



RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

Serving Amston, Andover, Cobalt, Colchester, East Hampton, Hebron, Marlborough, Middle Haddam, Portland and Salem

Volume 35, Number 46

Published by The Glastonbury Citizen

February 18, 2011



Jack Faski, Fred Brown and Gregg Schuster, pictured from left, camped out in a tent last weekend on the Colchester Town Green, to raise money for the town's fuel bank. The trio brought in about \$6,500, an amount that is still growing.

Colchester Residents Camp Out for Fuel Bank

by Katy Nally

Three men – in a tent – took their second annual pilgrimage to the Colchester Town Green last weekend and camped out in an effort to raise money for the town's fuel bank.

The three – First Selectman Gregg Schuster, Colchester Business Association President Jack Faski and Colchester Lions Club member Fred Brown – were able to raise about \$6,500, and counting, which was about 80 percent of their \$8,000 goal. The men are encouraging residents to donate to their cause.

"While we haven't yet reached our goal, I'm confident the residents of Colchester will come to our rescue and help us reach our goal," Brown said.

Faski agreed, adding, residents can, and should, still donate, as there is always a need for fuel assistance in town. The need this year, however, seems to be greater than in years past.

"People are just frayed to the edges," Faski said.

"Every year the fuel bank gets used quite a bit," Schuster said, adding this year especially because "we've had a difficult winter."

Before the fundraiser, the fuel bank's reserves were in between \$7,000 and \$8,000, Schuster said. Around the same time last year, it had slightly more, at about \$11,000.

"It's not much, considering the price of oil," Schuster added.

The three men set up camp on the green around 3 p.m. last Friday, Feb. 11, and left the Town Green Sunday afternoon. By Friday evening, the three had already raised a couple hundred dollars and were keeping warm by their fire in a barrel. Area restaurants, including Subway, Family Pizza, Hung Won and Plum Tomato, all donated meals throughout the fundraiser.

Unlike last year, the three men were a little better prepared for the whipping winter wind.

Brown said REI in West Hartford donated a winter tent for the trio to sleep in, whereas last year, they only had a thin summer tent that did little to keep out the howling wind.

"You could hear it, and you could feel it," Faski recalled Friday, before they settled in for the night.

"At least this tent was sealed," Brown said Tuesday. "It was better than the wind tunnel we had last year."

This time, when the wind pounded their tent two nights in a row, just the edge of it lifted up, Brown said, instead of having it whip right through.

Weather-wise, Brown, Faski and Schuster endured about the same frigid temperatures as they did last year, with highs in the mid-30s and lows in the single digits.

Brown said he woke up Saturday morning to cloudy skies and a mere four degrees.

"It makes you appreciate five degrees much more," he said.

At least their last day, Sunday, was a bit warmer, with a low of 14 and a high of 39, according to weather.com.

Camping out in the cold for three days was just a glimpse into what residents without heating fuel experience during the winter months.

"Each year, starting in November, the town gets inundated with calls for fuel assistance," Schuster said in a press release. "We don't want to see anyone go to sleep cold and that is why we are doing this."

Residents can still donate to Three Men in a Tent to help the trio reach its goal. Donations can be made at Rockville Bank, located at 99 Linwood Ave., using account number 28000003609, at Schuster's office at Town Hall, 127 Norwich Ave., or at the Colchester Youth and Social Services office, also located at Town Hall.

RHAM Board Eats Into February, April Vacations

by Courtney Parent

In an effort to deal with all the snow days students have had this winter, the RHAM Board of Education voted last week to shorten both the February and April vacations this year.

The regional school board discussed the snow days and their effect on the current year's school calendar at a special meeting last Thursday, Feb. 10.

Superintendent of Schools Robert Siminski began the meeting by giving background on the school calendar for the current academic year and the 10 snow days that took place over the course of five weeks in January and early February.

The academic calendar submitted at the beginning of the year included a statement that said there would be five designated snow days listed, with any additional snow days being taken at the end of the school year.

RHAM High School Principal Scott Leslie said that he was "stuck between a rock and a

hard place," with the choice to either maintain February vacation while risking a continued loss of momentum for students, or take days from break and risk the quality of education.

"I absolutely agree with some of the feedback we've been receiving," Leslie said. "Kids have essentially had a February break and it would be in our best interest to get back on a regular schedule."

According to Leslie, there will be over 30 teachers out during February break, 11 of whom will be away on international trips sponsored by the school. At the meeting, Siminski explained that substitutes hired to fill these spots may not be properly certified in the areas that they will be required to teach.

"There is always concern over being able to provide quality substitutes," said Siminski.

However, according to minutes of last Thursday's meeting, the general public consensus was that the Board of Education should take days from the February and April breaks.

Many parents also asked that absences be excused as some already had plans booked for vacation.

Hebron resident Nicolo Culmo said she feels strongly that days be taken from either February or April vacation. Culmo expressed concern over a lack of instruction prior to state testing, which takes place throughout the month of March. Annette Morrison, also of Hebron, asked the board to consider the seniors and take days from one of the vacations.

Likewise, Patricia Morency of Hebron asked that the board take days from February vacation so that students could gain back some consistency in their studies. Morency also thanked the district for its concerns for the safety of the students.

Board of Education Chairman Michael Turner suggested that three days be taken from February break, excusing students who already had vacation plans. Student representatives Brennan Whalen and David D'Auria agreed that

three days should be taken from February break as there had been so many recent snow days.

After discussion, the board voted to take two days from both February and April vacation, as well as utilize a professional development day in April. School will now be in session Thursday, Feb. 24, and Friday, Feb. 25, as well as Monday, April 4, Monday, April 18, and Tuesday, April 19.

Siminski said the school has had 10 cancellations so far this year due to the weather and he is hoping warmer, more cooperative weather is on the horizon.

"Hopefully there are no more [snow days] and hopefully it melts quickly," Siminski said.

The last day of school is currently Monday, June 20. Tuesday, June 21, will serve as a professional development day for teachers.

The RHAM Board of Education will hold its next meeting Monday, Feb. 28, at 6:30 p.m., in the chorus room at RHAM High School, 85 Wall St., Hebron.

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

It's a question that seems to come up every so often, and it did so again this year, with a public hearing on the matter held at the state capitol last week: Should the state allow alcohol sales on Sundays?

I say, yes. In fact, it seems like now is especially the time to allow alcohol sales on Sundays.

The state, as you might have noticed, is facing a rather large deficit – an estimated \$3.67 billion one in the 2011-12 fiscal year, according to ctnewsjunkie.com. Meanwhile, the Office of Fiscal Analysis has estimated that if stores were allowed to be open on Sunday alcohol sales would increase 2.8 percent, and the state would see an increase of \$2.4 million in sales tax and \$1.2 million in excise taxes.

Would that eliminate the deficit? Of course not. But when the state is facing a hole as big as the one it's facing, this is money it can ill afford to turn away.

The ban on Sunday alcohol sales is an antiquated law that needed to go away years ago. For starters, it hurts the package stores in towns near the New York and Massachusetts borders, since in those states you can buy alcohol on Sunday.

Also, does it really curb drinking on Sundays? I don't think so. It'd be one thing if Connecticut were completely dry on Sundays – it's not. Bars and restaurants are allowed to be open and serve alcohol. So anyone who really wants a drink but doesn't have any beer in the house isn't really going to be hampered.

While repealing the ban seems to make a lot of sense to me, there are many that oppose it – perhaps most vocally, the Connecticut Package Store Association. At last week's public hearing, Carroll Hughes, a lobbyist for the association, balked at the aforementioned numbers generated by the Office of Fiscal Analysis, and also predicted that, if the Sunday ban were repealed, 300-350 of the state's 1,100 package stores would go out of business, partly because they'd be unable to compete with local supermarkets, which would also be allowed to sell beer on Sundays if the ban were lifted.

I'm not really sure that would happen. For starters, buying beer at a supermarket is no great shakes. Yes, it may be more convenient if you happen to be in the store anyway, but the prices are virtually identical, and the beer selection in a supermarket is generally far worse than what you'd find at an average package store.

And even the convenience factor is overrated. In case you haven't noticed, Connecticut has tons of package stores – more per capita than any state in the country, in fact. So chances are you wouldn't be going out of your way if you opted to swing by a package store on your way home from Stop & Shop – and you'd likely be rewarded with a pretty nice beer selection.

Another reason why I think package stores would survive? They sell other things besides beer. Grocery stores are only allowed to sell beer in Connecticut; they can't sell wine or hard liquor. And there are an awful lot of people out there who would prefer, say, wine or scotch to beer. (I just happen not to be one of them.)

Now, like I said at the start of the column, this is a debate that takes place a lot, with some lawmakers – particularly those in the border towns – in favor of it, and some lawmakers, as well as the Connecticut Package Store Association, opposed. Typically, it never gets anywhere. But things are different this year. Namely, there's that giant deficit we're facing. Also, there's a new governor who wants to repeal the ban, wisely recognizing the money it could generate for the

state.

“Sunday alcohol sales is a no-brainer for me,” Dannel Malloy said in an interview last month. “If the legislature passes it, I'll sign it. It's just not an issue for me. That's my position.”

I hope the legislature does pass it. Repealing the ban is a concept long past due.

My respect for the Connecticut-based Subway sandwich chain took a bit of a hit this week, when I read the fast-food giant sent a cease-and-desist letter to a Midwestern chain of convenience stores, due to the chain's use of the word “footlong” to describe its 12-inch long sandwiches. (In other words, sandwiches that are a foot long.)

Subway told Iowa-based Casey's General Stores to remove all references of the word “footlong” from its menu board or face legal action. Subway, it seems, has applied for a trademark of the term “footlong,” and the U.S. Patent Office is reviewing the application.

Personally, I cannot believe Subway honestly thinks it should own the patent to that word. That's absurd; if a sandwich is one foot in length, it's a footlong. What's next, Taco Bell seeking to patent the word “burrito”? (By the way, Taco Bell has expressed opposition to Subway's application, as has fast food eateries Long John Silvers, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Dairy Queen, Pizza Hut and Domino's.)

This isn't Subway's first attempt to be a bully. In 2009, it sought a restraining order and preliminary injunction against Pennsylvania-based convenience store Sheetz Inc., over its use of “footlong.” Fortunately, the request was denied.

Casey's has now filed suit against Subway, seeking a declaration that use of the word “footlong” doesn't violate any right Subway may own. The suit also seeks a declaration that “footlong” is a generic description of a sandwich that measures one foot, and calls Subway's attempt to trademark it “frivolous litigation.”

“We maintain the use of “footlong” by itself to describe a sandwich, which is approximately a foot long, is as old as the hills and everybody has that right and has had that right since they've been making foot-long sandwiches,” Ed Sease, an attorney for Casey's, said this week.

Well put. Hopefully Casey's wins.

Lastly, I should note that this is the last *Rivereast* for our Portland/East Hampton reporter, Claire Michalewicz, as she is moving on. Claire started with the paper a little more than a year ago, and had only been covering East Hampton for a few months when Police Chief Matt Reimondo was abruptly laid off by then-Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe, touching off one of the biggest controversies the *Rivereast* has ever covered.

It was an issue that garnered statewide attention, with reporters from all four of Connecticut's TV news stations routinely flocking to East Hampton to cover the latest developments. There were lots of meetings, lots of emotional comments from various residents and town officials and lots of documents to sort through. Yet Claire handled it all well, producing thorough, well-written stories that were interesting to read.

It wasn't all the O'Keefe-Reimondo mess, though. Before, during and after that controversy, Claire covered a host of other issues in her two towns. She tackled them well, and with enthusiasm.

We wish Claire the best of luck, but she'll be missed here at the *Rivereast*.

See you next week.

East Hampton Resident Charged with Stealing from Amish

by Claire Michalewicz

An East Hampton man is facing possible extradition to Pennsylvania for allegedly stealing prefabricated sheds from an Amish supplier outside Philadelphia.

Demetrios E. Katras, 32, of 166 Comstock Trail, was arrested last Wednesday, Feb. 9, on charges from an extraditable warrant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, East Hampton Police said.

Sergeant Paul Battista said Katras was accepting delivery of prefabricated sheds from a supplier in Embreeville, PA, and selling them without paying the supplier back. Battista said Katras stole 12 of the sheds, with a total value of about \$30,000.

The Amish shed dealers, Battista said, “are so nice that they don't want to get paid until you sell it.”

According to the warrant, Battista said, Pennsylvania State Police learned of the case when the shed dealer inquired about Katras, who had been using an assumed name. Penn-

sylvania police traced Katras to Connecticut, determining that he had connections in Bristol, New Britain and East Hampton, Battista said.

Battista said Katras hadn't been doing business in East Hampton, but East Hampton police arrested him because he lives there. The Better Business Bureau's website lists Katras as general manager of New England Sheds Company in New Britain.

New England Sheds Company did not return a call for comment for this story.

The charges Katras faces from Pennsylvania are four counts of theft by unlawful taking – movable property, four counts of theft by deception – false impression, four counts of retail theft and four counts of receiving stolen property.

Katras was released on a \$50,000 bond and is due back in court to enter a plea on Thursday, March 10. Afterward, Battista said, Katras could be sent to Pennsylvania to face trial there.

Third Arrest Made in East Hampton Homemade Bomb Case

by Claire Michalewicz

East Hampton Police have arrested a third teenager in connection with a series of chemical bombs planted around East Hampton last summer and fall.

Charles R. Mauri Jr., 18, of 19 Oak Knoll Rd., was arrested Friday, Feb. 11, and charged with manufacturing of bombs, conspiracy to commit the manufacturing of bombs, third-degree criminal mischief and second-degree breach of peace, police said.

Sergeant Garritt Kelly said Mauri and several other teenagers filled plastic bottles with mixtures of household chemicals and planted them in mailboxes and garbage cans through-

out the northwest part of East Hampton. None of the bombs caused any injuries or damage, Kelly said.

One family on North Cone Road called police in August, after they heard a bang and a hissing noise in their mailbox. The Department of Environmental Protection sent a crew to neutralize the bomb and clean up the mess.

The charges against Mauri stem from a month-long investigation into the bombs, Kelly said. Two 16-year-olds were arrested in January after a routine traffic stop, and Kelly said police have three more suspects and plan to arrest them soon.

Colchester Student Arrested After BB Gun Found in Locker

Colchester Police arrested a middle school student after a BB gun was found in his locker last Tuesday, Feb. 8.

A 12-year-old at William J. Johnston Middle School was issued a juvenile summons for breach of peace and possession of a weapon on school grounds, Colchester Police said.

School administrators found the loaded airsoft BB gun.

Superintendent of Schools Karen Loiselle said since “in these cases we're very strict about following the schools' discipline policy,” the student will have an expulsion hearing.

Hebron Van Strikes Bus, No Injuries

A van backed into a bus full of students last Wednesday evening, but no one was injured, State Police said.

The bus, owned by First Student Inc., was traveling westbound on Slocum Road when a 2004 Ford E250 backed out of a driveway and struck it, police said.

The driver of the van, Christian Dube, 55, of Tolland was found to be at fault.

There were 20 students on the bus: three 5-year-olds, three 6-year-olds, two 7-year-olds, two 8-year-olds, three 9-year-olds, two 10-year-olds, four 11-year-olds and one 12-year-old, who were all of Hebron.

All the students' parents, as well as Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz, were notified, according to police.

Cruz could not be reached for comment.

Rollover on Main Street in Marlborough

A rollover car crash sent one Marlborough woman to the hospital early Monday morning, State Police said.

Alison Wenzel, 21, of 124 Jerry Daniels Rd., was traveling on South Main Street just north of Garden Lane around 4:35 a.m., when she went off the roadway and onto the left shoulder. Wenzel rolled her 1999 Jeep Cherokee onto the roof, State Police said, and she sustained a small laceration to her head.

She was transported to Middlesex Hospital via Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department for “complaints of pain,” State Police said.

Wenzel was later charged with DUI and traveling too fast for conditions, State Police said.

Golf Shop Opening Store at Blackledge in Hebron

by Courtney Parent

Chris Cote's Golf Shop is set to open at Blackledge Country Club, 180 West St., this spring, as soon as the weather permits.

Blackledge will still run the course and pro-shop, with Chris Cote's Golf Shop running as its own retail location. According to owner Chris Cote, the shop's opening at Blackledge is part of a recent expansion, in which the Portland-based business is trying to span out to some of the local golf courses.

Cote said Blackledge is an ideal location, serving as host to many popular tournaments, such as the CSGA Mid-Amateur Qualifier, Connecticut Women's Amateur Championship, CSGA One-Day Tournaments, SNEWGA Tournament of Champions and the U.S. Kids State Championship.

Cote's golf shop will be the first business not owned by Blackledge that will be operating on the premises. Blackledge owner William Anderson said the state of the economy influenced his decision to go with Cote's shop.

"It's so competitive now for small businesses that we just felt we could service our customers better for tournaments and members better with a full stock pro-shop at very competitive pricing," said Anderson.

The shop will offer a wide variety of drivers, irons, wedges and putters. In addition to clubs, there will be a variety of clothing available, along with many accessories, including everything from hats and gloves, to balls and tees, to GPS devices.

The original Chris Cote's Golf Shop which opened in Portland in 2007, contains over 15 brands in stock including Callaway, Mizuno, Titleist, Odyssey and Nike. An offering of the same top-name brands can be expected at this new location.

The opening at Blackledge will signify the shop's fourth location. The original Chris

Cote's Golf Shop resides at 275 Main St., Portland. Next door, at 283 Main St., is Chris Cote's Pre-Owned Golf Shop, and the third, most-recent shop is located at Tower Ridge in Simsbury. Cote said he is looking to expand the business and open one new location per year ideally.

Cote is currently entering his second year at Tower Ridge. According to Cote, it was the shop's presence at Tower Ridge that enticed Blackledge to contact them.

"They actually approached us when they found out about what we did at Tower Ridge," Cote said.

Anderson said Blackledge is excited about the partnership and believes that the country club will now be able to better tend to its customers needs.

"It was a decision we made that will allow us to provide better all-around service for our customers and we're excited about it," Anderson said.

While many think of golf as an adults' game, children are entering the world of golf younger and younger. Chris Cote's Golf Shop acknowledges that, carrying a full line of U.S. Kids Golf Equipment, catering to children ages 12 and under.

The anticipated grand opening was March 1, but now it is as soon as the weather permits, which owner Chris Cote said "is looking like it could be April at this point."

Anderson, meanwhile, was hoping for a slightly earlier date.

"With the current snow cover the season opening is unknown, but hopefully no later than March 15," said Anderson.

While awaiting opening day, golfers can get geared up for the season with free club fittings at Chris Cote's Golf Shop in Portland. The original location is the only Chris Cote's to offer free club fitting through the use of a P3 Simu-



Opening day for Chris Cote's Golf Shop at Blackledge Country Club, located at 180 West St., is right around the corner and slated for sometime this spring. Above is Cote's original golf shop in Portland.

lator. The simulator utilizes two Doppler radar transceivers, while shot data is transferred through a USB connection, and a LaunchMonitor Data Interface Program allows for computer processing.

The P3 Simulator is a virtual driving range where golfers are able to watch their shot projected on a large video screen. Launch statistics are also displayed on the screen which enables individuals to make fitting improvements.

Golfers are able to analyze specific aspects of their swing including ball velocity, angle of approach, trajectory and club acceleration and deceleration. The device can be used by both those who are just starting out and those seasoned professionals wishing to critique their game.

For more information, visit chriscotegolf.com.

East Hampton Board Members Eyeing Regionalization of Town Services

by Claire Michalewicz

Three town boards agreed last week to explore partnerships with neighboring towns to regionalize services and share equipment.

The discussion was part of a tri-board meeting of the Town Council and the boards of finance and education last Thursday, Feb. 10.

"There are a lot of things we're doing in town that we can do on a regional basis," Board of Finance Chairman Matthew Walton said. He listed the building inspector as one example of a department East Hampton could look at combining with other towns. Walton pointed out the town had already regionalized some services, most notably the use of the police and fire dispatch center in Colchester.

School board member Debra Robinson said the board had looked into regionalizing the town's schools with Portland in 2009, but said that would take years to coordinate.

Town Council member Barbara Moore suggested combining East Hampton's Parks and Recreation department with Marlborough's, as Marlborough was having trouble keeping staff, she said. Moore said the two towns offer similar programs, and one set of employees could manage all the services offered.

Several board members, including Town Council member Thom Cordeiro, suggested sharing snow-removal equipment with surrounding towns. But, Board of Education Chairman Michael Vasquenza said, other towns wouldn't have wanted to share equipment during recent snowstorms because they were busy using it themselves.

Director of Finance Jeff Jylkka, however, urged the boards not to rush into regionalization.

"The last thing we regionalized was probate, and that cost about 100 percent more," he said. Jylkka was referring to the consolidation earlier this year of the state's 117 probate courts into 54 regional courts. The consolidation was not the towns' idea, however, but rather a 2009 proposal by then-Governor M. Jodi Rell, in a move to cut spending. The consolidation was projected to save the state \$2.8 million annually, beginning with the 2011-12 fiscal year.

"You're not helping us, Jeff," Walton joked. Jylkka recommended starting with smaller collaborations with other towns, like sharing construction equipment, rather than combining departments.

Board of Finance member Patience Anderson said that with each item towns bought cooperatively, one town usually carried the largest financial burden. She suggested Interim Town Manager Bob Drewry contact neighboring towns to see if they were interested in combining any resources. Drewry was not present at the meeting, and Walton agreed to speak with him last Friday.

"I don't think it matters who's sitting in the town manager's seat," Anderson said. "I don't think we have any reason to delay."

The town recently looked into moving dog pound operations to East Haddam, but those plans are currently on hold.

Walton said Wednesday he had left a message for Drewry, but the interim town manager had yet to return it. Drewry did not return a call for comment for this story.

Board of Education Chairman Michael Vasquenza reviewed the ongoing plans for updating the town's schools. One of the school board's main priorities, he said, is to renovate the high school in time for its next accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges in 2017. He said the school board's Transportation, Buildings and Grounds Committee is scheduled to meet with an architect this week to review the proposed plans for the school, which include updates to the science classrooms.

Another project that had been discussed a few years ago, Vasquenza said, was the proposed construction of a new elementary school on the Memorial School grounds, and the conversion of Center School to a town hall. Vasquenza said that project had been "backburned for a variety of reasons," mostly financial.

Jylkka also reviewed the town's current budget expenditures and discussed his preparations for the 2011-12 fiscal year budget. Jylkka explained that the Board of Education's budget was set to break even at the end of the fiscal year in June, and the town budget would see a small surplus of about \$35,000.

He said the public works department had used up 74 percent of its overtime budget by Jan. 29, but the town was anticipating \$59,000 in reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

In most years, Jylkka said, the average snow-storm cost the town between \$10,000 and

\$12,000 in overtime. This year, though, storms were averaging around \$18,000.

The town is also overspending its legal budget this year, Jylkka said, with 104 percent of the budgeted \$115,000 already spent. Jylkka said he expected the town to continue spending about \$19,000 a month in legal fees.

Jylkka said he was meeting with department heads to work out each department's proposed budget for the next fiscal year. The school board was set to adopt its budget by Feb. 28, after which he and Drewry would incorporate it into the proposed town spending plan.

Jylkka said his biggest concern in the next fiscal year was the state budget, and whether legislators would cut state aid to municipalities. Governor Dannel Malloy has said he plans to keep Education Cost Sharing grants fully-funded, Jylkka said, but other grants could be reduced.

Also at the meeting, assessor Carol Ann Tyler updated the boards on the revaluation process, which the state requires towns to complete every five years. This year, Tyler said, appraisers had visited about 4,700 of the town's approximately 6,000 residences.

She said she had not yet completed the Grand List, but would have it by the end of February. Starting on March 1, taxpayers will be able to request a hearing with the Board of Assessment Appeals, Tyler said. She said properties are taxed at 70 percent of their estimated market value.

Hebron School Board Reviews Programs, School Calendar

by Courtney Parent

Program presentations and the impact of snow closings on the school calendar highlighted discussion at last Thursday's meeting of the Board of Education.

The two programs talked about at the Feb. 10 meeting are each designed to allow children to strive despite disabilities. The first mentioned was the Goal Program, which aids children with behavioral/mental health disabilities to work through their challenges.

In the Goal Program, children are provided with de-escalation strategies when they get overwhelmed, to take them out of a stressful situation. This helps them achieve daily or weekly goals and overcome their disabilities, according to Director of Special Education Lisa Wheeler.

There are multiple aspects of the program that add to its success, Wheeler said. Special education teacher Becky Campbell pointed to the importance of having children set goals for themselves on a weekly basis so that they are always striving for something.

School psychologist Scott Rossignol emphasized the importance of providing an incentive. Rossignol meets with students in the program on a daily basis, providing counseling and guidance.

"I think it is important that we reward them for desired behaviors that they display," said Rossignol.

Board of Education Vice Chairman Brian O'Reilly questioned how parents were responding to the program. Campbell answered that parents and guardians were very pleased with the progress and that this program was available.

At the end of the presentation, Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz thanked Wheeler, Campbell and Rossignol for their hard work, as well as Barbara Wilson, who works with the children on their occupational and physical therapy goals.

"Success is for all children," Cruz said. "We greatly appreciate your dedication and your efforts on their behalf."

The second program discussed was Scientific Research-Based Intervention (SRBI), referred to nationwide as Response to Intervention (RTI). Research-based intervention programs were created in response to traditional approaches, which would simply send children to special education without identifying the problems.

In July 2009, SRBI became a state mandate, requiring each school district in the state to have

a "systematic approach for implementation of support." According to Cruz, they have had the program up and running successfully for nearly two years.

SRBI is a three-tier system that emphasizes successful instruction for all students. The system includes targeted interventions for students experiencing learning, social-emotional, or behavioral difficulties.

The first tier represents the core curriculum, instruction, overall school climate and behavioral support for all students. The second tier includes short-term interventions for students experiencing difficulties who have not responded adequately to the first tier's core curriculum and instruction. The third tier involves more intensive or individualized short-term interventions for students who fail to respond to the second tier's interventions.

Gilead Hill School Principal Kathy Veronesi and Hebron Elementary School Principal Kevin Hanlon randomly chose two students for a case study within the program, but Veronesi said the students responded so well that now they can't be used for it. Veronesi and Hanlon will now shift the focus of their case study to observe one first grader whose progress has been inconsistent over time and track that student's

progress for the remainder of the school year.

Veronesi compared the program to a hospital with her serving as Dr. Gregory House, from Fox's primetime series *House*. She explained how, like House, she examines each case and student individually and independently from one another, exploring all possible causes and solutions.

"I ask probing questions with problem students; what have we done, what haven't we done, what has worked, what hasn't worked," Veronesi said.

* * *

The board also briefly discussed snow closings and the 2010-11 school calendar.

According to Board of Education Chairman Mark Allaben, the schools have had six "weather-related school closings" so far this year. The general policy is to add extra days at the end of June. If that were done, school would be in session through June 22, and both February and April vacations would be maintained.

The board decided to table the calendar until next month's meeting. This would allow time for any additional snow-related cancellations to be calculated in.

The next Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 10, at 7 p.m.

Solar Power on Horizon for Gilead

by Courtney Parent

NASA technology proved to be simply "out of this world" at last week's Board of Education meeting. Last Thursday, Feb. 10, the board considered a solar energy proposal by DBS Energy that would utilize the same solar panels NASA uses for space exploration.

DBS Energy, based in Berlin, supports the development of alternative energy through the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund. The fund promotes the use of alternative energy sources at schools, businesses, and residences in an effort to reduce emissions within the state and provide solutions to climate change.

DBS Energy representative Erik Bartone conducted the presentation for implementing a Solar Photovoltaic (PV) system at Gilead Hill School.

The school is currently second in line on the first-come, first-served list and Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz said though Gilead hasn't been officially awarded the PV proposal she is hopeful. Ultimately DBS will decide which schools it will outfit.

PV systems use semiconductors such as silicon to convert sunlight directly to energy. The energy produced by the use of solar panels displaces energy that would normally be produced by fossil-fuel-powered plants. PV systems produce no emissions of any kind.

According to Cruz, this was the town's second time receiving the proposal and she noted that this time the proposal was "significantly different."

The initial proposal was sent out to school districts two years ago, after the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 was passed in February 2009. The three main goals of the Recovery Act were to add new jobs and save existing ones, to increase economic activity and invest in long-term growth, and to hold the government accountable for its spending, according to recovery.gov.

Cruz said the main drawbacks to the 2009 PV proposal were that communities or municipalities were asked to fund the entire project or a large portion of the project. Of the \$1.2 million project, the town of Hebron would have been required to pay \$800,000.

According to Bartone the state received additional stimulus money in October 2010, representing \$3 million. Those stimulus funds are now being used to offer the PV systems to schools on a first-come, first-served basis.

About a month ago, the town received an e-mail from Clean Energy re-advertising the proposal. Cruz said this time, the big difference was the community did not need to supply any funding. The entire cost of the project would be supported through the ARRA.

"We are able to install the system at basically no cost," Bartone said, "and guarantee a discounted price on electric for the life of the system."

The main difference in the proposal, aside from the drastic change in money matters, lies in ownership. In the initial proposal the town

of Hebron would own the system. As the proposal stands now DBS Energy would own, maintain and operate the system for the entirety of a 20-year agreement. DBS would also conduct quarterly inspections of the system. After the agreement is up, Hebron would have the opportunity to buy the system for just \$1.

According to Cruz, Gilead would be a perfect candidate for the project, due mostly to its location and recent renovation.

"It sits on a hill, which has direct access to the sun," Cruz said. "Plus we just put a new roof on Gilead last April and we are putting another new roof on this summer. It's an ideal location."

The proposal presented by DBS revolves around a 100 kilowatt system. This would provide approximately 25 to 35 percent of the power required at the school, with the remainder being provided by Connecticut Light & Power. Bartone said the proposed system would offset about 75 percent of the output during the summer months.

A few key advantages to installing the solar panels mentioned by Bartone were that they contain ample amounts of data and are very durable. He explained the solar panel system would be connected to an online school network.

Also, since they do not require roof penetration they can simply be picked up and removed for any necessary maintenance to the roof or to

the panels themselves. Lastly, he acknowledged their dark coloring which he said "helps significantly" with generating heat in the cold winter months.

Cruz noted additional advantages to installing the system at Gilead. The most pulse-stopping of which – over 20 years the community would save more than half a million dollars. Some other advantages would be a guaranteed cheaper cost per kilowatt, educational benefits for Gilead students and a 25-35 year warranty.

"There are educational programs connected to it," Cruz said. "The children will really benefit from learning about it."

According to Bartone, the company does "active education" with the implementation of the system. Children get together and are provided with information and properly educated about the system while it's being installed.

Before Bartone finished his proposal, Board of Education Chair Mark Allaben added a few quick promotional attempts.

"I was just wondering if Ellie told you in her grand proposal that the sun shines brighter in Hebron," Allaben said laughing. "And the sun does rise sooner in eastern Connecticut than western Connecticut."

The next step in the process is for DBS Energy to conduct a site analysis.

If chosen the installation process would take about eight weeks and Cruz estimated panels could be installed as early as next fall.

Heritage Photo Album to Capture Hebron's History

by Courtney Parent

A presentation at the Board of Selectmen meeting last Thursday, Feb. 3 aimed to bring life to past memories.

Local photographer Peter Billard proposed the idea for the Hebron Heritage Photo Project. The project would involve members of the community bringing forward old photographs of people, places, activities and services within the town, as a way to preserve the town's history.

"The purpose is to bring out old photos that are tucked away in shoe boxes, albums [and] attics," Billard said. "Anything that relates to the town that might be otherwise lost when people move or pass away."

As a photographer, Billard said he's had plenty of experience copying and scanning photographs, which, he added "isn't hard to do." He thought this could be a project that would be of great benefit to the town of Hebron, which

is also his hometown. When completed, the project would enable residents to go online and view images displaying everything that has added to the history of Hebron and the town's evolution over time.

Desired images would include cultural events, interiors and exteriors of homes, agriculture, animals, leisure and recreational activities, famous visitors, people at work, performers, natural disasters, town landmarks, town government, and more. The photos would provide a structure for acknowledgement for all those people who made an impact on the town and any monumental moments that took place.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that the project proved to be a big hit with selectmen and the town is excited about moving forward with it.

"The board loved the idea and voted on a

motion to support the project," Therrien said.

Therrien also noted that when other local towns completed similar projects there had been a "huge response" from the residents.

The project is intended to be a community-effort, to which Billard is encouraging everyone in town to participate. He said it will take numerous volunteers, readers and information takers to complete the project.

There are eight steps in the execution of the project. These include getting the town on board, completing a plan of action, creating an identity, logo, and website, selecting dates and venues, developing a publicity program, getting the word out, assigning tasks to volunteers, and holding "Photo Scanning Day." So far, the town is officially on board and Billard is now working on a plan of action.

The project will also require cooperation of town officials to use town facilities to complete the scanning efforts on Photo Scanning Day. As of right now, possible venues are the Douglas Library, Town Hall, Gilead Hill School, Hebron Elementary, RHAM, and the Russell Mercier Senior Center.

While the exact date of Photo Scanning Day is yet to be determined, Billard said that April is a likely target. He said a Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. would be ideal, providing the best availability to reserve a venue and the best opportunity for high community attendance.

With the support of the community and use of town facilities Billard will be able to successfully complete the Hebron Heritage Photo Project and provide a virtual online yearbook of the town of Hebron.

Portland Grand List Grows By Less Than 1 Percent

by Claire Michalewicz

Portland's Grand List of assessable properties for the year ending Oct. 1, 2010, showed a modest increase rising 0.61 percent from the previous year.

The list put the total value of taxable properties in Portland at \$856,549,611, an increase of about \$5.21 million from the 2009 list.

Town officials say that while the increase is small, they're glad the value went up at all.

The grand list includes three types of property – real estate, motor vehicles and personal property. Real estate is by far the largest category within the Grand List, with a value of \$760.05 million, an increase of 0.34 percent from last year. Motor vehicles, at \$66.63 million, showed the largest increase, up 4.52 percent from last year.

Personal property, meanwhile, showed a slight decrease. The \$29.86 million in that category is down 0.79 percent from last year.

Assessor Nicole Lintereur said she never tries to predict changes in the Grand List, but she was pleased with the increase.

"It's not much, but it's something," Lintereur said. "It's something in these difficult times."

This year's increase was smaller than in previous years – the Grand List's value went up 1.16 percent last year, and 1.06 percent the year before.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield agreed, explaining that she was happy to have even a

small increase. She pointed out that the Grand List had actually decreased in some nearby towns, such as Durham.

"To have it go up is a good thing," Bransfield said, "and we're looking forward to those years when it goes up more."

The Grand List will be a factor in calculating the budget for the 2011-12 fiscal year, she said. Bransfield said she and Finance Director Tom Robinson were working on a proposed budget to present to the Board of Selectmen by Feb. 28.

"We're looking forward to working on the budget and doing our best to keep expenditures minimal," she said. She said that while her goal was always to present a zero percent tax increase, that goal was dependent on several factors, including the Grand List.

The Board of Selectmen will use the Grand List to set the mill rate. The rate is determined by dividing the town's budget by the Grand List total. One mill is equal to \$1 tax per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Residents can calculate their taxes by multiplying their total assessments by the mill rate. Portland's current mill rate is 27.80, meaning if residents have a home assessed at \$200,000, they pay \$5,560 in taxes on it.

"The Grand List is of some help [to the town budget], but not as much as we would like,"

Bransfield said. But one factor that did make a difference, she said, was that the Board of Education had proposed a zero percent increase to its budget.

Bransfield said that while she didn't plan to add any programs to next year's budget, she was considering replacing the sand and salt mixture the town uses on its roads with the salt and calcium chloride mix that the state and many other towns use. She said she was also waiting to see how much of the snow budget the town used this year, to see if she would need to make any adjustments to next year's public works budget.

A major factor in planning the town's budget is state revenues, Bransfield said, and this week, the town received the estimated amounts of grants it will receive under Governor Dannel Malloy's proposed state budget. Education Cost Sharing, at \$4.27 million, is the largest grant the town receives, and that figure is not expected to change. Under Malloy's plan, Portland will see slight decreases in some categories, notably public school transportation. The total reduction is estimated at \$12,596.

Lintereur said the increases and decreases in the three categories were all normal, though this was the first time she had seen personal property fall in her three years in Portland. Personal property, which includes business and

manufacturing equipment, depreciates automatically by 10 percent each year, she said.

She said much of the personal property loss came from the closure of the Smurfit-Stone Container Corporation. The box factory closed its doors in 2009, and while its real estate holdings still place it in the town's top 10 taxpayers, the company no longer pays taxes on personal property.

The top 10 property owners in Portland are Connecticut Light and Power, with property valued at \$10.7 million; St. Clements Foundation, \$4.47 million; Perry Portland Associates (owners of the Elmcrest Hospital/Portland TownPlace property), \$4.2 million; Buckeye Cattle Company (the Quarry Ridge Golf Course), \$3.91 million; Stone Container Corporation, \$2.86 million; Jarvis Airfoil, \$6.70 million; Fairways Fivesome (Portland Golf Course), \$2.18 million; Portland Care and Rehabilitation, \$2.15 million; Woodgreen Portland \$2.11 million; and Chatham Ridge Associates, \$2.01 million.

Combined, the top 10 taxpayers own \$37.29 million of taxable property. Lintereur said she had not yet calculated the top ten taxpayers in each of the three property categories, and would wait until after the Board of Assessment Appeals held their hearings next month. The deadline to request a hearing is today, Feb. 18.

Marlborough Grand List Maintains Small Growth

by Katy Nally

Similar to last year, the town's 2010 Grand List only saw a slight increase over the 2009 total.

According to Tax Assessor Marie Hall, the town's taxable property totaled just over \$627 million, netting an increase of about \$3.73 million or 0.60 percent, over the 2009 list.

The increase this year, while small, is still a little more than what the Grand List had grown by the previous two years. The 2009 list increased by 0.42 percent, and the 2008 list only increased by about 0.06 percent.

The Grand List represents the net value of assessed property in town, and is used to help set the mill rate for the upcoming fiscal year. The rate is determined by dividing the town's budget by the Grand List total. Residents can calculate their taxes by multiplying their total assessments by the mill rate. Currently, the mill rate in Marlborough is at 26.58, Hall said. (A mill is \$1 tax per \$1,000 of assessed property value. So, for example, a person with a house assessed at \$200,000 pays \$5,316 in

taxes on it.)

The list is separated into three parts: real estate, personal property and motor vehicle. This year, totals for each category saw an increase. Real estate went up the least, at about 0.38 percent, or \$2.17 million; personal property rose 1.75 percent, or about \$147,000; and motor vehicle increased about 3.07 percent, or \$1.4 million.

Hall said income from real estate was impacted this year because the Moose Lodge filed for property tax exemption, as did two veterans in town.

Board of Finance Chair Cathi Gaudinski said she was aware the veterans had filed for tax exemption, but added the board had requested that selectmen change the tax-exemption ordinance to include a residency requirement, similar to the ordinance in East Hampton.

"We asked selectmen to consider having it amended, so that we can plan better," Gaudinski said.

As far as personal property, Hall said it might have increased because cell towers now must

be declared as personal property.

Considering the miniscule overall increase, Hall was not optimistic about the upcoming townwide revaluation.

"The market's dropped since the last reval," she said. "It's happening everywhere, not just here."

First Selectman Bill Black said he was just "glad" the town maintained an increase, instead of dipping into the red on taxable property.

Gaudinski agreed.

"I still consider it a flat increase, but it's better than being at a zero or a negative decrease," she said.

Black said the town operation's budget for 2011-12 will likely come in at about a 0.09 percent increase – or \$4.34 million. Selectmen will present their budget to the Board of Finance on March 9.

The Board of Education is currently examining three budget scenarios, ranging from a 0.31 percent increase to a 3.89 percent jump. The latter totals about \$7.17 million. The board

held a meeting to discuss its budget options Thursday after press time.

The top 10 real estate taxpayers in town are: Both LLC at \$3.49 million, Milborough Heath Care Realty Co at \$3.13 million, Elliott Enterprises LLC at \$2.8 million, Robert H. and Mary C. Soleau at \$1.93 million, Country Barn Properties LLC at \$1.88 million, Robert M. Elliott at \$1.67 million, C & B Marlborough Associates LLC at \$1.64 million, 369 North Main Street LLC at \$1.19 million, Edward F. and Nancy S. Bader at \$904,000 and Douglas A. and Nathalie D. Thibodeau at \$900,000.

The top 10 personal property taxpayers in town are: Connecticut Light & Power Co at \$3.54 million, Schneider Electric Motion USA Inc at \$278,000, Marlborough Health Care at \$276,000, John Fritz at \$206,000, Shared Imaging LLC at \$162,000, Liberty Bank at \$140,000, Imshaug Knut at \$137,000, Prohealth Physicians MSO Inc at \$131,000, Dunkin' Donuts at \$127,000 and De Lage Landen Operational at \$117,000.

Marlborough Selectmen Scrutinize Town Operations Budget

by Katy Nally

The Board of Selectmen held another budget workshop Tuesday, as its presentation to the Board of Finance is less than three weeks away.

First Selectman Bill Black said the town operations 2011-12 budget will tally "in the neighborhood" of about a 0.09 percent increase, when compared to this year's spending package.

Two factors, he said, are keeping the budget from reaching a zero-percent change: unemployment payout and changes to health care plans – both of which are mandated by the federal government.

Another wild card for this year was the town's snow removal budget, which, at only in the middle of February, is already in the red.

New to this year's budget, and something the board touched on Tuesday, is creating a Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) part-time administrator position, now that residents have begun to make payments on the sewer project.

Black explained the federal government has extended unemployment payout beyond what the town originally budgeted for, which was 26 weeks. He said the town would now be responsible for funding half the cost of an additional 30 weeks of unemployment benefits.

In addition, Black said the town operations

budget was impacted when changes were made to family health care plans. Before, children were booted from family plans at age 21, but now they can remain on their parents' insurance until they're 26. Black said this change costs the town about \$3,000-\$4,000 more annually, as some employees opt to switch from a single health care plan to a family plan.

"These two items have really kept us from zero," he said.

Another big hit for the budget was this year's public works budget, as the town tried to stay ahead of the snowy weather. Besides clearing snow, Black said there is yet-to-be-seen "collateral damage" that was perhaps done to roads and parking lots when the blocks of snow and ice were "pushed back" from municipal buildings and road shoulders.

Also, the "push back" of snow in the four parking lots at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School, and surrounding roads, has cost about \$3,300, Black said.

The \$20.88 million spending package that was approved by voters back in May, budgeted \$130,000 for public works "materials," or, ice melt, Black said. As of Tuesday, that line item has gone over by about \$81,000 and sits at

\$211,000, Black said.

As of Jan. 22, Black said about two-thirds of the overtime line item for public works was used up.

"It's just been one of those winters," he said. "We haven't had a melt."

The budget currently in effect had a contingency line item of \$20,000, which, Black said, "isn't gonna cut it," when it comes to making up going over budget on clearing snow.

The alternative, he said, was to take from the undesignated fund balance, which sits at about 7.4 percent of the town's overall budget, and is rarely used as a "rainy day fund," he said. Instead, keeping the fund balance around 7.5 percent ensures Marlborough will receive good rates when it bonds out for projects.

Lastly, Black proposed creating a part-time administrative position to be managed and funded by the WPCA.

During the town sewer project, Black said, Town Planner Peter Hughes had taken on administrative responsibilities for the WPCA.

"I'd like to free up [Hughes] so we can get started on our business park," Black said.

For the most part, he continued, the town has acted as "a clearing house" for the sewer

project, by collecting payments from residents and processing paperwork.

Black said since the town closed the permanent financing of the sewers in September, it was time the WPCA took on its own day-to-day administrative responsibilities.

He proposed sending a letter to the WPCA, asking its members to look in the commission's budget and fund the part-time position, as other area WPCA have done.

The other two selectmen were on board with Black's letter.

Selectman Joe La Bella said since the WPCA now generates its own revenue "they can appropriately place the cost."

Selectwoman Riva Clark said she thought creating the position was "always understood" between the WPCA and the town.

"I hope they realize this and have it in their budget," she said.

Another budget workshop, to discuss capital expenditures, is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 22, at 6 p.m., at Town Hall. Selectmen are slated to present the town operations budget to the Board of Finance March 9, at 7 p.m. at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School.

Portland Resident Criticizes Town's Snow Removal

by Claire Michalewicz

The barrage of snow seems to be winding down, but the way Portland handled its removal is still a hot topic in town.

Resident Michelle Donahue approached the Board of Selectmen at its meeting Wednesday, explaining that she was upset that the town had to cancel school for a few days to remove snow from roads and roofs.

"I felt let down by our town," Donahue said. "I looked at our leadership and said 'What happened here?'"

"I'm not placing blame," she said, explaining that she just wanted to know how the town had addressed safety concerns. She said she had cleared off her own roof after the second major snowstorm, and wanted to know why the town hadn't started snow removal earlier.

Donahue explained that she felt she owed it to the selectmen to tell them about her concerns, rather than tell other people in town.

But First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield told Donahue the town had done its due diligence in checking roofs at schools and other town buildings.

"I was told that the school roofs were fine," she said. "I take a little exception for you to say we weren't proactive with our roofs."

Closing schools on Monday, Jan. 30, had been a safety precaution because roads weren't wide enough for buses to safely pass after the

snowstorm that had hit the previous Wednesday and Thursday, she explained. Complicating snow removal that weekend was the propane explosion on Summer Street, which drew emergency personnel and public works employees away from snow removal duties, Bransfield added.

Selectman Carl Chudzik praised public works employees for their efforts to remove the large amounts of snow.

"I think they did their very best," he said, explaining that the amount of snow this winter had been exceptional.

"It's not a problem that's unique to Portland," selectman Mark Finkelstein added.

Board of Education member Andrea Alfano explained that the school roofs had been inspected, and cracks were only discovered in walls at the high and middle school complex on Feb. 4. Bransfield said the town hired a crew of about 100 people to clear the roof of the building, which took several days.

Donahue said she felt reassured to hear that the town had inspected the roofs and tried to proactively remove snow. "I'm happy with what I'm hearing," she said.

* * *

At the start of the meeting, Kevin Armstrong presented a months-long project he conducted to map the town in a variety of ways. Armstrong

is a senior at the University of Connecticut, majoring in geomatics, a science that deals with using mathematical methods on data about the Earth's surface. He explained how he used software and tools the town already owns, through the Technology Partnership Program run by David Kuzminski to complete his project.

Armstrong said he surveyed the town with a satellite positioning system to map features like fire hydrants and catch basins. These maps, he said, could be stacked in layers, so a single map could include assessor's data, topographical features, zoning regulations and anything else the town might find useful.

* * *

The frequent snow days have interrupted the work of the School Facilities Study Committee, so the Board of Selectmen Wednesday granted a two-month extension to prepare their final report. Selectwoman and committee member Sharon Peters explained that the committee had finished touring the town's schools, and was working on "crystallizing their ideas" to prepare a final report. Under the new deadline, the committee will send their report to the boards of selectmen and education by April 30, and will give a presentation by June 30.

The selectmen passed a resolution supporting the establishment of a Connecticut State Energy Office. Clean Energy Task Force Chair-

man Andy Bauer said Governor Dannel Malloy had proposed the office as a way to consolidate different state offices that manage energy use, including the Connecticut Energy Advisory Board, the Office of Policy and Management, and the Department of Public Utility Control. The resolution will be sent to the state legislature.

Chudzik and John Anderson both opposed the motion, with Chudzik explaining that while he supported the idea of an energy office, he'd like to see more detailed plans about the office and the potential cost or savings to taxpayers.

Also at the meeting, the selectmen voted to renew an agreement between the town and the architecture firm CR3, which provides design consulting services for property owners in the Town Center Village District. The agreement will continue for another year, through Jan. 31, 2012.

The selectmen also voted to send to a town meeting the lease agreement between the town and the Northern Middlesex County Y.M.C.A. for the town to use the Camp Ingersoll facilities for recreational programs at no charge. The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 2, at 7:15 p.m., at Portland Library, 20 Freestone Ave., with a regular Board of Selectmen meeting following at 7:30.

Titanic – The Musical Sets Sail at Bacon in Colchester

by Katy Nally

Colchester Community Theatre (CCT) embarked on its own type of maiden voyage this year when it chose to tackle the behemoth of the Broadway production *Titanic – The Musical*.

The show opens tonight at 7 p.m. in the auditorium at Bacon Academy, with two more showings scheduled for Saturday and Sunday.

Unlike the Hollywood production, this weekend's play will not feature the love affair between Jack and Rose. Instead, the show – which debuted on Broadway in 1997 and won five Tonys, including Best Musical – retells the story of the Titanic through actual events and accounts from passengers and crew members.

And the historic mood will be set even before the show begins tonight. A slideshow that includes actual photos from the Titanic will cycle through on a large projector screen as the audience gets seated. Also, there will be the name of a passenger on each boarding pass/ticket, and at the end of the show, theatergoers will be able to check a chart outside the auditorium to see if their 1912 alter egos survived the sinking.

With about 3,500 passengers aboard the actual Titanic, and CCT's determination for authenticity, Director Wallis Johnson and the cast had a large task at hand. But, she said, the actors, actresses and crew really pulled it off this year.

"The cast members have really taken it upon themselves to research and learn about who their characters are," Johnson said. "It's really an amazing thing. They took it very seriously."

While there are essentially no lead roles within the 75-member cast, Johnson said there are about 10 key characters, including Edward Smith, the ship's captain, Thomas Andrews, its builder, and Bruce Ismay, the managing director for White Star, the line that operated the ill-

fated cruise ship.

Because there were so many Titanic passengers, Johnson said some cast members have taken on multiple roles, which poses a challenge for CCT's costume department.

"It's the most-costumed show we've ever done," Johnson said.

The crew worked "painstakingly to precisely reflect the class" of each character through clothing, jewelry and accessories, Johnson said. The right set of elbow-length gloves or a brooch helped to distinguish the wealthy characters from common folk.

And if costumes and cast members weren't enough of a task, CCT faced the challenge of creating a Titanic set.

"Every single component of the show is over the top," Johnson said.

When the curtain draws at Bacon this weekend it will reveal a 42-foot boat, with two additional hulls flanking each side. Because of its size, some audience members won't even be able to see the ship in its entirety, but, Johnson said, that's all part of the vessel's mystique.

"We wanted to give the impression of the grandeur of the Titanic," she said.

And, like the actual ship, the set at Bacon will "tip" after its inevitable brush with an iceberg.

The whole production, Johnson said, took "countless hours of work," to put together. The crew began building the boat set in December.

"We have been working tirelessly," Johnson added.

Because of the scale of the production, Johnson said very few community theatre troupes "even touch" *Titanic – The Musical*. But, with the support from Colchester and its residents, Johnson said she knew CCT would be able to pull off such a show.

"We really felt we could take on this task, because we have the support of our commu-



Actors in *Titanic – The Musical* bid their goodbyes to family members and board the ship as they rehearse the opening scene of the Colchester Community Theatre production.

nity," she said. "We have wonderful crew members who have been with us since the beginning."

Titanic – The Musical marks the 28th show for CCT over the past 12 years. While many CCT veterans remained part of the cast, Johnson said there are also many newcomers for this year's production, "which is very exciting."

Opening night is tonight, at 7 p.m., in the Bacon Auditorium located at 611 Norwich Ave. Saturday's production will also begin at 7 p.m.,

in the same auditorium and Sunday's is scheduled for 2 p.m.

Ticket are \$10 for adults and \$8 for seniors and children age 12 and under. They are available in the Parks and Rec. office at Town Hall or at the Wild Geese Gift Shop, 191 Broadway. They will be sold at the door, as well, but audience members are encouraged to purchase tickets ahead of time.

In case of inclement weather, call 860-537-7297 for updates.

East Hampton Police News

1/31: Pamela Cramer, 64, of East Hampton and Michelle Paquette, 18, of East Hampton, were involved in a two-vehicle accident on Route 66, East Hampton Police said. Cramer was issued a written warning for failure to follow at a reasonable distance apart and Paquette was issued a summons for operating an uninsured motor vehicle, police added.

2/2: Colin M. Schad, 26, of 96 Middle Haddam Rd., was arrested for sixth-degree larceny, police said.

2/5: Tyler J. Maxwell, 27, of 17 Sherry Dr., was arrested for DUI, failure to drive right, traveling too fast for conditions, and failure to give signal while making a left turn, police said.

2/5: Linda J. Myers, 50, of 11 Sturbridge Rd., Marlborough was arrested for DUI, failure to drive right, operating an unregistered motor vehicle and driving with an obscured marker, police said.

2/7: Stanley Warzecha, 83, of East Hampton, Timothy Rall, 55, of East Hampton and Guy Miner, 46, of East Hampton were involved in a three-vehicle accident at the intersection of Colchester Avenue and Smith Street, police said. Warzecha was issued a ticket for following too close, police added.

2/8: Seth Hall, 20, of 126 Bear Swamp Rd., was arrested for third-degree larceny, credit card theft, illegal use of a credit card, fraudulent use of an ATM, and issuing a bad check, police said.

2/9: Dionige J. Nasiadka, 18, of Sawmill Ln., South Windsor, was arrested for possession of less than four ounces of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia, police said.

2/9: Meghan O'Brien, 39, of 17 Haddam Neck Rd., was arrested for disorderly conduct, possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, and possession of drug paraphernalia, police said.

Colchester Police News

2/11: Peter Bates, 44, of 19 Gustafson Rd., was charged with risk of injury to a minor, disorderly conduct and third-degree assault, Colchester Police said.

2/11: A 14-year-old male was charged with disorderly conduct and third-degree assault, Colchester Police said.

Marlborough Police News

2/11: Michael Baskerville, 28, of 43 Elms Village 2B, East Hartford, was charged with operating a motor vehicle when license is suspended and speeding, State Police said.

Portland Police News

1/30: Jeremy Murphy, 20, of 39 Levesque Rd., Middlefield, was charged with DUI, traveling too fast for conditions, evading responsibility and following too closely, Portland Police said.

2/1: Beatrice Colbky, 21, of 141 Franklin St., Stamford, was charged with violation of probation, police said.

2/9: Wayne Whitehead, 49, of 79 Reservoir Rd., Colchester, was charged with DUI and failing to drive in established lane, police said.

Marlborough Selectmen Revisit Library Renovation Plans

by Katy Nally

Selectmen took another step toward renovating the library's second floor Tuesday – an initiative that's been around for several years now.

In the fall of 2009, the Richmond Memorial Library received \$250,000 from a Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant, but, without funds for engineering and design plans, the original use for the grant was changed.

Also, \$250,000 was about one-third to one-quarter of what was approximately needed to complete the renovation. The town had applied for the maximum awarded through STEAP, \$500,000, but only received half.

First Selectman Bill Black explained he worked with the Office of Policy and Management to divert the \$250,000 STEAP grant to be used to create sidewalks that run along School Road from Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School to Richmond Memorial Library.

Remaining STEAP funds from the 2009 grant would also be used to configure the library's new boiler with its existing thermostat.

Now town officials are looking to secure a Small Cities Program grant that would cover American Disabilities Act (ADA) changes at the library, including those on the second floor. On Tuesday, selectmen awarded Wagner and Associates a bid to become the project's Small Cities grant consultant and handle the application and paperwork.

If the town receives the Small Cities grant, renovation plans for the library could include making the elevator and restrooms handicapped accessible, as well as installing a ramp.

A search committee, composed of a library executive board member, a selectman, Town Planner Peter Hughes and Library Director Nancy Wood, has met with several architectural firms to go over engineering and design plans

for the renovation. The committee narrowed down the pool to five and met with the last firm late this week, after press time.

As bids haven't been finalized, Wood said she could not comment on how much the engineering and design plans might cost. She said the library board would meet soon to discuss the cost and whether or not it will be able to afford funding the plans.

"We really hope it comes in cheap," she said.

The library board would have to dip into its endowment fund to cover the initial design phase. Black said he expected to award a bid for these plans by March 1.

This is not the first time the library's renovation hinged on engineering and design plans. When selectmen looked to apply for STEAP funds last July, they considered procuring money to renovate the library, but ultimately decided on a sidewalk plan that connects the town center and businesses – in a vote of two to one. At the time, sidewalks were chosen over the library because engineering and design plans for the sidewalk project were already complete.

This time, however, Black said he "expected" the library to fund the engineering and design plans.

Once the library and town get over the engineering and design hurdle, Black said there still might be a shortfall when it comes to funding the entire renovation. But, he said, there might be several options to make up this shortfall, including, having fundraisers, applying for additional grants and perhaps incorporating it into the budget.

With the latest renovation initiatives, Black said it was important to demonstrate the town and library are committed to going forward.

Wood, Black, Hughes and a member of the library board are expected to meet sometime next week to further discuss renovation plans.



Officials met with architects this week and discussed plans to possibly renovate Richmond Memorial Library. The town is looking to apply for a Small Cities grant to cover some of the expenses.

Mission Accomplished in Colchester, Sip by Sip

by Katy Nally

Imagine New York City without electricity, working toilets, water that won't make you sick and any way to filter diseased water.

Now, imagine that recipe for disaster continuing for longer than a year, and it's close to the chaos the people of Haiti have endured since a 7.0 earthquake devastated the country last January.



Les Kershnar

Colchester teacher Les Kershnar uses his New York City analogy when he describes his recent trip to Haiti where he helped teach locals how to purify their water.

"In three or four days, we wouldn't have a New York City left," Kershnar said. "But Port-au-Prince hasn't had water for a year and the people still survive. They survive on hope and God."

Kershnar, a sixth-grade Earth science teacher at William J. Johnston Middle School, said he decided to go to Haiti after a seminar about purifying water sparked his interest.

"I just went to the seminar because I wanted to know more about what was happening with water throughout the world," Kershnar said.

But that decision set off a chain reaction that would land Kershnar and a "Clean Water Team" in Haiti, just two weeks later.

At the seminar, Kershnar learned the water filtration company PUR had created small packets of chemicals that can be dissolved into several gallons of polluted water, and in about 30 minutes, the result is crystal clear, disease-free H₂O.

Kershnar explained the packet is mostly chlorine, with an additive that makes the pollutants like dirt, cysts, bacteria and viruses coagulate and settle. Then the water is filtered through a cotton cloth and stands for a few more minutes before it can be consumed.

"It's pretty simple," he said.

Since the Jan. 12 earthquake, access to clean drinking water, as well as working toilets, has been scarce for most Haitians. Then, on Oct. 21, an outbreak of cholera was confirmed, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Cholera, while easily prevented and treated, can cause dehydration and eventually become life-threatening.

After being introduced to the packets, it was only a matter of days before Kershnar was on his way to Haiti putting them to good use.

"With all the cholera going on, the only way to cure it is to start hydrating people," Kershnar said. "It was a miracle, basically, how we got these packets."

His first step was approaching the speaker of the seminar that night. "That's when I told him I'd be using these packets somewhere," Kershnar said.

After that, Kershnar sought out an organization that had ties to Haiti, and a fellow teacher put him in touch with Bethesda Evangelical Mission (BEM) ministries in Meriden and Pastor Jean-Lubin Beaucejour. Then, several days later, Kershnar and the rest of the team were off to Les Cayes, Haiti, on Dec. 17.

Kershnar spent about a week in Haiti distributing, and demonstrating how to use the PUR packets.

In total, Kershnar estimated about 225,000 packets were handed out; each one aimed at providing clean water to a family for about 30 days.

The PUR packets, while very effective and easy to use, don't provide clean water on a long-term basis, Kershnar said, so the goal of completely eradicating cholera is still something the science teacher grapples with. Most recently, the disease has affected children at an orphanage BEM supports.

"[The packets are] more of a Band-Aid or a stop gap," he said, adding he'd like to see a better solution put in place to supply water. "There's not enough packets being made to take care of these people."

And that solution might have fallen right into Kershnar's lap. While waiting to leave Haiti,



Colchester middle school teacher Les Kershnar traveled to Haiti in December to distribute PUR packets that purify polluted water. Pictured above are residents of Les Cayes, Haiti standing with boxes of the packets.

Kershnar met a representative from Global Effect – an organization that created a factory in Jacmel, on the southeast side of the island, that makes water filters and employs Haitians.

Unlike the packets, the ceramic filters manufactured by Global Effect provide clean drinking water for five years.

"To me that's the better long-range approach," Kershnar said. "That's the only real solution at this point for Haiti."

Now Kershnar and Beaucejour are looking for businesses or residents to invest in an initiative to bring a similar water-filter solution to Les Cayes.

"We're trying to get someone to sponsor us

because too many people are being affected," Kershnar said.

Having witnessed firsthand how the Haitian population has suffered through the initial natural disaster and its many aftershocks, Kershnar seemed anxious to return to the island to continue helping families. A summer trip back to Haiti has been planned to, hopefully, work on creating a water filter factory.

"He really wants to see things change," Beaucejour said about Kershnar. "As a teacher – for him it is unacceptable for people to live the way people do in Haiti."

"He has a heart for those in need. ... This is the kind of guy I like to work with."

Obituaries

Colchester

Betty Avery

Betty (Clark) Avery, 88, of Colchester and formerly of Meriden, went home to be with the love of her life, the late George W. Avery, on Wednesday, Feb. 9, at the Harrington Court GHC Center in Colchester. Born Jan. 15, 1923 in Middletown, she was the daughter of the late Russell and Irene (Hill) Clark.

On Dec. 5, 1942, she and George were married at All Saints Church in Meriden, where they were parishioners for many years. Together, they shared 67 years of marriage before he predeceased her on June 26, 2010.

She was a devoted wife, mother and grandmother who loved cooking and baking for her family. She also held a great love for animals, especially dogs.

She is survived by three children and their spouses, June and Michael Banack and Robert and Dorothy Avery, all of Meriden, and Lynn and Arnold Miller of Lebanon; seven grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren; and numerous extended family members and friends.

In addition to her husband, she was predeceased by her brother, Robert.

The family would like to thank the staff of Harrington Court for their care and compassion.

Care of private arrangements has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the Meriden Humane Society, 311 Murdock Ave., Meriden, CT 06450.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

George Chemerynski

George Chemerynski, 84, of Colchester, passed away peacefully Saturday, Feb. 12, surrounded by his loving family. Born Nov. 2, 1926, George was the son of the late George and Mary Chemerynski, and beloved husband of the late Carol Mintz Chemerynski for 60 years.



A lifelong resident of Colchester, George was well-known and liked by all. George served in the Navy during World War II and was a member of American Legion Post 52. He had an accomplished career as the long-time owner of Colchester's auto service station, George's Flying-A, and many dedicated years as a mechanic at Grody Chevrolet in West Hartford.

George is survived by his sister, Jennie Marsh of Coventry; children Cheryl Croce and her husband Vincent of Fort Myers, FL, Mark Chemerynski and his wife Teri of Colchester, Michael Chemerynski and his wife Jane of Marlborough; his grandchildren, Jonah Piascik and his wife Jennifer, Jesse Piascik and his wife Shawntel, Marissa Taylor and her husband Jeffrey, Charity Chemerynski, Sara Kinney and her husband Trevor, Hannah Waltz and her husband Matthew, Rachel and Krista Chemerynski; 10 great-grandchildren; his sister-in-law Mae Chemerynski; brother-in-law Joe Fleischmann; and many nieces and nephews.

George was also predeceased by his siblings John, Helen, Mildred and Howard.

George was tirelessly devoted to his ever-growing family. He was an avid storyteller, excited to share his lifetime memories. George was well-known for his famous tag sales, with a knack for finding and reselling hidden treasures. He also took great pleasure in caring for and watching birds and other wildlife.

Funeral services were held Wednesday, Feb. 16, at 10:30 AM in the sanctuary of Congregation Ahavath Achim, 84 Lebanon Ave., Colchester, with Rabbi Ken Alter officiating. Interment followed in the Ahavath Achim Cemetery with full military honors. Arrangements were entrusted to Belmont Funeral Home, Colchester.

In honor of George, memorial contributions may be made to the Connecticut Audubon Society, 1361 Main St., Glastonbury, CT 06033 (ctaudubon.org), or Disabled American Veterans, DAV Memorial Program, P.O. Box 14301, Cincinnati, OH 45250 (dav.org).

Colchester

Richard W. Peck

Richard W. Peck of Colchester, husband of Gail Marie Peck, entered into eternal rest Saturday, Feb. 12, at Harrington Court Nursing Home. He was born Feb. 11, 1930, the son of William Peck and Ruth Berger.

He attended the University of Hartford where he obtained a degree in electrical engineering, which he applied to his employment as supervisor of the Meter Department for Northeast Utilities until he retired. His absolute love of life was his sailboat, "Awesome". He enjoyed most of his life sailing the Connecticut River and Long Island Sound. He also had his pilot's license and enjoyed many hours flying the skies.

He is survived by his devoted wife, Gail Marie Peck of Colchester, and his dedicated step-son, Thomas Gibson of Wethersfield.

Upon Richard's request, arrangements are private.

Andover

Susan L. Takacs

Susan L. Takacs, 63, of Andover, died peacefully at her daughter's home Sunday, Feb. 6. She was surrounded by her family after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Born Feb. 7, 1947, in Baltimore, MD, she was a daughter of the late Chester Nitche and Harriet Ruxton. She was a talented painter and sculptor. Most importantly, she will be remembered by her family as a devoted mother and grandmother.

Susan leaves her beloved daughter, Kim Sneller, of Andover, with whom she made her home, and her son, Carter Takacs, of New Haven. She was Nana to five grandchildren, and will be missed by her twin sister, Sara Warner, of Cranbury, NJ; her brother, Richard Nitche, of Sarasota, FL, and her sister, Kathie Holmes, of Fernandina Beach, FL.

Funeral services will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to benefit breast cancer awareness and research through the 2011 New York EIF Revlon Run/Walk for Women, "Team Susie," at revlonrunwalk.org.

Care of arrangements has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Portland

Charles D. "Chuck" Lyman

Charles D. "Chuck" Lyman, 69, of 49 Grove Street died Wednesday, February 2, 2011, at the Jackson Memorial Hospital, in Miami, FL. He was born on October 23, 1941 in Sutton, Massachusetts, to William and Helen A. (Cole) Lyman



He was educated in Sutton Public Schools, graduating from Sutton High School in the Class of 1959. He graduated in June of 1963, from the University of Massachusetts @ Amherst, with a B.A. in Mathematics, with a minor concentration in English literature.

Chuck retired from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, in December of 1997 following 34 years of service, and at the time of his retirement was the Director for Personal Computing Support Services, in the Office of Information Technology. He enjoyed traveling, daily walks, music, was a self taught keyboard player and avid reader. He was a loyal fan of the Boston Celtics, New England Patriots and Boston Red Sox. His greatest joy was his grandchildren.

He will be lovingly missed and remembered by his devoted wife of nearly 37 years, the former, Patricia K. (Thornton) Lyman, whom he married on June 23, 1974 in Shutesbury, MA. He leaves his loving children: Charles D. Lyman, Jr., and his wife, Karen, of Tucson, AZ, Jim A. Lyman and his wife, Sherry, of Portland, CT, Amanda Gavryck and her husband, Wayne A. Gavryck, M.D., of Greenfield, MA, Thomas Thornton and his wife Sharon Pleasant of Greenfield, MA, in addition to his loving grandchildren: Kirsten, Zachary, Kayla, Ford and Hunter, who adore him. He leaves his brother, William "Bill" Lyman and his wife, Patricia, of Whitinsville, MA, as well as his loving nephews and nieces: Tad Gentile of Tamarac, FL and William Lyman, III, of Warwick, MA, Christine Mariani of Monson, MA and Pauline Foreman, of Winchendon, MA.

A celebration of life gathering will be observed on Saturday, April 23, 2011, from 12PM until 3PM, at the Union Station, 125A Pleasant Street, Northampton, MA. Rites of committal and burial will take place in the West Cemetery, Shutesbury, MA and will be private and at the convenience of the family. Visiting hours are omitted. Expressions of affection in the form of charitable contributions are recommended in lieu of flowers, to the Alzheimer's Association National Office, 225 N. Michigan Ave., Fl. 17, Chicago, IL 60601, or to the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 262 Danny Thomas Place, Memphis, TN 38105.

The McCarthy Funeral Homes of Greenfield and Turners Falls, MA, have been entrusted with the arrangements. For further information, directions, to sign a guest book or to forward a condolence message to the Lyman family, please visit www.mccarthyfuneralhomes.com.