

RIVEREAST News Bulletin

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Spreading Christmas Cheer... Leah (fifth grade) and Kayla (third grade) Balsler, students at Jack Jackter Intermediate School, did a project during the holidays. They created 50 bookmarks – they drew them, colored them, got them laminated and added a ribbon to them – and then they donated them to Connecticut Children’s Medical Center in Hartford. The girls’ goal was to make the children at CCMC smile for Christmas.

Belletown Officials Push Facilities Needs

by John Tyczkowski

Tuesday night, a three-hour long public information meeting laid out all of East Hampton’s facilities needs in the open, and allowed citizens the chance to lay out their thoughts candidly as well.

Nearly 130 people attended the meeting in the EHHS auditorium, the turnout seemingly unhampered by the light snow falling at the time.

Steve Greco moderated the two hours and fifteen minutes of presentations from the town manager, the chief of police, the superintendent of schools, the fire chief and the head of the town facilities committee.

The town finance director also spoke to the financial impact of these projects. The Lake Commission and Water and Sewer Commission also presented.

Differing opinions regarding the content of the town facilities committee’s report, released in November, prompted the meeting.

In their report, the committee recommended the construction of a public safety complex including both a police and fire station at 195 Main St., as well as the construction of a combined town hall and Board of Education Central Services office along a section of Main Street in the Village Center.

The town does not currently own these properties.

Town Manager Michael Maniscalco gave the first presentation, stressing the need for a new

town hall, referring to the building as the town’s “front door.”

“You have a question you need answered, you need help with something, you go to the town hall,” he said. “It’s really our first impression to the community, and I’ve heard first impressions are the most important.”

Maniscalco gave a litany of issues the town hall faces, which include the lack of adequate storage space for town records, failing foundation and structure, a lack of employee work space and problems with the radio antenna’s safeness for maintenance workers.

Maniscalco also related one particularly striking story to drive home his points.

“Last year we had an issue with the ventilation system; we started seeing dust and dirt and all kinds of things showing up on the vents,” he said. “We thought it might have been black mold. But after we had it investigated and worked on, we found out that our ventilation system had simply never been cleaned.”

And, Maniscalco added, “The building was built in 1946.”

Another story that struck much of the audience was that though the town attempted to add an ADA-compliant ramp to the town fall front, the top corner ended up being too narrow for persons in wheelchairs to maneuver around by themselves.

“On many occasions, we’ve had to go out-

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‘An Inspiration to So Many People’

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

When Emma Fries walked into Bacon Academy for the first time in months on Dec. 4, she was greeted with signs of well wishes and 1,000 Japanese paper cranes.

A sophomore at the high school, Fries, 15, has been through more than many kids her age will ever experience.

When she was just a year old, Fries was diagnosed with a rare form of brain cancer. Despite being given a one percent chance of surviving, and with doctors at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center telling Fries’ parents, Kevin and Dawn, to take her home and love her, Emma never gave up. Her parents rushed baby Emma to Boston Children’s Hospital and there they performed a risky surgery, followed by chemotherapy and radiation that saved Emma’s life.

“She’s made medical history,” Dawn Fries, Emma’s mother, said. “She wasn’t expected to survive. She had a one percent survival rate then and now it’s 50 percent” for kids with the same type of tumor.

The chemotherapy and radiation on such a young baby had its risks; Emma wound up suffering a stroke, and had to relearn everything, including how to walk and talk.

Last summer, Emma and her family faced a life-changing diagnosis yet again. On July 14,

Emma was diagnosed with a rare late-stage form of liver cancer.

“On July 4 weekend, Emma complained of stomach pains,” Kevin Fries, her father, said. “She had a radiation scar and just wanted to get her hair done. That morning, she complained again of pain and was pale. We called off the hair and went straight to the emergency room.”

That was when doctors found that her respiratory rate was “through the roof” and her liver was three times its normal size with tumors.

“It was inoperable,” Kevin said. “It was just too involved.”

Kevin explained that usually at this late stage, it spreads. However Emma’s was contained in her liver.

“All of a sudden, our world just changed,” Kevin said. “It brings you back to square one.”

A mere five days after Emma was placed on the liver transplant list, a miracle happened. Even though Emma was low on the list, the hospital had found a liver.

“If she was an adult, she would never have gotten a liver,” Kevin said. “If she didn’t get a liver, she wouldn’t be here.”

Dawn and Kevin explained that once the liver was found, the doctors had to evaluate it to make sure it harbored no diseases and was good to go. And while they did all that, Emma was in the operating room and ready for the transplant.



Colchester teen Emma Fries (third from left) was welcomed back to Bacon Academy last month; it was her first time at the school since a liver transplant in August. From left are Emma’s classmates Katarina Konon, Megan Stevens, Shelby Kranc, Nick Hemm, Cara Delsesto and Megan Ashe.

“Waiting to see if we would get the liver was agonizing,” Kevin said. “It was life or death.”

Dawn said she knew her family’s fortune came at another family’s misfortune.

“It’s bittersweet,” Dawn said. “Someone has to pass away to get the organ; there has to be some other tragedy. It shows how critical or

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Police Chief Sean Cox, left, and Town Manager Michael Maniscalco, right, discussed the needs of the town during a comprehensive public information meeting Tuesday evening. Various departments presented their hopes and dreams at the meeting – and more than a dozen residents also offered their input.

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side and help residents in wheelchairs get around that corner and get into the building,” Maniscalco said. “I’d argue our ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] accessibility is minimal at best.”

Next, Police Chief Sean Cox delineated to the residents in attendance his critical need for expanded and updated facilities, citing the safety of not only his own officers but also the town at large.

“It’s more than just a building that we have issues with here, there’s a ripple effect into our personnel which makes us very inefficient,” he said. “We can do more with what we have; the only problem is the way we currently do business restricts what we can do.

“This is not placing blame or pointing fingers,” Cox said. “It’s just a ‘state of the state’ presentation to educate the public on where we are.”

Cox brought up several safety and maintenance issues with the police station itself, space issues with storing evidence and employee workspace, as well as outdated record systems and a lack of parking for the public.

In addition, he discussed the department’s short-staffed nature, including the need for training to replace the detectives it’s lost over the years to retirement.

“We’ve had some very serious cases we’ve had to hand off to the state police because of our lack of detectives,” he said.

Cox also addressed some comments he said he’s received from people asking why the police department needs the large amount of equipment it does.

“The people need to understand we’re a multi-function agency. Not only do we respond for police services and criminal investigations, we’re also the primary responders for medical calls,” he said. “That means, at a minimum, we’re going in two different directions on most days.”

In addition, Cox also stressed the need to bring dispatch services into town, instead of contracting with Colchester-based dispatch service KX.

“We pay into a regional system for ambulance, fire and police,” he said. “The person who answers 911 is not our employee. How accountable can we hold them? One of the most dire functions that we have, we’re subcontracting that out.”

“We can do better for you all,” he said, concluding his presentation. “We can serve you better. But we need to start changing some of the things that we do here.”

Superintendent of Schools Diane Dugas and Board of Education Chair Ken Barber talked next about the public schools’ needs.

Barber outlined the basic idea that the Board of Education wished to reduce the number of buildings the school system used from five to three – by shuttering Center School and the Board of Education administrative building.

“We’re asking that you please relieve us of the expense of a school that was built in 1913, and an office building that was built in 1866, the year after the end of the Civil War,” he said.

Dugas gave a profile of each of the town’s schools that serve approximately 1,960 students overall, including building history and outstanding needed maintenance.

She stressed that Center School has severe issues with aging infrastructure, including sev-

eral components of the school that require immediate and expensive replacement, such as the boiler, air handler and plumbing system.

“Right now we have inefficiencies in our budget due to the high maintenance costs that we have,” Dugas said. “We need to be proactive and not reactive. It’s about spending wisely and reducing waste, and keeping budgets in balance over time.

“Our biggest return on our investments is our students, we want them to come back and be a part of our community,” she said.

She stressed the need to consolidate school buildings, as Barber mentioned, and to take advantage of state incentives for both building a replacement for Center School and for a new Board of Education building.

“One of the biggest impacts of looking at the school system is that we get a reimbursement from the state in regard to renovations for our buildings,” she said. “Let’s take advantage of those reimbursements.”

In closing, Barber urged residents to take immediate action.

“It’s always easier to criticize and do nothing, because that way you were never wrong. But then you’re never right,” he said. “Our request is simple: we do not want more at the Board of Education; we want less. Please allow us to reduce five buildings to three.”

Fire Chief Greg Voelker then spoke about the issues facing the 60-person fire department, which also includes three firehouses. He specifically addressed facility problems with Fire Company No. 2’s building in Cobalt, which has been on the department’s agenda for years.

Voelker mentioned that the building, built in 1952 and leased to the town, has a front that is too small for standard-size trucks, which has been requiring additional expenses to the town.

“The fire trucks that are bought for that firehouse have to be custom built, you can’t buy them off the shelf,” he said. “Also, if I call in mutual aid, they have to leave their stuff outside. If that happens in inclement weather, trucks can freeze up, which causes damage.”

Also, the two-floor building is not ADA-compliant in that it lacks an elevator and it lacks doors that are large enough for wheelchairs to move through. He also said all firehouses lack storage space for their required reports, as well as bunk space for firefighters.

In addition, he stressed the sub-optimal location of the Cobalt station, whose driveway opens into a busy four-way intersection, the cross between routes 66 and 151.

“During rush hour, it’s somewhat impossible to get out of and to go in any direction,” he said.

In addition, Voelker brought to everyone’s attention the department’s need for a new ladder truck to replace its current model, purchased in 1985, which is facing safety issues, according to a recent inspection.

He said a replacement truck could cost between \$800,000 and \$1 million, but is crucial because currently the ladder is too unsafe for firefighters to use except in extreme emergencies.

Voelker also mentioned problems with the town’s buildings, citing the modern trend toward truss-style construction as a safety hazard for fire crews.

“There are studies that show that when exposed to fire, an engineered system can fail in 10-15 minutes,” Voelker said. “That’s the time it takes us to get to your house. I could walk in

and not walk out. It’s that simple.

“The way that buildings are being constructed now is killing firemen,” he continued. “It’s not a joke.”

Voelker said he is working on legislation to have truss-style buildings be marked as such in an effort to increase firefighters’ safety, and stressed the need for upgraded equipment and facilities to allow a quicker response time.

Following Voelker, Glenn Gollenberg of the town facilities committee gave an abbreviated version of the committee’s initial presentation to the Town Council back in October.

The main points of the report remained unchanged, namely that the police station and town hall/Board of Education building were considered the top priorities.

Also, Gollenberg said, the fact remains that the town is very land-poor, which hampers construction efforts and long-term planning.

“The town needs a land bank for new facilities; it’s a fact,” he said. “We need to plan for the future.”

Town Finance Director Jeff Jylkka spoke as the final presenter, and outlined the debt and tax ramifications for the town should they choose to take on some of the proposed projects in the immediate future.

Specifically, Jylkka presented a series of projections which showed how East Hampton could take on up to three additional \$5 million projects over the next few years, and still maintain “very low” to “moderate” debt per capita rates and overall debt, respectively, as defined by Standard & Poor’s.

Also for comparison, Jylkka showed how the town’s debt service per capita and outstanding debt per capita are both well under the state average, and well under the amounts carried by neighboring towns Portland, Cromwell, Marlborough and Colchester.

“Ultimately, there are two questions. There’s the institutional questions which must make its way through the Board of Finance and the town council,” he said. “The individual question is up to all of you to decide on. At the end of the day it’s your town, your money and your vote.”

Following presentations, more than a dozen residents spoke during public comment to give their opinions on everything they had just heard.

Pete Brown talked more in-depth about his thoughts on the police department’s needs. He agreed with Cox in that the department should be more in control of its own dispatching.

“As a former police officer, I feel for the guys on the road,” Brown said. “I’ve experienced some of the things the chief talked about. The one recommendation I would like to make is that we take over KX’s duties in town and get it back in town.”

He also stressed the need for immediate action.

“Take these studies, put something together, show it to the voters, and let’s see where we stand,” Brown said.

Larry Lowe, a longtime resident, suggested the town use eminent domain if needed to get the land required for new facilities.

“We have a crisis situation coming with our facilities, and it should not have happened,” he said. “The town has the right of eminent domain. Worst comes to worst, you take the property you need despite the yelling and screaming of the people who own it.”

“I’ve been here 40 years and I’ve dealt with

that; the town has taken property from me,” Lowe said.

Lifelong resident and former mechanical contractor in town John Hanson said the town needs to take decisive action to fix all the infrastructure issues adding up at once.

“I go around town and see houses under repair with blue tarps over them. I think East Hampton right now has a blue tarp over the whole town,” he said. “We need to bond out and get the money to repair the town. And we need to raise taxes. None of us want that, but it’s inevitable. It’s going to cost a lot of money to fix this town.”

Alison Tocarz criticized what she considered the town’s lack of attention to facilities, citing Maniscalco’s Town Hall ventilation system anecdote.

“It seems that everything that is old in town, everyone is saying, ‘Let’s get rid of it, we need something new,’” she said. “We don’t seem to maintain anything in town, so I think we should lease everything now, instead of build.”

Resident Fran Klein said the town needs to have a long-term plan in place before taking any significant action, in order to decide what type of town East Hampton will become.

“How far and how fast do we want to grow? This was a small town, but we’ve been increasing in population,” she said. “I am appalled by all the buildings going up on 66.

“If you can show us a long-term plan for where you want our community to go, then we can look at all the individual parts we’ve looked at this evening and put them together in a logical sequence,” Klein added.

Following public comment, Town Council Vice Chairman Kevin Reich, who’s worked in town for 42 years, delivered some comments on the whole meeting.

“We need to put together a comprehensive plan that expresses each and every one of the ideas that were laid out tonight,” he said. “Also, it appears that we as a community can afford financially to address a number of these projects. The question is, do we want to?”

Reich said he “was heartened by the number of people who expressed an interest in wanting to investigate that window of opportunity.”

He also mentioned that upgrading the town’s buildings will be beneficial for all town residents in a more tangible way.

“I understand the investment we make in this community is going to improve the greatest investment you made, in purchasing your home. Your home value will improve when this community’s services and facilities improve,” Reich said.

“I might not have been born here, this might not be my home, and I know I’ll never be considered a townie,” he added. “But East Hampton is where my heart is, and this is where we need to invest, in our town.”

To close the meeting, Town Council Chairwoman Barbara Moore reaffirmed the town’s commitment to solving all of its facilities problems.

“We will continue down this road, and we will involve all of you in the process,” she said to the gathered residents. “We hope that you will keep coming to our meetings, and call us if you have questions; we’re all available to you.”

The Town Council will next meet Tuesday, Jan. 13, in the meeting room at Town Hall.

An Inspiration cont. from Front Page

gan donating is. One life can save five lives.”

Dawn described her daughter as a “good soul.” While waiting for the liver to be tested, a boy with a dislocated hip came in. “She said ‘if he needs to go before me, he can,’” Dawn said. “Emma has always been very considerate.”

The surgery to receive the liver was 12 hours, Kevin said, and doctors had to replace almost 24 pints of blood that Emma had lost during surgery. However, Emma’s determination shone through, Dawn said, and 10 days after the surgery, she was discharged home. Typically, Kevin said, people with organ transplants take between 21 days and six months to be released, depending on how their body accepts the organ.

“The only time she complained was when I had told her before surgery that they would make a small incision,” Kevin said. “After the surgery, she said it wasn’t so small.”

“When the doctor says it’s a miracle, it’s a miracle,” Dawn said. “With any diagnosis, you’re functioning on adrenaline. You are more in tune the second time around, but it’s a whirlwind and you’re on the fast track.”

Dawn said it really didn’t hit until after the fact.

“It’s not your first rodeo,” Dawn said. “It is an emotional rollercoaster.”

On Aug. 14, Emma was out of the hospital – but her road was far from over.

“People have no idea the struggles she faces every day,” Kevin said. “She just started showing by herself again last week.”

According to Kevin and Dawn, the first six months after an organ transplant are tough. Emma cannot be around anyone that’s sick because of her weakened immune system. She can’t swim and any water used to make her food had to be boiled before using. Emma also used to attend High Hopes Therapeutic Riding in Old Lyme; however, she cannot continue that until she becomes more stable.

“There are things she’ll never be able to do again,” Kevin said. “Horse therapy is her only sport. She may not be able to go back. Taking that away is hard, but eventually maybe once she stabilizes she can return.”

Emma fights daily the battle of balancing her medicine to stop her body from rejecting the organ. Already once she had a near rejection, Dawn and Kevin said, and doctors had to change her medications, put her on steroids and balance it out.

“She’s been through a lot and taken it in stride,” Dawn said. “Emma always asks us how we are doing. She’s been an inspiration to so many people.”

One big thing the family has been thankful for was a letter from the donor’s family.

“It puts a name on it,” Kevin said. “This year would have been very different if not for that family.”

After being confined due to the risk of infection for months, Emma returned to Bacon Academy last month. She found herself walking into a school with 1,000 paper cranes and her closest friends with welcome back signs.

“There are a few core people that have taken her under their wing,” Kevin said. “They look out for her. You don’t see a lot of kids with that empathy.”

Dawn thanked the community for what they did. The day Emma was headed home from Boston after her transplant surgery, the community gathered at Bacon to fold all of the paper cranes which symbolize good health in Japanese culture.

“It’s such a good thing when someone is that sick,” Dawn said. “They are amazing with their empathy.”

Dawn said she was amazed at all of the support. One of Emma’s friends sent her postcards almost every day when Emma wasn’t allowed many visitors. While she was in Boston, Emma was also visited by the Rev. Michael Giannitelli, formerly of St. Andrew’s Church in Colchester, to share a prayer with her.

“Everyone has been praying and giving support, even people all over the world are rooting for her,” Dawn said. “This was completely out of the blue and the outcome has been so positive. The high school kids deserve credit for what they’ve done to welcome her back.”

Going forward, Emma’s fight continues. Kevin explained that her lab results are taken weekly and depending on how they are, Emma is either home or in the hospital. This past Tuesday, the family was headed back up to Boston for their first MRI since the surgery to check for tumors.

“It’s never been a clear path for Emma,” Dawn said. “Emma’s just trying to get back to where she was. It’s all very unpredictable.”

“You deal with it everyday now,” Kevin said. “It’s a tough thing to deal with as a family.”

The Fries’ other children are two sons, ages 13 and 12.

“Everyone’s affected by it.”

For now though, Emma will continue to make the rubber band bracelets known around school as ‘Emma Strong’ bracelets – in honor of a miracle girl who always cares for others before herself.



State Police are searching for two suspects involved in four armed robberies, one at the 7-Eleven in Marlborough Jan. 3.

Marlborough 7-Eleven Robbed at Gunpoint

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

In the early morning hours of last Saturday, Jan. 3, the 7-Eleven store at 3 North Main St. was robbed at gunpoint, state police reported.

No one was hurt, but an undetermined amount of cash was taken, police said. The suspects are also connected with robberies in Franklin at the Mobil Mart and in Willimantic.

Police said they are searching for two suspects involved with the robberies that were captured on store video footage. One is a Hispanic man approximately 5’7”, heavyset, clean-shaven and wearing a black jacket with a hood over his head, red gloves and faded blue jeans with a decorative belt. The other, an accomplice, is described as a white male approximately 5’7”, heavyset, wearing a mask and a black coat with the hood pulled over his head, green gloves and dark colored jeans.

At around 2 a.m. Jan. 3, police said, the suspects entered the convenience store through the

front door, and the first suspect pointed a silver frame and black slide pistol at the clerk behind the counter, police said. The suspects demanded money, and the clerk handed over the cash drawer, police said. The suspects then left the store fleeing in an undetermined direction.

Police said a thorough search of the area was conducted by troopers and a K-9 unit, however they did not find the suspects or a related vehicle.

State police also reported that the Mobil Mart at 63 Windham Tpke. in Franklin was robbed earlier that night by the same suspects. Police also said the suspects may be involved with two armed robberies in Willimantic on New Year’s Day.

The investigation is ongoing and anyone with information is asked to call the State Police Troop K Major Crime Squad at 860-465-5411. All calls will be kept confidential.

Marlborough Potentially in Oil Tank Violation

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Tuesday’s meeting of the Board of Selectmen began with a heated debate between First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski and Fire Marshal Joe Asklar.

Asklar began by stating in public comment that a project to install a 2,000-gallon oil tank at Company 2 had not been properly inspected and has product in it already when the code states it cannot have product in it until it has a certification of compliance.

“On Dec. 16, I sent a letter to [Public Works superintendent of operations] Chris Corsa with very specific instructions on how the project was to be done,” Asklar said. “The state statute states there is to be no product in the tank until there is a certification of compliance.”

However, Asklar said, he found out Monday morning there were 1,400 gallons of highly-combustible product in the tank without the proper inspections.

Asklar told the *Rivereast* Wednesday he made phone calls to Corsa and heard nothing back for weeks on how the project was going.

“It’s a combustible liquid, it has the highest degree of public safety in fire code and state statute,” Asklar told the *Rivereast*. “Monday morning I called to see how the job was going. There was 1,400 gallons of fuels without inspections or anything done from the Dec. 16 letter.”

Asklar explained that typical protocol surrounding this kind of project is that Corsa would

request an inspection from the fire marshal. Asklar said no such request was ever made.

“It’s specific to the fire marshal, not the building inspector,” Asklar said. One of the issues as well, Asklar said, is that some of the tests required must be done without product in the tank.

Asklar also contacted Convault, the company which supplies the oil to the tank, to see if it had any data or information if that tank was compliant. Asklar said he has yet to get a response from Convault at this time.

“The lack of communication and lack of inspections and putting product in the tank bothered me the most,” Asklar said. “I asked Corsa who authorized the code violation and putting product in the tank prior to testing. I did not get a clear answer.”

Although Asklar said the tank is an “excellent, safe product,” it still has to meet certain requirements before fuel can be put in.

Corsa did not return calls for comment for this story.

During the meeting, Asklar stated he had spoken with the state fire marshal and learned the town had two options: they could either resolve the problem peacefully or face legal actions.

While Asklar was speaking during public comment, Gaudinski interrupted him numerous times, attempting to call off public comment and stating that the project is being handled in-

house, and procedures had been followed properly. Gaudinski refused to listen to Asklar until he put his complaint and what violations the town was guilty of in a written letter.

“We have to go back to the Dec. 16 statement and do what was originally agreed,” Asklar said. “The oil has to be removed from the tank.”

“We have not violated anything,” Gaudinski said.

In a written statement to the *Rivereast* this week, Gaudinski said the town hired a contractor in October to remove the original underground storage tank at Company 2 due to its 20-plus years of age and undocumented tank information.

“It was replaced with a Convault tank that was already tested and UL-certified prior to shipping as required,” Gaudinski said. “In October, the fire marshal and building official met with town personnel on this operations matter.”

“At that time, plans were found satisfactory by the fire marshal,” Gaudinski added. “The town applied for a building permit prior to installation that was approved by both the fire marshal and building official on Dec. 15, 2014.”

However, Gaudinski said the issues raised by Asklar in his Dec. 16 letter had not been previously brought up.

“The tank and all of its related equipment is now above ground,” Gaudinski said. “Appropriate soil tests were taken as well as vacuum

and pressure tests. Pressure line testing can be done independently of emptying the fuel in the tank.”

During the winter, Gaudinski said, the “town’s primary concern was heat for the building that houses the fire and police departments along with its emergency generator.” Therefore, fuel was placed in the tanks.

“The town has requested from the fire marshal that he cite the violations in writing together with the associated regulation or statute in question,” Gaudinski said.

At Tuesday’s meeting, Gaudinski said she would hold a meeting about the situation including Corsa and the building inspector.

“Will this meeting be a public meeting?” selectman Denis Soucy asked.

Gaudinski stated the situation would have to be evaluated first.

“It doesn’t sound like something we can’t fix,” selectman Dick Shea said.

Asklar said Wednesday the state fire marshal would be assisting the town and Asklar in the interpretation of state statute regarding the tank, and if necessary, there would be legal action taken by Asklar and the state’s attorney against the town if the town did not enter into compliance with the state marshal’s recommendations.

“We’re doing everything we can before going through that route,” he said.



Breakfast is now a daily offering at Marlborough Pizza and Restaurant. The eatery had been serving up the most important meal of the day on weekends only but, due to popular demand, recently expanded it to Monday through Friday as well.

Weekday Breakfast Comes to Marlborough Pizza

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Pizza for breakfast? Well, not exactly, but people are now able to get breakfast at Marlborough Pizza and Restaurant any day of the week.

After customers asked co-owner Nick Topintzis about more breakfast options, he delivered. Although the restaurant had been doing breakfast on weekends beginning at 7 a.m., Topintzis and his other co-owner, chef Marco Mayen, decided to make it a daily thing.

The restaurant's weekday breakfast hours, which begin at 6 a.m. Monday through Friday, started this past Monday.

And breakfast is not strictly a morning affair, either.

"You can order breakfast all day," Topintzis said.

Along with the new breakfast hours, Topintzis also expanded the breakfast menu, and is doing a revamp of the rest of the menu, with plenty of new offerings – including pizza by the slice.

One of the big changes is an expanded glu-

ten-free section, which Topintzis and Mayen started after they realized how many patrons were unable to eat gluten.

"Almost 90 percent of our dinners can be made gluten-free," manager Amanda Gonzalez said. "We're also introducing some sugar-free desserts for diabetics."

The restaurant, which opened this past June, has seen success in the community, partly because of Topintzis' dedication to the community.

Marlborough Pizza and Restaurant originally opened in the late 1980s by original Greek owner Nick Aivioltis. In 2007, the eatery was sold to new owners and transformed into the Route 66 Diner. However, earlier this year it was put back on the market and Topintzis scooped it up, to bring the restaurant back to its heritage including a Greek-styled pan pizza that Aivioltis was known for.

"Nick does a lot for the community," Gonzalez said. "He's donated pizza to the Marlborough Congregational Church for our

pastor's birthday and also donated to Marlborough Elementary School for their bake sale."

That commitment to community, Gonzalez said, really is what made Topintzis expand the breakfast options, since Topintzis "doesn't even like breakfast."

Some of the things customers can look forward to on the menu include five types of eggs benedict, 12 types of omelets or "scramblers," stuffed French toast, Cinnabon pancakes and mimosas. The restaurant is also launching a new kids menu.

"Everything is your choice," Gonzalez said. "We can make gluten-free any breakfast sandwich. The chef is also accommodating to allergies and likes. We can make meals that are not on the menu."

Also, starting Jan. 19, residents of Marlborough can look forward to free delivery in town as well.

"I try and do everything [customers want] and be part of the community," Topintzis said.

Gonzalez said one of the most important aspects of their menu is that everything is made fresh.

"There's nothing fake," Gonzalez said. "There's no frozen anything. Our seafood is fresh and never frozen as well."

Topintzis said it's just time for them to implement all of the new things since they have come to understand the community and the customers better.

"It took time to see what people need," Topintzis said. "We're now equipped and ready to do so. We want to provide the best service we can."

Marlborough Pizza and Restaurant, located at 7 Independence Dr., is now open Monday-Friday, 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., and on Saturdays and Sundays from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. People can eat in or carry out – or, starting Jan. 19, get their food delivered as well.

The restaurant can be reached at 860-295-8181.

Rapelye Appointed to Marlborough Board of Education

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

The local Board of Education is welcoming a new member, after former board member Carole Shea resigned last month to join the RHAM school board.

Republican Susan Rapelye, resident and parent in Marlborough, had run for the Board of Education in 2013 and came close to winning, but did not get elected.

"I was going to run again [later this year]," Rapelye said. "I had run and lost by 30 some odd votes."

Rapelye said it's her love of children that made her so interested in the board.

"I have four children in the school system," Rapelye said. "I hope I can do well in this volunteer position."

"I was very pleased to see Sue appointed to the Marlborough Board of Education," Ken Hjulstrom, Marlborough Republican Town Committee chairman, said. "She came very close to being elected in 2013 and since then has attended nearly every Board of Education meeting. I can not think of anyone who would be more prepared to assume this role as a nominee to fill this vacancy."

This position will be Rapelye's first time on a town board. She first moved to Marlborough in August 2012 and said she quickly noticed how many people are so involved.

Rapelye said she is impressed with the school system and wants to "give back and make a difference in our town."

"I am delighted to have been appointed to the Marlborough Board of Education," Rapelye said. "I am confident I will bring a fresh perspective to the already seasoned Board of Education's members."

Rapelye said since the November 2013 election, she has attended all, but one Board of Education meeting.

"I'm ready and anxious to jump in and add immediate value," Rapelye said. "I'm looking forward to working on the 2015-16 budget and eagerly enthusiastic to work with the members of the board on the technology committee."

Rapelye holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from what is now Post University in Waterbury. She is the program manager at Fiserv, a financial services company in Glastonbury.

Rapelye will finish Shea's former term which will run until the end of 2017.

"We are rapidly approaching the November 2015 municipal elections and we will be looking for more people to step forward to serve our community," Hjulstrom said. "I trust there will be others who will demonstrate a similar level of commitment."



Sue Rapelye (left) was appointed Tuesday as the newest member of the Marlborough Board of Education. First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski (right) congratulated her.

Andover Trio Hoping for Republican Endorsement

by Geeta Schrayter

Next week, Andover Republicans will have the opportunity to select who they'd like to endorse for the May municipal elections – and there's a three-member Republican team hoping to make the cut.

Current selectwoman Cathy Desrosiers, who is completing her first term on the board, is seeking re-election along with newcomers Steve Willard and Curt Dowling.

Dowling, who has lived in town all his life, is then hoping to go on to become first selectman, unseating Bob Burbank, who has held the position since 2006. This week, Dowling explained when he was initially asked whether he'd consider running for first selectman, "My first answer was 'no.'"

But then, "after some discussion I said, 'Let me go home and talk to my wife,' and as it ended up, she said, 'Give it a shot,'" he explained.

Dowling added, "I've been close to this town for a long time being involved with the fire department and being fire chief for so long; I know all the ins and outs of what goes on at Town Hall."

Dowling joined the Andover Volunteer Fire Department in 1968, and worked his way up from a junior firefighter to fire chief.

"I'm still an active member" of the department, he said, but added he retired from the role of fire chief about seven years ago.

Dowling is also a member of the Fire Commission and said while he's seeking re-election to that commission, "if I'm lucky enough to be elected [first selectman] I would resign because that would be a conflict of interest which I'm very much aware of."

Along with his volunteer work, Dowling has worked at Connecticut Light and Power for the last 42 years but, he shared, "I'm at the end of my career there... It's time to look into retirement."

But it's the experiences he's garnered through the years that Dowling said qualified him for the role of first selectman.

"I've basically been an administrator as fire chief on a volunteer basis and I've been in a supervision role at work for quite some time," he said, adding he also worked with budgets on the fire commission and sat on the Tolland County Mutual Aid Board of Directors for over 20 years where he worked with a \$1-3 million budget.

He stated, "I think I have enough administrative knowledge and background to do the job as first selectman."

Dowling said he hopes to change some of

the things he's currently unhappy with.

"I don't like the way things are being run," he explained. "Since I opted to run for the position, I've been attending some [Board of] Selectmen meetings; I'd heard the stories about how they've been run and things like that and I don't like it. I don't like the atmosphere in Town Hall; it's not a good environment, especially for taxpayers."

He furthered, "You seem to be bothering certain people when you walk in there as a taxpayer."

Dowling said he, Desrosiers and Willard wanted to "bring civility back to town hall, to where if a taxpayer comes in with a question or complaint, you're heard. Your voice will be heard."

Dowling added he also wanted to focus on seniors in town who he thought "have taken a back seat for many, many, many years" and work to acquire more grants, improve infrastructure and increase recreation options to help keep families in town.

"As far as I'm concerned, the town's been at a standstill," he said.

Desrosiers felt similarly – although she said she thought that, overall, things were currently running "fairly well."

She clarified, "The budget is being adhered to, the taxes have been kept low; but I feel that the growth in the town and making it attractive for families to move to and stay in is lacking."

Like Dowling, Desrosiers said, "I think we need more recreation in town." She added, "I think we need to have more openness and cohesiveness between all the boards and commissions."

Desrosiers, who is an account manager for Colonial Life Insurance, has lived in town for 30 years. Prior to serving as a selectwoman, Desrosiers spent time on the Board of Finance for eight years, prior to which she was the Board Clerk. She also serves on the town's Library Board.

She said she decided to run for reelection "to create a better community, to be part of the solution and to help the town [become] a more positive, great small town to live in."

She added she had a "pretty good understanding of the finances and how to present a budget



Curt Dowling

and work with a budget and understand the needs of the taxpayers by being able to listen and hear and represent them."

Willard, who was also born and raised in Andover, had similar sentiments. He explained he decided to run because "I didn't like the path that we seem to be headed down."

He elaborated, explaining the Board of Selectmen seemed to be going down "a road of disjointedness."

"I don't know a good way to describe it other than it seems to me from what I'm hearing, that everyone is kind of doing their own thing," he stated. "I'm looking for more unity and transparency in the government in town and getting everyone more involved with what's going on."

Willard added, "I just really love our town and I want to get involved."

Like Dowling, Willard is involved with the Andover Fire Department and has been since 1987. He also runs the machinery business his father started and was a member of the United States Coast Guard.

The 44-year-old furthered he also wanted "to bring some youthfulness to the board."

He said he felt he'd make a good selectman due to "the fact that I'm a younger candidate and I can be more in touch with younger residents in town."

He added, "The fact that I have been a member of the fire department for so long, I have a good feeling for how the town works, and my enthusiasm for the town really sets me apart from some of the other residents."

Willard also said he wanted to focus on bringing more business into town, and "making sure that there's proper recreation for residents of all ages from the youngest child to the oldest senior. Reasons for people to stay are really going to be my focus."

Willard shared his thoughts on the current selectmen, saying he thought they'd done "an excellent job to get us where we are but I feel like they've become stagnant in their positions and not open to certain things. I know when people are asking questions they're not getting the answers that they'd like – or answers in general."

But the trio hopes to change all that if they're



Cathy Desrosiers

elected, and Dowling stressed the three were in it to win it together.

"One thing a lot of people don't understand is it's all three of us or nothing," he said, adding that "wasn't a threat" but "the three of us are solid; we're stuck together like glue."

Desrosiers reiterated Dowling's sentiments, and said the decision was made to run as a team so they'd be able to make a difference.

"The thinking behind that was the capability of having the right leadership so that everybody is on the same page and working toward the same goal," she stated. "Everybody has got to be on the same page. You can't have different people with different agendas or different priorities – it doesn't work."

Dowling added, "Cathy, Steve and I have said from the beginning we're not going to have any hidden agendas. Our plan is right out there and we started with six steps."

Those steps, according to a letter to the editor Dowling wrote this week, are to improve communications and begin a professional working relationship between the selectmen and all boards, commissions, elected officials and residents; to bring trust back to town government spending by increasing transparency; to bring civility back to the town office building; to apply all state and town laws, regulations and policies including ethics laws; to initiate dialogue between the selectmen, boards and commissions and report back monthly so projects can be supported jointly and the government will be more efficient; and to strengthen and support the senior population, and to improve recreational opportunities and facilities for residents.

Dowling concluded, "It's a large agenda and I probably wouldn't even be able to do it all in four years, but I'm not afraid of taking on the task."

Desrosiers meanwhile, said voters should support her because "I'm in your corner. Because I'm listening to what you want and I'm willing to do the hard work to make it happen."

The Republican caucus takes place next Wednesday, Jan. 13, at 7 p.m., at the Town Office Building, 17 School Rd. Snow date is Jan. 14.



Steve Willard

East Hampton Police Department Launches Facebook Page

by John Tyczkowski

East Hampton residents, both current and former, now have a one-stop spot to stay up to date with what's happening in police news in their hometown.

Last month, the East Hampton Police Department stepped into the world of social media with the launch of its Facebook page.

As of press time, that page, [facebook.com/pages/East-Hampton-Police-Dept/301934496669454](https://www.facebook.com/pages/East-Hampton-Police-Dept/301934496669454), had 628 'likes' from as many Facebook users.

Officer Hardie Burgin runs the page, which launched in early December.

"I saw a bunch of other local police departments were doing it, so I decided it would be another good venue to get what we do here out to the public," he said. "Social media is not the future, it's now, and we should embrace it."

Burgin said the Facebook page allows for more frequent communication with the community than press releases do, and with more detail as well.

"Up until now, everyone relied on us putting out press releases to the papers, and there were delays," he said. "But now, people can see mug shots, put names to faces for crimes, and read a little more about the crimes as well."

"We update the page as soon as we can after we make the arrest, and we put as many details in it as we can," Burgin said.

He also said that for now, the page will continue to focus on press releases and mug shots for its content, but that he wants to see the page become a more concrete "two-way communication tool."

"If we do different community events, like stuffing a police cruiser, I'd like to put that up on the page, before, during and after," Burgin said. "If we [the police] want to engage with our community, the page is an important way to let everyone know."

However, for the time being, he said residents can expect more press releases, mug shots and calls for recruitment on the page.

Burgin also said having the Facebook page is an important step in combating what he called the stigma surrounding police departments in the wake of national stories on police brutality.

"It's just another avenue for us to clearly spread what we're doing, to get it all out there and show people what we really do in town," he said.

Burgin said another plus to the page is the 'share' feature of Facebook, which allows posts to propagate throughout Facebook in direct proportion to the number of friends the user that shared the post has.

"We've got about 630 people looking at our page, so even if just one or two people share a post, it just multiplies," he said. "A few shares later, and 7,000 people have seen our post. It's exciting to see that our work is getting spread."

There has been some negative feedback to the page, but Burgin said he's not daunted.

"When you put yourself online, you're always going to get that," he said. "But it matters more that we're taking the step to connect with the community, at the click of a mouse."

Town Manager Michael Maniscalco said he was in full support of the page because it contributes to the town departments' mission of community engagement.

"I think it's a challenge sometimes for people to attend town meetings and stay informed, because of their other commitments," he said. "But we all sit at home at night on our phones or on Facebook, and we're always Googling things. You can use that to your advantage in terms of connecting with the public."

Maniscalco mentioned that he maintains a Twitter account in his capacity as town manager, @EHTown_manager, and the Parks and Recreation department maintains a Facebook page, [facebook.com/easthamptonparksandrecreation](https://www.facebook.com/easthamptonparksandrecreation).

"Being active on social media is an important part of making sure [the town is] in touch and in step with the community," he said.



East Hampton Police News

12/22: Troy McIntosh, 32, of 28 Main St., was arrested and charged with possession of drug paraphernalia and operating a motor vehicle without a license, East Hampton Police said.

12/27: William Potter, 66, of 8 Bellwood Ct., was arrested and charged with public indecency, police said.

12/30: Steven Oliver, 27, of 177 Redstone Hill, Plainville, was arrested and charged with failure to drive right and DUI, police said.

Hebron Police News

1/3: Joyce Vincenzo, 77, of 850 Parker St., Manchester, was transported to Marlborough Clinic for minor injuries after the car she was in struck a utility pole on Church Street.

1/3: State Police said Robert Liska, 55, of 155 Stone House Rd., Amston, was arrested and charged with violation of a protective order.

Andover Police News

1/1: State Police said Landon Pond, 18, of 161 Lake Rd., was arrested and charged with DUI and making an improper turn.

Colchester Police News

12/30: State Police said Robert Craig, 53, of 96 Town Farm Rd., East Haddam, was arrested and charged with DUI, improper parking and failure to submit to fingerprinting.

1/2: Colchester Police said Alan Dill, 56, of 127 Waterhole Rd., East Hampton, was arrested and charged with evading, DUI, failure to drive right and failure to drive at a reasonable distance.

1/2: State Police said Devin Birch, 23, of 103 Horse Pond Rd., Salem, was arrested and charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct.

1/3: State Police said Patricia Giuss, 29, of 143 Hickory St., Norwich, was arrested and charged with OUI and failure to drive in the proper lane.

Portland Selectman, Town Clerk Positions Still Open

by John Tyczkowski

The search for a new selectman and a new town clerk continues in earnest as budget season draws nearer.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said she hopes to be able to make an appointment for one or both positions by the end of the month.

“It’s been very difficult to get meetings organized around the holidays, but we need to get things moving along,” she said. “We’re overdue for the selectman, in fact.”

Selectman Mark Finkelstein, a Democrat, stepped down from the board in October. The town charter gives the board 45 days to appoint a new selectman following a resignation. The charter also specifies the new member should be from the same party as the selectman who resigned.

“We want to follow as close as possible the will the people expressed when they voted,” Bransfield said.

Finkelstein had served on the board for the past 12 years. He began serving as a selectman in 2002, to fill a vacancy, and ended up being re-elected to five terms.

“Mark was a wonderful selectman, having been there for over a decade,” Bransfield said. “He had also been on the Board of Finance in the past and served the town in other capacities as well.”

With Finkelstein’s former seat still vacant, the board now has six members, including Bransfield. The Democrats currently hold the majority, 4-2.

And the vacancy on the Board of Selectmen isn’t the only one town officials are grappling with. They also need to replace Bernie Dillon, the erstwhile town clerk who stepped down from the role earlier this month, after nearly 40 years in office.

Finding a replacement for Dillon is no small task, Bransfield said.

“Mrs. Dillon gave exemplary service to the town for 37 years; those are big shoes to fill,” she said. “I’m very grateful for all the well-qualified candidates who have stepped forward.”

Dillon announced her decision to leave the position in December, citing the need to care for her husband, who is experiencing numer-

ous health issues.

“The people of Portland and my coworkers through the years at the town hall have been like family to me, and I will miss everyone,” Dillon said in her letter to the Board of Selectmen. “I have enjoyed every minute of my 37 years.”

Dillon’s resignation took effect Jan. 1.

Since Dillon is a Democrat, the Democratic Town Committee has formed a nominating group who is in charge of selecting the new town clerk, Deputy First Selectwoman and DTC chair Kathy Richards said.

“They’re planning to meet next Thursday. They’ll start interviewing people then and hopefully come up with a recommendation,” she said. “We’ve had plenty of interest in that position. It’s another really important job for the town.”

Richards said she hopes to have a new town clerk by Feb. 1, but that things are too uncertain to give a timeline for regarding the new selectman.

“That’s the big question; we’re still working on that one,” she said. “We’ve put a lot of time into it, but we’re still continuing to search for just the right person.”

Bransfield said that the new candidates will “at minimum” serve in an interim capacity until elections in November, but they will be able to seek re-election at that time if they choose to do so.

Additionally, she said the process for finding a new selectman is quite different from finding a new town clerk.

“It’s not as formal a process for the selectman, because it’s not a full-time position like the town clerk,” Bransfield said. “It’s a two-year term, and it’s stipended \$1,000 a year. The town clerk is full-time and is a four-year position.”

Still, she said, it’s important to take the necessary time and diligence when looking for just the right candidates for jobs like these.

“We don’t replace people in Portland,” Bransfield said. “We fill positions.”

Air Line Trail Expansion Updates in Portland

by John Tyczkowski

Wednesday night, the Board of Selectmen began the new year with updates on the proposed Air Line Trail expansion and a discussion of several plans for expanding pedestrian access in town, and possibly to Glastonbury.

Deputy First Selectwoman Kathy Richards chaired the meeting, due to First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield’s absence.

Lou Pear, co-chair of the Air Line Trail Steering Committee read from a letter, encouraging the selectmen to support their progress over the past year.

This included hiring a trail engineering consultant, Kevin Grindele of Anchor Engineering, and beginning talks with Connecticut Light & Power and Algonquin Gas to attempt to work out a deal to use their land for trail expansion.

In addition, Pear said the Steering Committee has had tables at such public events as the Portland Fair and at the Waverly Center on Election Day, in order to inform the public about their mission.

Also, the Steering Committee established a Complete Streets work group, headed by members Kathy Herron and John Hall, to supplement their trail-planning efforts.

Finally, Pear said member Jeff Jacobs is working on developing a site plan to present to CL&P to further negotiate land use.

“To that end, they plan to join us on a hike,” he said.

Pear also invited selectmen to attend the hike, leaving from Breezy Corner at the YMCA’s Camp Ingersoll and exploring just over a mile of the two and a half miles of proposed trail.

“We also hope to have people from the local YMCA, from Algonquin Gas, people from the town, and from the committee,” he said. “We’re hoping that once CL&P and Algonquin Gas see that all we want to do is put some stonedust down, they’ll see it’ll be a nice addition.”

Pear said the goal of the Steering Committee is, eventually, to have the Airline Trail stretch from the Arrigoni Bridge to Willimantic.

Also, he said having the trail extend into Portland would bring economic benefits to the

town as well.

“I think that just bringing in more people who are going to hike and walk and cross-country ski will be beneficial to our business in town,” he said.

Pear also mentioned next steps might include “securing the usage of the train station on Marlborough Street” and having a parallel trail from that location to Wolcott Lane.

Most ambitiously, he mentioned a long-term plan for a trail from Depot Hill Road to Camp Ingersoll, finally ending at the Arrigoni Bridge.

Next, Riz Rizzo, a self-proclaimed “new resident of about 55 years,” gave a breakdown of the nuts and bolts of the Steering Committee’s efforts and membership.

“We’ve signed up about 40 volunteers so far, who are willing to help with on-site work, background research, grant research and writing, hospitality, photography and marketing and communications,” he said. “We have another 25 area residents who have asked to be kept informed as well.”

“So you can see, there’s a lot of interest out there,” he said.

The Steering Committee has developed a mission statement as well as a series of short-term goals to be accomplished within the next six months and a series of long-term goals to be accomplished over the next one to 10 years, Rizzo said.

Rizzo also broke down how the Steering Committee used the \$10,000 the Board of Selectmen gave them to start their activities last year.

The first \$5,000, Rizzo said, went to several projects, including engineering research costs, grant proposal assistance and assistance with Complete Streets efforts.

The rest of the money went toward Jacobs’ efforts to create a trail site plan, as Pear mentioned earlier in the meeting.

“We are now asking for additional allocation of \$10,000 for the next fiscal year, to help us get started with the actual work,” Rizzo said. “Once we have the license for use of the trail,

we’ll be able to get started on the grant-writing process for local, state and federal funding.”

To that end, Rizzo said he’s begun networking with representatives from the Connecticut State Park Service and the Director of Rivers and Trails for Connecticut and Rhode Island from the National Park Service.

Lastly, Rizzo said the Steering Committee seeks to add two non-voting alternates to their ranks to have a reserve personnel pool to draw upon “when the need arises to replace current members.”

Kathy Harron, committee member and chair of the Complete Streets work group, spoke next, on the new citizens’ action group.

“There are currently eight members of our group, which is part of a national movement supported by the Connecticut [Department of Transportation],” she said.

Harron said the group also presented at the Portland Fair to spread awareness of their group, and have finalized their mission statement and goals.

“Our mission is to improve the streets of Portland and make them safe and accessible for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, people with mobility challenges, and motorists,” she said. “We want to encourage non-motorized methods of transportation and also health living.”

Gathering more public input on what areas of the town need attention, and enlisting the support of the selectmen on their Complete Streets plan in order to take advantage of local, state and federal funding opportunities are chief goals for their coming year, Harron said.

John Hall, a former committee member who now serves as a mentor to the Complete Streets work group, talked about Complete Streets’ three recommendations to the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments [the RiverCOG] for a regional plan.

The RiverCOG “sent out a request for recommendations for regional transportation long-range plans. We thought it was timely for us to

make some recommendations especially because we’re not the town, because [the RiverCOG] is looking for citizens’ groups as well as the town itself to provide support,” he said. “In fact, they want strong local support from the citizens for these plans.”

Hall named the two of the regional plans as repairing the sidewalks on Main Street, increasing walkability along a 2.5-mile stretch of Route 66, which would also create better access to proposed Airline Trail stops and overlap with the Complete Streets goal of increased street-friendliness for non-motorized transportation.

Finally, “and most excitingly,” Hall said, the third plan would be to connect Riverfront Park to Glastonbury by a trail right along the river to Tryon Street.

Around Petzold’s Marine Center, the trail would be routed back to Main Street, but could then rejoin the riverfront at the Portland Fairgrounds.

“It’s just a fantastic opportunity that’s just waiting to happen,” Hall said. “It warrants feasibility studies, of course, which we plan to do too, but it’s just an unbelievable opportunity.”

Hall said Complete Streets would formally request recommendations from the Bransfield and the Board of Selectmen next week.

Lastly, the board, who recently established a sidewalk subcommittee, promised to look into the possibility of working together with the members Complete Streets work group on that issue.

The Airline Trail Steering Committee meets every fourth Wednesday at Portland Library at 6:30 p.m. The Complete Streets work group meets every second Thursday at the library, at 6:30 p.m.

A presentation on proposed Airline Trail expansion featuring input from the Town of Portland and the RiverCOG can be found at portlandct.org/Portals/12/Departments/ParkRec/PDF/AirLineTrail.pdf.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Last Saturday afternoon, I gathered up my father and made a little field trip to Portland, to check out the holiday train display at the Portland Fire Museum.

The display is an annual event in Portland, put on every Christmas season by the Connecticut Cellar Savers. And while I've been aware of the exhibit for years, I've never ventured over there. However, this year's display – as reporter John Tyczkowski wrote about in last week's *Rivereast* – sounded bigger and better than ever before. I knew I just had to check it out – and I thought I'd bring along my father, a lifelong model train enthusiast.

Boy, was I glad I checked it out. I was very impressed! There were five different layouts, featuring trains of different-sized scales (such as the large O scale and the smaller HO scales). And the layouts were all set against various, delightful backgrounds, from a winter wonderland scene to 1950s Americana (complete with a model of a Dari-King in the background), even to firemen rescuing someone from a burning home. (Hey, the display is in a fire museum, after all.)

And the O-scale layout was even interactive – that was a hoot. You could press a button and operate such things as a tire swing, a firehouse, a light on a water tower, and more.

But what blew me away was the attention to detail – it was just amazing. And while I got kick out of seeing people actually inside the trains, it was what surrounded the trains that I found most impressive. There were classic-era model cars all over the place, trees and bushes galore (including some expertly-painted trees and greenery for the winter wonderland scene), a very nice recreation of the Chester-Hadlyme ferry – and people! Just tons and tons of people.

The Cellar Savers really paid attention to their work. There weren't just models of people standing around; there were people sawing logs, working at the service station, dining at the Dari-King and McDonald's, or simply sitting, or sunbathing, on the beach. When people look at a train layout, it'd be easy to assume people are there to look at the trains. But the Cellar Savers took the care to create a whole little world for their trains to run in – and, like I said, the whole thing was just very impressive.

I wasn't the only one impressed; my dad was too – and, as I mentioned earlier, he knows a thing or two about model trains. In addition to collecting them his whole life, every weekend for the past several years he's helped out at a gigantic train layout located in the back of a Manchester hobby store known as The Time Machine (which, to keep the *Rivereast* connections going, is owned by East Hampton resident Steve Maynard). So he definitely appreciates the effort put in to maintaining a good layout – and he was definitely very impressed by the show the Connecticut Cellar Savers put on at the fire museum.

One of the things that makes the annual train display great is it's not over just because December is. It always runs until the middle of January, which I think is great. Too often, with the busy schedules of Christmas shopping and Christmas get-togethers, it can be tough to get out there. I like that the Cellar Savers keeps things going a little longer; it gives as many people the chance to see it as possible.

And if you haven't guessed by now, I think everyone reading this should head over to the Portland Fire Museum and check the display out, if they haven't done so already. The museum, which is located at 634 Main St., is open one more weekend – tomorrow, the 10th, and Sunday, the 11th, – from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. both days.

* * *

I believe I railed about this last year at this time but: really? Mike Piazza was denied induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame *again*??? The Met great – the best-hitting catcher of all time – did not garner enough votes among baseball writers to warrant entry into the Hall of Fame. This is the third year in a row this injustice has taken place – and frankly, it needs to stop.

Piazza – like fellow former player Jeff Bagwell – appears to be getting denied entry to the Hall because some writers feel he may have been using steroids while he played. There's nothing connecting him to PEDs; there's been no court testimony, no former teammates alleging he juiced. The only thing close to a smoking gun is acne that supposedly covered Piazza's back right up until the 2004 season, the season MLB first started testing people for steroids. Back acne is supposedly a side effect of steroids. It could of course also be a side effect of many things – such as sweat and dirt dripping down your back for three hours a night because oh, I don't know, you play baseball for a living? And if the acne cleared up suddenly, couldn't the acne have just cleared up suddenly, for any number of reasons – ranging from Piazza getting older to simply discovering a new brand of body wash.

To put it in *Law & Order* terms, if back acne were the only evidence Jack McCoy had to justify an indictment, he'd get laughed right out of judges' chambers.

Oh, there's also the matter that Piazza was a low draft pick. That surely means he must've juiced, right? If he was that good all along, surely he'd have been drafted higher, right? The annals of baseball history are filled with people drafted much higher than Piazza whose careers amounted to zip. General managers and scouting directors don't possess crystal balls; I'm sure they wish they did.

Nope, it's nothing but gossip and innuendo and “Well, he just doesn't look right to me, so I'm voting ‘no’” sentiments keeping Piazza out of the Hall. And that's a crying shame. I maintain he'll still get in one day –

perhaps as soon as next year – but it should've happened three years ago. The fact it hasn't yet just isn't right.

* * *

On a more pleasant note, congratulations to local state Rep. Melissa Ziobron (R-34th District), who was recently chosen as the leading House Republican lawmaker on the legislature's Appropriations Committee.

Ziobron, whose district covers East Hampton, East Haddam and a portion of Colchester, began her new committee responsibilities with the new legislative session, which started this past Wednesday, Jan. 7.

“As Ranking Member of the Appropriations Committee, Ziobron will play a pivotal role in demanding change with regards to our state's financial crisis,” state Rep. Themis Klarides (R-114th District), House Republican Leader, said. “I know she will serve the House Republican caucus with distinction.”

Ziobron said that during her time in office – she was first elected state representative in 2012, and won a second term last November – she “quickly realized the lack of representation for small towns within our state.” She added, “As a legislator, my goal has been to be that voice. I plan to continue working hard for my constituents and for the taxpayers of the state. Our residents cannot afford to live in the state they love and that is a trend I want to reverse.”

One of the biggest tasks on her plate will be to deal with the state's budget deficit, which Gov. Dan Malloy recently projected at \$44.8 million.

“As Ranking Member of the Appropriations Committee, I will work together with legislators on both sides of the aisle to address our financial crisis rather than temporarily pacifying our current situation with tax increases, borrowing or increased spending,” Ziobron said.

Meanwhile, Ziobron is carrying on with her service on the legislature's Environment Committee, and is starting a stint on the legislature's Children's Committee.

“I am thrilled to continue serving on the Environment Committee; I am extremely passionate about these topics. Our state parks in the 34th District need a voice and I am proud to be one,” Ziobron said. “The Children's Committee is a new assignment for me and as a Mom with two teenage children, I look forward to contributing.”

* * *

Lastly, it's a new year, and across the country, a bunch of new laws have taken effect. Some are pretty standard – for example, in Louisiana, smoking is now prohibited within 25 feet of public entrances to state office buildings – while others are a little more unusual. A few of the odder ones:

– In Nevada, teen drivers can have their licenses suspended for missing too much class;

– In Washington, it is now illegal to throw out food or anything else that is compostable;

– In Oregon, sellers of foreclosed homes must tell potential buyers if there's any possibility the home was once used as a meth lab;

– In California, plastic bags are banned from being used in stores, unless they contain fruits, vegetables or meats;

– In Massachusetts, people can now order wine online from vendors outside of the state (okay, this isn't really an odd law; rather, it's odd this was ever against the law to begin with);

But my favorite odd new law of 2016 is this:

– In New York, it is now illegal to take a selfie with a tiger or any other big cat.

As New York City gossip queen Cindy Adams likes to say, “Only in New York, kids. Only in New York.”

* * *

See you next week.

Obituaries

Portland

Frederick Warren Becher

Frederick Warren Becher, 89, of Portland, died Wednesday, Dec. 31. Born in Hartford Jan. 17, 1925, he was the son of Wesley R. Becher and Annie (Mortensen) Becher.

Fred attended schools in Wethersfield and graduated from Admiral Billard Academy and the Connecticut Institute of Engineering. He was a WWII Army Veteran serving in the Pacific and the Liberation of the Philippian Islands. He was decorated for the Asiatic Pacific campaign with three Bronze Stars.

He is survived by his loving wife Beverly (Fuller) Becher and two sons, Wesley of Glastonbury and Frederick Jr. of Old Lyme; step-daughter Jacqueline Burdick and her husband Thomas of East Hampton; stepsons Gordon Hallberg and wife Maureen and Karl Hallberg and wife Martha. Fred leaves his five grandchildren, Courtney, Kristen, Stephen, Eric and Laura, and several nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by first wife Diane Dimock, brother Morton F. Becher and son Robert G. Becher.

Fred was retired from Sinco Inc. of East Hampton as vice president and comptroller of several corporations. Previously, Fred was a purchasing agent of Pratt and Whitney Aircraft East Hartford.

Fred was a member of the Silas Deane Lodge of Masons, the Scottish Rite, the York Rite Bodies, a past potentate of Sphinx Shriners and a member of the Royal Order of Jesters. He was a former member of The Hartford Canoe Club, the Hartford Club, the past commodore of the Baldwin Yacht Club and member of the Essex Corinthian Yacht Club.

A memorial service was held Monday, Jan. 5, in Second Congregational Church in Middle Haddam with the Rev. Lois Kennedy officiating. Burial will be private at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers memorial contributions may be made to Vitas Hospice 628 Hebron Ave. Glastonbury, CT 06033.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

East Hampton

Mary Louise Walton

Mary Louise Walton, 60, of Meriden, formerly of East Hampton, died Monday, Dec. 29, at Masonicare in Wallingford. Born April 2, 1954, in Hartford, she was the daughter of the late Charles and Gertrude (Grover) Walton.

She is survived by her brothers Charles Walton and his wife Beverly of East Hampton, Matthew Walton and his wife Beverly of East Hampton, a sister Annette Kowalczyk and her husband Robert of East Hampton, several nieces and nephews and many special friends at her home on Twist Avenue in Meriden.

She was predeceased by a brother, Michael Walton.

A funeral liturgy was celebrated Tuesday, Jan. 6, in St. Patrick Church in East Hampton. Burial will be in the spring.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Hebron

John Francis Seredynski

John Francis Seredynski, 78, of Bristol, Maine, formerly of Hebron, passed away Sunday, Dec. 21. John was born in Brattleboro, Vt., Sept. 23, 1936, to Priscilla and John Edward Seredynski.

He was a graduate of Windsor High School and completed studies at Ward School of Electronics. He served in the Army, and married Judith Hayden Aug. 8, 1964.

After 50 years of marriage, Judith predeceased John by six months this year.

John worked for Control Data System for 25 years, working in early computer design and development. He was a competent auto mechanic, tinkerer of small engines, remote control airplane club member, and target shooter. John was a loving husband, father and grandfather.

John is survived by his son Tom and his wife Carol of Hebron; his son Paul and his wife Michelle of Livonia, Mich.; daughter Maryanne of Westport Island, Maine; and brother Peter Seredynski and his wife Marcia of Briarcliff Manor, N.Y. His three grandchildren, Brian, Amy, and Maren also survive him.

No service is scheduled at this time.

Future details will be available at stronghancock.com.

East Hampton

Lawrence Cheeseman Jr.

Lawrence G. "Larry" Cheeseman Jr., 69, of East Hampton, husband of 40 years to Judie R. Canavan, died Monday, Dec. 29, at Waters Edge in Middletown. Born in New Haven, he was the son of the late Lawrence and Alice Cheeseman.

Larry was a graduate of Platt High School in Meriden and Franklin Pierce College in New Hampshire. Larry served as President of Friends of the East Hampton Library for over 20 years. An active and distinguished law librarian for more than four decades, Larry began working in New York law firms and eventually served at the Brooklyn Supreme Court.

He joined the then-Connecticut State Library Law Library Department in 1978 as unit head for multiple Tier II and Tier III Libraries across the state. Larry spent his career making the Law Library accessible to all Connecticut residents. Larry offered fine leadership in the area of teaching librarians, affiliated with both legal and municipal public institutions. He was dedicated to the Southern New England Law Librarians Assoc. and the American Assoc. of Law Libraries. He served as Past President and after as editor of the newsletter *Orbiter Dicta*. A prolific writer, he co-authored eight legal treatises with Southern Connecticut State University professor Arlene Bielefield.

Larry is survived by his wife Judie, sister Pamela Giovanetti and husband Neil, brother Wayne Cheeseman and wife Anna, sister-in-law Alice Cheeseman, niece Sara Cheeseman, nephews William Cheeseman and fiancé Ashley, Wayne Cheeseman and fiancé Joelle, Aaron Cheeseman, Christopher Cheeseman and wife Jennifer, Jason Giovanetti and his son Elijah, and special buddies Ernie and Tibby.

Besides his parents, he was predeceased by his brother, Ronald Cheeseman.

The family would like to thank the caregivers at Water's Edge Center and Janice and Francis O'Meara, Jon Stock, Martha Sullivan and Arlene Bielefield.

A graveside service will be held in the spring.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Alzheimer's Assoc., alz.org/ct, or to Protectors of Animals, P.O. Box 24, South Glastonbury, CT 06073.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Portland

Joanne E. Bitcon

Joanne E. Bitcon, 82, of Middletown, formerly of Portland and Leesburg, Fla., wife of Donald S. Bitcon Sr., passed away Monday, Jan. 5, at Middlesex Hospital, surrounded by her loving family.

She was the daughter of the late Richard and Johanna (Ricklefs) Andersen. Her mother later married Joanne's beloved stepfather, Leopold Crispyn.

Born Dec. 13, 1932, in Freeport, N.Y., she lived in Portland since 1965, then moved to Leesburg, Fla., in 1994, until recently moving to Middletown.

Besides her loving husband of 62 years, she leaves her son, Donald "Dann" Bitcon Jr. and Tabatha McLellan of Erving, Mass.; daughters, Donna B. Amato and her husband Edward of Middletown and Deborah B. Franklin and her husband Craig of Portland; a brother, Henry Crispyn and his wife Grace of Freeport, N.Y.; sisters, Mary-Ann Dial and her husband, Mark of Pasadena, Calif., and Kathleen Riehl of Schenectady, N.Y.; 11 grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by her infant daughter, Linda, and by her sons, David and Dean.

A memorial service celebrating Joanne's life will be held Saturday, Jan. 10, at 10 a.m., at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland. Burial will be private. Relatives and friends may call today, Jan. 9, from 5-7 p.m., at the funeral home.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the American Heart Assoc., 5 Brookside Dr., Wallingford, CT 06492, the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Rd., Newington, CT 06111 or to the Susan G. Komen Foundation, P.O. Box 650309 Dallas, TX 75265-0309.

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

East Hampton

Frances Doherty

Frances (Kalakay) Doherty, 84, of East Hampton, died in Marlborough Saturday, Jan. 3. Prior to moving to East Hampton, Fran was a long-term resident of Bridgeport and daughter of the late Mary and Stephen Kalakay.

She was predeceased by her beloved husband, Martin, son Robert, brothers Charles and Stephen, and in-laws Edward, James, Barbara and Betty Doherty.

Survivors include her loving children Patricia Beem and husband Bruce of East Hampton; Kathleen Jaccarino and husband Mark of Brockport, New York and Timothy Doherty and wife Patricia of Stratford. In addition, grandchildren Sean, Shannon (Jamie), Billy, David (Michelle), Matthew, Brendan, Haily, Katie, Lauryn, Timothy, Ian and Maggie; several great grandchildren; nieces and nephews; daughter-in-law Sally Harris; sister Joan and brother-in-law John Doherty; and sisters-in-law Shirley Kalakay and Faye Doherty.

Fran was retired from Bridgeport Hospital and was renowned for her work as a caterer, cook and baker. She was famous for her delicious stuffed cabbage – which she made weekly for her former son-in-law David's restaurant, The Ritz, in Black Rock. Throughout her life, Fran was very active in several Catholic organizations and volunteered in numerous capacities. Fran loved to read, crochet, travel and spend time with friends and family. In her later years, one of her greatest pleasures was sitting outside, soaking up the sun.

The family was fortunate to have dear friend, Jane and caregivers Sallie, Alethea and Nicki as a special part of her life. She also received compassionate end-of-life care from Vitas Hospice.

There will be no calling hours. In order to embrace Fran's love of sunshine and warm weather, a Mass of Christian Burial will be held Saturday, June 6, at 11 a.m., in St. Patrick's Church in East Hampton. Following Mass, there will be an outdoor celebration of Fran's life, hosted by her children.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Amston

Gladys Newton O'Leary

Gladys "Joy" (Dollimore) Newton O'Leary, 92, of East Hartford, a beloved mother, grandmother, great grandmother and friend, passed away peacefully Wednesday, Dec. 24, at St. Francis Hospital, with her family at her side.

Born in Colchester, Essex, England, the daughter of the late Frederick and Ethel (Nunn) Dollimore, she grew up and lived in England before coming to the United States in 1948.

She had lived in East Hartford since 1950. She was the owner of the former Joy's Restaurant in East Hartford. Prior to her retirement, Joy was employed by the Town of Glastonbury for sixteen years, and prior to that she was employed by the former Food Mart in East Hartford and Rocky Hill for over 25 years.

She enjoyed spending summers at Amston Lake and Old Saybrook. She enjoyed gardening and was gifted with a green thumb. Joy loved all animals and she thoroughly enjoyed family gatherings and spending time with her family.

She leaves to mourn her passing her children, Dale Newton and his wife Judith of Amston, Wayne Newton of East Hartford, Galan Newton of East Hartford, Shawn Newton and his wife Jeanne of East Hartford, and Linda O'Leary Coladonato and her husband Richard of East Hartford; five grandchildren, Christopher Newton, Kelli Costa and her husband Stefano, Adam, Damian and Macaire Newton; three great-grandchildren, Aria Costa, and Ethan and Evan Newton; and many extended family throughout the world.

She was also predeceased by her granddaughter, Jessica Newton.

Her family received friends for memorial calling hours Sunday, Jan. 4, at the Samsel & Carmon Funeral Home, 419 Buckland Rd., South Windsor, followed by a memorial service at the funeral home that evening.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations in her memory may be made to the American Diabetes Association, P. O. Box 11454, Alexandria, VA 22312 or to the Our Companions Animal Rescue, P. O. Box 956, Manchester, CT 06045.

For online condolences and guest book, visit carmonfuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

Normand T. Parenteau

Normand T. "Bucky" Parenteau, 86, of East Hampton, beloved husband of Judith (Eccleston) Parenteau, died Saturday, Jan. 3, at Middlesex Health Care.

He was born in West Warwick, R.I., son of the late Alcide and Amanda Parenteau. Normand was a veteran of World War II, serving with the U.S. Army.

Besides his wife Judith, Normand is survived by his daughters, Suzanne Waltonen of Coventry, R.I., Robin Grassi of Haddam, Kristan Konon and her husband Nicholas of Moodus; son, Robert Carpenter and his wife Stephanie of Surprise, Ariz.; daughter-in-law, Brenda Parenteau of Florida; and several grandchildren.

He was predeceased by a son, Michael Parenteau.

Funeral services and burial in the State Veterans' Cemetery, Middletown are private. There are no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to Middlesex Hospital Hospice, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457 or to Shriners Hospital for Children, Office of Development, 2900 Rocky Point Dr., Tampa, FL 33607.

Biega Funeral Home has care of the arrangements. To share memories or express condolences online, visit biegafuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

Violet A. Wall

Violet A. (Tegelman) Wall, 86, of East Hampton, died Wednesday, Jan. 7, at Chestelm Health Care in Moodus. Born Jan. 24, 1928, in the Bronx, N.Y., she was the daughter of the late Charles and Ida (Bergmen) Tegelman.

Violet was a retired nurse's aide, having worked at Meadowbrook Convalescent Home in Middletown.

Violet was predeceased by her husband, John E. Wall, in 2009.

She is survived by her two sons, Dennis P. Wall and his partner Rhonda of Florida, Kevin J. Wall and his wife Paula of Cobalt; her daughter, Elaine G. Gagliardi and her husband Michael of North Carolina; four grandchildren, Ryan and Kirsten Goodrich, Dylan and Aaron Wall; five step-grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.

A memorial service will be held Friday, Jan. 16, at 11 a.m., in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, with the Rev. Beth Anderson of Bethlehem Lutheran Church officiating. Burial will be in Lake View Cemetery. Friends may call at the funeral home Friday, Jan. 16, from 10 a.m. until the time of the service.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to National Kidney Foundation, 1463 Highland Ave., Cheshire, CT 06410.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Helen J. Rizzo

Helen J. Rizzo, 92, of Vernon, formerly of Colchester, passed away peacefully Tuesday, Dec. 9, at Evergreen Health Center. Born in Hartford, the daughter of the late Prospero and Guiditta Mary Rizzo, Helen grew up and lived most of her life in Hartford.

She worked many years at The Underwood Typewriter Co., ending her working career at the Smith and Fazzina Wholesale Meat Co.

Helen loved her family, being Italian, and Italian food. She loved people, movies, especially musicals, parties, and she never missed a UConn women's game. She was an avid knitter and made gorgeous afghans and sweaters for everyone she loved! She loved to volunteer and did so at the Colchester Senior Center and in later years at Welles Country Village where she lived.

Helen was a kind, gentle person loved by many. She is survived by two nieces who she loved very much, Hope Prinzivalli of Stafford Springs, her husband Bob and two great nephews, Tyler and Josh, who were like grandsons to her; also Anita Brown, of Tennessee, a very loving long-distance niece. She is also survived by a very special long-time friend, Peggy Bonelli; and many other nephews, nieces and cousins.

Her sweet way will be missed very much and always remembered. Sleep, Auntie, until we meet again.

Services will be private.

Colchester

Judith A. Guarnaccia

Judith A. (York) Guarnaccia, 72, of Colchester, peacefully passed away at home with her loving husband Salvatore by her side. Judith loved her family and adored her grandchildren. She loved to spend her free time with Sal out on their boat or at the family beach house.

In addition to her husband Sal, Judith is survived by her son, Salvatore Guarnaccia of Salem; her daughter, Christine Hubbard and her husband Carl of Stafford; grandchildren, Brooke and Gabriella Hubbard, Dante Guarnaccia and Rachael and Joshua Parlee; her aunt, Mimi Howard of Yarmouth, Maine; sisters-in-law, Sadie Brady and Carol Guarnaccia; special friend, Ellen Gustafon; and many nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by her mother, Gladys York, and her daughter, Mary Parlee.

Calling hours were held at the Belmont-Sabrowski Funeral Home, 144 S. Main St., Colchester, Thursday, Jan 8, with a service held that morning. Burial immediately followed at New St. Andrews Cemetery.

The Belmont-Sabrowski Funeral has been entrusted with these arrangements.

Portland

Dorothy P. Seaman

Dorothy "Dotti" P. Seaman, devoted wife, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt and friend, passed away Thursday, Jan. 1, at the age of 83. Born to Sicilian immigrants, Salvatore and Louise Perruccio, on July 14, 1931 in Portland, Dotti was the oldest of three siblings. Her sister, Irene P. Roberts, and brother, William Perruccio passed away in 2011.

She married her late husband, Larry Seaman, on April 21, 1963. Larry and Dotti raised their two children, Nancy and David in West Hartford, before moving to Boca Raton, Fla., in 1983. Dotti was loved and admired by her nieces Candi Seaman and Karen Roberts, with whom she developed a special relationship.

Dotti was an avid card player and much-loved member of her CT Bridge Club that was formed in 1953. She was proud to have met with all the original members most recently this past summer. Dotti's passion for cooking inspired her to co-author two cookbooks. Never one to sit still, Dotti had a multitude of hobbies and interests that kept her active and busy, and her family was in awe of her endless energy.

Dotti was an admired leader, philanthropist and role model within the Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach Countym Fla. For more than 20 years, she was one of Federation's most dedicated, generous and energetic activists with a wide breadth of philanthropic interests and depth of commitment. She was instrumental in forging South Palm Beach County women into a philanthropic force. She chaired the Federation's Women's Division from 2003 to 2005, and served as ex-officio member of the Women's Philanthropy board as well as Federation Board Director Emeritus since that time.

Dotti was a recipient of the esteemed Kipnis-Wilson/Freidland Award honoring her for extraordinary service to the community through Women's Philanthropy. Each year since 2008, the Federation's Dorothy Seaman Leadership Award has recognized a member of the Federation's Women's Philanthropy Board who embodies the values of tikkun olam, tzedakah and leadership so exemplified by Dotti.

She endowed the annual PACE gift of her husband Larry, and created a memorial fund in his name that supports the cultural arts programming at Jewish Association of Residential Care (JARC). Dotti was recognized nationally for her endowments in the Star of David Society and for establishing the Seaman Family Scholarship Fund to benefit the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School and endowing a fund to assist teens and young adults seeking an immersive Israel experience.

A resident of Boca Woods Country Club and longtime member of Temple Beth El in Boca Raton, Fla., Dotti touched the lives of so many with her compassion, generosity, sincerity, dedication and contagious love of life. She will be missed and remembered fondly by all who knew her.

She is survived by her her son David, daughter Nancy and her husband Geoff and grandson Hunter.

A service was held at the Hebrew Cemetery on Corrigan Avenue in Meriden Wednesday, Jan. 7, at noon. A memorial service will be held in Boca Raton, Fla.; details to be announced.

The family has requested that donations, in Dotti's name, be made to the Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach County, 9901 Donna Klein Blvd., Boca Raton, FL 33428.

Hebron

Richard D. Veltri, PhD

Richard D. Veltri, PhD, 79, of Hebron and formerly of East Hartford, beloved husband, father and grandfather, died Sunday, Jan. 4. He was born in Huntington, Long Island, N.Y., on Nov. 12, 1935, a son of the late Carl Veltri of Amantea, Italy and Celia (Cargola) Veltri of Naples, Italy.

He was also predeceased by his sister, Antoinette Abate of Trumbull.

He is survived by his loving wife of 56 years, Shirley A. (Turner) Veltri, RN; his daughter, Bernadette "Bern" M. Veltri, RN of South Windsor; his son Daniel M. Veltri, Md., and his wife, Jennifer, of Marlborough; his son, Carl J. Veltri, DVM, of Robeson, Pa.; and his daughter, Victoria "Vicki" L. Veltri, JD, LLM of Colchester. He is also survived by his sister, Mary Lofts and her husband, Dave, of Langston, Ala.; his six cherished grandchildren, Kyle, Katlin, Emily, Luke, Grace and Maxwell; two brothers-in-law, Theodore Turner and his wife, Margaret, of Queensbury, N.Y., Francis Turner and his wife, Betty, of South Glens Falls, N.Y.; a sister-in-law, Barbara Curley of Hudson Falls, N.Y.; many nieces, nephews, cousins and dear friends.

He was a gentle soul, beloved by everyone he met. His sense of humor and kindness were felt by everyone with whom he came in contact. He always had a kind word for everyone. He devoted much of his spare time to volunteer activities and mentoring young adults. He designed and built many things for friends and family and loved taking and displaying annual family portraits.

He obtained his bachelor's and master's degrees from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute of Troy, N.Y., and his doctorate in mechanical engineering from the University of Connecticut. Since he was the only sibling of his family to attend college, he was very proud of his four children who, because of his and his wife's influence, chose the path of education and became a nurse, a medical doctor, a veterinarian and an attorney.

He was employed as a research scientist for 38 years at the United Technologies Research Center, where he made lifelong friends and retired as a holder and co-holder of 26 United States patents. He was a dedicated father, involved in many activities with his children. In the 1970s he was active in Little League Baseball and the YMCA Indian Guide and Indian Princess, program rising to chief of the East Hartford Indian Guide Nation for two years.

He was active in Republican politics and served fourteen years as an elected member of the East Hartford Board of Education, five years as a member of the Town Council and four years in the Connecticut General Assembly House of Representatives, representing the ninth state district. He proudly served as a justice of the peace, marrying his son and daughter-in-law 2004.

In retirement, he and Shirley spent the summer months in Lake George, N.Y. They tried to take one annual trip outside of the continental USA. He and Shirley got to visit Alaska, Hawaii, England, Ireland, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, New Zealand and Australia. In the mid-90s, he and Shirley became avid University of Connecticut women's basketball fans, as they had season tickets and traveled to the team's Final Four games.

The funeral service will be today, Jan. 9, with a Mass of Christian Burial celebrated at 9:30 a.m. at Holy Trinity Church, 53 Capitol Ave., Hartford. Burial will follow at Holy Cross Cemetery, Hebron Avenue, Glastonbury. (Everyone is asked to please go directly to the church on Friday morning). Richard's family received relatives and friends Thursday, Jan. 8, at the D'Esopo-East Hartford Memorial Chapel, 30 Carter St., East Hartford.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations in Richard's name may be made to Holy Trinity Church, 53 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106.

Richard's family wishes to thank Hartford Hospital, the kind individuals in New York who came to his aid, and the staff of the emergency department of Bellevue Hospital, New York City.

For online expressions of sympathy to the family, visit desopo.com.

East Hampton

Helen Valerie McKinney

Helen Valerie McKinney, 51, of Lebanon, formerly of East Hampton and Columbia, passed away suddenly Monday morning, Jan. 5. Born Nov. 16, 1963, in Middletown, she was a daughter of Helen (Morehouse) Allen of Willimantic and the late Cecil Allen.

Helen was a branch assistant manager of the Savings Institute Bank and Trust Co. in East Hampton.

She will be sadly missed but always remembered by her husband Scott; her mother, Helen Allen; sons, Justin Allen and Michael Constant, both of Columbia; a daughter, Caitlyn Constant of Lebanon; two grandchildren; a brother, Hugh Allen of Lebanon; a sister, Bertha Indelicati of Lebanon; her former husband, Brian Constant; and numerous nieces, nephews, extended family members and friends.

Calling hours will be held today, Jan. 9, from 4-7 p.m., at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A memorial service will follow immediately at 7 p.m. at the funeral home. Burial will be private.

Donations in her memory may be made to benefit her daughter's education: McKinney Memorial Fund, c/o Savings Institute Bank & Trust Co., P.O. Box 86, Lebanon, CT 06249.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.