sr., passed away on Monday, Dec. 19, in Bloomfield. She was born on March 13, 1920, in Goshen, VA.

Surviving are nine sons, Lincoln, Earl, Mitchel, Clinton, Abraham, Herbert, Gerald, Makeba and Ahmad Davis; five daughters, Anitah, Addie, Amelia, Althea and April; a sister, Corrine Sales-Black; a brother, Robert Sales; 38 grandchildren, 39 great-grandchildren and a host of daughters-and sons-in-law; a host of nieces, nephews and friends.

Belmont/Sabrowski Funeral Home of Colchester is in care of arrangements. For details on service times, call 860-537-2900.

Colchester

Dennis H. Marvin Jr.

Dennis H. Marvin Jr., 39, of Colchester, passed away unexpectedly at his home early Friday, Dec. 16. Born in Middletown Oct. 10, 1972, he was a son of Dennis H. Marvin and Teri (Nowisch) Strickland.

Dennis was a talented chef. He loved to cook, working at several restaurants in Florida throughout his career. He was an avid fan of the NY Yankees and Giants. Most importantly, he will be remembered most fondly by his family for the generosity he showed to others.

He is survived by his father, Dennis Marvin and wife Marge of Colchester; his mother, Teri Strickland and husband Kenneth of Marlborough; a daughter, Brynn Marvin of Anna Maria Island, FL; his special friend and Brynn's mother, Megan Fischbach; a brother, Richard Marvin and his wife Sandy of Colchester; a grandfather, Bing Marvin of Colchester; and numerous extended family members and friends.

He was predeceased by grandparents, Richard and Irene Nowisch and Catherine McFadden.

Funeral services were held Tuesday, Dec. 20, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. Calling hours were held immediately prior to the service. Burial followed in Linwood Cemetery.

Donations in his memory may be made to the Transplant Gift Fund, Hartford Hospital Fund Development, 80 Seymour St. P.O. Box 5037, Hartford 06102-5037.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Portland

Gwendolyn Masselli-Morin

Gwendolyn Marie Masselli-Morin, 57 of Portland, wife of Raymond M. Morin, passed away Wednesday, Dec. 14, at Middlesex Hospital in Middletown. She is the daughter of Claire D. (Jasmin) Hastings of Higganum and the late Franklin E. Hastings Sr.

Born Sept. 3, 1954, in Hoboken, NJ, she lived in Portland for most of her life. She worked as a psychiatric nurse at Yale Hew Haven Hospital for 25 years. She was an Alumni of Mercy High School, a member of the National Genealogy Society, the National Historical Society, the Connecticut Nurse's Association and a recipient of the Nightengale Award. She was also a contributor to the American Cancer Society and a member of the Church of St. Mary in Portland.

Besides her mother and husband, she is survived by her children, John S. Muntean and his wife, Sunshine, of Jarrell, TX, Stephen M. Mondaca of Portland and Michael R. Morin of Andover; brothers and sisters, Diana Combs of Sanford, ME, Amy Janus of Baltic, Robert Hastings of West Haven, Kenneth Hastings of Chester, John Hastings of East Haddam, Timothy Hastings of Uncasville, Sharon Shields of Torrington and Cathy Clark of Middletown; grandchildren, Justin and Joshua Owen and Shelby and Brandon Muntean.

She was predeceased by a brother, Franklin Hastings Jr.

Funeral services were held Monday, Dec. 19, departing from Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, for a Mass at the Church of St. Mary, Portland. Burial was in St. Mary Cemetery, Portland. Relatives and friends called Sunday, Dec. 18, at the funeral home.

Memorial donations may be made to the American Cancer Society, 1075 Chase Parkway, No. 1075, Waterbury, CT 06708.

To send an online expression of sympathy, visit portlandmemorialfh.net.

Portland

Donald C. Murray

Donald C. Murray, 88, of Portland, passed away Thursday, Dec. 15, at the Rocky Hill Veterans Home and Hospital. He was born Sept. 14, 1923, in Wethersfield, to the late Clifford R. and Olive (Grue) Murray. He grew up in Rocky Hill and was a graduate of Hillyer Jr. College.

Mr. Murray was a grand high priest of the Royal Arch Masons of Connecticut and achieved the 33rd Degree MSA in both the Scottish and York rites. He served as commander of New Haven Commandery No. 2 of the Knights Templar. He was also a member of Shriners International, the Order of the Eastern Star, the St. Andrews Society of Connecticut, the USS General W.A. Mann AP112 Association, and the Clan Murray Society of North America, as well as several other charitable organizations and historical societies. He was a leader and mentor in every organization to which he belonged.

In 1943, he married Louise Corban of Windsor. They were happily married for 65 years until her passing in 2009. Their marriage served as an example of love and partnership for all who knew them. Mr and Mrs. Murray lived in Wallingford for 39 years and were very active in service to their community. Mr. Murray was a deacon and trustee of Wallingford Church of Christ Congregational. After moving to Portland in 2005 they became members of Portland Congregational Church.

Mr. Murray was a veteran of World War II, serving three years in the U.S. Army attached to the USS Gen. W.A. Mann AP112. He was honorably discharged as a staff sergeant in 1946 after receiving African, European and Asiatic Theater Ribbons, a Good Conduct Ribbon, a Marksmanship medal and a Victory Ribbon. He worked in sales and service for several firms and retired from Goodyear Tire and Rubber in 1988 after 28 years of service.

Mr. Murray leaves behind his children, Cathy Ferry and wife Patricia Duffey, Allison Thomas and husband Bob, and Jim Murray and wife Joy; grandchildren, Barbara LeBlanc and husband Michael, Christopher Ferry and wife Amanda, Jessie Fischer and husband Patrick, Michael Thomas, Brendan and Andrew Murray; and great-grandchildren, Joshua and Nathan LeBlanc and Mayhew Ferry. Also, he is survived by three sisters, Evelyn Danforth, Barbara Griswold, and Roberta Dalenta, and numerous nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by his sister, Lorraine Brown.

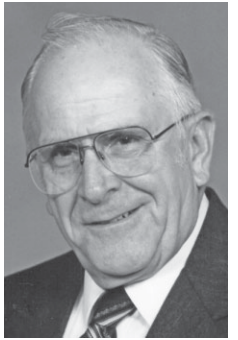
He will be remembered for his loyalty, service to others, sense of humor, dedication to his wife and family, and fierce pride in his Scottish heritage and the Murray Clan.

Funeral services were held Thursday, Dec. 22, at the Portland Congregational Church, 554 Main St., Portland, with the Rev. Jane Hawken officiating. Relatives and friends called Wednesday, Dec. 21, at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland.

Memorial donations may be made to the Portland Congregational Church 554 Main St Portland, CT 06480.

For directions or to send an online expression of sympathy, visit portlandmemorialfh.net.

The Murray family would like to thank the staff of the Health Care Center of the Rocky Hill Veterans Home and Hospital for their loving and personal care of Mr. Murray in his final months.



**MORE OBITUARIES
ON FOLLOWING PAGE**

East Hampton

Endre O. Farkas

Endre O. Farkas, 76, of East Hampton, beloved husband of Beverley (Allen) Farkas, passed away peacefully at his home Sunday, Dec. 18. Born Dec. 10, 1935, in Hungary, he immigrated to the United States at a young age.

Endre proudly served our country in the U.S. Marine Corp for thirty years. He served 21 years in active duty attaining the rank of master sergeant and serving in both the Korean War and the Vietnam War. He then served nine years in the reserves. He was retired from Pratt & Whitney where he worked as an inspector.

Besides his wife Beverley, he is survived by his son Leland Farkas and his wife Rachel of East Hampton; his daughter, Charlotte Brombacker and her husband Donald of Wallingford; two brothers, Stephen Farkas and Robert Farkas, both of Houston, TX; and seven beloved grandchildren, Andrew and Elizabeth Brombacker, Victoria, Haley, Philip, Monica and Caroline Farkas.

Funeral services were held Thursday, Dec. 22, in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, with Rev. Fred M. Dole officiating. Burial will be Tuesday Dec. 27, at 11 a.m., in the Connecticut State Veteran's Cemetery in Middletown. Friends called at the Spencer Funeral Home on Thursday evening before the service.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Fisher House of Connecticut in West Haven at fisherhousect.org, or Friends of Fisher House in care of Newman Creed Associates P.O. Box 575 Bristol, CT 06010.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

East Hampton

Margaret E. Smith

Margaret E. Smith, 81, passed away Thursday, Nov. 24, in Portland, OR. She was born Jan. 9, 1930, to Olaf and Elizabeth Odegard and grew up in Portland with her brother, Ralph.

Margaret met and married the love of her life, Warren E. Smith, in 1951, and they were married for 60 years. Warren, formerly of East Hampton, is the son of the late Eaton E. and Gladys L. Smith. Warren and Margaret lived in Sherwood and Wilsonville, Oregon throughout their marriage.

Margaret was employed at Portland General Electric for 35 years, retiring as an executive secretary. Upon retirement, Margaret continued to share her talents as a member of the Wilsonville Garden Club and a volunteer at the Wilsonville Senior Center and the American Cancer Society's Discovery Shop in Tigard. Margaret and her husband filled their life with a shared passion for Tennessee Walkers and rode their horses, along with their bird dogs, on field trials whenever possible. They were also avid dancers and loved jazz music. Margaret will be deeply missed by many.

She is survived by her beloved husband, Warren; brother, Ralph Odegard and wife Margaret of Happy Valley, OR; brother-in-law, Leonard C. G. (Geoffrey) Smith and wife Erika of Naples, FL, and Simsbury, and two nieces and three nephews.

Funeral services were held Friday, Dec. 9, at Canby Funeral Chapel, 160 South Grant St., Canby, OR 97013.

Portland

Steven R. Williams

Steven R. Williams, 54, formerly of Portland, passed away peacefully at home on Thursday, Dec. 15, after a courageous battle with cancer.

Born in Springfield, MA, to Stanley and Claire (Gingras) Williams, he attended Springfield Technical High School before graduating from East Longmeadow High School. He received his bachelor's degree from Embry-Riddle College in Virginia Beach and served his country honorably in the U.S. Navy Seals.

Steven was a communicant of Holy Name Church in Springfield and was employed as a Maintenance Foreman for Wadsworth Glen Rehabilitation in Middletown. Steven was an avid fan of the Denver Broncos and was always there to lend a helping hand to those who needed it.

Besides his loving parents, Stan and Claire, of Springfield, he is survived by his sister, Diane Rhodes, of Springfield and her friend Rene, of Chicopee, MA; a niece and godchild, Melissa Rhodes, of Uxbridge, MA; former wife and friend, Kim Ferreira, of Ludlow, MA; a special canine companion, Kayla; and several other nieces, nephews and caring friends, especially all those he worked with at Wadsworth Glen.

Family and friends met for calling hours Wednesday, Dec. 21, at the Hafey Springfield Chapels, 494 Belmont Ave., Springfield, MA. A funeral home service with military honors followed. Burial will be private and at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Steven's memory to the Holyoke Soldiers' Home, 110 Cherry St., Holyoke, MA 01040.

To leave an online tribute, visit hafeyfuneralservice.com.

Hebron

John D. Kelley

John D. Kelley, 90, of Manchester and formerly of Hebron, beloved husband of Mary (Tweedie) Kelley, passed away Sunday, Dec. 18. He was born in South Portland, ME, on July 20, 1921, son of the late George F. and Katherine M. Kelley, was raised and educated in South Portland and graduated with the Class of 1943 from the University of Maine at Orono, ME.

He enlisted in the U.S. Army and served with the Cannon Co. of the 134th Infantry Reg. of the 35th Div. During his time in the service he participated in the invasion of Normandy, going ashore at Omaha Beach, continuing on through St. Lo Mountain, Battle of the Bulge and ending at Elbe River. He was awarded five Battle Stars, The Bronze Star and Combat Infantry Badge.

Upon his discharge from the service he went home to Maine for a short time before moving to Connecticut in 1946. John went to work for the State of Connecticut Department of Labor and retired in 1986 as a Counselor after 28 years of service. He was a life member of the V.F.W. Post 2046 in Manchester, the American Legion Post 14 in Rockville, D.A.V. Chapter 17 in Manchester, The Manchester Army & Navy Club and The Irish American Home Society in Glastonbury.

In addition to his loving wife of 59 years, he leaves by his brother-in-law, Ernest Tweedie and his wife Ruby of Thorndike, ME; special nephew, Skip Kelley of Deerfield, NH; and several other nieces and nephews. Other survivors include his loving adopted daughter, Mary Moriarty and her husband Dennis of Falmouth, MA, and formerly of Hebron; his grandson, Christopher Moriarty and his fiancée Alexis Alloway of Everett, WA; his granddaughter Erin Colleen Moriarty of Seattle, WA.

John was predeceased by four brothers, Eric, Donald, Gordon and George.

Funeral services will be held today, Dec. 23, at 10:30 a.m., at Holmes Funeral Home, 400 Main St., Manchester. Burial with military honors will take place in the veterans section of the East Cemetery. Calling hours were held Thursday, Dec. 22, at the funeral home.

Memorial donations may be made to the Samaritan Shelter of Manchester, 466 Main St., P.O. Box 773, Manchester, CT 06040.

To sign the online register book, go to holmes-watkinsfuneralhomes.com.

Portland

Albert Boak Burbank

Albert Boak Burbank Jr., 64, of Portland, beloved husband of Antoinette (Slocum) Burbank went to be with his Lord and Savior Thursday, Dec. 15, at home, surrounded by his family. Born in New London, he was the son of the late Albert and Margaret (Gemme) Burbank Sr.

Albert had lived in Portland for the past six years, was a member of Victory Christian Church in Middlefield and was a veteran of the Vietnam Conflict, serving in the U.S. Air Force. He was a retired police chief of Groton Long Point after 21 years of service, a retired master sergeant of Indian affairs for Mashantucket Pequot Tribe and retired from Murphy's Security in Hartford. Albert was an avid motorcycle rider and enthusiast as he was a member of the Blue Knights, a founding member and past president of the Christian Motorcycle Association of Middletown and was also a member of the American Legion.

Along with his wife, he is survived by two sons, Lance Owen of Brooklyn and Jacob Burbank of North Stonington; his stepson, Christopher Durkee of Laredo, TX; a daughter, Melissa Stout of Ledyard; a stepdaughter, Melisa Durkee of New Haven; seven grandchildren, Courtney, Sky, Christiana, Garrett, Connor, Hannah and Eila; a special cousin, Alice Harris of Enfield and several aunts and uncles.

Funeral services were held Monday, Dec. 19, at Victory Christian Church, 191 Meriden Rd., Middlefield, with Pastor Geoffrey Scott officiating. Burial will be at the convenience of the family. Friends called Sunday, Dec. 18, at Victory Christian Church and in lieu of flowers, may make donations in Albert's memory to Helen and Harry Gray Cancer Center, 80 Seymour St., Hartford, CT 06102.

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

Portland

Herbert Newton Malmberg

Herbert Newton Malmberg, 78, of Portland and formerly of Durham, beloved husband of Mary (Calcagni) Malmberg, passed away Sunday, Dec. 18, at Middlesex Hospital. Born in Hartford, he was the son of the late Herbert Nils Malmberg and Evelyn Lavina (Rand) Malmberg.

Herbert lived most of his life in Connecticut later retiring to Vermont and was a member of Church of the Epiphany in Durham. He was a veteran of the Korean Conflict serving in the U.S. Army. He spent his life as a builder and was very instrumental in constructing buildings at Yale University especially the A and A Building, the Atomic Accelerator, also Rosemary Hall in Wallingford and several area churches in Connecticut. Herbert was a lifelong Red Sox fan, followed University of Connecticut sports and most of all loved spending time with his family.

Along with his wife, he is survived by two sons, Richard H. Malmberg and Robert W. Malmberg, both of Durham; his daughter, Lee Ann Palladino and her husband, Michael, of Madison; a brother, Fredrick Malmberg, of Southington; six grandchildren, Erica LaFrance, Matthew Dowden, Michael G. Palladino, Deborah Palladino, Britany Malmberg and Brent Malmberg; and four great-granddaughters, Gabrielle, Brooke, Emily and Caitlynn.

Funeral services and burial will be private. There will be no calling hours and in lieu of flowers, friends may make donations in Herbert's memory to American Heart Association, 5 Brookside Dr., Wallingford, CT 06492 or Wounded Warriors Project, P.O. Box 758517, Topeka, KS 66675-8517.

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

Portland

Edward S. Lull Jr.

Edward S. Lull Jr., 79, of Eustis, ME, formerly of Portland, passed away Thursday, Dec. 15, at the Androscoggin Hospice House in Auburn, ME. He was born in New Britain on July 26, 1932.

Edward attended school in Middletown, before entering the U.S. Air Force, serving as a photographer. While serving he married Maryann Paszek. Upon returning home he went to work for Hartford Electric Light, retiring from there 32 years later. Edward and Maryann then moved to Eustis, ME, to retire. He was an avid hunter and fisherman. He loved the outdoors and was a weather watcher for a few years. Throughout his life he continued his passion for photography and also enjoyed cooking.

Edward is survived by his wife of 58 years, Maryann; his son Theodore Lull of Portland; his three daughters, Theresa L. Knapp and her husband David of Hebron, Cynthia White and her husband Tom of Tafton, PA, and Janet Hungerford and her fiance Stephen Stickler of East Hampton; five grandchildren, Jeffrey, Jeanna, Rachel, Amber, and David; three great-grandchildren; his brother, Robert Lull of Connecticut; several nieces, nephews and cousins.

He was predeceased by his brother Richard Lull Sr. and a nephew Richard Lull Jr.

A graveside memorial service will be held Tuesday, Dec. 27, at 11 a.m., at Calvary Cemetery on Bow Lane in Middletown with military honors.

Arrangements under the direction of Adams-McFarlane Funeral & Cremation Services, 108 Court St., Farmington, ME. Those wishing may send condolences for the family at adamsmcfarlane.com.

Portland

Jeanne Barker Roman

Jeanne Barker Roman, born in Portland on Oct. 8, 1924, peacefully passed away at Brakebill Nursing Home, Knoxville, TN on Sunday, Dec. 18.

Jeanne was a longtime resident of Olivette, MO. Jeanne was active in her community and church, the Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion, on Delmar and she fulfilled her lifetime dream of visiting all 7 continents. She taught science at McClure and McClure North until her retirement in 1989.

Jeanne had been residing in Knoxville, TN, since October 2006. Following a broken hip in October 2010, Jeanne moved to Brakebill Nursing Home.

Jeanne is preceded in death by her parents, sister and husband, Daniel P. Roman, Sr.

She is survived by her children, son Daniel Roman, Jr. and his wife, Geri; son Peter C. Roman and wife Heather; daughters Heidi Chausse and Tacie Hall; 12 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.