

News Bulletin

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Visiting the Big Guy...Garin Vardanian, 7, Xaden Vardanian, 11, Colby Vardanian, 10, and Jacob Dietz, 10 (pictured from left), were all smiles the night of the Gathering on the Green in Marlborough, as they hopped aboard Santa's sleigh for a photo opp with him and one of his elves. See related story on page 22.

Banding Together to Support Mental Health

by Geeta Schrayter

Saturday marks the one-year anniversary of the tragic shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown that took the lives of 27 people, including 20 children. After the shootings, discussions – often quite heated – went back and forth between issues such as gun control and mental health, what could have been done and what should be done moving forward.

People from all over wondered what they could do to help those immediately affected by the tragedy as well as to prevent anything similar from occurring again; in Hebron, that wonder led to the creation of a fund for local children and families who need assistance paying for mental health care.

Stephanie Haines, minister of missions at Gilead Congregational Church, explained this week her church's Board of Missions sat down soon after the tragedy to discuss how they could respond to what happened. She said the members went "around and around" with different ideas but eventually decided to help address mental health needs.

"Certainly there's not one thing that caused the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School; we want to make that very clear," she said. "But in kind of looking at what we could potentially do we thought if somebody is reaching out – a child or a family – for support with mental health-related issues and they can't afford to do that, they should be able to" – and that was something the fund could help assure.

"It was something we felt we could feasibly do," Haines said, furthering, "No family or child should have to suffer in silence."

And so, the church partnered with AHM Youth and Family services and other members of the faith community to create the Community Mental Health Fund (CMHF) with both a short and long-term vision.

AHM Executive Director Joel Rosenberg said from the beginning, the idea seemed like it would be "a great partnership and match between AHM and the faith community."

"So much of what we do is focused on the social and emotional well-being of children and families and the faith community very much cares deeply about that same welfare, so it was just a natural partnership from the very beginning," Rosenberg said.

Using knowledge AHM already had, due to its management of the AHM Children's Trust Fund, Rosenberg explained a similar model was decided upon for the CMHF. While some short-term contributions would be set aside for current needs, contributions will also be "conservatively invested," thereby ensuring funds continue to be available in the future.

"I want to make sure when the people who are working on this today are done with this project that it's in a good enough place for the next volunteers, the next visionaries, to carry it forward to the future," he said. "That's going to be the real test of whether it was successful or not."

Rosenberg said at first only a very limited amount of funds will be available and there are very strict policies in place that will be used to determine whether or not someone is eligible

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Santa Claus Comes to Town

by Elizabeth Bowling

Not even the cold temperatures could freeze over Portland's Christmas spirits last Sunday night, Dec. 8, as the third annual holiday parade and tree lighting went off without a hitch.

Parks and Recreation Director Sean Dwyer explained that, until three years ago, the parade and the tree lighting were two separate events. But in 2011, the events were combined under the Parks and Recreation Department.

Sunday night's crowd, made up of about 200 local residents, gathered in front of Brownstone Intermediate School and stayed warm by drinking hot chocolate and wearing festive hats like Santa Claus and elf hats. Others decorated themselves in reindeer antler headbands and some were actually wrapped up in Christmas lights.

The Portland High School chorus and band provided live music throughout a chilly, but exciting, one-hour event. The musical ensembles sang and played Christmas classics like *Silent*

Night, O Come All Ye Faithful and *Jingle Bells*.

One Portland resident, Sarah Weeten, said she and her family attend the parade and tree lighting every year.

"I think it's awesome," she said. "It's got that small-town feel to it."

That small-town feel was especially evident when the parade made its way from Town Hall, down Main Street, and to the school.

Upon seeing the flashing lights of a slow-moving, decorated fire truck, one youngster yelled "They're coming, they're coming!" with so much conviction, he would have made Paul Revere proud.

The cheerful crowd lined the street and it seemed the festively decorated local fire trucks had everyone mesmerized.

One such truck sported on its roof a blown-up Santa and reindeer, which inspired one dad to ask his kids, "Who's that guy?"

And though the children didn't respond with

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Portland got into the holiday spirit last Sunday, Dec. 8, with its holiday parade and tree lighting at Brownstone Intermediate School on Main Street. Pictured here is one of 31 units in the parade, lit up with Christmas lights and cheer.

Holiday Shopping Guide Inside

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to apply. “We don’t want people to be disappointed thinking if they have a \$500 deductible for a mental health service they can apply for that – there are very limited funds available for now and the idea is to help not just one but multiple people,” he explained, adding the fund is meant to be used as a “bridge” between, for example, what someone’s insurance covers and the cost of a particular service or medication if the family can’t afford it.

The fund currently contains over \$10,000, and has a goal of about \$25,000. The funds have been raised through a number of ways, including private donors, a Neighbors in Need grant awarded through the United Church of Christ and events held by various churches.

In addition, wristbands are currently being sold for \$3 with all proceeds to go toward the fund. The wristbands are green – the color often associated with mental health awareness campaigns, and the school color of Sandy Hook Elementary School – and read “Mental Health Matters!”

Haines added another hope was that they could help de-stigmatize mental illness and, to

that regard, those who purchase the wristband also receive a card that contains some mental health statistics.

“It’s great to have the Community Mental Health Fund but if people don’t reach out for help that won’t do us any good,” she said.

Some of the statistics include “one out of every four families will experience mental health in their family” and “two in three people with signs and symptoms of mental illness do not seek help due to fear of judgment and rejection.”

“It’s okay to ask for help,” the card proclaims.

“Mental health, just like any physical health issue should be treated,” Haines stated. “I used to work as a social worker in town [for AHM] and I would say ‘You wouldn’t not treat your child for diabetes, so why would you not treat them for mental health?’ but there’s such a fear of the label.”

And that was something they were looking to help change. In addition, Haines said she hoped “they” would grow to include many other churches.

“We [at Gilead Congregational] kind of are

leading this initiative but we really want it to be an all-faith community” she stated.

Members of churches from all four towns associated with AHM – Andover, Hebron, Marlborough and Columbia – attended a clergy breakfast at Gilead Congregational Church in October, to discuss the fund.

Haines said she is “still kind of reaching out” to get some more churches involved, but said several – including Church of the Holy Family, St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, The Worship Center Church in Hebron, St. John Fisher Church and Marlborough Congregational Church in Marlborough, First Congregational Church of Andover and Columbia Congregational Church – have already come onboard.

“It’s nice the faith communities are coming together and trying to be a light in the midst of a lot of darkness,” Haines said.

Also present at the October meeting were state Sen. Cathy Osten and state Rep. Pam Sawyer, both of whom, Rosenberg said, were “extremely supportive.”

This week, Sawyer said the fund was “the answer to a lot of my hopes and prayers.”

She explained that, since she’d been elected one of the things the state has done poorly is providing mental health services, particularly in the eastern part of the state.

“And at this time of year, particularly on the one-year anniversary of the Newtown tragedy, we need to focus on mental health services” she said, and added, “My heart just leapt when AHM and the churches decided to put together an emergency fund.”

Sawyer said she’s frequently heard of families who don’t have the money to service their family member’s needs for whatever reason “and sometimes just a little bit of assistance will get people over the hump.”

“It may be the difference between someone not being productive and getting someone back into the community in a far more healthy state,” Sawyer said.

For more information on the Community Mental Health Fund or to purchase a bracelet, call Haines at Gilead Congregational Church at 860-228-3077. Bracelets can also be purchased at the various other churches mentioned above.

Santa Claus cont. from Front Page

words, their eyes lit up with amazement.

Another truck was led by Santa’s flying reindeer – that is, a white-light replica of his reindeer attached to the top of the truck.

The parade was made up of 31 marching groups and vehicles, Dwyer affirmed.

A judging table determined which four of the 31 units would win “Wow Awards.” In no particular order, the winners were: the Portland Fire Department, the East Hampton Fire Department, the Connecticut Military and the Polar Express.

Dwyer called the Wow Awards “very informal” and said the four winners were each awarded a small trophy.

Concluding the parade portion of Sunday’s event was none other than jolly old St. Nick himself, looking quite comfortable sitting in his sleigh. He was happy to get out, though, and ask the kids, “You guys don’t want candy, do you?”

And in a fashion that is usually reserved only

for the British boy band One Direction, the kids swarmed.

After handing out candy canes to some 50 children, Santa joined the event’s MC, Dave Kuzminski – who also wears the hat of town technology coordinator – and took to the microphone.

“Portland is on the pretty good list,” Santa said. “I look forward to coming to Portland, Conn., every year.”

Kuzminski added, “We got lots of good boys and girls.”

Each year, one lucky boy or girl gets to flip the switch that lights up the big, evergreen tree in front of Brownstone School. Raffle tickets are handed out to all the children in attendance and the winner of the raffle lights the tree.

Santa pulled lucky ticket number 079551 Sunday night, making Landon Currie this year’s official tree-lighter.

After a crowd-wide countdown from 10,

Currie flipped the switch and illuminated the tree – which will be lit from now through New Year’s. The crowd then erupted in applause and, fittingly, the PHS band and chorus finished off the night with the musical number *O Christmas Tree*.

Dwyer said the town’s grounds crew decorates the tree each year and this year, “we had to buy some extra lights” because the tree grew about a foot and a half. However, Dwyer said he does not know the total height of the tree.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said the grounds crew did a “marvelous job” with the tree.

Regarding the overall event, she said, “I thought it was a wonderful way to begin the holiday season. It was wonderful to see so many people.”

She noted the teamwork required to put the event together, calling it “a nice complement of many groups working together.”

And in an effort to not leave out any of those helpful groups, she said, “I thank everyone.”

Though she did specify her thanks for the efforts of the Parks and Recreation Department, Dave Kuzminski, Cellar Savers and the high school chorus and band.

“The music was just beautiful,” she added.

Dwyer said recognition must also go out to Mary Pont of Youth Services and Portland resident Bob Currier because, “The three of us help put the event together.”

Regarding this year’s event, Dwyer said, “We had a very good crowd for a cool evening.”

He added, “I think it was a nice event. It was a nice chance to end the weekend for the people in town that came down to see a nice parade.”

And in looking forward to next year, he said, “Tentatively, the idea would be to do it again and do it the first Sunday after Thanksgiving.”

Surely it will be an event worth looking forward to.



It was hard to overlook the reindeer that stood on the town green last Saturday. Families watched with fascination as an ice sculptor transformed what was originally a block of ice into a reindeer, which kept up with the event's reindeer theme.



A first this year at the Gathering on the Green was the vocals of this jolly group, the Very Merry Dickens Carolers of Rhode Island. The singers were dressed in Victorian-era clothing and sung holiday classics around the green.

Marlborough Rings in the Holidays

by Melissa Roberto

It was a sight that only comes once a year. Horse-drawn carriages trotted down Jones Hollow Road, an ice sculpture stood in the Marlborough Town Green as well as Santa and his sleigh.

The annual "Gathering on the Green" event in Marlborough reeled in hundreds of families this year. The event took place from 4-6 p.m. and while an array of activities were happening on the green, the biggest draw of the night seemed to be the lighting of the town's Christmas tree, which was donated by the East Glastonbury Fish & Game Club and planted in the center of the green by the Marlborough Public Works Department.

"That's the big event for them!" mom Julie Teplitsky said of the lighting on behalf of her daughters Isabella and Evie.

The anticipation of the lighting was heightened by a 10-second countdown. Families gathered in a circle around the nearly 30-foot tree, and children rang the jingle bells they created at an activity table at the start of the event. Once the tree was illuminated, visiting carolers belted out "O Christmas Tree" and "Jingle Bells."

The carolers, known as Very Merry Dickens Carolers from Rhode Island, were a first for the Gathering on the Green. Wendy Dietz, who organized the event along with six other Marlborough mothers, said it worked out just

the way they had envisioned.

"Every year we've wanted singing right when the tree got lit and this year it did," Dietz said. "It was great."

This year was Marlborough's fourth annual Gathering on the Green. The event began four years ago when Dietz, who grew up in Marlborough, wanted to bring back the annual tree lighting she remembered as a kid. Along with other mothers in town, Dietz organized fundraisers to collect money in order to put on the event and has continued to do so every year since. This year Dietz was joined by mothers Megan Thatford, Stacey Desmosthenous, Charie Norton, Christine Vardanian, Dana Smith and Tracey Neumuth for the planning of the festivities.

Dietz said 100 letters were sent out to member businesses of the Marlborough Business Association (MBA) to raise funds for the activities. She said a total of \$2,200 was raised, which kept up with the rising trend of donations. As a result, all of the same activities as last year came back to the green in addition to the carolers.

This year's holiday event had a reindeer theme. Onlookers enjoyed watching an ice sculptor from Ice Matters, an ice carving company out of Cheshire, create a reindeer made

of ice. Horse-drawn carriage rides were conducted by Cedar Knoll Farms, and reindeer ornaments were handed out to the first 100 families in attendance.

Tables also lined the perimeter of the green featuring activities put on by It's So Ranunculus Flower Shoppe, Marlborough Arts Center, Marlborough Education Foundation, the Kid's Club and the MOMS Club. Local Boy Scouts from Troop 39 also hosted Christmas card making for soldiers serving overseas.

A certain jolly Santa Claus and one of his elves also were stationed in the green for picture taking in a sleigh donated by the Chrostowky family, Marlborough residents of 38 years.

While the many offerings supplied entertainment for all, 11-year-old Zach Catania said his favorite aspect of the event was the hot chocolate donated by Dunkin' Donuts.

"It was very helpful tonight," Catania quipped as he hinted at the cold weather.

Cookies were also provided by local business Melted Madness.

First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski and Marlborough Elementary School Interim Principal Kathy Veronesi were also in attendance. Gaudinski acted as the master of ceremonies, and just minutes before the tree lighting ensued,

Veronesi sat in a rocking chair in front of the tree and read *Olive, the Other Reindeer* children's book to the kids.

Also taking place on the green from 3-6 p.m. was the annual "Stuff a Cruiser" event hosted by local state troopers. Each year a police cruiser is stationed in the town for the purpose of filling it with donated unwrapped toys. The toys then get distributed to families in need in the area who otherwise might not be able to afford holiday presents for children.

Dietz this week deemed the event a success. She said she was "very happy" with the turnout, and although attendance isn't counted she figured it was more than it had been in the past.

Dietz thanked the local businesses who hosted activities in addition to the many local residents who contributed their time, skills and services to make the event possible. Gaudinski said the event is "becoming a holiday tradition for the town."

"It was well attended and enjoyed by the residents," she said.

And with the tree officially stationed in the center of town and another Gathering on the Green a success, it's now up to the residents of Marlborough to continue spreading the joy that makes the holiday season the most wonderful time of the year.

Marlborough Selectmen Discuss Charter Revision

by Melissa Roberto

Marlborough citizens hoping for charter revision may be happy to hear the selectmen began discussion this week of getting the process started.

The discussion took place at a special Board of Selectmen meeting Wednesday afternoon. The board discussed the planning of charter revision, which would require the formation of a Charter Revision Commission similar to the one that was formed in April 2001.

2001 was the last time the town charter was reviewed. The Charter Revision Commission was formed in April of that year and drafted several charter revisions over a 16-month duration. The commission submitted its revisions to the Board of Selectmen in July 2002, with a vote on the revisions taking place in the November election later that year. The selectmen at the time decided the revisions would all be compiled into one 'yes' or 'no' vote during the election. However, the vote was turned down, meaning none of the revisions passed.

On Wednesday, First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski and selectman Dick Shea discussed organizational planning of a future commission. Gaudinski defined what she felt the board would be responsible for.

"I just want to stress this would be a type of committee that would be a hands-on committee tasked with doing a lot of research," she said.

The selectwoman continued the committee wouldn't just attend meetings but would also be responsible for "studying various documents and making recommendations."

The two selectmen also discussed what revisions they'd like the commission to discuss.

Shea said based on discussions he's heard recently around town he felt the two "most popular" revisions discussed by the public are a town budget vote consisting of an all-day referendum – the current vote is done at an evening town meeting by ballots – and expanding the number of Board of Selectmen members, which currently consists of three seats.

Shea also pitched the idea of combining the separate planning and zoning commissions. He said this could be looked into for streamlining the process applicants have to go through, which involves applicants conducting "the same presentation over a period of several months to different commissions," he said.

Shea also suggested looking at restricting chairmanships so a citizen cannot chair more than one board/commission at a time, in addition to the possibility of requiring boards or commissions to record minutes, among others.

Though Gaudinski did not oppose Shea's suggestions, she felt some sounded more like by-laws for boards and commissions. Gaudinski said she had focused on "larger issues."

Of Gaudinski's issues, one was to determine a more streamlined process of the way the town "borrow[s] and bond[s]" money.

"It's very antiquated and cumbersome in terms of the steps once the approval is given by the public," Gaudinski said of the process in place.

The town's bond counsel has also recommended a change in the bonding process, Gaudinski said.

Gaudinski also commented on shifting the budget process from a town meeting to referendum.

"We don't have a choice of doing it by referendum," she said of the current process. "Times have changed. People don't work in town so they're not available in the evenings. I think you get a broader representation coming to vote by machine."

Gaudinski agreed the largest public concerns are about the budget process and number of selectmen.

Though the pair tossed around ideas, Gaudinski said she didn't plan on handing a "finite list of details to the Charter Commission, but broader areas."

Additionally, Gaudinski pointed out she would hope the committee would bring in individuals from various town departments to understand the current practice. She also said she would hope other town charters are reviewed "because I think you have to look at other best practices and not just what we're comfortable with."

Shea agreed. He also felt the commission members should be appointed carefully.

"My biggest concern is the ability to find a group of people that know how to put in that kind of time," said Shea. "We have to be very careful in the selection in hopes that people that come forward are people that have confidence."

Resident Richard Denno, seated in the audience, entered the conversation. He sat on the 2001 Charter Revision Commission for six months before he stepped down because he found he didn't have enough time in his schedule, he said.

"There are two key things," he told the selectmen. "One is yes, you need the people who have the time to be able to do it and hopefully

the passion and knowledge to do it. Secondly, they put a ton of work as you well pointed out and because the [selectmen] made it an all or nothing proposition [in 2001]...the whole thing got shot down after all the work and time and money the town spent."

Denno furthered he would hope the votes of revisions could be divided rather than one vote for all. Gaudinski said she believed multiple votes is possible.

"That's generally what I've been looking at," she said.

Resident Betty O'Brien – who is also a member of the Board of Education, but not speaking on behalf of the board – also commented charter revision is something she has been pushing for. She told the selectmen she found Wednesday's meeting to be "very informative."

Gaudinski also explained the process. She said the process for revising the charter begins with the Board of Selectmen establishing a Charter Revision Commission. The selectmen then have 30 days to appoint citizens to the commission as members. The commission then has a maximum of 16 months to complete a drafted report of revisions for the selectmen. The timeline also includes public hearings both by the commission and selectmen for public input. Gaudinski said if the commission is formed in early 2014 the goal would be to have charter revision questions on the ballot for the 2015 election.

The selectmen said this would appear as an agenda item at a future meeting. The next Board of Selectmen meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 17, at 7 p.m., at Town Hall.

Hebron Girl Scouts Spread Cheer with Bronze Project

by Geeta Schrayter

When Christmas comes around each year, one of the main events for many families who celebrate the day is to bring home and decorate the Christmas tree. Throughout December, these festive firs become a focal point in the home, drawing friends and family close to bask in the cheerful glow and excited glances from children anxious for presents to appear beneath the branches.

In Hebron, the significance of the Christmas tree hasn't been lost on the members of Girl Scout Junior Troop 65067.

"I don't know what it would be like on Christmas without the Christmas tree because it's like the big centerpiece in the living room," Emily Cook exclaimed.

Fellow scout Brooke Delissio added decorating the tree was a "big thing" in her family, and a major part of the holiday was "having a tree in the middle of the room with all the lights shining brightly."

But for some, a treeless Christmas is a reality. Not everyone has the means to bring home a tree and fill it with decorations. In response, the girls decided to focus on that while working toward their Bronze Award.

The Bronze Award is the highest achievement a Girl Scout Junior can earn and requires participation in a service project. Troop co-leader Heidi Nilsson explained many troops focus on various collections like items for the Humane Society or pajamas. But Troop 65067 decided to go a different route and collect Christmas tree ornaments, lights and tree stands in collaboration with the Connecticut chapter

of Little Elves for Little Angels.

Little Elves for Little Angels is a non-profit founded by a Florida family with the goal of providing a place children of all ages can volunteer in their communities. The Connecticut chapter was founded in September 2012 by Hebron resident Julie Veilleux. She said this week she started the chapter because her own family has struggled in the past. In addition, she said she wanted to teach her kids – and other children – about giving.

Like the national organization, the Connecticut chapter of Little Elves for Little Angels has done a back-to-school program that provided school supplies and clothing to children; sent care packages to struggling families that contain a month or two of household supplies; and has sponsored kids for Christmas. Last year 200 kids were sponsored – this year that number grew to 300.

Along with sponsoring children, Veilleux decided this year to help families get a Christmas tree as well. She explained families with sponsored children usually sent in photos of the kids opening their gifts on Christmas. When the photos started to arrive last year, Veilleux noticed some families only had a tabletop tree or no tree at all.

"There's nothing wrong with that," she said. A Christmas tree "is not a necessity, but for me it's one of the best things."

And so, she decided to step in and help by providing some families with trees. About the same time, the Girl Scouts were looking to do something for their project and Veilleux said "this is something you can do." Thus ensuring the trees would be covered in ornaments and "lights shining brightly" like Delissio mentioned.

"We liked [the idea]" for the project Nilsson said. "It had meaning and I think it has meaning to the kids too because they're collecting items for families who haven't been able to afford a real tree."

From the end of October through the beginning of December, the girls collected a plethora of lights and ornaments. Nilsson said a lot of decorations were received from churches, while some of the other Girl Scout troops made items for the cause and "my troop had a crafting party and a pasta dinner."

In addition, Ace Hardware in Hebron donated extension cords while Peaceful Hill Tree Farm in East Hampton provided tree stands.

Then, last Friday, the acquired goods were spread out in Gilead Congregational Church to be gathered together for the various families. The girls worked with smiles on their faces as Christmas music played in the background and they sorted everything out.

Sarah Cohen said she was trying to get an even mix of ornaments as she put together a bag for a family and said it felt "amazing" giving to families who didn't have a tree.

"It's a lot of fun and it's helping people at the same time," she said of the project.

Sarah Nilsson said she was having fun putting the ornament bags together as well and liked collecting things for the families.

Amber Grzybowski added the project made her happy.

"I like doing it," she said.

Supplies were gathered for 15 families with



Thanks to the efforts of a group of Hebron Girl Scouts and the non-profit Little Elves for Little Angels, Jeffrey and Annabell Ocasia have a glowing Christmas tree to admire this holiday season.

some to spare, which came in handy when, come Saturday, 17 families showed up for a tree and supplies instead. None went without, and each family went home with a tree – some were donated by the Manchester Volunteer Fire Department while the rest were purchased with donations at a special rate – and a bag full of trimmings.

"It was cool to know that [the trees and decorations are] going to people who've never had a tree to decorate," said Lily Freer. "Christmas would still be good [without a tree] but it feels better with one and it's better when you have decorations."

For Eliza Byrne, completing the project was something to be proud of.

"I'm just proud of myself that we were actually able to pull this off," she said.

"At first it seemed like a huge project,"

Nilsson furthered. "But then we asked for help and it happened."

Veilleux added the girls did "a beautiful job" with the project.

"Not only did they collect more than these families probably even expected, they even handmade some that every family told me was their favorite," she said. "They put their heart into it and I could tell they worked very, very hard."

And because of that hard work, 17 Connecticut families have a glowing Christmas tree to admire this year, and the members of Girl Scout Troop 65067 have a Bronze Award to be proud of.

For more information on Little Elves for Little Angels visit lelact.com or [Facebook.com/lelact](https://www.facebook.com/lelact).



Seventeen Christmas trees with all the trimmings were donated to Connecticut families this year.

Interim Finance Director Made Permanent in Hebron

by Geeta Schrayter

At the Dec. 5 Board of Selectmen meeting, Interim Finance Director Elaine Griffin got to ditch the word “interim” from her title, as the selectmen agreed unanimously to appoint her to the permanent position.

Griffin has been working in Hebron for the past 20 years. She began in 1993 as an administrative assistant with the Public Works department and was promoted to accounting clerk in 1999. Then, in 2005, she was promoted to financial administrator; she’s held the position ever since along with two stints as interim finance director.

Griffin first stepped into the interim position for 10 months from 2009-10, following the October 2009 firing of Jim Day. She returned to the role in January 2012, following the resignation of Lisa Hancock and has been acting as such ever since.

This week, Griffin said it was the time she spent as interim that helped her feel confident enough to permanently take on the role.

“The more time that’s gone by and the more responsibilities of the finance director that I assumed and was able to accomplish gave me more and more confidence that I wouldn’t have a problem filling the responsibility of the posi-

tion,” she explained.

Tierney said this week that when the town first advertised the position last spring, a candidate was offered the job, but the two parties couldn’t come to agreeable terms regarding the salary. (The candidate was offered an annual salary of \$85,000 – the same Griffin will receive; Tierney added she has been making about the same amount as interim, but in stipend form.)

About a dozen people interviewed for the position, Tierney said, and the town had a list of the three top candidates, but after that first candidate turned them down, town officials opted not to extend an offer to the others – as they sought the best candidate available.

“We wanted what was best for the town” he explained, adding, “At that time, [Griffin] wasn’t interested in applying for the job.”

But, like Griffin, Tierney said the additional time she’s spent as interim seemed to boost her confidence enough to accept the position.

“We’re getting close to budget season,” he said. “We wanted to have someone in place so we gave the option to her again and she came back within a week and said she was interested,” he said.

Tierney furthered having two budget seasons under her belt, a number of accomplishments including a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting received in August for the town’s annual financial report (the ninth consecutive award during her tenure), seeing the town’s credit rating increase to “AAA” in October, as well as “good letters of reference from banks and bonding companies” made Griffin confident she could do the job.

“She does a great job,” Tierney said, explaining she’d be diving right into another budget season – one he hoped would be successful.

“We have some early indications the budget numbers will be better than last year,” he stated. “Insurance is down, we know where we’re going to be with contract negotiations and we’ve added a few things to the tax rolls so we’re just looking for a smooth transition.”

Likewise, Griffin said she was hoping for an easier budget process this year and a budget that would pass at the first referendum. (It took multiple referendums before voters passed each of the past two fiscal years’ budgets.)

“There’s a couple new initiatives that will probably be presented to the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen for the town’s general

government budget,” she said, “but word has it the Board of Education has really sharpened their pencils to the extreme and both the new superintendent and [the school board’s acting finance director] Dave Linehan have been very, very cooperative in working with this office and the town manager’s office. So I think this year the process will hopefully be a lot smoother and more acceptable to the taxpayers.”

On her appointment overall, Griffin said she had “a lot of gratitude” and was appreciative of the support from the selectmen.

“I really appreciate their confidence in my abilities,” she said. “I think some of the awards that we’ve won have proven the department is really working smoothly.”

Board of Selectmen Chairwoman Gayle Mulligan furthered those thoughts, explaining Griffin’s time as interim finance director and the budget processes she oversaw have gone well.

“I think it’s great for the town,” Mulligan said of her appointment. [Griffin] has been acting finance director for months now and she’s filled that role a couple of times. She knows the job as well as anybody so I think it was a really good decision by the town.”

East Hampton School Board Receives Common Core Presentation

by Elizabeth Bowling

At its regularly-scheduled meeting Monday night, the Board of Education viewed an in-depth presentation on the new Common Core State Standards, which call for a re-writing of curriculum and a new approach to both teaching and learning.

Superintendent of Schools Diane Dugas, Assistant Superintendent Tim Van Tasle, and East Hampton schools’ language arts coordinator LuAnn Hardacker and math coordinator Katie Post gave the hour-long presentation, which board member Emily Fahle said “took a lot of the mystery out of the Common Core.”

Dugas kicked off the presentation by explaining “the Common Core State Standards are the new standards for what we want our children to know and be able to do in math and English and language arts – being reading and writing – across the content areas at each grade level – kindergarten through grade 12.”

She furthered that the standards were developed by a team of experts from across the nation, but not the federal government. Rather, the group of professionals came together to look into the old curriculum that was “too wide,” she said. She added that there is still controversy regarding whether the standards are still “too broad.”

Van Tasle said there’s a lot of discussion questioning whether “our students” are developmentally able to meet the standards that are set by the Common Core at each grade level.

However, he said, “There’s no question that based on the research that’s out there that we have to increase our expectations for our students. We have to get them prepared for college and career as best as we possibly can.”

He also said the Common Core is important right now especially because students need to compete in a global economy with better-prepared students from across the world.

Van Tasle stated that currently, compared to other countries, U.S. students are two years behind in math by the end of eighth grade. Even top U.S. math students rank 25th out of 30 when compared with the best students internationally. Additionally, the U.S. ranks 17th in terms of students graduating high school, and 16th in terms of students graduating college.

“The instruction we had in school is no longer

adequate for our children because the workforce has changed,” he said to the board, adding that Common Core State Standards are “internationally benchmarked.”

He furthered that the majority of jobs kids will have in the future do not exist yet, so it is important that students develop skill sets that are applicable to multiple careers.

The standards require an in-depth learning of few objectives, rather than a shallow learning of many. Students are not only asked to understand a concept, but also to explain their thinking with evidence.

Post affirmed that the Common Core will require real-world applications of math problems, as well as explanations of a students’ thinking.

She said that with the Common Core, students will “actually know how to do the math and how to apply it.”

The new Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), which is based off the Common Core, differs from the Connecticut Mastery Test because “the CMT had a lot of basic recall – kids could kind of guess at the right answer,” Post said.

The SBAC Field Test is being implemented in the East Hampton school district this academic year, thus making the CMT and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) “obsolete,” Dugas said.

Regarding the curriculum, Post added, “We’re sticking to key concepts and going deeper; we’re teaching [students] how to apply [those concepts].”

Hardacker said similar changes can be seen in the English and language arts program. Students will read shorter amounts of text, but more deeply and will be asked to support their ideas with evidence directly from the text.

Another “major shift,” according to Hardacker, is an increase in the amount of non-fiction that students will read. Other changes include the reintroduction of grammar to the curriculum, and the merging of three kinds of writing into all grades, rather than splitting them between grades. The three kinds of writing are: narrative, opinion and explanatory.

She added that the Common Core State Standards increase expectations in day-to-day teach-

ing, as well as learning.

Hardacker emphasized that Common Core State Standards are not limited to English and math. Rather, the standards spread into history, social studies, science and technology classes, too.

“We share the wealth because it’s not just an ELA [English and language arts] test, it’s not just a math test,” she said. “We’re all in this together – which is the only way that it should be.”

Van Tasle echoed Hardacker’s idea of weaving the concepts of the Common Core into a number of areas. Specifically, he said technology skills are “woven throughout” the standards.

He concluded, “It’s not just about the assessment; it’s about learning the skills that are necessary for [students] to have productive careers.”

* * *

Also at Monday’s meeting, East Hampton Middle School’s leadership team members for the State Personnel Development Grant explained to the board how they have been (and will be) implementing the three-year grant.

The monetary amount of the grant is yet to be determined, but EHMS Principal Nancy Briere thinks it will be approximately \$3,000 to \$5,000. The grant goes toward teacher training and the execution of an initiative that is “designed to educate the whole child” by connecting positive behavioral and academic intervention.

Briere summed it up as “building coherence” between the school’s academic and behavioral programs.

Additionally, Briere said the grant “helps us to build leadership capacity in our staff,” which, she added, “has a direct impact on student learning.”

Essentially, the goal is to educate students both academically and emotionally. One specific goal is to increase literacy achievement and positive behavior, with a focus on students with disabilities.

Chairman of the 11-member leadership group Aaron Mannes called the grant “very structured” and explained that he and his team will use the three-year span of the grant to come up with systematic goals to improve EHMS.

The initiative separates students into three tiers: 85 percent of EHMS students fall under tier one, which focuses on general education instruction; students in tiers two and three require more intensive intervention for academics and/or social behavior.

Ideally, after intervention, kids in tiers two and three would move down to tier one.

The program is data-driven – students are not haphazardly placed in tiers two or three, rather, placement is well calculated.

But Dugas said data is kept on each student in grades K-12 regardless of the middle school’s grant. Once a student graduates, all data is destroyed after a certain number of years, she said.

Another piece of the program focuses on having a “strong, safe environment” within the school building so students can perform at their optimal levels, Briere explained. Part of the welcoming environment would include improved family involvement.

Dugas called the program one that “significantly impacts the students” and a “wonderful opportunity.”

* * *

During the liaison portion of Monday’s meeting, Minnick said the full-day kindergarten committee is well underway and recently went on a “site visit” to an elementary school in Wethersfield. The visit gave the committee an opportunity to see the school’s kindergarten classrooms and ask questions.

Minnick said, “There’s so much research out there – both for and against [full-day kindergarten]. There’s just so much information”

But he said the East Hampton committee would create its pros and cons list with three focuses: educational development, socialization and physical development of students.

Also during the liaison portion of the meeting, Marshall discussed the most recent progress made by the High School Building Committee. He said the architects met last week with the administration and presented to them “as close to a final proposal as they had.”

* * *

The next regularly scheduled East Hampton Board of Education meeting is Monday, Jan. 13, at 7 p.m. at East Hampton High School.



East Hampton Volunteer Fire Department life member William Siena passed away Monday, Dec. 2. At left, as a send-off, his body is transported to Lake View Cemetery via a fire engine, while members of the fire department give one final salute. At right, firefighters pay their respects to their brother, before Siena's casket is lowered into the ground.

East Hampton Fire Department Member Receives Final Send-Off

by Elizabeth Bowling

A life member of the East Hampton Volunteer Fire Department Co. 2 William Siena, 89, passed away from natural causes Monday, Dec. 2, and loved ones celebrated his life Saturday, Dec. 7, at a funeral at St. John's Church in Middletown.

Siena was a longtime resident of East Hampton, having moved to town in 1961. He worked at Bevin Brothers Manufacturing Co. until his retirement in 1992 and was a member of the East Hampton Fire Department Co. 2 for more than 30 years.

According to East Hampton Fire Chief Greg Voelker, Siena was a senior member when he passed away, making him a life member of the Fire Department.

Voelker noted that Siena served as captain of Co. 2 in Cobalt for several years, too.

Regarding his relationship with Siena, Voelker said, "I learned a lot from him."

Fourteen uniformed members of the fire department attended Siena's funeral Saturday to say a final goodbye in the form of a salute to their fellow member.

The firemen's salute is typically done at the family's request or the member's request, Voelker explained. In this case, Siena himself made the request before he passed away.

Voelker furthered that the salute is a "final send-off." He added, "We all respect him and sent him off."

Longtime member of the East Hampton Fire Department Phil Visintainer said he served with Siena for about a few decades.

"He always took the job very seriously," Visintainer said about Siena. "We had fun, but

he was very serious about the work we did and his position as an officer."

Visintainer added, "He had the respect of everybody in the department."

He explained that the firemen's final salute at the funeral Saturday was a demonstration of the department's opinion of its lost brother.

Siena's son, Tom Siena, said the salute was a "very nice tribute," consisting of the fire department members loading Siena's casket onto a fire truck, the pallbearers – who were all members – and other members saluting the truck as it stopped in front of Cobalt Firehouse.

"I couldn't believe the tribute that they paid to him," Tom said. "It was a tear-jerker."

Tom recalled when he was younger his father would bring him and his brother to the firehouse and sometimes let them ride in the

fire truck. The boys would watch as the firemen tested out their equipment.

Tom added that his father "had a love for the fire department" and "liked helping people out."

In addition to serving the local fire department, Siena served in the U.S. Army during World War II in the infantry and in the Korean War as a member of the military police.

Because of his service, Siena was buried with military honors at Lake View Cemetery.

As Siena's brothers from the fire department each laid a flower onto his casket, a bell tolled symbolically in the distance.

Visintainer explained that the bell tolled so that Siena could "answer his last call."

Memorial donations can be made to the East Hampton Volunteer Fire Department, 5 Barton Hill Rd., East Hampton, CT 06424.

Former East Hampton Man Arrested for 1998 Murder

by Elizabeth Bowling

According to a press release from the office of the Chief State's Attorney, a former East Hampton resident has been arrested and charged with murder in the 1998 homicide of a woman who was found strangled in a stream in East Hampton.

Gerald Tuttle, 51, was arrested Tuesday at his home in Surfside Beach, S.C., the press release stated. He was charged as a fugitive from justice in the homicide of Gertrude Ochankowski. He is charged in an arrest warrant issued in Connecticut with one count of murder.

Tuttle's bond is set at \$1 million.

On Jan. 12, 1998, East Hampton police responded to a report of the body of a woman found in a stream near Tartia Road. The woman, Ochankowski, was pronounced dead at the scene.

Ochankowski had been the subject of a missing person's investigation earlier that day, after her car was found running in the front parking lot of 82 Main St. Witnesses said they

had noticed her car running, with her dog inside, at 9:30 p.m. Jan. 11, the press release said.

An autopsy determined the cause of Ochankowski's death was strangulation, and the case was ruled a homicide, the chief state's attorney's office said.

The East Hampton Police Department conducted the nearly 16-year investigation in conjunction with the Office of the State's Attorney for the Judicial District of Middlesex and the Cold Case Unit in the Office of the Chief State's Attorney.

The investigation was led by former sergeant of the East Hampton Police Department Garritt Kelly, who said in a statement yesterday, "I salute and thank all of my colleagues who have worked tirelessly on this investigation. I am pleased that the prosecution stage of this case will now begin."

The Office of the State's Attorney for the Judicial District of Middlesex is prosecuting the case.

Grant Request Up for Grabs in East Hampton

by Elizabeth Bowling

Each year, the state awards select towns with Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grants of up to \$500,000.

East Hampton Town Manager Mike Maniscalco explained that STEAP grants are annual opportunities for towns to receive state funding for a variety of projects that would ultimately boost local economy.

He explained that a town can receive up to \$500,000 in funding and can apply for more than one grant, so long as the total amount the town applies for does not exceed \$500,000. For example, last year, East Hampton submitted two grant applications, each for \$250,000, but was only awarded one.

The last grant East Hampton received was last year's \$250,000 grant, which went toward putting a roof on the Epoch Arts building.

Regarding this year's potential grant request(s), Town Council Chairwoman Barbara Moore said the council has discussed a handful of projects that need funding. Some of the STEAP grant hopefuls include: extending the sidewalks, extending the Air Line Trail, and updating a building in the Village Center.

But the Friends of Lake Pocotopaug has something else in mind for the money – improvements to the landmark lake.

John Moore (no relation to Barbara), the

chairman of the Friends of Lake Pocotopaug, said the group is seeking funding to improve the lake, which he considers one of the town's best assets.

John Moore said that, over the past year, his group has worked with a handful of other groups as "a cross-functional team that has the same end result in mind."

Fellow Friends member Joe Carbonell, who is also a member of the town's Lake Commission as well as the Connecticut Federation of Lakes, said, "The lake has been neglected over the past few years."

Carbonell said he'd like to see "corrective actions to make sure the lake is healthy."

Specifically, "to stop the infiltration or runoff into the lake," he said, for example, curbing.

He added that if East Hampton is awarded grant money toward the lake, local businesses would benefit due to increased tourism from both within and outside of town.

This year's STEAP grant application deadline is in April. Barbara Moore said the Town Council will discuss its options in January.

"We have to do what's right for most of the people in town," she said regarding how the council will choose which projects to seek funding for.

Colchester Selectmen Accept Operating Committee's Report

by Melissa Roberto

In June, the Board of Selectmen formed an operating committee to address concerns regarding the properties of Old Bacon Academy, Day Hall and the Senior Center – all owned by the Bacon Academy Board of Trustees, which has faced financial struggles in recent years to maintain the buildings.

That committee submitted a list of possible solutions to the selectmen at their Nov. 7 meeting and last Thursday, Dec. 5, the board unanimously voted to accept the report.

The acceptance of the report does not determine which of the committee's solutions, if any, would be carried out but the board reacted positively to the findings and highlighted each of them. It was noted discussion on the report would continue in the months ahead.

The committee was formed to be bi-partisan in makeup, and featured trustees board members Diana Giles and Arthur Liverant, selectmen Stan Soby and Jim Ford (the latter of whom is no longer on the Board of Selectmen) and Board of Finance member Art Shilosky; a second Board of Finance member was not available to fill the seat.

The solutions the group posed were in respect to the aforementioned three buildings: the senior center, located 95 Norwich Ave.; Old Bacon Academy on Main Street, which houses the town's alternative education program; and Day Hall, the building adjacent to Old Bacon Academy, which houses Colchester Cooperative Nursery School (CCNS).

At the Nov. 7 meeting, Ford – who initially birthed the idea of the committee – said the financial struggles the trustees board has been facing is “definitely” a problem. Last week, Liverant explained the financial struggles are a result of a number of factors including the recession and drop in the stock market. Regardless, he pointed out the trustees are still living off of the \$35,000 endowment Pierpoint Bacon left the town in 1801 for the purpose of building a school in town. That has since been used to fund Old Bacon Academy, what was the original Bacon Academy in Colchester before the larger, newer building on Norwich Avenue opened.

“Believe it or not, we have unfortunately not had a sugar daddy in this town or an alumni drop a million or two to us,” Liverant said, provoking laughter in the room.

Soby also echoed the financial difficulties the trustees have faced last week.

“The Bacon trustees have really been subsidizing the town of Colchester's operations in the use of Old Bacon Academy and the Senior Center and it's had a deleterious affect on the trustees,” the selectman said.

Giles said last week the committee's report included a number of possibilities for town officials to look at.

“We wanted to put as much on the table to be discussed...Rather than recommending some concrete decisions among those five people,” she explained.

At last week's meeting, Soby explained the committee looked at several numbers including operating costs, revenue and rent. An appraisal of the property of the senior center was also factored into the recommendations, he said.

Liverant has dished history of each of the buildings to the selectmen in recent meetings. He explained Old Bacon Academy and Day Hall are historic buildings within Colchester's Historical District. Liverant – who is also a member of the Colchester Historical Society – labeled the two buildings “icons.”

One of the recommendations included in the report is the possibility of an expansion of the alternative education program within Old Bacon Academy. The program allows students at risk of dropping out of high school to attend classes at an alternative campus. The classes are currently held in the first floor but committee members have discussed idea of expanding the program to the second and third floors, and possibly even making the alternative high school a regional school.

“The kids love it there,” Liverant said. “They take good care of it. They desperately want to go upstairs and expand science and math.”

Liverant furthered discussions with Building Official Tim York confirmed the upper floors of the building could not be used right now. He added mechanical and electrical upgrades and new bathrooms are needed for an expansion. However, York communicated “there's no reason in the world that these issues cannot be corrected,” Liverant said.

Another recommendation is to sustain Day Hall by including it in a project with Old Bacon Academy, committee members explained. The report suggests this could be done if an expansion of the alternative education program takes place. In contrast to the other buildings, Liverant and Soby said Day Hall is thought of as an “unknown” due to the current use of the nursery school and the building's layout.

At the Nov. 21 selectmen meeting, Giles said the nursery school's attendance has “dropped significantly” due to the recession. In turn, the trustees lowered CCNS' rent, which affected the trustees' finances, too, she said. Soby expanded on that last week, stating the “changing marketplace” of preschool programs and all-day kindergarten in the district now pose as competition for CCNS.

“We're sort of anticipating where that [nursery school] might go and also looking at that space as a future space attached to Old Bacon Academy,” Soby said.

Additionally, Liverant said the building “is very hard to use for anything other than a nursery school or a meeting room.”

“It would be very difficult to make it into an office building,” Liverant continued, and added, “We don't really know what to do with it.”

On Thursday, Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein said the school board has yet to discuss the report, but if an expansion were to occur the board initially envisioned it “would occur in Old Bacon Academy.” He said the school board would discuss it at a future meeting.

Superintendent of Schools Jeff Mathieu also attended last week's meeting to update the board on actions taken by the state Department of Education earlier this year that could impact this idea. Mathieu explained superintendents were given a survey questioning the certifications of teachers within their district's alternative education programs.

Mathieu pointed out when a survey is conducted it usually means changes are being questioned at the state level. His initial thought is that a mandate could come along that would require all alternative education teachers to be certified. Though there are currently two certified teachers and one certified social worker at the alternative education program at Old Bacon, Mathieu said if an expansion were to occur additional certified teachers would need to be hired.

“If that happens, there are two options,” Mathieu explained. “The program would have to be brought back on [the current Bacon Academy] campus or we need to be able to expand that to have revenue to make the alt. ed. program bigger and charge tuition to other towns.”

Mathieu said a report from the state is anticipated to come in February. He said if a change is mandated, the earliest it would go into effect is July 2015. Regardless, he told the selectmen “it is out there and we are thinking about it.”

What Liverant coined another “piece of the puzzle” is the future of the senior center. He explained it wasn't until the “last few years” the town was asked by the trustees to pay for the insurance of the building. He said the town currently pays for the maintenance, oil and utilities of the building. For the trustees, Liverant said, the senior center is “an asset that we actually make no money on.”

The report recommends the town enter into a lease purchase arrangement for the senior

center, which would allow the town to pay an annual lease payment and at the end of the payment the town would own the property. Though no costs were initially communicated in the report, committee members told the selectmen last week they're looking at a five-year lease with annual payments of approximately \$60,000. Those numbers come from the \$300,000 appraisal the property received by an appraiser earlier this year.

The senior center has been included in much conversation in recent years due to its dilapidating state, and therefore was included in the WJMS/Senior/Community Center project that failed at referendum in October. As a result of this, the selectmen, finance and education boards have scheduled tri-board meetings to determine what to do with all three entities. (A tri-board meeting was held Wednesday; a story on it appears elsewhere in this issue.)

Regardless, if the lease purchase was decided on, Liverant said the trustees imagine they would take the \$60,000 payment from the town and restore the windows—one of the deficiencies currently at the center.

“The windows and the rest of the building will certainly last short term,” said Liverant.

The final recommendation of the report is a “governance arrangement” between the town and Board of Trustees. Liverant explained the idea is similar to the current “symbiotic relationship” between the town and Cragin Memorial Library.

“We think perhaps we should go in that direction,” he said. “That the town and board of trustees share responsibility in maintaining and operating Old Bacon, Day Hall and the Senior Center at least until such time a new senior center is built, should that ever occur.”

With the acceptance of the report unanimous, board members agreed the report would continue to be looked at. The selectmen commended the committee for its work.

“It's a great product and it's a great conversation,” said selectman Mike Caplet.

“I think what you did is remarkable,” Coyle told committee members, “and I think it starts as a really good plan.”

And it seemed the committee served as a good experience for the members in it.

“It's the best committee I've ever worked on,” said Liverant. “It was both parties who participated. No partisan politics. We all knew we had major issues to deal with.”

Soby furthered, “It was a very good group of people.”

“If this was a test run, we passed the test,” said Soby.

Cop on Top Collects Thousands in Colchester

by Melissa Roberto

Colchester Police Sgt. Rob Suchecki continued tradition last Saturday, Dec. 7, when, for the fourth time in a row, he stood atop a high lift at the intersection of routes 85 and 16 to participate in the annual “Cop on Top” fundraiser.

Though Suchecki was a good 30 feet in the air overlooking the heart of the town, he confirmed this week “Cop on Top” is not part of a construction project. Rather, the sergeant was looking down on hundreds of passersby, who – as they drove past the intersection – dropped donations in stockings held by local state troopers and Colchester Police officers that will go toward the Special Olympics of Connecticut.

The “Cop on Top” fundraiser is just one of the many conducted by state and local police officers in Connecticut. Trooper First Class Carlo Guerra of the Traffic Services Department in Meriden said the “Cop on Top” event is similar to the “Stuff a Boot” fundraiser usually conducted by firefighters around the state, in which fire fighters stand outdoors and collect donations in their boots that go towards a good cause.

In 2009, Guerra brought the tradition to Colchester after realizing it hadn't already been done in town. Although Guerra does not work out of Colchester's Troop K state police barracks, it was there he lived out his first assign-

ment as a trooper and thus wanted “to do a little bit more for the community.”

The principal of the event is to hoist a cop on top of a building in town. Guerra explained, and that cop is not able to come down until a certain amount of money is raised. In Colchester, Guerra said there isn't a building fit in town for the event, so the high lift was donated this year by Folsom Construction of South Windsor.

The event took place from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. on the same day as the annual tree lighting in town so it certainly came with a side of holiday cheer. Santa Claus made an appearance on the town's downtown streets handing out candy canes and Christmas music was played for all to hear. Police officers and troopers were scattered around the area in attempts to fill the stockings they carried.

And it seems as though those stockings had a lot of refills during the four-hour event. Guerra confirmed this week \$8,700 was raised, surpassing his goal of \$8,000.

Suchecki coined the event an “absolute success.”

“It's just amazing,” Suchecki said. “It's right around the holidays and it seems as though people were very giving and very generous.”

Since the event's inception, Suchecki said he's always been the chosen one – the lucky

officer who gets to stand on the high lift. This year with heavy winds, he admitted it was a “little chilly.” Despite occasional swaying, Suchecki said acting as the “Cop on Top” is always a part of the holiday season he enjoys because it's “definitely rewarding to give back.”

Guerra commented the event was made possible by Colchester groups coming together. The Troop K Cadets, local teens involved in leadership roles and community service with Troop K, helped out, in addition to Maneeleys catering facility of South Windsor who donated food and the Colchester Fire Department, who provided a service bus for the officers to sit in and keep warm when needed.

For Guerra, the fundraiser begins before the day of the event. He reaches out to all entities who donate their products and services, and sets up everything from the food to the cones on the streets.

Overall, Guerra said this year's “Cop on Top” was “awesome.” As someone who's been involved with Special Olympics for “many years,” he was appreciative of the residents' donations which resulted in “good money” for a good cause.

“It was a big success,” Guerra concluded. “I want to thank the residents of Colchester, the companies who helped out and the Cadets youth group.”



Sgt. Rob Suchecki stood high over the intersection of routes 85 and 16 last Saturday, Dec. 7, for the annual “Cop on Top” fundraiser.

WJJMS Project – Take Two?

by **Melissa Roberto**

The Board of Selectmen unanimously voted Wednesday to schedule a town meeting for Tuesday, Jan. 16, at 7 p.m., where residents will decide whether to form a committee that would try again to upgrade the town's middle school.

The vote was taken at a meeting of the boards of selectmen, finance and education. Selectman Stan Soby was absent from the meeting.

It was the second tri-board meeting following the Oct. 1 failure of the \$57 million WJJMS/Community/Senior Center project at referendum. The proposal was to renovate and add to the existing middle school, with additions of a senior center and community center at the same campus.

Wednesday's meeting began with a review of survey results that came from the November municipal elections, in which voters had the chance to fill out a survey questioning if they voted for or against the project and why, and what they'd like to see in the future.

The three boards came to a consensus Wednesday that the first entity to be addressed should be the middle school. Members agreed forming a building committee that solely looks at a project for the middle school would be the next step. The selectmen's vote ensures a town meeting will be held to let Colchester voters decide if a building committee will be formed.

The January town meeting vote would be a bit more specific. The vote would be to amend the charge originally passed at the June 29, 2011, town meeting, which established the current building committee – that has yet to be disbanded – that developed the WJJMS/Community/Senior Center proposal. The January meeting would amend the committee's charge by eliminating the responsibilities of including a community center and senior center. Rather, it

states the committee would be responsible for the "construction of a middle school at the site of the William J. Johnston Middle School, to include renovation of existing spaces, demolition of existing spaces, and new construction, all as determined appropriate by the Building Committee."

The motion continues the project may "also include allocation of space for general town use, as determined appropriate and available by said Building Committee."

Board members agreed the building committee, if passed in January, would be able to retain all of the members of the original committee unless one or more choose to resign. Tom Tyler, who was chairman of the building committee behind the WJJMS/Community Center/Senior Center proposal, attended Wednesday's meeting and communicated he had not yet reached out to fellow committee members but felt "some members" wish to stay on.

Members of the three boards discussed Wednesday how the committee would operate a second time around, if passed at town meeting. Board of Education Vice Chairman Don Kennedy said he felt there should be "checkpoints along the way" between the boards and the committee. Board of Finance member Thomas Kane suggested building committee updates to be conducted at tri-board meetings rather than the previous method of the building committee updating all three boards separately. Members agreed the committee and town would operate under a "toll gate" method.

Decisions were also made concerning what the committee would be responsible for. Tyler said it would be a "tremendous benefit" to the future committee if it is given a budget to follow.

"That really decides what you can or cannot do," Tyler explained. "One of the overwhelming comments of the [WJJMS/Senior/Community Center] project was 'too much money.' The lack of budget was the hindrance."

However, board members agreed it would be difficult to just throw out a cost for the committee to operate with. Finance board chairman Rob Tarlov explained "cost is size."

Tarlov furthered, "To sit there and say 'spend this' for the school we need to better understand what the scope of the project has to be."

First Selectman Gregg Schuster pointed out rather than a number to operate with, the committee should look at a number of options. He said this was what was missing from the initial project – "more options given to the voters."

Though it seemed headway would be made on the school first, board members early on in the meeting stressed the other two components of the initial building project – the senior center and community center – shouldn't be forgotten.

"I don't want to see the [senior center] issue dropped," said selectwoman Rosemary Coyle.

Coyle furthered she wanted to see all seniors represented – not just ones that use the center – in the future of a senior center like the previous project had.

Board of Education member Mary Tomasi felt similarly. "We can't forget about the seniors," she said. "They are a part of the community and a growing population. We can't forget them."

Board members weighed the options of conducting two projects at the same time. However, Board of Finance Vice Chairman Rob Esteve – in a sentiment Tarlov and others agreed

with – said he felt two building projects conducted by two separate building committees simultaneously would not be the best option. Esteve voiced support of "only one project at a time."

In terms of a senior center, Schuster pointed out several options have been suggested to the selectmen including the possibility of buying the property known as Jack Chevrolet, former location of the Chevrolet dealership, on South Main Street. Schuster suggested the board of selectmen look at all of the proposals of a future senior center and investigate the options.

"My goal and hope is to bring all of these things to the table," said Schuster.

"I think your logic is good," selectman Mike Caplet told Schuster. "I say wait no longer than the Board of Selectmen meeting."

Tarlov reminded his fellow elected officials, "Don't forget the youths."

"We need to make sure we include that in the process somehow," Tarlov continued of a youth center.

Kane mentioned he did not want to eliminate the idea of a unified community center and senior center off the table. He said other towns in the state end up constructing them "because it's cheaper" and also because they serve the "entire community." He said the town could benefit from that option.

With the known fact that conversations on all three entities will continue, Schuster confirmed Wednesday's vote on the January town meeting was "crystal clear" – it is only a project pertaining to the school, he said.

The Jan. 16 meeting will be held at Town Hall, immediately before the Board of Selectmen meeting scheduled for that night.

Breakfast Brewing at AES

by **Geeta Schrayter**

The Board of Education Wednesday tentatively approved the implementation of a breakfast program at Andover Elementary School.

Superintendent of Schools Andrew Maneggia explained he still had some work to do regarding negotiations with the state and "I need to get all my ducks in a row" before the program could be implemented but "conceptually, we agree with having a breakfast program."

"Believe it or not," he said, "there are a good number of kids that come to our school without eating breakfast and they're hungry."

Maneggia added there were a number of research items Stefan Pryor, the state Commissioner of Education, had cited as reasons to provide breakfast at school. In letters Pryor sent to school superintendents and principals he said research showed breakfast is the most important meal of the day and children who skip the meal are "more likely to have lower math scores, poorer cognitive functioning, slower memory recall and are more likely to repeat a grade," miss more school and have more disciplinary problems.

Maneggia also explained Connecticut had federal money allocated for school breakfast programs – much of which goes unused. In response, Pryor and Gov. Dannel P. Malloy held a summit on the program which Maneggia and cafeteria manager Cheryl Folsom attended. After the summit, Folsom and Principal Dave Griffin visited Coventry as they implemented

the program "and came back in favor of it."

Folsom was present at the meeting and said she was very educated at the summit.

"My eyes were opened up to realize the necessity for children – whether full-pay, reduced or free – of being offered breakfast," she said, explaining she knew some children came to school hungry and there have been teachers who have fed them.

Reasons students might come to school without eating, Folsom said, could be because of a busy morning, divorced parents and rushing from one place to another or having no good food in the house or no means to have good food.

Folsom said the costs to the school would be minimal. She said she'd come into the school half an hour earlier each morning and breakfast would be a "grab-and-go kind of thing," with offerings like bagels, muffins, possibly egg sandwiches, juice and milk.

The students would make their purchases then go to their classroom to eat. Folsom also said students who qualify for free or reduced lunches would also qualify for free or reduced breakfast. The price for full-pay breakfast would be \$1.25 while reduced breakfast would cost 20 cents.

"Connecticut is probably one of the richest states in the nation and we are ranked last as far as offering breakfasts within schools that

offer a lunch program," Folsom stated. "The governor is encouraging schools to jump on board and offer a breakfast program."

"It seems to me to not offer it is negligent, given the statistics and information," said school board member Christine Tamburro. "I know there have been teachers providing food for the kids and if they go hungry they can't learn."

"I'm in favor of it," added board member Cathy Danielczuk. "I've worked with districts that have it in place and if kids go to school hungry they're not focused until they eat."

The board unanimously approved a tentative approval to institute the program.

"I think it's a good idea" concluded board member Kim Hawes.

* * *

The board also decided to move forward with the possible creation of an account to place some of their unexpended funds for future capital improvement needs.

Maneggia distributed legislation from July 2010 that said the Board of Finance can deposit into a non-lapsing account "any unexpended funds from the prior year from the budgeted appropriation for education for the town, provided such amount does not exceed one percent of the total budgeted appropriation for education for such prior fiscal year."

Maneggia said over the last several years, the amount that could have been deposited would

average about \$40,000. He said he was bringing this to the board's attention because "we need to start thinking into the future in terms of school roofs, in terms of some of our doors – and these are very costly items."

Maneggia said the money budgeted annually for repairs and maintenance services covered day-to-day things such as a patch to the roof, but not an entire roof replacement. He added the roof didn't immediately need to be replaced but when the time comes, "putting it in the regular operational budget is difficult" because it will be so expensive.

"It's kind of a forewarning of things to come," he said. "So I could ignore it and let it happen, then we face whatever that is or we could be proactive about it and say to the town 'we've been returning some money at the end of the year. We would like to be able to set aside \$40,000 – or whatever amount – to this capital account and let it accumulate so when it comes time to replace the roof et cetera, we're not going to have to take out a bond or that type of thing.'"

The board unanimously agreed with Maneggia and he will now take the possibility to the Board of Finance.

* * *

The next Andover Board of Education meeting will be held Wednesday, Jan. 8, at 7 p.m. in the Andover Elementary School library.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Due to Thanksgiving falling so late, this is the shortest Christmas season one could possibly have – and the time before Dec. 25 is just flying by. And so it was that this past Tuesday brought the annual holiday potluck luncheon at the offices of the *Glastonbury Citizen/Rivereast News Bulletin*.

To say we ate well would be an understatement. There were all sorts of goodies, including our receptionist Sandy's world-famous (would you believe locally-famous?) chocolate peanut butter balls, pumpkin-chocolate chip cupcakes baked by reporter Geeta Schrayter, a Death by Chocolate creation cooked up by the wife of publisher Jim Hallas, and my own contribution: a German chocolate cake drowned in sweetened condensed milk and covered in Cool Whip and toffee chips. It was pretty good, if I do say so myself.

But, area dentists needn't worry; there were more than just sweets on parade Tuesday. There was mac and cheese, tofu stir-fry, fried coconut shrimp, venison chili, meatballs (cooked up by reporter Elizabeth Bowling), sausage bread (contributed by reporter Melissa Roberto), a corn suffle (also from the kitchen of Jim's wife), a taco salad and more.

It was a ton of food – especially considering there aren't even 20 people in our office. And I can say, with authority, it was all fantastic. As I write this Tuesday night, I have visions of leftovers on Wednesday dancing in my head.

As I said, our potluck luncheon is an annual tradition here at the *Citizen/Rivereast* – and what a great tradition to have.

* * *

I didn't see all of it, but I saw the last third or so of the three-hour live broadcast of *The Sound of Music* last Thursday night – and what I saw, I enjoyed.

Believe it or not, I had never seen *The Sound of Music*, neither in its 1965 movie form (it was my grandmother's favorite film, by the way) nor on the stage. I was familiar with some of the songs, but that was about it.

Still, I was really interested to see how it would turn out. I've always heard nothing but good things about *The Sound of Music*, and I know Carrie Underwood's got a great voice. Plus – the thing was live. I'm always intrigued by live productions like that. Part of it has to do with the TV historian in me who likes the callback to TV's earliest days in the 1950s, when live dramas were presented on TV on a weekly basis. I also like the added level of danger involved; there's a thrill in knowing there will be no retakes – that anything can happen, and if it does, well, you just have to roll with the punches.

Also, I just find the talent of all involved to be able to pull off something like that very impressive. I know I couldn't do it.

The next day, I was displeased to see a fair amount of criticism on the Internet. In this day and age of snark (something I really grow weary of sometimes, by the way), I expected some of it, but I was still disappointed. Underwood got trashed for her performance, with people saying the singing was good but the acting wasn't (well, she's not an actress, nor does she claim to be; plus, for what it's worth, in the 45 minutes I saw, I found her acting to be pretty erveiceable. Was she Anne

Hathaway? No – but, again, she wasn't supposed to be, nor do I think anyone should've expected it). The sets and production values were cheap (it was a live production, inside a studio; did people expect jaw-dropping special effects or lush outdoor scenes?).

But mostly what I found ridiculous was that, before the show, during the show (on Facebook anyway) and after the show, people were trashing NBC for even mounting this production in the first place, as, they felt, nothing could ever be as good as the 1965 movie, and no one could ever be as good as Julie Andrews as Maria or Christopher Plummer as Captain von Trapp. *The Sound of Music*, though, was a play first (actually making its world debut at New Haven's Schubert Theatre before moving down to Broadway in the fall of 1959) – a play that didn't even star Andrews or Plummer. Mary Martin originated the role of Maria, while Theodore Bikel played von Trapp.

If the 1965 film was the be-all and end-all of *Sound of Music* productions (and to be fair, I've always heard it was very, very good; like I said, it was my grandmother's favorite movie, and it won the Oscar for best film of the year), then why mount another one, ever? And yet, the play has been revived many, many times in the nearly 50 years since the movie came out – including revivals in London and on Broadway – and is routinely performed by high schools and colleges all across the country.

So why shouldn't NBC do a production of it? I'm glad they did – and I'm glad that, while some of the reviews may have been harsh, the ratings for the live *Sound of Music* were top-notch. The show attracted 18.5 million pairs of eyeballs – making it the highest-rated show of the night, and also bringing in the best non-sports ratings NBC has seen on a Thursday night since the finale of *Frasier* in 2004. (In fact, NBC is re-running the musical this Saturday night, Dec. 14, from 8-11 p.m.)

Not surprisingly, the Peacock Network is now considering more live productions of musicals in the future – and I hope they find the same level of success. Last week's *Sound of Music* event was fun and enjoyable, and I'd be intrigued to see another production like it.

* * *

Lastly, this Saturday, Dec. 14, from 4-6 p.m., the *Rivereast's* own Geeta Schrayter will be at Books & Boos in Colchester, reading from, and signing copies of, her first novel, *Reaching Riverdale*. Yep, in addition to doing a terrific job covering Hebron and Andover for the *Rivereast*, Geeta's a published author – in fact, she was offered her first book contract just one year after graduating college.

Geeta's debut novel, *Reaching Riverdale*, is the story of a woman who returns to her hometown after several years away, only to find that the place she was trying so hard to leave was where she should have been all along.

So if you want to meet Geeta and find out about her novels – and also support a local bookstore whose cause I've championed before – then head down to Books & Boos on Saturday. You won't be disappointed.

* * *

See you next week.

East Hampton Police News

11/27: Erik Martin, 24, of 107 Main St., was issued a summons for speeding (61 m.p.h. in a 45 m.p.h. zone) and operating a motor vehicle under suspension, East Hampton Police said.

11/27: A 14-year-old juvenile of East Hampton was issued a summons for sixth-degree larceny and credit card theft, police said.

11/27: Drew Michael Hetherington, 27, of 89 Taylor Rd., Glastonbury, was issued a summons for failure to drive right and misuse of marker plates, police said.

11/27: Donald Rixon, 18, of 163 Wopowog Rd., East Hampton, and Erin Callnan, 32, of 462 So. St., Bristol, were involved in a two-car motor vehicle accident at the Route 66 and Route 16 intersection, police said. Rixon was issued a ticket for failure to obey a traffic signal and possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana.

11/30: Peter Einsiedel Jr., 19, of 6 Edgerton St., was issued a ticket for possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana, police said.

Colchester Police News

12/1: State Police said Jacob Cunningham, 19, of 31 Boulder Rd., turned himself in on two outstanding arrest warrants, each for second-degree failure to appear.

12/3: Colchester Police said Edward E. Kerwin, 61, of 50 Lane 1, Warwick, Rhode Island, was charged with second-degree failure to appear.

12/4: Colchester Police said Timothy Baillargeon, 30, of 616 Laurel Hill Rd., Norwich, turned himself in on two active arrest warrants, each for second-degree failure to appear.

12/6: State Police said Erin W. Haggert, 25, of 88 Baker Ln., East Haddam, was charged with second-degree failure to appear.

12/6: Colchester Police said Andrew Currier,

11/29: Stephen B. Lockwood, 42, of 15 Beechcrest Dr., was issued a summons for operating an unregistered and uninsured motor vehicle, police said.

11/30: Faith Watrous, 40, of 71 Freestone Ave., Portland, was arrested for DUI and failure to drive right, police said.

11/30: Tyler Lombardi, 26, of 27 Marshall St., Apt. A1, Hartford was arrested for speeding (57 m.p.h. in a 35 m.p.h. zone) and DUI, police said.

12/1: Ashley N. Watts, 18, of 307 Carli Blvd., Colchester, was arrested for DUI, possession of alcohol by a minor, possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia, police said.

Also, police said, during the Thanksgiving holiday and weekend following there were 44 motor vehicle stops, resulting in 28 written warnings, 12 infractions and eight motor vehicle arrests – four of which were for DUI.

20, of 190 Lebanon Ave., was charged with third-degree criminal mischief, disorderly conduct and threatening.

12/6: Colchester Police said Enock Kazibwe, 18, of 106 Buckley Hill Rd., was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of narcotics.

12/8: State Police said Metal Thamma-vongsa, 47, of 45 Barnes Ave., Apt. 3, New Haven, was charged with DUI and speeding.

12/9: State Police said Keith Yurewitch, 52, of 576 Old Hamburg Rd., Old Lyme, was charged with third-degree larceny.

12/9: Colchester Police said Joanne T. Griffin, 56, of 6 Collie Brook Rd., East Hampton, was charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct.

Marlborough Police News

12/5: State Police said Kevin Smith, 40, of 84 Jones Hollow Rd., was charged with disorderly conduct, third-degree assault and second-degree strangulation.

12/10: State Police said Ryan Scott Richardson, 19, of 39 Phelps Rd., was charged with DUI and failure to grant right of way.

Hebron Police News

12/10: State Police said Sean Bryant, 26, of 130 Cedar Swamp Rd., Coventry, was charged with DUI and traveling unreasonably fast.

Andover Police News

12/5: State Police said Joshua Ryan Shepard, 25, of 185 Lake Rd., was charged with third-degree burglary and sixth-degree larceny.

Portland Police News

11/22: Justin Cahill, 21, of 6 Grove Rd., was charged with DUI, traveling too fast and failure to drive in proper lane, Portland Police said.

11/28: Eugene Lapointe, 55, of 16 Evergreen Ave., was charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct, police said.

12/6: Eric O'Connell, 18, of 14 Commerce St., was charged with third-degree burglary, third-degree larceny and second-degree criminal mischief, police said.

12/6: Scott Mitchell, 54, of 184 Summer St., was charged with DUI and failure to drive right, and failure to renew registration, police said.

12/9: Tyler Hodge, 20, of 28 Old Middletown Rd., Cobalt, was charged with third-degree burglary and third-degree larceny, police said.

Obituaries

Colchester

Amy Sue Bochman

Amy Sue (Fiondella) Bochman, 33, of Broad Brook and formerly of Colchester, passed away Saturday, Dec. 7, surrounded by her loving family after a long, courageous battle with cancer.

Born Oct. 29, 1980, in Rockville, she was a daughter of Daniel Fiondella of Enfield and Kathy (Thibodeau) Melton (and stepfather Roy Melton), both of Willington. Amy worked as a Licensed Optician for Sam's Club in Manchester.

She was affectionately known as a charter member of the "Shop 'til You Drop" Club by all that knew her.

In addition to her parents, she leaves her son, Ethan Scott Bochman; siblings, Kristie Clark of Coventry, Adrian Fiondella of Chicopee, Mass., and Peter Fiondella and Megan Cague, both of Willington; her grandfather, Adrian Thibodeau of Jackman, Maine; and numerous extended family members and friends.

The family received guests Tuesday morning, Dec. 10, before a chapel service at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Road, Colchester. Burial followed in Linwood Cemetery, Colchester.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the American Cancer Society, P.O. Box 22718, Oklahoma City, OK 73123-1718.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Donald A. Billington

Donald A. Billington, 77, of Colchester, formerly of South Windham, passed away peacefully Friday, Dec. 6, at Middlesex Hospital. Born in Pawtucket, R.I., he was the son of the late Celia E. (Forgette) Billington and Francis R. Billington.



He recently moved to Killingworth, previously having resided in South Windham for close to 40 years.

Donald had proudly served his country in the U.S. Army RA AMEDS at the rank of PFC (E-3) during the Korean War. After his tour of duty, he worked at Anchor Glass Container Corp. in Dayville, later at Giant Vac in South Windham and more recently at D. H. Marvin & Son, Inc. in Colchester as an assembler.

He was a devoted family man who will be greatly missed by his fiancée, Joan Foote of Killingworth; his stepchildren Lucinda McCue and her husband, Bruce of Wethersfield, Clifford Porter and his wife, Sherri of Colchester, Sue Coston of Walton, N.Y., and Heidi Marvin and her husband Tim of Colchester; eight grandchildren; and 13 great-grandchildren. He also leaves behind numerous nieces and nephews as well as many extended family members and friends.

Donald in his early years enjoyed cars, campers and CB radios, fondly remembered as "The Red Dragon." More recently, he has enjoyed NASCAR Racing, doing crossword puzzles, playing the guitar, dining out (especially fish and chips on Fridays) and the occasional trip to the casino. He always made time to celebrate important milestones with his grand and great-grandchildren. It was often difficult to determine who was the bigger kid when they spent time together.

Along with his parents, he was predeceased by his brothers, Charles and Raymond; sisters, Joan, Eleanor and Norma; his wives, Alberta (Martha Ousley) and Gail (Porter) Billington; as well as a grandson, Danny Richards.

Friends may call 5-7 p.m. today, Dec. 13, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A chapel service with military honors will be observed at 6:30 p.m. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to Speedway Children's Charities, PO Box 7888, Loudon, NH 03307-7888 or to the Wounded Warriors Project, P.O. Box 758517, Topeka, KS 66675.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Sue Sheridan

Sue Sheridan, 64, of Colchester, died Sunday, Dec. 8, at home.

A memorial funeral Mass will be held Saturday, Dec. 14, at 10 a.m., at St. Andrew Catholic Church on Norwich Avenue, Colchester. Interment of cremains will follow in St. Joseph Cemetery, Colchester. There are no calling hours.

Donations may be made to the Connecticut Humane Society or to the donor's choice in her memory.

Belmont Sabrowski Funeral Home of Colchester is in care of arrangements.

East Hampton

Kathleen Mary Owen

Kathleen Mary (Dryden) Owen, 67, of East Hampton, beloved wife of Paul Owen, died Monday, Dec. 9, at Middlesex Hospital. Born Dec. 4, 1946, in Portsmouth, N.H., she was the daughter of the late James and Mary (Quinn) Dryden.

Kathleen had most recently worked as a supervisor in the lockbox division of Bank of America. She and her husband and family have lived in East Hampton for 27 years, having moved from New Jersey.

Besides her husband, she is survived by her three sons, Paul Owen of East Hampton and his fiancée Kristin, Scott and Danielle Owen of East Hampton, Shane and Jamie Owen of East Hampton; a brother, Paul Dryden of North Carolina; a sister, Patricia Pearley of Florida; and nine grandchildren, Kellie, William, Meagan, Brian, Ryan, Kristin, Baylee, Liam and Kaeden.

Friends may call at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, today, Dec. 13, from 6-8 p.m. Burial will be private at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Dana Farber Cancer Institute, 450 Brookline Ave., Boston, MA 02215.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Portland

Allen A. Lawton

Allen A. Lawton of Portland passed away Friday, Dec. 6, at his home at the age of 89. Born in Cranston, R.I., in 1924, he was the son of Theodore H. Lawton and Evelyn Whitford Lawton.

He was a devoted, family-oriented husband and father who was predeceased by his wife of 54 years, Nancy Winship Lawton.

He leaves three sons, Allen Lawton Jr. and his wife Karen of Bolton, Richard Lawton and his wife Henrietta of Portland and Jeff Lawton of Middletown; two daughters, Linda Naughton and her husband, Michael of Franklin, Mass., and Donna Lawton and her husband, Richard Biehl of Arlington, Va.; and 12 grandchildren, four great-grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by two brothers, Charlie and Jack.

After high school in 1943, he entered the World War II Army Air Corps Aviation Cadet Program from which he graduated as a pilot in November 1944. In 1945, he flew C-46 Transport Planes across the infamous "Hump" mountains from India to China in support of the campaign to retake southern Burma. His squadron moved to Okinawa in the Pacific in support of B-29 Bomber operations and movement of personnel and supplies for the expected invasion of Japan.

After separation from active duty in December 1945, he attended Rhode Island State College, graduating from the engineering school in 1949. He then worked in the aerospace industry before being recalled into the USAF for the Korean War. After a tour of duty in Korea, he was assigned to the Aircraft Laboratory of the Wright Air Development Center. Upon separation from active duty, he was employed at Pratt and Whitney in East Hartford for 35 years, working on various assignments in the Engineering Department.

He was a coach in the Middlesex Youth Hockey Association for several years beginning with the start of the program and was a player himself in amateur circles. For several years he served on the committee of the Portland High School Dollars for Scholars program.

Always an aviation buff, he enjoyed participation in the free flight discipline of model aviation and attended competitions in several states, which led to friendships with people from all over the United States. He was a member of the Flying Aces Club and was a frequent contributor to the club newsletter for many years. He was a long-time member of the Congregational Church in South Glastonbury.

Services will be private and at the convenience of the family. There are no calling hours. A reception for family and friends will be held at the South Glastonbury Congregational Church Saturday, Dec. 21, at 2 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs, 287 West Street, Rocky Hill, CT 06067.

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

Haddam Neck

Donna Mae Peterson

Donna Mae Peterson of Haddam Neck died Sunday, Dec. 8, at Middlesex Hospital.

A funeral service will be held Monday, Dec. 16, from 6-8 p.m., at the Church of Latter Day Saints, 130 South St., Cromwell.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Nature Conservancy 55 Church St. New Haven, CT 06510.

The Spencer Funeral Home has care of arrangements.

East Hampton

Kathleen D. Alden

Kathleen Draghi Alden of East Hampton, formerly of Glastonbury, passed away peacefully Monday, Dec. 9.

She is survived by her husband, John M. Alden Jr.; daughter Claudia M. Alden; sisters Betty McKelvey of East Hartford, MaryAnn Cofiell of Glastonbury; and sister-in-law Joan Alden Albergini of Cape Cod.

Kathleen, born May 2, 1940, was a 1958 graduate of Glastonbury High School. She worked as a bookkeeper for many years at Paul and Sandy's of East Hampton, until recently when she retired as the result of declining health.

A Mass will be celebrated at St. Patrick Catholic Church, East Hampton, today, Dec. 13, at 11 a.m. The burial service will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Sandy Peszynski Breast Cancer Foundation, 93 High St., East Hampton, CT 06424.

Marlborough

Raymond J. Cavanaugh Sr.

Raymond J. Cavanaugh Sr., 91, loving husband of 44 years to Winona (St. Jean) Cavanaugh, formerly of Hartford and Glastonbury and longtime resident of Marlborough, passed away peacefully Thursday, Dec. 5, at Manchester Memorial Hospital, with his family by his side. He was born in Hartford Dec. 9, 1921, the son of the late Laura (Faucher) and James Cavanaugh.

A World War II veteran, Ray served in the U.S. Army in the European Theater in the Normandy, Northern France, Ardennes, and Rhineland campaigns. He was employed for 42 years by Arrow Hart Inc. (now Cooper Industries) in various management positions before retiring. He later joined Alpha Q, Inc. of Colchester as a purchasing associate until 2005.

Ray was a former Keyman organizer of the Hartford Industrial Management Club, and also had been active for more than 25 years in the Boy Scouts of America, as Scoutmaster of Troop 79 and District Commissioner of the North Hill District, Charter Oak Council, where he was recognized with the coveted Silver Beaver award for "Distinguished Service to Boyhood", and received the Catholic Scouting Bronze Pelican award.

In addition to his wife, Winona, he is survived by a daughter and son-in-law, Marlene and James Hayes of Tolland; a son and daughter-in-law, Raymond J. Jr. and Virginia Cavanaugh of Simsbury; a sister-in-law, Nora Cavanaugh of New Rochelle, N.Y., and Anne Castelhana of South Windsor; four great-grandsons; and several nephews and nieces.

Along with his parents he was predeceased by his brothers, Lawrence, James and Bernard.

Calling hours were Tuesday, Dec. 10, at the Farley-Sullivan Funeral Home, 50 Naubuc Ave., Glastonbury, A Mass of Christian Burial was held later that morning at St. John Fisher Church, 30 Jones Hollow Rd., Marlborough, CT 06447, followed by burial with full military honors in Marlborough Cemetery, Route 66, Marlborough.

Winona would like to thank the family and friends for being so supportive and helpful during Ray's illness.

To extend online condolences or for further information, visit farleysullivan.com.

Colchester

James C. Thisdale

James C. Thisdale, 56, of Colchester and formerly of Portland, beloved husband of Holly Ann (Strong) Thisdale, passed away unexpectedly Tuesday, Dec. 10. Born June 27, 1957 in Middletown, he was a son of Mary R. (Parmelee) Thisdale of East Haddam and Camille J. Thisdale of Portland.

James had worked as an assistant engineer for Pratt & Whitney Aircraft for 33 years. In his spare time, he loved computers and was an avid Ham Radio operator with the handle "N1JMM". He also spent time camping, particularly in Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine.

In addition to his loving wife of 18 years and his parents, he leaves six siblings, John of Portland, Jack and Jeanne, both of East Haddam, Joe of Southington, Jerry of East Hampton and June of Hebron; numerous extended family members and friends and special lap dog Mickey.

Friends may call Saturday, Dec. 14, starting at 9:30 a.m. before an 11 a.m. chapel service at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Road, Colchester. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to the American Heart Association, P.O. Box 417005, Boston, MA 02241-7005 or to the Protectors of Animals, 144 Main St., Unit O, East Hartford, CT 06118.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Helen S. Farrell

Helen S. (Saplikoski) Farrell, 93, of Colchester, died Monday, Dec. 9, at Middlesex Hospital. Born and raised in New Britain, daughter of the late Bogumil and Stella (Chrzanowski) Saplikoski, she was predeceased by her husband of 52 years, Harry J. Farrell.

She retired as administrative aide from the City of New Britain after 24 years in the Park and Recreation Department. She held the office of secretary-treasurer for New Britain City Employees (CSA) Community Service Association for many years, retiring in 1978 when she moved to Sharon, and was employed at the Sharon Hospital for almost 10 years. Her co-workers nominated her as "Care-Giver for the Month."

She was a member of Holy Cross Church for over 67 years, a member of the Holy Cross Ladies Guild and held office of Treasurer, a member of the former Mother's Club, and served as secretary.

In Colchester, she joined St. Andrews Parish. During her leisure time, she knitted and crocheted afghans which she donated to churches and convalescent homes. She crocheted over 250 blankets for the Holy Cross Ladies Guild where they were then donated to Hospitals for pre-natal babies.

Mrs. Farrell leaves two sons, Timothy J. Farrell of Colchester and LTC (Ret) U.S. Army Thomas D. Farrell and his wife Pamela of Colorado, and several nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by three sisters, Hedwig McLaughlin, Florence Hobart and Mary J. Saplikoski, and two brothers, L. Steve Saplikoski and Joseph Saplikoski.

Funeral services will be held today, Dec. 13, with a Mass of Christian Burial at 10 a.m. at Holy Cross Church. Burial will follow in Sacred Heart Cemetery, New Britain. Visitation will be today from 9 a.m. until the time of the Mass at the Farrell Funeral Home, 110 Franklin Sq., New Britain.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Holy Cross Church, 31 Biruta St., New Britain, CT 06053.

To light a candle or send a condolence, visit FarrellFuneralHome.com.

Haddam Neck

Donald Byron Bement

Donald Byron Bement died unexpectedly Sunday, Dec. 8, at his home with his loving wife of 48 years, Susan, at his side.

Don was born in Middletown to Albert N. Bement and Alice (Murphy) Bement on Nov. 8, 1935, and grew up in Middletown, attending Central School and Middletown High School graduating in 1953.

He was employed by First National Stores for 17 years and served in the U.S. Army in Frankfurt, Germany. In 1968 he joined Connecticut Yankee Atomic Power Company retiring as the Nuclear Records Supervisor in 1995.

He met his wife, Susan Johnson Bement, at the First National Grocery Store in Portland in 1961 and they were married in Haddam Neck in 1965. They built a house on the site of the home where Susan grew up in Haddam Neck and lived there happily until his death.

Don was an accomplished artist working mostly in oils on canvas. He loved the outdoors either working in the yard, hiking, observing animals in nature, looking for subjects to paint and checking out national parks and other beautiful areas. He was a kind and gentle person who loved to make people laugh.

Besides his wife, Susan, he left behind his twin sister, Patricia Anderson and husband Carl of Durham; his brother, Albert K. Bement of South Windsor; his brother-in-law, Norman E. Johnson and his wife, Rinette of Storrs; also, his nephews, Glenn, Kenneth, and Carl Anderson and their spouses, Kelly, Robin, and Heather and their children; his nieces, Doreen Johnson and her husband, John Tomanelli and their children of Marlborough and Jennifer Johnson of Kingfield, Maine; his extended family of cousins whom he was very fond of and his beloved cats who were his constant companions at home.

A memorial service will be held at Rock Landing Cemetery at the convenience of the family in the spring.

In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to CATALES of Middletown, P. O. Box 901, Middletown, CT 06457 or the Haddam Neck Volunteer Fire Department, 17 Rock Landing Road, Haddam Neck, CT 06424

