

RIVEREAST

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**Michelle Hespeler of Marlborough pushes over a tire at a Fitathlon Challenge last September in Glastonbury. The 46-year-old suffers from Young Onset Parkinson's disease, and plans to attend the upcoming Fitathlon Challenge next Saturday, April 13, that will help raise money for the Michael J. Fox Foundation.**

## Woman Raising Parkinson's Awareness

by Melissa Roberto

Six years ago, when Michelle Hespeler of Marlborough noticed her right arm stopped swinging when she walked, and simple tasks like dialing a phone number or tying a shoe became difficult, she knew something was wrong.

But finding out she had Parkinson's disease, at just 40 years old, came as a shock.

An even bigger shock was learning that the disease has no cure, and that over time, the symptoms would only get worse. After the initial feelings of devastation and fear began to sink in, Michelle said her only approach to living with the disease was to be "proactive."

What Michelle specifically has is Young Onset Parkinson's, which is diagnosed in individuals under the age of 50. Michelle's husband, Karl, referred to Young Onset Parkinson's as a "rarity," because 70-80 percent of individuals suffering from Parkinson's are usually over age 50.

In order to be proactive, Michelle and Karl fueled their energy into researching the disease and finding any preventative measures Michelle could take to slow down the progression of Parkinson's, and it didn't take the couple long to discover that exercise was the key.

"Working out is the only proven fact that slows down the progression of the disease," Karl explained.

So exercise is exactly what Michelle began to do. A mother of two, and a physical education teacher at Buttonball Lane Elementary School in Glastonbury, Michelle said she had

always been active, but it wasn't until her diagnosis in 2007 that she made health and fitness a "huge" part of her life.

A couple years ago, Michelle began to work out at Accelerated Fitness, a personal training studio in Glastonbury with personal trainer Ryan LaMarche. There, Michelle works out twice a week doing core and balance exercises that help improve her mobility, flexibility, strength and stability.

"She has excelled and improved in all of those categories," LaMarche said of Michelle. "She has a lot of strength."

Nearing six years with the disease, Michelle has taken several steps to make others aware of the link between exercise and Parkinson's. Her latest effort will be to raise awareness for the disease at the upcoming Connecticut Fitathlon Challenge that is being held at Rentschler Field in East Hartford by Accelerated Fitness on Saturday, April 13.

The Fitathlon will be the third of its kind held by the personal training studio. It is a 5K race that tests participants' athleticism, strength, endurance and mental toughness through 15-20 obstacles. The obstacles include – but are not limited to – climbing walls, wheelbarrow pushes, weight exercises, running, balance beams, tunnels and ropes.

For each of Accelerated Fitness' Fitathlons, a portion of registration fees have been donated to a charity. For the April 13 event, the charity, which Michelle suggested to event organizers,

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## \$316K Cut from Belltown School Budget

by Joshua Anusewicz

The East Hampton Board of Finance met Wednesday to approve the proposed 2013-14 town budget, and wound up cutting the Board of Education's spending proposal by \$316,000. The cut, which drops the school budget increase from 5.19 percent to an even 4 percent, passed unanimously, 6-0, with Chairman Matthew Walton not present.

The total budget now sits at \$29.48 million, with \$27.78 million set aside for education. The board opted not to touch the town operations budget, which sits at \$9.72 million. The budget also includes \$1.10 million for debt service and \$869,916 for fund transfers.

According to Finance Director Jeff Jylkka, bringing the school budget increase to 4 percent would yield a mill rate of 26.85, an increase of less than one mill from the current year's mill rate of 25.97. To explain the tax impact, Jylkka said that a property valued at \$200,000 would be charged \$5,370 in taxes for the year, down from \$5,426 in the budget that was originally proposed. (By comparison, under the current mill rate, a property valued at \$200,000 is charged \$5,194 in taxes.)

At previous meetings, the finance board had debated how a reduction to the budget – the

education budget, in particular – should be approached, with the majority of the board feeling that a sizeable reduction needed to be made. With some members feeling a 4 percent increase was the way to go and some looking for a 4.5 percent increase, board member Ted Turner split the difference on Wednesday night, making a motion to set the education budget at a 4.25 percent increase.

"I'm in favor of that kindergarten teacher," Turner said, alluding to the inclusion of an additional kindergarten teacher at Memorial School for an additional section of all-day kindergarten. Turner said that the difference between a 4 percent increase and 4.25 percent increase was between \$65,000 and \$70,000, enough to fund that position.

"I can't say how to spend it," Turner said to the school board, "but I hope it goes to that kindergarten teacher."

Board of Finance member Patience Anderson, who has championed making a substantial cut to the education budget at recent meetings, admitted that she still had some apprehension toward a 4 percent increase.

"I initially thought 4 percent was a bit high, but I think it's the best I'm going to get," she

said to her fellow board members. She added that property values in town were declining, but taxes were continuing to rise, a disturbing trend for residents. "[The residents] need a break," she said.

Finance board member Dave Monighetti said he looked at where the education budget could be trimmed, and didn't see much. "I don't think there's a lot of fat in here," Monighetti said of the school budget. "All of these big increases [salaries and insurance] are contractual. There's not much that's going to happen, no matter what we do here tonight."

Monighetti opined that, if a cut were to be made to the education budget, it should be a \$170,000 reduction, which would equal a one mill increase for the total budget.

Finance board member Mary Ann Dostaler called the difference between a 4 percent increase and a 4.25 percent increase "nominal," but agreed with the 4.25 percent increase. She did, however, plead her case for presenting the budget to voters as is.

"People continue to move here, not for jobs, but for the quality of life," Dostaler said. "I think that people who move here are willing to pay for it [the quality of life], and the people who

live here are proud of it."

Board members Tim Csere and Tom O'Brien, however, agreed with Anderson. O'Brien said the spending trend in town was "not sustainable," while Csere said that the education budget has been supported in the past and the district has been able to produce high achievement regardless of the amount of funding.

The vote for the 4.25 percent increase ultimately resulted in gridlock, with a 3-3 vote.

O'Brien then made a motion to approve a 4 percent increase, which passed 6-0 without any discussion.

"I'm disappointed we couldn't get more of a consensus amongst the board members," said Dostaler following the meeting. "I've been pleading my case, but board members have been unwilling to move."

If the budget is approved by the Town Council and approved at a town referendum, the education budget will have seen a sizeable cut again this year, as it has in the past several years. Though the Board of Education will still see a substantial increase in its budget no matter how the town vote shakes out, board chairman Mark

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**Michelle Hespeler climbs over a net at one of the obstacles at last September's Fitathlon Challenge. The race combines obstacles made to test participants' strength, stability and mental toughness.**

#### **Parkinson's cont. from Front Page**

will be the Michael J. Fox Foundation, to raise money for Parkinson's research.

While Michelle plans to participate and said her personal goal is to finish the race in a "decent" time, she also has another goal in mind: to raise \$15,000 for the foundation.

In order to raise money for the charity, individuals interested in signing up for the event need to use the promotion code TEAMFOX that Michelle and Karl set up. Using the promotion code will immediately take \$20 off of the \$99 registration fee, and the fee will then go towards the charity.

"Ultimately it's about finding a cure," Karl said of the goal. "It's about raising money and it's about getting money in the right hands."

Michelle said 89 cents of every dollar the foundation receives goes toward Parkinson's research. She stressed that people can also simply go to the event and donate without participating.

Accelerated Fitness owner Doug Dorsey said 1,800 people have already signed up for the event so it is expected to be the "biggest Fitathlon to date."

The business' first Fitathlon was held at Smith Middle School in Glastonbury last September, with a second two months later at Winding Trails, an outdoor recreation park in Farmington.

Dorsey – who has gotten to know Michelle well – said this event is especially fitting not only because it helps raise awareness for a disease that one of his clients has, but also because April is National Parkinson's Awareness Month.

"It's all about giving back, and we wanted to give an opportunity to show support in fighting the disease," Dorsey said.

Dorsey added that Michelle initially approached him with the idea about incorporating Parkinson's awareness into the event and that he was on board from the first mention of it.

"If there's somebody out there that has a need and there's enough people that warrants me to do it then we're always open to it," he said. "It makes me feel good and it makes me feel healthy that I can contribute and I can allow others to contribute to support those with Parkinson's."

Since Michelle's participation at the gym, Accelerated Fitness set up its first specified group class open to people with Parkinson's that meets once a week.

For Michelle, the April 13 Fitathlon won't be her first. Dorsey said she attended the one in Glastonbury, and she did "very well."

In addition to her role with the Fitathlon, Michelle has networked with Parkinson's diagnosed individuals in other ways. In January

2011, she started her own support group for people with Young Onset Parkinson's called Young Young Active Parkinson's Advocates (YYAPA) with two other men in their 40s that have the disease, Greg Hallee of Colchester and Peter Northrop of Vernon. The group meets once a week in Glastonbury and is made up of 20-25 Connecticut residents from all over the area including Enfield, Wethersfield, Portland, West Hartford and even Old Lyme.

"I've met numerous people in their thirties and forties and fifties that have the disease in this area," Michelle said. "I've met a lot of friends."

The upcoming Fitathlon will be the second time in the last month the group has made an effort to raise money for the Michael J. Fox Foundation. Michelle said the group held a dinner and dance gala last month at a community center in Wethersfield. The group's goal was to raise \$10,000 from attendees and instead received \$18,000.

"We're really trying to promote awareness and get some more people involved to get funding for clinical trials because clinical trials are what we need to do research and find the cure," Michelle explained.

LaMarche described Michelle as someone with a "positive spirit and great attitude." But he stressed that he does not treat her differently than any of his other clients because that's not what she wants.

"I don't want any sympathy," she added.

For the last six years, Michelle said she appreciates each day "a lot" more.

She said she will continue promoting healthiness, whether it's to her elementary school students in her gym classes, her family, friends, or others with the disease. But she also stressed not to go overboard.

"Everything should be in moderation," she added.

The 46-year-old added that she has become inspired in the last six years to lead a more positive life.

"Believing in yourself and believing in your dreams is kind of what my mantra has become. That's the overall vision I have of dealing with this disease. I believe that some day within my life there will be a cure and I live daily believing in that."

To register for the April 13 Fitathlon challenge log on to [fitathlonchallenge.com](http://fitathlonchallenge.com).

The event is open to individuals of all skill levels. It will also include a kids obstacle course and complimentary inflatables, along with health and wellness vendors and sports massages for participants. Registration begins at 8 a.m. and the event runs from 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

#### **School Budget cont. from Front Page**

Laraia said that deciding where reductions will be made is "not going to be easy."

"We presented a budget we thought would move our education system forward," Laraia said following the meeting. "And they [the Board of Finance] did what they felt was right for the town. We'll try to honor what they want."

Laraia has been a proponent of letting the voters decide how much they can afford, and not leaving the decision to the finance board. "There are people out there who want the budget higher, but they can't change it now," he added. "If the budget gets voted down, we can't put it back in."

With the figures set, the budget will now head to the Town Council, which will decide whether or not to send the budget to a town meeting scheduled for Monday, April 29, at 7 p.m. at Town Hall. The budget would then be sent to the town referendum, scheduled for Tuesday, May 7.

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Also Wednesday, Town Council Chairwoman Sue Weintraub announced a meeting would be held on Tuesday, April 9, following

the Town Council's regular meeting, to discuss the proposed high school renovation project. The meeting will commence at 7:30 p.m. at East Hampton High School, 15 N. Maple St.

Weintraub said the meeting will include the Town Council, the Board of Finance and the High School Building Committee, and that its focus will be the scope of the project. The proposed project, which has been approved by the building committee and the Board of Education, was recently rejected by the Board of Finance in a 5-2 vote, with opposition citing the addition of unnecessary items and high costs. The cost of the project, as presented last week, was just over \$52 million, with the town on the hook for \$28.8 million due to a 52.5 percent reimbursement rate from the state.

With the rejected proposal last week, the clock is ticking for a plan to be approved, as the town needs to hold a referendum for residents to vote on the project. If approved, the town would need to submit the plan, along with education specifications, to the state before June 30 to receive reimbursement.

## **Prague Back in Action**

by **Geeta Schrayter**

Edith Prague didn't stay retired for long.

Prague, who served as state senator for the 19th District from 1994 until the end of last year, was named last week the commissioner of the newly-formed State Department on Aging (SDA) by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy.

"Senator Prague has dedicated herself to improving the quality of life for senior citizens – with her background and expertise, she is a natural choice to lead the Department on Aging," Malloy said in a press release from the SDA. "I know she will make an immediate impact as the commissioner on aging and am eager to work with her to address the needs of our state's growing senior population."

The purpose of the SDA, which was created on Jan. 1, is to ensure that Connecticut's seniors receive the appropriate support services in order to live life "with dignity, security, and independence," the release said. Once Prague is confirmed by the legislature and administrative staff is hired, the release said, the department will encapsulate "all appropriate func-

tions, programs and duties" of the Department of Social Services' State Unit on Aging, and the office of Long Term Care Ombudsman.

Before her nearly 20-year stint as state senator, Prague was a state representative for eight years. She also served on the Committee on Aging and as the Commissioner of Aging under former governor Lowell Weicker.

"It is an honor to serve the people of Connecticut, and I thank the Governor for his trust and support," Prague, a Democrat from Columbia, said in the news release. "For 18 years I represented the residents of Connecticut's 19th Senatorial District, and I am looking forward to getting back to work on behalf of our seniors. We have a tremendous resource in our older residents, it is important that the state's programs and services are relevant, appropriate, and meet their needs."

The 19th District was recently redrawn but, during Prague's time in office, it included the *Rivereast* towns of Andover and Hebron.



# RHAM School Board Passes \$25.95 Million Budget

by Geeta Schrayter

The RHAM Board of Education Monday voted 6-0 – with member Tom Tremont abstaining – to pass a \$25.95 million middle and high school budget for the 2013-14 fiscal year.

The adopted spending plan is 3.52 percent, or \$882,385, more than current year spending – but 2.05 percent less than the \$26.45 million budget Superintendent of Schools Bob Siminski presented in February.

The budget, which will now advance to a public hearing on Monday April 8, went through a number of cuts at both Monday's meeting and a prior meeting on March 25, before the final number was accepted. The largest of these was a \$283,657 drop in the health insurance line due to a lower insurance increase than originally expected. In his initial February budget proposal, Siminski had projected insurance costs to rise 24.95 percent, but insurance has since gone out to bid, and the insurance carrier, Anthem, came back with an increase of 11.33 percent instead. This resulted in the amount allotted for insurance dropping from \$3.2 million to \$2.9 million.

Other significant decreases from March 25 included: \$75,000 from instructional supplies; \$40,600 from field trips (Siminski said the decision was made to reduce the number of field trips that take place); and \$30,000 from textbooks. Cuts were also made to supplies for the custodians and maintenance in the amount of \$18,840; \$10,000 from money set aside for library books; and a \$9,000 reduction in property insurance.

The March 25 pruning left the budget at \$26.05 million. Then, at this past Monday's meeting, Siminski presented a list of still more reductions that could be taken. The list included \$31,944 for the school-to-work coordinator, who helps students acquire work experience while they're still in school; an additional \$30,000 from textbooks; an additional \$10,000 from library books and \$10,000 from curriculum writing. (In order to offset some of the reductions, it was noted at the meeting that pre-purchasing would be used to purchase some of the instructional supplies, textbooks and library books.)

The cuts also included a reduction in extra days for the school psychologist and guidance counselors, amounting to \$5,995, and a \$9,600 reduction in funding for professional development for the principals. However, some board members expressed disapproval over the removal of these items.

"I think there's too much we've got to prepare for" said board member Kevin Williams, and Board Chair Laura Steiner agreed.

"I don't want the extra psychologist or guidance days going," she said.

Monday's discussion also prompted members to wonder what level the board was looking to reach – and if they were going too far.

Board member Manny Catarino said the board hadn't mentioned a specific increase they were looking to get to, while Steiner added some members wanted a budget increase she didn't feel was feasible.

"Some want it below 3 percent, but I think that's impossible, I'm sorry," she said.

"I think this is about as lean as it gets without detrimentally affecting students," Catarino added.

The board then motioned to accept \$595,159 in cuts from March 25 as well as the cuts from Monday's meeting, which amounted to \$147,286 and brought the total cuts to \$742,445. It then voted 6-0 to pass the budget altogether. (Board members Amy D'Amaddio, Danny Holtsclaw, Kenneth Lee and Mike Turner were absent from the meeting.)

Tremont said this week he abstained from the vote because he felt the number was **simply to high – and this is why**

The next step for the RHAM budget is a public hearing, which will be held Monday, April 8 at 7:00 p.m. in the RHAM High School auditorium. Any information received at the hearing will be used to examine the budget once more before it's sent to a district meeting, after which it will be forwarded to referendum in each of the three district towns, Andover, Hebron and Marlborough.

## AHM Program – "Sticks, Stones, Words... They All Hurt"

by Geeta Schrayter

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me" is a phrase many people are familiar with from childhood. The idea is to not let what others say bother you, but, a program entitled the "Power of Words" stressed to area children this week, this is rarely the case. Words can, and do, hurt.

On Tuesday, students from RHAM Middle and High School met with around 60 fifth- and sixth-graders at AHM Youth and Family Services on Pendleton Drive in Hebron, to discuss the impact of words and ways to make the school environment safe for all students.

The Power of Words is an annual, all-day, student-led program at RHAM High School, where kids discuss the affect words can have on people and create awareness of the negative impact of discrimination, prejudice and bullying. Each year, when the program is held, students view a documentary on the impact of bullying, listen to personal stories of individuals who have been bullied themselves or bullied others, and participate in discussions and diversity activities.

Due to the success of this program at the high school, it's been broadened to include the middle school and this year, AHM Executive Director Joel Rosenberg said, the decision was made to start it even earlier – at the elementary level.

"We believe that this program is going to have a long-lasting impact on children," he said.

"We're using some of the kids from the high school program to come down to [AHM] to talk

to fifth- and sixth-graders on the affects of bullying," added Program Director Peggy Tunick. "Each elementary school is sending about 15 kids for a training session and then they're going to go back to their schools and share the information about bullying and its affects."

Beginning a little after 9 a.m. on Tuesday, AHM was filled with kids of all ages. The high school students, who have already been trained in the program and participated previously, wore Power of Words shirts with the phrase "Sticks, stones, words... they all hurt," written across the back. It's a new take on the age-old phrase, but highlights the point the program is looking to make.

Students from elementary schools in Andover, Columbia, Hebron and Marlborough were split up into groups, took part in an ice-breaker then listened while, just like with the high school program, the older students shared their personal experiences with bullying.

Some talked about how they'd been affected by bullying: one student shared she had a learning disability which required she wear hearing aids and take special education classes and due to that, she was considered different and bullied. As an example, she shared after one of her sport practices, she was finishing up her homework when some of the other girls took her notebook and wrote "SPED" across the back.

For a while, the girl said, the bullying caused her to stop playing sports and her grades to suffer. But she eventually realized she shouldn't let herself fail because of others' words, and



Students from the RHAM high and middle schools met with area kids Tuesday to discuss bullying and how it affects people.

she told the students to "stop thinking so much about what others think of you. You are your own person and no one should make you change that."

Other students talked about how they'd been the ones to bully: one said he and his friends used to bully a girl in his neighborhood. He said they would call her names, pick on her and her family, and when she sat in the back of the bus at the start of sixth grade – in the seat he wanted – he sat next to her, taunted her and coughed and sneezed on her until she moved.

"I bullied because I had nothing better to do," he said. "This needs to be brought to a stop. School should be a safe place to be."

Plenty of advice was also provided, and the elementary students were told being different – which is often the reason someone gets bullied – shouldn't be a bad thing.

"Learn to accept differences," the students were told. "You don't have to be friends with everybody, but you don't have to be mean."

Along with the presentations, participating students took part in group discussions on the types of things they witnessed in their schools. They also talked about how to present everything they'd learned to their fellow students, with the ultimate goal of reducing bullying, showing words *do* hurt, and differences should be accepted and respected.

## Former EH Interim Town Manager Weichsel Passes Away

by Joshua Anusewicz

He only spent a year in East Hampton, but former interim town manager John Weichsel left an indelible mark on the town and, in particular, those he worked closely with.

"He was an extraordinary, wonderful human being," said Town Council Chairwoman Sue Weintraub on Tuesday. "I had a tremendous amount of respect and admiration for him."

Weichsel passed away last Friday, March 29, at the age of 80 after a long battle with an illness. He leaves behind his wife, Dolores "Dee" Stanton-Weichsel, a son, Barry, and a daughter, Amy, as well as numerous extended family members.

A graduate of the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, Weichsel came to East Hampton in April 2011 with a

boatload of experience, having served as the town manager of Southington for 44 years prior to his retirement. His tenure in Southington made him the longest serving town manager in the country at the time. He came out of retirement to take the interim position in East Hampton, which provided a unique opportunity for the seasoned administrator.

"I've been working since I was 14 years old and retirement is not for me," Weichsel told the *Rivereast* in 2011, displaying his sharp wit that many who got to know him remember fondly. Being an interim town manager "was a very specific job. At my age, it's probably better that it's not permanent."

But despite the interim tag, Weichsel earned his keep, quickly jumping into the town's affairs and "bringing trust back into town government," Weintraub said. In a matter of months, Weichsel was able to secure \$400,000 in grants to fix a culvert issue on Pine Brook Road, help regionalize the town's animal control officer with East Haddam to save costs, and initiate a years-long road project that would overhaul most town roads. He also

crafted the 2012-13 town budget and steered the town through union negotiations with town employees.

His calm demeanor and no-nonsense approach to running a municipality, Weintraub said, made the town staff revere him, making him a stabilizing force in a position that had seen much changeover in years prior. Weintraub virtually ran out of compliments – "concise," "laser intellect," "lightning sense of humor," "astute" – when describing the man who often flew under the radar.

"I'm not sure if people appreciated how much he did, because he was so low key," Weintraub added. "It's a real loss."

While serving East Hampton, Weichsel battled his illness, even taking roughly a month off for a medical procedure. After serving out his year-long contract, Weichsel retired for good, handing the reigns over to current Town Manager Michael Maniscalco. But despite his short-lived time in East Hampton, Weichsel's impact on the community that will live on for years to come.



John Weichsel, who was interim town manager for East Hampton from April 2011 until last April, passed away last week.



# Finance Board Takes Second Look at Marlborough School Budget

by Melissa Roberto

The Board of Finance Tuesday took its second look at the proposed 2013-14 local Board of Education budget, and members seemed pleased with what they saw.

The special meeting followed the finance board's March 27 meeting, where Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz presented the proposed budget to finance members for the first time. Tuesday's meeting, however, gave finance members the opportunity to further discuss line items of the budget with Sklarz and Board of Education members before taking any action on it.

Originally Sklarz presented the budget at \$7.37 million, which translated to an increase of \$1.17 million, or 2.40 percent, over the current spending package. But on Tuesday, Sklarz told the board that the bottom line number is expected to drop thanks to a reduction in the health insurance increase over the current fiscal year.

Health insurance was originally projected to climb 26.93 percent, but with an update from Anthem Insurance, it was determined that the increase will drop to a 16-19 percent increase over the current fiscal year. If it lowers to a 19 percent increase, Sklarz explained, the budget would be lowered by \$27,000.

"I would be delighted to reduce it," Sklarz added, and finance members nodded their heads

in agreement.

Sklarz – and First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski, who was also in the audience – confirmed that the exact number for health insurance would be communicated to finance members soon so the budget could be adjusted.

The board then looked deeper into the capital outlay account. Sklarz included nearly \$34,000 in the capital outlay account, and he explained \$20,000 of it is proposed to go toward security improvements at Marlborough Elementary School that may surface over the next year. While exact improvements have yet to be determined, Sklarz singled out replacing glass doors at MES with a more secure material.

However, the finance board also addressed the anticipated \$150,000 surplus the Board of Education could receive at the end of the current fiscal year. Board of Finance Chairwoman Evelyn Godbout asked the superintendent where he'd like to see that money go, and Sklarz provided her with a detailed answer.

"If you have a one-time savings, it shouldn't go to ongoing expenses," he explained.

Rather, Sklarz highlighted "one-time expenses" he'd like to pay for through the surplus. His answer included replacing the school's exterior cameras at the entrance of the school

for security purposes and additional exterior cameras outside of the building, at an estimated cost of \$16,000; replacing locks on classroom doors at the school, at a cost of \$12,000; purchasing seven new SMART Boards, at a cost of nearly \$21,000 (Sklarz said this would complete the school's goal of offering a SMART Board in every classroom); and replacing library books at an estimated cost of \$8,000.

Godbout, however, asked Sklarz why he wouldn't use the \$20,000 in the capital outlay account towards the new cameras and locks at the school. Sklarz explained that he'd like to leave the \$20,000 in the budget for the as-yet-unknown security improvements.

"We don't know what's going to come up over the summer," he explained, adding that there might be a recommendation at the state level for schools to heighten security and make improvements at the schools.

"A building can never be totally secure but we need to do the best we can with what we have," Sklarz added.

Also, the superintendent explained that it has been a "difficult year" for worker's compensation claims. He explained that the expense of worker's compensation doubled in next year's budget because of "unique" claims that left some employees on long-term medical leave.

At the end of the meeting, both Board of Finance Vice Chairman Cliff Denniss and member Susan Leser said they had no "major issues" with the Board of Education budget.

Instead of "throwing money at things," Denniss said he believes the proposed budget puts items back into the budget that were once taken out at the "best cost."

Member Ken Hjulstrom, however, said he was concerned with the school's running cafeteria deficit that has reached nearly \$45,000 over the last five years, as well as the need for maintenance repairs at the school.

Sklarz pointed out during the meeting that he hopes to develop a long-term plan to replace the school's old furniture and to fix other repairs in the building.

The superintendent added that the building is "starting to look tired," and a 3-5 year long plan would be needed to address the school's maintenance downfalls but, if possible, would be paid for outside of the budget.

The Board of Finance held a meeting on Thursday, April 4, after press time, where finance members tentatively scheduled to take action on the local school budget.

The next Board of Finance meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 10, at 7 p.m. at the Marlborough Elementary School library.

## Portland Culinary Kids Compete in Chef Competition

by Joshua Anusewicz

Who says kids don't like to eat healthy foods?

On Thursday, March 21, five students from Gildersleeve School donned aprons and chef hats and competed in the National Challenge Future Chefs contest, where the youngsters battled it out to see who had the best healthy, kid-friendly salad.

When the lettuce settled, it was fourth-grader Brandon Lockwood who stood above all the rest with his Hawaiian-inspired "Brando's Chicken Mango and Pineapple Salad."

The runners-up were third-grader Erin Beach with "The Yummy Mummy Salad"; third-grader Andrew Stokke with his "Tasty Southwest Salad"; fourth-grader Julia Berthiaume with her "Quinoa Salad"; and fourth-grader Anna Bordonaro with her "Confetti Salad."

The contest, sponsored by Sodexo, an international food service company that supplies food to Portland schools, was a big hit this year, with over 100 students submitting recipes. Sodexo devised the contest to inspire young children to eat healthier by showing them how easy – and delicious – it can be to include good foods into your diet. The top five recipes were chosen by a group of Sodexo judges, and the five finalists came to the Portland High School cafeteria on March 21 to prove just how good their recipe was.

For Brandon, getting in the kitchen to prepare a delicious meal was old hat. Brandon said he has been cooking and baking from before he was old enough to go to school, helping out his mom, Diane, and his dad, Barry, a chef himself. From sweet desserts to big steak dinners, Brandon said he knows his way around a kitchen.

"And I love salads," added the 10-year-old.

When coming up with a recipe, Brandon said he had two themes in mind for his salad: Mexican and Hawaiian. With mom Diane as the official taste-tester, he prepared his Mexican salad first, with crispy tortillas and black beans. It was good, he said, but it was his Hawaiian salad

that drew rave reviews from every member of the family. The salad included field greens, grilled chicken, mangoes, pineapples, and strawberries for garnish. To top it all off, Brandon created a dressing of coconut milk, yogurt, parsley and curry powder.

After a few weeks of practicing to get the recipe just right – and "no help from my dad," he pointed out – Brandon said he felt confident entering the contest. Each young chef worked with the ingredients to present their recipe to the judges, and then explain how it was made, why it was healthy and why students would enjoy it. The chefs also created a large plate of the salad to show off their flair for presentation.

"Every kid had the biggest smile on their face and had such a sense of achievement," Diane said. "And they looked so professional with their hats and aprons on."

While the chefs waited for their results, Brandon said that each contestant got to try their competition's creations, and admitted that he might not have voted for himself to win. His favorite was his classmate Alex's "Confetti Salad," which included pasta and mandarin oranges. "I think I had four bowls!" he said.

But the judges whittled the contestants down to Brandon and Julia, eventually settling on Brandon's Hawaiian-inspired creation. For winning, Brandon won an iPod touch, but might have received an even better distinction: "Brando's Chicken Mango and Pineapple Salad" will be featured in the Gildersleeve School cafeteria for the rest of the school year. Not only that, but the salad will also be featured as a special at Farrell's Restaurant – owned by Brandon's aunt – later this year.

And the salad will also be heading beyond Portland; Brandon will now go to a regional competition to face other young chefs in the area. If he were to win the regional competition, Brandon would go on to a national competition, where he would create a YouTube



**Fourth-grader Brandon Lockwood recently won the National Challenge Future Chefs competition, beating out a handful of his Gildersleeve School classmates with his Hawaiian-inspired "Brando's Chicken Mango and Pineapple Salad." The salad will be featured at the Gildersleeve School cafeteria for the rest of the school year.**

video about how to make his salad, and people throughout the world would be able to vote on which salad they like best. The winning salad would be featured as part of Sodexo menus across the country.

The possibility of being nationally-recog-

nized has Brandon, who aspires to be a chef someday, excited about what the rest of the contest has in store. But, for now, Brandon is happy with his iPod and that his salad will be shared with his classmates and, certainly, that he can continue doing what he loves to do.



# KOCO Celebrates 25th Anniversary in East Hampton

by Joshua Anusewicz

Tucked away off of Route 66, near the shore of Lake Pocotopaug, it would be easy to miss the Kids of Chatham Organization, or KOCO for short, as you buzz by the facility. It almost looks like a small home with a long driveway, not unlike other residences that dot the lake's shore.

The fact that it blends in so well with its surroundings might be the perfect metaphor for the child care center, which has become an integral part of the East Hampton community. It would be hard for many parents to imagine the town without KOCO and all that it has done for the town's children for the past 25 years, a milestone that KOCO celebrated last month.

But the milestone was not cause for celebration for KOCO; it was just another day to continue serving the youth of the community. "We're here to accommodate the needs of this town," said Roxann Bartone, the director of KOCO for the past 12 years.

Since 1989, KOCO has done just a private, non-profit organization, KOCO was founded by a group of parents in search of local child care. According to Bartone, KOCO is still overseen by a volunteer board of parents, who do anything from holding licenses to establishing policies. The center has expanded from a small fa-

cility near the Village Center to its existing location on Route 66, where it serves nearly 200 children under the direction of about 35 staff members.

As the reputation of KOCO grew over the years, so too has the facility and its programs. It has added a nursery school, acquired a dance studio located in the building, and has coupled with the town's Early Childhood Council and East Hampton Public Schools to integrate the school district's curriculum goals into the curriculum to better prepare children for attending school.

"It's not what you think of when you think of daycare," Bartone said. "We're not babysitting or just killing time until the parents show up."

"Not being part of a chain allows us to generate our own curriculum," said Janet Santos, the assistant director of KOCO for the last 11 years. "We can do things that big chains can't do."

Over the years, that has included working closely with the district's central offices and observing kindergarten classrooms to establish that curriculum. Bartone and Santos – who are both certified teachers, like many of the staff

members at KOCO – agreed that the "quality of programs" that the center offers have helped grow KOCO and have kept many of the staff members on board, with many in employ at KOCO having spent close to 10 years there.

But what the two agreed has been the biggest part of KOCO's success is its integration into the community. Not only has the organization become an essential part of the town's education system, but KOCO has coupled with other town departments, such as the senior center, where the seniors participate in a pen-pal program with the children; the public library, which comes to KOCO twice a month to read to the children; and private groups like Epoch Arts and local church groups. KOCO also makes its facility available for various community events, such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts meetings and Red Cross blood drives.

"It's part of our success," said Santos of partnering with local groups. "We can't do this as an island."

"If we need help, we have five different people we can call," added Bartone.

That give and take with the community has allowed KOCO to grow, providing a place for children from 8 months old to 13 years old a

place to learn and grow themselves. Like much of the staff, which has been at KOCO for years, the children have been at the center for years and that has lent itself to "great success stories," Bartone said. Santos added that many of the students that were at KOCO when she started are now freshmen in high school, perhaps with a little of what they learned at KOCO still in use.

The "large center with a small-town feel," as Bartone puts it, has grown into a family over the years, with not just children and staff becoming close, but the families of the children becoming close.

Santos said she can't go into Stop & Shop without hearing "Ms. Janet!" from a family happy to see her. Bartone said she can identify the lunchbox of nearly every child that attends KOCO. But they wouldn't have it any other way.

"We always make an effort to treat everyone as an individual and build relationships," Bartone said.

That attitude has grown KOCO more than anyone could ever have imagined 25 years ago, and is sure to carry on the growth for – at least – another 25 years.

## Hebron School Budget Increase Trimmed to Less Than 1 Percent

by Geeta Schrayter

After much discussion on whether to reinstate previously-trimmed positions, the Board of Education Tuesday trimmed its proposed 2013-14 budget by \$163,333. The move brought the spending plan to \$12,004,923, an increase of .97 percent over the current year's budget.

The cut passed 5-2, with board members Tina-Marie Blinn and William Moorcroft voting against it.

The reduction was due to a decrease in the insurance line and a teacher who was going to remain on the same salary step due to time off for child rearing. The budget was originally proposed at \$12,168,256, a 2.33 percent increase.

As was the case with both the town budget and the RHAM education budget, insurance was initially calculated at a 24.95 percent increase when the budgets for 2013-14 were first presented. However, after going out to bid last month, the insurance carrier came back with a lower increase, at 11.33 percent. In addition to the Hebron Board of Education budget, that change decreased the Hebron town budget by \$62,093 and the RHAM school budget by \$283,657.

The board Tuesday discussed potentially using the money from the decrease in insurance to replace two teaching positions that had been eliminated in the 2013-14 budget: a math specialist and a library media specialist. Per the board's request, Interim Superintendent of Schools Kathy Veronesi explained what those two cuts could mean. She said there had always been two math specialists in the school system, and, with only one, their time would have to be split between the two schools. This, she said, could mean fewer kids are serviced.

For example, she said, the specialist would meet with the students deemed to be the most critically in need of help, as opposed to meeting with every student who needs some assistance, or meetings may go from once a week to once a month.

As far as the library media specialist, Veronesi said there was currently a team of three people in each school's library – a paraprofessional, technology staff member and a library media specialist – and with the reduction, the remaining specialist would, like the math specialist, have to rotate between the two schools.

Moorcroft said he wanted the community to understand the cuts "could potentially reduce the number of kids getting serviced."

But Veronesi made it clear that was only a "potential" outcome.

"I don't want to make a veiled threat to the board," she said. "We're still in the potential decision-making process."

Veronesi added the math specialist was also the person teachers tended to go to if they needed help understanding changes in curriculum due to changing state standards.

"Teachers look at some of the units and sometimes it takes their breath away," she said. The teachers wonder "do I know how to do this?" and the math specialist has been the one to work with them on that.

Different board members wondered what the budget would look like if the positions – or a portion of each – were reinstated. Restoring the math specialist would add \$63,459, moving the budget from a .97 percent increase to a 1.5 percent increase. Putting the math specialist back in part-time would bring it up to a 1.23 percent increase, and Board of Education Chairwoman

Kathy Shea voiced her concern that no matter what, the education budget was bound to fail at referendum.

"Personally," she said, "I don't think there's a guarantee the voters will support even a .97 percent increase."

Shea said there were some people who wouldn't vote in support of the budget if there was any increase at all.

Board member Maryanne Leichter said the board needed to bring down the budget due to the fact both RHAM and the town had used the insurance reduction to bring down *their* budgets. She felt "very certain" if the Board of Education didn't, "we will fail."

"Just because of the political atmosphere... I think we just have to bite the bullet," she said.

But some felt that, with the insurance being lower than expected, the positions should be reinstated – because if it had been the lower rate to begin with, they would have never been cut.

"I think restoring the math specialist is critical to keep [students] on the right path," said Blinn. "When we presented the budget we said the cuts were hard but we would make do, only because of insurance."

William Moorcroft agreed. He said the cuts were a last effort in response to insurance and said restoring the positions was the right move.

"I don't think this is irresponsible," he said. "On the contrary, I think it's the right thing to do."

Board member Stephanie Raymond said she agreed with Blinn and Moorcroft, yet she too felt the budget wouldn't pass if the number wasn't reduced.

"I honestly agree with Tina and Will. If we had all the facts before we wouldn't have [cut the positions]," she said. But, she added, the budget wouldn't pass at 1.5 percent and asked rhetorically, "What makes us so special?" – noting, like Leichter did, that town and RHAM had used the lower-than-expected insurance increase to reduce its budget proposals.

"I know people who have excelled because of [the math specialist] but I don't want to set us up for failure," she said.

Board member Dominic Marino said the positions were needed, but felt they couldn't be supported.

"We need those positions quite honestly, but we can't pay for them," he said. "We're in a mess."

And although member Amy Lynch-Gracias said she had benefited from the services of a math specialist and library media specialist as a child and so understood their importance, she said couldn't support an increase of any kind.

"Personally, I still want a zero percent increase," she said.

While the budget isn't flat, the board, at Shea's suggestion, voted to reduce the budget to a .97 percent increase, and charged the administration with taking another look at the budget to find a way to put the math specialist position back in, and take \$63,000 in cuts elsewhere.

"The bottom line is the bottom line," she said, so it didn't matter if the specialist was put back in, just so long as the number remained reduced.

"This will be a challenge for us," Veronesi stated, "but this is what we do at this time of year."

## \$52.225 Million Colchester Budget Sent to Town Meeting

by Melissa Roberto

The Board of Finance Wednesday moved the proposed 2013-14 Board of Education and town operations budgets to a town meeting.

The approval comes right after the board held two public hearings on Monday and Tuesday, giving residents a chance to venture down to Town Hall to hear the proposals. (A full story about those hearings appears elsewhere.)

The two budget packages total \$52,225,904, and show an increase of \$1.94 million over the current year, or a 3.87 percent increase.

The bottom line number of the town operations budget changed slightly on Wednesday from what was presented at the public hearings two weeks prior. Financial Advisor Maggie Cosgrove informed the board that the town spending plan was lowered by \$395 because of calculations made once she received more in-

formation about the town's Honeywell energy conservation project.

The project is an energy performance contract that was passed earlier this year. The town opted to pay for it through a lease, or by borrowing the money for it. The town will make lease payments for the next twelve years. The first payment will be made in the 2013-14 fiscal year and Cosgrove said the \$395 reduction is a result of more savings than the town expected.

The minor change did not affect the tax increase at all. The budget calls for the mill rate to climb 1.48 mills, to 30.28. So, for example, a property valued at \$200,000 would be charged \$6,056 in taxes, up from the \$5,760 it is charged now.

At the meeting, a handful of residents ex-

pressed their thanks to the Board of Finance for a job well done. The residents said they appreciated the board's hard work and their decisions to keep key items in the budgets like all-day kindergarten in the school budget and capital items on the town side.

Two residents, however, expressed concerns about the tax increase. Residents Joyce Maine and Merja Lehtinen submitted letters to the board in opposition of the budget increases. At the end of the meeting, Lehtinen told the board she does not think they've done a good job.

"Please don't do this," she pleaded. "Do not go forward with the tax increase. ... It's foolish."

While Lehtinen's words weren't exactly high praise, Board of Finance Chairman Rob Tarlov said he's appreciated the higher-than-usual pub-

lic turnout at the budget meetings this year. He added that the board listens to everyone that comes out and gives input.

"We listen to many, many different people and we try to produce the most efficient and responsible budget that doesn't cut services," he said.

Tarlov said Wednesday he believes the budgets are as low as they can get without cutting services.

Board member Art Shilosky agreed with Tarlov, saying, "That's all that's left to cut... that I can see."

The Board of Selectmen was scheduled to set the town meeting date on the proposed \$52.225 spending package in its meeting on Thursday, April 4, after press time.



# Colchester Officials Pleased with Turnout at Budget Hearing

by Melissa Roberto

At first glance, several seats were empty in the meeting room at Colchester Town Hall Monday, where the town held its first public hearing on the proposed local Board of Education and town operations budgets for the 2013-14 fiscal year. But compared to recent years – all of one person showed up for the first budget hearing last year – Board of Finance Chairman Rob Tarlov said the nearly 20 residents that attended the hearing was a great turnout, the best the town had seen for a budget hearing in quite some time.

The residents sat among town officials and local board members and listened to a presentation on the local Board of Education budget by Superintendent of Schools Jeffry Mathieu and school board chair Ron Goldstein and vice chair Donald Kennedy, and then listened to First Selectman Gregg Schuster's presentation on the town operations budget.

The two budgets total \$52.23 million, an increase of \$1.94 million, or 3.87 percent, over the current fiscal year.

Also, the overall 2013-14 proposed mill rate is 30.28 mills, which is an increase of 1.48 mills over the current spending package.

The school spending package, which is proposed at \$39.08 million, is a budget that has been well-received by the public thus far due to the all-day kindergarten proposal, and on Monday night the public's support was once again made obvious.

Several residents said they were in support of the kindergarten proposal, with a majority speaking in opposition of the current lottery system in place.

Currently, there are six half-day kindergarten classes and two all-day kindergarten classes. The two all-day classes are made up of students that are chosen based on a lottery number – a method parents at the hearing (and in other meetings) said they have struggled with.

If approved, all-day kindergarten would be offered to all kindergarten students in Colchester starting with the 2013-14 school year.

Other residents highlighted the benefits of all-day kindergarten, and even town officials stressed its importance.

"It's creating a foundation for later years' success and research tells us that full-day kindergarten will set that stage for the future years," Kennedy said.

Mathieu added that, when developing the budget, even secondary principals wanted to see all-day kindergarten included in next year's spending package. He added that, if the budget is approved, Colchester will be added to the long list of districts in the state that already provide all-day kindergarten.

"Every time you pick up the newspaper it seems every week another town has added it," Mathieu said.

Also in the presentation, Goldstein explained to the public that the local Board of Education budget is made up of three categories: operating budget, health insurance and capital. Of the three, health insurance was proposed with the highest increase over the current year at 16.67 percent. The operating budget – made up of programs and ongoing expenses – follows with a 2.34 percent increase. However, a "very significant decrease" was shown in capital spending, which is proposed at a 68.67 percent decrease because most capital items are included in the concurrent building project of William J. Johnston Middle School that was proposed in January.

Cost drivers in the school budget include employee-related health insurance, classified salaries, employee benefits and the increase in magnet school enrollment.

"Most of the budget goes toward people, which is appropriate for a school system," said

Goldstein.

The largest chunk of the budget is salaries, the chairman pointed out. Salaries make up 61.73 percent of the budget at a cost of \$24.12 million. Employee benefits make up the second-highest percentage, at 17.74 percent and a cost of \$6.93 million.

Also in the school budget presentation, Kennedy explained that the district is reducing 2.8 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions from the budget but that class sizes will not be severely affected in the 2013-14 school year.

"Our class sizes are staying relatively stable," he said.

\* \* \*

Schuster then presented the town operations budget to the public – a budget that totals \$13.15 million and is an increase of \$392,879 over the current fiscal year, or 3.07 percent.

The town operations budget is broken down into six categories: general government at \$3.51 million, public safety at \$2.35 million, public works at \$3.17 million, community and human services at \$1.45 million, debt service at \$2.10 million and capital at nearly \$560,000.

Schuster explained that health insurance spiked by nearly \$200,000, and minor changes were also made in community services and public safety.

Within the community services portion of the town operations budget, \$5,000 was put in to help fund the Collaborative for Colchester's Children (C3), and Schuster was pleased that the proposal is included in the budget for the first time.

"This really gives the support this organization needs," he said. "The organization has done a tremendous amount of work for our children birth through age 8."

Another minor change in community services is the replacement of a Parks and Recreation Department supervisor position into the

budget. The position has been funded in the last few years by the Parks and Recreation Department's program fund because it had a surplus; however, now that the surplus is gone, Schuster said it was time to place it back into the budget.

Some "unavoidable costs" Schuster mentioned included funding overtime at the police department and paying for 80 percent of two part-time and two full-time employees at the fire department.

Additionally, Schuster noted that positions that have been vacant for the last year were removed from the budget. The positions included a part-time food bank coordinator, a highway maintainer and a part-time delinquent tax collector. Also, a Parks and Recreation administrative assistant position was reduced from full-time to part-time.

Also in his presentation, Schuster highlighted capital items that were left in the budget: a police cruiser, funding the future revaluation, open space, repairing sidewalks at Town Hall, repairing ramps at Fire Company 1, replacing overhaul doors at Fire Company 1 and funding the Rescue 128 heavy rescue vehicle that is used in emergencies.

Ultimately, Schuster explained that the town operations budget has been "fairly flat" in the last decade.

At the end of the meeting, Tarlov thanked residents for coming to the meeting.

"Usually board members and staff far outnumber the citizens so we certainly appreciate you taking the time," Tarlov said to the public.

He added that finance members enjoy hearing what residents have to say.

"Every little bit of input – even a small part of it – changes the budget and changes our thinking," Tarlov said, "so we certainly appreciate all who come to any of our meetings."

## Colchester to Again Raise Donate Life Flag

by Melissa Roberto

As it has the past few years, Colchester will soon raise a flag outside Town Hall in honor of National Donate Life Month, to raise awareness for individuals who have given the gift of life through organ donation and to also honor those who have received a lifesaving transplant or are still waiting on one.

The nationwide display of flags is a part of the Flags Across America campaign that was created in 2009 by Donate Life America, a not-for-profit association made up of national organizations in the United States that educate Americans about organ, eye and tissue donation, and motivate citizens to register as donors.

And when the flag is raised at Town Hall on Monday, April 15, it will bring resident Lorraine Tierney back to Jan. 12, 2003 – the day her 12-year-old daughter Jennifer passed away after sustaining a brain injury, and the day Tierney and Jennifer's father, Timothy Lorette, decided to register their daughter as a donor so her tissues and organs could be donated.

The decision to register Jennifer as a donor didn't take too much thought. Tierney said it was an easy move to make, because it was influenced by Jennifer herself.

Jennifer was known to all that knew her as an active child that enjoyed playing soccer, basketball and softball, Tierney said. She also had a fondness for reading books, especially the Harry Potter series, and going to church. But what her mother viewed as truly inspirational was Jennifer's interest in tissue and organ donation at a young age.

At just 10 years old Jennifer learned about tissue and organ donation during a simple visit to her eye doctor, Dr. Thomas Dempsey in Colchester. Dempsey explained to Jennifer how a liver transplant had saved his life, while also stressing to her the importance of taking care of her organs. Tierney said that was the day her daughter became a proponent of organ and tis-

sue donation.

"She would talk about it all the time," Tierney said of her daughter's request to be an organ donor. "She would hear advertisements over the radio and every time she heard them she would say 'I want to be an organ donor.'"

Though Tierney was aware of her daughter's interest in becoming a donor, she never thought she'd have a say in it. Instead, Tierney said she expected Jennifer would register as a donor when she got her driver's license at 16.

"I remember thinking to myself, 'I'm not going to need to know this, you're not going to die before me,'" Tierney recalled.

But when a sledding accident on Marvin Road in Colchester left Jennifer on life support with a traumatic brain injury, Tierney said she knew what her daughter would have wanted to do.

"It was obvious that she wasn't going to make it and I shared [with the nurses] that she had always wanted to be an organ donor so that's when we started the process," she said.

Jennifer's liver went to a 64-year-old woman in the Boston area who was experiencing end-stage liver disease; her pancreas went to a 46-year-old man in Pennsylvania; her left cornea went to a 64-year-old man in Massachusetts; and her right cornea went to a 31-year-old woman in Maryland.

Though Tierney admitted that the first few years after her daughter's death were difficult, she was "so thankful" knowing that her daughter's former request was made possible.

"It was just such a comfort to know that her death was not in vain... that she was able to go on and help people," said Tierney.

Tierney added that it was important for her to share Jennifer's story with the four individuals that received Jennifer's organs and tissues.

"It was important for me to let them know that it was Jennifer's decision and it was Jennifer that was behind the whole organ donation,"

Tierney added.

Also, the mother said it would have been a more difficult decision for the parents to make had they not been aware that Jennifer was an advocate of organ donation.

The message that Tierney has – and continues – to stress to people is to never rule out the idea of becoming a donor.

In fact, Tierney's sister, and Jennifer's aunt, Janlyn Neri of Colchester, is a living example of Tierney's words of wisdom. After learning through a friend that a man in western Connecticut, Rob Fogelberg, was in need of a kidney, she did not hesitate to become his donor.

"I knew in an instant," she said. "I believe it was Jennifer's spirit that told me to step up to the plate."

Starting in July 2005, Neri had to undergo several tests to determine that her kidney was a good match for Fogelberg, and it wasn't until that October that she received the good news that she was a match.

"I called Rob and I said 'are you ready for a new birthday?'" Neri recalled.

Ironically, the day of Neri's surgery fell on what would have been Jennifer's 15th birthday.

"I think it would have been a great birthday present," Tierney said of her sister's donation.

Since Jennifer's death, Tierney and Neri have both become ambassadors of a volunteer-based coalition for organ and tissue donation called Donate Life Connecticut. They both have also delivered speeches about their involvement with organ donation, and have shared Jennifer's story to crowds over the years. For Tierney, her story always begins with Jennifer's eye appointment in Dempsey's office.

While the town of Colchester will do its part to raise awareness by raising a Donate Life flag in front of Town Hall from April 15-29, Tierney said it's now up to family members to talk to one another about organ donation.

"You never know who you'll inspire," said



**Jennifer Lorette was just 12 years old when she died following a sledding accident in January 2003. Following her death, her liver, pancreas and corneas were donated to those in need – gifts her mother thinks about a lot at this time of year, as April is National Donate Life Month.**

Tierney. "Who knew a 12-year-old was going to help make such a decision?"

According to the Donate Life website, there are currently 116,000 people in the United States that are waiting for a life transplant and each day 18 people die while waiting for one.

In Connecticut, people can become registered donors in between license renewals. Individuals interested in doing so can join the Organ and Tissue Donor Registry online at [donatelifenewengland.org](http://donatelifenewengland.org).



# Meet Hebron's Newest Police Officer

by Geeta Schrayter

Walking around during this year's Maple Festival, residents may have seen a Hebron Police officer who, while friendly enough, wasn't exactly familiar. However, before long that's sure to change, as the officer – Robert Johnson – has just started working in town.

Johnson comes to Hebron from the Manchester Police Department where he served on the force for 15 years, and while he was also born and raised in the same town, Hebron's not completely unknown to him.

"I've always been familiar with Hebron," Johnson said, explaining he's eaten at restaurants in town and has gone fishing in the area. "And then I got to work the Maple Festival and was inundated by really, a lot of nice people in the town."

Town Manager Andy Tierney added onto that, saying there had been positive feedback from people who met him at the festival.

"We had a good response from the people that were at the Maple Fest regarding his friendliness, so we think it's a good move for both Mr. Johnson and the town of Hebron," Tierney said. "We're very happy to have him on board – he came highly recommended."

Johnson added he was looking forward to what his new position would provide from a couple of professional standpoints. First, fewer hours – Hebron Police officers are part-time – would give him the time needed to open his own business.

Johnson explained he was a canine handler with Manchester Police, and now, he's starting his own business working with police canines and dog training with the eventual goal of having his own breeding program to provide "a better-quality dog for the police departments."

"So Hebron was perfect because the police department didn't require as much time," he said.

In addition, a smaller town means more time to focus on individual cases – something that doesn't always happen in a place like Manchester.

"When you handle too many cases, the quality of your police work kind of goes down because you can't spend the time you really need

on each individual case," Johnson explained – and offered up a medical analogy.

"It's kind of like when you go to a big hospital or a primary care physician. You get better care at the primary care physician because they know you a little bit better," he said. "Hebron is going to allow me to know the community a little better."

As far as challenges, Johnson said he'll need to get to know the town better, learn a new radio and code system "and things like that," but he said he has his experience to offer.

"There's going to be a lot of differences, but on the flip side I think my experience will be a benefit," he stated.

Another plus is also likely to be the fact that he loves what he does.

"I fully enjoy being a cop," he said. "That's one of the reasons I applied. I didn't want to lose that."

Johnson said he liked to try and police "with a sense of community" and he could already tell he'd be able to do that in Hebron.

"You can lose yourself in a bigger department," he said, "but it's just the four of us [Johnson and fellow Hebron Police officer Marc Rubera, as well as resident state troopers Kyle Fitzgibbons and Dan Greenwood], so it makes us a little more tight-knit."

Residents who didn't get a dose of Johnson at the Maple Festival can expect to see him at other town functions. In addition, Tierney said Hebron Police officers usually perform special duty at events such as school dances and concerts, and perform patrols when other troopers aren't on duty.

Johnson added residents may see him at some youth games as well, and he'd been talking to RHAM High School Principal Scott Leslie about getting involved with some activities at the school.

"I also want to be visible at the elementary schools and the middle school just because of the state of the world today," he furthered. "It's just something that you've got to do and I don't mind that at all, either."

And so, with the addition of Johnson, Hebron will continue to be in safe – and friendly – police hands.



During last month's Maple Festival, residents had an opportunity to meet Hebron's new police officer: Robert Johnson. Johnson, pictured here with his dog Dibbs, comes to Hebron from the Manchester Police Department and said he looks forward to "policing with a sense of community" and getting to know more residents.

# Hebron Benefit Coming Up for a 'Good, Go-Lucky Person'

by Geeta Schrayter

Hebron resident Tom Clark has made his living putting things together. A stone mason, Tom has built many walls in the area – perhaps none more locally famous than the commemorative stone wall in the center of town created to help mark Hebron's 300th birthday. His walls are structures of strength and resilience built stone by stone.

Now, in the face of a daunting illness, it's other people who are coming together – and putting things together – for Tom, in the hopes of giving him a bit of strength and resilience in return, along with courage and financial aid.

On Sunday, April 14, at the Colchester Fish and Game Club, Tom's friends and family will hold a benefit to help him in his battle with stage four tongue and throat cancer. Tom's cousin, Colchester resident Terrance Clark, said this week Tom didn't have the best insurance since he was self-employed. As a result, his friends decided to step in and help.

"A lot of his friends in Hebron started this and invited me in to raise up the money," he said, calling Tom "a great guy."

"I don't think there's anybody that dislikes him. He's just a good, go-lucky person," Terrance said, adding the two were very close.

"Tom's probably my best friend. We talk two to three times a week about family stuff or just to chit-chat or for business," he said. "We run things by each other all the time."

But when it came to the benefit, Tom's girlfriend Lynn Bjork told the group running the idea by Tom for permission probably wouldn't garner the response they were looking for.

"They wanted permission from him [for the benefit]," Bjork said, "and I said 'he's not going to give it, so if you want permission, I'm giving it to you.'" Bjork added that Tom "does nice things, but he doesn't want things back."

Tom's aware of the benefit now, and Bjork said "he says he's not happy about it, but you know that he is." She added the event will be "a great relief" for him, and, like Terrance,

called Tom her best friend.

"He's the kindest person I ever met," she said. "He's not judgmental, he's very open-minded and hard-working. His integrity is wonderful – of course, I'm partial. We've been together 11 years. But he's my best friend... he's an old soul, he's just a very kind man."

And considering it was more than a dozen friends of his who came together on their own to form a benefit committee and plan the event, she and Terrance aren't the only ones to feel that way.

Deb Horton is one such friend, who called Tom an "outstanding" community member.

"Whenever you see him you just want to smile and hug him," she said. "He's just one of those guys that's forever doing for everybody else."

Horton said when Tom's friends found out he had cancer, they realized, "We need to help him as soon as we can, because he has been such an outstanding community member and friend to us all."

"This is about friends in need," she added. "We just all banded together and realized he needed some help with medical expenses."

The benefit, which will run from 1-5 p.m., will feature food and music. Horton said her husband Walter Norris and Carl Emt, another friend and Hebron resident, will cook the food. The menu will include a Steam Ship beef dish, as well as chicken, pasta, oven-roasted potatoes, salad and dessert. The Steam Ship was donated to the event by Bob Mason from the Fish and Game Club, while the rest of the food has been donated by other friends and local businesses such as Ted's IGA Supermarket, Georgia's Restaurant and Gina & Marie's Restaurant.

There will also be door prizes and raffles, and Terrance noted anyone who's interested in becoming a truck driver could have that opportunity at the event, since "a really big gift" was given for the benefit from Affordable CDL Training School: the training to receive a com-



Tom Clark, right, is shown here with friend Dan Garrison, shortly after the two collaborated on the new stone wall in the center of town in 2008. Also shown is Clark's beloved yellow Lab, Gus. Clark has stage four tongue and throat cancer, and will be the subject of a benefit Sunday, April 14, at the Colchester Fish and Game Club.

bination driving/CDL license, which Terrance valued at \$3,755 and expected to be auctioned off.

"The gifts that we've gotten – the door prizes – were just incredible. And the food that's been given and set up is incredible," he said. "Come help Tom out. See him, visit, have some good food, good door prizes and a raffle."

Bjork added that through this tough situation, she and Tom were remaining positive – and it meant a lot to have the community rally behind them.

"It's tough for me because I don't want to lose him," she said, "but we're positive and I believe in miracles and he has a very upbeat attitude about this. I just think that it's astonishing to me that so many people have rallied and come together and want to do something for him. It's very heartfelt."

Tickets to Tom's benefit cost \$20 and can be purchased at the Colchester Fish and Game Club, Liberty Square Collectibles or by calling Horton at 860-729-2140, Dan Garrison at 860-622-8847, Robin Gerovitz at 860-918-6474.



*From the Editor's Desk*

# Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

The baseball season didn't even start until this past Monday, but late last week, just days before Opening Day, my Mets were dealt a rather staggering blow. Johan Santana – the ace of the staff, with New York shipping Cy Young Award winner R.A. Dickey to Toronto in the off-season – had torn an anterior capsule in his shoulder. Again. And would likely need surgery. Again.

Everybody who followed the Mets knew he was injured. He missed the last month and a half of last season, and an offseason of rest didn't seem to help much. He had difficulty developing shoulder strength all spring training, and quickly the plan changed from him starting on Opening Day to him starting sometime in mid-April to possibly the Mets not having him until the end of May or possibly even June.

But this, folks. This was unexpected. And just very very sad.

Why sad? Santana had the same surgery in September 2010, and it took him over a year and a half to come back from it; he didn't throw a pitch in the majors again until last April. Surgery to repair a torn shoulder capsule is a relatively new thing; it wasn't first performed until 1996. And since that time, it's been performed on only a handful of pitchers – and it's never been done twice. The recovery period after one is grueling enough, but doing it twice?

Santana – being a bulldog gamer who would never back down from a challenge – underwent the surgery this past Tuesday. He's done for the year, certainly, probably most of next year too. But I don't doubt that he's going to try to come back. I hope he makes it back – even though I have no idea where he'll be pitching.

This is the final year of Santana's contract with the Mets (he was traded to the team before the 2008 season, and signed a lengthy extension with them). The team is all about economy these days, so I have to imagine I've seen him don orange and blue for the last time.

And if so, that'll stink. It'll be a lousy way to end his time here. Even the most glass-half-full Mets fan out there would be hard-pressed to declare the Santana acquisition has been a huge success. Injuries cut short his seasons in '09, '10 and '12, and as I mentioned wiped out all of his 2011 season. But when he was healthy, he could be great; even in 2009 and '10, he sported ERAs that hovered around 3.

But more than that, when I look back on Santana's time with the Mets, I'll always remember two games. The first came Sept. 27, 2008. It was the next-to-last game of the regular season. The Mets were in the midst of their second consecutive September collapse, but they were still alive; they entered the game one game out in the wild card race, and two games out in the divisional race. Santana took the ball on just three days' rest – the first time he'd ever done that in a regular-season game – and turned in an absolutely brilliant performance: a complete-game, three-hit shutout.

I was fortunate to be at that game, and it was absolutely brilliant. Santana did as much as he could to get the team into the postseason, and indeed, with the Brewers losing later that day it meant the Mets were tied for the wild card lead.

Alas, the postseason wasn't meant to be that year, as the Mets lost the next day, the Brewers won, and for the second straight year the Mets had missed the playoffs despite leading the division earlier in September. But nobody blamed Santana. Indeed, his gutsy, nine-strikeout, leave-it-all-out-there performance just etched his place in Mets history. A pic-

ture of Santana from that game now hangs outside Citi Field – and for good reason. It's a heck of a memory.

If Santana etched his place in Mets history that cool September day, he put that place in cement, and then covered it in gold, last June 1. That was the day Santana threw a no-hitter against the St. Louis Cardinals. I wrote about that game at length last summer. The Mets – quite famously – had never had a no-hitter in their 50-year history, despite sporting pitching greats like Seaver and Koosman, Gooden and Cone, and Martinez and Glavine over the years. But Santana put an end to all that. "It has happened!" Mets TV announcer Gary Cohen shouted as Santana got Cardinal David Freese to strike out – Santana's eighth K of the night – and end the game.

It was majestic; I was so glad the Mets' first no-hitter happened at home, in front of a super-appreciative Flushing crowd.

Sadly, some have blamed the no-hitter – Santana threw a career-high 134 pitches that day – for the capsule re-tear. I'm no doctor, of course, but I don't really think that's the case. If you look at his games for the rest of June, you'll see Santana continued to pitch pretty fantastically – including eight innings of shutout ball against the Dodgers nearly a month later, on June 30. So I don't think the no-hitter's to blame.

The Mets' general manager has said there's no way to know for sure just *when* the re-tear happened – although he's as doubtful as I am the no-hitter caused it. Still, until it can be definitively ruled out, I suppose there will be some who dwell on it, and that's unfortunate. The no-hitter was a great night, not just for the Mets but for Santana (who had never hurled a no-hitter before), and it'd be a shame if people attempted to cheapen it.

So, at the end of the day, Santana gave us Mets fans two absolutely fantastic memories. Would we have liked to have had more? Of course. I'm sure he would as well. But those were a couple of dizzying highs, and for those reasons, I'll always cheer for No. 57, wherever he ends up.

\* \* \*

The news broke this week that, on March 21, Clearwater, Fla., resident Elsie Thompson died at the age of 113, just weeks before her 114th birthday. Thompson – no relation to me, by the way – had held the "oldest person in the United States" title since January, after South Carolina resident Mamie Rearden passed away at age 114.

And Rearden herself hadn't held the title very long. On Dec. 17, Iowa resident Dina Manfredini died at the age of 115. She wasn't just the oldest person in the U.S., but was believed to be the oldest person on the planet.

Interestingly, Manfredini's death came less than two weeks after the Dec. 4 passing of Besse Cooper of Georgia. Cooper was 116, and had held the "world's oldest person" title since June 2011.

Veteran "Observations & Ruminations" readers – who have an incredible retention of details – may recall I mentioned Cooper in my column last August, when she turned 116. One of the things that caught my eye in reading about her was that she seemed, even as a supercentenarian, like a feisty old bird. Her secret for longevity? "I mind my own business," she told *Guinness World Records*. "And I don't eat junk food."

By the way, in case anyone's curious, the oldest person *ever* was French-born Jeanne Calment, who died in 1997 at the age of 122.

\* \* \*

See you next week.

## East Hampton Police News

3/17: – Kerri Elizabeth Devine, 25, of 43 Main St., was arrested for third-degree larceny, DUI, possession of less than four ounces of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia, East Hampton Police said.

3/19: Frederick Galvin, 50, of 54 Midwood Farm Rd., was issued a summons for allowing operation of a motor vehicle without insurance stemming from an accident that occurred in February of this year, police said.

3/22: Jennifer L. Rankin, 32, of 64 West High St., Apt 2, was arrested for second-degree failure to appear, police said.

3/24: Zachary H. Nicolletta, 18, of 576 Main

St., Portland was arrested for possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana, possession of narcotics and possession of drug paraphernalia. In the same incident, Amanda J. Stone, 18, of 52 East Wharf Rd., Middletown, was issued a ticket for possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia and failure to illuminate headlights, police said.

3/25: Catherine Lynch, 49, who police reported having no certain address for, was arrested for first-degree criminal trespass, police said. In a separate incident, Lynch was arrested March 27, and also charged with first-degree criminal trespass, police said.

## Portland Police News

3/26: Lawrence Unikewicz, of 374 Main St., was charged with DUI, traveling too fast and passing on right, Portland Police said.

3/28: Christopher Eckola, 27, of 14 Braeburn Ln., Middletown, was charged with sixth-degree larceny, police said.

3/29: Nicholas Hetzel, 18, of 4 Jobs Gate No. 1, was charged with simple trespass, police said.

3/29: Christopher Robinson, 18, of 186 Isinglass Hill Rd., was charged with simple trespass, police said.

3/29: Reva Henderson, 26, of 143 Emerald Ave., Willimantic, was charged with sixth-degree larceny, Police said.

## Hebron Police News

3/25: Michael H. Bergeron, 39, of 541 Wall St., was charged with third-degree assault, disorderly conduct and violation of a protective order, State Police said.



# Obituaries

## Portland

### Ronald F. Klick Sr.

Ronald "Ronnie" F. Klick Sr., 76, of Portland, passed away Thursday, March 28, at Portland Care and Rehabilitation. He was the son of the late Frank and Cecile (Dombrowski) Klick.

Born Nov. 23, 1936, in Middletown, he was a longtime resident of Portland and received his education there, graduating from Portland High School in 1955. He worked at Standard-Knapp for many years until his retirement. He was a former member of the Portland Fire Department, Company 1. An avid Boston Red Sox fan, he never missed a game. If he couldn't watch a game on TV, he would listen to it on the radio. Ronnie also loved polka music and was an accomplished drum player, and played in a polka band, The Mellowtones, for a number of years back in the '60s and '70s.

He is survived by his four children, Ronald F. Klick Jr. and his wife Debra of Somersworth, N.H., Karen Moro and her husband Frank of Deerfield, Mass., Steven L. Klick and his wife Cari of Portland and Denise Porto and her husband Jeffrey of Lawrenceville, Ga.; a sister, Jackie Conran, of Southington; eight grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; a niece and nephew.

The family would like to thank the staff of Portland Care and Rehabilitation for their compassionate and loving care of Ronald.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, April 6, at 11 a.m., directly at First Congregational Church, 554 Main St., Portland, with the Rev. Jane Hawken officiating. Burial will be in St. Mary Cemetery, Portland. Relatives and friends may call today, April 5, from 5-7 p.m., at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations in his memory may be made to First Congregational Church, 554 Main St. Portland, CT 06480.

To send an online expression of sympathy, visit [portlandmemorialfh.net](http://portlandmemorialfh.net).

## Portland

### Helen E. Gustafson

Helen E. (Iverson) Gustafson, 94, of Portland, wife of the late Clifford A. Gustafson, passed away peacefully Saturday, March 30, with her loving family by her side. She was the daughter of the late O. Martin and Gunda (Solberg) Iverson.

Born Feb. 24, 1919, she spent her childhood in Floral Park, N.Y., and then moved to Portland in the 1930s and graduated as salutatorian of the Portland High School Class of 1937 and was a member of its National Honor Society. Clifford and Helen were married on May 30, 1941, and raised five children.

She was a member of Zion Lutheran Church in Portland, she taught Sunday School for many years and was on the funeral committee and belonged to the Faith Guild. She belonged to the Hemlock Grange No. 182, and she was a 4H leader for the Howe Sew Club. She enjoyed gardening and rose-maling (Norwegian folk art painting) and going to the Senior Center for stained glass classes and she really enjoyed having coffee with the homemakers group.

She leaves her daughters, Nancy Droit and her husband, Jimmy of Glendale, Ariz., and Elise O'Brien and her husband, David of Portland; a son, Charles M. Gustafson and his wife, Jane of Chester; daughter-in-law, Katharine "Kit" Gustafson of Canterbury; grandchildren, Christina VanAken, David VanAken, Sarah Beth (Droit) Daughtery, Joseph Droit, Tara Gustafson, Eric Gustafson, Kevin O'Brien, Christopher O'Brien, Katherine O'Brien; great-grandchildren, Lars Gustafson and his sister, Emma Caufield and Colin Daughtery; sisters, Mildred Rose of Higganum and Alice Stemmler of Portland and many nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by a daughter and son-in-law, Carol and Peter VanAken, a son, Clifford E. Gustafson and by three brothers, Henry, William and Robert Iverson.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, April 6, at 2 p.m., at Zion Lutheran Church, William Street, Portland, with the Rev. James Reemtsma officiating. Burial will be in the Swedish Cemetery, Portland. Relatives and friends may call Saturday from 12:30-1:30 p.m., at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, prior to the service.

In lieu of flowers, gifts in her memory may be sent to Zion Lutheran Church Organ Fund 183 William St, P.O. Box 202 Portland, CT 06480.

The family wishes to thank all the Staff at Portland Care and Rehab for their compassion, love and support shown to Helen while she was under their care.

## Colchester

### Dr. Wallace H. Harris

Dr. Wallace H. Harris, D.Ed., 77, of Ft. Pierce, Fla., and formerly of Colchester and Waterford, beloved husband of Evelyn (Edson) Harris, passed away Wednesday, March 27, in Vero Beach, Fla. Born June 26, 1935, in Brattleboro, Vt., he was a son of the late Rupert and Virginia (Sanborn) Harris.

A native Vermonter, Wallace attended Lyndon State Teachers' College from 1953 to 1957. During those years, Wally excelled in athletics, receiving varsity letters in soccer, basketball, and baseball. In 1957 he received the Men's Athletic Award, being the first to letter in three sports in three years. In 1998 Wally had the distinct honor of being inducted into the Lyndon State College Athletic Hall of Fame.

In 1959 he was selected as Brattleboro, Vermont's Community Ambassador to Yugoslavia. Returning to the States, he then enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps, and in 1960 won the 18th Rifle Company, UMCR Techniques of Instruction Competition. After his service, Wally began his teaching career in Brattleboro, Vt., and continued his love of sports through coaching. An avid skier, he was also a member of the Brattleboro Ski Patrol from 1959-1962.

In 1963, Wally and his young family journeyed south to Waterford. There he began a new chapter in his education career, teaching in Groton, Ledyard and Waterford from 1963-72. In 1969, he completed his Master in Science degree from Eastern Connecticut State College. This led to a vice-principalship at Halls Hill K-5 School in Colchester from 1972-76. His next career achievement in Colchester was principal at Central Middle School/William J. Johnston School from 1976-1992. While principal, Wally received his doctorate degree in educational management at the University of Bridgeport in 1988.

During his principalship, he continued to develop professionally through his membership of Elementary and Middle School Principals Association of CT (EMSPAC), and as a delegate to the State Leaders Conference (NAESP). In addition, he was a member and secretary (1988-1992) of the Delegate Assembly for Project Oceanology.

Throughout his years as an educator, he promoted youth sports. He shared his love of skiing through creating and directing the "Learn to Ski" Club for the Colchester middle school students. In 1970-72, he organized K-6 the Small Fry Wrestling Program in Waterford, and later was co-founder and first president of Waterford Soccer Club.

After retiring, Wallace and Evelyn moved to sunny Fort Pierce, Fla. However, Wally continued to use his skills as an educator as he returned to his passion for science and learning. He volunteered at the Harbor Branch Oceanology Center and taught science classes at Indian River State College at Fort Pierce, Fla. His zest for life and sense of adventure led Wally and Evelyn to running a travel agency called "Oh, the Places We Go." Living life to its fullest, he could easily be found improving his golf swing with Evelyn and his golf buddies, walking along the beach, or reading his favorite genre, historical fiction.

Over his last 10 years, he discovered his talent as an artist. It is here that Wally's creative spirit found wings. He worked at his craft with discipline and found joy in drawing, especially the beautiful birds of Florida and lighthouses. His artwork has been displayed on yearly Christmas cards, T-shirts, hats and mugs - a wonderful reminder to his friends and family of his creativity and love of nature. However, it was the time spent with his family and especially his eight grandchildren that brought the greatest joy to his life.

In addition to his loving wife of nearly 53 years, he leaves three children and their spouses, Deborah and Kenneth Goodale of Coventry, CT, Timothy and Karen Harris of Byfield, Mass., and Pamela and Donald Sullivan of Colchester; eight grandchildren, Harrison, Samantha, Timothy, Hannah, Ryan, Molly, Holly and Haleigh; two siblings, Dorothy Jarvis of Wilmington, Vt., and Earle Harris of Leesburg, Fla.; and numerous extended family members and friends.

He was predeceased by a brother, Edward, as well as his parents.

The family will receive guests starting at 10 a.m. Saturday, April 6, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, before a chapel service at 11 a.m. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made out to the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, 450 Brookline Ave., Boston, MA 02215.



## Portland

### Robert P. Helming

Robert Paul Helming, of Portland, the beloved husband of Norma (Morris) Helming, died Wednesday, April 3, after a short illness. Born Jan. 18, 1933, in Bristol, Robert was the son of Karl W. and Clara (Wunsch) Helming.

Bob graduated from Bristol High School and served two years in the United States Army. He worked in the printing industry all his life and retired from Waverly Printing in Portland in 1999. He was a member of Zion Lutheran Church in Portland and the Belltown Antique Car Club in East Hampton and also looked forward to attending the Hershey Car Show each fall. Bob was a hard worker and a good husband and father.

Besides his wife of nearly 54 years, he is survived by a daughter, Barbara Helming of East Berlin; a son, Karl of Portland; two brothers, Richard and his wife, Audrey and Ronald, both of Bristol; two sisters, Ruth Manke and her husband, Paul of Newington and Rita Potts and her husband, Jim of Orlando, Fla.; and numerous nieces and nephews.

At Bob's request there will be no services. Donations may be made in his memory to Belltown Antique Car Club, P.O. Box 211 East Hampton, CT 06424 or the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Road, Newington, CT 06111.

Doolittle Funeral Home, 14 Old Church St., Middletown, is handling the arrangements.

Messages of condolence may be sent to the family at [doolittlefuneralservice.com](http://doolittlefuneralservice.com).

## Andover

### Harold J. Fox

Harold J. "Skip" Fox, 64, of Andover, formerly of Manchester, beloved husband of 41 years to Carolyn J. (Alfano) Fox, passed away Wednesday, March 27, after a brief illness. Skip was born March 4, 1949, in Syracuse, N.Y., son of the late Harold W. and Florence (Hart) Fox, and he had been a resident of Andover for over 31 years.

He was a veteran of the Vietnam War serving in the US Navy aboard the U.S.S. Wright. Prior to his retirement in 2011, he was employed as a heavy equipment operator for J.C. Penney Logistics in Manchester for over 23 years. In his younger years he was an avid hunter and more recently he enjoyed watching and living NASCAR racing.

In addition to his wife Carolyn, Skip leaves his two sons and three grandchildren; Timothy P. Fox of Manchester and his daughter, Patricia Ann Fox, Todd J. Fox and his fiancée, Beatrix Szanto of Manchester and their children, Evita Szanto and Xavier Rios and his second family at Witch Meadow Campground.

In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by his brother, Stephen Fox.

Memorial calling hours will be held today, April 5, from 6-8 p.m., at Watkins Funeral Home, 142 East Center St., Manchester. Burial will be private.

Memorial contributions may be made to the American Cancer Society, 825 Brook St., I-91 Teach Center, Rocky Hill, CT 06067-3045.

To leave an online condolence, visit [holmes-watkinsfuneralhomes.com](http://holmes-watkinsfuneralhomes.com).

## Colchester

### John M. deRezendes

John M. deRezendes, 102, of Colchester and West Hartford, passed away Tuesday, March 26. Born in West Hartford June 24, 1910, he was the loving son of the late Manual and Marianna (Melo) deRezendes.

He leaves behind a sister, Helena E. Chaves of Glastonbury. He was predeceased by his sister, Mary Bollea; his brother, Joseph deRezendes; and his friend and companion, Alice Hill. He also leaves behind many cousins, nephews, nieces and friends that cherished the time they spent with him.

John maintained connections with the family across the entire United States and Canada as well as with relatives in the Azores Islands. John was a World War II veteran having served his country as a medic in the U. S. Army 82nd Airborne Division. He was in the Battle of the Bulge and several times during the war he crossed paths with his brother Joe, who also served for his country in the Army. John was an avid reader, reading the newspaper from front to back daily. John did not look his age and retained his mental faculties his entire life. He lived a good long life and will be greatly missed by everyone who knew him.

The funeral service was held Monday, April 1, at the Sheehan Hilborn Breen Funeral Home, 1084 New Britain Ave., West Hartford. Burial was in Mt. St. Benedict Cemetery, Bloomfield. Visitation was Monday morning, prior to the funeral service, at the funeral home.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made to the Colchester Senior Center, 95 Norwich Avenue, Colchester, CT 06415 or to a charity of the donor's choice.

Online condolences may be made at [sheehan-hilbornbreen.com](http://sheehan-hilbornbreen.com).

## Colchester

### Thomas A. Brown

Thomas A. Brown, 38, of East Hartford and formerly of Colchester, passed away unexpectedly Saturday, March 30. Born in Hartford Jan. 25, 1975, he had resided in East Hartford and Colchester for most of his life.

Tom was a graduate of Bacon Academy in Colchester, Class of 1993 and was employed for several years by CDL Liquor Distributors as a Sales Representative. Tom was actively involved with the Colchester Cougars Youth Football Association, where he was a former head coach. He also enjoyed spending time with his sons, especially fishing and drawing with them and was an avid fan of the Boston Red Sox and Green Bay Packers.

Tom was predeceased by his loving maternal grandmother, Frances (Cosgrove) Cwikla, who helped raise Tom with his mother when they all lived together in East Hartford. He was also predeceased by his maternal grandfather, Henry Cwikla.

Tom is survived by his three sons, Matthew T. Brown, Collin P. Brown, and Conor N. Brown, all of Colchester; his devoted mother, Judy N. (Cwikla) Brown of East Hartford, with whom he made his home; his father, Thomas F. Brown of Berlin; his three sons' mother, Nicole (Zagaski) Brown of Colchester; his paternal grandmother, Dorothy (Lanagan) Brown of South Windsor; a special aunt and uncle, Karen and Christopher Zern of Wethersfield; an aunt, Kathy Fornwalt and her husband, Don, of Windsor Locks; numerous cousins, friends, and players he coached.

Funeral services were held Thursday, April 4, at the D'ESOPO-East Hartford Memorial Chapel, 30 Carter St., East Hartford. Private burial will be held at the convenience of the family. Relatives and friends called at the funeral home chapel Thursday, before the services.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in Tom's name may be made to the Colchester Cougars Youth Football, P.O. Box 311, Colchester, CT 06415.

For online expressions of sympathy to the family, visit [desopo.com](http://desopo.com).

## Colchester

### Gertrude G. Lenk

Gertrude G. Lenk of Colchester, wife of the late Albert Lenk, died peacefully Tuesday, March 26. Gertrude was born Dec. 21, 1920, in Hartford, the daughter of the late Ernest and Albertine Geske.

She was married to the late Charles Aubrey, who died while serving in World War II, then later married Albert Lenk and they were married for over 50 years until his passing. They lived in West Hartford, with many happy summers spent at the family cottage in Old Saybrook. Later, they moved to Colchester and spent winters there while continuing to enjoy Old Saybrook in the summer.

Gertrude is survived by her daughter, Christine (Edgar) Orde of Wethersfield, and two sons, Gary Lenk of West Hartford, and Peter (Waneta) Lenk of Colchester with whom she made her home the last few years. She was predeceased by a daughter, Susan Davis, of Batesburg, S.C.; a daughter-in-law, Ann Lenk of West Hartford; and son-in-law, James Davis of Batesburg, S.C. Gertrude also had seven grandchildren, Jennifer Lenk (Michael) Holdsworth, Michael Lenk, Thomas (Amanda) Lenk, Sarah Orde, Justin Orde, Bryn Davis, Taylor Davis and two great-grandsons, Mason Lenk and Jackson Lenk, whom she loved very much.

Gertrude worked at the University of Hartford as an executive secretary for many years and was also active in the Lutheran church in various locations, serving as a Sunday School teacher and member of the altar guild and Martha's Circle.

The family would like to give special thanks to her caregiver, Lida and to the staff at VITAS, especially Karen, Donisha, Kelly and Cheryl for making Mom's last years as pleasant as possible.

There will be a memorial service at Taylor & Modeen Funeral Home, 136 South Main St., West Hartford, today, April 5, at 11 a.m. Interment will be at a later date as determined by the family. Calling hours were Thursday, April 4, at the funeral home.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Connecticut Humane Society would be appreciated.

For directions and online condolences, visit [taylorandmodeen.com](http://taylorandmodeen.com).



## East Hampton

### Bradley Gene Ucci

Bradley Gene Ucci, 32, of West Hartford, died Wednesday, March 27. Born in New Britain, the son of Dennis Butler and Jacqueline (Goltra) Ucci and adoptive father John Ucci, he was raised in East Hampton, moving to West Hartford eight years ago.

Brad graduated from Branford Hall with a degree in information technology and recently began his own computer company, B Rad's PC Services.

Besides his parents, he is survived by his fiancée, Stephanie Lugo; his stepdaughter Mikayla Barton; two sons, Dominic Lance, Nicholas Bradley; his brother and sister, Jason Ucci, Angeline Ucci; a nephew and niece, Jason Ucci Jr., Haley Ucci, and many aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

The funeral was Thursday, April 4, at the Molloy Funeral Home, 906 Farmington Ave., West Hartford. Burial followed in Fairview Cemetery, West Hartford. Calling hours were Wednesday, April 3, at the funeral home.

Online expressions of sympathy may be made at [molloyfuneralhome.com](http://molloyfuneralhome.com).

## Hebron

### Helen Benvenuti

Helen Lititia Caswell Benvenuti of Hebron died Tuesday, April 2, at Windham Hospital. She was born Feb. 22, 1923, in Mystic, the daughter of Frank Caswell and Mary Ernestine Lewis.

Helen married Silvio Benvenuti on Aug. 23, 1941, and was his devoted wife for 63 years (until his death in 2004). She was a homemaker with a love for Italian cooking, needle work, gardening and square-dancing. She loved family gatherings and spending time with her many grandchildren.

She is survived by her seven children, Sylvia (Maguire), Silvio, Marsha (Conley), Alberta, James, Jeffrey and Peter; 17 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren; and five great-great-grandchildren.

A funeral service will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday, April 6, at the Fulton-Theroux Funeral Home, 181 Ocean Ave., New London. Entombment will follow in St. Mary's Cemetery, New London. A calling hour will be held on Saturday for one hour prior to the service at the funeral home.

Visit [fultontherouxnewlondon.com](http://fultontherouxnewlondon.com) for tributes, directions and more service information.

## Portland

### Harry Salvatore Amenta

Harry Salvatore Amenta, husband of 67 years to the love of his life, the late Mary Lisi Amenta, died with his family by his side Wednesday, March 27, after a brief illness.

He was also predeceased by a daughter, Mary Rose Amenta.

Harry was born May 18, 1920 to the late Peter and Mary Amenta. He was born in Cromwell where he lived until moving to Middletown with his wife where they raised their family for 20 years before moving back to Cromwell in 1977. He and his wife retired to Rook Retirement Community in Cromwell in 2003 where he resided until present. Harry worked at Pierson Green House in Cromwell as well as the Stevens Company before taking a job with Pratt and Whitney, where he retired after 35 years in 1983.

He was a volunteer firefighter for the Cromwell Fire Department. He was an active member in the Knights of Columbus Fourth Degree, the Italian American Club, the Elks Club and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He was a veteran of the U.S. Army and served during WW II. He was an avid fan of the Yankees, UConn girls' basketball, and the New York Giants.

He is survived by a daughter, June Amenta of Wallingford and Mary Rose and her husband Robert Barone of Middlefield; three granddaughters who he adored, Melissa Barone-Prince and her husband Joseph Prince, Krista Barone, and Erika Barone. He is also survived by a sister, Angela Amenta and predeceased by his brothers, Sebastian, Anthony, and Peter Amenta. He will be missed by many good friends and neighbors at Rook Retirement Community.

His family would like to thank all the Nurses, Physical therapists, and Dr. Raider at the Portland Care and Rehabilitation for all their wonderful care and compassion.

Funeral services were held Thursday, April 4, from the D'Angelo Funeral Home, 22 South Main St., Middletown followed by a Mass of Christian Burial that day at St. John's Church in Cromwell. Calling hours were Wednesday, April 3, at the D'Angelo Funeral Home.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to St. John Church, West Street in Cromwell.

## East Hampton

### Stanley G. Warzecha Jr.

Stanley G. Warzecha Jr., 86, of East Hampton, husband of Barbara Maloney Warzecha, died Tuesday, April 2, at Middlesex Hospital. He was born March 29, 1927, in Middletown, the son of Stanley and Rosalie Sokoloski Warzecha, and was a lifelong resident of East Hampton.

He was a U.S. Navy veteran of World War II and the Korean conflict. He was a member of St. Patrick Church, East Hampton and a past member of the Knights of Columbus and the American Legion.

Prior to his retirement in 1991, he was an automobile salesman for various auto dealerships. He loved his family and enjoyed traveling, golf, and dining out.

Besides his wife, he is survived by four children: Barbara (Thomas) Puffer of Guilford, Kenneth (Kristen) Warzecha of Colchester, Stanley Warzecha III of East Hampton, and Sylvia (William) DeMore of Middle Haddam; two sisters, Barbara Clark of Colchester and Cheryl Warzecha of New Hartford; six grandchildren, Jeffrey (Kimberly) Warzecha, William, Michael, and Nicholas DeMore, Elizabeth and Jennifer Warzecha; and a great-grandson, Jaxson Warzecha.

He was predeceased by a brother, Eugene T. Warzecha.

A funeral liturgy will be celebrated Monday, April 8, at 10 a.m., at St. Patrick Church, East Hampton. Burial will follow at the State Veterans' Cemetery, Middletown. Friends may call at the Spencer Funeral Home 112 Main St. East Hampton on Sunday, April 7, from 4-6 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Connecticut Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure, 74 Batterson Park Road, Farmington, CT 06032 ([komenct.org](http://komenct.org)) or the American Cancer Society, P.O. Box 22718, Oklahoma City, OK 73123-1718 ([cancer.org](http://cancer.org)).

The Spencer Funeral Home has care of arrangements. To leave online condolences, visit [spencerfuneralhomeinc.com](http://spencerfuneralhomeinc.com).



## Glastonbury



### Marion Evelyn Swiconek

Marion Evelyn (Fill) Swiconek, 96, of Glastonbury, entered heaven peacefully March 16, at home. She was born Oct. 2, 1916, in Hadley, Mass.

She was predeceased by her husband, Felix and her five siblings Edward, Veronica, Victoria, Helen and Fred.

She was sustained by her faith throughout her life as a devout Catholic and was a proud member of St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church in Glastonbury.

From a farming family, she spent most of her working life as a Howard Johnson's waitress in East Hartford where she was legendary to both her co-workers and patrons. In retirement, she traveled the world visiting Germany, Australia, and Paris, France where she enjoyed her café au lait. Two of her favorite travel memories were the helicopter ride into the Grand Canyon and the glass-bottom boat at the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.

She was an avid UConn women's basketball fan; she loved music and dancing. Marion and her husband, Felix, won many dance contests together. Growing up as a farmer, she felt especially at home in her beloved garden. She really enjoyed cooking for her family, especially her famous golumpki.

The most important thing in her life was her family. She raised seven children and was an extraordinarily loving mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, aunt and friend. She spent many wonderful hours with her grandchildren at Disney World and Cape Cod.

She never gave up on anything she believed in, especially family. For every sacrifice she made, for every heartache she soothed, for every dream she stood behind, we loved our Grannie Annie/Momsie very much. She was a beautiful, giving person; someone who worked so hard to care for the ones she loves. She was tough as a marine; stubborn as a mule; and loving as a saint. We will love her and cherish her memory forever.

She is survived by her seven children: Marion, Charles, Shirley, Barbara, Peg, Fill and Gin; and her grandchildren: Sean, Frank, Jr., Tina, Jason, Charlene, Gregory and Jessica, and one great-grandchild: Dylan.

The family would like to extend heartfelt thanks to her three caregivers, Roxanne Gill, Sharon Miller-Vazquez and Trudi-Gay Wisdom for their loving care. We also wish to thank VNA and the VNA Hospice staff for their compassion and guidance, especially Krista Kardys, Eve Organek and Anne Miceli for their support and comfort.

A viewing will be held at Glastonbury Funeral Home, 450 New London Tpke., Glastonbury, today, April 5, from 5-8 p.m. A funeral Mass of Christian Burial will be held Saturday, April 6, at 10 a.m., at St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church, 2577 Main St., Glastonbury. Burial will follow in Green Cemetery, Hubbard Street, Glastonbury.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to: St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, [stjude.org](http://stjude.org), or VNA Hospice of Greater Hartford, [vnahealthcare.org](http://vnahealthcare.org).

To leave an online condolence, visit [glastonburyfuneral.com](http://glastonburyfuneral.com).