

RIVEREAST

# News Bulletin

Serving Amston, Andover, Cobalt, Colchester, East Hampton, Hebron, Marlborough, Middle Haddam and Portland

Volume 40, Number 34

Published by The Glastonbury Citizen

December 18, 2015



**Basketball is Back...** Colchester Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein tosses up the ceremonial jump ball at the William J. Johnston Middle School boys' varsity home opener Tuesday. Thanks to a fundraising effort, basketball is back at the school, after being cut during the budget process last spring. See story on page 35.

## Hebron Staff Stuff Stockings for Troops

by Geeta Schrayter

Christmas is just around the corner, and in Hebron, in an attempt to make the holidays a bit more cheerful for those away from home, more than two dozen town employees have gathered up items to stuff into stockings and send to a platoon of deployed soldiers.

The idea came about from Tax Collector Adrian MacLean, who shared this week she started doing some research after noticing a friend on Facebook was donating their leftover Halloween candy to Operation Gratitude, a non-profit that sends care packages to deployed soldiers.

It's through that research she explained she came across the option to send Christmas stockings to troops in Afghanistan through the non-profit soldier support organization AdoptaPlatoon. MacLean said there was an option to send a stocking to a few troops or a full platoon, and she thought if she got all of Town Hall involved, they could send stockings to an entire platoon.

"They're away from their families and away from home so I wanted to do something where we were benefiting deployed soldiers," MacLean shared of deciding to go forward with the campaign.

"I have friends that are deployed, so I kind of know the plight," she said.

To get the campaign underway, MacLean submitted an application and was then interviewed over the phone. The contact she spoke with told her the organization was currently in platoon rotation, so it might take some time for MacLean to receive her assignment, but that

didn't stop her from getting the donation part underway. And now, she said, "the collection part is pretty much done. We had a wonderful response."

She added, "In the middle of November I sent out a town-wide email for anyone interested. I gave suggestions and some rules for things they can and can't send and collectively we all came together. And so, I'm all set to go; I'm just waiting to stuff the stockings and send them along."

MacLean said at least 25 town employees joined in and donated items.

One of the employees who contributed items was Kelly Bindert of the Parks and Recreation Department. She shared this week she donated items like lip balm, gum, candy, Sudoku puzzle books and word search books – "something to keep their minds and hands occupied."

"I was very honored to be part of it, to go out and buy supplies for people in our troops," said Bindert. "I thought it was a worthwhile cause

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### Early Deadline Next Week

Due to the Christmas holiday, the *RiverEast* is printing the Dec. 25 issue one day early. Therefore, all news copy – letters to the editors, news releases, etc. – **must** be received by noon Monday, Dec. 21. No exceptions will be made. The deadline for advertisers will be noon Tuesday, Dec. 22.

## Last Hurrah for Holiday Train Display?

by Elizabeth Regan

For 10-year-old Victoria Bailey, of Portland, the annual holiday model train display at the old firehouse on Main Street is a tradition.

That's where the Connecticut Cellar Savers have been setting up a miniature wonderland for the past 12 years.

"When we see the fire truck in front of it all lit up, we're like 'the trains are going to be opening soon,'" Victoria said.

But the Portland institution is in jeopardy now that the organization that operated both the fire museum and train display has disbanded.

The Portland chapter of the Cellar Savers closed the fire museum on Oct. 1, according to the defunct organization's president, Michael Tierney. Tierney was able to secure space in the town-owned building for the train display again this holiday season – but he doesn't know what's going to happen going forward.

"This will probably be the last year, unless something happens or we can find another place to do it," Tierney said.

He said the Portland Historical Society is one

organization that may be interested in taking over the old firehouse.

According to Historical Society President Martha Lutecki, her group has made some inquiries with the town but has not yet expressed a firm commitment to either buy or rent the building.

"It's a big decision for us, so we're going slow and getting all our information before we make a commitment," Lutecki said. "We have to get it appraised and inspected and see if it's something that we as a group can even tackle."

She said the feasibility of restoring the building is one consideration. A benefit would be much-needed storage space.

As for the train display, she said there would likely be a place for it if the historical society took over the building.

"If they wanted to continue, we would probably be more than happy," she said.

The event is sponsored this year by Portland's Office of Youth Services, which Tierney said publicized the event and helped out with logis-

tics. Admission to the museum remains free, though donations are accepted.

Victoria, a student at Brownstone Intermediate School, worried the Christmas season will be a little bit sadder if the yearly event comes to a halt. "It's just cool to see all the trains. They have old trains, new trains," she said. "It's a great place to come and it's fun for the holidays."

Victoria and her brother, Frederick, 8, said they enjoyed the tiny, detailed scenes that give them a glimpse into life on both sides of the tracks. They walked around Sunday afternoon with a list of scavenger hunt items printed on sheets for visitors young and old. They searched the displays for objects ranging from a pink Cadillac to a dinosaur pulling a train.

"Some of the things were really hard to find," Victoria said. It was the tiny Salvation Army Band that stumped her the most.

The close scrutiny made it clear to Victoria that the display takes a lot of work to put up and take down each year – and she said she

appreciates the effort.

That's what it's all about, according to volunteer Paul Jiantonio of Middletown.

"It's a lot of work, but it's a lot of fun," he said. "You come in, you see the kids smile and run around. It's Christmas."

Jiantonio said the crew worked four to five days a week from the beginning of October until the day after Thanksgiving to get the display ready for the crowds. It runs weekends through Jan. 10.

"I'd hate to see it stop. They've been doing it over ten years and a lot of people look forward to coming here," Jiantonio said. "Kids that have been coming here since they were 3 years old, now they're 15 and they're still coming back. So obviously it made an impression on them."

Tierney estimated there are about 50 visitors a day, for a total of more than 1,000 each year.

The Cellar Savers had been renting the building from the town for \$1 annually. For most of the year, the space was filled with antique

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## Holiday Shopping Guide Inside



**Michael Tierney of Portland oversees the annual model train display he started 12 years ago as part of the Connecticut Cellar Savers. The future of the annual event is up in the air, now that the Cellar Savers has disbanded and closed its fire museum at the site of former Portland Fire Company Two on Main Street.**

**Train Display cont. from Front Page**

firefighting equipment and apparatus from around the state as part of their mission to honor the memories of firefighters in town.

But the group's aging and dwindling membership, consisting of firefighting aficionados committed to education and preservation, was responsible for the upkeep of the building. This year there were only about 10 active members to share the work.

"It was hard to keep it open and up-to-date - cleaning and everything else," Tierney said. "It's a lot of work."

Now the museum's artifacts have found new homes with other historical organizations or with former Cellar Savers members.

The Portland chapter of the Cellar Savers was one of two in the state; the other is based in Milford.

Tierney, Jiantonio and the other model train enthusiasts involved in the display are hoping for the best now that the status of the old firehouse is up in the air. Maybe whatever organization that ends up taking over the building will let them use the space during the holidays; or maybe they'll find another location.

Jiantonio said a new spot could be advantageous if it affords them more space. They already have more tables and trains than they have room for.



**Victoria Bailey, 10, of Portland, and her brother, Frederick, 8, watch the trains go by at the annual model train display, held at the old firehouse on Main Street.**

"Something may come up," Tierney said.

Among those hoping the tradition continues are Tori Means, of East Hampton, and her grandchildren Thomas Cromwell, 14; Michael Cromwell, 11; and William Kinney, 8.

On Sunday, the boys were poring over the center display featuring grass, trees, a lake and a 1950s model town complete with fire station, diner, train yard, campers, and townspeople. Michael said it was the little details he found most interesting, like the smoke shooting out of the trains.

Michael was also drawn in by buttons stationed around the display which, when pushed,

triggered different actions. One button prompted a fire truck to leave a little fire house while another made a tiny mechanic fire up a blowtorch.

Means said the boys had been looking forward to the visit to the model train display for weeks.

"That would be a shame for it not to continue," she said.

*The holiday model train display is open weekends from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. both days, at Portland's old firehouse, 634 Main St. To schedule group appointments to view the display, email [portlandtraindisplay@yahoo.com](mailto:portlandtraindisplay@yahoo.com).*



**Items Hebron employees donated included travel-sized toiletries, socks, candy, individually packaged food items, note pads and pens, and word puzzles.**

**Stockings cont. from Front Page**

and to support our troops is all we can do at this time; we have to think about our men and women over there."

Louise Caisse from the Building Department contributed items such as body power, disposable shavers, hand lotion, Tic Tacs and playing cards - "just a bunch of stuff that I'm sure they'll be able to use. And hopefully, they get to enjoy the holidays."

"I thought it was a terrific idea and I jumped on board as soon as I heard about it," Caisse said. "I hope they do it again next year because I will be anxious to get involved."

Town Manager Andrew Tierney was also a fan of the campaign. "I think it's a great idea," he said. "I love when someone in the [town

office] thinks outside the box to do these kinds of things and make it kind of fun. And it's for a worthy cause."

In total, MacLean will ship 20 stockings - and she added there will likely be donations leftover that she plans to send to Operation Gratitude to be used in other care packages.

Speaking on the response she received, MacLean said "I'm really happy about it. Like I said, I was glad that we could do it as a town and I think that it's a wonderful thing to just remember those that are out there fighting for us."

To learn more about Operation Gratitude or the Christmas stocking campaign go to [operationgratitude.org](http://operationgratitude.org) or [adoptaplatoon.org](http://adoptaplatoon.org).



Rabbi Yosef Wolvovsky of the Chabad Jewish Center in Glastonbury hosted a menorah lighting event on the town green last week. For part of the event, Wolvovsky donned a dreidel costume and danced and clapped around the menorah.



Approximately 30 people from Colchester and the surrounding communities gathered for the event to celebrate the fifth night of Hanukkah, known for “tipping the scale” from darkness to light.

## Giant Menorah Lighting Brings Warmth to Colchester

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Five bright flames – plus the center light, the shamash – lit up the town green last Thursday, Dec. 10, on a giant menorah, blanketing the crowd in warmth and kindness.

Although Hanukkah ended this past week, the spirit of the holiday is still alive with the people of Colchester.

Hosted by Rabbi Yosef Wolvovsky and the Chabad Jewish Center in Glastonbury, this was the eighth year the group has held a community Hanukkah celebration in Colchester. This year, the lighting fell on the fifth night of the holiday – a night known for “tipping the scale” to light from darkness.

“[The menorah] transforms the dark, cold environment to a warm place,” Wolvovsky told the group of about 30 people who had gathered for the event. “This year we could use more light, more warmth, more kindness.”

Wolvovsky explained that, before the fifth night, the menorah was 50/50, “half good and half not good.” After the fifth night, the lit candles outnumber the darkened one, tipping the menorah on the “good” side.

“It’s a beautiful night and God is smiling at us,” Wolvovsky said as he opened the celebration. The celebration occurred on an unusually

warm December night, featuring temperatures in the 40s.

The celebration of Hanukkah commemorates two major events of the Jewish. In 165 BCE, a small group called the Maccabees were outnumbered by the Greeks but were able to challenge their oppressors and overcome the Greek tyrannical rule. The second is the celebration of the Hanukkah miracle. After the Temple of Jerusalem was defiled, the Maccabees discovered a small jug of oil that was meant to fuel the menorah for only one day, but instead it burned for eight days. This is represented in the eight nights of Hanukkah.

After singing a Jewish hymn, Wolvovsky invited multiple families in the audience to come light a flame. This included the Aldermans, the Fields, the Millers, the Slattery, and the Krancs.

“Take [the light] home to make our homes warmer and friendlier,” Wolvovsky said. “The world needs healing to be a better place.”

Dorothy and Neil Alderman said it was important to them to attend the celebration. This past year the couple moved from Glastonbury to Colchester.

“My father always had his electric menorah out,” Dorothy Alderman said, reflecting on her childhood. “We kept wiring it together for years.”

After the menorah was lit, first the children and then the men danced around it, with the crowd clapping along to recordings of Hanukkah music. Wolvovsky came out as the “Dreidel Man” in a large, blue costume, spinning like a dreidel around the menorah. A dreidel is a four-sided spinning top that is used during Hanukkah as a game to keep children interested while the candles are burning.

While obviously geared more toward the Jewish faith, Wolvovsky stressed the annual menorah lighting is for all faiths. Sandra Brown of Colchester, who isn’t Jewish, said she enjoys coming to the menorah lighting because it’s such a nice ceremony.

Steve Lipman of Glastonbury also attended the ceremony, and said he enjoys the joy of the holiday.

“I like celebrating with other members of the community,” Lipman said.

After the menorah lighting, attendees enjoyed hot cider and warm latkes, or potato pan-

cakes. There was also a free raffle and holiday music.

Wolvovsky shared this week that, about half an hour after the event ended, a family from East Hampton walked onto the green; apparently, there had been some confusion about when the lighting took place.

But the rabbi made sure they didn’t go away unhappy.

“Because they came out especially for the giant menorah lighting, and in order to keep the festive spirit, we re-lit the Community Menorah and had another shorter ceremony,” Wolvovsky said.

Overall, it was a very pleasant night – one Wolvovsky is looking forward to having again next year.

“The mood was festive, the crowd was enthusiastic, and the people went away uplifted,” Wolvovsky said. “Anytime we can get together as a community to celebrate happy times is a good time.”

The Chabad Jewish Center in Glastonbury hosts events all year round. For more information about the center and its events, visit [chabader.com](http://chabader.com) or call 860-659-2422.

## Hoop Dreams Pay Off for Colchester Trio

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Most of the time, the sight of a middle school basketball team taking the court wouldn’t be a big deal; but for three William J. Johnston Middle School eighth-graders, it’s the celebration of hard fundraising work.

As a sea of white and blue dribbled the ball down the court Tuesday, parents sat in the stands cheering on the Pumas and clapping. Their coach, Tom St. Louis, and assistant coach, Kevin Fennell, shouted from the bench, offering encouragement. Although the varsity team lost to Middletown’s Woodrow Wilson Middle School 51-40 during their first home game, the team fought hard, shooting multiple three-pointers.

But without team captains Nick Sedor, Luke LaSaracina and Nick Tiziani, the game would not have been possible. In fact, there would have been no team at all.

After voters balked at the Colchester school budget at two straight referendums last year, the Board of Education eliminated funding for the middle school’s soccer and basketball programs, in an attempt to get the spending package passed. Indeed, the package was passed – and the sports were out.

But Sedor, LaSaracina and Tiziani refused to let basketball stay out of bounds. Instead, the three boys went to the Board of Education to see what they could do to restore the program.

And the answer was money – lots of it. To help out, the Board of Education gave the boys \$1,900 – funds that had been allocated for the freshmen girls’ soccer program at Bacon Academy. However, since not enough girls signed up for the program this year, the school could not field a team.

That left the boys needing to raise \$3,500 to

bring back the boys’ and girls’ varsity teams – and an additional \$5,000 beyond that to bring back the boys’ and girls’ junior varsity squads.

The money needed to be raised by Nov. 15, so that the teams could begin try-outs.

So, the boys went to work. They visited local businesses in the beginning of November, soliciting donations. They then held a school-wide dance, called the “Basket Ball,” to raise funds for their cause; the dance raised more than \$2,000.

Between the dance and the donations, the trio met their goal. They raised \$10,059 – and it turns out that whole amount was necessary, as fewer people signed up for the teams than the school system had expected. This decreased the amount of pay-to-play revenue available, thus making the teams more expensive than anticipated.

“The three young men decided, instead of sitting down and being sad the program was cut, to stand up,” WJMS Principal Chris Bennett said last week. “I’ll be honest – I thought they would struggle and maybe raise \$500. They collected more than \$10,000.”

Goldstein was impressed by the boys’ tenacity.

“They came before the board respectfully and forcefully,” Goldstein said. “They wanted to try and raise the funds and help us. I was skeptical at times – and adults usually are – but we set the expectations and the kids met them.”

Even the boys’ coach was skeptical. “It’s unbelievable,” St. Louis said of the boys’ efforts. “When they first came to the Board of Education, I thought [they’d raise] maybe \$800. ... The fact they raised the money they raised, it shows their commitment.”

The boys said they were amazed at the gen-



Nick Tiziani, center, and Luke LaSaracina, right, play defense for the Pumas against Woodrow Wilson Middle School of Middletown during the Pumas’ first home game of the season Tuesday.

erosity of the town.

“We were expecting [to get enough for] just varsity,” Sedor said. “It really feels like we can do anything.”

Sedor said the other boys on the teams have been grateful for them getting the team back.

“It builds confidence [that we got the team back],” LaSaracina said.

As far as a goal for the team, the boys said they want to do better than last year – when the team won only one game.

After leaving WJMS, all three said they hope to play at Bacon Academy in the fall.

The trio said they wish to thank Bennett, DJ Montez for providing entertainment during the school dance and their parents for driving them around and taking the time to help them achieve their goal.

“If you really want something, keep fighting,” Sedor said. “If you set your mind to it, you can get your goal.”

# Hebron Superintendent Proposes .73 Percent Budget Increase

by Geeta Schrayter

Superintendent of Schools Tim Van Tassel last week presented his proposed school budget for 2016-17 – a scant spending increase that calls for the elimination of several staffing positions.

The \$12.08 million proposal equates to a .73 percent increase, or \$87,196, over the current year's budget.

In a letter sent by Van Tassel to the Board of Education, he said the increase "represents a modest and responsible budget that honors the values and aspirations of our school district, while considering the current fiscal climate of the community."

Initiatives include funding for a new full-time library media specialist; a \$100,000 technology lease purchase (\$20,000 annually for five years) that will go toward 100 Chromebooks for third and fourth grade; 50 iPads for pre-kindergarten through second grade; three SMART Boards for Gilead Hill School; and 35 laptop replacements for classroom teachers.

In addition, funding is included for 15 "classroom libraries," to support the reading and writing program. Van Tassel said this week the classroom libraries will cost approximately \$25,000; funding is also included for a new set of risers for the music program.

As far as reductions, Van Tassel explained, "Our declining enrollment provides the reasoning [for] multiple staffing reductions for the 2016-17 school year."

These reductions include one classroom teacher, one speech and language pathologist and one library paraprofessional as well as a half-time office secretary position, a half-time nurse paraprofessional, and a half-time regular education paraprofessional.

Enrollment is expected to decline by 42 students in the upcoming year, and while that allows for the above reductions, Van Tassel said it wouldn't impact some of the larger budget drivers.

"Our fixed operating costs that substantiate our most significant drivers cannot be easily adjusted with relativeness," he said. "The budget drivers that represent the greatest share of our .73 percent increase are the increases to our negotiated contracts and the projected increase to our insurance consortium agreement."

As is usually the case, personnel costs drive the budget. Of the \$12.08 million, \$7.41 million is included for salaries – up 1.47 percent, or \$107,315, from the current budget – and \$2.62 million is for medical insurance benefits – up 4.18 percent, or \$105,306, from the current year.

In addition, the proposed budget includes \$486,423 for student transportation; \$254,058 for utilities; \$123,695 for magnet school and special education tuition; \$122,044 for pupil services programming; and \$66,114 for AHM Youth and Family Services.

Funding for property and equipment is proposed to increase by 45.69 percent next year; however, while the percentage is large, Van Tassel stressed that, in terms of dollars, the increase is only \$5,270 – bringing that account to \$16,805 – and is largely for the replacement of the choral risers.

"Although it may look like a large increase, it's really insignificant due to the fact there wasn't much in that line to begin with," Van Tassel said.

Meanwhile, purchased property services are proposed at \$421,601 for an increase of .44 percent or \$1,862, while other purchased services amount to \$738,198, which is actually a decrease of 11.07 percent over the current year's budget. Another decrease includes monies for supplies and materials which is proposed at \$444,614 for a decrease of 17.68 percent or \$95,523 from the 2015-16 budget.

Meanwhile, staying the same next year is the amount budgeted for dues and fees, at \$13,500.

In his letter to the board, Van Tassel said as the new superintendent, "I made it my priority to learn as much as possible about our district's educational program since my arrival in July."

He added he's had the opportunity to attend different town meetings and community functions that have helped him learn about the town and its challenges.

"What I have learned in my short tenure is

that the community as a whole has made a long-standing commitment to seeing the quality of life improve for its residents," he wrote. "With this, I have heard from a wide-ranging cross section of the community who appreciate and support education, and understand that the community's vibrancy and future is largely dependent on the success of its two elementary schools."

Now that the superintendent's proposed budget has been presented to the board, the board will begin working through the numbers during a series of budget workshops throughout January. They will then approve a final number that will be presented to the Board of Selectmen.

"To arrive at the next year's proposed increase has been a lengthy and detail oriented process," Van Tassel said. "Both formal and informal discussions have been occurring at all levels, which gives me great confidence that the request is in alignment with the needs of the district."

Van Tassel concluded the initial proposal is "the beginning to a very collaborative, informative, and strategic planning process that will ensure our schools remain an attractive asset to our entire community."

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Information on the proposed budget can be viewed at [hebron.k12.ct.us](http://hebron.k12.ct.us) by clicking on "budget" under the "district" drop-down menu.

## Douglas Library in Hebron Receives Tree Donation

by Geeta Schrayter

A new tree took root at Douglas Library last week, after Hebron was selected as the 2015 recipient of the annual "Thanksgiving Tree," planted by the Tree Wardens Association of Connecticut.

According to [cttreewardens.org](http://cttreewardens.org), the Tree Wardens Association is a non-profit "dedicated to educating tree wardens and others about tree wardens' roles and responsibilities (in the proper care and control of ornamental trees, shade trees, and shrubs for the purpose of assuring their continued preservation and natural beauty) through education and advocacy."

As part of that education and advocacy, the association selects a town each year to receive a donated tree. Kevin Kelly – who's not just director of Hebron Public Works but is also vice president of the Tree Wardens Association – explained the gift "is the association's way to say 'thank you' for all that we as tree wardens have received throughout the year. It is a way that helps us to educate the public as to the mission of the Tree Wardens Association and our responsibilities working for the municipalities that we serve."

Kelly added Hebron was chosen this year because it had an available location that would replace a notable tree that was recently removed.

"The Douglas Library had a majestic sugar maple removed that was slowly dying of old age and becoming a risk to the public and the building that stood in its shadow," he stated.

A Shadblow tree, which is a deciduous, flowering tree that typically grows 15-30 feet tall, was selected and tagged after the association's fall workshop at Planters Choice in Watertown; the tree was planted at the Douglas Library and

a dedication took place Dec. 9 that was attended by Kelly, Library Director Amanda Brouwer, Town Manager Andrew Tierney and Tree Wardens Association President Jim Govoni.

Kelly added this week the tree donation provided the opportunity for the association to do some public outreach. By law, Kelly explained every town is supposed to have an appointed tree warden, "and this is a way that helps us to do a little public outreach so that people know what we do as an educational function and for maintaining municipal trees."

Speaking on the donation this week, Brouwer shared, "It was an honor – it was a very nice gesture from the Connecticut Tree Wardens Association. We've been doing a lot of work with our community garden so it fits right in with the growth of the town and where we're going as a library."

Over the summer, the library received a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services that allowed them to create a community garden tended by local teens.

Brouwer explained, "It's part of a grant which is geared towards getting teens into the library. So they do work on the garden, like weeding and planting."

She explained produce from the garden is delivered next door to the American Legion for their Friday lunches.

Also commenting on the tree donation was Tierney, who called it "a great thing."

"I'm always honored when the Town of Hebron gets recognized in any capacity," he said. "And we kind of have a fond place in our hearts for the Douglas Library and removed a rather large tree earlier in the year."

He added, "It's only appropriate that we plant a tree. Over the years, it will retake [the



Last week, a dedication took place at the Douglas Library for a "Thanksgiving Tree," donated to the town by the Tree Wardens Association of Connecticut. Present for the dedication were (from left) Tree Wardens Association President Jim Govoni, Hebron Public Works Director and Association Vice President Kevin Kelly, Library Director Amanda Brouwer, and Town Manager Andrew Tierney.

removed tree's] place; I think in a lot of areas trees get cut down and not replaced, and that's a shame."

He concluded, "I'm honored and glad

Hebron was picked to be recognized and I hope we continue to replant trees in the center and on town properties when we have to remove them."



After the Cemetery Committee's clean-up day in November, community members expressed upset at the changes they saw, and the committee's proposed revisions to the cemeteries rules and regulations; while some lots have yet to be cleaned and have overgrown shrubs around the monuments, others have had the shrubs torn down and left as stumps.

## Marlborough Residents Balk at Cemetery Clean-Ups

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Several people are upset with the Cemetery Committee, claiming a recent clean-up day the committee set up at Marlboro Cemetery left it a "boneyard."

Residents from Marlborough and other towns spoke at a committee meeting Dec. 9 against its proposed revisions to its rules and regulations – and also blasted the committee for recently cutting down shrubs and removing items that had been in the cemeteries for almost 20 years.

This past summer, the Cemetery Committee was revived, and the committee set about holding a clean-up day, following receipt of complaints about the appearance of the town cemeteries, especially Marlboro Cemetery. The committee published a notice in the *Rivereast* in October stating that overgrown shrubs and personal items interfering with safety and maintenance would be removed. According to the committee, the shrubs were getting in the way of the monuments and the personal items could get caught in the mower and become dangerous projectiles.

Families were told they could come and remove items. In the middle of November, the town's Public Works Department, which is responsible for maintenance of the cemetery under their contracts, cleaned up the rest. During this process, many of the overgrown shrubs were cut down, leaving stumps.

In its proposed changes to the rules and regulations, the committee allows one personal item per monument, and said flower beds should extend no more than 15 inches from the monument. There would also be clean-up days twice

a year. The proposed changes have to go before the Board of Selectmen for approval.

The committee has been working off of a set of regulations approved in 1993; the regulations bar decorative stones, above-ground edging and benches, and also states "trees, shrubs, bushes, obstacles or articles of any type may be placed on any lot when approved by the sexton," who currently is Vi Schwarzmann. However, the regulations also state the sexton "reserves the right to remove such obstacles that may hinder the opening of graves, the proper maintenance of the cemetery, or in the sexton's judgment shall seem desirable."

But after the clean-up in November, lot owners became upset when they saw the shrubs removed and personal items gone.

"Slow down, where's the fire?" Linda Bromley of Colchester, who has family in the cemeteries, said. "Leave the rules as they are. If plots aren't maintained, let the owner know. Don't go in with bully tactics."

Although resident Marilyn Murphy said the committee is headed in the right direction, she said some things have gone overboard.

"With the benches, don't rip them all out. I will not bring a lawn chair with me to visit my children," Murphy said. She added that she has yet to hear of anyone being hit by a projectile while mowing.

"My parents' monument had the bushes removed," Catherine Bon of Newington said. "My father planted them, and they can't be replaced."

Some people suggested hiring an outside firm to do the cemetery maintenance – something which First Selectwoman Amy Traversa

said wasn't allowed, as per Public Works' union contract.

Last week's meeting was the second Cemetery Committee meeting on the subject of the clean-up; there was also one on Nov. 19, after the clean-up, and Traversa said comments got heated at that meeting as well.

"I'm disappointed with these meetings," Traversa said at last week's meeting. "They have been vicious attacks on a group of volunteers."

Traversa said she understands this is an emotional issue, and said there can be some compromise between the committee and the lot owners.

Cemetery Committee Chairwoman Barbara Montstream said there have been complications with the rules and regulations. Last week, prior to the meeting, Traversa had found regulations from 1999 and 2001 that no one had known about – and thus there have been rules no one's been following.

These newer regulations, Montstream said, make the flower bed area 12 inches out from the monument, allow for parking only in a designated area by the vault, and bar trees and shrubs altogether. In addition, they mandate an annual spring clean-up day be held.

Finding the newer regulations "was a real eye-opener because what I feel the committee came up with was a duplication of what was there," Montstream said. She also clarified that when a person buys a lot, they purchase the right to bury a person. The purchaser does not buy the land on the ground.

The problem, Montstream said, "hasn't been

that we don't have rules in place; the problem is enforcing them. It's unfortunate they haven't been enforced. We wouldn't be here today [if they had been.]"

Cemetery Committee member Carl Carlson suggested a compromise on the issue of the benches: to allow the current benches, and simply ban new ones.

Montstream disagreed, saying the committee can't selectively enforce the rules.

"You make me feel like I'm the ogre," she said. "If we're going to have rules, follow them."

But committee member Carol Whitmer said if the committee is too rigid in its rules, it runs the risk of more heated meetings like the one last week.

"If it is [already] there, it's there," Whitmer said of items such as benches. "We can't remake the cemeteries as we wish. Going forward, it's fair to say no new benches."

Schwarzmann said this week compromise is a good idea.

"We need to take it one step at a time and not try and change the whole world in two weeks," Schwarzmann said. "I'm certain we can come to a compromise with all of these issues, but we all need to be open-minded."

Traversa suggested that Schwarzmann, as sexton, provide cemetery regulations to any new lot purchasers, and have them agree to them. That way, she said, the rules are easier to enforce.

The next regular Cemetery Committee meeting is Thursday, Jan. 21, at 9 a.m. at Marlborough Senior Center, 17 School Dr.

## Second Grade in Portland Shifting to Gildersleeve

by Elizabeth Regan

A portable wing of Valley View School built as a stopgap almost 30 years ago is earmarked for demolition.

The Board of Education voted Tuesday to move second grade to Gildersleeve School and get rid of the modular classrooms at Valley View; the modulars are used for the school's first-graders.

The board hopes to relocate the second-graders to Gildersleeve for the start of the 2016-17 school year.

Valley View School currently serves preschool through grade two while third- and fourth-grade students attend Gildersleeve School. Grades five and six are housed at Brownstone Intermediate School.

The school board's vote came at the recommendation of Superintendent of Schools Philip B. O'Reilly. He chose the option over scenarios that included moving the preschool grade level to Gildersleeve or totally overhauling the grade configurations at all three schools.

The second-grade changeover will be guided by a committee of administrators, teachers and parents from both schools charged with presenting their findings to O'Reilly. He will be assembling the committee over the next month, he said.

Town and school officials going back to 2001

have stressed the importance of getting rid of the temporary classrooms, according to an analysis drafted by O'Reilly and presented at Tuesday's school board meeting.

O'Reilly cited a 2011 recommendation by the Facilities Study Committee that put the modular classrooms at "many years past their useful life" and said continued repairs don't make financial sense.

Demolishing the modular unit and moving students into under-utilized space in Gildersleeve could result in taxpayer savings because of a reduction in repair and utilities costs, O'Reilly reported. He said bus routes would not need to be reconfigured and no additional buses would be necessary.

Preliminary estimates put the demolition of the portable classrooms at \$65,000-\$70,000, according to O'Reilly.

The lone 'nay' vote came from school board member Gisela Rice, who wanted to see evidence of a comprehensive transition plan and more open communication with parents before she could endorse a solution for the aging modulars.

Rice, the mother of a son with a developmental disability and a founder of the town's Unified Sports program, said she has seen emails from parents concerned that their

children's special needs are not being addressed.

"A lot of these kids have a hard time transitioning in general," Rice said. "What's the plan?"

Becky Sarkinkas spoke during the public comment period to tell board members she is worried about losing the age-appropriate Valley View culture in the move to Gildersleeve. As the parent of a current second-grader, she said she sees a welcoming atmosphere with activities and celebrations geared toward young students; as the parent of an incoming kindergarten student, she wants to make sure her child will be able to flourish in the same type of atmosphere in a couple years.

"I want to feel very comfortable that they will have that second-grade experience even though their address has changed," Sarkinkas said.

School board chair MaryAnn Rode said the move is a physical change only, with no threat to curriculum or philosophy.

"This is not an attempt to fast forward our second-grade education to a third-grade education," Rode said. "This is an attempt on the board's part, which has been going on at least 8 if not 10 years, to address a facilities concern that the board has had regarding the modulars

and the money we continue to put in band-aiding a situation that was originally supposed to last two years."

O'Reilly put this this way: "Grade two will remain grade two."

He said the current second grade teachers at Valley View will remain the second grade teachers at Gildersleeve as well.

Parent Michael Nadolski used the public comment period to advocate for a fully-developed transition process that takes into account the physical building, parking and communication as well as continued, quality education.

Nadolski said a traffic study referenced during the meeting by O'Reilly should be at the forefront of the process. He characterized it as an issue that needs to be addressed not just for congestion and convenience, but for safety.

He also reiterated concerns from many parents at the meeting when he stressed the need for the transition committee to keep the second grade culture – with its social, emotional and academic aspects – at the forefront of their deliberations.

"I think you can't discount that and you've got to take it as seriously as understanding the physical constraints of the building," Nadolski said.

# East Hampton Board OKs New Student Info System, Sans Bids

by Elizabeth Regan

The Board of Education Monday sidestepped the formal competitive bidding process when it gave administrators the go-ahead to spend \$63,399 on a new student information system.

Instead of following the procedure outlined in the town's purchasing policy, the school board on Monday voted unanimously to go with a recommendation by district technology director Craig Stearns and his administrative team to switch to the PowerSchool student information system.

There is an exemption in the town's purchasing policy that allows the district to move forward without soliciting multiple bids if "a single source is uniquely qualified to provide the desired service."

Superintendent of Schools Mark Winzler said an administrative team has worked since September to figure out what the district is looking for in a data management system and which of four vendors is best able to meet those needs. The administrators compared student information systems offered by the school's current provider, Rediker Software, as well as PowerSchool, InfiniteCampus and Follett.

Winzler said vendors were brought in for presentations – some of them more than once – and that "extensive negotiations" were conducted with each firm.

"In fact, we did the bidding process, except we didn't do it the normal way," Winzler explained after the meeting.

On Tuesday, Town Manager Mike Maniscalco wondered how the sole source exemption could apply when there are multiple vendors for student information systems. He said the codified bidding process exists for a reason: "The municipality and the people of this town have put laws in place to put transparency and fairness in the marketplace for when taxpayer dollars are being spent."

He cited the recent move to purchase a ladder truck for the fire department. The Town Council put the purchase to bid even though fire department officials said there was only one manufacturer with the patent for the features that fit the town's needs.

The local supplier of the sole manufacturer was the only bidder and the Town Council authorized the purchase for \$805,017. The final approval rests with taxpayers at a town meeting on Monday.

The need for a new student information system is time-sensitive because the current Rediker Software system runs on outdated software the company's management said will no longer be supported in about two years, according to Winzler.

"We did this because the district is at a crossroads," Winzler said in the email to school board members before Monday's meeting. "We either need to upgrade software or purchase new software. We cannot continue with the present system. We are very vulnerable and also not serving the needs of families to understand their children's education programs."

Student information systems allow administrators and teachers to put in student data – in areas like attendance, grades, homework and discipline reports – and share it in real time among themselves and with parents. The software also helps the district meet state and federal reporting requirements.

While the school district didn't employ the competitive bid process, East Hampton Finance Director Jeff Jylkka said the results seem to jive with what would have happened if they did.

"They did their due diligence, went through a vetting process," Jylkka said. "It looks like they went with the lowest qualified bidder anyway."

Despite claiming an exemption based on a

single, "uniquely qualified" vendor, both Stearns and Winzler said there's very little difference among PowerSchool, InfiniteCampus and Follett's Aspen system when it comes to the actual product.

"Basically, their product is all the same," Winzler said.

Stearns put it this way: "From a product perspective, they are all very similar."

The difference is in the details, they said. One key issue revolves around whether the system can be hosted in town by the district or if it must be hosted off-site by the vendor. The fact that the district can house the PowerSchool system on-site results in cost savings compared to the InfiniteCampus and Follett plans that require the vendors to do the hosting.

Stearns said \$700,000 in technology upgrades carried out in conjunction with the high school renovation make on-site hosting feasible. The district's storage and server capabilities should carry them through the next five to seven years before an infrastructure upgrade or outside host would be required.

According to Stearns, the vendors vying for the East Hampton student information system contract committed to pricing for the initial setup and training as well as the annual cost.

"We never disclosed exactly what the other vendors were offering, but we did go through multiple quoting processes to make sure that we're comparing apples and apples across all the different products," he said.

PowerSchool, which Stearns said serves 122 other districts in the state, came in with the lowest per-pupil cost out of the four vendors. While the initial price tag for a new system is higher than it would be to upgrade the existing Rediker framework, Stearns said there will be significant savings and enhanced capabilities going forward.

That shakes out to a per-pupil cost of \$7.40 for the new system compared to \$16.00 per pupil to upgrade the old system. And even then, Stearns said, the Rediker system would not be able to offer the same level of full, integrated service as its competitors for approximately two years.

On an annual basis, PowerSchool pricing represents a savings of approximately \$4,000 over Infinite Campus and Aspen and about \$12,000 over Rediker.

Stearns said work must begin on the student information system upgrade soon in order to be ready for rollout at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year. That would require paying some of the implementation costs from the current school budget even though the expense was not anticipated.

School Business Manager Karen Asetta told Board of Education members she expects the current budget to sustain those costs – with the caveat that "there are still almost six months to go."

She said a mild autumn and lower oil costs have resulted in unexpected savings to help offset the unexpected cost of the upgrade. The school budget is also seeing a less extensive outlay in town pensions than was budgeted and more unpaid medical leave.

But a harsh winter or unexpected special education costs could potentially mitigate any savings, she said.

Winzler reiterated the significance of the current fuel situation as the driver behind the available funds. The schools are still paying low oil prices even though they budgeted for more expensive natural gas back when they thought the natural gas heating system would be in place by now.

"It's not that there's fat in the budget, believe me," Winzler said.

## Arrestee Omitted from Colchester Story

There were three people arrested Dec. 5 in connection with the 2014 torching of a car in town, not just two, as last week's story, "Two Arrested in Connection with Arson," indicated.

Jeffrey Buckland, 38, of 11 Beebe Rd., East Haddam. Buckland was charged with first-degree arson, conspiracy to commit first-degree arson, conspiracy to commit third-degree larceny, second-degree criminal trover, conspiracy to commit second-degree criminal trover, insurance fraud, conspiracy to commit insurance fraud, first-degree criminal mischief and conspiracy to commit first-degree criminal mischief.

The *Rivereast* regrets this oversight.

## East Hampton Police News

12/7: Richard D. Morin, 46, of 50 Church St., East Hartford, turned himself in pursuant to an active warrant for his arrest, and was charged with second-degree assault with a motor vehicle, DUI and failure to drive right, East Hampton Police said.

## Portland Police News

12/8: Michael Albrecht, 44, of 333 Homestead Ave., Hartford, was charged with issuing a bad check and sixth-degree larceny, Portland Police said.

12/13: Michael Bower, 25, of 221 Maromas Rd., Middletown, was charged with DUI, operating an unregistered motor vehicle, possession of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia and operating with no insurance, police said.

## Colchester Police News

12/7: State Police said Hope Walden, 39, of 34 Rudden Ln., was arrested and charged with following too closely and DUI.

12/7: State Police said Nicholas Dodge, 22, of 100 Pinebrook Rd., was arrested and charged with DUI, driving a restricted turn, and failure to meet insurance requirements.

12/9: State Police said William Nixon, 30, of 103 Magnolia St., Hartford, was arrested and charged with failure to appear.

12/10: State Police said Angel Vasquez, 26,

of 123 Cook St., Waterbury, was arrested and charged with first-degree forgery and third-degree larceny.

12/11: State Police said Andrew Lotreck, 21, of 151 Cannon Dr., Amston, was arrested and charged with failure to appear.

12/13: State Police said Alexander Jannen, 25, of 215 Buddtown Rd., Southampton, New Jersey, was arrested and charged with DUI and improper parking.

## Marlborough Police News

12/9: State Police said Roan Brown, 31, of 54 Queen Court, Manchester, was arrested and charged with DUI and reckless driving.

12/10: State Police said Anthony Alos, 30, of 16 Caffyn Dr., was arrested and charged with breach of peace and threatening.

## Man Injured in Hebron Crash

An East Hartford man sustained minor injuries after colliding with a tree last week, state police said.

Police said Amir Lowen, 24, of 170 Brewer St., East Hartford, was driving a 2009 Subaru Impreza on Church Street at around 1 a.m. when he failed to negotiate a turn, overturned and struck a tree. He was transported to Marlborough Clinic with minor injuries.

Police said Lowen was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to drive in the proper lane.

## Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

A little thing floated around the Internet late last week telling people how to find which of their friends on Facebook like Donald Trump. Okay, so it wasn't a super-complicated thing to do – just go into Facebook and type "My friends who like Donald Trump" in the search bar – but it still made the rounds, seeing as Trump is very much in the news.

The point behind finding out who of your friends supports The Donald was that, once you learned who they were, you could delete them from your friends list.

I searched out of mere curiosity – I did, it turns out, have a few friends who liked Trump – but I had no desire to drop them as friends. For starters, there's more to a person than which presidential candidate they support. But even beyond that, excising a friend from your life – even if it's just your Facebook life – simply because the two of you don't see eye to eye on something is a symptom of what seems to be a growing problem on the Internet, which in turn is becoming a growing problem in life.

People seem increasingly content to just live in an echo chamber, surrounded solely by people who think the way they think, feel the way they feel. And that's no way to live life.

To a degree, this has always been the case – but the Internet, strangely, has made things worse. The Internet ushered in a new Information Age; people had access to more opinions and more viewpoints than ever before – and could interact with different people more easily than ever before. You'd think this would make people more diverse, more open to other peoples' thoughts, right?

Not really. It seems an awful lot of people have simply found others who feel the same way on issues as they do – and since, on the Internet, there's a group for seemingly every interest imaginable, it became easy for people to surround themselves with like-minded folks, and never have to deal with anyone of a different opinion.

As a result of this, when they have to deal with an issue, or a person, they don't like, people can respond very harshly and stridently. They don't listen because they don't *have* to listen.

And when you refuse to hear someone out, when you refuse to listen to whatever reasoning they have, you deny yourself the ability to see what makes them think – and of the ability to see that they're a person just like you.

The country is very black and white on a lot of issues these days; I think for the most part we don't see shades of gray as well as we used to. You really are for something or against it; there increasingly seems to be no middle ground. And that's a shame.

I'm not saying I'll ever become a fan of Donald Trump; indeed, if you've read my column the past two weeks you know I'm pretty much as opposed to him as one can be. I don't see anything a friend could tell me that would win me over to the Trump cause.

But to not even give him or her the chance? To cut them out of my life because they don't agree with me? That's no way to live.

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The other day on *Jeopardy!*, I was pleased to be able to guess the Final Jeopardy question right off the bat. Working in newspapers, it was right up my alley. The answer was: "The website for this '60s act says 'First look to see if the information you are interested in is already publicly available.'"

Think you know the question? Stay tuned;

it's at the end of my column.

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My alma mater, East Catholic High School, made national headlines this week with a video about what the school called "prayer shaming." In it, students at the school silently hold up signs saying things like "So many have told God that he's not welcome in public" and "Pray that God is allowed back into our lives." And while it can be a little over the top at times, it's still an interesting video, and I'm glad to see it's been spread across the country.

What seems to have spurred the creation of the video was the harsh reaction to "thoughts and prayers" after the San Bernardino, Calif., massacre.

After the horrific shootings that left 14 dead, a round of politicians and presidential hopefuls offered up the standard "My thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families" line. That prompted a spate of criticism from people saying "thoughts and prayers" simply aren't enough.

I understood the backlash. Look, it's a nice thought (and, maybe I'm being a little too humanistic here, but I'm sure it's sincere, more often than not, when politicians say it). But like I said, it's become something of a cliché – we hear it far too often because, news flash, there are far too many mass shootings. And rarely does the sentiment extend beyond that; there's mass shooting after mass shooting, but gun control rarely gets addressed. So I understand the frustration there; I really do. It's time for action on gun control – past time.

But, as usual, folks went overboard – perhaps none quite so much as the *New York Daily News*, which, the day after the shootings, posted a big front-page banner headline that read, "GOD ISN'T FIXING THIS," and, underneath it, wrote that "cowards that could truly end gun scourge continue to hide behind meaningless platitudes."

While I do like that a major paper like the *Daily News* is clearly on the more-gun-control side, the message was a little much – and I could see how some could be offended by that. For one who believes in God, prayer shouldn't be dismissed as a "meaningless platitude."

That being said, I'm not being deliberately obtuse here; I understand people weren't bashing prayer so much as those who offer the thoughts and prayers but never really do anything to try to curb the violence. But, perhaps things went a little over the top.

Stephen Colbert put it best on his CBS show last week (which, by the way, is a Grade A show; I highly recommend it): "I'd like to defend thoughts and prayers, as someone who occasionally thinks and prays. The reason you keep people in your thoughts and prayers is, admittedly, not to fix the problem, but to try to find some small way to share the burden of grief."

So, don't go "prayer shaming," as East Catholic calls it. Thoughts and prayers are meaningful. It's just, in this case, there needs to be something more.

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Okay, back to Final Jeopardy. The correct response is "What is the Freedom of Information Act?" Good ol' FOIA – a journalist's best friend.

And speaking of *Jeopardy!*, as Geeta Schrayter reported last week, don't forget to catch Amston resident Dee Daigle as a contestant on the Dec. 25 episode!

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See you next week.

## Obituaries

East Hampton

### Muriel Bransfield

Muriel (Winchester) Bransfield, 89, of East Hampton, passed away Thursday, Dec. 10, while in residence at Marlborough Health Care. She was born in Hartford on Oct. 31, 1926, and was a long-time resident of East Hampton and formerly of Lantana, Fla.

Muriel loved to paint and was awarded many accolades for her artistry. She shared her beautiful paintings with family and friends and one of her paintings has been on display at the East Hampton library for many years now.

Daughter of Raymond and Lillian (Phillips) Winchester of East Hampton and sister to three siblings, Raymond Winchester Jr., Audrey Brandon and Adair Curtis, all predeceased and all Connecticut residents. She had been predeceased by her husband, Edward Bransfield, in 1995 and in 2015 by her son, Warren Neal Jr., of Oklahoma City, Okla.

Muriel is survived by her daughters, Vivian DeMerchant and her husband, Richard Sr. of Portland, Ore., and Marcia Boyce and her husband, John Sr., of East Hampton; five grandchildren, Christopher Neal of Oklahoma City, Okla., Richard DeMerchant Jr. and Jeffrey DeMerchant of Portland, Ore., John Boyce Jr of Glastonbury and Courtney (Boyce) Eighthmy of East Hampton; and three great-grandsons.

Graveside services were held Monday, Dec. 14, at Lakeview Cemetery, East Hampton, with the Rev. Thomas Kennedy officiating.

In lieu of flowers, donations in memory of Muriel may be made to St. Jude's Children's Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105.

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

Andover

### Bertha J. Farrand

Bertha J. (Hutchinson) Farrand, 84, of Manchester, beloved wife for 65 years of Robert H. Farrand Sr., died peacefully Monday, Dec. 14, at the Westside Care Center with her family at her side.

Bertha was born Feb. 7, 1931, in Canton, daughter of the late John and Doris (Segar) Hutchinson. She grew up in Andover and has been a resident of Manchester for 64 years. Prior to her retirement, she had been a waitress at the former Willie's Streak House in Manchester for many years.

She is survived by two sons, Robert H. Farrand Jr. and Gerry of Andover, John V. Farrand Sr. and his wife Beverly of Manchester; her daughter Wendy Baillargeon and her husband David of Plymouth. She also leaves her grandson, John V. Farrand Jr. of Chicago, Ill.; her brother-in-law Mel Stotler of Virginia; and her dog "Jake," a very special love.

Bertha was predeceased by her sister, Judy Stotler.

The family wishes to extend a special thanks to the Westside Care Center, Dr. Brenes, Connie, Beth, Lisa, Christine and Katie, as well as to the special friends, Wanda, Jackie, Rosie, Millie, Jackie, Mo, Vivian, Iffy, Diane, Mary, Madelyn, Ingrid, Cybil, Miss M, and everyone who helped, cared for and enriched her days, and a blessed "Thank You" to Frances.

Funeral services will be private with burial in the Townsend Cemetery in Andover.

Memorial donations may be made to Out to Pasture Farm & Rescue Inc., P.O. Box 310174, Newington, CT 06131-0174.

To sign the online register book, go to [holmes-watkinsfuneralhomes.com](http://holmes-watkinsfuneralhomes.com).

Portland

### Mitchell Kogut II

Mitchell Kogut II, 67, of Portland, peacefully passed away Thursday, Dec. 10, with his loving wife, Lori (Coleman) Kogut by his side. Born in Boonville, N.Y., on Feb. 9, 1948, he was the son of the late Mitchell and Helen (Adour) Kogut.

In addition to his wife, Lori, Mitchell is survived by his daughter, Michelle Ohanian and her husband George of Virginia and his son, Mitchell Kogut III and his wife Lori of Maine. Mitchell was also the proud grandfather of Camille and Cecilia Ohanian and three step-grandchildren, Kelly, Chris and McKenna and four step-great-grandchildren, Brooklyn, William, Ezra and Zachary.

Mitchell graduated Boonville High School in 1966 and went on to graduate from Plattsburgh College in New York. Mitchell was a heart transplant recipient in 1994; he always considered himself blessed to be able to spend the last 23 years with his loving wife, to see his children marry and to become a grandfather and great-grandfather. He loved spending time with his family and friends. He also enjoyed cooking, camping, and traveling. Mitchell worked as a salesman for most of his career, including the McDonald Corporation, the Carrington Company in Southington and retired as an educational software salesperson.

Mitchell was an extremely active and beloved member of the First Congregational Church of Portland where he served on various committees, including the Board of Deacons, the Search Committee, the Board of Christian Education and the Nominating Committee. He will be fondly remembered by many congregants for the jovial way in which he narrated various church functions and fundraisers. Mitchell was also committed to his community in Portland and served on the Board of Education in Region 10 as well as the Conservation Committee in Portland.

Family and friends are invited to attend a memorial service on Saturday, Jan. 9, 2016, at 11 a.m., at the First Congregational Church of Portland. Burial will be private and at the convenience of the family.

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

Doolittle Funeral Home is handling the arrangements. To share memories or send condolences to the Kogut family, visit [doolittlefuneralservice.com](http://doolittlefuneralservice.com).

Portland

### Sandra K. Cotter

Sandra K. Cotter, 71, of Middletown, died Tuesday, Dec. 8, at Portland Care and Rehabilitation Center. She was the daughter of the late James and Catherine Taber and was born in Cranston, R.I., and attended schools in New Britain.

She was a graduate of Pulaski Senior High School. Sandra had worked at the Middlesex Memorial Hospital in Middletown and retired from the State of Connecticut Department of Public Safety in Meriden.

She is survived by her son and daughter-in-law, John and Mary Cotter of Middletown, son-in-law, Michael Seabock and grandson Levi Seabock of New Hartford; two granddaughters, Christina Cotter of Cranston, R.I., and Cassandra and her husband Timothy Irish, and great-granddaughter Evangeline Irish, of Narragansett, R.I.; and a brother, James Taber of Virginia.

She is predeceased by a daughter, Catherine Seabock.

Graveside services were held Thursday, Dec. 17, in St. John Cemetery, Middletown. There were no calling hours.

The Coughlin-Lastrina Funeral Home, 491 High St., Middletown, is in charge of arrangements.

