

RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

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To Your Health... Cobalt Healthcare distributed over 200 free flu vaccines at a clinic Jan. 4. Melinda Cogan, LPN and director of community relations at Cobalt, is shown here giving a vaccine to East Hampton resident Alyssa Scelza. See related story on page 8.

Hebron, Fmr. Finance Director Reach Settlement

by Geeta Schrayter

The litigation between the Town of Hebron and former finance director James Day has reached a resolution, at a cost to the town of \$157,500.

The lawsuit, which was filed by Day in January 2010, brought six different counts against Hebron and Interim Town Manager Andy Tierney. However, two of the counts against Tierney – the intentional infliction and negligent infliction of emotional distress – were dropped two months after the suit was filed.

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

In April 2009, two months after Day was hired, the litigation stated he discovered the town had spent more than \$61,000 to complete the Village Green project without being authorized. Day thought this expenditure was illegal and brought it to the attention of various town

employees.

Day also alleged in the suit that he found the management team of Tierney, Town Planner Mike O’Leary and Executive Assistant Donna Lanza – which had taken over the responsibilities of former Town Manager Jared Clark, following his resignation in March of that year – were paid in excess of \$700 each in the March 28 payroll.

The lawsuit claimed Day “discovered accounting practices that were less than transparent, budget overruns, negative funds, and instances in which town monies were distributed prior to receiving bond monies” during the first six months of his employment.

The litigation stated that at a meeting in August 2009 between Day and the management team, Day was informed his probationary period was being extended 90 days, during which progress reviews would be completed. According to the suit, the reason for the extension was that Day “was not a team player, was argumentative and confrontational.”

The suit also stated an evaluation of Day’s performance was conducted by Tierney, O’Leary and Lanza in which Day received a rating of 2.5 out of a possible 5.0. But when Day asked to see the evaluations, he was told they’d been destroyed to protect the evaluators,

See Settlement Page 2

Dog Activist Complains About Colchester Pound

by Bailey Seddon

When former animal control officer Chris Lamb heard there was a pitbull that had been in the Colchester pound for months, she decided to help find him a home.

But when Lamb, a nationally-certified ACO who worked in East Lyme and Ledyard for about a year each and now heads Connecticut Animal House, a nonprofit dog rescue group, recently visited the Colchester pound to meet Don Favry, the town’s ACO, she was taken aback by Favry’s reaction.

According to Lamb, a Mystic resident, Favry resisted suggestions on how to help get dogs adopted, even those that had been in the pound for months. And she was startled to learn not only that Favry was not placing adoptable dogs on popular Internet sites, as many municipal pounds do, but by his response when she suggested that he list them online.

He was so opposed to the idea, Lamb said, that Favry said of the dogs, “I’ll just put them down.”

Asked this week if he made that comment to Lamb, Favry said, “I don’t remember what I said.”

The town currently does not pursue a policy of euthanizing dogs the pound takes in and which remain unclaimed. But Lamb said Favry “basically told us they did not want to be bothered with posting” the dogs.

According to state law, an ACO is required

to advertise its adoptable pets at least once in a newspaper and on “a national pet adoption Internet website” or a site that is “accessible to the public through an Internet search.” While Favry said he will put dogs up on the town’s website, he does not advertise in a newspaper because it costs too much and he doesn’t have the time or resources to place the dogs on sites like Petfinder.com, a site many municipal dog pounds in Connecticut utilize.

And, a recent review of the pound’s website also indicates that Favry has allowed the site to lapse for weeks, without posting any dogs that are currently available for adoption. Also, in the past, the site has sometimes had inaccurate information on its adoptable pets or fails to include some at all on its listings.

For instance, while the pound currently has a nine year-old Pomeranian and a pitbull available for adoption, they have never been listed on the pound’s website. Favry said he intended to list the Pomeranian, which has been at the pound for weeks, and the pitbull by today. Asked why he had taken so long to get the dog listed online, Favry had no answer.

Some dogs at the pound, a small, squat concrete structure located behind the town’s Public Works garage on Old Hartford Road, have languished there for months before being adopted.

Favry said he does adoptions by appointment

only, though the pound’s website says adoptions take place on Saturdays only. He acknowledged that listing the dogs on Petfinder.com might generate more interest in them, but it might also require him to travel to the pound several times a week so people could look at the dogs.

“I can’t be running back and forth there four or five times a week; no way I could do it,” he said. “It’s a waste of time and effort.”

Favry is a part-time ACO for Marlborough and Colchester. Marlborough does not have its own pound and shares with Colchester. He is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, he said. Though Lamb has offered to volunteer to help find homes for the Colchester pound’s dogs, Favry has refused the help. He said there are liability issues involved with accepting volunteers and he feels the pound runs fine the way it is.

“The paperwork alone is a pain” for volunteers, he said.

Favry expressed annoyance that Lamb had even sought information on the animals at the pound. He said “animal activists” like Lamb come in and think dogs should be adopted right away. He also said when a dog is adopted the town only gets \$5, but when organizations such as Lamb’s come in they can sell the dog for much more and get a profit.

“Why should I let them get fat and sassy?” he said of Lamb and other activists.

Lamb said her organization does not make money by rescuing and adopting out dogs. She said the group asks for \$100 when they adopt out a pet, but the organization uses the money to cover the costs of spaying/neutering and vaccinating the animals, and to have a locator microchip inserted in them. Most pounds do none of those things, she said.

And she said Favry is wrong about groups such as hers earning a profit.

“We are in the hole, there is no money being made here...that’s not what our mission is,” she said.

Lamb said she could charge \$350 like some organizations do for pet adoptions, but she focuses more on finding appropriate homes for her animals.

“If you’re going to let [dogs] sit there just because another organization is charging \$100, that is ridiculous,” she said of Favry.

Lamb said she has brought her concerns about the pound to the town’s Resident Trooper Supervisor Marc Petruzzi, who was sympathetic to the issues she raised – including a complaint that while she brought blankets to the pound for the animals, Favry did not use them. However, after a meeting with Petruzzi she said she has not heard back from anyone in a month.

Asked about the issue this week, First Selectman Gregg Schuster said he had not heard

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Settlement cont. from Front Page

the litigation said.

Day was told by Tierney on Oct. 13 that he was being placed on paid administrative leave “due to an investigation currently being conducted,” the litigation stated. He was also told that on Oct. 15 the situation would be discussed in an executive session of the Board of Selectmen.

The minutes from the Oct. 15 meeting explained Tierney read a letter regarding Day’s employment, and there were concerns from long-term employees which resulted in his being placed on probation. Tierney mentioned the reviews that were conducted, giving Day an overall score which was “less than satisfactory,” and said the management team “is recommending that J. Day be terminated or afforded the opportunity to submit a letter of resignation effective immediately.”

The selectmen later moved to terminate Day, “based on the recommendation of the Management Team and in accordance with Article IX (Probationary Period) Section 1D (Discharge) of the Employee Handbook of Personnel Policies and Procedures,” and the motion passed unanimously.

According to the litigation, the reasons for the termination as read by Tierney at the meeting were that Day “presented a confrontational and argumentative attitude toward his staff, other Department Heads and the Management Teams.”

But, according to the litigation, the investigation against Day was “a sham, replete with personal bias and false allegations,” and caused Day to suffer economic losses, “mental anguish, emotional distress, humiliation and embarrassment, loss of enjoyment of life, harm to reputation and attorneys’ fees and costs.”

The second count brought against the town was a violation of C.G.S. Sec. 31-51q, the “liability of employer for discipline or discharge of employee on account of employee’s exercise of certain constitutional rights.”

According to the litigation, Day claimed he was fired for exercising his right to free speech and speaking out on the “illegal and unethical practices” of Tierney and other employees. The litigation states reasons to fire Day were “fabricated,” and the town’s actions were “malicious, intentional, willfully wanton and/or in reckless disregard” of Day’s rights.

The two counts against Tierney that weren’t dropped were one count of defamation and one count of invasion of privacy. The litigation

stated Tierney “maliciously and intentionally published false information” about Day as well as “intentionally and recklessly representing to the Board of Selectmen, the public and the press” that Day made comments which might be considered sexual harassment.

But the release and settlement agreement between Hebron and Tierney (“the Releasees”) and Day states “the releasees deny any and all allegations of wrongdoing contained in the civil action” filed by Day. It later states “neither the negotiation, undertaking or signing” of the agreement is “an acknowledgement of admission” by the town that they, or anyone acting on their behalf “have violated any of Day’s rights under federal, state, or local statutes, regulation, ordinances or common laws...” or any regulations under common law including defamation and any other rights regarding his employment such as infliction of emotional distress.

Both parties, the settlement states, “wish to resolve this dispute without further litigation or proceedings and wish to resolve fully and finally all issues” which currently exist or could possibly exist in the future “under federal, state or municipal law, including common law,” regarding Day’s employment with Hebron and subsequent termination.

The agreement states the settlement is in consideration of Day’s accordance “to release the releasees from all claims and charges” mentioned in the agreement and “to secure the dismissal with prejudice” the claims in his lawsuit.

Under the agreement, the town had to pay a total of \$157,500, divided three ways. To Day, \$60,185.14 for wages, as well as an additional \$30,000 “for emotional distress claimed to have been suffered and for damages from defamation, both of which claims releasees deny,” and \$67,314.86 to Day’s law firm Madsen, Prestley & Parenteau, LLC for attorney’s fees and costs.

In agreeing with the settlement, Day “waives, releases, promises and agrees not to file, bring or pursue” any present or future “complaint, charge, claim, suit or action” against Hebron or Tierney including but not limited to “any reason arising out of Day’s employment by the Town, termination from such employment or those matters raised in the Civil Action,” bringing closure to the lawsuit nearly a year after it was first filed.

As per the agreement, neither Tierney nor Day could comment on the settlement.

Dog Activist cont. from Front Page

about any concerns with Favry but added “anyone who has an issue or a complaint with a town employee” should come to him. As to the pound, Schuster said, “It’s our goal to make sure that any animal coming in” gets adopted.

After visiting the pound in December, Lamb placed information about several dogs in the pound, including the pitbull that had been there for several months, on her group’s Facebook page. “By [the] next weekend all of those dogs had been adopted out,” she said.

While pleased with that success, Lamb said she was left worried about the other dogs in the pound and Favry’s seeming lack of interest in getting the animals adopted.

Many ACOs, she said, utilize organizations

like hers to help place pets. She and other rescue groups have experience in organizing fundraisers and getting volunteers and are just looking to help ACOs.

“It doesn’t have to be this way,” said Lamb of her experience with the Colchester pound. “We’re just making [ACOs jobs] easier.”

Connecticut Animal House has been in operation for three years and works with pounds to try to get dogs adopted. The organization does this through evaluations of the animals, behavior training and promotions. The organization also helps any Connecticut pound with animals that have medical issues, raising money for medical care, which can improve their chances of getting adopted, Lamb said.

From the Editor’s Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Yahoo’s “Trending Now” feature, you’ve done it again.

I was signing out of my Yahoo mail Tuesday afternoon, and I was taken to Yahoo’s home page, where, on the right-hand side, it displays the top 10 “trending” topics at that particular moment – the items particularly capturing people’s attention on the web. In the top five was “McDonald’s pink slime.”

Come on, I just had to click on it. Wouldn’t you?

The click brought me to a host of news stories related to the “pink slime.” Apparently, McDonald’s acknowledged this week it is no longer using ammonium hydroxide in its hamburger meat.

McDonald’s would use the chemical – an ingredient in fertilizers and household cleaners, and which can even be used in homemade bombs – on scrap meat that would otherwise be inedible. After being treated with the substance, the scraps were then ground into a pink, meat-like paste.

If, like me, your first thought – well, after being utterly grossed out by the term “pink slime” – was, *Hmm, I wonder if the burgers will taste different now*, have no fear. In a statement, McDonald’s said it decided to stop using the chemical last year, and it has been “out of our supply chain” since August. So, if you’ve eaten at the burger emporium in the last few months, then you’ve already munched on the new and improved un-slimed burger patties.

But that doesn’t mean the chemical – which, just from the name, sounds like something you’d never even consider ingesting – is out of your life. Far from it. According to MSNBC, ammonium hydroxide is widely used in the food industry as an anti-microbial agent in meats and as a leavener in bread and cake products. The U.S. Agriculture Department says the chemical is “generally recognized as safe.”

So, the moral of the story is we’ve all likely been consuming ammonium hydroxide for years, and we’ll probably continue to do so, whether we know it or not. (And we probably won’t; according to MSNBC, the USDA considers the chemical a component in production, and not an ingredient that must be listed on food labels.) But hey, at least our burgers won’t be made of pink slime anymore.

* * *

Now here’s something that sounds like it would have been great fodder for an episode of *M*A*S*H**: the U.S. Veterans Administration has declared an Army veteran in Florida dead not once, but four times.

And the man is still very much alive.

Jerry Miller, a former drill sergeant, served

10 years in the Army, according to Florida TV station WESH Channel 2. He currently lives on a government pension and Social Security.

In July 2010, Miller received a letter from the VA addressed to his estate. The letter expressed sympathy for Miller’s death and explained that, as a dead man, he was not eligible for the veterans’ benefits he was paid.

Miller responded the way most people would respond when falsely accused of being dead. He told the VA he was still alive. His benefits then restarted – but the letters continued, each one stopping his benefits.

In January, another letter arrived – again addressed to his estate – asking for repayment of more than \$94,000 in benefits Miller shouldn’t have received, as he was dead.

Miller said he has no idea why the VA declared him dead – but he wishes they’d stop it.

“I’m alive, you see,” Miller told WESH. “This can’t keep going on and on.”

* * *

The website delish.com had a feature recently entitled “Paula Deen’s Most Outrageous Recipes.” The page listed eight creations dreamt up by the jovial Southern cook. The list includes appetizers like Fried Butter Balls (which is exactly what you think it is; fried balls of butter), entrees like the self-explanatory Bacon Cheeseburger Meatloaf, and desserts like Twinkie Pie (which features one and a half boxes of Twinkies), but there were two culinary wonders on the list that simply boggled the mind.

The first is called “The Lady’s Brunch Burger,” and consists of a beef burger seasoned with onion and parsley, topped with an egg fried in butter, plus crispy bacon. And, get this: instead of a hamburger bun, the meat and egg rests between two glazed doughnuts (although Paula also suggests using English muffins).

If you want dessert after downing that burger, Paula’s got you covered, with “Bill Nicholson’s Krispy Kreme Bread Pudding.” (Yeah, I don’t know who Bill Nicholson is either. Don’t get bogged down with the minutiae, though; there’s doughnuts to eat!) It contains a whopping two dozen Krispy Kreme donuts, one can of condensed milk, two eggs, raisins and a can of fruit cocktail. Paula then tops it with a butter rum sauce.

I don’t even want to think about how incredibly unhealthy that dessert is. But, unlike the “Brunch Burger” (which sounds a little gross, to be honest), that bread pudding seems like it’d be mighty tasty.

* * *

See you next week.

Marlborough Man Dies in Car Crash

by Bailey Seddon

A Marlborough man died Monday night after his car left the road and hit a tree, State Police said.

Michael DiStefano, 49, of 46 Edstrom Rd., was traveling south on Saner Road at around 3 p.m. Jan. 30 in his 1987 Ford Thunderbird, police said. He was about one-tenth of a mile south of Summer Lane when he failed to negotiate a turn and left the roadway, crashing into a tree off the right shoulder of the road, according to police.

A firefighter, who did not wish to be named, said the car rolled over and the roof of the car hit the tree. He said there was no ice on the

road at the time of the crash, and no skid marks indicating that DiStefano was going too fast.

“It looks like he missed the turn in the road and went straight into the woods,” the firefighter said.

DiStefano suffered “multiple blunt traumatic injuries” according to the State’s Medical Examiners Office. He was pronounced dead on the scene, police said.

With his brother Dan, DiStefano started the Italian restaurant Mr. D’s in East Hampton in 1987. The restaurant prospered for 10 years, until it was destroyed in a fire in 1997.

DiStefano’s obituary appears on page 20.

Two of Portland’s Finest to Join Regional SWAT Team

by Joshua Anusewicz

On Wednesday, the Board of Selectmen approved a fund transfer of \$10,500 that will pay for equipment for two Portland Police officers to join a new regional SWAT team based in Middletown. The funds were moved from the town’s contingency fund to the police department equipment account.

According to Lt. Ron Milardo, the town was approached to join the SWAT team several months ago when the police chief in Middletown met with First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield. After expressing interest, Milardo recommended Sgt. Jim Kelly and Officer Dan Knapp as the two candidates to join the team, calling them “dedicated officers.”

Milardo said the two officers recently went through a “grueling” training program, where the two scored “extremely well.” Kelly and Knapp will now go through a class to become

certified, then will begin training with the SWAT officers from Middletown and East Hampton, who is also expected to join the team.

The transferred funds will provide the needed equipment for the officers, which includes protective equipment and weaponry.

Milardo said the SWAT team will be activated during dangerous, high-risk situations, and will work together with four other regional SWAT teams in the Capital region. The officers will go through training at least once a month, which will function much like the training officers currently go through so the department won’t have to pay the officers for additional time. The officers will also be covered on their standard insurance, as well.

The board unanimously approved the transfer. “This is a wonderful opportunity for our officers,” Bransfield said.

Principals Present EH School Improvement Plans to BOE

by Joshua Anusewicz

Putting discussion of the proposed high school renovation plan aside, the Board of Education was presented with "school improvement plans" by the principals of the town's four schools at its meeting on Monday night.

According to Superintendent of Schools Dr. Judith Golden, the plans are part of a "systemic approach" to align the goals of the district, the superintendent, the administrators and the teachers. Golden said the focus of each of the goals is "continuous student achievement" and mainly uses assessments like the Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMT) and Connecticut Academic Performance Tests (CAPT) to set those goals.

Golden said that each year, the principals and their faculty create these "small working documents" as a guide for what they intend to accomplish during the upcoming school year. She added that the plans adhere to the district's vision, which prepares and inspires students to become contributing members of "the global society."

"We don't want to just hand the students a high school diploma," Golden said. "We want to lead them toward a college degree and a career."

The presentation began with Memorial Elementary School, which houses the youngest students in district, from kindergarten to third

grade. Principal Karen Fitzsimmons started off with the school's most important goal - teaching reading and writing.

"They start off by learning to read, but by third grade, they are reading to learn," Fitzsimmons said. She added that one of the most important tools the school has is encouraging independent reading; she said that the entire school - right down to the faculty and staff - is reading E.B. White's *The Trumpet of the Swan*. By encouraging the students to read on their own, Fitzsimmons said they will learn to "love and enjoy reading."

Fitzsimmons said the school's second important goal is to "foster a professional learning community." This is done, she said, by monitoring student progress, providing valuable resources for the students, and supporting innovation and collaboration from the staff.

Donna Turchi, principal of Center Elementary School, said her staff tries to "provide a broad experience" for the students that will ensure each student meets state standards in assessments. She said this is done by holding students accountable for "increased personal responsibility and work ethic." She also listed the importance of supporting innovation and collaboration amongst the staff.

Turchi said she considered the collaboration of staff a key area. She said the teachers "ana-

lyze data, set specific objectives, implement lessons and interventions, review and share results with colleagues and modify instruction as indicated."

"We look at the progress, and change the goals if we have to," Turchi reiterated.

East Hampton Middle School Principal Nancy Briere said the school analyzes what to do for the school year by collecting data from the Connecticut Mastery Tests and other student assessment tests. This directly relates to the school's two important goals, which are improving student achievement in reading and math.

Briere said that to do this, the school will form "data teams" that will analyze student performance and intervene more or less with an individual student, if necessary. The goal, she said, is for each grade as a whole to increase the number of students scoring at or above goal on the CMTs by 3 percent.

As for East Hampton High School, Principal John Fidler said that the school tries "to build off what each school has done before us." Currently, he said, the school is coming to the end of a three-year plan that was installed by former principal Dr. Linda Berry, who left the school last year.

Fidler listed three major goals for the school - holding students accountable and measuring

their progress, providing a challenging curriculum, and improving the school facilities. The expectation is that through this, a graduate of the school will demonstrate literacy and comprehension, apply problem-solving techniques and communicate effectively.

Aside from academic concerns, Fidler praised the work of new assistant principal Michael Dalton, who recently analyzed all non-academic data - which includes students extra-curricular activities - for an overall school climate study.

Following the presentation, Golden spoke about the importance of aligning the goals of the entire district toward the same common focus, something that hadn't been done in the past. She said that this was important for the continued success of the district, and added that progress was already being made, "particularly in instruction."

* * *

The next scheduled Board of Education meeting will be held Monday, Feb. 6, at 7 p.m. at East Hampton High School, 15 North Maple St. At this meeting, the board will be approving its 2012-13 proposed budget. A Tri-Board meeting of the Board of Education, Board of Finance and Town Council will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 7, at 7 p.m., also at East Hampton High School.

Portland School Board Adopts First Budget Increase in Two Years

by Joshua Anusewicz

Having received federal and state grants and salary concessions from employees, the Portland Board of Education has been able to present budgets with a zero percent increase over the past two years, and an average increase of 0.75 percent over the past three years. But this year, without that luxury, the board has presented the town with an \$18.46 million budget that represents an increase for the first time since 2010.

The school board adopted the 2012-13 budget Tuesday, Jan. 17, and submitted it to the town last week. The \$18.46 million spending plan represents a 1.98 percent, or \$358,384, increase. Last year's approved school budget was \$18.10 million, part of a \$29.82 million total town budget for the current fiscal year.

According to a statement from the board, the requested increase reflects "the need to update our instructional technology resources, provide a professional consultant to assist the board with future facilities planning, and to provide for additional students needing educational programs that we are not able to provide locally." Although it's requesting an increase, the board realizes the difficult situation it is in.

"We continue to experience challenging economic times," Board of Education Chairman Christopher Phelps said. "The direction we've given [to the schools] is to be as frugal as possible, without undermining the quality of edu-

cation."

Phelps said he was pleased the proposed budget came in at a lower number than most Connecticut towns. For example, just last week, the Colchester Board of Education presented a 2.92 percent increase that would eliminate at least a dozen full-time positions.

"We don't have to make any teacher or program cuts," Phelps said.

A large reason for the proposed increase is the lack of federal and state funding coming to the town this year. Doyen's budget presentation states that the board will lose roughly \$240,000 in federal funding, among other state and federal grants that have been cut.

"Over the last few years, we've had those dollars that have helped fill in the gaps," Phelps said. "Now, we have to pick up the slack again." Phelps gave credit to Superintendent of Schools Dr. Sally Doyen for preparing the board for that lack of funding so the impact "would not be as dramatic."

The main goals of this budget, stated in Doyen's presentation, not only include maintaining the staffing levels, but plans are in place to upgrade academic expectations to meet state standards, upgrade technology, and review school facility needs based on a "town school facilities report."

These goals are reflected in the budget in-

creases. For instructional technology, an additional \$12,000 would be added to upgrade computers and software programs; \$8,000 would be added for seventh-grade math textbooks to meet new state standards; \$10,000 would be added to hire a consultant to assist the board with facilities planning; and \$50,000 would be added to accommodate tuition for additional special needs students, coupled with the decrease in special education grants.

According to the budget line items, funding for certified teacher salaries would increase \$283,705, or 3.44 percent, to \$8.54 million, by far the largest chunk of the education budget. Additionally, \$143,753 will be added for non-certified salaries, bringing the total up 6.06 percent to \$2.51 million.

On the savings side, a considerable amount would be reduced from the medical insurance line item. The budget is proposing \$2.66 million for the insurance, down \$108,897, or 3.93 percent, from the current year's spending package. Phelps said the amount the town pays for medical insurance has gone down, as the employee unions have negotiated with the town to "pick up more of the cost." Phelps also said the numbers for medical insurance are generally an "estimate to work with" from the town's finance director, Tom Robinson, based on prior and current rates.

Despite not having major budget increases over the past several years, the schools system has reached numerous accomplishments during this stretch, including Brownstone Intermediate School being recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence last year. "The Board of Education and Town of Portland's accomplishments reflect the continued support, both financial and philosophically, of its citizens," said the board in a statement.

The budget also has the support of First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield, who called the proposal "very responsible, as usual." She added that additional dollars - roughly \$200,000 - from the town's insurance carrier from a reimbursement for snow removal last year could be available, if needed, to "soften the blow."

"We always look at the needs of our schools, and try our best to meet those needs," Bransfield said. "It's very important."

Bransfield said that despite the increased budget proposal, she would not have to change her approach toward the town's operating budget. She said she is currently in the process of going over the budget with Tom Robinson, the town's finance director, and will present the proposal to the Board of Selectmen later this month. A public hearing to present the full budget to residents will be held on Tuesday, March 6, at Portland High School.

Police Arrest Suspect in Portland Jewelry Theft

by Joshua Anusewicz

After a lengthy investigation, Portland Police have arrested a suspect in connection with a burglary that took place last October.

According to Lt. Ron Milardo, Ronald Pettit, 42, was arrested last Wednesday, Jan. 25, and charged with first-degree larceny, third-degree burglary and third-degree criminal mischief. Milardo said that at the time of the arrest, Pettit was being held at the New Haven Correctional Center on unrelated charges.

Milardo said Monday that the Oct. 28 burglary took place at a residence in Portland and "numerous pieces of jewelry" were stolen from the home, totaling more than \$50,000. He added that Pettit knew the jewelry was in the home because he had done various "odd-jobs" at the home prior to the burglary.

The investigation was led by Officer Fran Ahlquist, who Milardo said obtained infor-

mation through several "regional databases of precious metals." Through one of these databases, Milardo said Ahlquist found the stolen items at a pawn shop in Middletown.

Milardo said that Ahlquist was then able to interview a woman who worked at the store, and she was able to identify Pettit as the man who had brought in the jewelry. Ahlquist then interviewed Pettit, who confessed to committing the crime, Milardo said.

Pettit is being held on \$75,000 court set bond, Milardo said, and will appear at Middletown Superior Court on Wednesday, Feb. 8, at 10 a.m. According to the state's judicial website, Pettit's history includes a misdemeanor charge for sixth-degree larceny in 2004, and was charged with violating a protective order in 2005. (Pettit was sentenced to 18 months probation for that crime, and was then sentenced to 120 days in jail after violating that probation.)

Hartford Officer Dies in Hebron Crash

by Geeta Schrayter

A Hartford police officer died early Friday morning, Jan. 27, after the car he was driving crashed into an embankment on Route 85.

Officer John Marvin, 28, of Coventry, was traveling southbound through Hebron when he failed to stop at the intersection of routes 85 and 94 then hit the embankment on the right shoulder of Route 85, state police said.

Marvin, who was not wearing a seatbelt at the time, was pronounced dead at the scene. The crash is currently under investigation.

Hartford Mayor Pedro E. Segarra ordered city flags lowered to half-staff on Friday, and expressed his condolences in a statement from the same day, saying "our heartfelt prayers and with his loved ones on this painful day."

"The fine men and women of the Hartford Police Department (HPD) risk life and limb daily to protect our city, and every loss deeply impacts us all," he said.

Hartford Police Chief Brian J. Heavren also commented in the release, saying "it is with a deep sense of sorrow that we mourn the loss of one of our family."

Marvin joined the HPD in December 2009, served in Iraq with the U.S. Navy in 2008 and was a sergeant with the Connecticut National Guard, the release stated.

A funeral service was held Wednesday at South United Methodist Church in Manchester, followed by a burial with military honors at New Cemetery in Coventry.

A memorial fund has been set up by Marvin's Hartford Police Department Academy classmates to help support his 18-month-old son. Donations can be sent to 50 Jennings Rd., Hartford, CT 06120. Checks should be made payable to: The Patrol Officer John Marvin Memorial Fund.

New Auto Shop Opens on Route 66 in Portland

by Joshua Anusewicz

For a lot of people, the thought of leaving your job and starting up your own successful business is more of a dream than a reality. But for Bill Baldyga, the owner of the new Bill's Auto Repair & Tire in Portland, he's hoping that his dreams will come true.

Baldyga is taking his shot with his new shop, which just opened two weeks ago on Route 66, after spending over a decade working for Firestone in Manchester and Glastonbury. Baldyga, who lives in Glastonbury but was raised in Middletown, said he enjoyed working for the company but became tired of working within the corporate structure after a while. Additionally, he wanted to spend time with his family, which includes five daughters.

"I wanted to escape that corporate pressure," Baldyga said. He said his experience as a manager with Firestone allowed him responsibilities within "all facets" of running a repair shop, so looking to forward his career on his own seemed like a worthwhile endeavor.

Three years ago, Baldyga began making moves toward establishing his own company in the area. He said that, aside from "finding the nerve to do it," finding a suitable location has been the most difficult part so far. But after other locations fell through, he settled on the highly-traveled stretch of Route 66 in a highly-visible location.

Baldyga said that the location was a former transmission shop that wasn't in the greatest condition. He said that over the past few weeks, he's had to put in "a lot of elbow grease" to clean, paint, and spruce up the building. That work has undoubtedly helped, as the shop – from the office to the five service bays – is close

to immaculate.

With the shop secured, Baldyga has been able to hire one full-time technician and one part-time technician who will run the garage for now. Baldyga was brimming with excitement that he was able to hire his full-time technician, who he said has 16 years of experience and is an "excellent" technician.

"We were just talking about him coming to work for me someday, and now, here he is," Baldyga said. "Definitely makes me feel more comfortable."

Bill's Auto Repair & Tire will be a full-service shop, which Baldyga said will do everything except body work and internal transmission work. And although he expects the work to be top-notch, he said the service is what will keep people coming back.

"Fair, honest and trustworthy," Baldyga said of his goals. "We want to treat people right, and be happy. It'll be good work at a good price."

He recalled how much he learned about customer service working for Firestone, but said he always felt pressured to push the price up. "More, more, more is what they wanted," Baldyga said. "I want to tell you what it needs, but there's not any pressure."

In the several days it has been open, Baldyga said that he has seen a decent flow of customers coming in already. He said he has a "decent referral foundation" set up already, but expects business to pick up through word of mouth. And as with most fledgling business, he's optimistic, but realistic.

"Ideally, I'd love to expand," Baldyga said. "But if there's one thing I've learned, you need



With five service bays and newly-revamped office, Bill's Auto Repair & Tire in Portland is ready to provide a new option for vehicle maintenance in town. Owner Bill Baldyga said you can expect the company to be "fair, honest, and trustworthy" with each customer it serves.

to one thing well first, and then expand." He added, "I'm not nervous about succeeding; just treat the customers right."

And with the experience he has earned in the business, there's no reason to believe he

won't do just that.

Bill's Auto Repair & Tire is located at 677 Portland-Cobalt Rd., Route 66. You can reach the office at 860-358-9965.

Colchester Finance Board Member Suing Over Injuries

by Bailey Seddon

Bruce Hayn, the Board of Finance vice chairman who was recently charged with arson, is also currently involved in a lawsuit against several companies for injuries he says he sustained while on a job site in 2009.

Hayn and his wife, Patricia Hayn, are suing Keith Aurand Construction LLC, Icon Legacy Custom Modular Homes LLC, Tri-County Homes LLC and Extreme Home 615 Foundation for negligence following an incident on Nov. 12, 2009. According to the lawsuit, filed in New London Superior Court, Hayn was hurt while working on a home at 576 Bethel Rd. in Griswold.

According to the suit, the defendants in the case were delivering sections of the roof and moving pieces of the home into place on the foundation. During the process a portion of the roof that had been set on the ground fell over on Hayn, "crushing him to the ground," the suit says. The lawsuit says the defendants "negli-

gently failed to safely and securely set sections of the roof... and had not made proper arrangements to prevent one of the roof sections from falling over." It also says the defendants did not warn Hayn or others that the roof sections were not secured.

Hayn, the lawsuit states, suffered 14 injuries including: back and chest pain, right leg and calf swelling, left knee and lateral patellar tilt, right knee arthroscopy, posterior cruciate ligament reconstruction with hamstring allograft and degenerative joint disease of the left knee. Because of his injuries, the suit says, Hayn suffered "great pain, mental anguish and loss of the ability to carry on and enjoy life's activities." It also says his injuries will likely be permanent and as a result Hayn cannot pursue his usual line of work.

Hayn's wife is included as a plaintiff, the lawsuit says, because as a result of his injuries she has suffered "a loss of consortium, affection and

services from her husband as a result of the defendant's negligence." According to injuryinfo.com, loss of consortium is "a disruption of the marriage relationship caused by an injury" and can include "aspects of your relationship that provide you with support, affection and companionship and may be filed by the non-injured spouse in conjunction with the injured spouse's claim."

The lawsuit says the couple is suing for more than \$15,000 in damages.

In addition to suing the aforementioned companies, Hayn himself is being sued by GE Capital Information Technology Solutions, Inc., doing business as IKON Financial Services. The firm says in its lawsuit that Hayn owes the company from a lease agreement. According to the lawsuit, also on file at New London Superior Court, Hayn signed a lease agreement with IKON for a Canon CPP650 Copier and agreed to make 48 monthly payments of \$924.59 each.

Hayn also signed a lease agreement for a GBC table, cutter, GBC punch, MBM folder and a GBC laminator and agreed to pay IKON \$587 in 36 monthly payments for the equipment. IKON says Hayn has failed to make the payments, the firm is seeking more than \$2,500 in payments, including interest and legal fees.

Hayn first made headlines two weeks ago, when he was arrested for first-degree arson, criminal attempt to commit first-degree arson, second-degree false statement and insurance fraud. The charges were in connection with a fire that destroyed his business in October of last year.

Since his arrest, First Selectman Gregg Schuster has called on Hayn to resign, but, as of press time, he has not done so.

Hayn could not be reached for comment. Hayn's attorney, Michael L. Anderson, said he could not comment on pending litigation.

Hebron Library Director Seeks Increase in Funding

by Geeta Schrayter

Douglas Library needs more funding, according to the library's director. Like others all over the country, the library is feeling the affects of a rough economy, budget freezes and enough funding to just get by.

"The funding's been basically stagnant for the past few years," explained Library Director Mary Ellen Beck. She went on to say there are two problem areas as a result – hours and materials.

"The past two years we've had [budget] freezes in March, and that's affected buying materials," she said. "Our material budget is lower than those of [other libraries] in the area of the same size. So the price is going up on materials, and the budget is being frozen on materials, and because other libraries have more funding – we're obviously at a disadvantage."

Beck said a survey had recently been conducted where patrons submitted answers to questions regarding what they saw as shortcomings at the library, "and people want more materials," she said. Presently, the library is only able to buy one copy of a best seller, "so people have to wait a long time" to borrow it.

"The library hasn't been appropriately

funded, in my opinion, since I came here seven years ago," said Beck.

The survey also showed that people wanted more hours, but "we can't open more hours," said Beck.

"We can't have more hours when the money we have for staff has been at a stagnant level," she said.

Beck said the library had been asked to submit a budget for the upcoming fiscal year, but it was a "continuation budget," or the bare minimum – what the library needs to "basically operate at the same level."

But because costs continue to increase in more areas than one, including electricity and oil, the funds "have to be put in those areas – we can't ask for more money for materials and staffing," she said, adding the library is "in a bind."

"I would like to see a budget that would reflect more staff and more materials," said Beck.

Along with the budget she was asked for, Beck said two other budgets were also submitted – one with a zero percent increase and another which she called a "dream budget."

"The zero percent budget means, for ex-

ample, if oil goes up something else has to go down," she said. But, she added, "there are only so many things that we can decrease." So if a decrease were in order, "then we would have even less materials and certainly wouldn't be able to open more hours."

The "dream budget" contains a four percent increase in salaries and money to open the library more often as well as an increase in the materials budget.

The lack of materials and availability is causing some patrons to seek out libraries elsewhere; something Beck says is "not a good thing."

"A large percentage of our patrons use this as one [library] among others... and some aren't using it at all," she said, explaining once a resident acquires a Hebron library card, they can use it to go to other libraries.

"If the people in your town are not coming to your library or find it necessary to go to others" for materials, "they're not going to support [the library] in the future," she said.

The current funding for the library also makes it difficult to hold programming. "We have had to rely on donations for that," said Beck. She cited the Friends of Douglas Library as a source

of money through their fundraising efforts, "but they're up against difficulties with the economy."

Tim Howard, vice president of the Friends, admits it has been difficult.

"It's definitely been challenging," he said. "Through the work of our volunteers we've been able to provide many of the same services that we have funded in the past," he continued, but there are some additional services – such as eBooks – "that we just don't have the money for."

Howard agrees with Beck that more money needs to be allocated for the library.

"[Friends of Douglas Library] would like the library to be able to provide the services that it needs," he said. "And in comparison to [libraries in] other towns of our size, we have fewer hours than most and we don't spend as much on materials as others."

Howard stated he hopes funding for the library will increase, and at the very least, he'd like to think "that we will get people to continue to donate their used books or make contributions to support the Friends," who may then, in turn, help the Douglas Library.

Colchester Teacher Helps WJJMS With Grants

by Bailey Seddon

When she is not performing her job as a full-time teacher, Laura Krenicki is doing all she can to get grants so her students have more opportunities at school.

Krenicki, a sixth-grade geography teacher, has been at William J. Johnston Middle School (WJJMS) for nine years and has been applying for grants since she started. And at midway through the 2011-12 school year, WJJMS has already received three grants from different organizations Krenicki applied to.

The first grant received was for \$500 from the Colchester Learning Foundation for the Unified Theater program at the school. The second grant, for \$3,000, was also for the Unified Theater program, and came from the National Inclusion Project in order to implement *Let's All Play*, an inclusion of all children in recreation programs. The partnership, according to a press release, will allow all children including those with "developmental disabilities to enjoy successful theater experiences in an inclusive setting."

Combined, the \$3,500 will help children in the Unified Theater program put on a play later this year. Krenicki started Unified Theater in Colchester last year, after hearing about the Hartford version of the program. Krenicki said the school just had to sign a contract with National Unified Theater and pays an annual fee of \$500 to use the name and the training of student leaders. When she first advertised the new group, Krenicki only expected 20 kids to join and was amazed when 50 showed up. This year is even higher, with 70 kids a part of the process.

The shows put on in Unified Theater are written, directed, produced and acted solely by the students, who are in grades six through eight. "The kids do everything," Krenicki said. Having the children do all the work, especially those

children with disabilities, helps lead to "improved self-esteem, social skills, confidence to participate and sport and motor skills," the press release said.

This year, the students are putting on a spoof of *America's Got Talent*, a popular reality show in which people audition their talent and then compete for \$1 million and a chance to headline a show in Las Vegas. Krenicki said the students are going to imitate the show, pretending to be the celebrity hosts and judges, such as Nick Cannon and Sharon Osbourne, and will even perform commercials. The show is Friday, Feb. 10, at 7 p.m. in the Bacon Academy auditorium, and anyone in the community is welcome, Krenicki said.

Krenicki said having the students in charge is very important to the group. She said it can be a healing and therapeutic process for students who might need it. "The process is more important than the product," Krenicki said. Of the show she said it is great for parents and other students to see how well the students perform at putting a show together. She said over 300 people came to see last year's show, *Hollywood Revealed*, another spoof, which depicted the everyday lives of actors and actresses.

Krenicki said she started writing grants when she realized that the money would allow students to get even more out of their school. When she found herself wishing she had more money for kids activities she asked herself, "Okay how can we do this, how can we fund it?" The answer was applying for as many grants as possible.

"It can be a job in itself," said Krenicki. She said she gets about two 'no's for every one 'yes' when applying for grants. Despite this, Krenicki said it is worth it because kids get even more of the good experiences they need.

Before coming to Colchester, Krenicki taught music for 13 years. After that she worked

for the state Department of Education, in the social studies department. Then she was in the department of Curriculum and Instruction for the State of Connecticut for a year before coming to WJJMS, in 2003. Since coming to Colchester she is glad of her change of career, she said.

"I really love working with kids," she said. "It's nice to have that kind of connection with kids outside our school."

In addition to the two grants for United Theater, WJJMS recently received a third one, for another afterschool program. The \$300 grant, from the Kids in Need Foundation, went toward the Geography Project, which started at the school last week. Krenicki said the grant will help the project with \$120 for maps, books and printed materials, \$80 for supplies, paper and project materials, and \$100 in awards, certificates and prizes for the Geography Bee winners. Without the money the school would not have had such a well-funded afterschool program, she said.

According to its website kinf.org, Kids In Need is a 501(c)(3) foundation with the "mission is to ensure that every child is prepared to learn and succeed." As well as providing free school supplies to schools in need, the organization has awarded \$1 million in grants to teachers since its start in 1995.

With the help of the grant, the Geography Project has kids choosing "up to four countries or regions from different continents considering the geography, two selected periods of history and contemporary cultures of these countries," according to a press release. Once they have picked, students will work to know all about the area they have chosen and learn such skills as "geographic terms and regions... examine geographic factors that help explain historical events...and describe specific places on a map using latitude and longitude."



Laura Krenicki

Krenicki said she is hoping students will learn a lot from the project, not just about their own country but also about others. She also said that students will learn such important skills as problem-solving and map-making through the afterschool program.

The students will learn real-world geographic issues such as where to build a dam and how it affects the environment around it. They will also learn where locations for places such as Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts would go and create a model and show how it would affect the community.

As a geography teacher, Krenicki said she is glad to have a project where kids can "look at things from a geographic perspective" and learn more about the world around them.

All-Day Kindergarten Included in Hebron School Budget

by Geeta Schrayter

The Board of Education last week approved a \$12,012,553 for the 2012-13 fiscal year – a package that includes funding for the expansion of all-day kindergarten.

The spending plan calls for a 1.85 percent reduction over the current year's budget. The package was passed 5-2 at the school board's Jan. 26 meeting, with members Dominic Marino and Amy Lynch-Gracias opposed.

Reasons for the addition of all-day kindergarten included increased expectations for students due to changing state mandates and the Common Core State Standards as well as decreasing enrollment and the fact that no additional supplies, space, furniture or support staff is required.

Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz said "there was a combination of factors which have significantly changed the conversation" from what it was in 2010, when the idea of expanding all-day kindergarten proved controversial with voters, and was considered to be a main reason the 2010-11 town budget was defeated on its first trip before the voters that year.

"Declining enrollment in conjunction with the retirement package" which was offered, and which eight teachers took advantage of, allowed for more flexibility "and the opportunity to move things around and accommodate the reduction in class sizes but also support an all-day initiative," she said.

Cruz said other towns have had to put significant amounts of money into the implemen-

tation of all-day kindergarten, but "we don't have to."

"We have budgeted five full-time kindergarten teachers here," said board chair Kathy Shea. Currently, there are two full-day kindergarten classes and four half-day. Shea went on to say there had been requests by parents to offer six kindergarten classes and bring the class sizes under 18, but an additional teacher "would increase the bottom line by another \$62,000."

Conversely, if full-day kindergarten were to be removed, the budget would reduce by \$41,000 – a number that prompted Marino to say, "that's all?"

Cruz said going down to six half-day kindergarten classes as opposed to five full-day ones would allow for the reduction of an additional teacher, at \$55,000 worth of savings. However, about \$14,000 would need to be paid in unemployment, making the savings the stated \$41,000.

"The savings of going to all half-day is the loss of a teacher," she said, adding there would be no additional savings since "we don't have a need for classroom space, supplies, support personnel or furniture."

The majority of the board was in favor of the inclusion, but Marino and Lynch-Gracias expressed concern.

"We don't have the money here," said Marino. "Where's the money coming from? Homeowners?"

Marino stated he wanted to wait until all-day kindergarten became mandated by the state,

which could potentially bring in funding for the program.

"I think that in this small town, where we do have the money to do that – I can't support all-day kindergarten right now," he said.

"I do think that full-day kindergarten is warranted," said Lynch-Gracias. "However, I can't see us paying for it at this time so I would prefer to see it not installed."

But board member Tina Marie-Blinn said "right now, everything's in place... we can't rely on the state or federal government to support [kindergarten]." She went on to say, "I think it's a good investment to do with the children... it's about what's best for the kids and I think this is best for the kids."

"We put our heads in the sand if we think just because we had half-day kindergarten [growing up] that it's going to work for the kids," said board member Stephanie Raymond.

Shea reminded those present about the "huge kindergarten battle a couple years ago," and how the board, at the time, had looked at taking out various programs to make it happen. She went on to say she's in support of all-day kindergarten in light of the fact it doesn't involve the same cuts.

"It's got to be skimmed down as much as possible," she said. "That the risk we're going to take here. So with our numbers tonight - [a budget] under 2 percent - I can support it as long as the board is still okay with five full-day teachers and working with those parents that

want half-day... I hope parents can really understand where we are," she said.

The approved budget comes in at an increase of 1.85 percent, down \$240,100 from Cruz's originally-proposed \$12,252,653 budget, which would have been a 3.89 percent increase over the current year.

Reductions took place across the board, including certified salaries (\$148,042, due mainly to teacher retirements), curriculum (\$4,000), technology (\$2,648), staff development (\$8,500), and dues and fees (\$6,590), among others.

Prior to the budget's approval, Lynch-Gracias said she'd still like to see the budget increase below 1 percent, and Cruz expressed her concern over the amount of cuts that have taken place and the future of Hebron's schools if things continued on the same track.

"We will do whatever the board directs us to do, but I'm really concerned at our ability to run and maintain this district" at the level that's expected, she said. "For us to continue, we do need some more support."

She went on to say, "Of course we can do without [more items]... I just don't know, is that a choice that our paths want? I'm not so sure that it is... I guess what I'm asking is, what's the tipping point? When do you start compromising?"

"I will do what the board directs me to do," she continued, "but it is with great sadness and regret that I will."

Obituaries

East Hampton

Lance Joseph Carroll

Lance Joseph Carroll, 66, of Boynton Beach, FL, and formerly of East Haddam, CT passed away on January 17, 2012 after a brief illness. He was preceded in death by his wife Fredericka Ault Carroll.

Lance was born in Hartford, Connecticut on February 15, 1945 the son of the late Joseph and Evelyn Carroll of Unionville.

He served in the U.S. Navy, was a Vietnam Veteran and a member of the American Legion. He was employed by Connecticut Light and Power and retired in 2003. He has resided in Boynton Beach, Florida since 2007.

He is survived by his five children; Christopher Carroll; Dawn Kenney; Denise Carroll; Doreen Andrews; Kadian Carroll; and 10 grandchildren. He is also survived by his sister, Barbara Cochran, and his brothers Stuart and Wayne Carroll.

Lance was a dedicated father, husband and friend who will be greatly missed. He was an avid bass fisherman who loved being on the water.

A celebration of life will be held at 2 p.m. on Saturday, February 11, 2012 at the American Legion in Marlborough, Connecticut.

East Hampton

Walter E. Nichols Sr.

Walter E. Nichols Sr. of East Hampton died Friday, Jan. 27, one day before his 95th birthday. He now joins his wife, Mildred R. (Royce) Nichols, with whom he spent 62 happy years.

He was the son of the late George Nichols and Annie Jane (Simpson) Nichols and was predeceased by his sister, Ethyl Royce, and brother, Robert E. Nichols.

He is survived by three sons, Walter E. Nichols Jr. and his wife Gloria, Robert A. Nichols and his wife Lynn, Gary E. Nichols and longtime companion Ramona Stone; also four grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, two great-great-grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews.

He was a U.S. Navy veteran of World War II, having served in the South Pacific. He was a Navy Petty Officer Metal Smith 2/C. He was a charter member of the VFW Post 5095, a life member of the International Association of Machinist and Aerospace Workers Lodge 782. He retired in 1981 after working at Standard Knapp Inc. in Portland for 30 years as a toolmaker.

He was an active HAM Radio operator with the call letters WB1DBQ, a member of the Middlesex Amateur Radio Society, the Connecticut Amateur Radio Emergency Service, the Amateur Radio Relay League, and a volunteer examiner for amateur licenses. He was a member of the East Hampton Fire Department since 1939 and was one of the original members of the East Hampton Fireman's Recreation Association. He was a member of the Connecticut Wood Carvers Association and was also a member of the Tobacco Valley Fly Wheelers.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, Feb. 4, at 11 a.m., in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton. Burial will follow in Lakeview Cemetery. Friends may call at the funeral home Saturday morning from 10-11 a.m.

The family wishes to extend their thanks to Portland Care and Rehab for the excellent care and compassion extended to Walter.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

East Hampton

Ann Marie Pender

Ann Marie Pender, 90, of Haddam Neck and East Hampton, widow of the late David Pender, died Saturday, Jan. 28, at Hartford Hospital. Born March 3, 1921, in Meriden, she had lived most of her life in Haddam Neck.

She had worked in manufacturing for G.E., assembling televisions. She was a member of the Haddam Neck Congregational Church.

She is survived by her only grandson, David Gonzalez of Middletown.

She was predeceased by her husband and her daughter, Jade Pender.

Funeral services will be private at the convenience of the family. The Spencer Funeral Home 112 Main St. East Hampton has care of arrangements. To leave online condolences please visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

East Hampton

Barbara Phelps Shepard

Barbara Phelps Shepard, 82, of East Hampton, passed away Saturday, Jan. 28. Mrs. Shepard was the wife of Bruce C. Shepard, to whom she was married for 57 years. She was born Oct. 3, 1929 to the late Arthur L. and Alice Phelps of Springfield, MA, and Waterford.

Mrs. Shepard is also survived by three children, B. Scott of Ellington, Ethan of New Hampshire and Elizabeth of East Hampton. She was the grandmother of four: Joshua and Zachary of Westbrook, Emily Perillo of Guilford and Liam of Ellington; and great-grandmother of Joshua and Grace, of Delaware.

Mrs. Shepard was active in the community, graduating from Connecticut College for Women and Willimantic State Teachers College. She taught in Essex and upon coming to East Hampton, started the East Hampton Nursery School in 1968. In 1986, she organized the first annual Crop Walk, a town-wide walk in support of the alleviation of hunger, and in 1984 was instrumental in the organization of the East Hampton Food Bank, where she was a steady volunteer for 20 years.

There will be no calling hours and funeral services are private. Burial will be at the Union Hill Cemetery in Middle Haddam, the Reverend D. Charles Schleich presiding.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the East Hampton Food Bank, 20 East High St., or to the Connecticut Hospice, 100 Double Beach Rd, Branford.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Marlborough

Michael Paul DiStefano

Mike beloved son, brother, father and friend, was born on October 21, 1962 and passed away from injuries sustained in an auto accident Monday, Jan. 30.

Mike was the fifth child of Thomas L. and Agnes F. DiStefano Jr.'s eight children, seven sons and one daughter, of 48 Barton Hill Rd., East Hampton.

Mike, an avid sportsman and athlete in high school, lettered in both soccer and basketball. After high school, Mike became a competitive 5K and 10K runner, participating in races throughout New England. Mike's passion for music and singing was first noticed as a lead voice in the high school choir. Mike followed UConn basketball and football as well as University of Tennessee football, was a shareholder in the Boston Celtics and loved the Dallas Cowboys since childhood.

After high school, Mike entered the Air Force and was honorably discharged. After the Air Force, Mike attended Middlesex Community College and ended his course study in 1984. Mike began his employment and career as a chef, working for family restaurants leading to the ownership of Mr. D's restaurant with his brother Dan in 1987. For 10 years under both Mike and Dan's leadership Mr. D's prospered as the East Hampton meeting place serving Italian fare in a sports atmosphere. In 1997 Mr. D's was destroyed in a fire and a bit of the soul of East Hampton was lost as well.

Later in life Mike joined International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers, Local 33, where he was employed. Most important to Mike was being a dedicated and loving father to his children, Anthony, Gabriel, Luca and Gianna.

Mike leaves behind his parents, Thomas L. and Agnes F. DiStefano Jr.; siblings, Thomas and Rebecca DiStefano III of Boca Raton, FL, David and Mari DiStefano of Cumberland, TN, Randall and Mona DiStefano of Grafton, VT, Steven and Sherri DiStefano of Roanoke, VA, Kevin DiStefano and Jerry Rodriguez of Hartford, CT, Karen (DiStefano) and Frank Mott of Moodus, and Daniel and Sharon DiStefano of East Hampton; and many nieces nephews and aunts and uncles.

A funeral liturgy will be celebrated today, Feb. 3, at 11 a.m., in St. Patrick Church, East Hampton. Burial will follow in the family plot in St. Patrick Cemetery. Friends called at Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, on Thursday, Feb. 2.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Autism Speaks CT at autismspeaks.org.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Caroline Guarnaccia Kelly

Caroline Guarnaccia Kelly, wife of the late Clayton (Skip) Kelly of Colchester and much respected companion of Bobby Thompson, dear daughter of the late Charles and Mary Ferro Guarnaccia, passed away peacefully with her loving family by her side Sunday, Jan. 29.

Surviving are her son, John and wife, Lori Herde; two daughters, Mary Jean and her husband, Steven Goodman, Carrie Gullon; adored grandmother of Sam and David Goodman; loving sister of Sadie Brady and the late Wesley, Salvatore and Judie Guarnaccia, Carol K. Guarnaccia, and the late Charles; treasured aunt of the late Mary Guarnaccia-Parlee and best friend to the late Dottie Lewis. Carol will be fondly remembered by cousins, especially missed by Mimi Murphy and nieces, nephews, grandnieces, and grandnephews, all of whom she adored and brought her great happiness.

Carol's professional years were dedicated to Pratt & Whitney Aircraft, Town of Colchester and most recently as a volunteer for Social Services. Carol never regarded any issues as too insignificant when it came to family. She was a woman of honor and old-fashioned values who always put others before herself and was genuinely a kind hearted person. You could always count on Carol - always. She will be remembered for a courageous life well lived.

Special thanks to the CCU Nursing Staff at Lawrence Memorial Hospital who took such great care of our mother.

A Mass of Christian Burial was held Thursday, Feb. 2, at St. Andrew's Catholic Church, Norwich Avenue, Colchester. Burial followed in New St. Andrew's Cemetery. Visitation was on Wednesday evening at the Belmont/Sabrowski Funeral Home, 144 South Main St., Colchester. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105.

Hebron

Robert D' Ambrosio Memorial Service

A memorial service for Robert D' Ambrosio of Palm Beach Gardens, FL, formerly of Hebron, will be held Saturday, Feb. 4, at 2 p.m., at Aycock Funeral Home, Jupiter, FL.

D' Ambrosio passed away Jan. 19 at the age of 63. For more information about the memorial, visit aycockfuneralhomejupiter.com.

Donations may be made in D' Ambrosio's memory to Hospice of Palm Beach County, 5300 East Ave., West Palm Beach, FL 33407 or visit hpbcc.com.

Hebron

Violet N. Wallace

Violet N. (Conrad) Wallace, 83, of Hebron, formerly of Glastonbury, wife of the late Edward M. Wallace, died Sunday, Jan. 29, at the Marlborough Health Care Center. Born March 18, 1928, in Mooretown, VT, daughter of the late Clarence and Myrtle Gertrude (Smith) Conrad, she had lived in Glastonbury for 50 years.

Violet is survived by her six children and their spouses, Laurie and Russ Marinone of Broad Brook, Nancy and Ted Powell of Colchester, Marion and George Noonan of Hebron, Janet and Charles Hood of Nashville, TN, Margaret and Cowboy Bradley of St. Louis, MO, James and Sharon Wallace of Arrington, TN; two brothers, Edward Conrad of Montreal, Carlton Conrad of Nova Scotia; four sisters, Laurene Owen of Florida, Anna Fevens of New Brunswick, Alice Amiro of Nova Scotia, Evelyn Garrett of England and 18 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

She was predeceased by a son, William Wallace. The family would like to thank the staff at Marlborough Health Care Center for their care and compassion shown to their mother and father these past three years.

The funeral service will be held Tuesday, Feb. 7, at 2 p.m., in the Mulryan Funeral Home, 725 Hebron Ave., Glastonbury. Burial will follow in Green Cemetery, Glastonbury. The family will receive friends at the funeral home one prior to the service.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the American Lung Association, 45 Ash St., East Hartford, CT 06108.

To share a memory, visit mulryanh.com.

Portland

Ellen S. Roman

Ellen S. Roman, 82, of Portland, wife of the late Victor G. Roman, passed away Wednesday, Feb. 1. She was the daughter of the late Sterling and Louise (Rothschild) Spero.

Born March 4, 1929, in New York City, she was a resident of Portland for over 50 years. She was a teacher for the Portland and Middletown school systems. She also worked for the State of Connecticut legislature and was politically and socially active in the local communities.

She leaves her three daughters, Cynthia Roman of Portland, Louise Roman (Bernstein) of London, England, and Margot (Mimi) LaPoint of Marlborough, as well as Michael Gray of Hampstead, NH. She is also survived by five grandchildren, Gregory and Matthew Bernstein, Zane Lombardo and Molly and Rebecca LaPoint, by many nieces and nephews and by lots of others who called her "Grandma" and loved her.

She was predeceased by an infant son, Gregory Victor Roman.

Funeral services will be held today, Feb. 3, at 2 p.m., at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland. Burial will be in Trinity Cemetery, Portland. Relatives and friends may call today from 1:30 p.m. until the time of the service at the funeral home. Memorial donations may be made to the Middlesex Hospital Hospice, 28 Crescent St, Middletown, CT 06457, middlesexhospital.org/support-middlesex-hospital, or to Heifer International at heifer.org.

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



Body of Missing Portland Woman Found in Connecticut River

by Joshua Anusewicz

The body of a Portland woman who went missing last week was found Tuesday morning in the Connecticut River.

According to Portland Police Sgt. Scott Cunningham, a man who was walking along the river in the area of Riverside Marina on Riverview Street came across the body of Margaret Oliver, 59, submerged in the water. Cunningham said that Oliver, a resident of the Greystone Retirement Home on High Street, had been reported missing last Thursday, after she signed herself out of the home and had not returned.

Cunningham said that Portland Police were aided by the Connecticut State Police Major Crimes Unit, who assisted in removing the body from the water. Oliver was identified by the clothes she had been wearing at the time she went missing and personal identification in her possession, he added.

Police have yet to confirm why or where she went into the river, but Cunningham said a "room search" at the retirement home produced a note that stated Oliver "intended to harm herself." Cunningham said an autopsy was scheduled on Wednesday, and a cause of

death would be determined soon.

Although reports have stated that Oliver suffered from either dementia or Alzheimer's disease, Luel Swanson, the administrator at Greystone Retirement Home, said Wednesday that Oliver was a "very intelligent and highly articulate" individual. Swanson said that Oliver did suffer from some "mental health issues," but it was not uncommon for Oliver to sign out and make bus trips to Middletown for the day.

"She loved to go to the library, the health food store, or go out for lunch and dinner," Swanson said. "She was a very vibrant and very independent person." Swanson added that Oliver was "very well-liked" by the other residents at Greystone, and was considered "part of the family."

Swanson said that a support group has been established for residents of Greystone who need help handling the situation. She added that residents are "doing as well as expected" during this difficult time.

"We've done our best to have residents stay calm and we're helping everyone get through this," Swanson said.

Colchester Police News

1/24: Ryan A. Rogers, 20, who was listed as having no known address, was charged with second-degree criminal mischief, State Police said.

1/24: Sanjeev Khadka, 20, of 18 Edgemere Ave., West Hartford, was charged with speeding, DUI and failure to drive in the proper lane, State Police said.

1/28: Timothy McNamara, 54, of 90 Great Hill Rd., Moodus, was charged with DUI and making an improper turn, Colchester Police said.

1/28: Gary A. Pianka, 51, of 25 Chapel Hill Rd., Oakdale, was charged with DUI and having improper brake lights, Colchester Police said.

1/30: James Michael Kelly, 33, of 15 Wheeler Ave., was charged with DUI, third-degree assault and disorderly conduct, State Police said.

Hebron Police News

1/25: Paul C. Carlquist, 41, of 110 Hunt Rd., Columbia, was charged with DUI and failure to drive right, State Police said.

1/26: Police are investigating a broken window of a motor vehicle parked on Church Street. Between the hours of midnight and 2:33 a.m. Police say the back window of a vehicle parked behind Twin Lakes Café, at 544 Church Street, was broken out. Anyone with information is asked to contact Troop K in Colchester at 860-537-7500.

Portland Police News

1/27: Robin Paquette, 38, of 1113 Portland Cobalt Rd., was charged with failure to drive in proper lane, misuse of plates, unregistered motor vehicle and insufficient insurance, Portland Police said.

1/28: Pablo Figuero, 33, of 29 Woodruff Ct., New Britain, was charged with second-degree forgery, illegally obtaining prescriptions and obtaining a controlled substance by forgery, police said.

Armed Robbery Reported in East Hampton

East Hampton Police are investigating a report of an attempted armed robbery Tuesday at a local pizza restaurant.

The reported incident occurred at around 8:45 p.m. at DaVinci Pizza in Cobalt. The suspect is described as a Hispanic-looking male, about 5'8", with a medium build. He was wearing a bandanna across his face.

According to police, the male displayed a

black handgun to employees but fled the restaurant without any money. There were two people in the restaurant at the time, both employees, police said.

East Hampton Police are investigating the incident. Anyone in the area at the time who has any information is asked to call Sgt. Paul Battista at 860-267-9544.