

RIVEREAST

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A variety of scarecrow displays, like this *Jaws*-inspired scene entitled "You're Going to Need a Bigger Town Green," are currently up at the Colchester Town Green, as the annual Scarecrow Decorating Contest is underway.

Scarecrow Contest Returns to Colchester

by Julianna Roche

Record high temperatures may have swept through the state this week, but judging by the Colchester town green – which is decorated with nearly 35 elaborate scarecrow displays – the warm weather hasn't stopped Colchester from getting into the Halloween spirit.

The scarecrow scenes make up the 17th annual Scarecrow Decorating Contest, which is hosted and co-sponsored by the Colchester Business Association (CBA) and the Colchester Parks and Recreation Department, and features entries from businesses, families or individuals and youth groups and organizations.

According to Anita Pizzutiello Kelly, Colchester Parks and Recreation's recreation supervisor and chairwoman of this year's contest, the year has "gone very well" so far with "a fresh new committee and enthusiastic volunteers."

"We [also] had several new businesses who joined the event this year and of course, the businesses who we know absolutely love this tradition – the true Halloween enthusiasts who we all look forward to seeing their scenes every year," she said.

From the corner of Main and Norwich, it's hard to miss the magnificently designed "Out of this World" display by Apple Rehab for example, complete with two astronauts decked out in silver spacesuits, each with a red apple for a head, and a green apple-headed alien sitting in a UFO between the two.

"It was a collaborative effort," said Apple Rehab's Therapeutic Recreation Director Rob-

ert Lecce of the scarecrow display, adding that staff members and Apple Rehab residents worked on the project together.

"Different parts came from different people. We all kind of chipped in," he said, adding for example, the scarecrows' heads were actually beach balls they had used in another event. "We had used them for something else, but we brought them back up from downstairs and had the residents refurbish them."

Another eye-catching scarecrow display included "You're Going to Need a Bigger Town Green," done by the Callan family, referencing the infamous quote from *Jaws*: "You're gonna need a bigger boat!" The elaborate display features a cleverly-crafted sky blue-colored shark

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Election Day Drawing Near

The Nov. 4 *Rivereast* is the last issue before Election Day. As such, political letters that week should be endorsements only, or positive in nature. No negative letters, and no letters raising new issues, will be published, as candidates will not have time to respond before the following Tuesday's elections.

So next week's issue, the Oct. 28 edition, will be the last time to write any negative letters.

Belltown Woman to Donate Kidney to Son

by Elizabeth Regan

Emily Thomas of East Hampton didn't think twice when she learned her son, Shawn, needed a kidney transplant.

Before he could even ask, Emily said she would be his donor. "I'm doing it for you, baby," she recounted during an interview this week. "I'm your mother."

But it was only after months of medical testing that a comprehensive team of transplant specialists determined Emily's blood and tissue type were compatible with her son's.

She said she now has the all-clear to donate a kidney to her son – "which is very exciting because not everyone gets to be that lucky."

Shawn was born 33 years ago to Emily and Art Thomas with an undiagnosed birth defect affecting his urinary system. He was three years old, vomiting in the backyard, when it first became apparent something was wrong.

That's when his parents took him to Middlesex Hospital, pointing to a rash on his body that they thought was Lyme disease. But Emily said doctors quickly discovered blood poisoning was overtaking Shawn's body, because urine had been backing up into his kidneys.

Shawn had five surgeries over the next de-

cade to address blockages in his ureters, including one to remove a catheter that had been left in his body during a previous operation.

At one point, when he was about 14 years old, he had to wear an external drainage bag connected to a tube inside his body.

"He was such a trooper. He was out there giving me a heart attack running around the house chasing the dog with this bag hanging off his kidney and the cord around his arm," she said. "It didn't keep him down. He was so, so brave."

His last childhood surgery was performed at Boston Children's Hospital by Dr. W. Hardy Hendren III, widely touted as a leading pediatric surgeon of his generation.

Art Thomas referred to Hendren with obvious gratitude, calling him a world-renowned nephrologist sometimes referred to as "God."

According to a website for the pediatric surgery and urology foundation started by Hendren, the doctor was also known by the nickname "Hardly Human" for his ability to work for 18 hours or more on complex and groundbreaking surgeries.

Despite the fact that Hendren told the Thomases their son had lost half of the func-

See Belltown Woman page 2



Emily Thomas is set to donate a kidney to her 33-year-old son, Shawn, early next year. A benefit will be held Sunday at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5095 in East Hampton to help the family. From left are Michele Sharpe-Thomas, Shawn Thomas, Nathaniel Thomas, Art Thomas and Emily Thomas.



“Out of this World,” the display created by Apple Rehab, features an astronaut and alien scene. According to therapeutic recreation director Robert Lecce, it was a collaborative effort between staff and residents.

Scarecrow Contest cont. from Front Page

sticking out of the ground with its jaws wide open chomping on a pumpkin person.

Colchester Dental Group also had a charming scarecrow display with characters from the animated film series *Despicable Me*, including minions with hay for hair, along with the film’s antagonist, Felonius Gru, holding onto a life-size red toothbrush.

According to Pizzutiello Kelly, regardless of whether the scarecrows were crafted by individuals, families or businesses, however, the main goal of the annual event remains the same.

“This event is one more way for our community to come together, engage in the voting process, support local businesses, and enjoy our town green during the fall,” she said.

Lecce, who said that Apple Rehab has been a part of the contest for several years, agreed.

“Residents really enjoyed doing it and it really does give them a sense of purpose,” he said. “And to be a part of the community and take part in events like this, it’s fun for them.”

As with every year, the scarecrow contest kicked off the right way, with a costume parade which was held last Friday, Oct. 14, where clusters of children dressed in costumes paraded around the green to music by DJ Montez. According to Pizzutiello Kelly, this year was especially fantastic, as pizza and snacks were donated for everyone from Maria’s Pizza, Plum Tomato, Family Pizza, Subway and Stop & Shop.

“Overall, the response from people who attended the kickoff costume parade on Friday was that the quality of the scenes, the creativity and humor of the designs make the event a lot of fun for kids and adults,” Pizzutiello Kelly said.

* * *

This year’s scarecrows are in the running for first and second place in the categories of most imaginative, scariest and funniest.

Voting for the scarecrows can be conducted online or at local businesses. To vote online, readers can go to the CBA website, colchesterctbusiness.com, scroll to “Upcoming Events” and click on the voting link. Voting boxes will be located at these Colchester locations: Lifelong Dental Care, 151 Broadway St.; Dime Bank, 139 S. Main St.; Colchester Dental Group, 79A Norwich Ave.; Apple Rehab, 36 Broadway St.; United Bank, 99 Linwood Ave.; Colchester Eye Care, 163 Broadway St.; Escapes Hair Salon, 27 Lebanon Ave.; TD Bank, 64 Norwich Ave.; Shattered Endz Hair Salon, 99 Linwood Ave.; the Colchester Parks and Recreation office at Town Hall, 127 Norwich Ave.; and Mackey’s, 132 Linwood Ave.

The last day to vote is Oct. 30, with winners anticipated to be announced the following week. Winners will be contacted personally and will be posted on the CBA website as well as the Parks and Recreation website, colchesterct.gov/parks.

Belltown Woman cont. from Front Page

tion in each kidney, the doctor’s work carried Shawn through the next two decades.

“After that wonderful surgery at Boston, he had been doing so well – up to this point,” Emily said.

The family has lived in East Hampton for 32 years. That’s also how long Emily has worked as a mail carrier in town, first covering the Route 16 side of town before crossing over recently to the Route 66 area of Champion Hill Road and Spice Hill Drive.

Shawn moved from East Hampton to Marlborough a year ago with his wife of two years, Michele, and his 13-year-old son, Nathaniel.

According to Shawn, it took him some time to realize his kidneys were failing completely. He credited Michele and Nathaniel with helping him come to the realization he needed medical help. They were the ones who pointed it out when he began to complain he didn’t feel well every single day.

“I’ve been putting up with it my entire life, so I never really noticed it had gotten that bad,” he explained.

Shawn said his doctor at Middlesex Hospital ran the necessary tests and told him he should’ve gotten a transplant a year ago.

“It’s a lot of waking up feeling sick,” Shawn said. “Being kind of crabby certain days; being in a lot of pain other days.”

Art pretended to look shocked at the “crabby” part: “What? Mr. Sunshine?”

Shawn ignored the playful jab with the experience of someone who’d long dealt with his father’s sense of humor.

“Other days I feel fine, where I can go out and play with the dog. But this morning I woke up and felt horrible,” Shawn said. “It’s tough. But I can still thankfully work and provide for my family. I’ll do that as long as I possibly can, and we’ll go from there.”

Shawn said the transplant is tentatively scheduled for the second week in January.

While Emily, 54, has full clearance to donate her kidney, Shawn still needs more testing and some preparatory surgeries – including the removal of his wisdom teeth to reduce the chance of any infections – before he is ready to receive it.

“We’re doing the wisdom teeth this weekend, right?” Art asked Shawn, deadpan. “I’ve got those vice grips.”

Shawn acknowledged his father with an emphatic “no” before returning to the subject at hand to explain he will be meeting with the transplant coordinator and a surgeon soon to set the official date for the surgery.

In the meantime, he’s trying to get by without dialysis. The treatment does the work of the kidneys through a machine that removes waste, salt and extra water while helping to maintain chemical levels and to control blood pressure. Treatments are usually done three times per week for about four hours at a time, according to the National Kidney Foundation.

His greatest concern is the effect the treatment would have on his job, Shawn said. He is employed by Unitex, a medical linen and uniform rental service that delivers across the northeast.

According to Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration guidelines, those on dialysis are disqualified from being truck drivers.

“At that point, I can’t do my job at all,” Shawn said. “They’ll revoke my license to drive and I can no longer work. That was a huge sticking point for me.”

So he is focused now on getting to his transplant surgery while keeping the job he loves.

“Work has been very good. They’ve definitely extended their hand and are willing to make sure I come back to work and I’ll have a position, which was a huge relief for us,” he said.

Michele Thomas said the family is looking at significant expenses during Shawn’s four- to six-month recovery period since his company does not offer short term disability. And while Medicare covers immunosuppressive therapy for three years after a kidney transplant, costs beyond that are estimated to be \$20,000 per year.

A crowdsourcing website had raised \$1,745 of its \$15,000 goal as of Wednesday.

Emily said the generosity of people in town has brought her to tears on multiple occasions. Donations have been made not only through the website, but also in the form of goods and services for a benefit event scheduled for Sunday at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5095.

“This town is amazing,” Emily said. “They’ve always been supportive through Shawn’s entire life.”

Emily’s own recuperation is expected to last a couple months before she can return to her postal service job with all the strenuous lifting and stair-climbing it entails.

Shawn and Emily both said they were surprised to find out the donor is likely to find recovery more difficult than the recipient.

“I’m going to feel like I could run a marathon the day after I have the surgery,” Shawn said.

Emily, not afraid at all of the temporary discomfort she’s facing, expressed only excitement about the aftermath of the surgery: “He’s going to feel so good.”

Art, who had been cracking jokes for the entire interview, was almost speechless when asked how it felt to know that his wife would be saving their son’s life through kidney donation.

“Absolutely amazing,” he said, his voice cracking as tears welled in his eyes.

A benefit event will be held Sunday at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5095 on 20 N. Maple St., East Hampton, from noon-5 p.m. The event will feature a DJ, food, raffles and a silent auction. Donations can also be made at gofundme.com/2kyhhj2c.

Marlborough Library Receives Grant for High-Speed Connections

by Julianna Roche

Richmond Memorial Library will soon join the ranks of Avon, Hartford and Glastonbury libraries now that the State Library Board has approved a \$22,100 grant to provide its computers with high-speed fiber connections to the Connecticut Education Network (CEN).

According to Library Director Nancy Wood, the state-approved funding marks a momentous milestone in the library's digital history, having evolved from originally owning a single computer in back in 1993, which librarians used to look up magazines by microfiche.

"This is a really good thing for the staff and the public when they come in to use our computers or databases," she said, adding the biggest benefit is that the new connection will offer much faster Internet speeds to residents – almost tripling their network's current speed from about three mbps (megabits per second) to over one gbps (gigabits per second).

Fourteen computers will be connected to the new network, including six staff computers and eight public computers. Wood noted the library also has two touch screens preloaded with age-appropriate games in the children's area; how-

ever, they will remain disconnected from the Internet.

Back in 2015, the Connecticut General Assembly originally appropriated \$3.6 million for grants-in-aid for high-speed connections to CEN, and in May of this year, the State Bond Commission finally approved an allocation and bond authorization to the State Library, which has funded high-speed Internet connections for more than 90 libraries in the state.

As of late, the State Library Board approved \$338,670 in grants to 15 public libraries for high-speed fiber connections to the CEN, including Marlborough's library, making it one of the first public libraries in the state to receive a grant under this program.

The connection is expected to be completed in the first half of 2017.

Over the years, communities' reliance on public libraries to provide these types of services has grown, Wood said, especially because access to the Internet serves as a gateway to all sorts of information.

"Pretty much everything we do is tethered to

computers now," Wood said, adding that it's true even for the staff, which uses the Internet to do everything from ordering and cataloguing materials, measuring development or gaps in their collection, and even making public announcements.

Libraries also provide individuals without access to computers, free access to the Internet, Wood said, which has helped close the digital divide in today's information age.

"While we realize that people in Marlborough have a high rate of ownership in computers, there is still a group of people who need help," she explained, adding that the library already provides a concierge computer service where residents can make an appointment to come in for any sort of computer assistance – from getting their email organized to learning the difference between a Nook and a Kindle.

In addition to support from the Federal Schools and Libraries E-Rate program (which helps schools and libraries obtain affordable broadband), the \$22,100 grant will also cover

all of the fiber connection installation costs.

"It's a digital world now, so we are all really excited," Wood said, adding that she has "waited years for this to happen."

In a joint letter announcing the local funding, State Library Board Chairman John N. Barry and State Librarian Kendall F. Wiggin wrote that public libraries serve as "critical gateways to information outside of one's own community."

They added that as reliance by the community on libraries' Internet services has increased, it is essential that libraries across the state now have access to universal high-speed connectivity.

As such, the State Library Board is expected to award another round of grants in November.

"People think they can get everything online, but libraries are still really relevant today and librarians are still the people to come to when you can't find information on something you're looking for," Wood said – and that perhaps makes the high-speed fiber connection that much more valuable.

East Hampton Council Takes Stand Against Binding Arbitration

by Elizabeth Regan

The Town Council voted last week along party lines to take an approximately \$30,000 stand against the system of binding arbitration.

The council's five Republicans voted last week to reject a three-year contract for school administrators. Councilors James "Pete" Brown and Kevin Reich, both Democrats, opposed the motion despite reservations about wage increases and the concept of binding arbitration as a whole.

Republican councilors Mark Philhower and Melissa Engel were adamant throughout the meeting that the binding arbitration system, which they believe limits the council's authority over the local budget, has to change.

"You need to start somewhere. And I believe we should start right here, right now," Philhower said. "Maybe if the town of East Hampton goes to arbitration saying, 'No, we're not giving you a two-and-three-quarter [percent] increase after we gave our taxpayers the highest mill rate increase ever,' maybe other towns will follow suit and it'll start. But if no town starts, it'll never happen."

Binding arbitration allows municipalities and school districts to work with an impartial arbitrator to settle disputes using the "last best offer, issue by issue" framework. That means an arbitrator must choose either management's last offer or the union's last offer on each contested point of the contract. State statute does not allow arbitrators to work out compromises.

The move makes East Hampton one of the rare municipalities to reject a tentative agreement already reached between the school board and the union.

According to Engel, it's time to challenge the system.

"I am so tired of being threatened by arbitration," she said.

The tentative agreement, negotiated between the East Hampton Administrators' Association and the East Hampton Board of Education, affects nine administrators and includes a raise of 2.75 percent in the first two years and 2.5 in the third year. The contract was approved unani-

mously by the Board of Education on Sept. 19.

Superintendent of Schools Paul K. Smith said the raises are comparable to those in other towns approved last year.

Smith told councilors the general wage increase amounts to \$96,377 over three years. The total financial impact of the contract – including wage increases, step increases, retirement plan contributions and a special education summer school stipend – comes to \$119,570 over three years.

The teacher's contract authorized last year included a wage increase of 2.25 annually for three years, which Smith said was also in line with contracts in other districts.

The most recent report on binding arbitration awards from the state legislature's Office of Fiscal Analysis found six instances in the 2009-10 school fiscal year of school administrator contracts that went to arbitration.

Of the 40 total issues settled as part of those six cases, 25 came down in favor of unions while 15 were in favor of the school boards.

A 2006 study by the state General Assembly's Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee stated the binding arbitration process in education most commonly occurs between labor and the local or regional school board.

It is on "rare occasions" that a local legislative body – such as a town council – rejects the agreement after the school board and union have already come to an agreement. The study found in those cases that the already-negotiated agreement is given "additional weight" in a neutral arbitrator's deliberations.

Smith put it this way when addressing questions from councilors: "According to the board's attorney, the arbitrator is just going to rubber stamp it and say the agreement is the agreement."

Philhower told Smith he'd be happy to see that process unfold.

"I want [the arbitrator], in a state that's going broke, to tell the taxpayers they deserve that kind of increase," Philhower said. "That's quite

outlandish that somebody would just rubber-stamp that. I think I'd like that to happen."

The total financial impact of the contract in its first year would add up to about \$41,000. According to Smith, legal counsel for the Board of Education estimated the cost of going to binding arbitration would be between \$25,000 and \$30,000.

Smith said the wage increase is about 0.41 percent higher than the average wage increase for contracts settled across the state in 2015. That amounts to about \$554 per year above average for each of nine administrators.

But he cautioned the officials to look at the entire contract. He pointed to a higher insurance deductible than in the previous contract – for a savings of about \$7,000 to \$8,000 per year over the course of the contract – combined with the notable lack of a Board of Education contribution to each administrator's Health Savings Account (HSA).

"We are one of two districts in the state that contributes nothing to the HSA for the teachers and the administrators," Smith said, adding that most other districts cover 50 percent of the health insurance deductible for their employees.

That HSA contribution would be about \$2,000 per year for each administrator if implemented in East Hampton, according to Smith.

The contract also includes a new retirement plan contribution of \$1,000 annually per administrator.

Councilor Ted Hintz Jr. said he was conflicted about spending \$30,000 to go to arbitration when the return on that investment is unclear. He also worried about the effect of arbitration on the administrators.

"Are you really that upset with your administrators that you want to push them one step closer to the door? [It] is really something that you have to look at," he said.

Reich recommended taking no action on the contract, which means it would automatically be ratified after 30 days from receipt by the council. Then the school board could use the

\$30,000 it would've spent on arbitration fees for other things.

"Golly, we could buy another hundred little computers," Reich said, referring to the Chromebook laptops that the district now provides for every middle school student and eventually plans to provide for all high school students.

He said the council would be better off if they put their effort into advocating at the state level for reform of the binding arbitration system.

For Brown, the biggest concern was the 2.75 percent raise in the first two years. He emphasized taxpayers have already "stepped up to the plate" by passing a referendum for the \$51 million high school renovation that has now come due.

"The very people we're asking to fund this contract – not only this contract but all contracts – are living on wages that are far, far below what some of these people are making," Brown said. "How many times can you ask [taxpayers] to give more?"

Administrators would be making between \$121,000 and \$149,000 per year under the new contract, according to salary information provided by Smith.

The vote to reject the contract came after an impromptu executive session held to give councilors more information about the negotiations that had taken place between the school board and administrators' union.

Hintz, despite his initial reservations, voted with the other four Republicans to reject the contract. Brown, despite his staunch words of support for struggling taxpayers, voted with his fellow Democrat against the motion.

Smith said after the meeting that he respects the process, "though it will be a costly one."

The arbitration process will be set up by the school board's attorney and the union attorney, he said.

According to state guidelines for the arbitration process, each side will pick an "advocate arbitrator." A third "neutral arbitrator" will be selected through mutual agreement.

Biking 12,000 Miles in Hebron for Hungry Vets

by Geeta S. Sandberg

"There are 130,000 homeless veterans in our country on any given night; nearly four million veterans and their families don't have enough food at the end of each month to feed themselves. These are the people I was riding for."

When Storrs resident Mike Beattie stood before members of the Hebron American Legion last Wednesday, Oct. 12, he did so as someone who'd recently completed a 12,000-mile journey around the country by bicycle to raise money and awareness for hungry veterans.

Beattie, 65, who is himself a U.S. Navy veteran, shared with the Legion that after his retirement from his locksmith and security business, he had the opportunity to travel the country in a camper. During that trip, he explained he was amazed at the number of homeless veterans he came across.

After one particular encounter in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, where Beattie brought a couple of hamburgers for a homeless veteran standing outside McDonald's, he shared, "the guy gave me a big hug and started crying. I got to talking with him, and that's really what moved me."

As a result, for the rest of his trip Beattie tried to think of something "really crazy that would attract attention to the average person."

The answer, he decided, was to ride a bike around the country.

"A lot of people have ridden bikes across country, but I didn't know of anybody my age that would physically ride 12,000 miles around the country," he explained.

And so, that's precisely what Beattie did. He planned the course, and joined up with Feed Our Vets, a non-profit organization based in New York that feeds 5,000 veterans in upstate New York alone, and distributes monthly food cards throughout the country to veterans that need assistance.

Beattie then formed his own non-profit so he'd be able to receive funds as he journeyed around the country to donate to Feed Our Vets upon his return. He packed all the gear he'd need to be self-supported – 75- to 80-pounds' worth – and headed out from Storrs the last week of March.

He rode down to Florida, across to California, up the Pacific coast to Washington, then back east via Montana, North Dakota and Minnesota, then down along the Mississippi River into Iowa and Illinois. He skirted the Great Lakes through Ohio and a bit of Pennsylvania, went up through the Adirondacks in New York, across Lake Champlain via ferry to Vermont, New Hampshire then back down to Connecticut.

cut.

For Beattie to take this trip it was unique not only because of his age and circling the country instead of crossing it, but because he has two steel rods in his spine.

He explained, "I was a physical wreck from 50-60 because I had so many spinal surgeries, among other surgeries, and basically couldn't do anything. I wasn't active at all, so for me to do this it was a huge thing."

Beattie added his last surgery was a multi-level spinal fusion where steel rods were put in, and "I felt great after that – walking and hiking and dancing. I found that I can sit on a bicycle seat for a long while without any pain at all."

Which was a good thing, considering Beattie planned to ride 8-12 hours a day, or about 70 miles, in order to complete the trip in six months.

But just because Beattie found sitting on a bike seat relatively painless doesn't mean he didn't experience pain elsewhere; by the time he'd ridden through upstate New York, down along the Delaware River and reached Pennsylvania Amish country, he shared, "My knees were so bad I could hardly walk."

That was the fourth day of the trip. Beattie said he took a day off, alternated between hot and cold compresses, and shortened the amount he rode to around 40 miles per day until he reached the Carolinas; his knees eventually strengthened, and were relatively pain free from Louisiana on.

"I could tell stories probably for weeks just about the weather," Beattie shared of his trip. "I skirted tornados in Texas and got caught in flooding in Louisiana" and saw some "horrific storms with lightning and hail" as well as blinding dust storms.

He added of the Oregon coast, "If you've never been there, it's just awesome – if there's one place you want to put on your bucket list, it's the Oregon coast."

Other areas Beattie remarked on included Glacier National Park in Montana – "it's probably one of my favorite spots in the country; it's just awesome there" – as well as the endless corn and soy fields in Illinois and Indiana.

"After a couple of weeks of that it's like, man, get me out of these corn fields! But then once I got out of the fields I started getting back into traffic and wished I was back in the corn fields again!" he laughed.

But while he got to experience the diverse weather and scenery all around the country, he added he didn't have time to truly visit the places he went, because his focus was on the



Storrs resident Mike Beattie recently shared with the Hebron American Legion his tale of a cross-country bike ride to raise money for homeless veterans.

ride and hungry veterans.

"As I traveled along I stopped at VFWs, American Legions, veterans' clubs – anything I could find like that, and passed out my card looking for hungry veterans in need of assistance," Beattie explained. "I'd go to tent cities and ask, 'Are there any homeless veterans here?' and just about half the hands would go up. And I got assistance for a lot of them."

Beattie also wore a shirt that said, "I'm biking 12,000 miles to feed hungry veterans" on the back, and he shared people would stop him on the side of the road and make donations.

"I had people donate as much as \$100 just like that – and they don't even know me!" he stated. "And I met people that didn't really have any money but wanted to give me something so they gave me a \$1 bill, and that dollar meant as much to me as the larger amounts."

Beattie added, "Everybody just seems to have a connection to a veteran in some way, shape or form and everybody has a story. And I listened to everybody's story as I went along, and it was just fantastic."

He was also able to listen to the stories of some of the homeless veterans, and shared "all

the veterans I met were pretty memorable." He added, "Politicians need to give up their benefits and in exchange take the benefits the veterans get – then maybe they'll do something real fast" about the issue.

Beattie returned home Sept. 9, a month earlier than anticipated. He rode 12,142 miles in 152 days and averaged about 82 miles a day.

As a result he was able to raise \$30,000 for Feed Our Hungry Vets, and the donations haven't stopped coming: at the end of last Wednesday's presentation, Beattie was presented with a check for \$500 from the Hebron American Legion, "as a token of appreciation from the club," Commander Joe Fetta stated.

"People would say, 'Do you really think you made a difference?'" Beattie shared, "And I think I did. Because I raised awareness; I spoke to thousands of different people about the problem."

And the veterans who are able to eat because of his efforts are sure to feel the same.

For more information or to donate to Feed Our Vets go to feedourvets.org. Beattie can also be found on Facebook; go to facebook.com and search for "Michael Beattie."

Hebron Awarded \$1.1 Million for Main Street Renovations

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Enhancements to the Hebron town center are forthcoming, following word this month the town received approval for two grant applications sent for the installation of sidewalks along Church Street, the extension of lighting along Main Street, and the construction of a pedestrian bridge and walkway between the Douglas Library and Pendleton Drive.

The town is set to receive \$880,400 from the state Department of Transportation for an application sent through the Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program; and up to \$229,420 in grant funds under the Main Street Investment Fund program.

The former will be used to install sidewalks approximately 6,000 feet along Church Street from the intersection with Main Street to the Sunnyside Shopping Plaza. According to the grant application submitted last December, the sidewalks will be located on the west side of Church Street (Route 85) from the intersection to Hebron Elementary School, which will provide access to the United Brethren of Hebron Synagogue and St. Peter's Episcopal Church as well as the St. Peter's ballfield, the Russell

Mercier Senior Center, and the senior housing facility Stonecroft Village.

The sidewalk will cross over to the south side just after the intersection with Kinney Road, which, according to the application, is significant because "this is a future signalized intersection in the long term Village Green Master Concept Plan."

The Village Green is a 130-acre mixed-use economic development area. The concept plan also includes a series of trails and walkways to which, the application asserts, "this project would also tie-in."

The sidewalk will then continue until the Sunnyside Shopping Plaza, providing access along the way to the town's Church Street Park, Church of the Holy Family, and "a relatively densely-populated residential area" along Hope Valley Road and Brennon Road.

Meanwhile, the Main Street Enhancement Plan proposed under the Main Street Investment Fund program consists of two initiatives: a Main Street Lighting Project, and a Pendleton Drive pedestrian project.

According to the project plan provided by

Town Planner Mike O'Leary, the lighting project will extend the colonial lighting that already exists on a portion of Main Street from Route 85 to Route 316 further east throughout the rest of Main Street. This would "unify the whole of the town center commercial district using this strong design theme of colonial street lights," according to the description of the project.

These lights would follow the sidewalks along Main Street, "and the added lighting and ambiance would encourage pedestrian use of the center."

As for the Pendleton Drive Pedestrian Project, it will connect the Douglas Library parking lot to the Pendleton Drive cul-de-sac via a pedestrian bridge and walkway. The walkway would then extend as a sidewalk on Pendleton Drive to another parking lot across the street from AHM Youth and Family Services, and connect with another walkway that extends back to the sidewalks on Main Street.

Town Manager Andrew Tierney said of the awards this week, "It was a team effort between [state Sen. Cathy] Osten and [state Rep. Gayle]

Mulligan and the town of Hebron, and the final outcome is going to benefit all of us here in this community."

Tierney added of the Main Street Investment Fund program grant, "This should be close to the final phase of the beautification of the downtown of Hebron with colonial lighting all the way down to Ted's [IGA], and a pedestrian walkway behind the library to attach to two new parking lots we just put in with [Small Town Economic Assistance Program] grant money."

Speaking to the LOCIP award, he continued, "The other grant will extend sidewalks to Hebron Elementary School, to make Hebron a more viable, walkable community."

Tierney concluded, "Hebron is very lucky to get the support of the state of Connecticut, the Office of Policy and Management, and the Bonding Council. We really appreciate their cooperation. I think we've gotten our fair share of grants since I've been town manager and I'm hoping to get more to enhance this community."

Work on all the enhancements is due to start with the next construction season in the spring, Tierney said.

Colchester Pet Shop Celebrates Five-Year Anniversary

by Julianna Roche

Jen Lowy knows her fish. Having grown up working in her parents' pet store, Magic Pet in Wethersfield (which opened a year after she was born), skills like growing coral and live rock or even making her own saltwater became second-nature.

Lowy continued to work at the store through high school and college until her parents finally retired and the store ultimately closed. When she received her marketing degree from Rhode Island's Bryant College however, Lowy just couldn't shake the idea of ending a long-running family tradition for good (her father also grew up working in his parents' pet shop).

Fast forward to today – with Lowy preparing to celebrate the five-year anniversary of her own store Colchester Pet Shop, which she opened along with help from her parents in 2011.

According to Lowy, deciding on the store's current location, 111 Loomis Rd., was almost a no-brainer, considering she would always drive by it on her way home. In fact, she only lives two miles away in Moodus, making it an easy commute.

"When we first got here, this was actually a dirt floor," Lowy said, adding there was a lot of work to be done, including building walls and painting them. She and her parents also sectioned off an office area which doubles as a nursery for Lowy's 18-month old daughter.

Considering they literally built the shop from the ground up, Lowy says that it has evolved quite a bit over the years.

"We've gone with more fish. We had more dog and cat stuff, but competition has made it so we have focused more on fish instead," Lowy said, adding they have both fresh and saltwater fish including rope, parrot, sword tails, rummy

nose, seahorses, clownfish, hippo tang, geophagus, chocolate chip starfish and glofish. They've also expanded their saltwater section, which continues to grow.

Recently, the saltwater section also gained a new resident (whom the Lowys won at auction) – Tango, the captive-bred Pacific Blue Tang, who is one of just 27 of its kind in the world, reared in captivity at the University of Florida's Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory in conjunction with the Rising Tide Conservation program. He is also only one of two individual Pacific Blue Tang made available to the general public. While the fish isn't for sale, having him represents a huge milestone for the shop, Lowy said, considering its breeding marks a historic leap in the aquatic industry and for such a small shop to be a part of it, is "just mind-blowing."

It also helps separate a family-run shop like Lowy's from big box stores like Petco or Pet Valu, where it may be less common for customers to get a more personalized experience in the store, as well as the best information in regards to how to care for fish.

"You can't get the kind of knowledge we have [about fish] anywhere else, especially when you go to any of the big stores," Lowy said. "It doesn't get more family than this. And shopping here instead of places like Petco – you're getting the expertise and you're not funding a big corporation. ... Your money is staying in small business, here in Connecticut. You're supporting local."

While Lowy said they have customers travel to the shop from all over (including some from Rhode Island and Massachusetts and some who even followed the family from Magic Pet), owning a small business is not without its challenges.



Colchester Pet Shop Owner Jen Lowy proudly shows off her Yellow Tang, who were some of the first of their kind bred in captivity. On Sunday Oct. 23 from 11 to 4 p.m., the shop owner, who grew up working in her parents' pet store, will be hosting a five-year anniversary celebration on 111 Loomis Rd.

"I just love the challenge of fish, but having your own business is very hard. It's hard getting people to know about you or getting the word out," she said, adding she hopes Tango's presence in the store will draw more people in.

Colchester Pet Shop's "Five Year Anniversary" celebration is this Sunday, Oct. 23 from 11 to 4 p.m. at the shop on 111 Loomis Rd. In addition to a huge raffle and goldfish races, the

shop will also have a special sale including 25 percent off all regular priced livestock, 25 percent off freshwater and saltwater fish, and more.

The organization Homeward Bound CT will also be in attendance from noon to 3 p.m. along with some dogs that are up for adoption. The group is seeking donations in the form of leashes, collars, and any kind of dog food. For more information on the organization, visit homewardboundct.org.

Colchester Board of Finance Vacancy Issue Remains Unresolved

by Julianna Roche

There continues to be confusion over how to fill an impending vacancy on the Board of Finance.

As the *Riverast* reported last week, the Board of Finance is unsure how to find a replacement for James McNair, who is leaving the board effective Nov. 1.

According to the town charter, the vacancy must be filled by an individual with the same political party as the prior member "or if the prior member was not affiliated with any political party, then such successor member shall also not be affiliated with any political party."

While McNair is registered as a Democrat, he was elected to the finance board as a member of the Colchester Independent Party (CIP) – and this has caused the confusion as to who can fill his spot, as state statute asserts that the vacancy can be filled with any party except the Republican Party.

At the finance board's Oct. 19 meeting, it was apparent that the issue has not yet been resolved and the wording in the town charter and state statute remain in direct conflict with one another.

During the meeting, board members once

again expressed their concerns regarding the issue and whether or not the town charter would take precedence over state statute.

First Selectman Art Shilosky, who was also present at the meeting, once again declined to comment on the issue, stating that while "everything has been turned over" to the town's attorneys, he would wait until McNair was officially off the board to further discuss it.

As per the town charter, following McNair's resignation, the board has up to 60 days to appoint a successor member by majority vote.

At the meeting, McNair stated he thought it made sense that the town would wait until after the upcoming election on Nov. 8 to address the issue at hand.

"There's not much the town can do... [we have] to wait on the secretary of state to make a determination," he said at the meeting, adding, "For the board's sake, I'm confident it will be resolved within 60 days... given the election, it's easier for me to leave and get that out of the way, then stuff will happen."

"I'm fascinated to see how this will turn out," he continued.

During the brief discussion, board member

Andreas Bisbikos also asked Shilosky if there was the potential that somebody could intervene "in an illegal matter" and what that would mean for the town financially, in terms of legality costs.

"I'm looking out for the town because of the legal costs that may come," he said.

"It's going to cost money," Shilosky agreed, adding ultimately the issue comes down to "what the state says and what the attorneys say."

He did note, however that town Chief Financial Officer Maggie Cosgrove was "not happy" when she received the bill of lawyer fees.

The second potential issue regarding McNair's vacancy – which was also addressed in last week's story – is, if the charter does overrule state statute, how the board would determine who is officially a CIP member and a viable replacement for McNair's seat.

Earlier this week, McNair noted that the town clerk's office actually received a copy of the CIP rules from the secretary of state's office last Friday – which he previously had trouble tracking down this time last week.

The rules, according to McNair, "get messy" because while the CIP slate originally peti-

tioned to get party designation on the 2013 ballot (when McNair ran), no party rules were submitted by CIP until 2015 – at which point the party's chairwoman Dee Bouchard ran a different slate with a different group of people, petitioning to get a ballot designation under the CIP again. In 2016, CIP submitted its party rules.

"According to the state, the status of the current CIP [then] started in 2015; not 2013 when I ran," McNair said earlier this week, adding that "the common name seems to be creating the confusion."

He continued, "So technically, the CIP of 2013 died. My opinion is that my seat cannot be replaced by the new CIP. Though the name is the same, it's a different party in the eye of the secretary of state; just my two cents."

Neither the charter nor state law addresses how to replace a seat from a party that no longer exists. As such, the finance board may have to wait for a resolution come McNair's resignation on Nov. 1, when Shilosky said he would be the "point person," and would let the board know how to move forward.

New Place for Voting This Year in Portland

by Elizabeth Regan

Voters will cast their ballots in a new location this year, as the town's designated polling place has been changed to the Portland Middle School band room.

Portland Town Clerk Ryan Curley said the change was made as a reaction to heavy voter turnout in the 2008 presidential election, during which over 84 percent of registered voters participated.

"Turnout is especially hard to predict this election but I wouldn't be surprised if we saw similar numbers to 2008," Curley said. That's when Democratic President Barack Obama won his first term in office over Republican John McCain.

According to Curley, the new location will offer voters more space, more parking, better traffic flow and protection from the elements in the case of inclement weather.

The middle school is located at 93 High St.

The main entrance is on the right side of the building it shares with the high school.

Voters will enter the campus from the main entrance on High Street and will exit via Butler Lane for enhanced traffic flow, Curley said.

Voting has taken place at the Waverly Center since 2010, formerly known as the Portland Senior Center. Elections were held at the library from 1988 to 2010.

Students will not be in school on Election Day now that state guidelines requiring districts to use Election Day as a professional development day have gone into effect.

Handicapped-accessible parking will be available in the circle in front of the school as well as in the larger lot to the right side.

Curley said his main concern is spreading the word about the change in the voting location.

"We want everyone to know where to go and

be able to vote as easily as possible," he said.

A mailing went out about a month ago to all registered voters, according to Curley. The town has also ordered lawn signs, which will go up within the next week around town.

When asked why the correspondence went only to registered voters and not all households in town, Curley said the mailing was also used for a state-mandated canvass of registered voters to confirm their residence.

"It's not perfect; that's why we want the signs up too," he said.

Curley told selectmen in August he had considered spending \$1,250 on a banner to be put up over Main Street to alert passers-by to the location change. He ultimately decided it was unnecessary.

Curley called the plan to change the polling place a "team effort" between himself and the town's two registrars of voters. Athena Neville

is the registrar for the Democrats while Pauline Neumann is the registrar for the Republicans.

"It's the registrars' show," he said. "I'm just trying to help out behind the scenes."

As of Wednesday afternoon, the registrar of voters page on the town website was still directing voters to the former polling place at the Waverly Center.

Curley said the new voting location is here to stay.

While it's likely that the annual budget referendum and any other referendums that may be called throughout the year would be held on days when school is in session, he said turnout for those votes is generally much lower than in the general election.

In cases when voting coincides with a school day, he said a police officer would be posted at the school for traffic concerns and to make sure students remain separated from voters.

Letter Grades to Remain at RHAM Middle School

by Geeta S. Sandberg

At a community conversation held at RHAM Middle School Wednesday to keep the public abreast of different topics, Principal Mike Seroussi and Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Lauren Fierman presented on standards-based grading, and shared their response to parent concern regarding the loss of letter grades.

Work on standards-based grading, and whether to implement it at the middle school, started last spring, when a Standards-Based Report Card Committee was formed, made up of 17 faculty members and Fierman. Several presentations on the grading system were made, and the Board of Education originally intended to move forward with the change for this year. However, after parent concern was expressed in June, the board decided to delay that implementation.

Standards-based grading is a way of reporting student progress in terms of whether the student has shown understanding of key skills and ideas in each subject. This differs from traditional grading in that in most classes traditional grading has been assignment-based instead of standards-based, so it's more about the completion of an assignment versus complete understanding.

This was presented as the "old story" versus

the "new story" Wednesday. The old story is about doing the work, and receiving grades as payment for said work; the new story, meanwhile, is about learning as a consequence of thinking, uncovering complexity, and delving deeply into a topic.

When the change was originally proposed, it involved doing away with the traditional letter grades and giving students a 1, 2, 3, or 4, for whether they were below standard, nearing expectations, meeting expectations, or exceeding expectations.

However, on Wednesday Fierman explained since the idea of the loss of the letter grades was a concern to many parents, the administration was no longer looking to replace them.

"We've been having a great deal of discussion after we listened to parents," Fierman said, "and while we know there's some things with grading we want to change, we have heard from a number of parents, a number of stakeholders, that the thing that is most upsetting is the idea of the loss of the letter grades."

As a result, she added, "We've heard that that is a problem and at this point we are no longer interested in trying to put something into effect that would have 1, 2, 3 and 4s. We can see ways to achieve what we want in terms of trying to give a more clear understanding of

what the grades are based on and still have letter grades."

Fierman continued on to explain it was understood that letter grades provide a "common language," and is what parents and students are expecting to see.

"It will make it much easier for us to talk about how we give additional information about student skills if we are not also trying to fight a battle of what does 1, 2, 3, and 4 mean versus A, B, C, and D."

And so, if this grading system is put into place, students would continue to receive, and parents would continue to see letter grades; but those grades would provide more information in terms of the specific skills a student excelled in – or needs improvement.

For example, while a student will receive an overall grade for a test, and a parent would be able to see that via the Parent Portal on the school website, they'd also be able to click on that test, and see the breakdown; each of the individual skills that test assessed will also receive a grade – and it's those individual grades that come together to form the overall score.

"We want to make it so it's easy to identify weaknesses," Fierman explained. "Our grades should drive our instruction.

This would be helpful, for example, when

parents attend meetings surrounding their child's academics; parents will be able to go into the meeting with information on what skills their child is doing well in, or which may need improvement, instead of only seeing the breakdown once they're in the meeting.

Also touched upon was the concern that this shift would equate to students working less or having less motivation, but Seroussi stated, "We expect students to work very, very hard" and under standards-based grading, they'd need to work "harder than previously, because they no longer get an 'A' for memorizing; the goal is after completing work, you have increased understanding."

* * *

The next step surrounding this issue is the meeting of the Board of Education Program Committee on Nov. 7. Fierman and Seroussi shared they will discuss the change at that time, at which point the Program Committee will share their thoughts, work on any changes, and decide whether to bring it before the Board of Education at the school board's Nov. 21 meeting.

And, ultimately, it's the Board of Education that will decide whether to implement the new system.

Andover Town Administrator Position Explained

by Geeta S. Sandberg

What is a town administrator?

That was the question posed – and answered – Tuesday night, when approximately 70 residents gathered in the Andover Elementary School gymnasium.

Hosted by the Andover Democratic and Republican town committees, Tuesday's event provided the opportunity for residents to inform themselves before heading to the polls Nov. 8 and, among other things, voting whether to bring a town administrator to Andover as recommended by the Charter Revision Commission.

Over the summer, the Board of Selectmen formed a five-member commission made up of chairman Adrian Mandeville, George Elliot, Ken Marcia, Angela Montemagni and Steve Willard, to look at and consider amending the Town Charter to create the new position. And, following about a month's worth of work, the commission unanimously decided the change was in the best interest of the town.

And if voters feel the same on Election Day, a search committee would be formed next spring, with the intention of the administrator starting in June or July, Mandeville said Wednesday.

On Tuesday, Bolton Administrative Officer Joyce Stille, Coventry Town Manager John Elsesser and Wethersfield Town Manager Jeff Bridges – all of the Connecticut Town and City Management Association – were in attendance to present on the position.

An appointed professional town administra-

tor, they shared in their presentation, "enables local officials to involve and serve the entire community, and to actively plan for the future." In turn, the town administrator "applies professional skills and training to assist the [selectmen] and to administer the daily operations of the community."

Elsesser elaborated on the position, and said having a town administrator "frees the Board of Selectmen up to focus on community goals and major projects. It's just a tweak where someone is on hand for the day-to-day." He added, "The rules don't change all that much; the town meeting is still the legislative body and approves the budget. The Board of Selectmen is still the executive and policy-making body."

Stille furthered the job of the administrator when it comes to different issues "is to get the pros and cons, not make the decision. On occasion we may make a recommendation if asked, but the elected board decides."

The draft of the revised charter is available at andoverconnecticut.org by clicking "Meeting Agendas and Minutes" under "Boards and Committees," and scrolling down to the Charter Revision Commission. Throughout the document, many of the duties previously listed as being the responsibility of the first selectman have been amended to be the duty of the administrator with the assistance of the Board of Selectmen. A large portion of the duties of the first selectman were also stricken from the document, and a new section was added about

the administrator.

Regarding the role of the first selectman were these changes to pass, Stille explained "the first selectman serves as the key policy leader, presides at meetings, represents the municipality in intergovernmental relationships, and sets the meeting agendas with the administrator."

Elsesser added the town administrator is hired "on the basis of merit to serve the selectmen and the community. It's what you know, not who you know; and if the town or the board isn't happy with the administrator, they don't have to wait until the next election [to get rid of them], they can terminate them via the board."

On the other hand, since the town administrator is a hired employee, the presenters added that equates to consistency throughout different election seasons.

"What we expect doesn't change with the elections," Stille stated. "It takes all the politics out of it."

In addition, it was shared part of the administrator's job is to look at the budget and multi-year capital improvements to plan for the future "and ensure fiscal responsibility and modern accounting practices are used," Elsesser shared.

The presenters added that, since a town administrator is a professional who comes in with knowledge of a variety of areas from grants to economic development, personnel and legal issues, towns that employ one tend to save

money.

"We've found towns that have a town administrator have a great reduction in their legal bill because we know the law," Elsesser said, and added, "Every day we save the towns money because we're in tune to what's out there – sometimes big chunks – through grants or innovative financing."

But of course, bringing an administrator to town will cost money, too, and just what that amount would be was asked at the end of the presentation; if the changes pass, the first selectman's salary – which is currently around \$50,000 – would be reduced to a stipend and the rest of the money would be put towards the administrator's salary. Also going towards the salary would be \$35,000 approved in the 2016-17 budget for a position to assist with the public works department that was never filled.

Together, the town will be able to offer a salary of about \$85,000, to which Bridges said, "for a town your size I'd say that's pretty fair."

Board of Finance Chairman Dan Warren added Tuesday the position was anticipated to be budget neutral, meaning it would not impact residents' taxes.

As the presentation came to an end, Elsesser concluded, "We can't sit here and tell you it's right for your town – you know the town. But we live it, we love it, so we preach it, because we believe it works well."

Bridges added, "We bring a fresh set of eyes and ears to move the town forward."

East Hampton Police News

10/8: Neil A. Bishop, 71, of 9 W. High St., East Hampton was arrested and charged with reckless burning and second-degree reckless endangerment, East Hampton Police said.

Portland Police News

10/12: A 17-year-old male juvenile was arrested and charged with possession with intent to sell, two counts of possession of a controlled substance, and possession of drug paraphernalia, Portland Police said.

10/13: A 17-year-old male juvenile was arrested and charged with reckless burning, criminal mischief, disorderly conduct and carrying a dangerous weapon, police said.

10/15: Larry Whitmore, 72, of 13500 Romford Ave., Port Charlotte, FL., was charged with SQI, police said.

Marlborough Police News

10/12: State Police said Jeffrey C. Palumbo, 48, of 20 Pam Lane, South Windsor, was arrested and charged with operating under the influence of drugs and alcohol and failure to drive in the proper lane on a multiple-lane highway.

Colchester Police News

10/13: State Police said David L. Rowland, 46, of 481 East St., Hebron, turned himself in on an active arrest warrant for injury to a child and fourth-degree sexual assault.

10/14: Colchester Police said they responded to an attempted burglary call at a residence on Mahoney Road, where the victim reported that an unknown person forced open a locked front door to his home, causing damage to the door. There was no one home when the incident occurred, which police said is sometime between 2:30-3:30 p.m.

10/16: Colchester Police said Paul Taradejna, 28, of 184 Gravel St., Apt. 38, Meriden, was arrested and charged with breach of peace and third-degree assault.

Hebron Selectmen Approve Veteran Tax Abatement Increase

by Geeta S. Sandberg

The Board of Selectmen this month voted unanimously to approve an increase in the tax exemption low-income veterans are eligible to receive.

The increase raises the amount from \$10,000 to \$20,000, and is the second revision to the abatement since 1987; the state senate passed a bill this year that allows municipalities to increase exemptions up to that amount.

Under the exemption, a house assessed at \$100,000 would be assessed at \$80,000 instead, and it's the lower assessment that's used to determine the veteran's taxes.

Town Manager Andrew Tierney said of the approval this week, "It's just another way of showing that the Board of Selectmen supports their veterans and the community here in Hebron."

He added, "We wanted to make [the exemption] more in line with what we do for firefighters and seniors. We give them discounts, so we didn't want to leave the veterans out."

To qualify for the abatement, a single veteran has to have a maximum annual income of \$35,200; for married veterans, it's \$42,500. Those income limits are set by the state.

According to town assessor Deb Gernhardt, firefighters in Hebron qualify for a tax abatement that takes money off the amount of taxes owed. The town also acts as the liaison for a state-run program that offers tax relief for seniors whose annual income does not exceed

certain limits, and provides them with a tax credit based on a graduated income scale.

In addition, the town has local options of other entities, including \$100,000 off the value of a farm building at an income-producing farm; an exemption for motor vehicles equipped with handicapped-accessible features; and, available through the town manager's office, an income-based tax deferral.

The latter, Gernhardt explained, "allows residents to defer a portion of their taxes, so at some point in time it does have to be paid back, but there's no age limit, and it's determined from a ratio between the taxes and the income for a household."

Tax deferral, she said, is something a resident may only have to take advantage of for a year, "because they lost their job or had major medical issues; so then they pay it off and get back on track."

As far as the veterans' exemption, Gernhardt explained the impact "is going to vary from year to year because it's based on the assessment and the mill rate and depends on how many people qualify for it."

At the September Board of Selectmen meeting Gernhardt shared there were 347 veterans in town in 2015, and 19 property owners applied and qualified for the \$10,000 exemption that year.

Under the current mill rate of 35.64, she added, that equates to \$6,771 in revenue loss to the town.

Colchester Lions Host Pasta Night for Local Burn Victim

by Julianna Roche

The Colchester Lions Club will host a "Pasta for Paul" spaghetti supper fundraiser to raise money for Paul Peterson, the Colchester resident and Lion's member who was severely burned as a result of the tragic fire which occurred last month at 32 Mill St.

The fire, which blazed through the apartment building in early September, also took the life of resident Nickolas D. Majek III, who was burned beyond recognition and initially unidentifiable by fire officials. Majek worked for his family business, NDM Majek Builders, Inc., alongside his parents and siblings.

Peterson was also severely burned in the fire and was transported by Lifestar to Shriners' Hospital in Rhode Island. He was released five days later.

"He's recovering nicely, but there are medical bills and he's going to be out of work for a long time," Lions member and spokesperson Greg Barden explained.

"Paul is recovering nicely," said club Presi-

dent Pam LaFaille. "We want to do anything we can to help him get back on his feet."

The fundraiser, which will be held Friday, Oct. 28 from 5 to 8 p.m. at St. Joseph's Polish Club (who is also co-sponsoring the event) on 395 S. Main St., will feature a meal which includes salad, spaghetti and meatballs, bread and beverages. There will also be a bake sale and gift basket raffle, according to Barden.

"We do a lot for the community throughout the year and are now asking the community to help us help one of our own," said Lion and fundraiser chairman Erica Montie, who was also a past club president.

Tickets for the event are \$10 per person and \$7 for children ages 12 and under. Advanced tickets can be purchased at Dime Bank on 139 S. Main St. or by calling the Lions event hotline at 860-531-2010. Tickets will also be available at the door. Businesses looking to support the dinner or basket raffle can contact Barden at 860-608-6990.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

An old college professor of mine recently shared with me his rules for baseball fandom.

"Number one," he said, "always root against the Yankees."

That just goes without saying.

"Second," he added, "root for the team in the league that plays real baseball."

And yup, gotta agree with him there too. Apologies to any American League fans that are reading this – and given that this area of the state is Red Sox Nation, there probably are more than a few – but the National League is just a better brand of baseball. It's purer, the way baseball was meant to be, and it just brings so much to the table.

If I had any doubt (and I really did not), last Saturday's dynamic Game One of the National League Championship Series drove it home.

The Cubs were ahead most of the night, until the Dodgers put across two in the top of the eighth to tie it. Which seems like a fairly paltry sum of runs considering L.A. had loaded the bases with nobody out, but the Dodgers were pretty fortunate to score any runs at all.

That's because, once the Dodgers loaded the bases, and with the Cubs up 3-1, Chicago brought in their flamethrowing closer Aroldis Chapman – the man whose fastball regularly tops 100 mph. Chapman made the Dodgers look silly, promptly striking out the first two he faced before Adrian Gonzalez, somehow, got a hit.

The Dodgers had gotten to Chapman, but they didn't like their chances of doing so again. So they saw to it they didn't have to. In the bottom of the eighth, the Cubs found themselves with two on, and two out. The Dodgers then intentionally walked the next guy – *intentionally loaded the bases in a tie game* – so that Chapman's spot would come up in the lineup. Surely, he'd be pinch-hit for, and he'd be out of the game.

Indeed he was, by light-hitting Miguel Montero, a guy who had hit all of .216 with eight home runs during the regular season. Piece of cake, right?

Wrong. Montero crushed a pitch over the right field wall to give the Cubs a 7-3 lead. It was the absolute worst case scenario for the Dodgers.

And the whole thing happened because the Dodgers were desperate to get Chapman out of the game.

L.A. manager Dave Roberts bucked conventional thinking – who the heck intentionally loads the bases in the eighth inning of a tie game, a tie playoff game no less? – but it was the only way he knew to get Chapman out of the game. And I can't say as I blame him; like I said, Chapman looked absolutely dominant in the top half of the eighth.

It was the kind of managerial maneuvering I love – and the kind you only see in the National League. If this were an American League game, Chapman never would've come to the plate anyway, because of the designated hitter. So Roberts wouldn't have even been tempted to load the bases; there would've been no reason to.

That kind of strategizing, those kinds of gut-wrenching decisions, are what I love so much about the National League. The presence of a pitcher in a batting lineup can influence so much – how long you leave a starter in, what relievers do you use, should you make a double switch, should you bunt in this spot, etc. – and it's a shame none of that comes into play in the American League. Instead of the pitcher hitting, it's just another bat. It's kinda boring, if you ask me.

The presence of the designated hitter is supposed to add more offense to the lineup –

I get that. But for me, give me that stressful strategizing, the stuff that makes managers go gray and makes us armchair managers yell at the TV. Can the decision-making be agonizing, even torturous, sometimes? You bet. But that's pure baseball – baseball the way it's meant to be.

I wouldn't have it any other way.

* * *

Speaking of the baseball playoffs, Cleveland politely lost to Toronto Tuesday in Game Four of the American League Championship series, thereby ensuring they wouldn't sweep the Blue Jays.

I highly doubt the Indians intentionally took a dive – say it ain't so, Tito; say it ain't so! – but if you consider recent history, you hardly could blame them. While sweeping another team in a league championship series might on the surface suggest you are adept at kicking butt and taking names, the reality is that, in recent years anyway, it has boded less than well when it comes to your chances to win the World Series.

The most recent example is, sadly, my 2015 Mets who, after sweeping the Cubs fairly handily, went on to lose four games to one to the Kansas City Royals in the World Series (though I'll point out to anyone who takes pity on me and listens that it was a much closer World Series than 4-1 would attest).

Before that, there were the 2007 Colorado Rockies, who rode into the World Series incredibly hot. Winning a tie-breaker game to even get into the playoffs, the Rockies then swept the division series, swept the LCS – and then got swept away by the Red Sox in the World Series.

Over in the American League, the perils of sweeping have been more pronounced. Both leagues moved to a seven-game format for the league championship series in 1985. Not long after, in 1988, the Oakland A's swept the Red Sox in the LCS, only to lose to the Dodgers in the World Series. Two years later, Oakland was again in the World Series, after having again swept the Red Sox. And again, Oakland lost, this time to the Cincinnati Reds.

There wasn't a sweep in the American League again until 2006, when the Detroit Tigers did it. They lost in the World Series to the Cardinals. The Tigers were back in the Fall Classic in 2012, after sweeping the Yankees. Detroit lost again, to the San Francisco Giants this time.

In 2014, Kansas City found itself in the World Series after a four-game sweep in the LCS. What came next? You guessed it, a defeat, at the hands of the Giants.

Over both leagues, since that 1985 playoff expansion, there has been only one team to sweep an LCS and go on to win the World Series: the 1995 Atlanta Braves.

Why does this happen? Does the team that sweeps the LCS go cold during the nearly week-long layoff before the World Series starts (a layoff that, obviously, a team that doesn't sweep isn't subject to)? That's likely the case – but who knows, it could all be one giant coincidence. One thing I do know, though: the next time the Mets are in the LCS, if they don't sweep their opponent, I won't necessarily be crushed.

* * *

Earlier this week I was reading in the news about a nutrient bar apparently called SoyLent, which is causing people to vomit, and the company doesn't quite know why.

Fans of 1970s sci-fi will know whereof I speak when I suggest perhaps the first problem was making the bar out of people.

* * *

See you next week.

Obituaries

Colchester

Nickolas Donald Majek III

Nickolas Donald Majek III (Ziggy) was born in Hartford Oct. 30, 1962, and died Saturday, Sept. 3, at the age of 53, burned beyond recognition in a house fire in Colchester. Nick first alerted another resident of the fire, saving a life. Nick died a hero!

Raised in Glastonbury, he graduated with high honors from Glastonbury High School in 1982. He worked in the family business NDM Majek Builders Inc. (One Call Does It All), training with his parents alongside his siblings. Learning the trade from the bottom up, he started with clean-up and putting nail holes, and in time became an accomplished carpenter. The last 20 years he traveled the northwestern part of America supporting himself along his journey in his trade of carpentry and construction.

He loved sports watching basketball and playing baseball, followed the Boston Red Sox no matter where he lived (Nick loved Carl Yastrzemski; go Yaz!). His passion was collecting, trading and selling memorable cards, sports, movies, TV series, as well as movie and concert posters. He was a master or trivia, of both movies and sports, an avid reader and current news junky he loved being informed.

He was preceded early this year by his parents, mother Magdalene Brennan Carreira in January and father Nickolas Donald Majek Jr. in April, and by sister-in-law Bambi Jean in 2013. He is survived by a son, Nickolas Majek of Colchester; a brother, Robert Majek of East Hartford; a sister, Theresa and her husband Steven, nephew, Christopher and niece Stephanie Cole, all of East Hartford; ex-wives Mary Murphy of Colchester, Jayne Jarrell of East Hartford and a longtime friend, Butch Couch of North Dakota.

A celebration of Nick's life will be held on what would have been his 54th birthday Sunday, Oct. 30, at 12:30 p.m. at his sister and brother-in-law's home in East Hartford. Nick will also be remembered in a memorial Mass, along with his parents, Sunday, Nov. 6, at 11 a.m., at Saint Augustine Church, South Glastonbury.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the donor's charity of choice.

Colchester

Kevin Arthur Dutra

Kevin Arthur Dutra, 46, of Colchester, passed away Saturday, Oct. 15, from injuries sustained in a motor vehicle accident. Born March 3, 1970, in Hartford, he was the son of Arthur Dutra, of Colchester and the late Sandra (Fitzler) Dutra, his extremely proud and beloved parents.

Kevin grew up in Colchester and graduated from Bacon Academy. He will be remembered as a hard-working man and "Jack of all trades." For over 17 years, Kevin worked with his best friend and boss, Ron, at Spicer Sheet Metal in Colchester. In addition to his full-time job, he could also be frequently found working at Walt's Country Motors, helping his good friend, Billy, and at Easy Pickins Farm, helping longtime friend, Brian. In his spare time, Kevin had a great interest in working on and fixing old cars and especially old tractors. He also enjoyed racing and NASCAR, camping and animals, especially his pet cat.

Kevin will be remembered by countless friends as a man who treated everyone he met as family and would selflessly help anyone in need.

In addition to his father, he leaves his longtime girlfriend, Kelly Hicks; two aunts, Jane Wingate and Dorothy Pimento, both of Florida; an uncle, Manuel Dutra Jr. of North Haven and numerous extended family and friends.

The family received guests Wednesday, Oct. 19, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral assembled Thursday, Oct. 20, at the funeral home, before a funeral liturgy that morning at St. Andrew Church in Colchester. Interment followed in the New St. Andrew Cemetery, Colchester.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.



Colchester

Florence Dailey

Florence 'June' (Jaserie) Dailey, 90, of Colchester, passed peacefully Wednesday, Oct. 12. June was born in West Haven June 30, 1926, to Peter and Estelle (Elkins) Jaserie. She married Edward M. Dailey Jr., on Feb. 16, 1950, at St. Augustine's Church in Hartford. They were married 39 years.

She was predeceased by her husband (1989), son Michael Peter (1980) and sister Alyce Wiley. June is survived by a daughter Kathy and husband Tony Tarnowski; grandson Anthony wife Jeanie and her great grand-daughters Malia and Skylar Tarnowski; son Edward, his fiancé Denise and her two granddaughters, Alexandria and Savannah Dailey; nieces Lee and Deane; and numerous friends.

She graduated Buckley High School in 1944 and was a member of the National Honor Society. At age fifteen she opened the "June K Jaye" Dance Studio, where she taught dance for 25 years. During that time she auditioned for the "Rockets," became a member of Dance Masters of America and the youngest dancer to be admitted to the Dance Teachers Club of Connecticut, Chapter 18. From dancing she went to work at Pratt & Whitney, in East Hartford, as a senior engineering assistant for 23 years. Upon retiring she volunteered, for five years, at the American Cancer Society and became a FISH Driver for the Town of Colchester. She spent the next 21 years as a bereavement volunteer for the Center for Hospice Care Southeast Connecticut in Norwich.

She loved to cook and was known to make great stuffed shells. She made delicious banana nut and zucchini nut breads along with strawberry, blueberry and peach jams, which she often gave as gifts. Knitting was another talent; she knit afghans for family and friends and lap robes for hospice. She also collected pine cones from around the world.

May the road rise up to meet you – May the wind be always at your back – May the sun shine warm upon your face – The rain fall soft upon your fields – And until we meet again – May God hold you in the hollow of his hand. You'll live forever in our memories.

Calling hours were Wednesday, Oct. 19, at Belmont Funeral Home, 144 South Main St., Colchester. A Mass of Christian Burial was held Thursday, Oct. 20, at Our Lady of the Lakes Church in Oakdale. Interment immediately followed at New St. Andrew's Cemetery in Colchester.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her name can be made to the Center for Hospice Care Southeast Connecticut, 227 Dunham St., Norwich, CT 06360.

Amston

Frank D. Wax

Frank D. Wax, 79, of Amston Lake, passed away Thursday, Oct. 13.

He leaves to mourn his loss but cherish his memory his loving wife of 53 years, Karen (Kaven) Wax; their daughter, Jeri Ann DiGiovanni; a grandson, Anton DiGiovanni; two nieces, Maxine Wax and Linda Diamond; and numerous extended family and friends.

Born Oct. 30, 1936 in Burlington, Vt., he was the son of the late Max and Claire (Melman) Wax. In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by four siblings, Edith, Bernard, Julius and Jerome.

Frank had worked as a mechanic for the former Jack's Chevrolet in Colchester for many years and went on to Electric Boat in Groton as an outside machinist until his retirement.

Care of private arrangements has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester.

Donations in his memory may be made to the Wounded Warriors Project, P.O. Box 758517, Topeka, KS 66675 (woundedwarriorproject.org).

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Hebron

Robert Neubert

Robert (Bob) Neubert, of Hebron, passed away unexpectedly from natural causes Tuesday, Oct. 11, at the age of 72.

He leaves his loving wife of 45 years, Marilyn (Martinchek) Neubert; two sons, Michael (and wife Anna Marie) of Matthews, N.C., and Stephen of Hebron; brother, Harry Jr. (and wife Kathleen); sister, Linda; and numerous extended family and friends.

In addition to his parents, Harry and Josephine (Pallman) Neubert, he was predeceased by a sister, Patricia Lorenzetti.

Robert was born on June 13, 1944, in Hackensack, N.J. He was a graduate of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University as well as Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Mr. Neubert had worked as an Aeronautical Engineer at Pratt & Whitney in East Hartford for 30 years. Following his retirement, he continued to work in the field at P&W with the Belcan Corporation.

Bob passed away while enjoying one of his favorite pastimes, golfing with friends at Blackledge Country Club in Hebron. He was a member of the Blackledge Men's Golf League and the East Hartford Golf Club League. Bob was also an avid hiker and a classic car enthusiast - with a particular love of Packards, Studebakers and Jaguars - and was a member of numerous collectors clubs for all three. Bob enjoyed researching his family's genealogy and sharing the treasures of his family tree with his loved ones.

A memorial service celebrating his life will be observed at 1 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 23, at Gilead Congregational Church, 672 Gilead St. (Route 85), Hebron. There are no calling hours and burial will be private.

In his sudden passing, Bob was able to give the gift of life through organ donation.

The family suggests that, in lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to AmeriCares Foundation, 88 Hamilton Ave, Stamford, CT 06906 (americares.org) or to a charity of the donor's choice.

The Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester is assisting the family with arrangements. To share a message or remembrance with the family, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.



East Hampton

Lorraine Hunter Bevin

Lorraine (Hunter) Bevin, 102, of East Hampton, passed away Tuesday, Oct. 18. Born at the outset of World War I on Sept. 11, 1914, in Hartford, she was the only child of Charles and Carolyn (Schwab) Hunter.

Raised in nearby Glastonbury, her desire after high school was to study history in college, but the looming demands of the Depression years found her gratefully securing secretarial work at Underwood Typewriter, where her speed and accuracy were recognized and rewarded. On June 9, 1936, she married Chauncey Bevin of East Hampton, with whom she shared an active and varied life until his death in 1979.

Upon marrying, the newlyweds set out for San Diego, Calif., and Ryan Aircraft, where Chan joined with other men who had designed the first plane to fly across the Atlantic. A vivid memory of those years was seeing Ted Williams play high school ball. The years that followed were full of travel, as Chan joined American Airlines as a pilot, who over the next decade stationed him in both Boston during the war years and in Los Angeles thereafter. Blessed with a strong domestic impulse and gift for beautifying new surroundings, Lorraine provided a stable and wholesome environment for their two sons: Avery (1940) and Stanley (1942), which they remember with fondness to this very day.

After her husband left American and they moved back to East Hampton, Lorraine participated in several activities, the town's garden club having a special place in her heart. A woman of multiple interests, she translated her lifelong interest in history into the collecting of genuine antiques and while not formally trained, received high marks from those who were. An avid traveler, she drove tens of thousands of miles over the years in service to old classmates and to friends old and new, no matter where it seemed, there was a need.

Rich in the gift of hospitality as well, she was a real trooper and the memory of her will live on among us.

Mrs. Bevin is preceded in death by her beloved husband and two great-grandchildren, Brittney Bevin and Philip Parks. Surviving are her son Avery (and wife Louise) and son Stanley, eight grandchildren and 23 great-grandchildren.

A funeral service will be held Tuesday, Oct. 25, at 11 a.m., in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton. Burial will follow in the family plot in Lake View Cemetery. Friends may call at the Spencer Funeral Home on Monday evening, Oct. 24, from 6-8 p.m.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.