

RIVEREAST News Bulletin

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All-State Athletes... Portland High School senior Jonathan Dolan, junior Brooke Townsend and freshman Shannon Dolan (pictured from left) were all named 2014 All-State cross country athletes for their performance this season. This is Jonathan's second year as an All-State cross country athlete. See related story on page 25.

Podium Players Perform 'Pageant' Play

by John Tyczkowski

Despite a last-minute change in the proposed fall play, and a subsequent change in play dates, East Hampton's Podium Players are on track for a successful holiday show season.

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever opened on the East Hampton Middle School stage the weekend of Nov. 21 and 22. After having last weekend off for Thanksgiving, the show will continue this weekend, Dec. 6 and 7.

"Our opening weekend was well-received," Valerie Bozzi, the production's director and member of the Podium Players' board, said. "We have good audiences; they loved it and they thought it was funny."

The Players initially were looking into *Footloose* for their fall production, but that changed to *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* after some issues with staging.

"We couldn't get the casting that we'd need in the time that we had, so we decided to adjust our development to do something with young people later in the year," Bozzi said. "We were having trouble putting all the right people together. It will be done – just not this year."

Bozzi said she decided to select the new play based upon the success it enjoyed when it was last performed 14 years ago.

"It had been one of our more popular productions, we had lots and lots of positive feedback and lots of people came," Bozzi said. "So why not do it again?"

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever is based

upon the award-winning 1971 young adult novel by Barbara Robinson. It details the headaches and hilarity that result when a couple, casting for a church Christmas pageant, is forced to turn to the Herdman kids – the town troublemakers – for their acting needs.

Riley Harrington, who plays Gladys Herdman, gave a simple description of the play for prospective goers.

"Bullies really learn the true meaning of Christmas," she said. "People can change."

At the same time, Bozzi said that while the play teaches a lesson, it doesn't "hit you over the head with it."

"It's about making changes based upon something that impacts you in a major way," she said. "It's got the general flow of a lot of Christmas plays like *A Christmas Carol*, and I think it's very relatable."

Several Players characterized the production as "a play with music," as opposed to a traditional musical or play.

"I think the definition of musical is that at random moments, people will break out into song and dance," Julien Minnick, who plays Charlie Bradley, said. "But in this play, we just sing songs like you would in a regular Christmas pageant."

Bozzi said that the production features a play within a play, but left it at that – not wanting to spoil too much for prospective audiences.

See Podium Players Page 2

Bacon Academy Remembers Beloved 'Chef Kaik'

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Donna Kaik, also known as "Chef Kaik," was a woman known for her creativity in the kitchen and her passion for her students.

Kaik, 63, of Colchester, passed away Nov. 22 after an illness while in Rochester, New York, and the Bacon Academy family will always remember her.

"Chef Kaik became part of the Bacon Academy family and created a culinary program with extremely high standards," Superintendent of Schools Jeff Mathieu – a former principal at Bacon – said of Kaik's Academy Café program. "She was such a big part of the Bacon tradition, that soon after coming to the Academy, she bought a house in Colchester so she could be part of the larger community. She will be truly missed."

Kaik began Academy Café, a restaurant operating out of Bacon Academy, in 2008. The first year of the café, only seven students were in the class. That number was up to 24 students by 2011. The café combined students in Kaik's Bake Shop and Food Services classes to prepare meals for school staff along with the pub-

lic. Anyone could register for that week's meal and come to Bacon and either sit down and eat or take the food out.

"Chef Kaik taught us the skills needed to be successful in the culinary field," Kylie Dorothy, a former student of Kaik's, said. "But she taught us much more. She never accepted anything but our best. Some kids thought she was too tough but she wasn't; she just wanted us to be our best in whatever we chose to do. She told us to work hard and be proud of our work."

Kaik made Academy Café a licensed restaurant, and it also became recognized by the Culinary Institute of America, giving students the experience and hours they would need to apply to the culinary school if they attended the class for six months.

Originally a chef at the Milford Yacht Club



"Chef Kaik was an amazing woman," Killian Maloney, a former student of Kaik's, said. "She truly represented the phrase 'Do what you love and you'll love what you do.'"

and the Mercy Center at Madison among other places, Kaik had decided it was time to do something different and attended the University of Branford for her master's degree in education.

Kaik told the *Rivereast* in 2011, "I got too old to be in the kitchen."

"Her creativity in the kitchen and passion to see her students go on to a career and love for food is second to none," Mathieu said.

Kaik had retired from Bacon Academy last year; however, Academy Café continues to live on at the school under the Family and Consumer Science department.

Maloney said he remembers going into Kaik's classroom feeling very welcomed.

"I had her as my Bake Shop teacher and she told me if I ever wanted to help her out, she would be glad to have me," Maloney said. "So that year I became her chef's assistant. She taught with such passion that you could become passionate about it yourself."

Maloney said Kaik loved baking and "molding the future bakers and cooks."

"I don't have a doubt in my mind that she will always be in my heart as one of the greatest role models I could ever ask for," Maloney said. "If I could tell her one more thing, I would tell her that she has truly showed me that I can be passionate about what I will do in the future and that she was an amazing teacher and mentor."

Kaik left behind two children and their spouses, Beverly and Craig Mott and William and Erin Kaik Jr., four grandchildren; a brother, Robert Hawtin; and numerous extended family members and friends.

Services for Kaik will be announced in the spring, and will be observed at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home on Old Hartford Road.



Scott Minnick, Julien Minnick, Bailee Palen and Margie Wilson (pictured from left) perform a scene during *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever's* opening weekend. The Podium Players production debuted Nov. 21, and will wrap tonight and tomorrow.

Podium Players cont. from Front Page

However, she did say that the music features at a “touching moment.” She also said because the music is songs that many already know, actors were able to focus on their characters’ feelings rather than having to learn music.

The Players also said they all enjoyed the intergenerational aspect of community theatre.

For example, East Hampton Board of Education member Scott Minnick is Julien Minnick’s father, and the two also play father and son in the play.

“If my kids couldn’t be in it, I couldn’t be in it,” Scott said simply. His daughter Charlotte is also performing in the play.

Fellow resident Roy Gauthier, who plays a fireman and who is the Players’ treasurer, said he enjoys community theatre of the community aspect.

“Many times you don’t know most of the people in the room,” he said. “But you work together building sets and acting, and the whole process builds community over a two-to-three month window. It’s very rewarding.”

“You have adults and kids and they all work together. And there’s no rivalry between the younger kids and the older kids; everyone works together,” he said.

Cindy Harrington, assistant producer and stage manager, agreed.

“It really is a true community effort,” she said. “Everyone has something important to contribute.”

Cast members said reception to their opening weekend was overwhelmingly positive from the town.

Pat Gauthier, who plays Mrs. Armstrong, said she received a positive review of the play just walking down the street.

“I saw someone who attended and I stopped to say ‘hello,’” Gauthier said. “She told me she enjoyed the play thoroughly and that the kids were fantastic!”

Bozzi said the play has “a lot” to keep audiences satisfied.

“It’s got antics, it’s got drama, it’s funny – it’s really quite packed with a lot of things for an hour-and-fifteen-minute show,” she said. “It’s got something for everybody.”

Along those lines, many of the Players made reference to “the fire scene,” naming it as their favorite part of the play – but were careful not to give away any details.

“You’ll just have to come and see us!” Riley said.

Harrington and Bozzi also said they were grateful to the East Hampton Public Library for being “so generous” toward the Podium Players.

“We’re a community theatre; we don’t really have a permanent home,” Harrington said. “The library is where we know we can go to rehearse.”

“They’re just so good to us here,” Bozzi said. “They really help us do what we do.”

The Podium Players also hold their monthly meetings in the library’s Community Room on the second Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. For more information, those interested can visit podiumplayers.org.

* * *

The final weekend of the production will take place Friday, Dec. 5, and Saturday, Dec. 6, at 7 p.m. both nights, at East Hampton Middle School.

Tickets are \$8 for adults, \$6 for students and seniors and \$3 for children under 5.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

A good friend of mine works in retail down in New York, and earlier this week, he wished a customer, “Happy Holidays.” Sounds harmless enough, right?

Wrong.

The woman to whom he said it bit his head off: “It’s ‘Merry Christmas.’ We can still say ‘Christmas’ in this country, right?” she replied, followed by some choice words about President Obama.

It wasn’t even December yet, and the brush-back against the so-called “war on Christmas” had apparently already begun in earnest.

Every year I wonder: what are people getting so upset about.

If you’re Christian and somebody says “Happy Holidays” to you, don’t take it as an attack. There are other holidays in December besides Christmas; should somebody just make an assumption from looking at you or speaking to you that you’re Christian? Couldn’t you just as easily be Jewish? And besides, last time I checked, Christmas is indeed a holiday. So if somebody wishes you “Happy Holidays” aren’t they, by extension, including “Merry Christmas” in there?

In other words, chill out.

And if you’re not a Christian and somebody wishes you “Merry Christmas” – deal with it. Nobody’s trying to shove their religion down your throat. (At least they shouldn’t be, anyway.) After all, this season is still the Christmas season. I’ve argued before that the “commercialization” of Christmas is not as against the Christian meaning of the holiday as it’s made out to be, and I still believe this to be true. But at the same time, there are a lot of symbolic elements of Christmas that have little to do with the birth of Christ. There was no Christmas tree, no egg nog, no Bing Crosby records by the fireplace in Biblical times.

So if somebody’s wishing you “Merry Christmas,” maybe they’re doing so because, well, it’s Christmastime. There’s no agenda to try to decode.

So the next time somebody wishes you “Happy Holidays” or “Merry Christmas,” accept it in the spirit in which it’s given. Somebody is wishing you well. It’s that simple. People are being kind.

As my friend, the one who was verbally attacked for daring to wish “Happy Holidays,” said to me later on, “I don’t care what people call it; just spread peace and love and, at least for one day, forget how horrible the world is and can be, and be sure everyone you love knows you love them. And if someone wishes you a happy, non-denominational ‘Day of Love and Forgetting Awful Things,’ and you get upset because it’s lacking your title, well...I don’t know. Work on yourself.”

* * *

As it does every year, PNC Wealth Management has released its Christmas Price Index – detailing just how much it would set you back if you wanted to surprise your significant other with all of the gifts mentioned in the classic song, “The Twelve Days of Christmas.”

A set of gifts in each verse of the song would set you back \$27,673 in stores – steep, yes, but an increase of less than \$300 from last year. If you want to go even crazier, and buy all the items each time they’re mentioned in the song – 364 times in all – get ready to fork over \$116,273.

PNC’s sources for the prices include retailers, the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia-based PHILADANCO (as you may have guessed, a dance company in Philadelphia) and the Pennsylvania Ballet Company.

Here’s the item-by-item breakdown, in case you’re interested:

- Partridge: \$20.
- Pear tree: \$188.
- Two turtle doves: \$125.
- Three French hens: \$181.
- Four calling birds (canaries): \$600.
- Five gold rings: \$750.
- Six geese a-laying: \$360.
- Seven swans a-swimming: \$7,000.
- Eight maids a-milking: \$58.
- Nine ladies dancing (per performance): \$7,553.
- 10 lords a-leaping (per performance): \$5,348.
- 11 pipers piping (per performance): \$2,635.
- 12 drummers drumming (per performance): \$2,855.

* * *

See you next week.

KX Consolidation Moving Right Along

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

The consolidation of KX Communications and the Montville dispatch center is moving forward, with five of KX's towns signing a new five-year contract to stay in the revamped dispatch operations facility.

Currently, the Colchester Emergency Communications LLC, or KX, is stationed in a small room at the Troop K headquarters on Old Hartford Road. KX was founded in 1976 and is governed by a Board of Directors. The dispatch center takes care of eight towns, Colchester, Marlborough, East Hampton, Haddam Neck, Bozrah, East Haddam, Lebanon and Salem along with dispatch services for Middlesex Memorial Hospital paramedics within the northern portion of Middlesex County and its northern service area.

KX's services include dispatching fire and ambulances. KX currently also dispatches East Hampton police.

Hebron had been a KX member until June 2012 when it elected to transfer its services to Tolland County Emergency Communications. When Hebron left, KX lost \$100,000 a year from Hebron and the state. The cost had to be absorbed by the remaining towns.

So, faced with less funding as well as a need for capital improvements – including a new CAD system and other equipment updates, which could cost \$400,000 or more – to better serve the KX community, a committee was formed to find a new regional dispatch center to merge with or a municipality's dispatch center. The committee eventually narrowed down the choice to Montville, a municipality with a new state-of-the-art public safety and dispatch

facility.

"In the legal point of view, Montville is joining KX," project manager Doug Knowlton of Marlborough has said. "In the facilities point of view, we're moving operations to Montville."

This is because, Knowlton explained, legally a regional center with a Board of Directors can only merge with another regional center with a board. Centers under municipalities do not have a board and are under the authority of the town. The current KX Board of Directors has representatives from each town that it serves.

Knowlton has said he expects the move to be complete by July 2015 – and so far, five of the eight towns have decided to proceed with the consolidation and include Colchester, East Hampton, Marlborough, Salem and Bozrah. Knowlton reported that Lebanon chose to leave the group and switch to Willimantic for their dispatch services.

"All of the KX towns signed a [memorandum of agreement] previously that contains a penalty if the consolidation is successful and if the town terminates with KX prior to Jan. 15, 2016," Knowlton explained.

The current contract the KX towns have runs through June 30, 2016. However, once a town signs a five-year contract accompanying the Montville move, that supersedes the current contract, Knowlton said.

Therefore under contract agreements, a town like Lebanon, who chose to leave the group, will have to pay a penalty of \$50,050 for breaking the contract early.

"Lebanon has sent KX a letter notifying us of their intention to terminate and to switch to

Willimantic for their dispatch services," Knowlton said. "KX has replied, acknowledging their notice and reminding them of the penalty payment."

Knowlton went on to say that East Haddam is currently still comparing KX-Montville with Valley Shore; however, the East Haddam Emergency Committee, at a recent tour of the Montville facility, "made the comment that they do not intend to terminate from KX and incur the penalty."

Knowlton said the East Haddam committee said the town would continue until its current contract expiring June 30, 2016 – although the committee stressed it may still change its mind.

The KX Board of Directors has yet to hear from Haddam regarding the small section of Haddam Neck that uses KX services.

Knowlton said a draft of the new contract was sent to Middlesex Hospital for its consideration. The hospital's contract expires June 30, 2015, since Middlesex contracts for two years at a time.

"Since they are not a municipality, they do not have an obligation to provide for a 911 answering point and dispatch services," Knowlton said. "Rather, they contract just for their paramedic dispatch and communication services."

Currently Middlesex is split between Valley Shore and KX with KX handling the northern service area and Valley Shore handling the southern service area.

For the consolidation, Montville has been approved to receive a \$250,000 State Transi-

tion Grant. The physical facilities will move to Montville which is NFPA 1221 compliant, has the needed space and is state-of-the-art. KX's full-time employees will continue on; nobody is getting laid off. Also as part of the consolidation, the CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) data will transfer to Montville's TriTech system. The TriTech system is more up to date and easier than the old system, Knowlton said, and it also allows for more immediate access to the data.

Knowlton and the KX Board of Directors said some of the other benefits of the consolidation include financial stability with future budgets that are more predictable; the elimination of capital needs for improvements at the current KX location; providing a facility that could handle more towns; and strengthening police department dispatch operations for East Hampton and Montville.

To continue with the transition, the CEC Board of Directors is waiting for the Attorney General George Jepson to sign off on the \$250,000 Transition Grant.

"It will allow us to move forward with the necessary equipment and installation purchases to link the tower sites and radios together between Montville's towers and KX's towers," Knowlton explained. "It has been approved, but still needs his signature."

At the next KX Board of Directors meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 16, the board will vote on the official consolidation. The meeting will be at 7:30 p.m. at the Colchester Fire Department.

EHHS Boys' Soccer Team Celebrates Championship

by John Tyczkowski

When the East Hampton High School boys' soccer season began, Coach Jermaine Keller asked his team to look at the championship banners on display in the gym – and note that there wasn't one for boys' soccer yet.

"We wanted to change that. We set a goal that we wanted to bring home a banner," Keller said this week. "And that's what we did."

On Nov. 15, the Bellingers captured a co-championship with Somers Spartans after a double-overtime scoreless tie game at Municipal Stadium in Waterbury. East Hampton was seeded No. 7 and Somers was top-seeded at No. 1.

But it wasn't just "a" Class S championship. It was the team's first.

"It is a huge accomplishment that has a lot to do with the young men on the team," Keller said. "They were ready and prepared, and they needed the right push and motivation to win it all."

It was also Keller's first championship in general. This is his first season coaching the team; after spending two years coaching junior varsity girls' soccer at EHHS, he was selected to coach boys' soccer after the retirement of 23-year coach Bob Bascarino.

"A lot of people like to kid me; they're saying I should retire now," Keller said. "I think it was a combination of several different things. Sometimes a new coach does help, but there's also plenty of skill and motivation involved, and some luck involved too."

"Everything has to align just right," he said.

Keller said the seven seniors' experience and history were key factors this year, as well as their interplay with the rest of the team.

"We had the right mix of players, young and old. We had seniors, juniors and sophomores on the team," he said. "A lot of these young men have been playing soccer their whole lives as well."

"They also all bought in early during the pre-season to what we were challenging them with, and they took that responsibility," he said.

Keller said the Shoreline Conference, which East Hampton belongs to, is "perhaps the toughest" in its division.

"We were definitely battle-tested and ready to play for the state championship because of that," he said.

With regard to co-championship status, Keller said, "it's just the way the rules work."

"My goal was to focus on the positive. It's a co-championship, but it's still a championship," he said. "That's what we've been communicat-

ing to the players, to the parents, to our fans."

Keller said he and the team were pleased with their ruling of the field, though they were not able to score any goals.

"We were fixated on winning that game. We felt like we dominated the majority of the game even though we were the underdog," he said. "But we had a lot of missed opportunities right in front of the goal. The object of soccer is to score more goals, and neither team did."

Keller named senior Jordan Casey, an All-Conference and All-State athlete, a standout player of the season.

"He has been a consistently good playmaker, he's been our top goal-scorer," he said. "I saw not only his skills on the field improve, but also his leadership, in rallying the other guys."

Casey said he felt the co-championship was fair, and a definite high note to his senior year.

"To me, it feels that the way it was played, neither team deserved to lose," he said. "We both played very good games. We both played our hearts out."

He also felt the championship was "an amazing accomplishment" and that he felt the team's hard work showed the underclassmen even before pre-season that with hard work, anything is possible.

"It was one of the best games that we've played as a team," Casey said. "Everyone from front to back stepped up. It isn't always easy to do, but we did it."

He also wanted to note that he saw the championship as a "top-to-bottom effort" and praised the coaching staff.

"Coach Keller's very passionate about the game, and knows a lot about it. He brought that both to us," Casey said. "And assistant coaches [Mike Hill and Drew Debowsky] were always pushing us too."

Keller said senior Kyle Stiano was another important team member. He started out as a forward but moved back to defense.

"He did a tremendous job, particularly in the state game. He shut down the leading scorer in the state during the championship game," he said. "That was due to Kyle man-marking him the entire game."

Stiano said he felt the championship win helped prove East Hampton as a soccer town and move it out of its sports stereotype.

"We've really just been known as a baseball town before, but now we have a state championship to show for soccer," he said.

He also said that the challenge was two-fold for the team this season, as they also had to adjust to a new coach and his new coaching



The East Hampton High School boys' soccer team is basking in the glow of its first-ever state championship. Photo courtesy of East Hampton High School.

style.

"It really was a whole team effort this year, the players and the coaches too," Stiano said. "Everyone did their best in their own roles, and that's what won us the championship this year."

He also said that despite sharing this year's championship with Somers, he was happy to have ended his senior year this way.

"I couldn't have asked for a better ending," Stiano said. "I've been dreaming of this since my freshman year, winning the state championship, and we did."

Keller also said senior Connor Wall has been another solid and consistent player throughout the whole season.

"Our wins or losses come from whether you can control the middle of the field. He's a box-to-box player; he plays from one end to the other, on attack and defense," Keller said. "Without him controlling the middle, it would've been very difficult."

Wall said that though the co-championship victory was bittersweet to him, the "sweet far outweighed the bitter."

"The championship game was a statement. We showed the skill and fire that our team has," he said. "We stuck to the well-established game plan from coaches and each man upheld their task."

He also said he wanted to acknowledge the "relentless efforts" of the entire team through-

out the season, and in the final game.

"The men that played on the field that day depict, in an all-round fashion, what a team represents," Wall said.

In addition, he said next year East Hampton should use its combination of experience and younger players to keep other teams guessing.

"I feel the team's mix of youth, passion and play style will all be factors in catching opponents off guard," he said. "They're willing to put in the work and that will take them where they want to be."

In addition, Keller said he wanted to emphasize the importance of all seniors' efforts this past season.

"They all stepped up on the field and off the field, challenging the young players, staying motivated and staying focused," he said. "They challenged themselves to get better and challenged the younger guys to get better as well."

Keller also wanted to emphasize that the team is "only co-champions for this year," and that their own championship is next year's goal.

"Hopefully next year we can claim the title for ourselves," he said. "It's a major motivational point for us, and a major goal."

For more photos from the championship game versus Somers, as well as photos from other games over the season, visit [flickr.com/photos/128472403@N02/sets/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/128472403@N02/sets/).

New Vice Chair for Marlborough School Board

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

The Board of Education, at its meeting last Thursday, Nov. 20, elected member Wes Skorski to serve as the board's vice chairman.

Member Betty O'Brien is stepping down from the role, though she remains on the board.

Also at the meeting, Ruth Kelly was re-elected board chair, and Louise Concodello board secretary.

The elections of board officers were drama-free this time around. Last year at around this same time, it took two board meetings for members to come to a consensus on officers. At the first one, the board was split right down the middle on who should be chairman and who should be vice chairman. At the second meeting, the board – by a tight 5-4 vote – agreed on Kelly over Bob Clarke for the position of chairman, and O'Brien over Skorski for the role of vice chairman.

O'Brien's experience appeared to give her the edge; Skorski at the time was new to the school board, having been elected mere weeks earlier.

This year, though, O'Brien was actually the one to nominate Skorski for vice chair; a motion to name him vice chair and Concodello secretary passed by an 8-0 vote, with board

member Judithe Kaplan abstaining. Explaining her vote in a phone interview this week, Kaplan said she felt board members should have more experience before being elected chair or vice chair.

In a separate vote, Kelly was unanimously elected board chair.

Also at the Nov. 20 meeting, Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz reported to the board the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) enrollment projections for the 2015-16 school year.

According to Sklarz, there are currently 28 sections at Marlborough Elementary School. However, due to a predicted decline in enrollment, the number of sections is slated to dip to 27, which would require one less full-time teacher, yielding a savings of \$50,000.

Sklarz went on to say enrollment is expected to continue to decrease over the next five years. Some of the reasons for this, he said, include decreasing birth rates, decreasing number of building permits in town. Sklarz stressed that other towns are handling similar situations.

Sklarz asked the board to consider how they should plan for the decreasing enrollment and

look at it as a time for opportunities to reduce class size or foster enrichment possibilities.

* * *

The board also began its preliminary budget discussions regarding the 2015-16 year.

Sklarz said certain items the board should consider while building the budget – in addition to the aforementioned enrollment projections – include: class size guidelines, special education requirements, staffing needs, contractual obligations, mandates, and requests from departments balancing needs versus wants.

According to Sklarz, salaries make up 84 percent of the school budget, leaving other needs and wants to fill the remaining 16 percent. Employee salaries will increase approximately 2.7 percent, Sklarz said, and benefits have been increasing by 6.6 percent or so the last five years.

Cost per pupil in Marlborough is lower than in Hebron and Andover, but that will be increasing due to increasing out-of-district placements at \$135,000 and the full-day kindergarten program costing \$115,072, Sklarz said.

There is also increasing costs associated with implementing Common Core and the teacher evaluation system, Sklarz said. However, Sklarz

said he foresees some savings with the \$50,000 less from the decline in enrollment and the Special Education excess cost of approximately \$50,000.

The board then discussed the budget timeline, and the overall feeling among members was that they wanted a “wants versus needs” budget, which makes clear which items are necessary, and which ones are simply items the board wants. Also, since the board has community outreach meetings planned for January, at which residents can offer their own budget thoughts, board members said they wanted to wait until then to begin crafting the 2015-16 spending plan, so as to allow time to receive feedback.

Concodello told the board it should keep in mind the state salary increase of three percent and Clarke clarified that items previously left out of budgets for cost savings and other reasons have been caught up and built back into the budget. Sklarz assured Clarke that everything is caught up.

* * *

The next Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 18, at 7 p.m., at MES.

Andover Residents, Selectmen Talk Field Plans

by Geeta Schrayter

What's taking so long?

That seemed to be the question on several residents' minds Wednesday, as the Board of Selectmen discussed the long-gestating plans for a recreation field behind Andover Elementary School.

“We have to do something different with the way we handle things,” resident Jeff Maguire said during a public comment session at the beginning of the meeting. “This project is going to benefit the kids in town and it's stayed stagnant in my mind.”

The project has been in the works since 2007, and is supposed to include the construction of a multi-use field behind Andover Elementary School. A walking trail is also supposed to be installed around the field, with the possibly to later add facilities such as a pavilion and picnic tables.

The construction for the field will be funded by a \$225,000 grant the town was awarded along with an additional \$225,000 grant originally awarded to help build a new senior center. When the cost of the center was estimated to be too much for the town at over \$1 million, the money was coupled with the field grant.

However, Maguire said at the meeting there were issues with the field that needed to be addressed from a design standpoint. He said the field slopes four and a half feet from goal to goal, and the fields are “tight” with no sidelines.

“You've got to bring in people that understand soccer in this town,” he said. If not, he added the town could end up wasting money on fields that don't get used.

After Maguire asked when the next meeting on the fields would be, First Selectman Bob Burbank explained the Inland Wetlands Commission had reviewed the soccer field design, and the project now heads to the Planning and Zoning Commission [PZC], who “may or may not recommend changes to the field.”

Burbank added the commission would bring the design to a public hearing “and it will be

discussed.” He added the plan would then return to the selectmen.

“At the next regular [PZC] meeting, they will accept the application and probably set a public hearing,” he stated.

But resident Joan Foran felt the selectmen should review the design sooner rather than later. She reminded the selectmen part of the money for the construction was coming from money originally intended for the seniors, and said “we're dealing with a great deal of money.”

“Just looking at some plans, the design is of a concern, cost is a concern, the steep slope is a concern...” she stated. “I think the Board of Selectmen needs to review it now and not keep sending it out to other boards or other commissions. You need to look at that plan.”

Resident Shannon Loudon asked why discussion on the fields was initially part of the agenda for Wednesday's meeting, but was then removed. Burbank reiterated the plan needed to go to the PZC for a public hearing first.

“We can't take any action until we have approval from [PZC]. They may or may not make changes in the plan in which time their recommendations will be brought in entirety to the Board of Selectmen and at that point we will know exactly what we're looking for,” he stated. “To look at it prior is premature, because we don't have the final draft.”

But despite this, after the public comment session, when it came time to add or delete items to the meeting agenda, selectwoman Julia Haverl moved to add discussion on the proposed field and current ball fields in town; the motion passed.

During the discussion, Haverl wondered if it made sense to hold an informational meeting prior to any PZC hearing, “with maps and open discussion with people from town because there's a lot of interest [in the project].”

She also wondered whether another site in town could work for the fields, but Burbank reminded her others had already been exam-

ined and the property behind the school was deemed best.

The new field was originally proposed to be located by the ball fields on Long Hill Road, but plans changed once engineers hired for the project discovered the property came into wetlands. As a result, other locations were examined, but it was the town-owned property behind the elementary school that panned out.

After the site was decided, Burbank said he received approval from the state for the location change. He added, referring to Maguire's earlier comment, that engineers had said the slope of the field was a 1.5 percent grade, which he was told wasn't unusual.

“1.5 percent is hardly noticeable if people are walking on it,” he stated.

But Haverl added “I have serious doubts this is going to be a good location.”

Regarding the size of the field, Burbank also said “this is a standard-sized field for junior high – that's what I'm told.”

Once the plans are finally approved by all the boards and commissions in town it needs to go before, they will head to the public for a final vote. Selectwoman Cathy Desrosiers, not convinced the project will be approved as it currently stands, wondered if the money allotted toward it could be used to fix the fields that already exist on Long Hill Road.

Burbank however, said about the money, “It's not available for other projects,” to which Joan Foran could be heard murmuring in the audience, “That's not true.”

Desrosiers furthered she had gone to the building department to look at the present plan and “wasn't terribly encouraged by it.”

“I have serious concerns about that plan and the location. I don't think we're going to get a good value for our dollar out of it,” she said. “I just think it's a tragedy if it gets voted down and we lose all this money from the senior center and fields.”

In another public comment session at the end

of the meeting, residents continued to share their thoughts regarding the plan.

Brian Trzcinski spoke up and said, “I may be naïve but if we could get the money from the senior center to the fields, we could probably adjust it from [being used for] new fields to the existing fields,” he stated. “And if what you're saying comes to light and [the plan] is shut down, we need to be ahead of that and shift course if that's the action we need to take.”

Dennis Foran spoke as well and said the selectmen should provide a cost estimate along with the plan as well as a timeline for the project.

“From here on everything should be out in the open,” he stated.

Marie Burbank – Bob's wife – also shared some thoughts, reminding those present the plans weren't for “just a soccer field.”

“This is a recreation field. It has a walking trail that goes around the soccer field,” she stated. “This should be viewed as a recreation field and also the future plan was to add maybe tables for people to come and gather.”

She added, “I think we need to look at this in the whole picture,” which she said was for adults and seniors as well as children.

But Foran said under the present plan, she wasn't sure how any of that would be possible.

“We don't even have room for benches for the kids [in the current plan],” Foran said. “I'm not saying we don't need fields or have a commitment to every age group, but what I'm telling you is look at the plan: it's a waste of money. It doesn't matter if it comes from the state or is based on our tax bases, money is money, and unless we come up with a valid reason other than ‘we have \$450,000; oh, let's spend it.’ I'm not going to be satisfied with the plan.”

* * *

The next regular Board of Selectmen meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 7, at 7 p.m. in the Andover Town Hall community room.

Andover Food Pantry in Running for \$20K

by Geeta Schrayter

Visions of \$20,000 are dancing around the heads of those involved with the Andover Food Pantry this season, as they hope to be one of 75 food pantries nationwide to receive money as part of the Walmart Food Pantry Holiday Makeover.

Food Pantry Director Joan Soucy, who has been involved with the pantry since it began seven years ago, explained this week she received an email from FoodShare in September mentioning the contest. Even though Soucy thought “there’s probably a snowball’s chance in Hell we’d win it,” she applied for the contest and was pleasantly surprised when they were selected along with four other Connecticut pantries to participate.

“I said, ‘Oh my goodness, I can’t believe they chose us,’” Soucy added, explaining she’s now trying to get the word out to as many people as possible.

The contest runs through Dec. 12 and until then, individuals can cast a vote for the pantry each day through their Facebook accounts. Of the 166 pantries on the list, the 75 with the most votes will receive \$20,000 each.

Walmart’s goal for the contest, according to its website, is to “strengthen communities by helping food pantries across the country refresh their facilities to make it easier for them to help families who may struggle with hunger.”

In total, \$1.5 million will be donated to the

winning pantries.

If Andover wins, its share of that pot would be used to create a more permanent space for the pantry’s operations. Currently, Soucy explained, the food pantry runs out of the basement of Andover Congregational Church. Twice a week, volunteers set everything up, then break things back down and put everything in storage until the next time.

Soucy stated there’s a building behind the church that the church said the food pantry could use if the money is found to renovate the building.

“But of course, where do you find the money?” Soucy asked, mentioning the pantry “strictly operates on donations.”

Soucy said the pantry had licensed contractors willing to help with the renovations, but getting money for the materials was the problem.

Winning the contest, she said, “would be a really great chance to put [money] towards that building and get renovations done and make it accessible and all that. And we could have the pantry set up right out there and not have to share space. That’s where we’re at right now so we’re going to do our best to try to win that contest.”

In addition, Soucy said the present space issues mean the pantry is unable to service as many people as they’d like. For instance, 162

families were provided with a complete Thanksgiving meal this year – but that number could have been higher.

“We could be serving a lot more but our funds are small and we don’t have the space so it limits us to what we can actually get,” she said. “For example, we picked up turkeys the same day as the distribution because we don’t have the room or freezers to store them, so it limits us.”

With a more permanent space, she said, “We could maybe get a good buy on something and we can say, ‘Okay, we’re putting it away for Christmas.’ But we can’t do that now because we don’t have the storage area.”

Soucy added she wanted to get the word out to the broader community about the contest, since the pantry services people from towns outside Andover as well.

“We’re a community food pantry; we don’t refuse anyone who comes in from any of the surrounding towns,” she said.

The Andover Food Pantry is described on the contest website as “a resource to all those in need of food in [the] community.”

The pantry hosts a regular food pantry, a pantry geared toward senior citizens, and a mobile FoodShare site open to the public. Soucy shared along with food, the pantry offers items such as personal hygiene supplies and resources to people who come by.

“We take all kinds of donations of different things so we can help [people] out one way or another, if not strictly with food then with something else,” Soucy said. “We’re a community giving center,” she said, adding everyone works hard to make the donations go as far as possible, including using coupons to get the biggest bang for their buck.”

Time again, Soucy said that hard work’s paid off, and Thanksgiving was the latest example: between coupons and items from FoodShare, Soucy said the Thanksgiving baskets that were distributed cost the pantry just 99 cents each. That’s 162 complete Thanksgiving dinners for just \$162.

“We really work hard at it because we’re not actually in the budget from the town or church” Soucy explained. She added “we don’t refuse anybody and we just want to reach out to everybody; nobody in need should go hungry.”

And now it’s up to the public to help the pantry so that they, in turn, can continue to help the community.

Individuals can vote by going to wm8.walmart.com/holidaymakeover/#/, typing in “Connecticut” in the lower search field and clicking on “vote” underneath the Andover Food Pantry. A link to the contest can also be found on the town website at andoverct.org. A Facebook account is required to vote, and one vote can be cast each day.

Public Hearing Held on Colchester Zoning Regulation Changes

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

The Planning and Zoning Commission [PZC] has a lot to mull over after a public hearing Wednesday regarding changing some of the zoning regulations.

PZC already had regulation revisions in the works, but postponed implementing them earlier this year, following the state Appellate Court’s ruling against the Monroe Planning and Zoning Commission in an appeal filed by a developer. In its decision, the court said PZCs needed to be more detailed in their regulations, and offer specific reasons for zoning changes. After that decision, Colchester’s commission revisited their regulations to align with what the court said.

PZC Chairman Joseph Mathieu explained at the beginning of the meeting.

“It regards the ability of the board to wave regulations,” Mathieu said. “There are isolated sections [of the regulations] that had potential problematic revisions.”

Town Planner Adam Turner explained that many of the changes are due to added precision in the regulations and to define regulations. However along with that, some of the zoning changes regarded changing names of some zones to align with the town’s Plan of Conservation and Development.

During Wednesday night’s meeting, two particular areas of concern were brought up concerning residential lots becoming commercial lots. One was the lot behind Tractor Supply on Lake Hayward Road. The other lot was 9 Loomis Rd. which had been a split-zoned lot – half commercial and half residential.

One resident seemed particularly concerned with the change to the Tractor Supply lot, and how it would impact the development area

around Starwood Trail and Carli Boulevard.

Commission members said they had not been aware that any of the zoning boundaries were changing. However, after double-checking, Turner clarified the lot behind Tractor Supply and the one at 9 Loomis Rd. would indeed be changing zones.

“There is an existing residential lot behind Tractor Supply,” Turner said. “It’s being considered for future development because the water and sewer go out that way.”

Susan Mausteller of 6 Loomis Rd. expressed concern over the changing of the current split-zoning at 9 Loomis Rd., which has been approved for a gas station/drive-thru restaurant combination.

“How will you address transition properties?” Mausteller said. “People like me are right next to a commercial section. The village itself has specific language, but people like me next to it are not thought of.”

Mathieu told Mausteller the regulations generally require buffering and transitions between zones.

John Bear, another resident of Loomis Road, said there have been many concerns expressed over the proposed change to 9 Loomis.

“The land is rural, raw land,” Bear said. “I was involved with the original developments. The primary objective was to keep the rural character. Most people who built there had the same idea.”

Bear said the lot changing zones would have a major impact on the neighborhood.

“As it sits now, there’s a good situation,” Bear said of the lot. Currently the commercial section has frontage on Route 16. “I’m not adverse to how it is. It would have adverse impacts on

neighbors if changed. There is an overwhelming majority of residents on Loomis and Old Country [roads] that would strongly voice opposition.”

Mathieu told Bear that his concerns were well articulated and thanked him for the comments.

“Over the longer period of the last decade, we have tried to correct the issue of split parcels and zones running through property lines,” Mathieu said. “It makes for difficult decision-making. The overarching goal of planning is to have zoning lines encompass entire properties. That’s not to say there may be some circumstances that we would maintain the zone to bisect property.”

Mathieu went on to state that at this point, the board is not looking at individual properties, but the long term future.

Christopher Bourque, chairman of the Agricultural Commission, said yes it’s the goal to do away from split zoning, but sometimes there’s a good reason for the split.

“We should maintain Loomis Road as residential,” Bourque said. “Logically it’s one of the instances of why there was a split. There’s commercial lots on Route 16, but not on Loomis.”

George Veneziano, owner of the lot at 9 Loomis Rd., said he appreciated everyone’s concerns.

“I understand where they’re coming from,” Veneziano said. “The way I plan to develop would be tasteful. There would be a buffer with trees along the way. I’ve spoken with Susan before. I went along with what they were asking. I would not open the door to anything distasteful. I’m also constrained by septic and the

wells.”

Another change in the regulations concerned the Eight Mile River watershed. Turner said the change to the area would mean that lots cannot expand within 200 feet of the wetland. It does not mean if they are commercial lots that they cannot be commercial anymore – just that they cannot expand too closely to the wetlands.

The commission took no action on the regulation changes, and said it will deliberate on them further at its Dec. 17 meeting.

* * *

Also at the meeting, the commission approved a family subdivision on Pine Brook Road. Jamie and Josh Ruitto, brother and sister, had applied to build houses on land purchased from their grandmother. The land totals 97.5 acres, however only a very small portion of the land is being used for the houses and the remaining 93 acres will remain joint custody and undeveloped.

“I live across the road,” John Koopman, a resident of the area, said. “I’ve watched them grow up. It’s been Jim Ruitto’s dream for them to live on that street.”

Koopman said it’s only fair that the land stay in the family and the town not take the 10 acres for open space usually required of developers. There is a provision in the zoning regulations that states that when land stays within a family, the family does not have to give the 10 percent of the land to the town for open space.

The commission unanimously approved the application for the subdivision – and stressed the terms about the open space would need to be clearly noted in any deed for the property. If the family were to sell the land, the open space requirement would go into effect.

Portland Water Rate Increases Floated

by John Tyczkowski

The Board of Selectmen presented a proposal Wednesday evening for increasing town water rates to combat the growing water and sewer deficit.

In a discussion at the selectmen's Nov. 5 meeting, Water and Sewer Commission chair Dick Cote said the budgets for water and sewer services in town are running a significant deficit in around \$600,000 – a deficit that is growing by around \$2,000 to \$3,000 a week.

At this week's meeting, Cote confirmed that the budget for water services alone was running a deficit of around \$262,000, as of June.

Over the past six months, that deficit has grown by around \$3,200 a week, or by about another \$86,000 total.

According to the numbers Director of Finance Tom Robinson prepared, up for consideration would be 12.5 percent increases across the board on unmetered and metered water sales and water sales to public authorities.

The plan also laid out a meter schedule with rate increases for each size of meter in town. Quarterly rates per meter size would be about double under the proposed plan.

In addition, there would also be 20 percent increases on incidental charges such as private fire protection, service connections and cross connection.

In addition, the water rate proposal included adding a new charge to the general fund for town fire hydrants, of a flat \$200 per year, per hydrant. That would result in an extra \$50,000, from the town's 250 hydrants.

The flat fee was chosen after a review of surrounding towns' hydrant fees, First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said.

Current budgeted expenditures for town water services are about \$1,377,555. With these proposed rate increases in place, the town could generate a total of \$1,389,120 to cover its ex-

penses.

That would leave \$11,565 in the budget for "a little bit of room for variables," Bransfield said.

"You don't know how many customers are going to pay, you don't know how much water people will actually use," she said.

This should stop the annual deficit from growing, but would not begin to reduce it, Bransfield said. She said this rate increase, combined with the freeze discussed at least meeting on discretionary water and sewer spending, could serve as an avenue to begin cutting the deficit.

Selectman Carl Chudzick said he was in support of the rate increase, but stressed the importance of coming up with a concrete plan soon to cut the deficit.

"We have to at least stop the bleeding; something like [this rate increase] has to be put in," he said. "But we also have to think about the deficit, and how we're going to cut it. That big number is still sitting out there, and it will stay there."

Cote praised the town for its work in preparing the rate review, but urged for quick action.

"I was pleasantly surprised with the thoroughness of everything you've done here," Cote said. "I appreciate what you're doing, I just want to stress that we need to get it done as quickly as possible."

Under the proposed rate increase, the average household family user, using 9,300 cubic feet of water a year, would see a yearly water rate increase of about \$155, or a quarterly increase of about \$39.

Public Works Director Rick Kelsey said actual numbers for users could be higher or lower depending on other factors such as their exact amount of water used each year, as well as the number of people in their household.

"People could be looking at something in the range of a \$120-\$160 increase per year depending on that," he said.

At the same time, Kelsey recommended the board look into upping meter charges for the large eight-inch meters that serve the golf course and several surrounding streets.

There are four such meters in town, currently charged \$80 per quarter. The revised rate sheet recommended charging \$150 per quarter.

"Those revised numbers, I think, are low," he said. "I would suggest to you that those numbers get increased from \$150 to something more in line with what [the Metropolitan District Commission] is charging for those same-sized meters, which is in the \$400 range."

That way, Kelsey said, the town might be able to lower the flat meter charge slightly for 5/8 inch meters, which there are over 2,100 of in town.

"You might be able to get to the same place with revenue and maybe not hurt the household that has a couple people in it that are going to get hit by a big increase on their meter charge even if they have lower water usage," he said.

By way of an example, Kelsey provided averaged figures he worked out for a two-person household using a lower amount of water than 9,300 cubic feet per year.

"Now they would be paying about \$260 per year, and under this plan, they would be paying around \$342 per year," he said. "The majority of that charge would be a meter charge. So it's pretty important that we look at that."

At the same time, Bransfield reminded the board and those in attendance that customers on some streets surrounding the golf course, such as Bartlett Hill Road, pay a private company to read their meters.

"They already do pay fees for their individual

meters; it just doesn't come back to the town," she said.

Bransfield and the board agreed to review that concern as part of a process of preparing a finalized water rate increase proposal for residents.

Also, Bransfield urged selectmen to remember the law of diminishing returns in terms of water and sewer fees in planning.

"We can't outprice ourselves; we don't want to drive customers away," she said. "We have to be very careful how we do this. This proposal will have an impact on users, definitely."

Water and Sewer Commission member Norman Ward, who said he was a regular attendee at Board of Selectmen discussions on this matter, said the commission supported the rate review and proposed increase.

"We wholeheartedly support this increase; we have to. Can we afford it? No. But we can't afford not to do it," he said. "We just have to bite the bullet and move forward."

According to the town charter, all of these rates would have to be presented to town residents for discussion. The town serves approximately 1,500 sewer customers and 2,300 water customers.

The selectmen chose Wednesday, Jan. 21, at 7 p.m., as their tentative time for a town meeting on water rates.

In addition, selectmen will have to create a proposal for the increase of sewer rates as well, to address that department's deficit.

Bransfield said the board would have the numbers on those ready for discussion at the next meeting later this month.

The next Board of Selectmen meeting will take place on Wednesday, Dec. 17, at 7:30 p.m. in the Mary Flood Room of Portland Library.

PHS Sports Teams Honored

by John Tyczkowski

Portland High School held its annual fall sports awards ceremony Tuesday evening. Teams honored that evening included girls' and boys' cross country, boys' soccer and swimming.

Athletic Director Rick Borg noted in his welcome remarks that this year had been a banner year for Portland sports.

"No season has ever come to an end at Portland High School before with two state champions," he said. "Congratulations to them both."

Borg also said that in the 50 years the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) has been awarding state championships in various sports, Portland has won 16 state championships.

"And four of those 16 were won in the last 13 months," he said to applause.

Borg said girls' cross country is the high school's leader in state championships, having won seven for the school in their entire history.

"They've won almost half of all the championships," he said. "There's no other sport that's won more than two. We are a girls' cross country state power."

In addition, Borg mentioned how the extra-competitive nature of the Shoreline Conference teams "elevated" Portland sports.

"We play in a conference that is in many sports more difficult to win the conference championship than it is to win the state championship," he said. "What the Shoreline Conference teaches you is to get better, or get embarrassed."

"And we keep getting better," he said.

Portland Middle School Principal Scott Giegerich also spoke at the ceremony, about Portland sports teams' recognition for their sportsmanship.

"Over the past two years, the Shoreline Conference has recognized a team as the most sportsmanlike team in the conference," he said. "For the past two years, our boys' soccer team was recognized."

However, the team topped that this year, Giegerich said.

"The Connecticut High School Soccer Coaches' Association awarded the George F. Ritchie Sportsmanship Award, out of the entire state, to Portland High School boys' soccer," he said.

After separating into smaller awards ceremonies, cross county coach and PHS math teacher Isha Murphy wove in personal anecdotes with the story of Canadian Terry Fox, to drive home his points about believing in your abilities and

working to the best of them, and always contributing what you can, no matter how insignificant it might seem.

Fox was a high school athlete who in 1980, after losing his right leg to cancer, decided to run across Canada from Newfoundland to British Columbia, and to raise \$1 for every Canadian, of which there were 24 million at the time.

After receiving an artificial leg, Fox managed to run over 3,300 miles, broken up into a marathon, or 26 miles, each day, until he had to stop the run due to a resurgence of his cancer, which claimed his life the following year.

Murphy told the athletes to let Fox inspire them, as Murphy himself was inspired when he followed Fox's story at the time.

"It takes someone like Terry Fox, or perhaps someone in this room here, to inspire others, whether it's a freshman or an 8th grader, someone who has seen us practice all year," he said.

Murphy then spoke his two inspirational quotes he used over the year: "Allow for the possibility, and whatever you do may seem insignificant, but it's most important that you do it."

Murphy then called up each cross country athlete, mentioned a few of their accomplishments and gave them awards. He also presented each member of the girls' cross country team with Canadian one dollar coins featuring Terry Fox to commemorate their championship victory.

Senior Jonathan Dolan, who was awarded his second All-State athlete title this year, the first in the school's history, and who was recognized as an All-Conference athlete this year, also received a loonie.

Gianna D'Angelo, Rachel Osak and Jacob Godwin all received the 133% Award for their outstanding dedication and effort. Shannon Dolan, an All-State and All-Conference Athlete, received the Top Freshman Award. Michaela Paternostro and David Tracey received the Most Improved Athlete Award. Brooke Townsend and Jonathan Dolan both received the Most Valuable Athlete Award. Finally, Molly Kidd received an award for her dedication to and support for the team, despite missing the entire year due to an injury.

The team seniors also surprised Murphy with a gift, as did the teams for their respective seniors as well.

Jonathan Dolan said he and Shannon, who is his sister, joked about being dual winners, as, since he's a senior and she's a freshman, they would only have the one year to do it.

"We knew coming into it that it would be an



The Portland High School girls' cross country team was honored at an awards ceremony Tuesday. The girls captured the Class S State Title on Oct. 25. Brooke Townsend led the Highlanders, placing fourth, while teammates Shannon Dolan placed fifth, Rachel Osak placed 22nd, Gianna D'Angelo placed 27th, Amelia Cooper placed 33rd, Michaela Paternostro placed 55th and Bridget Reddington placed 62nd. From left are Coach Isha Murphy, Allison Tewkesbury, Gianna D'Angelo, Molly Kidd, Amelia Cooper, Michaela Paternostro, Bridget Reddington, Erin Springer, Shannon Dolan, Abby Dillon, Kiley Lord and Ashley Cappello. In the front row are captains Rachel Osak, Mikaela Smith and Brooke Townsend. Photo by Lynne Townsend.

impressive thing, having two athletes from the same house win these awards," he said. "I was trying to keep it, and she was trying to earn it."

Shannon Dolan said having her brother involved in cross country helped with her transition into the sport and into high school.

She also said she never had a "mid-career low."

"I'm generally a pretty positive person, so I never really had a race that I was genuinely disappointed with," she said. "I thought I did pretty good throughout the year."

Jonathan said that he experienced some frustration when he had to miss a race in the middle of the season due to his shin splits.

"I battle with them every year, but these ones were a lot worse and I thought I might have actually stress fractured my legs," he said. "But I took five days off and, with a lot of icing, came back."

"I was a little discouraged, right in the middle of the season, but I was happy that I was able to save the season," he said.

Jonathan said he plans to major in computer engineering in college. He also doesn't intend to join any collegiate sports teams; he plans to run on the club sports or intramural level only.

"I might also try a bunch of other sports, like Ultimate Frisbee," he said.

Shannon said that it was "definitely overwhelming" between both her personal accomplishments and the team's championship victory.

"At the beginning, we thought a championship might be possible, but then toward the end of the season we weren't really sure," she said. "And then, we won."

Shannon also said she plans to duplicate her freshman year success next year.

"Injuries happen, other things happen that you don't plan on," she said. "But I'm very hopeful and ready to go."

Look in next week's *Rivereast* for a feature on the Portland girls' soccer team's Class S Championship victory.

Obituaries

East Hampton

Mary L. Carr

Mary Legassey Carr, 66, of East Hampton, beloved wife, mother, sister, aunt and friend, passed away peacefully at Middlesex Hospital Tuesday, Nov. 18, surrounded by her loved ones. She leaves her loving husband Marvin Carr; her daughter, Lauren Carr; her sister, Susan Matteredazzo and her husband Bill; her brother-in-law, John Formica and his wife Linda Lavallee; her niece, Cheri Pugatch; and her nephews, John Matteredazzo and Scott Formica.



Mary was born in Rockville to the late Claude and Edith (Dalla Corte) Legassey on Oct. 6, 1948. She grew up in Middletown with her sisters, Carol and Susan, and her brother, Jack. She attended the University of Connecticut in Storrs and graduated in 1970 with a bachelor's degree in retail management.

After pursuing a retail career in Boston, Mass., she returned to Connecticut and earned a teaching certificate from the University of Saint Joseph in West Hartford. She taught home economics at Illing Junior High School in Manchester for six years before getting married to her husband, Marvin, in 1977. In 1980, she gave birth to her daughter Lauren. She took up retail banking in 1996 and retired in 2007.

Mary was a gifted artist who pursued her crafts in the evenings. She taught rubber stamping at numerous retail outlets in central Connecticut. She enjoyed the close, lifelong friendships of her UConn classmates, all of whom supported her tirelessly during her protracted illness. She will be remembered for her effortless smile, kindness, grace and strength.

She was laid to rest in East Hampton on Nov. 21. Memorial contributions may be made to: The MS Program Fund of Dr. Weiner, Brigham and Women's Hospital, 116 Huntington Ave., Boston, MA 02116.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Bernard F. Oppelt

Bernard F. Oppelt, 86, of Colchester, passed away suddenly Thanksgiving morning, Nov. 27. Born Feb. 27, 1928 in Hartford, he was a son of the late Walter and Edna (Covey) Oppelt.

Bernard married BettyAnn Doucette on Nov. 23, 1957. She survives him.

He was a proud veteran having served with the U.S. Army during the Korean War. He was also a member of the American Legion in Colchester and was a member of the Antique Veterans of Colchester providing memorial service military honors.

Bernard retired several years ago after a career with the Connecticut Department of Labor as a mail room and supply manager. He was always a hard-working man, holding down two jobs most of his working career.

He enjoyed traveling abroad and gardening at home. He loved air shows and was an avid tournament bowler for over 25 years. Bernard also volunteered at the Bowling office in East Hartford for many years.

In addition to his beloved wife BettyAnn, survivors include a sister and brother-in-law, Barbara and Paul Bansen of Winter Haven, Fla.; a brother, Walter Oppelt Jr. of Rockville; a niece and her family, Tammy and Henry Jolly and their children, Katie, Matthew and Brian of New Mexico; a nephew, Glenn Bansen of Winter Haven, Fla.; his beloved pets, Oreo the dog and Grace the cat; and numerous extended family members and friends.

Calling hours were held Tuesday, Dec. 2, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, and Wednesday, Dec. 3, followed by the funeral service that morning at the funeral home. Burial was in the Rose Hill Memorial Park in Rocky Hill with full military honors.

Donations in his memory may be made to the Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20037.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

Yvonne Anne Hallberg

Yvonne Anne (Boule) (Barrett) Hallberg, 88, of East Hampton, beloved wife of Roy Hallberg, died Wednesday, Nov. 26, at her home. Born Oct. 30, 1926 in Middletown, she was the daughter of the late Camille and Valentine (Deloye) Boule.

Yvonne had retired from Northeast Utilities where she had worked as a secretary. Yvonne was a member of Amaranth and a member of the Belltown Antique Car Club. She was a parishioner of St. Patrick Church in East Hampton.

She is survived by her husband, Roy Hallberg; two sons, Rowland Barrett and wife Nancy of Jamestown, R.I., Nels Barrett and wife Juliane of Mansfield Center; a daughter, Leslie Moore and husband Gerald of East Haven; two stepsons, Gordon Hallberg of East Hampton, Karl Hallberg of Virginia; a step-daughter, Jacqueline Burdick of East Hampton; a sister, Helene Kieft of Middletown; 10 grandchildren, five step-grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

She was predeceased by her brother, Henry Boule. Funeral services were held Monday, Dec. 1, in Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton. Burial followed in Union Hill Cemetery. Friends called at the funeral home Monday morning, before the service.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to St. Jude Children's Hospital 501 St. Jude Place Memphis, TN 38105-1942 or to Shriner's Hospital for Children 51 Blossom St. Boston, MA 02114.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Patricia A. Grenier

Patricia A. Grenier, 59, of East Hartford, formerly of Colchester, passed away Sunday afternoon, Nov. 30, at Hartford Hospital, after a courageous battle with leukemia. Born Aug. 2, 1955, in Norwich, she was a daughter of the late John and Stella (Anuszewicz) Skut.

For over 32 years, Patricia worked as the office manager for the 100 Club of Connecticut, helping families of fallen fire and police officers.

Patricia enjoyed sewing, quilting, antiques and walking her dogs on the beach with her companion Vic Strazdas. She was an avid gardener and a woman of many talents and abilities. She loved to fix and refurbish old things to become new and beautiful. Most importantly, she will be remembered by her family as a soft spoken and devoted mother, grandmother and friend.

She will be sadly missed but always remembered by her son, Justin and his wife June Potter of Westbrook; a sister, Marie and her husband Robert Tarnowski of Salem; a grandson, John Potter and many extended family and friends.

In addition to her parents, she was predeceased by two grandsons, Dylan and Matthew and a sister, Joan Oliver.

Calling hours were held Thursday, Dec. 4, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, and again today, Dec. 5, at 10 a.m. A funeral Mass will follow today at 11 a.m. at St. Andrew Church in Colchester. Burial will be private.

Donations in her memory may be made to: Delete Blood Cancer, (Bone Marrow Donation), 100 Broadway, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10005.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Portland

Sharon Carroll

Sharon Nan (Casey) Carroll, 68, of Portland, passed away Monday, Dec. 1, at Middlesex Hospital. Born in Bristol, she was the daughter of the late Robert and Jean (LaCroix) Casey and had lived in Portland the last seven years.

Sharon is survived by four sons, Bryan Carroll of Haddam, Jayson Carroll of Howland, ME, Jeremy Carroll of Middletown and Lucas Carroll of Portland; seven grandchildren, Amber, Jake, Connor, Jessa, Aislinn, Zoe and Morrigan; and a great-grandson, Timothy.

A memorial service will be held today, Dec. 5, at 4 p.m., at Doolittle Funeral Home, 14 Old Church St., Middletown. Burial will be at the convenience of the family. There will be no calling hours.

To share memories or send condolences to the family, visit doolittlefuneralservice.com.

Portland

Earl P. Hill

Earl P. Hill, 88, husband of Ada (Rose) Hill passed away Thursday, Nov. 20, at Cobalt Health Care and Rehabilitation Center. Earl, a longtime resident of Portland, was born in Middletown Feb. 7, 1926, to Thomas J. Hill and Nellie (Peterson) Hill.

He is survived by his wife of 62 years; a brother, T. John Hill of Cromwell; a daughter, Joanne Morariu and husband Thomas Morariu of East Hampton and their children Laura and Megan; and three sons, Charlie P. Hill and his wife Janice Gedlund of Shoreline, Wash., and their children Davis and Meredith; Thomas P. Hill and his wife Cindi Hill of Franklinton, N.C., and their children Carissa and Nathan; David P. Hill and his wife Liz Aschenbrenner of Captain Cook, Hawaii.

Earl was predeceased by his daughter, Susan Hill, of Durham, N.C.; a sister, Helen Dillon; and brothers Leroy and George Hill.

Earl graduated from Middletown High School, class of 1944 and then served in World War II as an Army mortarman in the European Theater. He graduated from UConn with a degree in business and had a long career in the insurance industry. Earl enjoyed spending time with his family and was a master at leading political discussions around the dinner table. He also enjoyed frequent golf games with friends and relatives and played in the Portland Golf league.

A service will be held at 2 p.m. Friday, Dec. 12, at the First Congregational Church, 554 Main St., in Portland, followed by a burial.

Andover

Chester Joseph Grabowski

Chester Joseph Grabowski, 97, formerly of Windsor Locks, Rockville and Andover, husband of the late Stella (Kalina) Grabowski, died Tuesday, Nov. 25, at an area convalescent home. He was born in Manchester April 18, 1917, son of Joseph and Mary (Lazarz) Grabowski.

Chester was raised in Manchester and Andover, where he helped his parents run the largest dairy farm in Andover, and was a resident of Rockville for 50 years before moving to Windsor Locks in 1999. Prior to retiring in 1982, he had been a machinist at Hamilton Standard Company for over 30 years.

Chester had a passion for antiques and was a dealer at many antique shows and flea markets throughout the state. He was also a longtime member of St. John's P.N.C. Church in Manchester.

He is survived by two sons, Richard Grabowski and his wife Mary of Ellington, and their four children, twins Mark and Glen Hodgson, Joel Hodgson, and Gail Liezowski; Roy and Lynette Grabowski of Manchester; three great-grandchildren, Joshua, Emily, and Allison; and several nieces, nephews, sisters-in-law, and brothers-in-law. Also surviving him is his longtime companion, Ann Collette, and her family.

Chester was predeceased by his two sisters and his brother, Helen Bielak, Sally Kirka and Henry Grabowski.

A prayer service was held Saturday, Nov. 29, at the Holmes Funeral Home, 400 Main St., Manchester. Burial followed in St. John's P.N.C. Cemetery in Manchester. Visiting hours were Saturday, before the service.

Memorial contributions may be made to the American Heart Association.

To leave a message for his family, visit holmes-watkinsfuneralhomes.com.

Colchester

Patrick Francis Vickers

Patrick Francis Vickers, 74, passed away peacefully Friday, Nov. 28, at Harrington Court, Colchester. He was born Dec. 15, 1939, in Hartford, to the late George and Catherine Mullane Vickers. He graduated and attended East Hartford High School, and was a proud veteran of the United States Marine Corps.

Patrick was a communicant of Blessed Sacrament Church in East Hartford. He was a loving father devoted to his family, always available to lend a helping hand to anyone in need. He was an avid Red Sox and Patriots fan, and enjoyed spending time with his family. He will be remembered as being a very loving son, father, grandfather, brother and friend. He loved the outdoors sports, playing with his grandchildren, camping and cars. Most of all, he loved his family.

Patrick is survived by his son, Patrick Matthew Vickers of Manchester; daughter, Angelyn Vickers of Colchester; sisters, Sally Ann Renolds of Blandford, Mass., and Peg Vickers Whittaker and her husband Wally of Chandler, Ariz.; grandchildren Elyssia, Justin, Andrew and Christian.

Family and friends attended calling hours Tuesday, Dec. 2, followed immediately by a celebration of life service, all at Glastonbury Funeral Home, 450 New London Tpke., Glastonbury. Burial is private and at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Patrick's memory can be made to Harrington Court, 59 Harrington Ave., Colchester, CT 06415 or to Vitas Hospice, 628 Hebron Ave. Suite 300, Glastonbury CT 06033.

To leave an online condolence, visit glastonburyfuneral.com.

Middle Haddam

George R. Creeger

George R. Creeger of Middle Haddam died peacefully Saturday, Nov. 1, at Brookside Nursing Home in Wilder, Vt.

Born in 1925 in Attleboro, Mass., the son of Methodist minister whose parishes included Middletown, Connecticut (where George met his wife Elva, the daughter of Wesleyan University professor Carl Stearns - they were married there in 1951), and other New England towns, he graduated from Depaw University in 1945, Phi Beta Kappa. After graduation, he served a tour of duty as an Army Air Corps Master Sergeant at Tachikawa airbase in post-war Japan.

He returned to pursue graduate study at Yale where he earned Master's and PhD degrees and was a Junior Sterling Fellow. Hired as an English instructor at Wesleyan University in 1951, by the time of his retirement in 1999, he had served as Professor of English, Director of the College of Letters, Dean of the College, Secretary and Chair of the Faculty, and was the Wilbur Fisk Osborne Professor of English.

A teacher first and foremost, Dr. Creeger's appreciation of all things beautiful produced many courses and publications on Romantic and American literature and poetry, American art, architecture, and material culture, and opera. Known as a brilliant teacher whose deep resonant voice was instantly recognizable, he was much beloved by a devoted following of students. When it was inaugurated in 1993, he was the first recipient of the Binswanger Award for excellence in teaching. George and Elva were founding contributors to the Wasch Center for Retired Faculty - a room there is dedicated to them.

Dr. Creeger also taught at the University of Berlin and in Wurzburg, Germany as a Fullbright Guest Professor, as well as Mystic Seaport, The Museum of America and the Sea in Connecticut.

In addition to extensive photographic documentation of early southern New England buildings, Dr. Creeger's interest in Connecticut history and architecture also led to a number of private restoration projects on historic homes, barns, and furniture of the lower Connecticut River valley, and a lifelong avocation as carpenter and cabinet maker.

George is survived by his daughter, Katie, of Ithaca, N.Y., his son, Christopher (Kit) Creeger and daughter-in-law Shelley Hadfield of Meriden, N.H., and two grandsons, Ethan and Josh, both sons of Kit and Shelley.

He is predeceased by his wife, Elva, and by a son, Carl, who lived in Austin, Texas.

Donations in memory of Dr. Creeger may be made to Wesleyan's Center for Faculty Career Development.

A memorial service is anticipated at Wesleyan in May.

East Hampton

Clara M. Aukshunas

Good friend, wife and mother Clara M. (Miklos) Aukshunas, 91, wife of the late John D. Aukshunas, died Friday, Nov. 28, at her residence in Chelmsford, Mass. She was born March 15, 1923, in New Britain.

Clara Aukshunas was born to hardworking Polish immigrant parents Vincent and Rosalia (Trzcinski) Miklosz in New Britain, where as a child she grew up on High Street and attended Sacred Heart Parochial School. Both her parents died by the time she was 12, and her sister Hedwig, whom Clara adored, became her guardian. She graduated from New Britain High School in 1941 and worked for the military draft board.

Clara first met her husband-to-be, John D. Aukshunas, on the Stanley Quarter Golf Course. In the course of their lives, they spent many sunny hours together playing golf, and many evenings as a dreamy dancing duo.

Clara helped the Aukshunas family build a cottage at Lake Pocotopaug in East Hampton, where the family enjoyed vacations fishing and swimming.

Clara was a great nature enthusiast, and imparted that value to her children. She took pleasure in feeding the wild birds, and there was nothing that delighted her more than setting out peanut butter for the mockingbird. In later years, she supported various environmental causes. An avid reader, she was savvy and well-informed about political and world events that shaped our culture.

Clara and John moved over the city line to Newington in 1967 to one of the new suburban developments that were being built at the time. When her children were older, she worked for the New Britain Board of Education and later took a job with the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles. She was a member of the YWCA and swam regularly with a group of women friends. She enjoyed frequent walks around the neighborhood. Clara was a nurturing and present mother who was always there for her children.

Clara was predeceased by her husband John, to whom she was married for 56 years; sisters Hedwig Masaero, Florence Majewski, Irene Cosgrove and brother Joseph Miklos. She leaves her children Mary Dong and husband David Dong, of New York City; Paul Aukshunas, of Orange, Calif.; John Aukshunas, of Chelmsford, Massachusetts; Jane Aukshunas, of Portland, Ore.; and grandchildren Brian Aukshunas and Kyle Aukshunas, of Orange, Calif.; Timothy Aukshunas, of Seattle, Wash.; and Max Aukshunas and Vanessa Aukshunas, of Chelmsford, Massachusetts.

We will always hold dear in our hearts the memory of Clara's feisty humor and her caring, nurturing spirit, along with deep love and respect for our mother, grandmother, wife and friend.

The family would like to extend a special thank-you to the staff of the Palm Manor Nursing Home, Chelmsford, Mass., for the care and compassion that was extended to Clara over the years.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, Dec. 6, from Venskunas Funeral Home, 670 Stanley St., New Britain, with an 11 a.m. Mass of Christian Burial at Holy Spirit Church, Newington. Burial will be in St. Mary Cemetery, New Britain. Calling hours will also be on Saturday, from 9:30-10:30 a.m., at the Venskunas Funeral Home.

Portland Police News

11/19: David Fontanez, 24, of 332 Cox Rd., was charged with fourth-degree larceny, Portland Police said.

11/20: Cody Sanford, 24, of 133 West High St., East Hampton, was charged with probation violation and second-degree failure to appear, police said.

11/25: Michael Cannata, 70, of 218 Main St., was charged with second-degree breach of peace and interfering with police, police said.

East Hampton Police News

11/16: Thomas Kabara, 31, of 394 East Haddam Moodus Rd., Moodus, was arrested and charged with second-degree criminal trespass, East Hampton Police said.

11/24: Timothy J. Baker, 48, of 1 Hayes Rd., was arrested and charged with second-degree criminal mischief and second-degree threatening, police said.

Colchester Police News

11/25: State Police said Travis Schubel, 29, of 25 Salem Ridge Dr., Salem, was arrested and charged with four counts of violation of probation.

11/26: Colchester Police said Justin Overbeck, 28, of 19 Boulder Rd., sustained very minor injuries after his car hit a pole on Route 149 near Church Street. Police said Overbeck was charged with speeding.

11/26: State Police said Julia Leblanc, 17,

Hebron Police News

11/28: State Police said Brendan Akers, 20, of 36 Scarboro Rd., was arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit third-degree burglary, criminal liability for third-degree burglary, conspiracy to commit second-degree larceny and criminal liability for second-degree larceny.

11/30: State Police said Kimberly Benevides, 45, of 54 Old Colchester Rd., Lebanon, was arrested and charged with sixth-degree larceny, interfering with an officer, failure to meet insurance requirements, operating under suspension, evading responsibility, and operating under the influence. Police said Benevides committed a larceny at FennAgain's Pub and, when leaving, backed into another car and fled the scene.

White Powder Found in Hebron Mailboxes

State Police said they investigated after 10 homes on Hall Road were found to have a white powdery substance in their mailboxes Nov. 10.

Police said DEEP officials identified the substance as the active ingredient in chemical fire extinguishers.

No threats were associated with the incident according to police, who said they will be continuing to investigate.

Anyone with information can call Trooper Daniel Greenwood at 860-465-5455 ext. 4022.

Marlborough Police News

11/25: State Police said Donna Johnson, 52, of 120 Old Farm Rd., Glastonbury, was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to drive at a reasonable distance.

11/26: State Police said Cheryl Coffe, 53, of 264 North Main St., was arrested and charged with third-degree assault, disorderly conduct, second-degree falsely reporting an incident, first-degree hindering prosecution.

Andover Police News

11/24: State Police said they are investigating after a workshop was broken into on Times Farm Road. Anyone with information can call Trooper David O'Connor at 860-742-0235.

11/25: State Police said they are investigating after a GPS was stolen out of a car on Boston Hill Road. Anyone with information can call Trooper Paul Arigno at 860-896-3200.