

RIVEREAST

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Christmas Carol Coming...Next weekend, the East Hampton High School Drama Club will debut its production of *A Christmas Carol*, the holiday classic by Charles Dickens. The youthful cast will feature, clockwise from top left, Nicolle Letterman, Sam Laraia as Ebenezer Scrooge, Emily Worman, Monica Farkas and Hannah Daddario. A story about the upcoming production appears on page 31.

Farm Drawn Into Dog Camp Controversy

by Melissa Roberto

A dog boarding camp that has been proposed for Bull Hill Road in Marlborough has been the topic of much debate in town lately – and a stable located adjacent to the proposed camp has been, unwillingly, drawn into the controversy.

The Bromley Kings Farm Equestrian Company is located at 15 Bull Hill Rd.; the proposed dog camp would be housed at the same address, in another barn on the property.

Signs have been posted around town criticizing not just the proposed camp but also Bromley Kings Farm, making allegations about the company that, according to co-owners Karin and Jill Bromley, couldn't be further from the truth.

Bromley Kings Farm offers equine assisted psychotherapy (EAP) and equine assisted learning (EAL). According to the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association, EAP is a "collaborative effort between a licensed therapist and a horse professional working with the clients and horses to address treatment goals." EAL is similar to EAP, the association said, but the focus is on an individual's vocational skills and general education goals.

Examples of the Bromleys' clients are individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and grief. The sisters offer EAP and EAL to youth, families and veterans.

"We can do things as simple as team building and communication training all the way up to therapy for a war vet who has been traumatized by what they've been exposed to," said

Jill Bromley.

The business operates in group or individual sessions. Jill Bromley said because "trauma varies depending on the person," all sessions are custom-tailored for their clients.

But, shortly before the Nov. 14 public hearing on the proposed dog boarding camp, signs began to appear around town criticizing not just the proposed camp, but the Bromleys' business as well. Some signs were found on South Road, and at the intersection of North Main Street, South Main Street and Route 66. One such sign said equine psychotherapy involves "therapy to people with mental health issues."

When the Bromleys saw the signs, they "couldn't believe it," Karin said. "We feel our business was personally targeted and slandered."

The "mental health issues" allegation, Karin added, "was really hurtful to our clients and we took offense to it for our clients' sake."

The sisters explained that the people they treat are not dangerous.

"I think mental health services have come so far that it's not a shameful thing for someone to say 'I'm really suffering after the loss of a family member,'" Karin said.

Karin said the sisters were contacted by a mental health professional from Glastonbury after witnessing the signs around Marlborough. She said the individual was "absolutely appalled that anybody would discriminate against people who use equine therapy services to better them-

See Dog Camp Page 2

Alternative Thanksgiving Road Race – in Andover

by Geeta Schrayter

Prior to sitting down for their Thanksgiving Day feast last Thursday, about 40 Andover residents laced up their shoes and hit the road for a race. But they didn't head to Manchester for the 76th annual Manchester Road Race – and in all honesty, they didn't really race.

Instead, they headed over to Andover Lake and the home of Celeste and Stephen Willard. There they found a bonfire, hot toddies, banana bread and good company waiting for them.

One evening in 2010, Willard shared Wednesday, she and her husband were having dinner at a pizza joint in Manchester. On one of the tables they noticed something about the Manchester Road Race, which prompted her husband to say he'd love to participate. But because they host their families for the holiday, there wasn't enough time.

"He said, 'You know, we should do a race around the lake,'" said Willard, and she agreed it was a great idea. A couple of Facebook posts and text messages later, the two of them gathered up around 12 people, who stopped over in

the morning for a warm drink and a snack and to receive their race bibs.

"I made up numbers and wrote on the top 'First Annual Andover Race' and on the bottom said 'Life's Better on the Lake,'" said Willard.

Each attendant was given their bib and safety pins to fasten them on as though they were at any other road race. But when it came time for the actual race, there wasn't really any running involved.

"We call it a road race but nobody really runs," Willard laughed, adding the event had become a kind of tradition. "It's just more of a chance to get together because it's the start of the holiday season."

Knowledge of the event has spread via word-of-mouth, and as a result, the race grew to around 20 participants in 2011 and jumped to about 40 this year.

"It just kind of caught on that way," she said. "It's now become our tradition."

Willard said everyone comes over at about

See Road Race Page 2



Three years ago, Celeste Willard and her husband Stephen started up an informal Thanksgiving Day race around Andover Lake. What started with about 12 people grew to around 20 last year, pictured here, and 40 this year.

Holiday Shopping Guide Inside



The Bromley Kings Farm Equestrian Company, located at 15 Bull Hill Rd., has found itself in the middle of the controversy surrounding the dog boarding camp also proposed for the site. The Bromley sisters, co-owners of the business, have taken particular objection to signs such as the one seen here, characterizing the farm's clients as people with "mental health issues."

Dog Camp cont. from Front Page

Both Bromley sisters, as well as their co-worker Cindy Trifone, have extensive backgrounds in psychology and education. Karin received a master's degree in special education from St. Joseph's in West Hartford in 2000, and has 15 years' teaching experience working with youth and adolescents. Also, for 10 years Karin has held a certification with the therapeutic riding organization PATH International, which certifies individuals in equine assisted psychotherapy and equine assisted learning.

Jill, meanwhile, has been a school psychologist for 12 years. She received a specialist's degree in psychology in 2001 from the University of Hartford. She began her career in a state facility working with incarcerated male youths ages 14-20 and has continued as a school psychologist at a state technical high school for the last 10 years. She said she believes EAP is a beneficial and alternative approach to a "four-walled classroom" she is used to working in.

"You can actually measure and see the kid making these leaps and gains that they don't do when you're just sitting there telling them what they should and shouldn't do," Jill said.

Trifone is a licensed professional counselor with over 10 years of experience working with youth, adolescents and families. She currently works for Plainville Youth Services, and is also familiar with the human-animal bond due to her three therapy dogs.

The sisters board their three horses at the 15 Bull Hill Rd. property, which is owned by Lynn Wolf. They explained that they had always wanted to start an equestrian business, which is why they each entered into professions with summers off, giving them time to spend with their horses.

"We started asking ourselves how we could marry horses to our professions," said Karin Bromley.

As a school psychologist and a special education teacher, the two already had mental health and educational backgrounds that would be helpful to provide EAP and EAL services. "Jill's experience fit the psychology component and I fill the education component," said Karin Bromley.

Due to state budget cuts, Karin was laid off in 2011 and the sisters decided it was a good time to start a business together. "It just made

sense at that point that we start chasing this dream," stated Karin.

While living together in Marlborough the sisters began looking at barns in the surrounding area to board their horses and to facilitate EAP and EAL services. Ultimately, they came across Wolf's property on Bull Hill Road, and opened their business at the site in July. The two have been pleased with their relationship with Wolf.

"Lynn Wolf has been very supportive to all her boarders and especially supportive of our small therapeutic equine business," Karin said. "We realize she has the right to sell her property to whoever she chooses, but not many business owners take their current clients into consideration when selling out. She has been generous with her property and building use and is always prompt in taking care of any issues that arise."

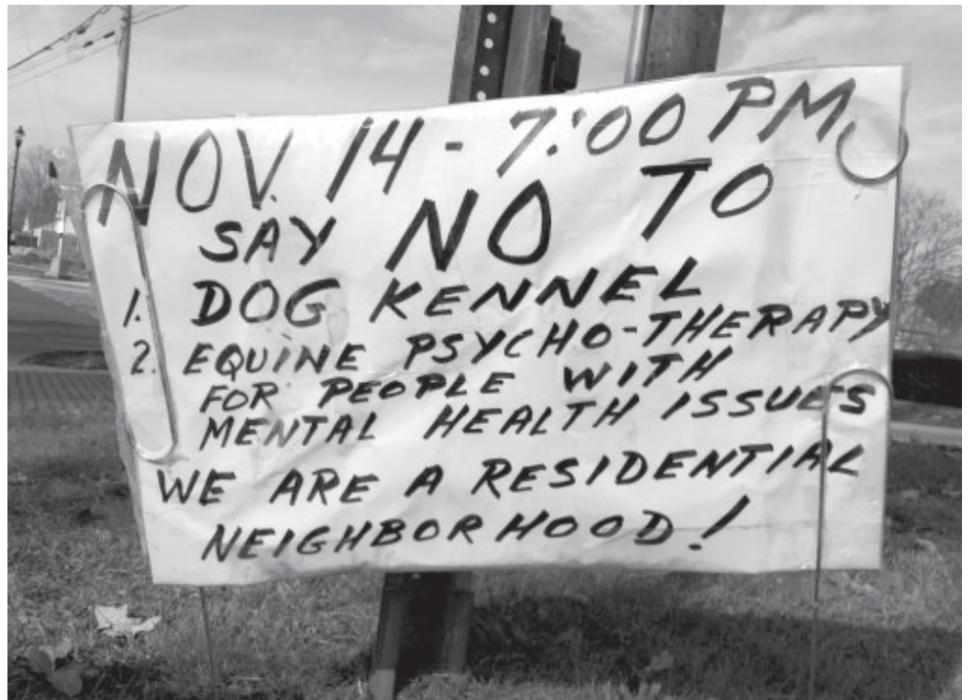
When the rest of the property went up for sale, the sisters said they were initially worried of a larger business coming along and knocking their business out. But they were excited after hearing Mark Cave's idea of a dog boarding camp at the site.

"We were hopeful things would work out with Mark Cave because he appeared to be a very responsible and ethical businessman, who was conscientious of waste management, property values, traffic, noise and safety," Karin said. "He had a plan to address our concerns as well as the neighbors' concerns while creating jobs. His business would not compete with any area dog kennels or daycare clients, since that is not his model."

The Bromleys attended the Nov. 14 public hearing on the dog camp proposal, which featured a standing-room-only crowd. When questions about the Bromleys' farm and its clients arose at the hearing, the sisters referred the public to their website, bromleykingsfarm.com to learn more about their business.

"We didn't want to take away from Mark Cave's proposal," Karin said.

Cave described the Bromleys' farm as "an amazing business for the community." He said he believes what happened at the public hearing was an issue of "people [who] didn't want to have the dog boarding facility there so they threw mud at both concepts to try to build a case to have us not there."



Wolf came from Florida to attend the public hearing and said she was "horrified" about the signs around town about the Bromley's business.

"They're extremely nice, intelligent, young women who have started a nice business and have done everything the right way, and it's the residents that are trying to prevent anything from happening by targeting these poor gals," said Wolf.

Wolf added that the neighborhood was not always as quiet as it currently is. She started a horse training business called Lynn Wolf Quarter Horses in 1997. At one point, Wolf said, the business had 52 horses on the property, and she

described it as a "very busy farm."

"Due to my retirement and the economy, it's gotten fairly quiet up there, the neighbors have gotten spoiled by it being so peaceful," she said.

Although the Zoning Commission will be the ones to decide the fate of the dog boarding camp – the commission has 65 days from the Nov. 14 public hearing to do so; its next meeting is Thursday, Dec. 6, at 7 p.m. at Town Hall – the Bromley sisters will continue to do business at 15 Bull Hill Rd., no matter what happens.

"We want people to understand we're an asset to the community, we love the town of Marlborough, and our goal is to remain small and quiet," Karin said.



Prior to walking a three-mile loop around Andover Lake, Celeste Willard, far right, helps race participants enjoy the event's signature drink: a hot toddy.

Road Race cont. from Front Page

10 to find a bonfire going, and receives the signature drink – the hot toddy – along with banana bread and, this year, apple cake courtesy of Willard's friend Lucie Wilson.

After the participants have had their share of socializing, they start walking around the lake at their own leisure. Willard said people bring their kids and dogs and head around "kind of in packs."

After completing the loop, which is about three miles, everyone meets back at the Willard's driveway and then heads home to enjoy the holiday. Willard stressed the event is nothing formal and there are no winners or losers.

"It's just kind of 'come as you are,' and enjoy some exercise before you sit down and eat a big meal," she said. "It's very informal."

Going forward, Willard said she'd like to see the event get "as big as it gets." And now that the numbers have increased, both she and her husband have discussed how to add a bit of charity to the race.

"Next year what I want to do is have everyone bring a non-perishable food item for the food pantry in town," she said. "It seems to be growing – seems to be doubling every year. I

think it's great. That's how the Manchester Road Race started one year. Somebody had an idea to walk, run, whatever – so it's kind of a grassroots thing that we're doing.

"It's a good way to get some exercise," she added, "but now that we have a captive audience it should include bringing a non-perishable to support the food pantry."

Willard added that it being "a homegrown thing" was part of the charm, and "maybe it could take off to where it's the entire town."

"It warms my heart," she said. "It was just an idea my husband and I had, and everyone just kind of made it a part of their Thanksgiving Day tradition. I never thought it would take off like this and it's awesome."

So when Thanksgiving 2013 arrives, which will inevitably be faster than expected, Andover residents who want to rev up their metabolism with a bit of exercise before the big meal or add a new tradition to the holiday, have the option of joining Willard, her husband and everyone else who's already caught wind of the event at Andover Lake.

And as Willard proudly stated on the race numbers, "everything's better at the lake."

Funds Not There for Senior Luncheons in Andover

by Geeta Schrayter

Since 2008, Andover's seniors have been able to gather for Friday luncheons that successfully mixed food, fun and education. Due to a lack of funding, however, the luncheons are no longer being held – although the hope is they'll make a return down the road.

Along with providing Andover's seniors with a meal each Friday, the luncheons have afforded them the opportunity to get together and socialize while learning new information. Cathy Palazzi, who recently resigned as the town's municipal agent for the elderly, but has remained active in various volunteer capacities – like helping with the luncheons – said speakers from different organizations regularly volunteered their time to talk with the seniors.

"We had such great speakers," she said. "We were very, very fortunate and all of them have been free."

The speakers have ranged from politicians like state Rep. Pam Sawyer, outgoing state Sen. Edith Prague and the town's new state senator, Steve Cassano, to individuals like doctors and nurses, dentists and bankers.

"We've had really quite an array," Palazzi said.

But despite how much of a hit the luncheons were, Palazzi explained the money to keep them going simply isn't there.

"There's \$15.34" left in the fund for the luncheons, Palazzi said. "After we paid for our Thanksgiving turkey dinner that we had, that's how much we ended up with."

And so, the Nov. 16 gathering proved to be the senior luncheons' swan song.

Meals came from such area restaurants as Oriental Wok, Andover Pizza and Subway. Palazzi said the cost of holding each luncheon depends upon the menu. For example, stuffed shells, meatballs and a salad would cost around \$7 each, which Palazzi said is the average. The seniors pay \$4 toward the cost – a \$1 increase was made in September – while the rest comes from a special luncheon fund. But those funds have "just dwindled," she said.

That the fund has lasted even this long is due to donations from around town, the proceeds from 50/50 raffles held during some of the luncheons, and money provided by Vice First Selectman Jay Lindy from the proceeds of a play he put on in May 2011. In addition, each September Palazzi has held a fundraiser at her home that would raise around \$1,000 for the fund. However, due to the fact she was resigning from the municipal agent position and her daughter recently gave birth, Palazzi chose not to have one this year.

"So that's why we have no money," she said.

"We were really doing quite well, and having luncheons every Friday because we were doing so well."

But now, that's not the case, and although an item has been placed in the *Rivereast* seeking donations, to date none have been received. Yet Palazzi said she can understand why.

"There's so much need in town," she stated, citing FoodShare, the fuel fund and the Norton Children's Fund as possible destinations for one's charitable donations. "It goes on and on, and how much money can a person give? We know we're last – we've always been last – so we're just not going to have it."

On Tuesday, First Selectman Bob Burbank called the situation "disappointing," and said he hoped the luncheons would be able to start up again in the future.

"I think it's disappointing at this point," he said. "Hopefully they'll get some contributions and be able to move forward with the program. But I think that perhaps a little break around the holidays wouldn't be the worst thing – but I would like to see it reinstated."

Burbank added he would do his best to help get the program up and running again, and if the decision was made to add some additional money in the senior budget for the program, it will "certainly be reviewed" by the boards of

selectmen and finance during their budget deliberations.

Palazzi reiterated the decision to not have the luncheons was due solely to the lack of funds – "We want to do it, because it's great for the seniors. We love getting together and sharing," she said, "but right now it's just not feasible" – and while donations may have dried up, she said she was appreciative of those who've donated in the past, as well as those who've volunteered their time to the event.

"There were so many [volunteers] and they were so fantastic," she said, citing Bob Russell, who contacted all the food vendors and kept the prices as low as possible and George and Judy Knox, who ran the kitchen and "did a great job."

"It's a group effort – but sometimes some people do a little bit more," Palazzi said. "They all did such a great job."

"And for all the people who donated money," she added, "without them donating we wouldn't have been able to come this far... People are so generous."

Anyone who would like to keep that generosity coming and help bring back the luncheons can send a check to the Andover Town Hall with a note signifying the money be used for the senior luncheon program.

RHAM High School Honored for AP Students

by Geeta Schrayter

As a result of more RHAM High School students participating in Advanced Placement (AP) courses and receiving a score of three or higher on the exam, Regional School District No. 8 has been named to the College Board's third annual AP District Honor Roll.

RHAM is one of 539 districts across 44 of the 50 states in the U.S. and Canada being honored by the College Board, a not-for-profit organization whose mission, according to its website, "is to connect students to college success and opportunity."

The honor is given to districts that are able to simultaneously increase the access students have to AP courses and the number of students who score a 3 or above.

In a release sent out by Superintendent of Schools Bob Siminski, he explained achieving both of these goals is the "ideal scenario" as it shows the district is "successfully identifying motivated, academically prepared students who are likely to benefit more from rigorous AP course work."

"We're really excited and proud of that distinction," Siminski added on Wednesday. "I think what it means is we're challenging our students academically and encouraging them to take risks and more difficult courses – making them rise to the challenge of increased learning in high school so that they can really pursue their career dreams."

On Wednesday, High School Principal Scott

Leslie said some colleges look at AP exams "much more seriously" than other achievement measures, and competitive schools may look for students who've taken a certain number of AP courses. Leslie added the school also offers University of Connecticut courses, but some schools don't look at those to the same degree as the AP.

"So it's actually to a student's benefit to have them take AP courses," he said.

Leslie added he was "thrilled" with the recognition.

"We've really had a concerted push to increase our AP offerings, and so I think this really demonstrates nicely how well that's gone," he stated.

Leslie said the total number of students participating in AP exams increased from 149 in 2010-11 to 257 this year and of those students, the percent who scored 3 or higher went from 93 to 94 percent.

"We're increasing significantly the number of students taking the exams, but we're also maintaining the high performance," he said.

Leslie said the goal moving forward is to show "continuous improvement."

"Our students tend to do very well," he said. "So I think we're in a fortunate position to not have to necessarily try to make up for a deficit in our scores. ... For us it's not so much an issue of how well the students are doing, it's more

making the opportunities available to more students."

He explained part of that was offering a wider range of courses – "not just in academic areas, but also some of the elective areas."

Another facet of RHAM that allows for increased access to AP courses is the district's subscription to Virtual High School. Leslie explained some students may have a difficult time fitting a particular AP course into their schedule if it's only offered during a particular section, while other students may not find the particular course they're looking to take. If that's the case, Virtual High School allows those students to take the course online.

"It feels real nice that we try to put some effort into [the AP courses] and you know, get recognized for it," Board of Education Chairman Mike Turner said Wednesday. "It's always kind of seemed like our offerings have been a little bit less than some of the other schools, like in Glastonbury and Avon – and it's really nice that we're getting good test scores from students taking the tests."

In his release, Siminski added the achievement was a tribute to all the teachers in the RHAM community.

"The achievement by the RHAM students is not only a tribute to the current RHAM teachers," he said, "but to all the teachers that guided the students in the past as well as their parents."

Auction in Colchester to Aid Local Teen's Recovery

by Melissa Roberto

A silent auction is being held Dec. 6 at Cragin Memorial Library in Colchester, to help the family of a local teen who's still recovering from an injury sustained in a snowboarding accident last December.

One hundred percent of the proceeds from next Thursday's auction will go to the Shumbo family of Colchester in honor of Jake Shumbo, a 14-year-old who hit his head while snowboarding Dec. 28 and suffered a serious brain injury.

The auction will kick off the third annual art show hosted by Salem resident and Jake's relative, Dawn Shumbo, and her art class at the Music Vale Studio in Salem. The silent auction is a part of the opening reception of the art show and is open to the public. Craft items, soap baskets, carvings, sculptures and paintings are just a few of the items that will be auctioned.

The remainder of the art show will include a wide variety of paintings and watercolors created by students ranging from the ages of 15-70, and 15 percent of those proceeds will also go to the Shumbo family.

This is not going to be the first time Shumbo has donated her students' artwork on behalf of Jake. In previous fundraisers, she has submitted artwork for raffles, but Shumbo said this

time she wanted to expand the idea into something greater.

"This is a good way to put my art to good use," said Shumbo.

Jake was 13 years old at the time of his accident when he hit his head while wearing a helmet. The blow to his head caused his brain to swell and have a small bleed. The right side of his skull was removed to allow for brain swelling. Jake spent four months in the hospital and has since moved back home and is in the process of therapy inside and outside of his home.

"We've got quite some time before us but we feel that he is going to have a great recovery," said Tom Shumbo, Jake's dad. "In 11 months' time he's done very well."

In the last couple of weeks, Jake has done a few sit-ups on his own. He still cannot walk independently but can take steps for 400-500 feet with the help of his dad. A majority of his therapy is done at home with his parents and at physical, occupational and speech therapy five days a week outside of the home.

Jake's parents have stepped down from full-time jobs and work in between Jake's therapy when possible. They still have to bathe and feed him, but Jake is getting better at it, Tom Shumbo said as he watched his son take bites of fruit on

his own.

Jake also attends four regular classes at Bacon Academy and is accompanied by a para-professional. His mother, also named Dawn Shumbo, said he has good grades, an 'A' plus in algebra and an 'A' in English.

Jake's mother said he is getting stronger. "His doctor is happy with the progress he is making and while he still has a long way to go, he's come a long way," she said.

The December auction adds to the long list of fundraisers that have been created for Jake. On Nov. 3, the American Legion in Moodus held a fundraiser coordinated by Tom Walsh, owner of American Landscaping and Property Maintenance. Other fundraisers have been held at the Polish Club in Colchester, the Sportsman's Club in Moodus and the Gelston House in East Haddam.

Family members, friends, and attendees of these fundraisers have wristbands that say "Shumbo Spirit." The wristbands are now being sold at Shagbark Lumber & Farm Supplies in East Haddam for \$5, with 100 percent of the proceeds going to a special fund for Jake that's been set up at Liberty Bank.

"We can't believe the amount of support we've had," Tom said. "It really shows that

there's a lot of good people still left in the world today."

The two Dawn Shumbos – Jake's mom and the artist – have been friends all of their lives and are related because their husbands are cousins.

The Shumbos are appreciative of the artist Dawn's efforts to create the silent auction for Jake.

"We were just very thankful that her and her artists wanted to do that," Jake's mom Dawn said. "We were very pleased and overwhelmed."

And although Jake has a "long road ahead of him," his dad said the family still shares many laughs.

"We're getting into these months where the long journey continues," he said, "but we have a lot of moments that are fun rather than tears."

The Shumbos describe their son as a kid with "great drive" and a "great spirit."

The art show will be held on Dec. 6 at the Cragin Memorial Library in Colchester and the auction will take place 5:30-7:30 p.m.; bids close at 7 p.m. Anyone interested in donating to the Shumbo family may do so at any Liberty Bank location or send a check to: Liberty Bank, The Jake Shumbo Fund, 29 William F. Palmer Rd., Moodus, CT 06469-0364.

In Time for Christmas, a New Tree on the Colchester Green

by Melissa Roberto

Colchester residents may have noticed a bare spot in the Town Green earlier this week, which was once home to the 80-foot Norway spruce that was removed on Monday morning.

The old tree had stood high toward the middle of the green for the past half a century. For years, it also served as the town's Christmas tree as well, lit every holiday season – although Public Works Director James Paggioli acknowledged this week it hadn't been used for that purpose for at least the past five years, due to animals eating away at the wiring and the tree getting just too tall to light all the way to the top.

Paggioli said the town was actually considering relighting the tree this year for the holiday season, but Hurricane Sandy pretty much put an end to that. The tree lost four branches on its west side due to the storm and that, combined with the cost to relight the tree, led to the decision to take it down and replace it, Paggioli confirmed.

"It just became a very high-maintenance situation," said Anita Pizzutiello, recreation supervisor with the Parks and Recreation Department.

But the town didn't need to look far to find a new and accessible tree. A 25-foot blue spruce located on the east side of the Town Green along Hayward Avenue was chosen to take its place. The spruce will be lit with approximately 2,400 LED lights and will now be used on Saturday, Dec. 1, to kick off the holiday season in Colchester.

The blue spruce was originally planted years ago by the former Parks and Recreation Director Wendy Rubin and the Colchester Boy Scouts. Paggioli said it was sensible to reposition the tree on the green because it was on the curb of Hayward Avenue, interfering with power lines. Eventually the tree would have

been trimmed by Connecticut Light and Power, Paggioli said.

"We're going to allow that tree to be grown into its full shape by moving it to a new location," Pizzutiello said, "so it's a win-win."

The cost estimate to transfer the tree is \$2,650, while relighting the tree will be about \$280, Paggioli said. The costs will be paid by funds donated by townspeople that were raised by the Parks and Recreation Department.

By comparison, simply relighting the former tree would have cost in excess of \$5,000, Paggioli estimated.

"It's a combination of specialized contractors, better prices on LED lights, fewer lights required and then the town staff doing some of the work," said Paggioli about the affordable new project.

The spruce was due to be installed yesterday. "A lot of things are falling together in a short amount of time," said Paggioli on Wednesday.

Residents will have the opportunity to see the spruce tree in its new location lit up for Saturday's Holiday Homecoming celebration, which ushers in the holiday season. The event begins at 4:30 p.m. on the green and will include a visit from Santa Claus via fire truck, St. Andrew's Young People's Choir, Interactive Hoop Dancing with Judi Ann Jones and a bonfire along with complimentary treats and drinks for all.

First Selectman Gregg Schuster said he is sad "anytime a tree like that has to come down" but is also excited for the new tree to go up just in time for Saturday's event.

"It says a lot that the community can come together and make sure we have a great celebration on the green in recognition of the holidays," he said.

"I think everybody will be happy with it," Paggioli said. "It's a beautiful tree."



Pictured above is the 80-foot Norway spruce standing tall in the Town Green on Monday before it was removed due to deterioration from Hurricane Sandy. The tree had traditionally been used as the town Christmas tree, and would be festively lit to kick off the holiday season.

EHHS Drama Club Performing Holiday Classic

by Joshua Anusewicz

If you're already in the holiday spirit or a "humbug" in need of a little Christmas cheer, the East Hampton High School Drama Club is preparing to ring in the holiday season with a three-day performance of Charles Dickens' timeless classic, *A Christmas Carol*, beginning next weekend.

The classic tale will be under the direction of Rachel Mansfield, who is currently in her first year as director of the high school's drama club – taking the place of Mark O'Donnell – after serving one year in the same position at Bacon Academy in Colchester. Mansfield, a Belltown native, is no stranger to East Hampton theater, however, having served with The Young People's Center for Creative Arts (YPCCA) for a number of years, building a relationship with many of the members of this year's high school cast.

The cast, made up of predominantly underclassmen, will tackle the challenging Dickens classic, which Mansfield has converted into a musical of sorts. With thorough cultural research of the time period – Victorian-era En-

gland – Mansfield has incorporated time-appropriate music and dance into the choreography.

"I can't help myself," Mansfield laughed.

The plot of the story, though, will follow the traditional tale, with a few minor tweaks to edit out scarier scenes to make the show more family-friendly. The story follows Ebenezer Scrooge, a miserly money lender, through Christmas Eve, where he is visited by the ghost of his late business partner, Jacob Marley, and foretold of a grim future. Scrooge is then visited by three ghosts that show him Christmases of the past, present, and future as a way of amending his ways and learning the true meaning of Christmas.

That message isn't lost on the cast members, either, who admitted they were somewhat familiar with the classic tale. "He sees the truth and changes his ways," said freshman Mason Cordeiro, who will play the role of "Fred."

"Christmas is important," added freshman Monica Farkas, who will play two roles, "Fran" and "Roberta." "It's not about money or presents; it's about family and having a good time."

As mentioned, this year's cast will be a particularly young cast; Mansfield explained that, in the past, the drama club's productions have been rather small and driven by upperclassmen, leaving her with "not much of a base" to work with from the beginning. (Only one senior will be part of the production this year, Mansfield said.) Kendra Dickinson, an assistant in the production, stated that this will give many underclassmen the unique opportunity of playing large roles to "build a foundation" of a successful drama club a few years down the road.

One of those younger cast members will be Claire Pawlewitz, a freshman playing the role of the Ghost of Christmas Past, alongside freshman Sam Laraia, who will play the lead role of Scrooge. Pawlewitz admitted that she was both excited and nervous, but ready to seize the opportunity.

"I was very excited to get the role," said Pawlewitz. "I think I'm prepared and really looking forward to it."

Adding to the youth of the cast will be a slew of students from Memorial and Center schools,

who will be playing the roles of children in the play. Dickinson, a mother of two youngsters with roles, stated that when the rehearsals first began in September, with teens playing the roles of children, it just didn't look right.

"When we did the family scenes, it just looked like something was missing," Dickinson explained. With the opportunity to spend time with kids twice their age and perform on a big stage, the youngest cast members' enthusiasm shines brightly on their faces in every scene, whether they're supposed to be smiling or not.

"Kids love the holidays," Mansfield said, "and that adds an element of a happy Christmas as Scrooge is changed."

The EHHS Drama Club's production is sure to add a similar element of Christmas spirit as it debuts next weekend; the show will be held Friday, Dec. 7, and Saturday, Dec. 8, at 7 p.m., as well as Sunday, Dec. 9, at 2 p.m. All shows will be held in the auditorium at East Hampton High School, 15 N. Maple St. General admission tickets will be \$10.

EH Council Approves Transfer for Emergency Preparedness

by Joshua Anusewicz

The Town Council Tuesday approved an appropriation to the town's Emergency Preparedness Fund for the purchase of generators and the accompanying wires and switches.

The transfer was passed unanimously, 7-0. Prior to coming before the council, the proposal was approved by the Board of Finance, as well.

According to Town Manager Michael Maniscalco, the total appropriation, which he stated was money left over from last year's budget, would be for \$224,000. This money would be used for a 150,000-watt mobile generator, at a cost of \$84,000; wiring and transfer switches for the generator at the Memorial, Center and East Hampton Middle schools, at a cost of \$60,000; a stationary generator and wiring and switches for the senior center/library complex, at a cost of \$60,000; an LED messaging system, at a cost of \$8,900; and \$11,100 for contingency.

Maniscalco said all the prices presented were for new equipment and that the town would attempt to purchase "used or demo" equipment

in an attempt to save some of the money.

Councilor Barbara Moore, who has been a proponent of increased emergency preparedness since last fall's storms, applauded the appropriation. "This is something we've been working on for the last eight months," said Moore, nodding at Chairwoman Sue Weintraub, who has worked with Moore extensively on emergency management.

Councilor Kyle Dostaler agreed. "This is a very good idea with all the storms we've been having," he opined. "We'll need this, hopefully, in the not-so-near future."

One councilor, Ted Hintz Jr., wasn't as pleased by the appropriation. Stating that he was "a little concerned" when first glancing at the proposal, Hintz said the council should be wary of spending leftover funds on "hot items."

"As much as we want to have the best preparedness possible," he said, "I'm a little worried that whenever we have an overage [of an item in the previous budget], it becomes a hot item and we quickly spend the funds. I under-

stand the need for this, but I'd like to see a better process in place to review where we should allocate these funds."

Weintraub quickly came to the defense of the appropriation. "This was identified as a long-term need," she said. "[Emergency management] has been missing from our public safety program."

Moore added, "We've been looking at this for almost a year, because it's a need."

The council also unanimously approved the formation of a Clean Energy Task Force, which will be tasked with investigating opportunities for more energy efficient measures to be taken throughout the town.

According to the resolution, these opportunities could include operational changes and changes in maintenance or capital improvements, and then forwarding recommendations to the appropriate municipal governing body. The task force would do this by taking advan-

tage of available state and federal incentives, established town resources and more affordable forms of energy to use the money saved for clean energy initiatives.

The task force will consist of the five members, the resolution states, with "knowledge of energy markets, clean energy initiatives and new clean energy technologies." The members will be appointed by the Town Council, with two members serving one-year terms and three members serving two-year terms initially; at the expiration of those terms, all terms will be two-year terms.

The town is now taking applications for the task force. Any resident that is interested can contact administrative assistant Cathy Sirois at 860-267-4468.

The next regular meeting of the Town Council is scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 11, at 6:30 p.m. at East Hampton High School, 15 N. Maple St.

Despite Title Loss, Portland Girls Have Magical Season

by Joshua Anusewicz

When the Portland High School girls' soccer team's season ended with a loss last Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, the attitude of the players, the coaching staff, and the swath of loyal supporters that cheered on the Highlanders every step of the way was not one of sadness or overwhelming disappointment.

Instead, it was an attitude of pride and accomplishment, after going where no Portland girls' soccer team had ever gone before.

"I've always said, 'let's get there and see what happens,'" said head coach Sandy Booth on Tuesday. "'Then we'll really see what we're made of.'"

"There" was finally accomplished this season, as the team earned its first Shoreline Conference title in school history, as well as its first appearance in the Class S state title game after an impressive 18-3-1 season. The incredible run came to end in last Friday's state title game, however, as the Highlanders were downed by Immaculate High School of Danbury, 5-0, at Municipal Stadium in Waterbury.

When looking back on the season, Booth, who is in his fourth year as head coach, actually tracked back to last season, which saw the team suffer two devastating losses toward the end of its season.

In last year's Shoreline playoffs, the girls made the title game against North Branford, but ultimately fell in overtime after a staggering 29 penalty kicks. Still earning a 3-seed in the state tournament, the team easily bested Morgan High School in their first contest, before falling to Old Saybrook, 2-1, again on penalty kicks.

"When you lose on the field, it's one thing," recalled Booth. "When it's decided on penalty kicks, it's hard to handle." But the girls who returned for this season seemed better for it, he added, as the team used the tough losses as "a motivating factor."

"Right from the get-go, these girls stepped up and played exceptionally well the entire season," Booth said. The regular season included just two losses and one tie, with big wins over local rivals Cogenchaug, Cromwell and East Hampton. The Highlander lineup also featured 12 different goal-scorers, the sign of a well-balanced roster that is rare at the high school level.

And a lot of these wins weren't just wins,

Booth said, but last-minute, on-the-edge-of-your-seat nail-biters that Portland was routinely coming out on top of. With Booth instructing the girls to use "grit" in "finding a way to win," the team pulled out two regular season victories with under 60 seconds to go, dramatic wins that showed just how mentally tough the experienced squad had become.

The team's most dramatic victory, however, came in the Shoreline title game, where the team had been left heartbroken the year before. With the game against Lyme-Old Lyme tied 1-1 with just a minute remaining, the Highlanders appeared to be headed to overtime for the second year in a row. But a well-placed header by junior Amanda Ghent put any chance of a repeat performance to rest with just 30 seconds left, lifting the team to its first conference title.

"We just fought to the very end all season," recalled Booth. "That just builds on itself, that 'we can do it' attitude. They always found that extra step they needed."

With the conference win under their belt, Booth said the team entered the state tournament with a "quiet confidence" that the Highlanders could take on all comers. After a first-round bye, that confidence showed quickly with a 5-0 thrashing of Wheeler. The girls then defeated Lyman Memorial 2-1, and then defeated Litchfield – a tough squad that had been to the state title game the year before – 2-1, as well.

That set up the match with Immaculate, the perennial power that has now won nine of the last 10 Class S titles. Allowing only five goals all season – zero in the state tournament – Immaculate came in the heavy favorites. Booth said the Highlanders "stuck with" the defending champs for the first 35 minutes, keeping the game scoreless.

"They're just so deep and so talented," said Booth of Immaculate, who would eventually pull away for the victory.

Each game along the magical run, the Highlanders were cheered on by huge groups of fans, who usually outnumbered those of the other team – even when the other team was at home. Booth said that "phenomenal support" spread through the community, as well, with many residents stopping him and his players to wish them luck.

The state title game also marked the final game for the team's two seniors, Sam Wever and Laura Wall, who Booth called "our emo-



The Portland High School girls' soccer team won its first Shoreline Conference title in school history this fall with a dramatic, last-minute victory over Lyme-Old Lyme. The team's 18-3-1 record led them all the way to the Class S state title game, where the Highlanders were defeated by Immaculate of Danbury.

tional leaders." Though they weren't always filling up the score sheet on the field, Booth said the two leaders "set the tone" and kept the team focused and motivated throughout the long, dramatic run.

Booth's juniors, he said, were the players that "put [the team] on the map" with their balanced attack and strong play all year long. The juniors included Jackie Otake, who Booth called "a fireplug" that is one of the most talented players in Class S; Ghent, "the soul of the team," a talented player that "looked out for her teammates" while fighting through injuries of her own all season; McKenzie Reimondo, a jack-of-all-trades that was key during the run to the Shoreline title, filling in for an injured Ghent and providing meaningful minutes at several positions; Nicole Caruso, a "good physical presence" and relentless attacker that "stepped up offensively" throughout the season; and the

team's "unsung hero," goalkeeper Marisa DiMare, who Booth admitted "didn't always get the recognition" but stood strong as the team's last line of defense, a counterbalance to the Highlanders' aggressive attacking style of play.

With a core of five talented seniors returning and a slew of underclassmen prepared to make the leap, Booth said the team is "looking to build off our accomplishments" of this season and get another crack – hopefully at Immaculate – next season.

"We're hoping to make the leap to an elite program in Class S, a continually elite program," Booth said. "We're hoping to make Portland a power."

And with one title looming large ahead of them, what will make them a power will be the team's goal for next season: a Class S state championship.

Solarize Program Growing Solar Power in Portland

by Joshua Anusewicz

With Portland's reputation for supporting energy efficiency programs, it's not surprising that it was recently announced Portland's residential solar power has doubled in size since the town was named a participant in the state's Clean Energy Finance and Investment Authority (CEFIA) Solarize CT program in September.

According to a release from Solarize, it took just 11 weeks for the town to double the amount of homes that installed solar over the last six years, bringing the total of homes in town with solar power to 30.

"This has been a great opportunity for our residents to go solar," stated First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield in the release. "Solarize Portland gives homeowners the confidence in both the installer, the equipment and the price they pay for solar."

Portland – along with Durham, Westport and Fairfield – was chosen to take part in the pilot program which, according to CEFIA's website, ctcleanenergy.com, brings "competitively priced solar photovoltaic (PV) systems to homeowners... by deploying a coordinated education, marketing and outreach effort, combined with a tiered pricing structure that provides increased savings to homeowners as more people in the community go solar." That means that if more residents agree to participate in the program, all of the residents in town who participate see savings in the cost of the installation and their monthly bill through various incentives and tax credits.

Portland, particularly through the Clean Energy Task Force, was chosen for the program for being one of the most active towns in the state in committing to clean energy in recent

years. On top of providing solar power and alternative energy programs for residents and local businesses, such as the Neighbor-to-Neighbor program, the town itself has incorporated solar energy on municipal buildings, like the solar array on Valley View School.

That support of clean energy has expanded through the Solarize program; according to Real Goods Solar, the chosen installer for Portland through the program, there are 16 signed contracts for solar installation. This allows Real Goods to offer "Tier 3" pricing to Portland residents, which allows customers to save roughly 25 percent on their systems. Real Goods added that with just 20 more kW – or four more contracts – they will be able to offer "Tier 4" pricing, bringing the cost down further.

But according to Andy Bauer of the Clean Energy Task Force, the time is ticking to sign up for the program, as the last date to sign a contract for installation is Friday, Dec. 14.

For those interested in seeing how an installation works, Bauer said residents are welcome to see an installation in progress this Saturday, Dec. 1, at 102 High St. Bauer said residents will see "how the panels are attached, as well as the size and look of the panels," and will also have the opportunity to speak with representatives from Real Goods and the installation crew that will be on site. Real Goods representatives will be able to explain the entire process, Bauer added; this includes viewing your house via Google Maps on a laptop or iPad to see if you're eligible, scheduling a free site visit, and a comprehensive cost breakdown for your home.

Bauer added that, if interested residents haven't done so, it is encouraged that you receive a "home energy solutions" visit prior to



One of the families that recently took advantage of the Solarize Portland program was that of Mark and Stephanie Grover, who had solar panels installed on the roof of their home. Solarize is a state initiative that provides increasingly lower costs for solar energy as more homeowners in the community participate in the program.

an installation. The visit, which costs \$75, aims to make your home more energy efficient by providing more efficient light bulbs, sealing doors and windows, and offering discounted rates on new insulation. This can be done before or after you schedule a site visit, Bauer

said; you can sign up for the assessment at ctenergychallenge.com.

For more information on Solarize Portland, you can visit solarizect.com/portland. To schedule your free site visit, you can also call 855-426-6678.

CVS First Part of New Village Green District in Hebron

by Geeta Schrayter

The first business in Hebron's Village Green District is set to become a reality with the construction of a CVS/pharmacy at 110 Main St.

The permit application, submitted by Salvatore Capital Partners LLC, was unanimously approved at the Nov. 13 meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission. The 13,000-sq. ft. CVS will sit on two and a half acres on the corner of Main Street and John Horton Boulevard. The building will be autumn tan in color, with white trim.

There will be two points of access to the new pharmacy: a right-in and right-out only from Main Street, and an entrance from John Horton Boulevard.

It will not be a 24-hour CVS; hours of operation will be 7 a.m.-10 p.m.

Once constructed, the store will replace the CVS currently located in what used to be Hebron Pharmacy, next to Ted's.

On Wednesday, Town Planner Mike O'Leary called the new store "the first business at the gateway to the future development on John Horton Boulevard and the Village Green area."

O'Leary added that the move is "a positive sign" for the town's business district and future economic development.

"We think that it is likely that other businesses will take note that this is a good town and business area in which to invest, and would expect to see other businesses follow," he stated.

Board of Selectman Chairman Jeff Watt felt similarly.

"I think it's an exciting start," he said Wednesday. "I think this is going to be the start of the whole Village Green Project – it's a great addition to developing some businesses in town."

As far as the next steps are concerned, O'Leary explained CVS had received all the necessary local approvals, and now needed to complete the building design drawings, get approval from the Department of Transportation to access the state highway (Route 66) and apply for a building permit.

O'Leary said the developer had informed him they expected to break ground in the beginning of 2013 "and hopefully open for business in September or October."



A new CVS/pharmacy, shown here in an architect's drawing, is the first business approved for the new Village Green District.

EH School Board Moving Along with Superintendent Search

by Joshua Anusewicz

At its meeting on Monday night, the Board of Education announced it has received 31 resumes for the soon-to-be vacant superintendent of school position and the search has been narrowed down to eight candidates, who will be interviewed beginning next week.

According to board member Joanne Barmasse, a "screening committee" has been formed to oversee the selection of candidates, holding its first meeting last week to choose the eight best for interviews. The committee consists of school board members Barmasse, Chairman Mark Laraia, Scott Minnick, Carol Lane and Bill Marshall; high school principal John Fidler; middle school principal Nancy Briere; high school teacher Matt Warner; middle school teacher Jody Dumeer; business manager Karen Asetta; and residents Amy Conklin and Deb Robinson.

Barmasse said that the committee will now gather questions and is looking for feedback from the school board for the interviews, which will be held from Dec. 3-5. From there, she added, finalists will be chosen to interview before the entire board, but no dates have been set for when those interviews will be held.

In the meantime, the board will begin searching for an interim superintendent to fill in for the departing Dr. Judith Golden, whose contract expires on Dec. 31. According to board member Donald Coolican, the board's personnel committee – of which he is chairman – will meet on Tuesday, Dec. 11, to review three candidates for the position of interim superintendent.

Laraia said the board hopes to name an in-

terim by Monday, Dec. 17, and that the interim will be expected to fill the position for 2-6 months beginning in January, allowing the new superintendent time to acclimate to the school district and its needs.

"There's a lot of things going on that are going to be thrown at the new superintendent right at the start of the year," Laraia explained, citing, in particular, two upcoming referendums: one on the town budget and one on the proposed high school renovation project.

The board also gave an update on the proposed high school renovation project, which recently took a step forward after residents showed resounding support at a town meeting to approve a funding request to the High School Building Committee.

Board member Glenn Gemma, who serves as chair of the board's transportation, buildings and grounds committee, said at Monday's meeting that he recently met with Golden, Fidler, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Kevin Reich, building committee chair Sharon Smith, and representatives from Capital Region Education Council (CREC), the project manager for the proposal, and SLAM, the architecture firm out of Glastonbury tasked with designing the renovation project.

Gemma said he had "a very good feeling" following the meeting, which set up a timeline for building committee and school board meetings that would help the town meet a late-March referendum date. Gemma said that members of the high school faculty and staff plan to meet with the building committee on Dec. 4-5, prior

to the committee's Thursday, Dec. 6 meeting, to discuss the proposal and give input. He said there would be a "public input meeting" Thursday, Jan. 17, for parents and residents to weigh in on the project.

At the committee's Thursday, Jan. 24, meeting, Gemma said, he plans for the committee to have "something to see" in regards to the project, which could include blueprints, education specifications, and a green energy plan. At the Board of Education meeting on the following Monday, Jan. 28, the board would then be able to meet with members of SLAM and CREC to answer any questions that it had before scheduling the March referendum.

"To me, this is a big meeting," Gemma opined of the Jan. 28 meeting.

To that extent, Minnick said he felt the school board should see the proposed plans before the building committee did, explaining that it would give them a chance to provide input on areas of "priority" to the architect and project manager before the building committee made a final decision. Gemma said that a meeting – or a "workshop," as Laraia suggested – could be scheduled prior to the building committee deciding on final plans, and most of the members of the school board agreed with the idea.

No date has been set for that meeting, but Laraia said Reich would be contacted to make sure representatives from CREC and SLAM could attend.

Also Monday, the board approved a proposal to include the high school as a stop for the

town's late bus system, which currently runs for middle school students only. The bus currently runs Mondays and Wednesdays at 4 p.m., allowing students to participate in various clubs and athletics while still receiving a bus ride home.

The decision came after a lengthy discussion as to whether an additional bus, strictly for the high school students, should be added to the education budget. The cost of the late bus in 2011-12 budget was \$6,165, with the addition of another bus bumping the cost up to \$12,849.

The idea of spending more money, particularly when no board members knew if the bus at the high school would be used often, didn't set well with some board members. "I'm not interested in spending more money at this time," said member Ken Barber.

"This budget year could be very tough," said member Josh Piteo, reminding the board that it made no upgrades in technology during last year's budget.

The board ultimately decided against adding an additional bus, but adding the high school as a stop. The board also discussed the possibility of sending out a survey to high school students and parents to gauge the need for a late bus, but no plans were definitively set at the meeting.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for Monday, Dec. 10, at 7 p.m. at East Hampton High School, 15 N. Maple St.

EH Congregational Church Lot to be Closed by Snow

by Joshua Anusewicz

Officials at the East Hampton Congregational Church in the Village Center have announced that the parking lot that abuts the Center School property will now be closed when snow is predicted.

According to Anita Guerin, the chairman of the church's council, the lot will no longer be plowed every weekday at 8 a.m. in the event of snow, but rather plowed "as dictated by the church's needs," then reopened. Guerin said the reason for this is to prevent vehicles from "packing the unplowed snow, making it harder to plow and leaving unsafe ice patches."

In the past, the church lot has been used by parents as a drop-off point for Center School students, as well as a parking lot for the neighboring post office. Though Guerin said that some parents are still using the lot as a drop-off, the town agreed to construct a new primary drop-off location behind the school on Bevin Boulevard, which was completed before the beginning of this school year.

From now on, in the event of a substantial snowfall, Guerin said the parking lot will be roped off and parents will need to use the Bevin Boulevard drop-off location.

"We're not saying you can't touch our parking lot; there's no ill will here," explained Guerin on Tuesday. "It's our private property and we just can't afford to keep plowing the lot for town use. We don't mean to sound harsh."

This isn't the first time issues have risen with church parking lot and snow plowing in recent years. Just last year, the church requested that the town reimburse the church for the cost of plowing after the heavy snowfall in January 2011, which pushed the church to its limit financially.

After negotiations, the church was able to reach an agreement with the town last winter, as the town reimbursed the church "up to \$2,500" for the cost of plowing and an additional \$500 "for the privilege to use the church's parking lot by Center School patrons and staff."

Portland Police News

11/22: Nickolas Trudeau, 32, of 38 Charter Rd., Wethersfield, was charged with first-degree larceny, second-degree larceny and two counts of third-degree burglary, Portland Police said.

11/22: David Frank, 39, of 311 Main St., was charged with three counts of second-degree failure to appear, police said.

11/23: Cecil Hudson, 58, of 102 Jobs Gate No. 3, was charged with DUI, evading responsibility and following too close, police said.

Hebron Police News

11/18: A 17-year-old juvenile resulted in the charges of third-degree assault, interfering with an emergency call, disorderly conduct, second-degree criminal mischief, possession of a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia in a drug factory, illegal sale of controlled substance, use of drug paraphernalia and receiving narcotic drug to keep it in the original container, State Police said.

Andover Police News

11/18: Thomas McBriarty, 33, of 267 Longhill Rd., was charged with DUI and failure to drive in the right lane, State Police said.

Marlborough Police News

11/25: Laura K. Gulliksen, 24, of 35 Portland Rd., was charged with DUI and a stop sign violation, State Police said.

Marlborough Pastor Remembered

by **Melissa Roberto**

Catholics from St. John Fisher Church in Marlborough and several other Connecticut churches have been mourning the loss of Rev. Arthur J. Audet, who passed away Nov. 13.

The 71-year-old Bristol resident touched many lives during his priesthood while serving in various Connecticut parishes.

Audet was a graduate of Saint Louis University in Saint Louis, Mo., and Christ the King Seminary in East Aurora, N.Y.

On Feb. 9, 1985, Audet was ordained in the Cathedral of Saint Joseph in Hartford by the Most Rev. John F. Whealon, the late archbishop of Hartford.

Throughout his priesthood, Audet served at multiple parishes, including St. Augustine in Seymour, St. Matthew in Forestville, St. Bridget in Cornwall Bridge, St. Bernard in Sharon and St. Dunstan in Glastonbury. Audet was also the co-pastor of Assumption Church in Manchester.

But it was as pastor of St. John Fisher that many in the area will likely remember him most. He held the role from November 2008 until retiring this past June.

Audet helped out the St. John Fisher Parish in Marlborough as well. It was his idea to buy pews from a church that was being torn down in Rhode Island to replace the use of folding chairs. Through his efforts, money was donated to the church in order to pay for the pews as well as having extra money to put towards painting the outside of the church. "He really enjoyed doing things like that, to get everybody

involved," said Audet's niece, Luann Pelletier of Becket, Mass.

Pelletier also said her uncle never viewed his time at the parishes as work. "It was something that he loved," she said.

She also described Audet as a "great" speaker and someone "you never got tired of listening to."

"He never wrote down his sermons, anything he ever preached came right from him in the moment, not prepared, just from his heart," Pelletier added.

During the St. John Fisher food drives, Audet kept large cases of food in his trunk that he bought himself to donate. "That's how big his heart was," said Pelletier. "He would do it financially himself if it needed to be done and he didn't want any credit for it."

Parishioners of other churches Audet served at also described him as a "giving" and "humble" man. Rev. Jeff Romans, the assistant chancellor for the Archdiocese of Hartford and secretary to the archbishop Henry J. Mansell, said he had the pleasure of being an altar server during Father Audet's Masses at Saint Matthew in Forestville.

"He was a humble man who did all he could to try to help others feel the peace and love of Jesus," said Romans. "The way he enjoyed serving the parish family was an inspiration."

Audet also loved to travel. He took parishioners on "journeys of faith" on a regular basis to Israel, Jerusalem, France and Portugal, said Father John Golas, pastor of St. Mary in Unionville. Rev. John Golas, who was co-pastor with Audet at Assumption from 1991-96,

remembered these trips well.

"He took them to sacred places to deepen their own faith and to witness things they normally wouldn't witness in their everyday schedules," he said.

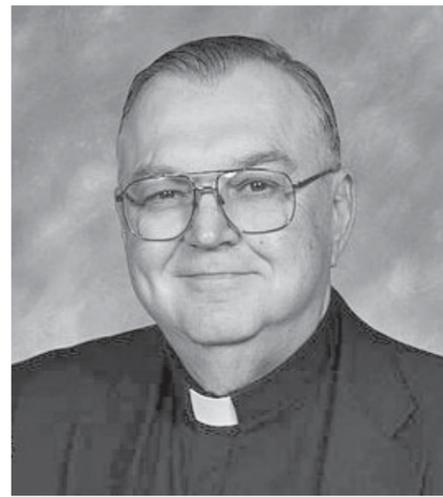
What many dear friends, family members and parishioners also recognized, was Audet's passion for something other than the church: his love of the University of Connecticut basketball teams, especially the women's team. "He absolutely adored the Husky women," said Pelletier. Longtime friend Bernadette Dickau reminisced over the many bus trips to UConn games Audet planned for the parishioners of Saint Matthew in Forestville. Dickau said she attended six Final Four games with Audet and his sisters.

While traveling to games outside of Connecticut, Audet continued to share his spirituality with everyone. Dickau explained Audet's persistence to conduct Sunday masses in his hotel room for his friends while traveling. Better yet, Dickau said he would often request permission by hotel staff members to provide a Sunday Mass for anyone who wanted to join. "That was the kind of giving man he was," said Dickau.

Audet was also known as a man who liked to shop, and was an avid fan of action films.

"Even back before he was a priest, when I was very young, every Christmas afternoon he would take all of the kids to the latest movie," said Pelletier.

And although Audet was fighting cancer for



Rev. Arthur J. Audet passed away earlier this month, at the age of 71. He had been pastor of St. John Fisher Church from 2008 until earlier this year.

the last two years, Pelletier said he was "always smiling."

Audet had three sisters, and was an uncle to several nieces and nephews, grandnieces and nephews and great grandnieces and nephews.

"He was always ready with a hug when you needed one; he was an all around great guy," said Pelletier.

Colchester Police News

11/13: Bruno Behrmann, 73, of 43 Pickerel Lake Rd., was charged with breach of peace and second-degree threatening, State Police said.

11/16: Yolanda Wilson, 44, was charged with interfering with an officer and disorderly conduct, State Police said.

11/17: Kristopher Kahle, 29, of 37 Davidson Rd., was charged with violation of probation, State Police said.

11/18: Glenn M. Bathgate, 50, of 147 Hill-top Dr., Cranston, R.I., was charged with DUI and speeding, State Police said.

11/19: Keith Thibodeau, 43, of 471 Lakeshore Dr., Lebanon, was charged with third-degree burglary, State Police said.

11/20: Corey Horton, 24, of 436 Hillside Ave., No. 2, Hartford, was charged with second-degree failure to appear, failure to respond to an infraction, speeding and operating under a suspended license, State Police said.

11/21: Shannon Brown, 38, of 215 West Rd., was charged with first-degree failure to appear, State Police said.

11/23: William Mareggia, 45, was charged with fifth-degree larceny, State Police said.

11/23: Jayme Ficara, 21, of 43 Neptune Ave., Moodus, turned himself in on an active warrant for violation of probation, State Police said.

11/25: Kenneth Barnhill, 47, of 1 Cobble Way, Apt. 4, was charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct, State Police

Portland

Souria Eichouzadeh

Souria (Aziz) Eichouzadeh, 66, of Portland, a devoted Witness of Jehovah, and beloved wife of Youal Eichouzadeh for 44 years, passed away peacefully at home, surrounded by her family, on Sunday, Nov. 25. Born in Hasaka, Syria, she was the daughter of the late Abraham and Nazah Aziz.

Many people spend most of their lives searching for their purpose in life, a glimmer that may shed light and hope into their existence. Souria Eichouzadeh's curiosity and ambition about life began her quest for the truth. Her extensive research in world religion would have proved Souria a true scholar amongst scholars. Her acquired wisdom and knowledge led her to find a light that sparked within her, guiding her closer to a faith that one day would open her eyes and find Jehovah.

Souria's devotion as a Jehovah's Witness proclaimed many accomplishments in her life not only for herself, but for her family as well. Her passing has left a hole in our lives but her memory will live on, her legacy will forever live on through us, and guide us. We love you, Mama!

Along with her husband, she is survived by her five sons, John Eichouzadeh and wife, Elena, Hani Eichouzadeh and wife, Daniella, Paul Eichouzadeh, Michael Eichouzadeh and Peter Eichouzadeh; a daughter, Feryal Daoud and husband, Emanuel; two grandchildren, Natalie and Dillon; two brothers, Aziz Aziz and wife, Jeme, and Samir Aziz and wife, Ahlam; two sisters, Esther Aziz, Georgette Abraham and husband, Sayed; and many nieces, nephews, aunts and uncles, as well as her brothers and sisters from the Kingdom Hall who meant so dearly to her.

A graveside service will be held today, Nov. 30, at 10 a.m., in Maple Hill Cemetery, 1164 Worthington Ridge, Berlin, and a memorial talk will be held Saturday, Dec. 1, at 1 p.m., at Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 165 Elm St., Wethersfield. Friends called Thursday evening, Nov. 29, at Doolittle Funeral Home, 14 Old Church St., Middletown, and may send condolences to the family at doolittlefuneral.com.

Obituaries

Portland

Shirley Guilmette

Shirley (Randall) Guilmette of Portland passed away peacefully Wednesday, Nov. 21. She was born Dec. 16, 1922, to the late Harold and Edith (Hopkins) Randall and was a lifelong resident of Portland except for eight years at Upper Dam, Maine.

Shirley graduated from Portland High School with the Class of 1940 where she was active in the early development of the "girls' sports" programs. Later that year she married her husband of 63 years, the late Ernest A. Guilmette. She enjoyed the company of friends both in and out of the Portland Senior Center; playing cards with "the girls," the weekly 10-pin bowling league and occasional bus trips. She lived comfortably alone in her own home until a stroke took away her independence one week before her 89th birthday. Her spirit, however, remained hers until the end and will remain in the hearts of her family and friends forever.

In addition to her parents and husband, she was predeceased by her brothers Howard, Walter and Richard Randall, and sisters Phyllis Rowe and Betty Moran. She is survived by her daughter Tina Doolan and her husband John of Stuart, Fla., and her three sons and their wives, Paul and Alice, Randall and Joan and Donald and Laurie, all of Portland. In addition to her children, she leaves 11 grandchildren and their spouses, 20 great-grandchildren and many nieces and nephews including a special niece, Laurie Greico of Richmond, Va.

The family would like to thank the staff and residents of Greystone Retirement Home for the kindnesses bestowed upon Shirley over the past 10 months and sincere gratitude to the many angels in the Hospice Unit of Middlesex Memorial Hospital for the comfort granted to her and her loved ones during her final transition.

A memorial celebration of Shirley's life will be held Saturday, Dec. 8, at 11 a.m., at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland. Relatives and friends may call Saturday from 10 a.m. until the time of the service at the funeral home.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that you consider a memorial donation to the Middlesex Hospital Hospice Unit, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457.

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

Portland

Donald R. Harmon

Donald R. Harmon, 86, of Portland, husband of the late Caroline (Laczak) Harmon, passed away Thursday, Nov. 22, at Middlesex Hospital. He was the son of the late Charles and Antoinette (Coache) Harmon.

Born Sept. 8, 1926, in Champlain, N.Y., he has lived in Portland for the last 55 years. He was a self-employed builder in Portland for most of his life and was a U.S. Army veteran having served during the Korean War. He was a member of the Elks Club, the Portland Exchange Club and he enjoyed playing golf and cards.

He leaves his sons, Rodney Harmon and his wife Alycia of Portland, and Scott Harmon of Portland; a daughter, Kim Harmon of Portland; five brothers, Charles Harmon of Lockport, N.Y., Paul Harmon of Houston, Texas, Douglas Harmon of Durham, James Harmon of Woodstock and Sidney Harmon of Middletown; three sisters, Joyce Demmer of Portland, Ore., Carolyn Looby of Woodstock, and Denise Roberts of Colchester; three grandchildren, Donald, Derek and Kelsey, and a great-grandchild, Logan; and many nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by his sisters, Muriel Handley and Nancy Harmon.

Relatives and friends called Thursday, Nov. 29, at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St. Burial will be private at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the charity of the donor's choice.

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

Hebron

Patricia Mancini

Patricia (Meli) Mancini, "Pat", 69, of Hebron and Columbia, widow of the late Pelligrino Mancini, passed away Sunday, Nov. 25, at Windham Hospital. Born Dec. 5, 1942 in Hartford, she was a daughter of the late Charles "Jet" and Pasqualina "Pat" (Zappulla) Meli, Sr.

She grew up in Hartford and was a member of Center Church in Hartford. Pat had worked as an LPN at Riverside Health Care in East Hartford for many years before her retirement.

She leaves two children, William Mancini and Laura Scrivano of Amston and Laurie and William Ashworth of Andover; three grandchildren, Carly and Billy Ashworth and Alexa Mancini; four siblings, Thomas Meli and his wife, Teresa of Scotland, Joaneen Soucy and her husband, Gilbert of Andover, Carmel Meli of Andover and Dorothy Normand and her husband, Richard of Goffstown, N.H.; and numerous extended family members and friends.

In addition to her parents and her husband of 32 years, she was predeceased by a brother, Charles Meli Jr., and a sister, Florence Meli.

Friends called Thursday, Nov. 29, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, followed by a chapel service that evening.

Graveside services will be observed at 11 a.m. today, Nov. 30, at New Hebron Cemetery, Wall Street (Route 316), Hebron.

East Hampton

Rosalie V. Kneeland

Rosalie V. Kneeland, 69, of East Hampton, wife of Leon Kneeland passed away Tuesday Nov. 27, at Middlesex Hospital. She was the daughter of the late Merle Black and Julia Burgess. Born Oct. 25, 1943, in Bar Harbor, Maine, she had lived in East Hampton for the last 27 years.

Besides her husband, she leaves her son, Scott Kneeland of Cromwell; daughters, Kimberly Daniolos of South Windsor and Karen Kneeland of East Hampton; three brothers, George Day Jr. of Newport, Maine, Floyd Day of St. Albans, Maine, and Stephen Day of Alexander, Maine; four sisters, Julia Burgess and Ann Johnson, both of Calais, Maine, Sharon Day of Meriden and Linda Mallett of Waterville, Maine; four grandchildren, Jennifer, Marissa, Gwendolyn and Nikolos; and many nieces and nephews.

Funeral services will be held today, Nov. 30, with a Mass at 11 a.m., at St. Patrick's Church, 47 West High St., East Hampton. Burial will be in St. Patrick's Cemetery, East Hampton. Relatives and friends may call today from 9:30-10:30 a.m. at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Avon Foundation for Women, 777 Third Ave., New York, NY 10017.

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

East Hampton

Susan Elaine Scherp

Susan Elaine Scherp, 47, of Sterling and formerly of Jewett City and East Hampton, died Thursday, Nov. 22, at her home, after a long illness. Born June 8, 1965, in Middletown she was the daughter of Arthur and Helene (Tibbals) Scherp of Sterling.

Susan is survived by her son, Matthew Poppie Jr., four daughters Nicole Belles, Kristen Belles, and twins Brittney and Kayley Davis, three brothers, Arthur Scherp Jr., Jeffrey Scherp and Thomas Scherp, and her seven grandchildren.

She was predeceased by her brother, Michael Scherp.

She was a very loving person with a kind heart. She will be missed by all her family and friends.

Colchester

Robert Andrew Browne

Robert (Bob) Andrew Browne, 67, of Northfield, Minn., formerly of Colchester, passed away Monday, Nov. 26, at the Northfield Hospital.

Bob was born Nov. 5, 1945, in Springfield, Mass., son of Daniel Q. and Lillian (White) Browne. He graduated from Enfield High School in 1965. Following school he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and was discharged in 1967.

On Dec. 2, 1967, he married Catherine Irene Hughes and they made their home in Enfield and Colchester before moving to Northfield, Minn., with their two daughters.

Robert Browne is survived by daughters, Robin Browne Anderson of Mankato, Minn., Kristen Browne of Northfield, Minn.; granddaughters, Nicholle and Cassidy Anderson of Mankato.

He was predeceased by his parents, his wife, Cathy, (in Jan. 2012), and brother, Daniel J. Browne.

The Bierman Funeral Home in Northfield, Minn., is in charge of arrangements. Funeral services were held Thursday, Nov. 29, at the funeral home.

Hebron

Anne H. Emt

Anne H. Emt, 80, of Hebron, wife of the late Eric W. Emt, passed away Tuesday, Nov. 20, at Windham Hospital in Willimantic, with her loving family and friends by her side.

She was born in New York City, the daughter of William and Beatrice Hassinger. She is survived by her children, Carl Emt, Linda Emt Strickland, Christine Emt Franklin, and her husband, Doug, and Stephen Emt, and his wife, Gail; a brother, Donald Hassinger; a sister, Joan Williams; five grandchildren; three step-grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

She was predeceased by a grandson, Alexander Bousquet.

Anne was the first female volunteer firefighter in Hebron as well as an emergency medical technician and a lifelong member of the Hebron Fire Department. Along with her late husband Eric, Anne was instrumental in founding many youth sport programs in Hebron.

Visitation was held Saturday, Nov. 24, at the Belmont Sabrowski Funeral Home, 144 S. Main St., Colchester, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at the Church of the Holy Family, Church Street, Hebron, burial to follow in New Hebron Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Hebron Volunteer Fire Department, P.O. Box 911, Hebron, CT 06248.

Colchester

Mary Jeanne Heinrich

Mary Jeanne Frissell Heinrich, 88, of Bozrah, wife of the late Warren Heinrich, died Saturday, Nov. 17, at Apple Rehab in Colchester. She was the daughter of the late Ralph Frissell and Marion Curtis Frissell and stepdaughter of Julianna Wansley Frissell.

Mary Jeanne and her husband lived in Middletown until 2005, when they moved to Gardner Lake in Bozrah with their daughter and son-in-law Heather and Bill Montanile.

Mary Jeanne was a 1941 graduate of Woodrow Wilson High School in Middletown and attended Mount Holyoke College. She was the owner and Director of Country Nursery School on Maple Shade Road in Middletown for 33 years. She retired for a year then worked at the Independent Day School in Middlefield for 10 years. She so enjoyed those many years working with nursery school children and shared many happy times with them. She also shared her talent with children by being a Brownie Scout leader for five years and by serving as the president of the Middlesex Council of Early Childhood Personnel.

As an active member of the community, Mary Jeanne was a life member of The Lower Connecticut River Valley Soroptimist Club, serving as recording secretary for seven years, president for two terms. Mary Jeanne also served as chairman of the Interfaith Tea and the Town Safety Board. In 1984, she was honored as Woman of the Year by the Junior Women's Club of Middletown for her dedication and devotion to the many young lives she lovingly touched. Her hobbies were bridge and knitting.

She was predeceased by her husband, Warren, in 2011, after 69 years of marriage.

She is survived by her son Alan and his wife Jeannette of Haines, Alaska; and three daughters and their spouses, Suzanne Dorsey and her husband John of Redlands, Calif., Lorinda Lewis and her husband Daniel of Havelock, N.C., and Heather Montanile and her husband Bill of Bozrah; in addition to 11 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

Interment will be at the convenience of the family in New Farm Hill Cemetery in Middletown. There will be no calling hours, and in lieu of flowers, donations may be made to C.A.T.A.L.E.S., P.O. Box 901, Middletown, CT 06457 to honor her love of cats and dogs or Middlesex Hospice, 28 Crescent Street, Middletown, CT 06457.

Condolences may be sent to the family at doolittlefuneralservice.com.

Portland

Conrad Stanley Cook

Conrad Stanley Cook of Portland, age 38, died in Waltham, Mass.

He is predeceased by his mother, Karen Hay, and leaves behind his father, Erben Cook III of Haddam, and sisters Thora Brylowe of Pittsburgh, Pa., and Libby Carrier of Portland, as well as his aunt and uncle, Perry and Gregory Huntington of Plainfield, N.J.

Conrad was a graduate of the Honor's College at CCSU and loved travel, science fiction and philosophy.

Friends were invited to the Brooklawn Funeral Home, 511 Brook St. in Rocky Hill, on Tuesday, Nov. 27.

In lieu of flowers, please donate to a homeless shelter.

East Hampton

Betty Jean Humphrey

Betty Jean (Hurn) Humphrey, 79, of East Hampton, wife of the late William Humphrey, died Wednesday, Nov. 21, at Middlesex Hospital. She was born in Amenia, N.Y., daughter of the late Albert and Florence (Milner) Hurn.

Prior to retirement, Betty was employed at Raymond Engineering. She was past president of the Old Home Days in East Hampton and The Ladies Auxiliary to the Fowler-Dix-Park VFW Post 5095 in East Hampton and very active with all veteran affairs.

Betty is survived by a son, Raymond Brookman Jr. of East Hampton; two daughters, Patti Burdick of East Hampton and Debra Hartley of Rhode Island; a sister, Vivian Brookman of Marlborough; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; and one expectant grandson.

Betty was predeceased by four brothers and a sister.

The funeral service was held Tuesday, Nov. 27, at Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown. Burial will be in the State Veterans' Cemetery. Friends called prior to the service on Tuesday at Biega Funeral Home.

Those who wish may send memorial contributions to Disabled American Veterans, Attention: Gift Processing, PO Box 14301, Cincinnati, OH 45250-0301.

To share memories or express condolences online, visit biegafuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Shirley Schufer Bednarz

Shirley Schufer Bednarz, 82, wife of the deceased Frank Bednarz Sr. of Middletown, passed on to meet her creator in her heavenly home Tuesday, Nov. 27, after a short illness.

She was born in Portland on May 30, 1930 and was employed by EIS Brake Parts for 36 years before her retirement. As a faithful Catholic, she was a member of St. Mary Church in Middletown.

A loving and devoted mother and grandmother, she is survived by her daughter Diane Louiselle of Middletown, her son and daughter-in-law Frank and Rosanne Bednarz of Meriden, her grandson, his wife, and great-granddaughter Mark, Tricia, and Ava Louiselle of Middletown, and grandson Kevin Bednarz of Beverly, Mass. Shirley also leaves behind her two brothers and sister-in-law John and Midge Schufer of Portland, and Edward Schufer, husband of the late Lillian Schufer of Colchester.

She is predeceased by her sisters, Marian Schufer, Elizabeth Wallett and Theresa and her husband Ed Bednarz, and her brother Albert Schufer, husband of Artie.

She is also survived by many nieces and nephews including her godchildren Debbie Lawton, Carol Baranowski, and Joyce Micali.

At Shirley's request, a special thank you is extended to Dr. Alan Douglass of Middletown for his 21 years of attentive and compassionate care of her.

Friends and relatives may attend calling hours at Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown, today, Nov. 30, between the hours of 5 and 8 p.m. Funeral services will be held Saturday, Dec. 1, at 8:15 a.m., from Biega Funeral Home, followed by a 9 a.m. Mass of Christian Burial at St. Mary Church, South Main Street, Middletown. Burial will be in Calvary Cemetery.

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

To share memories or express condolences online, visit biegafuneralhome.com.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Some of you may recall, over the summer, my writing in this space about Glastonbury native Donn Cabral, who competed in the Olympics in London, running in the steeplechase as part of the U.S. team. Donn didn't medal, but, I'm happy to report, he hasn't stopped running.

Donn finished third in last Thursday's Manchester Road Race – a pretty impressive feat considering that A.) 15,000 people ran the race this year and B.) no Connecticut native has won the Manchester Road Race since Charlie Duggan of Hartford back in 1980.

Aaron Braun of Flagstaff, Ariz., won the race, with Haron Lagat of Kenya coming in second.

Donn, who now lives in Bellingham, Wash., said he plans to be back next year – and hopes to win. For the 22-year-old Donn, running is, quite literally, his job – he's got a contract with Nike and draws a salary – and he told the *Journal Inquirer* he perhaps needs “a more aggressive race plan” for Manchester, which is known as being a fairly hilly race.

Hopefully he comes back next year and *does* win – that'd be a sight – and hopefully this time local drunks will stay out of his way. About half a mile into the race, as the runners passed the Manchester watering hole The Hungry Tiger, a man who'd likely had a few too many decided he'd join with the runners, jumping into the pack, brushing up against Donn and leading them all for nearly 150 yards until he finally ran out of breath.

While Donn told the *Hartford Courant* the guy “almost knocked me over,” he was also clear that the incident didn't mess up his race.

“Worse things have happened,” he said. “I've been punched in races, spat on, had things thrown at me. If, that early in the race, you've got this testosterone-raging attitude where something like that will set you off, you're not going to make it five miles. You've got to be in sort of a Zen state.”

It could've been easy to use what happened outside the bar as an excuse for coming up just a little bit short in the race, but Donn didn't. Nor would I have expected him to.

* * *

Speaking of the race, I was watching a little bit of the replay of the race coverage Thanksgiving afternoon on Fox Connecticut, and the reporter was interviewing the winner of the women's portion of the race, Delilah DiCrescenzo of New York City. Leading into the interview, Fox CT played the Plain White T's song “Hey There, Delilah.” It's a song I know well – it was a big hit a few years back – and I figured the station was playing it because, well, the winner was named Delilah and it fit. (Hey, beats playing the theme from the *Delilah* show on Lite 100.5.) Nope; it turned out this particular Delilah, the one that won the race, was *the* Delilah.

DiCrescenzo told the Fox CT reporter she's from Chicago, and the band's from Chicago, and she and the band began hanging out and became friends, and, as DiCrescenzo simply put it, the lead singer of the band, Tom Higgenson, “had a crush on me [and] he wrote a song.”

Of course, this proved to be more than just a mere song; it was a monster smash, becoming the Plain White T's first number-one hit, as was nominated for two Grammys, including one for Song of the Year.

But, the humble DiCrescenzo said in her post-race interview last Thursday, “I was just in the right place at the right time, and if it wasn't for me, it'd probably be named after some other girl.”

Possibly. But would it have been such a big hit? Perhaps not. After all, “Hey There, Doris” doesn't have quite the same ring to it.

* * *

As I do every Thanksgiving, I stuffed myself silly last Thursday. Still, when I came across a link to what the Obamas served at their Thanksgiving dinner, I had to look. I was curious; I wanted to see if I share the same Thanksgiving tastes as the leader of the free world. And the answer is, I do – sort of.

The first family's Thanksgiving meal fea-

tured turkey, ham, cornbread stuffing, oyster stuffing, greens, macaroni and cheese, sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, green bean casserole and dinner rolls.

Now, at the Thompson household, the only meat on the menu was turkey (although the addition of ham would've likely been well-received; my father's not a big turkey fan). We did have stuffing, but it was not of the oyster variety. There was green bean casserole – two different green bean casseroles, in fact – but those were the only greens on the table. Sweet and mashed potatoes were definitely present. I admit, I'd have never, ever thought of macaroni and cheese as a Thanksgiving side dish. It's an interesting idea; I'll have to remember it next year.

But that's not all for the White House Thanksgiving. There were six – yes, six – pies for dessert: banana cream, pumpkin, apple, sweet potato, huckleberry and cherry.

Now, before anyone gets all concerned about this food-heavy meal not exactly meshing with Michelle Obama's anti-obesity campaign (and really, she's been criticized far too much for that anyway, which really is sad; I mean, she picks perhaps the most uncontroversial cause out there – attacking childhood obesity – and she gets beaten up for it), keep in mind that, not only is it Thanksgiving, the meal was also served at the White House. I'm sure there were plenty of people lining the table to dine with the Obamas; I highly doubt it was just the four of them. After all, when you're the president, you can probably count on a few extra guests at the holidays.

* * *

Lastly, while the calendar technically still says November, the Christmas season is in bloom, and this weekend there are festive holiday events going on in five *Rivereast* towns – including the official lighting of various town Christmas trees.

Saturday seems to be the big day for most of these occasions. Colchester will have its annual Holiday Homecoming on the Town Green, starting at 4:30 p.m. This year's Homecoming features an all-new Christmas tree on the green – a 25-foot blue spruce, which replaces an 80-foot Norway spruce. (The old Norway tree had weathered a lot of storms over the years, but apparently Hurricane Sandy was just too much for it to take, and the town deemed it necessary to replace it; reporter Melissa Roberto writes about the new tree in this week's *Rivereast*.)

Also on Saturday is the annual Gathering of the Green in Marlborough, which will also boast the lighting of the town Christmas tree. The Marlborough event runs from 4-6 p.m., with the tree lighting slated for 5 p.m.

Meanwhile, over in East Hampton, the Friends of the Village Center will hold a Jingle Bell Parade. The parade starts at 4 p.m. at East Hampton Public Library, and from there folks will march down Main Street to light the Christmas tree, sing carols and more.

A little bit later on Saturday, at 7 p.m., the Hebron Volunteer Fire Department will host an appearance by Santa Claus at the gazebo located by Town Hall on Route 85. The big guy is due to arrive on a special fire truck, and will then meet children and adults alike, and help light the town tree.

Do these things sound great but, unfortunately, you're busy Sunday? Don't worry; Portland's got you covered. On Sunday, Dec. 2, at 5 p.m., Youth Services, Parks and Rec., and the Connecticut Cellar Savers will present the annual Holiday Lighted Parade, Tree Lighting and Carol Sing. The festivities will begin at Town Hall and end at Brownstone Intermediate School.

So if you're not in the Christmas spirit yet, the activities this weekend should surely help. And hey, if you want, go to a couple of the town gatherings for some extra yuletide joy; I highly doubt the towns will toss you for not being a resident.

* * *

See you next week.