

RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

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

Volume 40, Number 48

Published by The Glastonbury Citizen

April 1, 2016



They're Creepy and They're Kooky... The Addams Family: A New Musical Comedy is coming to the newly-renovated East Hampton High School auditorium as the latest effort of the Young People's Center for Creative Arts. Performances will be held April 8-10. From left are: Carol Greco as Grandma, Chris Briggs as Uncle Fester, Steve Jones as Gomez, Jillian Millette as Wednesday, Thom Cordeiro as Lurch, Jennifer Friday as Morticia and Joey Fago as Pugsley. See related story on page 30.

Dozens Slam School Budget Cut

by Elizabeth Regan

Applause broke out in regular intervals at Monday night's East Hampton Board of Finance meeting as more than 40 residents, including many students, decried the town manager's move to cut the Board of Education's proposed budget by more than a half a million dollars.

In February, the school board had adopted a \$29.34 million spending plan, a 1.9 percent increase over current year spending. Town Manager Michael Maniscalco received the school board's proposal and took \$559,396 off the top, instead of handing it over to the finance board along with his own general government budget recommendations. He has said he was relying on an edict from the Town Council for the school board to "maintain current spending levels."

Among the 200 residents at the public hearing were clusters of student athletes in bright pink shirts and young musicians in blue. Not a single voice spoke out in support of Maniscalco's spending plan, which increased town government operations by \$381,982 over the current year while keeping the Board of Education budget flat funded.

Town officials ranging from Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith and members of the Board of Education to a majority of Board of Finance members have said denying the school board a budget increase in the face of rising

contractual expenses amounts to a significant cut in staffing and programming.

Even a Town Council member stood up at the Board of Finance meeting to support the school board proposal.

Councilor Kevin Reich – who happens to be East Hampton's former assistant schools superintendent – acknowledged that something must be done to compensate for the hefty debt from the \$51 million high school renovation project coming due, but said any savings should not come at the expense of students.

Instead, Reich, a Democrat on the Republican-controlled Town Council, suggested the town should focus on leasing certain items instead of buying them. He cited the ladder truck for the fire department, currently on order, as well as a plow truck listed in Maniscalco's proposed budget.

In December, voters at a town meeting supported a Town Council resolution to purchase an \$800,000 ladder truck for the fire department by dipping into the town's debt sinking fund. The account was established to offset mill rate increases from large-scale projects like the high school renovation.

The council pursued the cash purchase against advice from finance director Jeff Jylkka and a unanimous Board of Finance to lease the truck over ten years.

See Dozens Slam Page 2

After Volley, RHAM Adopts \$28.03 Million Budget

by Geeta S. Sandberg

It took seven failed motions and a number volley Monday night, but eventually, the RHAM Board of Education voted to send a \$28.03 million budget proposal to district meeting May 2, for an increase of .95 percent over current year spending.

Discussion on the budget followed a public hearing on the proposal – which at that point totaled \$27.85 million for a .28 percent increase – and a list of recommended capital projects by schools superintendent Bob Siminski.

His list of prioritized projects included: \$85,000 to ensure proper separation at egress paths, mechanical rooms and storage areas and the replacement of damaged fire-proofing on the steel beams in the boiler room; \$60,000 for the replacement of a hot water heater; \$20,000 for repairs to the high school roof; and \$19,000 for new fire-retardant curtains in the auditorium and TV studio.

Totaling \$184,000, Siminski's recommendations amounted to less than what was approved at a special board meeting March 14. At that meeting, discussion was held on the possibility of having the capital budget voted on separately at referendum to increase transparency; ultimately, the board voted to create a capital budget of \$462,600 by a vote of 5-4.

But on Monday, board members expressed concern over the capital budget and its amount. "I can't support that; it's too high," said board

member Carole Shea. "If we are going to have a separate capital budget it has to be one that's reasonable and one we can support."

Shea said she was in favor of including Siminski's prioritized projects in the overall RHAM budget – the \$184,000 amount, she said, was "still palpable" – as opposed to moving forward with the \$462,600 for a separate capital budget.

Meanwhile, member Dave Gostanian said he was concerned there wouldn't be enough time to educate the public on the capital budget if it moved forward.

"I think right now there's not enough information for the general public and the board doesn't seem to be sure what it's looking for" with the capital budget, he stated.

But board chairman Danny Holtsclaw expressed uncertainty as to whether the board could change its mind given that a separate capital budget and specific amount had already been approved.

"What is real is Rich [Jacobson, school board member] made a motion for \$463,000 to go in a separate capital budget" that was approved March 14, Holtsclaw said. "The board voted to separate it out – does anyone know procedurally can we do that [add it back in]?"

Board members responded with silence to his question, and then continued with their discussion on keeping it separate versus adding it

back in. Board member Joe O'Connor was in favor of the former.

"There's been a lot of conversation and discussion on this," he said, sharing taxpayers he'd spoken to "talked about separating it out [the operating budget and the capital expenditures]. Whatever the number is, I think it's a good idea; it shows transparency."

Board member Sue Rapelye said she agreed, but, like Shea, didn't think it was a good idea for the current year, explaining she wasn't confident both budgets would pass. Rapelye said she was in favor of including Siminski's prioritized projects in the operating budget, and made a motion to that regard, but it failed 5-4.

Various members then proceeded to make motions of their own, one after the other, in an attempt to decide just what numbers to move forward to the May 2 district meeting.

O'Connor moved to add \$250,000 to the operating budget, but that motion also failed 5-4; Gostanian then motioned for the operating budget presented with a .28 percent increase to move forward to district meeting, but that too failed, 6-3.

A motion by Shea to add two of Siminski's capital projects to the budget also failed, as well as one by D'Amaddio to add all of the recommended projects but reduce the budget by \$91,000 for the previously-approved School Resource Officer position.

Jacobson then motioned to move forward with the originally-approved capital improvement budget at \$463,600 but that motion also failed, by a 7-2 vote, as did the next motion he made, which reduced the amount from \$463,600 to \$316,000 and failed 5-4.

Finally, Rapelye motioned once more to have all of Siminski's recommended capital projects included in the operating budget, making a slight alteration to the total amount so the motion could be made again. This time – and bringing the voting volley full circle – the motion passed 7-2 and \$184,500 was added to the operating budget, bringing the proposal to \$28,033,359 for an increase of .95 percent or \$262,584.

If approved, that would equate to a \$4,160,150 levy for Andover; \$8,550,174 for Marlborough; and \$15,269,771 for Hebron. The levy is determined by the number of students from each town who attend the RHAM schools; for the 2016-17 school year, Andover is projected to have 236 students for a levy of 14.84 percent; Marlborough is projected at 485 students for a 30.50 percent levy; and Hebron is expected to have 866 students for a 54.47 percent levy.

The budget will now head to district meeting May 2, followed by referendum the next day.

See Adopts Budget Page 2

Dozens Slam cont. from Front Page

Leasing proponents say the town's new AAA bond rating from Standard & Poor's will help maximize already low interest rates.

"Why can we not lease equipment?" Reich asked. "If we are buying a \$200,000 [plow] truck and we know we're going to use it for 15 years, why can't we lease it for five years? Just doing that will put \$150,000 back into the budget."

He suggested the finance board ask the Town Council to find a different way to pay for the ladder truck.

"Force the issue back to where it should be, and I'm hopeful we can reconsider the financing of the truck so that then we can utilize those funds to reduce the mill increase and also give the Board of Education their money back," Reich said.

Resident Stephanie Klewicki suggested the finance board could give back \$138,000 in unused funds that the Board of Education surrendered at the end of the last fiscal year. While a budget policy statement by the Town Council issued in January stated the fund balance cannot be used to decrease the mill rate or for town operations, she said the directive does not specify such funds can't be used for education.

She said it would be a good faith compromise to counter the council's approval of a teachers' contract that school board members have said comprises 1.7 percent of the proposed 1.9 percent increase in the proposed education budget.

"You can't say 'we approve increases' and then say 'we're not going to fund them,'" Klewicki said. "[The council] should've said to the teachers' union 'we're not going to approve your request for salary increases' and just been honest from the beginning."

The Town Council in November voted unanimously to approve the teachers' contract in a motion made by Republican Ted Hintz Jr. and seconded by Republican Mark Philhower.

But Hintz was a vocal proponent for a flat education budget during the January council meeting during which the council approved its budget policy statement. He said the school board budget goes up by about \$500,000 each year, with the school board typically returning between \$100,000 and \$300,000 to the general fund.

Hintz said the council's insistence on a zero increase isn't unreasonable based on those figures.

Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith has released a list of possible cuts that includes at least four teaching positions – two at Memorial School, one at Center School and one at the high school – in addition to two and a half positions already cut in the school board's proposal. A flat budget would also eliminate all middle school sports as well as high school volleyball and golf. Cuts affecting technology at the district level as well as supplies and technology at the classroom level would amount to \$74,000.

Class sizes in grades 2-5 would range from 25-28 students, according to Smith.

Numerous students stood up Monday to explain why they consider the flat-funded budget unreasonable.

East Hampton High School student Michael Fazzino, who described himself as the kind of kid who has always needed an extra push to succeed academically, stood up for students at the elementary school level who would be affected by larger class sizes.

"I've found out through the years, a teacher creates a bond with each individual student, gets to know their student. How are they going to do that in a classroom filled with 27 kids? I feel like if I was growing up in a classroom full of 27 kids, I probably wouldn't be doing anywhere as good as I am in school now," he said. "And, frankly, I'm not doing as good as I should be."

EHHS senior Sarah Massey said she has risen through the ranks of East Hampton sports from the parks and recreation level on through middle school and the high school – and she "wouldn't have wanted it any other way."

She credited the volleyball program with instilling confidence that has allowed her to succeed both on and off the court.

"Cutting the volleyball program means cutting so many girls' chances of discovering their passion like I did. It means cutting one of the most successful programs in the high school in the past five years. Ask any current player, former player or anyone that's seen a game," she said.

The girls' volleyball team consisted of 17 players this past fall, according to athletic director Shaun Russell. He said the co-ed golf team had 15 males and 2 females last spring.

Volleyball and golf are on the chopping block because they were the last two teams added to the school's athletic offerings, Russell said.

The pleas of those who spoke and the resounding applause appeared well-received Monday night. All members except Republicans Alannah Coshow and Janine Jiantonio have expressed support for restoring some, if not all, of the school board's original budget proposal. Discussion and a possible vote is slated for Monday.

Coshow said she is concerned about the impact of a 1.9 percent education increase on the mill rate, but has not stated how she would vote on the issue.

Jiantonio, due to personal reasons, has not been present at the last six finance board meetings, including four budget workshops and two special meetings held this month. The Republican was appointed to the board in 2015 and elected to a full term in November.

Once the finance board approves a spending plan, it will go to the Town Council. Town charter gives councilors the authority to make any changes or reductions they choose, but they cannot increase the total proposed budget amount.

Democrat Alan Hurst told those at the public hearing that the most important thing they can do is come out to the budget referendum en masse so that the budget can be decided the first time. Last year's budget season lasted for four referendums.

He also cautioned them not to vote down the budget proposal if they think it's too low.

"No" votes are traditionally interpreted to mean the budget is too high, he said, which will result in further cuts.

The likely result will be "zero percent for the Board of Education, zero percent for the town," he said. "Think about that."

The finance board will next meet Monday, April 3, at 6:30 p.m., at the East Hampton Middle School library. The Town Council's next meeting is Tuesday, April 12, at 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall, though it had not been determined as of press time if a budget discussion will be on the agenda.

be responsible for the remaining \$442,000.

Along with the above, which includes the installation of the gas mains and meters, there is an additional cost for the conversion of equipment and meter hook-up. Siminski provided the board with "very preliminary" costs for the conversion that amounted to \$262,200, to be paid for with savings the district realizes from the conversion. Those savings are expected to be around \$100,000 annually.

Tierney explained at last week's meeting that to ensure the project had zero impact on the RHAM budget, all conversion costs would be included in the 10-year low interest loan the town was going to acquire to pay for the project if it moved forward; the district would then pay the town from the savings realized each year until the debt is gone. And, afterwards, all future savings would be realized by RHAM.

The motion to move forward with the project was unanimously approved.

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

I was watching *Jeopardy!* this week, and the show decided, as it often does, to have a little bit of fun with its categories. In the opening round, there was a category called "Republicans," immediately followed by one called "Grand Old Party."

No, there weren't two categories in the same round all about Republicans; it's not like *Jeopardy!* airs on the Fox News Channel. The second category was all about famous parties.

But still, it got me to thinking: why do Republicans get to be the Grand Old Party, or the GOP? Where does the name come from, and how long has it been around?

The Republican Party itself dates back to 1854, having been founded in the northern states with the chief cause of opposing the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which would have expanded slavery into the territories. Interestingly, while southern states tend to be very heavily Republican these days, initially the party was almost exclusively a northern states thing. It took more than a century – until the late 1960s – before Republicans really began to expand in the south.

The party's founders chose the name "Republican Party" as an homage to the values of republicanism, which were promoted by Thomas Jefferson in his fairly short-lived Democratic-Republican party of the late 1700s and early 1800s. New York newspaper magnate Horace Greeley wrote that "some simple name like 'Republican' would more fitly designate those who had united to restore the Union to its true mission of champion and promulgator of Liberty rather than propagandist of slavery."

And this mission is why the GOP nickname stuck. In 1875, the *Congressional Record* referred to the party associated with the successful military defense of the Union as "this gallant old party." The following year, a Cincinnati newspaper modified it to "grand old party." Interestingly, the GOP acronym didn't first appear until eight years later, in 1884.

And while, in the opinion of this humble editor, the party is neither "gallant" nor "grand" these days – not on the national stage, anyway – the name has stuck.

* * *

Some interesting news floated across my desk this week. An auction was held at the end of February at Skinner Auctioneers up in Boston, featuring various pieces of folk art, silver, Chinese export porcelains, needlework, clocks and even selections of American furniture. And, as it turns out, the highest-priced item in the sale was a folk art piece from a local home.

The piece was a circa-1815 painted overmantel from a house in Haddam Neck.

The painting depicted the capture of the American frigate *President* after a battle with the British frigate *Endymion* on Jan. 15, 1815, during the War of 1812. According to *Antiques and The Arts Weekly*, Commodore Stephen Decatur, who was commanding the *President*, tried to break through the British blockade of New York harbor. He nearly succeeded, the weekly said. During a lengthy battle – in which he was severely wounded – he had nearly destroyed the *Endymion*. But other British ships engaged the *President*, and eventually forced Decatur's surrender.

The painting – which *Antiques and The Arts Weekly* said was the subject of much discussion during the auction preview – had remained in the Haddam Neck home until 1981, when it was removed by the consignor.

It wound up fetching \$46,125 at the auction.

* * *

As a follower of fast food (I no longer eat it quite as regularly as I used to, but I am still always intrigued by the wheelings and dealings of the burger joints), I saw this week Wendy's and Burger King appear to have something of a spice war going on.

Wendy's has announced it's bringing back, for a limited time only, the Jalapeno Fresco Chicken Sandwich. First introduced in 2015, the sandwich features a spicy chicken breast topped with fresh, diced jalapeños, ghost pepper sauce and Colby pepper jack cheese, on a red jalapeno bun.

Not to be outdone, Burger King announced its new "Angriest Whopper," which it rolled out nationwide yesterday, March 31. The sandwich features a flame-grilled beef patty, thick-cut bacon, American cheese, iceberg lettuce, tomatoes, crispy onion petals, jalapenos, mayo and spicy "angry sauce." All this between a red bun that has hot sauce baked in.

Now, I've always liked Wendy's spicy chicken breast; for a fast-food chicken sandwich, it's actually pretty flavorful, and has a nice, if rather mild, kick to it. So for that alone, the Wendy's sandwich sounds more intriguing. (I'd just make sure I have plenty of Tums on hand since, well, I'm not 22 years old anymore.)

But the Burger King one sounds a little.... gross. There's just a little too much going on. The onion petals don't sound necessary, and having both mayo *and* whatever that "angry sauce" is sounds like overkill. Yes, the Wendy's sandwich has a lot going on too, but it sounds like it's thought out a little better. The Whopper one has an "everything but the kitchen sink – but let's make it spicy!" feel to it. I think I'll pass.

* * *

See you next week.

Mulligan Not Seeking Re-Election

by Geeta S. Sandberg

State Rep. Gayle Mulligan announced Wednesday she would not be seeking re-election to the state's 55th General Assembly district, which covers Andover, Bolton, Hebron and Marlborough, due to her family's plans to move to Columbia.

Mulligan, a Republican, explained in the March 30 release, "This is truly a difficult announcement for me. Over a decade ago, I entered municipal politics to make Hebron a better place to live, work and raise a family. I was inspired by other public servants, and called to serve. My goals and aspirations as state representative remained the same, I believe in Connecticut – the people, the businesses and our small towns. While the headlines often scream doom and gloom, Connecticut is still a wonderful state that I will continue to call my home, just not in the 55th District."

Mulligan said in the release that she and her family are in the process of building a home in Columbia, which would prevent her from serving another term as representative for the 55th district. She added, however, that she wouldn't rule out running for a different office in the General Assembly in the future.

Columbia is in the 8th Assembly District, and is represented by Republican Tim Ackert. Like Hebron, Columbia is in the 19th State Senate district, which is represented by Democrat Cathy Osten.

Mulligan furthered, "I will continue to work each and every day for my constituents and the people of Connecticut. While this legislative session is shining the light brightly on Connecticut's fiscal crisis, there is work to be done supporting our veterans and stabilizing the small business climate."

She said her experience at the municipal level – which includes serving on the Hebron Board of Selectmen from 2007-14 – "continues to drive my focus of strong local control. It is clear that Connecticut needs to change the way we do business. That must include shrinking the size of our state government and reducing unfunded mandates that continue to stress our resources."

Mulligan was elected in 2014 and serves on the appropriations, education and environment committees. She was the endorsed candidate of Pam Sawyer, who represented the district for 22 years prior to Mulligan.

Adopts Budget cont. from Front Page

Also at Monday's meeting, the board voted to authorize Siminski to work with Hebron Town Manager Andrew Tierney to move forward with the proposed natural gas expansion in town.

The proposal includes the installation of six miles of gas main from a gate station on East Street to the center of town. As part of the \$4.19 million proposal, all of Hebron's town offices along the route as well as the fire department and Hebron Elementary School will switch over to natural gas. The inclusion of RHAM was also part of the proposal, and Connecticut Natural Gas made it clear the project wasn't profitable enough without the two schools.

The project will be budget-neutral for RHAM, which Siminski told Tierney was a requirement to move forward. Of the total price tag, \$1.26 million will be contributed from CNG, and another \$1.7 million is expected through a contribution in aid of construction (CIAC) from CNG customers. Hebron would

Two Colchester School Administrators Saying Goodbye

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Parents, staff and students are getting their goodbyes in, as Colchester Public Schools is saying goodbye to two administrators at the end of this school year.

Barbara Gilbert, the school system's director of teaching and learning, and Deb Sandberg, principal of Jack Jackter Intermediate School, are each retiring in June. The two have a combined 68 years in education.

Gilbert, who lives in Niantic, has been in the district since 2002, when she was hired as the Bacon Academy assistant principal. She became the director of teaching and learning in 2005.

She completed her undergraduate degree at Towson University in Maryland, received a master's degree at the University of Connecticut, and completed her sixth year certificate between Wesleyan University and Sacred Heart University.

For 19 years of Gilbert's career, she worked as an English teacher in various towns, including Bozrah and Stonington. Gilbert also worked in Italy at a Montessori school. However, she always leaned toward programming and curriculum.

"I love working with teachers," Gilbert said. "I love working with the instructional piece and working with children and teachers and finding the best materials."

Since becoming director of teaching and learning in 2005, Gilbert said she has seen the district make a lot of progress.

"It's been fun to see the breadth of the changes," Gilbert said. "I will miss learning new things."

Some of the changes Gilbert has overseen include the implementation of Common Core and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium tests, and an ever-evolving world of technology in education.

Two groups of people that really impacted

her were the library media arts leadership team and the language arts leadership team.

"They're really special people," Gilbert said of the teams. "They are strong people who have made an impact."

Gilbert said it's time to say goodbye as it's a good time for her and her family.

Although she said she will miss Colchester, there are some things she won't miss.

"I won't miss not having time to read or travel," Gilbert said. "My son is in San Francisco, and I can only visit him during Christmas break right now."

Charles Hewes, current assistant principal at Bacon, has been tapped to replace Gilbert in July.

"He has been attending leadership meetings with me," she said. "We have been working around his plans and his visions and what's already in place."

Gilbert notified the schools last July she'd be leaving at the end of the 2015-16 school year, and Hewes was selected as her replacement in December. Gilbert said it's been a long, slow and steady transition process, as Hewes is still acting assistant principal at Bacon.

* * *

The other departing administrator is Sandberg, who has been principal at JJIS, the school for the town's third- through fifth-graders, for 12 years.

"It's time to put family first and spend time with my two granddaughters who are two and four," Sandberg said.

Formerly a speech pathologist with the school system, Sandberg was named assistant principal of the then-Colchester Intermediate School in 2002, and was appointed its principal in 2004.

Sandberg received her undergraduate degree from Boston College, her master's degree from Syracuse University and her sixth year certificate at the University of Hartford. She worked

as a speech pathologist for 10 years in Hartford, Mystic and Columbia before coming to Colchester. A Colchester resident, Sandberg has remained with the Colchester school system for 25 years.

"Colchester is a good environment for kids and families," Sandberg said. "Both of my children went through Colchester [schools] and both are very successful."

She said she has certainly seen the changes in the town since moving to town in 1979.

"I don't think there were two streetlights," Sandberg said. "I moved here from Hartford and had to get used to things closing at 6 p.m."

Sandberg said she has also seen the school district boom. Her daughter, who is 36, had 110 kids in her high school graduating class. Sandberg's son, who is 29, had 240 kids.

She also saw a big change in the district in 2006. That year, the new Colchester Elementary School opened, for kindergarten through grade two. Colchester Intermediate School, which had been housed in half of William J. Johnston Middle School, moved into the renovated elementary school (and was renamed Jack Jackter Intermediate School in the process), and also added the town's third-graders, which until that point had been educated in the elementary school.

The move to a new school and addition of third grade "was a challenge and we really embraced it," Sandberg said.

The school went from an enrollment of 550 students to 750. But, the seasoned administrator added, her biggest challenge was "how was I going to keep a bigger school feeling small and connected," noting that the JJIS square footage is larger than the space Colchester Intermediate School had been calling home.

Sandberg added that she'll miss the children and the excitement of being the head of a HOT (Higher Order Thinking) school, a specific model of school that focuses on arts and chil-



Director of Teaching and Learning Barbara Gilbert, left, and Jack Jackter Intermediate School Principal Deb Sandberg have a combined 68 years in education. Both are retiring this June.

dren having a voice.

"I do worry I might be bored [in retirement]," she said. "I'm worried I'll miss the pace. I hope I have enough to occupy my time!"

Sandberg said she plans to begin her retirement in July with sleeping in past 5:15 a.m., running more, photography, traveling, golfing, and skiing. She is also preparing for an eventual move to Cape Cod to be closer to family.

"I just want to thank the town for supporting me and my career," Sandberg said.

As for who will fill Sandberg's shoes, the Board of Education has formed a search committee, and is currently in the midst of finding a new JJIS principal.

Colchester Senior Center Program Awarded National Recognition

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

It began with a game of LIFE – and ended with national recognition.

While participating in "Winning at the Game of LIFE & How to Best Use Your Senior Center" last September, seniors at the Colchester Senior Center focused on Learning, Independence, Friendship and Education (LIFE) and how the center served them.

The program, based off the Milton Bradley board game The Game of LIFE, was held by the center as part of the National Senior Center month theme which was "celebrate LIFE."

To add to the program's success, the senior center was recently awarded an honorable mention in the category of education for the National Institute of Senior Centers' 2015 Programs of Excellence.

The Programs of Excellence award is an annual recognition for outstanding efforts made by senior centers across the nation that offer innovative, creative, and replicable programs for older adults, Patty Watts, Colchester's director of senior services, said. The award has six categories with a winner and an honorable mention in each category.

By netting an honorable mention, Colchester Senior Center became the only center in the state to receive a Programs of Excellence award, and one of just 12 senior centers nationwide.

Colchester seniors participating in the Game of LIFE program picked up their own board game card that had 16 spaces. When the senior attended a program or used a service during September and could argue that he or she learned about learning, independence, friendship or education, they received a stamp.

Watts said the spaces were intentionally left blank and open-ended. She said everybody uses the senior center differently; how they use it is unique to them. The main thing she was interested in learning, Watts said, was "How does

the senior center promote LIFE to them?"

Last year, for National Senior Center Month, the center tried something similar; however, the programs the seniors got credit for were dictated. That program was not as successful, she said.

Watts said this program encouraged the seniors to use the center in new and different ways.

For instance, she said, seniors could ride the bus for independence or try a new exercise class for energy.

"It was whatever it meant to them and was very individual," Watts said. "It took on a life of its own."

Becky Sullivan, program coordinator for the center, said the program's element of fun was the key to its success.

"It was a game they could play while getting enrichment back," Sullivan said. "It didn't feel like a project."

Some seniors, like Carol Vasquez, filled up two cards worth of activities and services.

"I did a few things I wouldn't have done otherwise," Vasquez said. "I did a lot of exercise programs and kept very busy."

Vasquez said part of the fun was trying to fill up the board and earn the stamps, even if it was just for activities she usually participates in.

"It was a challenge to figure out what you're getting out of each activity," Vasquez said. "You had to choose whether learning, independence, friendship, or energy for each activity."

Eleanor Phillips, another senior who completed half of her game card, said even when she wasn't thinking about what LIFE category an activity fit, she was able to find at least one.

"There is a lot going on at any given time," Phillips said. "I got to talk to different people and do different projects."

Watts was happy the seniors enjoyed the program – and said it served its purpose.

"It did exactly what we intended for it to do,"



The Colchester Senior Center celebrated its "Winning at the Game of LIFE" program last September with a lunch party. Recently the center was awarded an honorable mention through the National Institute of Senior Centers for the program.

Watts said of the program, noting it introduced the seniors to new things while also educating them on what they get out of being at the center.

When September ended, the center held a celebratory lunch for all of the seniors who filled up their cards with stamps. Watts said approximately 40 seniors attended the lunch, but added that she distributed 100 Game of Life cards during the program.

After the program ended, Watts said she submitted it to the NISC through an online form. A panel of judges from across the nation then selected the winners.

Watts explained the programs that win "inspire and push the envelope and are programs that can be easily replicated."

The "Winning the Game of LIFE" program, Watts said, was not cost-prohibitive, and other centers could easily host the program.

Before the awards, Watts said the center has not won a national award although the center has won state level recognitions.

"We're all so proud," she said of the national award. "We're really celebrating this."

On Tuesday, the center held a "We Rock" party for the seniors including a special catered meal with stuffed flounder and crab along with musical entertainment by Mike Armentano.

This summer, the National Institute of Senior Centers comes out with this September's theme, and Watts and Sullivan said they are ready to create another great program.

Orange Feels It Would Be ‘Wrong’ to Stop Now

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

In the midst of the state budget crisis, state Rep. Linda Orange (D-48th District) said she cannot give up now and is running for re-election in November.

Orange, who is seeking her 11th term in office, is currently the deputy speaker of the House of Representatives. Her district covers most of Colchester, and portions of Lebanon, Mansfield and Windham.

“We are going through difficult times right now in the state financially and I feel that it would be wrong to leave during hard times,” Orange said Wednesday. “I am willing to push on to help straighten things out.”

Orange said she also decided to run for another term because she enjoys being a “public servant.”

“That’s my main goal; to be able to help people,” she said. “If I can help someone in a day, that’s a good day. If I can help more than one person, it’s a better day.”

One of the major issues facing the district, Orange said, is the recovery – or lack thereof – from the Great Recession.

“Although the Great Recession has subsided,

we in Connecticut and in the 48th District are still suffering the consequences,” Orange said. “Although there are more jobs, they are not high-paying jobs.”

She said the state also needs to focus on ways to keep the younger generations in the state.

“In speaking with younger people, they want to be in cities,” Orange said. “Boston is a main attraction for younger people because they like the transportation systems in the city and they have things to do socially.”

A member of the Appropriations Committee, General Law Committee, Joint Committee on Legislative Management, and the Public Safety and Security Committee, Orange said she is known as an expert on police, fire, and other emergency response legislative issues.

Currently, Orange is involved with the creation of a bill about funding for firefighter training. The training is paid for by both the firefighters in training and the municipalities. The Public Safety and Security recommended the state fund the training, but Gov. Dannel

Malloy balked at this, and that, Orange said, “would have put [funding] on the backs of municipalities.”

Orange explained the Public Safety and Security Committee has recommended some of the funding go back into the budget – but, she said, even if that measure it approved, it wouldn’t cover all of the training costs.

“It’s still going to fall on municipalities, which increases our property taxes,” she said.

In the bill Orange is creating, the training would be funded through an insurance policy and would cost people a penny per year on their homeowner, renter or commercial insurance policies.

“In doing that it takes firefighter training completely out of the state budget and completely out of the municipal budgets as well,” Orange said. “I would rather pay a penny than a couple hundred dollars more in property taxes.”

The idea came from a constituent in Mansfield, she said – and that’s why Orange said she’s there; to listen to constituents and

bring their ideas to life.

“I like public service and I like helping people,” Orange said.

Orange was first elected to the General Assembly in November 1996 and in her first term, she said she was proud to be able to stop the proposed asphalt plant on Old Hartford Road in Colchester – an achievement she calls “a miracle in itself.” Orange also was able to ensure the former waste site on Miles Standish Road remains permanently closed. In 2006, she worked on the first anti-bullying bill and a bill on video voyeurism.

A longtime Colchester resident, Orange served on the Board of Assessment Appeals from 1992-95 and on the Police Commission from 1993-96. She is also an honorary member of the Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Department, an associate member of the Connecticut National Guard, and a member of the Colchester Democratic Town Committee.

“It’s truly rewarding to be able to do these things for our district,” Orange said, adding she is looking forward to the campaign.

State Awards \$1.3 Million for Air Line Trail in Portland

by Elizabeth Regan

The state has awarded \$5.8 million in recreational trails grants, with \$1.3 million going to Portland and East Hampton to extend the Air Line Trail State Park.

Proponents at work on the first phase of Portland’s 2.27-mile portion of the trail hope it will eventually reach Middletown’s Arrigoni Bridge.

Portland Air Line Trail Steering Committee Co-Chairman Lou Pear said the move will connect a wide swath of eastern Connecticut for those interested in exploring this part of the state on foot or bicycle.

“People could literally bike from Portland all the way to Willimantic on the Air Line Trail,” Pear said.

The original “Air Line” railroad, constructed in the latter half of the 1800s, is now the basis for a 50-mile linear recreational trail cutting through 11 towns in Eastern Connecticut, from East Hampton to Thompson. The southern portion includes Colchester, Hebron, Lebanon and Willimantic.

Portland’s grant comes in at \$685,932, which will allow construction of a trail from the East Hampton border to Camp Ingersoll. The trail is expected to consist of two inches of gravel and a final coat of stone dust. Pear said it will be accessible to people with disabilities and should be navigable by most wheelchairs, especially in the summer and early fall.

East Hampton’s \$583,800 grant will provide funding to link downtown East Hampton to the Portland border at Depot Hill Road.

Portland First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said Portland’s presence on the Air Line Trail has been a long time coming.

The process gained steam early this year when Bransfield signed a licensing agreement with Eversource Energy authorizing use of their land for the trail. Then, earlier this month, voters at a town meeting approved the \$172,000 purchase of approximately 23 acres on Middle Haddam Road to use as a trail head.

Portland Air Line Trail Steering Committee Co-Chairman Rosario “Riz” Rizzo Jr. said the

purchase of the land, known as the Keegan property, serves as the 20 percent match the town must pay in order to receive the state grant.

And now that the grant funding has come through, Portland will be able to start the process of securing an engineer and a construction contractor.

Pear said he hopes construction will begin by the fall. He estimated the trail could be complete by April 2017.

The Portland Air Line Trail steering committee has been working with engineering trail consultant Kevin Grindle of Anchor Engineering. Grindle also worked on developing East Hampton’s portion of the Air Line Trail.

Bransfield, Pear and Rizzo thanked Grindle, Portland Town Planner Deanna Rhodes, the entire steering committee, the Board of Selectmen and the residents of Portland for making the project a reality.

Bransfield said the funding, coming as it does in the midst of a gloomy state budget picture, clearly illustrates the state’s commitment to the

Rails to Trails program.

The project is also an example of local cooperation, according to Bransfield.

“It’s a nice partnership with the town of East Hampton, which has done a marvelous job on the Air Line Trail,” she said.

It’s a chance for collaboration that exists not only at the local and state level, but nationally as well.

Bransfield pointed out the Air Line Trail is just one part of a nation-wide focus on recreational trails evident in large networks like the East Coast Greenway. The developing trail system covers 2,900 miles from Florida to Maine.

“It really provides an opportunity for people to get out, exercise and enjoy the outdoors, and not always in the woods. There are oftentimes trails in cities, along seacoasts,” she said.

Bransfield recently explored the southern part of the greenway on a trip to Florida.

“It’s really kind of a thrill to be able to see our country and preserve it so that we can all enjoy it,” she said.

Marlborough Finance Board Slashes School Budget

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Though not everyone was on board with the move, the Board of Finance last Thursday voted to slash the local Board of Education’s proposed budget by \$200,000.

The move brings the school board’s 2016-17 spending proposal to \$7.22 million, a \$173,413 decrease, or 2.34 percent, from current year spending.

The reduction brought the town’s overall 2016-17 proposed budget to \$23.69 million. Of that, \$8.49 million is the town’s portion of the RHAM schools budget; \$7.22 million is the local school board budget; and \$7.95 million is for town operations, debt, and capital. (The RHAM school board met this week and increased its proposed budget by \$262,584, which would affect the Marlborough portion; however, Marlborough officials had not adjusted the town budget to reflect the change.)

The budget calls for a 3.35 percent tax increase, and would bring up the mill rate by 1.17, from 32.89 to 34.06.

Going into last week’s meeting, though, the proposed tax increase was at 5.4 percent. Finance board chair Doug Knowlton said he ran various scenarios to see the effect on the proposed tax increase, prompting him to suggest the \$200,000 amount.

And while most people on the board agreed him, board member Ken Hjulstrom felt differently. He said that while he understands the board’s logic, he wasn’t completely comfortable with such a large cut.

He did say, though, that at a “bare minimum” the finance board should cut \$78,000 – based on the local Board of Education’s own split

decision on the budget. The school board in February voted 5-4 to add back into the 2016-17 budget a \$78,000 teacher position that had been ticketed for elimination. The addition brought the budget from a 0.70 percent decrease to a 0.36 percent increase.

But Knowlton said he was fine with the \$200,000 reduction, based on the school board’s recent history of not fully returning budget surpluses to the town.

At the end of the 2011-12 fiscal year, the school board had a \$191,334 budget surplus, but returned \$59,713 of that amount to the town. At the end of the 2012-13 fiscal year, it returned \$93,713 of a \$233,648 surplus, and in 2013-14, it returned \$83,712 out of its total \$168,128 surplus.

And last spring, at the end of the 2014-15 fiscal year, the board returned just \$1,164 from its surplus of \$117,019.

“If they don’t want to return surplus at the end of the year, we may take it at the beginning [of the year],” Knowlton said. He continued that the local school board keeping its surpluses has “burdened the town” in its financial state by not increasing the general fund.

Board member Susan Leser agreed with Knowlton, saying the surplus at the end of the 2014-15 school year which totaled \$117,019, “should have been returned to the taxpayer, so let’s return it to the taxpayers now.”

Vice chair Cliff Denniss said this fiscal year, the school is projecting a \$4,000 surplus at the end of June.

“You don’t have a surplus if you spend it,” Denniss said.

Before going through with the reduction, Denniss reminded the board that there is a minimum reduction based on a complex state formula.

On Wednesday, Sklarz did receive the numbers from the state. According to the state Department of Education’s Minimum Budget Requirement formula – with a 55 student decrease from K-12 – the budget can decrease \$348,586. Therefore the \$200,000 decrease is well within state guidelines.

Leser motioned to reduce the local school board budget by \$200,000 and the motion passed 5-1 with Hjulstrom against.

* * *

After discussing the local school board budget, the Board of Finance moved on to the town operations budget.

Knowlton suggested a reduction of \$73,000 from the proposed town operations budget; however, he did not state where it would come from.

“I’ve often said this thing is trying to find a balance that the taxpayers in the town can support, can afford, and it serves the needs in the town,” he said. “We have those needs and where does that leave us? How can we balance [the needs] against the citizens of the town and what they can afford?”

Although the board came to a consensus that approximately \$73,000 was a reasonable decrease in town operations, the board could not agree on whether or not it will cut line-by-line or give a bottom line number to the Board of Selectmen. Historically in the past few years, the finance board has reduced the town opera-

tions budget line-by-line. If the Board of Finance gave a bottom line number, the selectmen would decide where the reduction would come from.

“We are the check and balance,” Hjulstrom said, supporting the board reducing line-by-line.

First Selectwoman Amy Traversa encouraged the board to give a bottom line number.

“If I’m going to be held accountable as first selectman for the success or failure of a budget, I would appreciate the final say where the cuts come from,” Traversa said. “We’ve worked in-depth with this budget.”

Knowlton called the charter “nebulous.”

The town charter reads that the finance board prepares the proposed annual budget to present at public hearing.

“The Board of Finance may require any office to meet with it to explain requests for funds,” the charter continues. “Any office shall be entitled to be heard by the Board of Finance with respect to its proposed estimated expenditure when the Board intends to recommend a revised estimate of expenditures for that office.”

Knowlton said the charter does not draw a conclusion one way or the other.

“A lot of things have happened because of habits and practices. I encourage charter revision for a lot of clarity that outlines what boards and commissions are actually allowed to do,” he said.

The next Board of Finance budget workshop was after press time on Thursday. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 7, at 7 p.m., in the Marlborough Elementary School media center.

Hearings Held in East Hampton on G'Bury-Belltown Dispatch Deal

by Shawn R. Dagle and Elizabeth Regan

Public hearings were held last week in East Hampton and Glastonbury on a proposed \$1.2 million regional dispatch arrangement between the two towns that will cost East Hampton almost \$775,000 in its first year.

Under the deal, Glastonbury would provide East Hampton with police, fire and EMS dispatch on a 24-hour basis and provide tactical radio contact and support while personnel are on call, according to a draft memorandum of understanding.

East Hampton's current arrangement with Colchester Emergency Communications (KX) expires June 30.

Glastonbury Town Manager Richard Johnson said his town would pay about \$85,000 in start-up costs after state grant funding comes through. The town's total contribution is \$710,000 – and last week the Glastonbury Town Council approved a transfer of that amount to a special account, to pay for Glastonbury's share of capital improvements to the town's dispatch center.

East Hampton would be on the hook for \$439,710 in capital expenses, according to a resolution the East Hampton Town Council authorized last Tuesday.

The appropriation will go to town meeting in East Hampton next Tuesday, April 5, at 7 p.m., at the East Hampton Middle School library. Of the total, \$250,000 would come from the general fund, \$136,214 from the capital reserve fund, and \$53,496 from a special services account for police.

East Hampton Town Manager Michael Maniscalco said an additional \$115,000 for a computer software program would be financed.

East Hampton would also be responsible for \$215,000 in operating costs in the first year, mostly for salaries and benefits. The costs in subsequent years will be determined based on collective bargaining agreements, since Glastonbury is unionized.

A draft agreement that outlines the roles and responsibilities of each town will be brought to the East Hampton Town Council for approval at its April 12 meeting. Some language related to insurance still needs to be ironed out, Maniscalco said.

The draft agreement specifies East Hampton would be required to provide, maintain and repair the equipment necessary to communicate with Glastonbury at its own expense. It would also be responsible for the wages, employee benefits, payroll costs, insurance, training, overtime and uniforms for the additional employees Glastonbury needs to provide dispatch services to East Hampton.

Every February, Glastonbury would provide East Hampton with an estimate of the annual operating cost for the service with invoices furnished to East Hampton on a quarterly basis for the prior three-month period, according to the agreement. East Hampton would then have 30 days upon receiving the invoice to pay.

If at any time Glastonbury chooses to provide emergency dispatch to another community a cost-sharing agreement would be set up.

The memorandum, if agreed to, would begin July 1 and end June 30, 2017. It would renew for five-year terms, unless either town withdraws from the agreement. East Hampton can withdraw from the agreement by giving one year's notice to the Glastonbury town manager with authorization by the East Hampton Town Council.

Both Maniscalco and Johnson said funding would not be appropriated until the memorandum of understanding is approved. "We would not allocate or spend any of the money," Johnson said.

The transfer Glastonbury agreed upon last week will allow the various parts of the process to move forward together, streamlining the steps and time needed to complete the process.

The Glastonbury and East Hampton town councils have already approved about \$20,000 to begin purchasing some equipment in case KX is unable to maintain operations through the end of June.

East Hampton began to look in earnest for another dispatch provider after KX announced in December that it would dissolve at the end of June. The organization has had financial problems since former member town Hebron left for Tolland County Mutual Aid Fire Service in 2013.

Initially, fellow KX member town Marlborough also sought dispatch services from Glastonbury. Fire, police and town officials from the three communities met to discuss a potential agreement. (Unlike East Hampton, Marlborough would only be using Glastonbury's dispatch operations for its fire and ambulance calls; its police calls are handled through state police Troop K in Colchester.)

But Marlborough officials balked at the cost, which was estimated to be well in excess of the \$55,000 the town is currently paying with KX. Its Board of Selectmen put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) for emergency dispatch services, and chose Tolland County Mutual Aid Fire Service at a cost of \$12,860 annually. The Tolland-based nonprofit locked in the rate for five years and is covering any capital costs, according to the bid.

* * *

While no members of the public offered comment in Glastonbury, at the East Hampton hearing former assistant fire chief Marty Swan said paying three quarters of a million dollars in the first year to Glastonbury is "unbelievable" and "ridiculous."

"For what you're going to spend to go to Glastonbury, you could've bought KX twice," he said.

But Maniscalco said it would have cost the town almost as much annually to remain with KX. A 2014 presentation prepared by KX for its member towns said it would cost East Hampton \$208,472 in 2016-17 if KX charged towns based on population, with an additional per-call fee. If dispatch services had successfully merged with Montville (a proposed merger fell through last summer), the cost to East Hampton would have been \$198,907.

Another resident asked why the town didn't put emergency services out to bid, as Marlborough had.

Maniscalco said the time to go to bid would have been more than a year ago, when he first brought up the idea of entertaining other options. He has said on previous occasions that the former town council did not want to put out an RFP for dispatch services.

"At this point, we don't have the luxury of that amount of time, because KX has decided they're going to close by June 30," Maniscalco said.

Maniscalco has said he worked with the local emergency services chiefs to investigate dispatch options at police departments in Montville, Madison, and Middletown. They also looked at regional dispatch organizations in Tolland, Killingly and Westbrook.

He cited the need for police, fire and ambulance dispatch as a key difference between East Hampton and the other KX towns, as they do not require police dispatch.

* * *

Also at next week's town meeting, taxpayers can vote on adding \$405,000 to a \$3.32 million bond approved in 2011 for road work, in order to address issues with the Christopher Brook culvert at North Main Street and Brewer Road.

According to a resolution approved by Town Council last week, the money may be spent for design, construction, materials, equipment, engineering and other consulting fees, legal fees, net interest on borrowings and other financing costs, and other expenses related to the project or its financing.

The proposed construction project deals with three 24-inch corrugated metal pipes under North Main Street between Sears Park and Lake Boulevard. The pipes are deteriorating and are on track to be replaced with two concrete box culverts. In addition, the existing wooden pedestrian bridge would be replaced with a sidewalk.

Maniscalco said the Town Council is committed to keeping at least one lane open at all times and maintaining pedestrian traffic throughout construction. He said construction could start next month and should be finished by the end of the 2016 construction season this fall.

Shawn R. Dagle is a reporter with the Riverast's sister paper, The Glastonbury Citizen. A version of this story previously appeared in the Citizen.

Addams Family Coming to East Hampton

by Elizabeth Regan

A cast of 60 area actors is bringing the iconic *Addams Family* back to life in a musical production that features fun and dysfunction onstage and off.

The Addams Family: A New Musical Comedy will be performed next weekend by the East Hampton-based Young People's Center for Creative Arts (YPCCA), under the direction of Chris Mansfield.

The story centers around Wednesday, the macabre daughter of Morticia and Gomez Addams, who is grown up now and has fallen in love with a regular guy from a normal family. An ensemble of ghostly ancestors helps the family deal with this startling development.

The show brings together artists of all ages and levels of experience, including several members of the YPCCA staff responsible for the organization's long-running summer program.

"The Addams family is a big, dysfunctional, loving family, which is what every theater group becomes. And that's what we are," Mansfield, an East Hampton resident, said at a rehearsal this week.

Jennifer Friday – who, besides being married to Mansfield, is an award-winning teacher and choreographer – has been part of the East Hampton theater scene for more than 30 years. Many of the adult cast members have a similarly enduring relationship with the organization that was started in 1982 by the late Mike and Adina Mansfield.

Since the 1990s, YPCCA has used its spring musical as a fundraiser for its scholarship, which is given in the name of Mike and Adina to a graduating East Hampton student who plans to pursue a degree in either theater or education.

Friday said that landing a role in this production is about more than learning songs, dialogue and dance numbers – it's about delving into intricacies of performing, ranging from pronunciation to musical interpretation.

"Some people in the cast have not done musicals before and they're getting this master class," Friday said. "The caliber of people we're working with is great."

Friday plays Morticia Addams, with the long, black hair and tight, low-cut black dress that has captivated audiences since the *Addams Family* cartoon first appeared in the *New Yorker* in the 1930s. The family – famously described in their 1964-66 television theme song as creepy, kooky, mysterious and spooky – has been featured on big and small screens many times.

"I think anybody who's ever even seen one episode of *The Addams Family* will enjoy the nostalgia," Friday said. "There's all the familiar characters, there's the familiar looks, there's Cousin It and there's tangos and Lurch and all the stuff you expect to see, but then there's all these new twists."

Jillian Millette, a sophomore at Cromwell High School, has taken on the role of Wednesday in her first foray with YPCCA. She's been in more than 10 theatrical productions since she first started acting almost a decade ago.

"I've never worked with such a talented group of people, ever," she said.

And they keep her laughing throughout each rehearsal, she added, which is challenging since her character doesn't smile.

Wednesday's love interest, Lucas Beineke, is played by Bobby DellaCamera. The Northford resident drives 45 minutes each way to attend the twice-a-week rehearsals that will

become more frequent next week in anticipation of Friday's night opening.

DellaCamera, a graduate of Xavier High School currently attending the University of New Haven, earned the lead role of Tony in *West Side Story* in last summer's YPCCA production. He said he's wanted to perform since he was a little kid and has wanted to become a part of YPCCA for years.

"It's the rush, the team building, the story you get to tell," he explained.

And like other members of the *Addams Family* cast, he said it's also about having fun and making sure the audience has fun, too. He credited Chris Mansfield with helping achieve that goal.

"He's very precise on the comedic timing. He knows if something doesn't look right and if it could be hysterical in the moment," DellaCamera said.

The show will be the first musical staged in East Hampton High School's newly-renovated auditorium, which is a source of pride for project advocate and former East Hampton Town Council member Thom Cordeiro. He wears six-inch platform shoes to portray Lurch, the Addams family's butler.

"I worked really hard, as a lot of us did, to get this whole high school renovation approved," he said.

According to Friday, the new auditorium is reason enough for people to come check out the play.

"There's a full set of working lights, which is good," she said. "The curtains hit the ground. It used to be you could see people's feet running back and forth," she said. The stage floor is smooth now, without the divots and splinters

actors had become accustomed to.

"Not only do you feel more comfortable in the space, more safe, but it's also beautiful," Friday added. "It feels very professional."

The comforting space and welcoming cast has made ensemble members Vanessa Lagerstrom and Bella D'Ottavio feel at home from the beginning.

D'Ottavio, a student at Haddam-Killingworth High School, said it's tough keeping up with the demands of her junior year, but that performing in the musical is a respite from her daily responsibilities.

"Everytime I go to *Addams Family* [rehearsals], I immediately feel at ease and at home," D'Ottavio said.

The same goes for Lagerstrom, a 16-year-old who attends Classical Magnet School in Hartford.

She takes to the stage as Flapper Addams, one of the Addams family's dearly-departed ancestors.

"I was bullied a lot and this was a way to leave that all behind and become someone new, someone that you usually wouldn't be," Lagerstrom said. "I walk in this door and I become a dead person. But that's okay because I'm a dead person that likes to do kick lines and jazz hands – a very active person – when in reality I'm like the quiet person in the classroom."

The Addams Family: A New Musical Comedy will be performed Friday and Saturday, April 8 and 9, at 7 p.m. both nights, and Sunday, April 10, at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$13 for adults and \$10 for senior citizens and children under 16. Tickets will be available at the door or can be ordered online at ypcca.org.

Arrest Made in East Hampton in December Home Invasion

by Elizabeth Regan

An arrest has been made in relation to a December home invasion in Middle Haddam where masked men wielding knives were scared off by an elderly homeowner, according to police.

William Andre Colton, 33, of Norwich, was arrested Sunday, March 27 and charged with first-degree conspiracy to commit home invasion, first-degree conspiracy to commit burglary, and sixth-degree conspiracy to commit larceny.

The story of the events leading up to his arrest unfolds in a five-page affidavit by East Hampton Police Department Officer Jason Wishart, which details how a receipt from a Norwich gas station found in the driveway helped lead police to several suspects.

According to the affidavit, the invasion occurred Dec. 7 around 11 p.m. at a secluded Middle Haddam Road address.

A 1000-foot driveway winds through a heavily wooded lot to the home and that's where, according to the affidavit, a 73-year-old man witnessed two "ninja like" men making their way up the stairs to the second floor, where he and his wife had been sleeping before their barking dog woke them up. The affidavit states the man threw a metal mirror at them, and then turned to go get his gun from a safe as the two intruders ran out of the main entrance.

The couple was not physically harmed, according to the affidavit.

Police said several responding officers scoured the home and did not find any suspects,

however they noted a knife laying out on an otherwise uncluttered counter atop two open drawers.

According to the affidavit they also discovered a Chicago Bulls hat and a receipt from the Sunoco Gas Station on Town Street in Norwich toward the bottom of the long driveway.

Meanwhile, missing from the home was a purse belonging to the 72-year-old female resident as well as two knives, the affidavit said. The purse, minus \$50, and one of the knives were found the next day on Rock Landing Road in Haddam Neck.

According to the affidavit, a state trooper and his canine partner responded to the scene about a half hour after the local police arrived; the team located a pair of black gloves but no suspects on a search that extended from the residence to the intersection of Middle Haddam Road and Long Hill Road.

The next day, a visit to the Norwich gas station by an East Hampton officer and two officers from the Norwich Police Department yielded surveillance video and a signed copy of the same receipt found at the end of the driveway, the affidavit said.

The video showed a Hispanic male purchasing two sodas and a black mask, similar to the one the elderly victim said the intruders had worn.

The affidavit said the customer was accompanied by two black men, and they drove up in a dark colored Scion. One of those men was identified by the Norwich officers as William

Andre Colton, 33, whom the affidavit said was already known to the police; a Department of Motor Vehicles search for the car from the surveillance video led officers to Colton's Roosevelt Avenue residence around 10 p.m.

According to the affidavit, Colton has no criminal record. He told police about a series of events that had taken him, as the driver, from Norwich to Meriden and then to Middle Haddam. The affidavit said Colton explained he picked up his cousin and his cousin's friend "and they drove around smoking." Then the two passengers asked Colton for a ride to Meriden in order "to politic" with someone there.

The directions to the Meriden address were loaded into the cell phone belonging to the friend of Colton's cousin, according to the affidavit. That cell phone, as well as Colton's, were later seized and examined based on a search warrant signed by a Middlesex Superior Court judge. But Colton's phone was password protected and police weren't able to get any information from the phone, the affidavit said.

After interacting with a white man who is unnamed in the affidavit but is described as 5 feet 7 inches tall and skinny, all four of them left Meriden for what Colton said was an unknown destination. They went through Middletown in the direction of Willimantic, with the "kid from Meriden" calling the shots. Colton said in the affidavit they were getting closer to the destination when the newest passenger asked "Are we going to do this or what?"

The man from Meriden told Colton to pull

over and the three men got out of the car, according to Colton's account in the affidavit; he then drove to the end of a road, turned around, and that's when they called him to pick them up.

Colton said in the affidavit that the trio was breathing heavily when they got back in the car. He quoted the guy from Meriden as saying "Man, we didn't get nothing."

Colton heard a window roll down and a loud "thump" on the way back to Meriden, according to the affidavit. He told police "he didn't know what was going on, and doesn't want to get caught up and in trouble for what they did."

According to the affidavit, the events of that night ended when Colton dropped off two of the passengers at their homes and one at Mohegan Sun casino.

Police interviewed the friend of Colton's cousin two days later and the man said he couldn't remember a visit to Middle Haddam and that he must have passed out due to the large quantity of marijuana he'd consumed. He denied any involvement in "whatever happened that night," according to the affidavit.

* * *

Colton was arraigned Monday and is being held on a \$75,000 bond. His next court date is April 11.

East Hampton Police Chief Sean Cox said more arrests are expected and, according to the affidavit, police have secured DNA evidence from a knife, the Chicago Bulls hat and the pair of gloves.

Student Council Brings Organic Garden to AES

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Wednesday morning, members of the Andover Elementary School Student Council gathered in front of the building to admire the organic garden they worked to create, and thank those who helped in the endeavor.

The two-tiered garden built into a hill in front of the school was the last – and largest – goal the council made for the school year, the students' last at AES. The inspiration for the garden came from council member Ryan Russo, who had first mentioned the idea in a speech he'd made when running for office.

Student Council advisor Crystal Adanti shared once the council was established, "the students voted that was going to be their long-term project – what they really wanted to leave the school with."

She added, "The Student Council kids felt strongly about wanting to educate the rest of the school about where food comes from and then wanted to get [the produce grown] into the school lunches to promote healthy eating."

Russo furthered those sentiments Wednesday morning.

"I wanted to do something that would make a lasting impression on the school," he said, "and my dad and me talked about it and we thought that this was a good one because it was something that could be remembered, and it would always be there, and something that kids could enjoy for a long time."

Russo added that at home "we try to eat healthy, and we wanted others to do that too."

To make the garden a reality, Adanti said Russo wrote grants, and letters to local landscaping companies. And although none of the grants were awarded, "There was a huge outpouring of community support for the school garden," Adanti shared, and it was those supporters the students thanked Wednesday morning.

"We are gathered here today to celebrate an amazing achievement. This garden will be used for many years to come and is a milestone for Andover Elementary School," Russo stated during the ceremony.

And that milestone wouldn't have happened, he furthered, without the contributions of Christine Randazzo, owner of Randazzo Design & Associates, who donated her time to design the garden layout, help with the construction and worked to get other community members involved.

In addition, Matt Cordner of Andover Landscaping, LLC donated two days of his time, the necessary equipment to cut into the hillside, as well as gravel and soil.

Meanwhile, Martin Geoghegan of Andover's MG Masonry donated his masonry skills to create the garden's walls, and Merwin Mason Supply in South Windsor provided the stones at a discounted price for the project.

The students' budget was limited, and Adanti shared the lowest estimate the council received when reaching out to companies for stone was \$1,200. Then, she added, "Merwin said they could do \$500," which happened to be the amount the Andover Farmers Market had donated to the students.

Adanti expressed gratitude to AnnMarie Daigle, mother of Student Council treasurer Emily Daigle, who acted as a liaison to the Andover Farmers Market, which led to the students selling baked goods there; as well as the farmer's market for their "generous gift."

"All these people are a part of making this garden a reality," Russo furthered. "None of this would have happened without any of them and we are really very thankful for all they have done."

Adanti added, "We're very, very excited and touched that you would come out and do this for us; it's absolutely beautiful."

Following the ribbon-cutting marking the garden's completion, AES Principal John Briody commended the council.

He called their hard work "totally inspiring" and said, "many of these kids have been in the school from kindergarten – preschool even – so seven-eight years, and they've grown with the school and they're leaving a great legacy behind which will be continued by future students in the building."



Sixth grade teacher and Student Council advisor Crystal Adanti stands with council members during Wednesday's opening ceremony for the garden the students brought to the school with the help of the community. The garden was the council's largest – and last – goal, and was created as a way to educate students about where food comes from while providing produce for school lunches.

He added, "I just think it's been a great effort and I thank Mrs. Adanti for spearheading it and getting everyone together and empowering our young student leaders."

Meanwhile, Randazzo called the garden a "fantastic opportunity" to learn "patience as well as the art of growing vegetables, because some crops are going to do well and some aren't, and there's going to possibly be animals."

She furthered, "Every year there's an opportunity to learn and grow so it's like an experiment each year... every gardener says 'what can I do better next year?' I love growing. I'm a landscape designer and I think any opportunity for all the age groups to garden is good. There's something to gain for all of them, even if it's just one crop per grade."

"It's fun," she concluded. "And it gets everyone involved. Kids don't necessarily know that

carrots grow under the soil, so I think it's a nice connection. Our lives are just so busy. When you can get outside and get away from electronics, you're just more connected."

And now that the garden's complete, the council will get the chance to tend to it; Adanti explained the class has been growing seeds in the classroom "and once the weather is cooperating we're going to start planting veggies."

She added Wednesday the council still had some money left in their account, "So we're going to use that for seedlings, and marigolds to keep out the animals."

Then, "the next step is to grow. The goal is to get at least lettuce in the school lunches by the end of the year."

And it's an aspiration the council is likely to accomplish, especially if they put as much hard work into tending the garden as they did to get it built.

Glastonbury Republican Running for State Senate

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Glastonbury resident Lorraine Marchetti understands the difficulty that will inevitably come from running against a well-known incumbent. But it's a challenge she said this week she was up for.

"I knew it was going to be a difficult seat to win but I'm willing to put in the effort and I'm up for the challenge," she said.

Marchetti, who has spent time on both the Glastonbury Board of Education and the Glastonbury Town Council, is running to represent the Fourth District in the state senate, covering Andover, Bolton Glastonbury and Manchester. It's a seat that's been held by Democrat Steve Cassano for the last six years.

"Republicans haven't had this seat in years," Marchetti shared. She acknowledged Cassano has a long history in public office, and many people know him from his time at the capitol as well as his tenure as a teacher in Manchester – and that's all in his favor. But still, she's not deterred.

Marchetti has lived in Glastonbury since 1985; she moved from Maine to Connecticut to attend The University of Connecticut and "never went back." Although she admits she doesn't enjoy the winter, Marchetti said she loves the state, and the issue that propelled her to agree when she was asked to run for senate was the number of her friends who planned to leave.

"What pushed me over the edge was I have many friends who are looking to leave Connecticut to go where the cost of living is less," she said. "Connecticut is a beautiful state; it's convenient to New York City and Boston,

there's the ocean, we can get to Rhode Island easy... but that seems to not be important to anyone anymore. I've had lots of conversations with friends on where they're going; I don't like winter but this is my home, and a lot of my friends are leaving now."

Marchetti furthered, "That propelled me over the starting line, to see if we could start making change and at least start turning this mega cruise line in another direction; the fiscal mess is something we have to address."

Along with the state's financial situation, Marchetti mentioned healthcare and heroin use in the state as concerns.

"No community is immune to the effects of that horrendous drug," she stated. "Before the last three weeks [when many news outlets began focusing on heroin problems in the state] I wrote down my three top issues and heroin was one of them. Now it seems like I'm jumping on the bandwagon, but it was already a concern."

In addition, "healthcare is an issue. There's a hospital in my district and I'm going to pick [Eastern Connecticut Health Network CEO] Peter Karl's brain."

Marchetti is quick to say she doesn't have all the answers and there's still much to learn, but she asserted, "I go to meetings prepared. I do my homework."

"If – no, I should say 'when' – I'm elected, I have lots of questions and will follow issues closely. I think it's crazy how people can make assumptions without all the facts," Marchetti stated.

Putting in the necessary research before making a decision is something Marchetti's always done – including when deciding which politi-

cal party to register as.

Marchetti first got involved in Glastonbury politics in the 1990s. She explained, "I was asked to come to Daybreak [coffee shop in Glastonbury] for coffee, and the town Democrats wanted me to be on the Board of Education. Afterwards, a friend of mine said, 'You can't run as a Democrat, you need to be a Republican!' So I started researching and chose the Republicans because in Glastonbury, they were the ones who supported education. So I had to tell my Democratic friends, 'sorry, but I'm running as a Republican.'"

But political affiliation, she furthered, shouldn't get in the way of working together.

"I'm not partisan," she said. "I really, honestly believe in order to succeed and get things done you need to cross party lines."

Marchetti added, "Our state is in very bad shape. There are going to be some very difficult decisions to make."

She added of the towns in the Fourth District, "there's much potential in each town."

"All four towns are unique in their own way; they all have similar concerns but they're unique," she said, adding she wanted to provide the opportunity for individuals from each town to talk about the issues.

"I think everyone should have the opportunity to share their concerns," she said.

Speaking on the qualities she thought would make her a successful state senator, Marchetti said, "I work hard and I do my homework. When I make decisions they're based on facts.



Lorraine Marchetti

I'm fair. I want to do what's right for the people, and I think that's often lost to those who are in office too long."

She concluded, "It's going to be an interesting challenge and I'm up for it."

To learn more about Marchetti, volunteer or make a contribution, go to lorraine4ct.com.

East Hampton Police News

James Strick, 30, of 133 Washington Circle, West Hartford, was arrested and charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, East Hampton Police said.

3/22: Dennis G. Banning, 55, of 1 Old Coach Rd., was issued a summons for misuse of plates and operating an unregistered and uninsured motor vehicle, police said.

Hebron Police News

3/23: State Police said Connor Aldrich, 18, of 158 Millstream Rd., Amston, was arrested and charged with use of drug paraphernalia and possession of less than four ounces of marijuana. Police said they also arrested Trent Cormier, 21, of 27 Dow St., Vernon, and charged him with use of drug paraphernalia and possession of less than four ounces of marijuana in the same case.

3/27: State Police said Kyle Dellert, 31, of 58 Carolyn Dr., was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and second-degree assault.

Andover Car Break-Ins

State Police are investigating after they said vehicles on Stanley Drive were broken into during the overnight hours of Thursday, March 24.

Anyone with information about suspicious or unusual activity is asked to call Trooper Brian Lovell at 860-465-5400.

Marlborough Police News

3/26: State Police said Timothy Stetson, 27, of 171 Cliff St., Norwich, was arrested and charged with speeding, reckless driving, and disobeying the signal of an officer.

3/27: State Police said Michael Brooks, 34, of 165 Granby St., Hartford, was arrested and charged with reckless driving, failure to carry license, DUI, and failure to have head lamps.

3/28: State Police said Daniel Rivera, 31, of 300 Reservoir Place, Bronx, NY, was arrested and charged with third-degree burglary and fourth-degree larceny.

Colchester Police News

3/21: State Police said John Chojnicki, 69, of 55 Chapman Rd., Marlborough, was arrested and charged with second offense DUI, failure to drive in proper lane, and failure to renew registration.

3/22: Colchester Police said they are investigating after a locked tool trailer parked at Castle Day Care Center on Halls Hill Road was broken into at approximately 8 p.m. Police said three individuals in dark clothing with hooded sweatshirts driving a red, full-size extended pick-up truck forced entry into the trailer and stole numerous power tools. Anyone with information is asked to call Officer Robert Labonte at 860-537-7270.

3/22: State Police said Joanne Vasques, 61, of 219 Martin Rd., Hebron, was arrested and charged with failure to appear.

3/22: State Police said Phillip Tostarelli, 32, of 21 Russell St., Manchester, was arrested and charged with failure to appear.

3/22: State Police said Gerald Kelliher, 45, of 27 Tanglewood Dr., Preston, was arrested and charged with carrying a pistol without a permit and sale of firearms.

3/23: Colchester Police said they are investigating after the theft of numerous tools from a construction site on Red Schoolhouse Road. Police said the incident occurred between 6 p.m. March 22 and 8 a.m. March 23 and that a late

model, dark Ford F-150 crew cab was seen on the property at 6 p.m. March 22. Anyone with information is asked to call Officer Adam Regnere at 860-537-7270.

3/23: Colchester Police said Devon Grace, 20, of 81 Lakeview Dr., was arrested and charged with operating an unregistered motor vehicle, improper use of markers, failure to carry minimum insurance requirements, operating under suspension, using a cell phone while motor vehicle is in motion, drug paraphernalia, possession of four ounces of marijuana, possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, and possession of alcohol by a minor.

3/24: State Police said Dreshon Foreman, 27, of 22 Patsy Williams Way, Hartford, was arrested and charged with operating under suspension, speeding, and illegal possession of narcotics. Police said Foreman was also charged with being a fugitive from justice, stemming from a warrant out of Massachusetts for possession of cocaine with intent to distribute.

3/26: State Police said Matthew Crowley, 40, of 858 Highland Ave., Medford, Mass., was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to drive right.

3/28: State Police said Thomas Newman, 46, of 29 Elm St., Deep River, was arrested and charged with failure to appear.

Obituaries

East Haddam

Jacqueline Tierney

Jacqueline (Stratton) Tierney of East Hampton, formerly of East Haddam, passed away peacefully Thursday, March 24, at Hartford Hospital, after a brief illness. Jackie was born in Manchester Jan. 6, 1935, to the late Jackson and Hilda (Magnuson) Stratton.

She was the proud and loving mother of six children: Michael (Colleen) of West Hartford, Daniel (Jacqueline) of East Haddam, Patricia (Joey) of East Haddam, Andrew of Marlborough and Philip of East Haddam.

She was predeceased by her son Jeffrey, her brother Richard, her sister Audrey, along with her former husband Raymond and her longtime companion Richard Berglund.

In addition to her children, she is survived by six grandchildren: Christine (James) Dombroski, Marsha (Thomas) Hallowell, Danielle Tierney, Dean (Elaine) Tierney, Lisa Bogel and Jeffrey Tierney. She is also survived by seven great-grandchildren: Daniel, Stephanie, Jessica and Nicole Dombroski; Gregory Hallowell, Griffin Shepherd and Skylar Tierney, along with one great-great grandson, Ayden.

She is also survived by her sister-in-law Roberta Weigert and brother-in-law Paul (Mary) Tierney, and her sister-in-law Lillian Stratton and her four sons, David, Gordon, John and James.

Jackie attended Manchester schools and moved to East Haddam in 1959, where she raised her children, worked as a nursery school teacher at St. Stephens, and later retired as a care giver from Riverview Lodge in Deep River.

As the proud matriarch of the Tierney family, Jackie could always be found telling tales of her children's never-ending escapades (where her sons could do no wrong). She was a humble woman that was always willing to take time to listen to others. She always gave people the benefit of the doubt. Jackie lit up any room she entered and that light will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

The family wishes to thank the doctors, nurses, and support staff at both Middlesex and Hartford hospitals for the excellent care they gave Jackie in her final days.

Calling hours were Monday, March 28, at Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton. A funeral Mass was held at St. Bridget of Kildare Church, 75 Moodus-Leesville Rd., Moodus, Tuesday, March 29.

In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to East Haddam Volunteer Fire Dept., P.O. Box 4, East Haddam, CT 06423.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Portland

Sandra L. Moore

Sandra L. Moore, 71, of Portland, passed away Friday, March 25. She was the daughter of Albert Moore of Burlington and the late Catherine (Ford) Yurko. Born Jan. 13, 1945, in Nashua, N.H., she lived in Hartford and had been a Portland resident for the last 42 years.

Besides her father, she leaves her sons, Brett D. Franklin and his wife, Sandy of West Hartford, Craig D. Franklin and his wife, Deb of Portland and Keith D. Franklin and his wife, Roxanne of Orlando, Fla.; brothers, Leon Yurko of Dorchester, Mass., Robert Yurko of Simsbury, John Yurko of Portland and Tom Yurko of Wethersfield; sisters, Linda Stone of Cromwell and Candie Dipersio of Winthrop, Mass.; six grandchildren, 3 great-grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were held Thursday, March 31, at Trinity Episcopal Church, 345 Main St., Portland. Burial was in Trinity Cemetery, Portland. Relatives and friends called Wednesday, March 30, at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the American Cancer Society, P.O. Box 22478, Oklahoma City, OK 73123.

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

Colchester

Geraldine Elizabeth DeSanto

Geraldine Elizabeth DeSanto, "Geri," 66, of Colchester and formerly of Westbrook, passed away Holy Saturday, March 26, surrounded by her loving family.

Born Aug. 21, 1949, in New Haven, she was the daughter of the late Robert and Charlotte (Stone) Colberg. Ms. DeSanto had worked as a nurse's assistant for many years. Despite her many health problems, her strong faith and caring nature helped her to stay positive and active. Geri went on to cook for the resident priests of St. Mark Church in Westbrook and then St. Andrew in Colchester.

She was a member and past president of the St. Andrew Ladies Guild as well as the Finance Council, the secular Franciscan Order, and had taught RCIC for nine years. In addition, she was the former Tenant Commissioner for the Colchester Housing Authority at both Dublin and Ponemah Villages. In her spare time, Geri enjoyed crossword puzzles, knitting and crocheting.

She leaves to mourn her passing but cherish her memory four children, Wendy Phillips of Bristol, Anthony (and wife Michelle) of Taylors, S.C., Carmela (and husband Larry) Ghirardi of Salem and Gina Burton of Mauldin, S.C.; 11 grandchildren; two brothers, Robert and James Colberg, both of Florida; her best friend, Fr. Michael Giannitelli (currently of St. Mary of the Visitation, Clinton); and many dear friends who helped her in so many ways over the years; and numerous extended family members.

She was predeceased by a grandson, Scott Burton; a brother, Ronald Colberg; and her former husband, Anthony J. DeSanto.

The family received guests Thursday, March 31, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The memorial liturgy will be celebrated at 10 a.m. today, April 1, directly at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester, with Fr. Michael Giannitelli officiating. She will be laid to rest with her parents privately in East Lawn Cemetery, East Haven.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to St. Andrew Church.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

Sophie Mary Barnes

Sophie Mary (Wollander) Barnes, 86, of East Hampton, widow of Richard E. Barnes Sr., died Saturday, March 26, at her home. Born Sept. 23, 1929, in Greenfield, Mass., she was the daughter of the late Walter and Viola (Pinkoski) Wollander.

Sophie had lived in East Hampton since 1953 and had worked at Colonial IGA for several years. She was a Cub Scout den mother for her son's pack and was a member of the Chatham Historical Society in East Hampton.

She is survived by her son, Richard Barnes Jr. and his wife Lenora of Lebanon, and her two grandchildren, Hannah Rose Barnes and Samuel Richard Barnes.

She was predeceased by her brothers, Stanley, Joseph and Chester, and her sister, Virginia.

Friends called at Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, Wednesday evening, March 30. A funeral liturgy was celebrated Thursday, March 31, in St. Patrick Church in East Hampton. Burial was private in Greenfield, Mass.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Cub Scout Pack 58, 199 Exeter Rd., Lebanon, CT 06063 or Girl Scout Troop 65295, 199 Exeter Rd., Lebanon, CT 06063.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Marlborough

John Charles Ayers Jr.

John Charles Ayers Jr. 73, of Marlborough, beloved husband of Nancy (Sahler) Ayers, died Monday, March 28, at St. Francis Hospital in Hartford. Born Nov. 28, 1942, in Hartford, he was the son of Alice (Roath) Ayers of Wethersfield and the late John C. Ayers Sr.

John proudly served his country in the U.S. Marine Corps, and was a driver for Hartford Distributors before his retirement.

Besides his mother and his wife Nancy, he is survived by his son, John C. Ayers III of Grafton, Mass.; a daughter, Kathy Spencer and husband Richard of Kensington; five brothers, Charles of Vermont, Laurence of Old Saybrook, Stephen Ayers, James Ayers, and Thomas Ayers, all of Wethersfield; a sister, Mary Jane Galligan of Wethersfield; six grandchildren, Matthew, Julia Rose, Hannah, Ainsley, Aiden and Alex.

He was predeceased by a sister, Barbara Hadley.

A graveside service will be held Saturday, April 2, at 10:30 a.m. in Century Cemetery in Marlborough.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

East Hampton

Mario Simoni

Mario Simoni, 60, of East Hampton, formerly of Cheshire, passed away surrounded by his loving family Sunday, March 27, after a courageous battle with cancer. Mario was born in Patrica, province of Frosinone, Italy, on April 18, 1955, to the late Emilio and Chiara Simoni. He was the husband of 35 years to Lisa (Schappa) Simoni.

Mario was 17 years old when he and his siblings moved to the United States. They lived in Hamden with a close uncle and aunt, Luigi and Arnina Rossini. Mario worked many jobs, one of which was at Bimonte's Restaurant where he met his wife, Lisa. In 1979, he opened Rossini's Restaurant in Cheshire with his uncle, Lorenzo Rossini and cousin, Antonio Rossini. In 1991, he opened Rossini's Restaurant in East Hampton, with his brother, Luigi and cousin, Antonio Rossini. Soon after, his brother Angelo joined the business where the three brothers worked together.

Mario enjoyed spending time with family and friends, playing cards, cooking, working in the garden and soccer. Alongside his wife Lisa, they enjoyed their free time in East Haven and New Smyrna Beach, Fla.

Mario will be missed by many, including his wife, Lisa, his children, Marisa (Daniel) Czuchta of Bristol, Luisa (Fabio) Parente of Wallingford and Antonio (Lindsey Everin) Simoni of Colchester, his two grandchildren Abriana Parente and Christian Czuchta, his brothers Luigi (Luisa) Simoni, Angelo (Cheryl Austin) Simoni and his sister, Maria Simoni, as well as numerous aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and cousins.

Mario was predeceased by his nephew, Giancarlo Simoni.

Family and friends called at Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, Thursday, March 31. The funeral procession will leave Spencer Funeral Home at 9:30 a.m. for a 10 a.m. Mass at St. Patrick Church, 47 West High St., East Hampton, today, April 1. Entombment will follow in the All Saints Cemetery Mausoleum, 700 Middletown Ave., North Haven.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made to "Middlesex Hospital Hospice and Palliative Care - in Memory of Mario Simoni," 28 Crescent St. Middletown, CT 06457.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

East Hampton

Troy Donald Luoma

Troy Donald Luoma, 49, of Hartland, Minn., recently of East Hampton, passed away Friday, March 25, at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester, Minn., after a lengthy illness. He was surrounded by his family and friends.

Troy was born in Minneapolis, Minn., on June 6, 1966. He graduated New Richland high school, and subsequently joined the United States Army as a small arms repairman. Troy served with the 503rd Maintenance Company in Panama and Honduras, and later as military police with the 18th MP Brigade in Saudi Arabia and Iraq under operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Troy closed out his military career as an Infantryman with Alpha Company 1st Battalion 186th Infantry out of Medford, Ore. After military service, Troy pursued a career as an engineer in RF Technologies with Times Microwave systems and EZ Form.

Troy was a patriotic man, who loved his country fiercely, and would do anything to defend her. He was a loving father, and an avid outdoorsman. His sense of honor, loyalty, and duty will forever live on through his four children.

Troy was predeceased by his wife, Priscilla Louise Luoma; his parents, Phillip A. Luoma and Karen M. Buland; and his siblings Carrie and Jason Luoma.

He is survived by his children, Jonathan (Hunter), Mitchell, Robert and Valerie Luoma; his stepmother, Joyce and her husband JR; and his brothers, Craig and Lance.

Burial services were held at Geneva Cemetery in Geneva, Minn.

All memorial gifts will be used to establish an educational trust fund for Robert and Valerie, and may be sent to the Luoma residence in Connecticut: 7 Colchester Ave., East Hampton, CT 06424.

Amston

Robert Francis Dillman

Robert (Bob) Francis Dillman, 65, of Amston, passed peacefully in the loving arms of his wife Wednesday, March 23, with family at his side, following a long and courageous battle with lung disease.

Bob was born in New Haven, a son of the late Carmelita and Francis W. Dillman. After growing up in East Haven, and graduating from East Haven High School in 1969, Bob proudly served in the Navy from 1969-74. After his honorable discharge, he moved to Colorado, and later returned to Connecticut, where he met the love of his life, Evelyn Button Bernier, whom he married on May 14, 2011.

He was passionate about his Yankees and Broncos, and was an avid outdoors person, especially enjoying hiking, camping, skiing, sailing and canoeing. Bob was also very active in his church, singing in the choir, as well as serving as a deacon and participating in Silver Lake work weekends where he met his wife.

For most of the past 10 years, Bob was very proud to work as a para transit driver first for the Red Cross and then Middletown Area Transit when the two merged, until he was forced to retire due to his illness. Bob felt very devoted to "his" patients, and they returned those feelings. This was evident in the many honors and awards he received.

Besides his parents, Bob was predeceased by his sister, Nancy Larson David, brothers-in-law Kenneth Larson and Jack Hendricks, all formerly of Wallingford; and his nephew, Johnny Dillman of West Haven.

Bob is survived by his wife, Evelyn, as well as sisters, Joan Hendricks of Wallingford, Nora (Regis) Vetrano of Branford, and his brother, John (Connie) Dillman of West Haven. Bob is also survived by his mother-in-law Eleanor Button of Amston, who became a substitute mom, and two step-children, Jennifer Bernier of East Haddam and Scott Bernier of Amston; sisters-in-law Marilyn Henry of Amston and Sarah (Ray) Poulin of Auburn, Maine; as well as several nieces, nephews and step nephews all of whom were very important in his life. Bob is also survived by his beloved cat Snoopy.

The family would like to thank YNHH for ongoing care throughout his illness and the CCU staff at Middlesex Hospital for the care offered to Bob and his family during his final days.

A memorial service will be held at Marlborough Congregational Church, 35 South Main St., Marlborough, at 11 a.m. Saturday, April 2.

In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to the Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation at pulmonaryfibrosis.org.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Hebron

Gary L. Senkbeil

Gary L. Senkbeil, 62, of Manchester, beloved husband of Pauline (Robertson) Krysiwicz, passed away after a brief illness Wednesday, March 23, at Hartford Hospital, with his family at his side. Gary was born in Manchester Aug. 3, 1953, the son of Charles and Antoinette (Schiavetti) Senkbeil, both deceased.

He was raised in Hebron, graduated from RHAM High School and earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Eastern Connecticut State University. For a short time, Gary worked as a phlebotomist at Hartford Hospital before assuming his current occupation as a programmer. He lived most of his life in Manchester and was currently employed as a systems architect for The Farmington Company, Farmington, where he worked for the past 19 years.

Gary's grandchildren were an immense source of pride for him and he loved spending time with them. In his leisure time, Gary loved watching birds and wildlife, as well as playing with his dogs and cat. Additionally, he enjoyed drinking a good Chianti with friends.

In addition to his beloved wife Pauline, Gary is survived by his loving family, a step-daughter, Elaine Cieslak and her husband, Scott of Manchester; a step-son, Anthony Robertson of Manchester; two grandsons, Collin and Evan; a granddaughter, Izabela; a sister, Audrey Buckwell and her husband Bud of South Carolina; two brothers, Robert Senkbeil and his wife, Katherine of Columbia, David Senkbeil of Texas; several nieces and nephews and two grandnieces.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, April 9, at 4 p.m., at Watkins Funeral Home, 142 East Center St., Manchester. Memorial calling hours will be Saturday prior to the service, from 2-4 p.m. at the funeral home.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in Gary's memory may be made to the American Heart Association, P.O. Box 417005 Boston, MA 02241-7005.

To leave a message of condolence, visit holmes-watkinsfuneralhomes.com.



Obituaries continued

Marlborough

Emilia J. Kabara

Emilia J. (Jachimiec) Kabara, 84, wife of the late Stanislaw Kabara, of Marlborough, passed away peacefully Tuesday, March 22, in Riverside Health Care Center. Born in Poland, Emilia lived in Hartford before moving to Marlborough in 1987.

Prior to her retirement, she helped her husband with the Baltic Machine Co. of Glastonbury. She was a longtime member of SS. Cyril & Methodius Church in Hartford.

Emilia leaves her three sons, Joe Kabara and his wife Barbara, Tadeusz "Ted" Kabara and Richard Kabara, all of Marlborough; two grandchildren, Krystyna and Jeffrey Kabara; and a sister, Stefania Jachimiec and her husband Jozef, of Marlborough.

She was predeceased by a brother, Wladyslaw Jachimiec, and a sister, Janina Mozdziuch.

Friends called Monday, March 28, at the Farley-Sullivan Funeral Home, 34 Beaver Rd., Wethersfield. The funeral was held Tuesday, March 29, from the funeral home, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial in SS Cyril & Methodius Church, 63 Popieluszko Court, Hartford. Burial was held in Mount St. Benedict Cemetery, 1 Cottage Grove Rd., Bloomfield.

To extend online condolences, visit farleysullivan.com.

Marlborough

Caroline Elizabeth Neborsky

Caroline Elizabeth Neborsky (Watras), 82, of Scotland, Conn., passed away Friday, March 25, at Marlborough Health Care Center in Marlborough. She was born May 27, 1933, in Norwich, to Bronislaws and Elizabeth (Spring) Watras of Wethersfield.

Carol graduated from the University of Connecticut and raised her family in Scotland. Carol was active in town, serving as registrar of voters, on the PHHS Board of Education, and was a parishioner at St. Margaret Church. Carol will be remembered for her creative and generous spirit.

A very special thank you to Linda Spoerl for the care and support shown to Carol in her final years.

Carol is predeceased by her husband, Walter N. Neborsky Sr. She is survived by her children, Walter (Ruth), Jr. of Victory, Vt.; Donald of Chaplin; Joseph of Columbia; Thomas of Ashford; John of San Diego, Calif.; Nancy (Jerry) Pickering of Greece, N.Y.; and Michael of Scotland. She is also survived by her grandchildren, Eric, Sharon, Alyssa, Nick, Travis, Seth, Katie, Alex and Sarah.

Carol's family received friends at Potter Funeral Home, 456 Jackson St. (Route 195), Willimantic, Wednesday, March 30. The funeral procession departed the funeral home that morning for a funeral Mass that was celebrated at St. Margaret Church, Route 14, Scotland. Interment took place in Scotland Cemetery.

Memorial donations in Carol's name can be made to the charity of your choice.

For an online memorial guestbook, visit potterfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Otis Eugene Ross

Otis Eugene Ross, 84, of Colchester, beloved husband of Leila (Baukman) DeBrady-Ross, passed away Tuesday, March 22. Born July 5, 1931, and raised in Hartford, he was the son of the late Otis and Lucille (Tickson) Ross, Jr.

Mr. Ross served proudly with the U.S. Army during the Korean War and went on to work as an automobile mechanic.

Graveside services with full military honors were observed Tuesday, March 29, at the State Veterans Cemetery, 317 Bow Ln., Middletown. There were no calling hours.

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

Portland

Rev. Francis T. Kerwan

The Rev. Francis T. Kerwan, 99, former pastor of St. Mary Church in Portland, joined his Lord and Savior at St. Joseph's Residence in Enfield Tuesday, March 22.

Born Sept. 16, 1916, in Waterbury, Fr. Kerwan was the son of the late James and Mary (Whalen) Kerwan. He graduated from St. Margaret School and Crosby High School in Waterbury, and attended St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, graduating in 1939 with a degree in philosophy. He completed studies in theology at St. Bernard Seminary in Rochester, N.Y., in 1943. Fr. Kerwan was ordained June 3, 1943; his first parish assignment was at St. Mary Church in Portland from 1943-45.

He enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps as a chaplain during World War II, serving in the European Theater in Manila and Japan from 1945-47. After military service, he was assigned to St. Joseph Church in New Haven until 1950, when he was recalled for further military duty serving during the Korean War.

Returning home in 1953, Father served at various churches over the next several years and in 1965, he was appointed pastor of the newly-designated Parish of Holy Family Church in Enfield. Father continued service in the Connecticut Army National Guard and was appointed senior chaplain, and retired at the rank of colonel.

During his many years as priest and pastor, he found great joy and relaxation in the game of golf, at which he excelled. He was proud of his Irish heritage and was an avid fan of the Boston Red Sox. Fr. Kerwan was a member of the Washington Irving Knights of Columbus Council 50 and the Rev. William Kilcoyne Assembly 4th Degree, both of Enfield.

When he retired in 2013, he had been a priest for 70 years and was the longest-serving active pastor in the Archdiocese of Hartford. At that time, he was appointed pastor emeritus of Holy Family.

Fr. Kerwan will forever be remembered by parishioners, area nursing homes and hospitals as a devoted priest. Father was a priest who was always available, always there, whether day or night.

Father leaves a nephew, John Kerwan and family. He was predeceased by his brothers, Monsignor James Kerwan and John Kerwan, and his sister, Marion W. Kerwan, R.N.

A parish Mass was celebrated at Holy Family Church, 23 Simon Rd., Enfield, Monday, March 28. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at Holy Family Church Tuesday, March 29. Burial with military honors was held at Calvary Cemetery in Waterbury.

Memorial donations may be made to Little Sisters of the Poor, 1365 Enfield St., Enfield, CT 06082 or St. Vincent DePaul Society, c/o Holy Family Church, 23 Simon Rd., Enfield, CT 06082.

A special thank you is extended to the Little Sisters and staff at St. Joseph's Residence for their compassionate care. Also, a special thank you to Deacon Art Dickman and parish secretary Linda Sacheli for their many years of unwavering support.

For online condolences, visit leetestevens.com.