

RIVEREAST

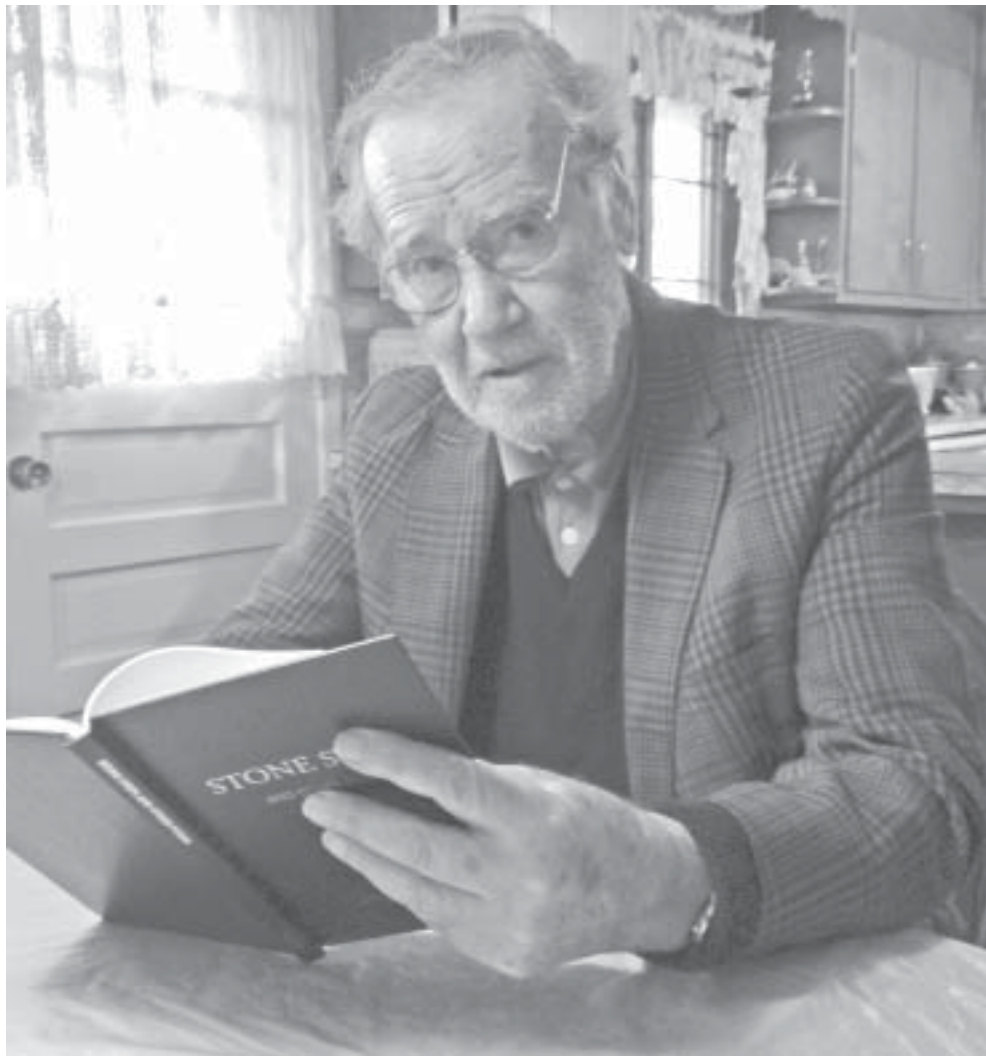
News Bulletin

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Longtime East Hampton resident Hugo DeSarro passed away last month at the age of 98. Hugo was a *Rivereast* institution, having penned his “A Point of View” column for more than three decades. He was also the subject of an occasional feature story, such as here in early 2016, when he was profiled upon publication of his first book of poetry, *Stone Steps and Other Poems*.

Remembering Hugo DeSarro

by Elizabeth Regan

Hugo DeSarro shared his point of view in the *Rivereast* for more than 30 years in concise and watchful prose that invited readers to pay closer attention to the world around them.

Hugo died Dec. 12 at the age of 98.

Publisher Jim Hallas recalled this week that Hugo’s association with the paper began with weekly letters to the editor.

“And it kind of turned into a column,” Hallas said.

Hugo’s widow, Marietta, was joined by daughters Doreen DeSarro of Glastonbury and Nancy Carbone of Colchester for an interview with the *Rivereast* in the week following his death. Daughter Anita Bellows was unable to attend.

Doreen and Nancy said their father’s column was crafted carefully each week based on his observations of human nature and wildlife.

He clipped newspaper articles as inspiration, according to his daughters; he jotted down ideas in a notebook he carried around with him everywhere.

“He had an amazingly inquisitive mind,” Nancy said.

Doreen said her favorite stories involved animals – like spiders, squirrels and woodpeckers – that Hugo loved so much.

“My dad would look out the window and notice what they were doing,” she said.

That’s because he was an artist, according to Nancy.

“Other people can look at the same thing and not notice all the details and comparisons and things he saw,” she explained.

She pointed to one column he wrote about

something as delicate as a spider’s web.

“Normally, you don’t even think about a spider. You see a web and you get your broom. But there was a whole little world there that he was observing,” Nancy said.

His writings in 1984 earned him a certificate of achievement from the Humane Society of the United States.

Hugo was also a poet, a visual artist and a musician.

He published his first poem when he was 13 years old. He received a full undergraduate scholarship to study art at Temple University in Pennsylvania, though he had to turn it down because he couldn’t afford the books or transportation. He played the piano, the guitar, the flute and the clarinet.

Marietta said her husband of 71 years also played “a terrific harmonica.”

In late 2015, Hugo published his first collection of poems at the age of 96. The 80 pages of *Stone Steps and Other Poems* contain a lifetime of observation, introspection and recollection culled with the help of his daughters. Most of the poems had already appeared in national and international magazines and literary journals.

The book came on the heels of Hugo’s appointment to the newly-created position of local poet laureate earlier that year. In addition to commemorating special town events in verse, he participated in numerous poetry readings that brought together the growing number of poets laureate from other Connecticut towns.

Nancy said her father’s “A Point of View”

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RHAM Teachers Get 8 Percent Raise Over 3 Years

by Sloan Brewster

RHAM teachers will see their pay rise a total of nearly 8 percent over the next three years.

According to a newly signed 75-page contract between the RHAM Board of Education and the RHAM Education Association, teachers will see a 7.7 percent increase in compensation over the three years covered by the agreement. The RHAM Board of Education officially agreed to the contract at its Dec. 18 meeting and it was signed by all parties the following day.

In year one, they will get 2.75 percent increases, said Superintendent of Schools Pat Law. In year two, they will get 2 percent hikes and in year three, they will get 2.95 percent raises for a grand total of 7.7 percent.

The contract also changed the salary schedule for teacher steps, bringing it down from 15 steps to 13.

“So it reduced the amount of time to get to the highest step,” Law said.

Steps generally change on an annual basis, save in years when there is a freeze, she explained. In the second year of the contract, all teachers will remain at their current steps and

receive only percent increases in salary.

There was a minimal change to the insurance High-Deductible Health Plan, Law said.

With the new contract, teachers and their dependents will be eligible for a wellness program that can reduce their insurance costs shares by one percent.

Participation in the program requires teachers to complete certain health screenings and services at certain frequencies based on their ages and genders, Law said.

“The carrier recommends that you do specific screenings and services at particular ages and frequencies,” Law said.

There are a total of six screenings and services the teachers will be required to get, and which fall under preventive care, such as cholesterol screenings.

Other examples include requiring everyone over the age of 18 to get physical exams every year and mandating all females over the age of 21, to be checked for cervical cancer.

Teachers will be expected to contribute 19.5 percent toward their health care costs in year

one of the contract. In year two, they will pay 20.5 percent and in year three, they will pay 21.5 percent.

“And if they opt [into the wellness program] starting in year two, they get a 1 percent reduction,” she said. “I do think that the wellness program is a good step.”

The agreement covers the three years between July 1, 2018, and June 30, 2021.

The bargaining units sat down and began discussions on Oct. 3 and came to a resolution on Dec. 17. Had talks gone longer, an arbitrator would have been required by the state to join the negotiations, Law said.

“When you do teacher negotiations, the state has very specific negotiation guidelines and dates that have to be followed by both parties,” she said. “There was no arbitration; we settled.”

In the discussions, the groups tried to work well together, made an effort to listen to one another’s needs and paid heed to the fiscal climate of the state and town, Law said.

“In the end I think that everyone ended up in a good place in the contract,” she said.



Ethan Spinelli, who heads the RHAM Education Association, and teaches at RHAM Middle School, stood up and applauded the contract at the Dec. 18 meeting.

Copies of the contract can be viewed in Hebron, Andover and Marlborough Town Hall, where they must sit by law for 30 days after signing.

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column was a lot like his poetry.

“It reflected very sensitive artistic and intelligent viewpoints about the subjects he was discussing,” she said. “And he had so many different subjects he discussed.”

Doreen recalled receiving a letter from one reader who reported her whole family had become happily enmeshed in a dinnertime conversation about memories spurred by one of Hugo’s columns. The piece was about a package store owner in Hartford whose radio was a non-stop backdrop to life on Barbour Street.

“When the North End began to decline and all of his customers moved out of the city, he stayed put,” Hugo wrote. “He sat on the stool behind the counter, always the same blank expression on his face, his hat squared on his head, a cigarette burning in a nearby ash tray and listened to his beloved Red Sox. Then one night he put out the lights, locked the door, drove home in his Chevrolet coupe, and never returned.”

The way the story went, the radio never worked again.

“I hate to tell you, but that’s going on in this house too,” Doreen said from the living room of her parents’ home. “The clock’s not working. I’m not kidding, the clock stopped. All you have to do is wind it up, but none of us can get it to work.”

An Artistic Foundation

Hugo’s daughters said his fascination with his surroundings made him an attentive father and grandfather who took an interest in everything his family members did.

Doreen recalled simple things, like being pushed on the swings by her father on so many warm summer nights and being taken out of school one day to see the circus under the big top.

Nancy, whose own artwork decorates the DeSarro’s living room, credited her father with

teaching her how to draw. She said it started when he came home from work to find a figure with a misshapen leg in one of her earliest drawings.

“He brought up the fact that what I was drawing wasn’t there. He helped me to see,” she said. “Later on I went to art school, but that was the beginning of knowing how to look at something as an artist and see what’s actually there.”

Nancy described her father as someone who took the time to explain things to his girls and who read to them voraciously.

“He loved good literature, so he made sure he read all the classics to us. When we went to English class, it was a review for us; we’d already read everything,” Nancy said.

The close family dynamic and lifelong education never faltered, with the DeSarro clan taking vacations together and gathering every Saturday for a spaghetti dinner up until his death.

Marietta noted the family was playing Rummikub, a combination of rummy and mahjong, on the evening before her husband came down with the indeterminate infection that lasted about three weeks before claiming his life.

Her daughters nodded at the recollection. Doreen even laughed.

“He beat us!” she said.

When asked if there was time for a final goodbye, the family agreed there was no need for one.

“We treated each other with such love and respect that it was always there. It wasn’t like we had to say ‘I’m sorry for this’ or ‘I regret this,’” Nancy said. “I look back and I have no regrets. I don’t think any of us do.”

It was a foundation of language and sentiment forged by a poet.

“There was no need to feel like I had to have a last say,” Nancy concluded. “The say was good right up until the end.”

Henry’s Radio

Henry (not his real name) said he got the radio from one of the stumblebums that hung around his package store. He said he gave the guy a pint of cheap wine for it. It was a small, brown plastic radio, the kind they sold at the five and dime stores back then. He put it on his beer cooler and tuned in the station that carried the Red Sox games and never touched the dial again. It was back in the days when they played baseball games in the afternoon and Henry was a rabid Red Sox fan.

The radio was plugged into a wall socket so that it didn’t shut off when he put the lights out at night and went home. The radio played continuously for six years, day and night, without repairs. Even when it was knocked to the floor one evening during a scuffle between two customers and the case broke into several pieces. Henry put it back on the cooler and it continued playing as if nothing had happened.

Henry’s package store was located in the north end of Hartford. Henry was past retirement age. He didn’t need the income from the package store. It gave him something to do. When the North End began to decline and all of his customers moved out of the city, he stayed put. He sat on the stool behind the counter, always the same blank expression on his face, his hat squared on his head, a cigarette burning in a nearby ash tray and listened to his beloved Red Sox. Then one night he put out the lights, locked the door, drove home in his Chevrolet coupe, and never returned. He suffered a heart attack during the night, was hospitalized a few days, and passed on to the big package store in the sky. When the executors of his estate opened the package store several weeks later to take inventory, the radio wasn’t playing. One of them flipped the dial on and off a few times but it was completely dead.

“What a piece of junk!” he said, tossing the battered set into the trash can. “With all his money, he should have bought himself a real radio.”

That ended the saga of Henry’s amazing radio. It happened many years ago but I’ll bet some of his old customers still talk about the old set whenever they meet. It was a kind of miracle. Six years of continuous operation, only to stop playing when Henry was no longer there to enjoy it.

Marlborough Superintendent Proposes 1.01 Percent Budget Increase

by Julianna Roche

At the Board of Education’s Dec. 21 meeting, Superintendent of Schools Dr. David Sklarz presented board members with a first draft of his \$7.36 million spending package for the 2018-19 fiscal year – a 1.01 percent, or \$73,892, increase over current year spending.

Included in the “need-based budget,” according to the presentation, is the laying off of three classroom teachers, increased legal fees for negotiations and magnet school tuitions, and a capital improvement plan which will be presented to the Board of Finance later in the budget season.

The superintendent explained this week he considered the proposed budget to be “a real show” of the school “wanting to work together with the town.”

“We’re coming in with a budget that’s really very responsible, but at the same time it’s not without sacrifice,” Sklarz said, noting that eliminating three teachers was an adjustment made to account for declining student enrollment, and will save the district approximately \$210,000 annually.

“It’s not very pleasant,” he said of the reductions. “These are really good teachers who care deeply about the school, and the children and their families, [but] it’s a reality of the economic times we live in.”

Board of Education Chairwoman Ruth Kelly agreed Wednesday that she felt the superinten-

dent “tried to come in as reasonably as possible” with next year’s budget, though changes could be made after future board discussions.

“The increase is small, but of course it’s the first blush of the budget,” she said.

According to the superintendent’s presentation, salaries and benefits account for 84 percent of the total budget totaling \$6,172,107 with an average general wage increase of 1.8 percent for teacher salaries over the current year.

The proposed budget also includes \$164,747 for purchased professional services which cover items such as AHM Youth Services, and legal and audit fees, and \$325,478 for purchased property services – a 24.9 percent increase over current year spending which covers electricity, sewer fees and contracts for facility maintenance.

The 2018-19 spending package also consists of \$220,831 for supplies and materials (up 4.01 percent from current spending) and \$14,660 for capital outlay, which was decreased from \$23,740 in the adopted 2017-18 budget.

In his presentation, Sklarz also noted that the district will continue to rely on various grants, elementary school rental fees paid by the Marlborough Elementary Child Care Association (MECCA), and Medicaid and excess cost reimbursements as alternative funding sources and cost-savings measures.

Student enrollment during the 2018-19 school year is projected to be 453 students in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade, which is 38 students less than this year’s enrollment and likely due to smaller entering kindergarten enrollments.

Sklarz explained there will be three kindergarten classes according to the new projected enrollments based on 41 births in 2013 and 54 students in kindergarten compared to four classes last year, with average class size across all grades increasing from 18.2 students to 18.9 students in the 2018-19 year.

The superintendent furthered this week that due to a steady decline in student enrollment – which started in 2009, when the school had a total of 668 students – the district has had to adjust the staff accordingly, even if it means eliminating classroom teachers.

“It’s always painful for the people involved, but tough decisions have to be made,” Sklarz said this week, adding that “critics” who argue that despite declining student enrollment, the school district hasn’t reduced their budget should see “the facts speak for themselves.”

According to his presentation, since the 2011-12 school year, the district has reduced classroom teachers from 31.5 to 26 in 2016-17, saving \$440,000. Other staff reductions have also included a 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE)

Spanish teacher, 0.5 FTE superintendent, 0.5 FTE special education coordinator, 2.2 FTE paraeducators, 1.0 office receptionist, 0.5 FTE custodian, 0.4 FTE special education teacher, 0.5 FTE social worker, 0.2 FTE preschool teacher, the replacement of a custodian supervisor position with a custodian, and reducing buses from 10 to 9. Including the three eliminated classroom teacher positions in the proposed 2018-19 budget, the budget reductions total \$823,837 in savings.

“This has happened over the last few years where we’ve had to continue to streamline and reduce [staff],” Sklarz explained.

Despite the painful sacrifices however, the superintendent stressed this week that he and the school board do not plan to “dismantle the school district,” and are committed to keeping it high quality.

“I think in this budget we made a statement,” Sklarz added. “I will continue to say it – that we and the town have to work together.”

Now that Sklarz’s first draft of the budget has been presented, the Board of Education will begin deliberating the spending package at their Jan. 25 meeting at 7 p.m.

According to their timeline, they should have plans to submit the FY 2018-19 budget to the Board of Finance on March 1.

No Hebron Supplemental Tax Bill – for Now

by Sloan Brewster

Residents of Hebron will not be getting a supplemental tax bill – for now.

On Dec. 21, at Town Manager Andrew Tierney's recommendation, the Board of Selectmen agreed to pass the proposal for a supplemental tax to the Board of Finance.

However, at its Dec. 28 meeting the finance board opted to hold off on the proposal, said Finance Director Elaine Griffin.

"They are not doing it at this time but if we should receive any further reductions from the state they'll revisit it," she said.

In the final town audit, which reached Griffin's desk Dec. 21, there was \$700,000 more than anticipated, she said. Because of the unexpected funds, the town does not need the extra tax money at this time.

Tierney made the initial recommendation for a supplemental tax bill in response to a shortfall created by cutbacks in the state budget.

In November, the Board of Finance asked Tierney to set aside \$200,000 from the town budget to account for the deficit and requested the Board of Education to save \$350,000. Tierney agreed to set aside the town portion and, at its Dec. 14 meeting, the Board of Education also concurred, adding the caveat that, in the

event of an emergency, it may still tap into the funds.

Initially, based on figures from the budget passed by the state legislators, the town anticipated a \$446,000 shortfall, Tierney said. But when Gov. Dannel Malloy announced his budget, an additional \$557,000 was taken out, bringing the total to \$1.04 million.

With that in mind, the \$550,000 in savings wasn't enough to cover the loss, so Tierney and Griffin explored other options, including the tax bill.

At the Dec. 21 meeting, the Board of Selectmen expressed discontent with the state budget.

"I haven't been around all that many years but I don't remember a financial situation at the state level, anything like this," said Daniel Larson, chairman. "I mean here we are at the end of December and we essentially don't have a state budget."

"While the state is cutting our money they haven't cut the unfunded mandates," Gail Richmond, vice chairman, said. "We're backed into a corner."

Larson said he understood the need to consider a supplemental tax bill but calculated that

the \$1.04 million in cuts represents roughly 11 percent of the town's overall budget.

"That's a huge percentage that we as taxpayers are being asked to surrender to the state, needless to say, I'm not happy," he said. "We've done everything we can to keep our house in order."

Tierney, though he recommended the supplemental bill, indicated at the Dec. 21 meeting that it was not a done deal.

"We'll continue to try and avoid this if at all possible," he said. "We are trying to share and save within this year's budget."

The supplemental bill was slated to be half a mill and, according to selectmen, would have run the average taxpayer approximately \$100.

Other ideas for raising funds included taking money from the Unassigned Fund Balance and reducing services.

Some discussion at the Dec. 21 selectmen meeting circled round the idea of taking money from the town's unassigned fund balance, a measure that could result in diminishing the town's AAA bond rating.

"Understand that we do want to maintain a healthy bond rating," selectman Brian

O'Connell said. "Unfortunately, we don't know what's going to happen at the state level next year."

"It's taken a long time to get the credit rating top notch," Griffin said.

The town currently has AAA ratings from Moody's Investors Services and Standard & Poors, Griffin said.

Currently, the town keeps a little more than \$6 million, or 16 percent of its budget, in the unassigned fund balance, Griffin said.

The \$700,000 in surplus that ultimately prevented the additional bill was found through a \$400,000 surplus from the Board of Education, an extra \$100,000 in the town's undesignated funds and additional revenue from taxes as well as building and permit fees for Colebrook Village, Griffin said.

"At this time, if the state leaves us alone, we'll be okay, but if they decide to do further reductions we'll revisit [the supplemental tax]," Tierney said. "Myself and the Board of Finance feel comfortable that's the way to proceed."

He added that he would wait to see what comes out of legislature when it returns to session next week.

Colebrook Village on Tap for May Opening in Hebron

by Sloan Brewster

The opening for Colebrook Village at Hebron is targeted for May 15.

Construction of the assisted living community, which is nestled in the Village Green District on John E. Horton Boulevard behind CVS, has been underway since last January – and the end is in sight. Colebrook Village Executive Director Pamela Krist Atwood and Director of Sales and Marketing Mary Kelly are planning separate ribbon cuttings with the Windham Region Chamber of Commerce and the Manchester Chamber of Commerce.

On Tuesday, two construction workers were working on a platform on the second floor of the three-story building, despite the cold.

The 113,630 square-foot building is about the length of a football field and sits on a 6.79-acre parcel. It will have 113 units.

When completed, the private-pay unsubsidized community will house seniors requiring three levels of care, Atwood said. There will be independent, assisted care and memory care living.

Independent units will have full kitchens while assisted units will have kitchenettes, according to information provided by development partner Optimus Senior Living, LLC. Bathrooms will have showers with grab bars and fold-down seats, grab bars at toilets and a call for aid system that will be monitored at all times.

Folks will not be required to move to another unit if their needs evolve.

"They can age in place," Atwood said. "The assisted living service can move."

If they do wish to move, staff will be on hand to help with the strenuous process.

Colebrook will be different from other assisted living facilities, the women said. They are already working on small details to assure residents will feel comfortable and at home.

"We have to make it more homelike so what do we do to make it homelike?" Atwood asked. "So we anticipate all of the things that you don't have to tell people about when you are at home."

For starters, the women are making a list of

coffee preferences for residents and their families, so staff won't have to ask what they want in their cup of joe.

"This is all about family," Atwood said. "You're not just a resident moving in; your whole family is part of our family."

There will be a variety of activities and amenities. The community will have a chapel, barber shop/beauty salon, exercise and fitness rooms, several activity rooms for arts and recreation, a movie theater, courtyards, balconies on most upper floor units and wireless Internet throughout the building, according to the information from Optimus. The building will also have a state-of-the-art emergency call system and door security devices.

Activities will expand over time, based on resident requests, Atwood said. An avid gardener who is moving in asked for garden plots and will get his wish. Neighbors of the community have approached developers and requested hiking trails. Since seniors are known to love hiking, trails are in the works. There will also be lifelong learning classes through universities.

One woman is excited to take an economics class, something she always wanted to do but which was not accessible to females when she was in school, the women said.

"Those are partnerships that we are working on because that's what our residents want," Atwood said.

The community will also be pet-friendly and staff will work with residents on pet care plans, including for after owners pass away.

"The pet is crucial," Atwood said.

Ruth Wheeler of Columbia is planning to move in as soon as Colebrook opens.

"I can't wait," she said. "I'm sick and tired of home ownership. I love my house but I want to enjoy myself."

She and a friend toured several assisted living facilities and were unimpressed until they saw Stonebrook Village at Windsor Locks, another community Optimus developed.

"Nothing hit us; we'd leave and say 'Huh this isn't the place,'" Wheeler said. "We came



Construction at Colebrook Village is entering the home stretch. The assisted living community is slated for a May opening.

out, we left [Stonebrook] and said, 'This is it, this is the one we want.'"

Staff were nice and helpful at Stonebrook, but that was typical of staff at all the places they visited, she said. It was the residents who made them want to move in.

"Happy, everybody was happy," she said. "They usually have long faces at the other places."

Wheeler was also impressed by all the offerings in the Optimus community.

"They have so many amenities that it's just wonderful," she said.

Memory care will be a big part of life in the community, Atwood, who specializes in Alzheimer's disease, said.

"We're going to be able to take care of some of the things that our country is not able to take care of, whether it is aging, whether it is wellness in aging," she said.

There will also be support groups, some which will be open to the public.

Optimus has partnered with Dr. Paul Raia,

who created what is called Habitation Therapy, a different method for working with Alzheimer's disease, which more than 5 million people in the U.S. have, Atwood said. Raia also helped design the community's dementia program and everyone on staff will be trained to deal with memory problems.

"About 80 percent of people in assisted living have some kind of memory disorder," Atwood said.

While the community will not open until spring, some of the wellness programs have already been running, with Wellness Monday programs offered at the Colebrook sales office at 105 Main St. Programs include laughter therapy, Joy of the Spirit with the Rev. Kevin Williams and qui gong, a martial art that combines yoga and tai chi.

The public is invited to the next program. Survival Saturday, which will take place Jan. 27 from 11 a.m. to noon, will address preparing for disasters. RSVP for the free course at 860-801-1114.

'Profile of a Graduate' Program Unveiled in East Hampton

by Elizabeth Regan

East Hampton school administrators have vowed that all high school graduates will have the experiences necessary to become compassionate, innovative, persevering, collaborative and active learners who will succeed in life.

Those five traits will be introduced starting at the very earliest levels of education with an evolving set of terms that students in each grade level can understand.

Take compassion, for example. East Hampton's littlest students will get lessons in caring at Memorial School. Center School students will learn about empathy. Middle school students will begin to master responsibility. By high school, the goal is to have forged a path toward a full understanding of what it means to be a compassionate individual.

The Board of Education rolled out the "Profile of a Graduate" program last month at its last regular meeting of 2017. The program is part of the 21st Century Learning framework that has gotten a foothold in districts across the country as a way to evolve in time with the rapidly changing technological landscape.

Superintendent of Schools Paul K. Smith said the specific skill set, which represents academic and social growth, was chosen by the school community through a comprehensive survey about how to carry the district into the next decade.

"Students are still going to learn to read, they're still going to learn to write. We want them to learn a foreign language, we want them to be masters of certain science and social studies skills," Smith said. "But there are skills beyond that. There are skills they have to have to be competitive."

In Memorial School, the program is tailored to the building's preschool through third grade population. According to Principal Andrew Gonzalez, teaching caring can be as simple as greeting a teacher with a smile or as involved as decorating wreaths for military veterans. A focus on imagination involves purposeful play, with student-directed activities and student-created play spaces. Confidence is modeled by teachers willing to share their own stories about

struggle, failure and perseverance. Teamwork at the preschool level is reinforced by a unit called "Super Power=Partner Power" as the students start to get the idea that they can achieve more together.

Center School Principal Chris Sullivan said teachers put empathy into action through a culture of service learning for fourth and fifth graders.

"With the skill set of understanding how one's actions impact others, it is now the responsibility of the learner to choose actions that promote our district goal of kindness and caring," Sullivan said.

Sullivan cited participation in the national Invention Convention program as an example of promoting creativity. Adaptability is reinforced through changing core academic classes for the first time and individual goal setting. Community is fostered through opportunities like the student council and by celebrating students' accomplishments.

The Center School Genius Hour Fair was an example of curiosity, according to Sullivan. The fair is a way to demonstrate what students can do when they are allowed to choose their own project to research and create.

Middle School Principal Jason Lehmann told school board members that he looks at middle school student development as a 50/50 proposition.

"At East Hampton Middle School, students are navigating a number of academic initiatives along with a wide array of social/emotional growth," he said.

A focus on responsibility means they learn organizational skills and are encouraged to seek extra help when they need it through a flexible and open ended "x block" period, according to Lehmann. The concept of initiative is fostered in mini-capstone projects through which eighth grade students can develop and implement an idea for making positive change in the world. Resilience is reinforced by celebrating accomplishments and offering constructive criticism to help students improve themselves. The school promotes inquiry by helping students

develop critical thinking skills to apply to their own lives and to subjects like science through the Next Generation Science Standards.

Kids can gain perspective through various kindness and caring projects and the inception of a unified sports program that puts students with and without disabilities on the same team, Lehmann said: "Middle school learners are inherently egocentric and it is imperative to provide them the opportunity to view life through other lenses."

In the high school, many of the concepts seen in the earlier grades are employed at a higher level as students get closer to graduation.

New high school principal Frank Rizzuto, who took the reins from interim principal Nancy Briere in the wake of John Fidler's death last July, said innovation is fundamental to the creation of graduates with the skills to tackle jobs that may be entirely different from anything in the current workplace.

"We want our students to be at the forefront of that innovation, to contribute in developing those products and services that don't quite yet exist," Rizzuto said.

Rizzuto and Briere used Capstone and Genius Hour projects as examples of activities that promote innovation. They also cited the "makerspace" included in the newly renovated building as a place to focus on creativity and invention with the help of wireless computers, a 3D printer and, as time goes on, other resources aligned with students' interests.

Stemming from innovation is the importance of collaboration and active learning, they said.

Rizzuto called the act of finding information an "archaic skill" in the age of omnipresent information, but said it's very important for students to scrutinize what they've found and where they've found it.

Reiterating a theme touted by Smith at the beginning of the meeting, Rizzuto invoked a quote from education expert Tony Wagner: "In today's world, it's no longer how much you know that matters; it's what you can do with what you know."

Smith told the school board and audience that

most schools utilizing the Profile of a Graduate framework employ the same five terms for all grade levels.

"The language and culture of the building is not taken into consideration, resulting in terms that can have very little meaning to students, teachers or parents," he said. "The East Hampton Schools have chosen to go a very unique route in clearly differentiating the skills to target the specific audience of learners in each building."

According to Smith, the approach was singled out for recognition by Ken Kay, the educator who coined the term "Profile of a Graduate" and now facilitates workshops across the country.

Smith's presentation to the school board included a photo of the original brainstorming sheet created by the town's four principals and director of curriculum during a recent workshop led by Kay. The five-session seminar was funded by the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents and attended by 20 school districts.

Smith said Kay affixed a "This is Awesome!" sticky note to the brainstorming sheet during the workshop.

"I think what we're doing is a little bit groundbreaking, yet to us it feels natural," Smith told school board members.

He said the next step is to decide how to measure student mastery of the concepts in preschool through grade eight. The skills are currently assessed in the high school through various assignments, including the long-term Capstone Project that became a requirement for all seniors this year.

Meanwhile, leaders are also exploring how they can continue to make sure each school's specific terminology permeates the social and academic life of the building.

The words have already been turned into new logos for each school and can be seen in the hallways of the buildings.

"I really believe that language ultimately becomes culture," Smith said.

Meet New East Hampton Interim Police Chief

by Elizabeth Regan

The East Hampton Police Department has landed a former commanding officer of the Connecticut State Police as its interim leader.

Thomas Davoren, 61, retired from the state police as a colonel in January 2011 after 25 years with the agency. He went on to serve for five years as Groton City police chief, retiring in June.

Davoren is filling in the gap between the departure of former chief Sean Cox and a permanent replacement the town hopes to have in place by the beginning of April.

Cox, who led the department for four years, announced his resignation in early December. He said he is embarking on a private sector job in the defense industry.

Davoren has been serving as the Director of Police Services since Dec. 25. Town Manager Michael Maniscalco said Davoren will take the title of interim police chief once he receives certification from the Police Officer Standards and Training Council, pending the completion of a background check and psychological evaluation.

The temporary director spoke with the *RiverEast* Wednesday from his office, where a visit from police canine Ardo made it quickly apparent that he had already gained the respect and trust of the department's four-legged officer.

Davoren revealed his affection for dogs when he described his own experience as a canine handler with the state police as "the five best years" of his life.

Davoren took command of the state police in 2007 during a tumultuous period in the agency's history. He was appointed by Gov. Jodi Rell just a month after a damning report by then-Attorney General Richard Blumenthal and independent evaluators from the New York State Police cited unfair treatment in the way the agency investigated its own troopers.

The 168-page report found the Connecticut State Police internal affairs unit was "seriously deficient" in its structure, practices and protocols. It also found that members of the command staff "effectively shielded employees from appropriate investigation, discipline and even possibly criminal charges."

Davoren's promotion to commanding officer of the state police followed an announcement by then-Col. Edward J. Lynch that he would be retiring from the role. The news came out in a press release just days before the New York report was made public.

Davoren said he was appointed by Rell in part to help implement the recommendations outlined in the New York report. He credited "a lot of other people," including the newly-appointed Department of Public Safety Commissioner John A. Danaher III and a special commission established to implement the reforms, with accomplishing the goal.

"I would say everybody was incredibly supportive. They acknowledged we had a problem, they wanted to fix it," he said. "I was fortunate in my career; I worked for highly ethical people."

Maniscalco this week said members of the police department and the public have responded well to the interim director.

"He's got a kind mannerism about him that I think people really respond to," Maniscalco said.

Maniscalco cited Davoren's efforts to find safe alternatives for people living in the "Tent City" behind [Food Bag] on Route 66.

Davoren said he's been working with town officials, including Social Services Director Jodi Brazal, to find transportation and accommodations for the residents of Tent City as well as a woman who was discovered to have been sleeping inside a storage unit in town.

He said two people were still living in the tents as of Wednesday despite the town's offer of bus fare to a warming center in Middletown.

"They have rights, too," Davoren said. "They can refuse."

He noted the property is owned by Eversource Energy, whom he said he plans to contact about the problem.

"It's one thing when the weather's not so bad, but if somebody dies, it's tragic," he said.

Maniscalco said a key project focus for Davoren will be radio tower upgrades to improve communication between local emergency responders and dispatchers in Glastonbury. East Hampton forged a \$1.2 million emergency dispatch arrangement with Glastonbury in 2016



Thomas Davoren is East Hampton's new interim chief of police. The law enforcement veteran began his career in 1980.

after Colchester Emergency Communications (KX) announced it would be closing.

The upgrades will be made to towers in East Hampton.

Davoren said he will be leaning on experience gleaned from his time as head of the state police field technology section. He hopes the upgrades will be completed before his temporary stint in town is over.

According to Maniscalco, one of the considerations for selecting an interim chief was finding someone who didn't want the permanent position.

"We're looking to run an open search to get as many applicants to find the highest qualified individual. This is really a situation where we're trying to put somebody in for a temporary period of time to kind of get us through until we can get a permanent chief in place," Maniscalco said.

Davoren said the job came to his attention through Cox, whom he says he knows very well from their time together in the state police.

"Before he called me, I never even thought of it," he said.

But Davoren said he loves police work, and

he was already familiar with the town from his time working in the Eastern District Major Crimes Squad. He was part of investigations into East Hampton homicides from roughly the mid-'80s to the late '90s, including the 1998 murder of Gertrude "Trudy" Ochankowski.

The case wasn't closed for almost two decades.

"I was thrilled that they put it together," he said of the DNA evidence that clinched it. Gerald "Brian" Tuttle was sentenced to 30 years in prison for charges of first-degree manslaughter and second-degree kidnapping after taking a plea deal.

"We collected the evidence back in the day," Davoren said. "You just never knew where things were going to go."

While staff has turned over since his days covering big cases in the little town, he said he's found the officers to be a great group.

"When I talk to them, they get it. They get their role here. They have a great relationship with the rest of the folks in the community," he said. "They do the police work, I'll just monitor these projects to the extent the town needs me to."

Projections Show Declining Student Enrollment in Colchester

by Julianna Roche

Keeping with a pattern that has been consistent in school districts across the state for nearly a decade, student enrollment in Colchester is projected to decrease by 4 percent in the 2018-19 school year, dropping from a total of 2,442 to 2,345 students district-wide.

The findings were first presented at the Board of Education's meeting last month, where former interim superintendent Karen Loiselle Goodwin explained to board members that the school hired contractor Peter Prowda – a former education consultant for the state Department of Education – to complete the district's enrollment projections at a cost lower than the New England School Development Council (NESDEC), which is utilized by many other school districts in the state.

(New interim schools superintendent Dr. Mary Conway, who was appointed by the school board in September to replace Loiselle Goodwin until a permanent superintendent is hired, began work Jan. 1.)

According to Prowda's findings, total student enrollment in Colchester declined by 796 students over the last decade from 3,238 students in 2007 to 2,442 students in 2017 – or a

24.6 percent decrease.

From 2006 to 2016, Colchester's enrollment loss of 23.7 percent was the largest among similar towns. For example, there was a 1 percent decline in Cromwell, 6.8 percent in Wethersfield, 10.3 percent in East Hampton, 17.1 percent in Old Saybrook, and a 1.5 percent increase in Rocky Hill.

This week, Conway – who has 29 years' experience in education and has served as the superintendent of Plainfield Public Schools and Vernon Public Schools, as well as interim superintendent at Brooklyn Public Schools – explained, however, that declining student enrollment is a common trend she's seen statewide, including in districts she's worked in.

"Everybody is really facing that across the board," she said, adding that decreasing enrollment often leads to staff reductions, but that those types of adjustments take time.

"You could lose 20 students, but it could be two 10th-graders and four second graders," she said. "So it takes a while to reduce staff based on [that]."

Conway furthered that over the last 20 to 30 years, the way education is delivered has also

changed and "what we're responsible for attributing to a child's development has increased substantially" – meaning that the types of staff needed at schools has also evolved.

For example, she explained that, years ago, many schools may have employed one or two guidance counselors; however, today, many schools will also hire psychologists, social workers across lower, middle and high schools.

Prowda's findings project that in the next 10 years, Colchester's total student enrollment will decline by approximately 12 percent or 290 students, compared to an average of a 6.8 percent decrease in public schools across the state.

In the 2018-19 school year, across the district Colchester Elementary School (CES) will see a 3.3 percent decline from 544 to 526 students, Jack Jackter Intermediate School (JJIS) will see a 1.8 percent decline from 514 to 505 students, William J. Johnson Middle School (WJMS) will see an 8.6 percent decline from 571 to 522 students, and Bacon Academy will see a 2.6 percent decline from 813 to 792 students.

According to Prowda's projections, several factors have contributed to the declining enrollment, including smaller entering kindergarten enrollments and less births.

For example, the kindergarten class of 2018-19, which is projected to total 128 students versus 155 in the current year, is based on the 111 births to Colchester residents recorded in 2013 – which he explained is the smallest number observed since he started tracking births in 1980.

"A logical policy decision would be to consider eliminating one kindergarten teacher," Prowda wrote, adding however, that the projection method used does not predict when economic conditions may change or how long current conditions will continue.

"This projection should be used as a starting point for local planning," he furthered. "Examine the factors and assumptions underlying the method. You know your community best. Apply your knowledge of the specific conditions in Colchester and then make adjustments as necessary."

Colchester Man Arrested for Trespassing

by Julianna Roche

A Colchester man was arrested on multiple charges Saturday, Dec. 23 after police said he trespassed onto the driveway of a residence on Shailor Hill Road and threw objects at the house.

Upon their arrival, Colchester Police said Joshua Ogden, 26, of 48 Novelli Place – who was found sitting in a running vehicle parked at the end of the driveway – rolled up the windows and locked the car doors.

Police said they were then forced to break the windows and as they were assisting Ogden out of the vehicle, he resisted arrest and assaulted officers.

Ogden was charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alco-

hol, narcotics kept only in an original container, drug paraphernalia, possession of a controlled substance, first-degree criminal trespass, interfering with an officer: simple assault, assault of public safety/emergency/medical personnel, disorderly conduct, and first-degree threatening.

This is not exactly Ogden's first brush with the law. He was arrested in December 2008 and April 2017, on charges of disorderly conduct and interfering with an emergency call each time, and, according to the state judicial website, in September 2017 he was charged with second-degree breach of peace and first-degree criminal trespass for an incident occurring on Oct. 24, 2016.

Portland Police News

12/21: Wayne Therrien, 18, of 116 Chestnut Dr., Colchester, was charged with less than four ounces of marijuana, Portland Police said.

12/21: Four juveniles were arrested for reckless burning and criminal trespass, police said.

12/22: Michael McCormack, 37, of 174 Fowler Ave., Middletown, was charged with evading responsibility, police said.

Marlborough Police News

12/25: State Police said Neil Johnson, 34, of 12 Caffyn Dr., was arrested and charged with third-degree forgery and fifth-degree larceny.

Colchester Police News

12/24: State Police said Julio E. Rivera, 48, of 101 Haynes Ave., Apt. 3, Groton, was arrested and charged with failure to respond to a payable violation.

12/28: State Police said Joseph M. Boucher, 27, of 103 Horse Pond, Apt. F, Salem, was arrested and charged with failure to keep plates readable, operating a motor vehicle without a license, use of drug paraphernalia, and illegal possession of a narcotic.

12/30: State Police said Tamer Nichols, 21, of 41 Route 87, Andover, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear.

East Hampton Police News

12/18: Benjamin Hentrick, 33, of 577 Main St., Portland, was issued a summons for traveling unreasonably fast and operating an unregistered and uninsured motor vehicle, East Hampton Police said.

12/20: Michael Joseph Flanagan Jr., 40, of 15 Spice Hill Dr., was arrested and charged with misuse of the 911 emergency system, police said.

12/24: Jose Lebron 36, of 29 Roberts Dr., Middletown, was issued a summons for improper use of a marker plate and operating an unregistered and uninsured motor vehicle, police said. During the same incident, police said, Lebron was taken in to custody pursuant to an active warrant for his arrest and charged with second-degree failure to appear, police said.

From Dec. 18-24, officers responded to 17 medical calls, four motor vehicle crashes and eight alarms, and made 17 traffic stops.

Obituaries continued

Hebron

Glenn Alan Palmer

Glenn Alan Palmer, 70, best friend and loving husband of Suzanne (Waldron) Palmer, passed away quietly Friday, Dec. 29, in Fort Kent, Maine.

Glenn was born in Hartford Nov. 5, 1947. He was raised on Waters Avenue in Rocky Hill as the eldest of nine children in a loving, faithful family. As a young person he loved goofing around with his many siblings, driving his hard-earned first car, a 1964 GTO, and playing his athletic heart out in a highly-accomplished high school baseball career. He graduated Rocky Hill High School, Class of 1965.

Following graduation, Glenn married Suzanne, and served in the U.S. Navy as a Communications Technician (R Brancher), stationed in Kama Seya, Japan. After serving his country, Glenn and Sue began a family, welcoming two precious daughters into the world and settling in Hebron to raise their children.

Professionally, Glenn was a sought-after craftsman in the trade of painting and paper-hanging, apprenticing under his skilled father as a teen before venturing off on his own in adulthood. For more than five decades Glenn wielded a paintbrush with enviable precision and speed. A proud lifetime union member, Glenn valued the support and advocacy he and his co-workers received from the International Brotherhood of Painters, Local 481 in Hartford, CT.

During his young parenting years Glenn enjoyed the opportunity to coach his daughter's softball team, sharing his love of baseball with his children and their friends, just as his father did for him. He coached the team for several years, maintaining a historic undefeated record for the length of his tenure. He was known as a quiet coach, never shouting from the sidelines, and his



players were always having fun. When asked how his team could be so good, repeatedly winning while he quietly coached from the bench, Glenn replied, "My players work hard during practice; game time is for putting what we've learned into action and having fun."

As an avid outdoorsman, Glenn carried on his ancestral traditions of hunting, fishing, and boating throughout his life. He shared his love for the outdoors by volunteering his time teaching hunter-safety and conservation courses throughout Connecticut. In retirement he returned to his family's roots, making his home on beautiful Eagle Lake in northern Maine, where he enjoyed unrivaled hunting, fishing, and all outdoor sports.

He is survived by Suzanne, his devoted wife of 49 years; daughter Dawna Palmer and her partner Erik Christian; daughter Heather Bruggeman and her husband Adam; his granddaughter Emily Bruggeman; his siblings and their spouses, Wayne and Kathy Palmer, Donna and Donald Doucette, Carol Palmer, Sheila and Michael Scalise, James and Janice Palmer, Christine Morande, Shawn and Janis Palmer, and many other family members and friends.

He was predeceased by his mother, Fernande Palmer; his father, Edmund Palmer; his mother-in-law, Rose Waldron; his father-in-law, Thomas Waldron; his sister, Sandra Palmer Dagata; and his nephew, Daniel Palmer.

Glenn will be remembered as a quiet, hard-working man of integrity who always placed family first; he will be missed dearly.

Friends may call at the Lajoie-Daigle Funeral Home, Fort Kent, Maine, on Saturday, Jan. 6, from 9-10:15 a.m. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11 a.m. Jan. 6 at St Mary Catholic Church, Eagle Lake, Maine. Burial will be private and at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Allagash Wilderness Waterway Foundation at AWWF, P.O., Box 1211 Bath, Maine 04530, or, St. Jude's Medical Center at 262 Danny Thomas Place, Memphis, TN 38105.

Obituaries

East Hampton

Stephen John Holda

Stephen John Holda, 54, of South Easton, Mass., formerly of East Hampton, died from complications related to rheumatoid arthritis on December 12, 2017, surrounded by loving family and friends, including his wife of 28 years, Margaret Mary (Peg) Leyden Holda, who cherished him.



Born Dec. 17, 1962, Stephen was the treasured son of Katherine Wheeler Lovett Holda and Felix John Holda, Jr., now of Stoddard, N.H., and formerly of East Hampton. He was the favorite brother of Katherine Holda Blake of Lowell, Mass. and Margaret Louise Holda of East Hampton. He was a second son to Thomas Patrick Leyden and Rita Ann (Nuss) Leyden of Westport, and a beloved brother-in-law to Patricia Marie (Leyden) Paul and her husband, David Paul, of Upton, Mass.; Thomas Patrick Leyden Jr. and his wife, Nicole Pezzola (Pezzola) Leyden of Westwood, Mass.; and John Lawlor of Lowell, Mass. His nephew, Jacob Benjamin Dow, of Los Angeles, Calif., and his nieces, Megan Elizabeth and Abigail Marie Paul, and Dahlia Anna and Olivia Rita Leyden, adored their Uncle Steve. He was kind-hearted and loving to animals, most especially Omar, Templeton, Zeb, Auggie, Buddy, and Sammy The Peanut.

The East Hampton native graduated from East Hampton High School in 1980, attended Manchester Community College, and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism from Ohio University in Athens in 1985. He spent his early career in advertising, working for Clarke Goward Fitts, Casey Media, and Holland Mark Martin. He later leveraged his quick wit and wry humor as a member of a Boston-based improvisational comedy troupe and as a stand-up comedian. Stephen also was a community theatre performer and occasionally worked as an extra in movies and commercials.

An avid golfer, Stephen played some of the world's leading courses, including Pebble Beach Golf Links, Ballyunion Golf Club; Harbour Town Golf Links; Merion Golf Club; Boca Raton Resort and Club; The Plantation Course at Kapalua; and The Country Club of Brookline. The weekend of the Masters Golf Tournament was annually spent in the company of lifelong friends Robert Rioux, Robert Rust and Sal DiMauro.

Stephen was a dedicated practitioner of Tai Chi, which he studied for more than 15 years under the guidance of the renowned Ramel Ronces of Boston. Stephen credited his ability to successfully manage his chronic disease to Rami and the care he received from Robert A. Kalish, MD, and Jamie R. Delugan, OD.

Stephen's mother engendered in him an enduring love of reading. During his lifetime, he amassed a vast and diverse library – and became a self-made scholar of the Second World War. Stephen was highly-knowledgeable about historical and current affairs. He disdained “truthiness” and backed up his points of view with well-researched facts.

He spent years honing his culinary skills and regularly delighted others with home-cooked meals, including his signature meatballs, known as “Steveballs,” and smoked ribs nicknamed “Stribs.” He cultivated blueberry bushes and routinely grew bumper crops of heirloom tomatoes and pickling cucumbers.

Stephen loved sports and was a stalwart fan of the New York Giants and Boston Red Sox. He chartered a fantasy football league of which he was the trusted commissioner for more than a decade.

Stephen was also passionate about music and enjoyed seeing emerging and established bands with friend and fellow Ohio University alumnus Scott Burns. He was a lifelong U2 fan and the “One” lyric – “We Get To Carry Each Other” – was his mantra and life practice. Stephen tackled challenges with a trademark positivity. He created opportunities for joy and laughter. He was a living, breathing wingman, never comfortable in the spotlight but always eager to find a way to help solve problems, with an open-palmed shrug and a smile.

A Celebration of the Life of Stephen John Holda is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 6, from 3-7 p.m., at Blue Hill Country Club, 23 Pecunit St., Canton, MA.

Contributions in Stephen's name may be made to MercyCorps, the international humanitarian aid society, by visiting MercyCorps.org.

Colchester

Ryan William Kristoff

Ryan William Kristoff, 16, of Colchester, passed away peacefully in the arms of his loving parents early Friday morning, Dec. 22. He was born in Middletown March 7, 2001, son of William and Pamela (Pasay) Kristoff.



He leaves to mourn and deeply treasure his memory his adoring parents, Bill and Pam; his big sister, Katherine Elizabeth Kristoff; his little brother, Carlton Alexander Kristoff; grandparents, Ruth and Martin Kristoff of Berlin and Walter and Kathleen Pasay of Lebanon; aunts and uncles, Sharon and Lewis Hineline of Coventry, Kim and David Rose of Berlin, Stephen and Diane Pasay of Andover; and cousins Emily, Kevin, Cole, Shelby, Neven, and Nina, along with numerous extended family members, friends and caregivers.

Ryan was predeceased by his younger sister, Alyssa Ryan Kristoff, on Nov. 25, 2010.

Ryan, who was also known as “Chum,” “Chubas,” “RyeRye,” “the Rye Guy” was diagnosed with Krabbe Disease at seven months of age. Ryan never knew a normal childhood, and was never expected to live past the age of two. He endured chemotherapy, numerous invasive treatments and surgeries and countless doctor and hospital visits throughout his lifetime. Despite all he endured, he was a trooper and never visibly complained.

Although Ryan could not walk or talk and had limited vision and hearing, he communicated in other ways; an occasional bright-eyed look, a turn-your-head smirky smile followed by a little grunt, or one of his classic loud sighs. Ryan enjoyed relaxing in his hot tub, being read to, and spending time with his family. Ryan may not have had the best quality of life throughout all of his medical obstacles but, he was loved beyond words and touched many lives. The purity of Ryan's earthly soul inspired kindness in every life he touched.

Pam and Bill have so many special people in their lives because of Ryan and want to express their sincere appreciation to all of them. Special thanks to Catherine Humphrey and Mary Melton, who have been part of our family and Ryan's journey for over the past 10 years, and to the generous Town of Colchester and volunteers who donated their time and material to build an addition to Ryan's home.

Visitation was Thursday, Dec. 28, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral liturgy was celebrated Friday, Dec. 29, at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester. Burial followed in New St. Andrew Cemetery.

Donations in his memory may be made to Hunter's Hope (huntershope.org), the Make-A-Wish Foundation (wish.org/donate) or the Duke Pediatric Bone Marrow Transplant Family Support Program (dukepbmtfamilysupport.org) in Durham, N.C.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Amston

Helen Serra

Helen (Spada) Serra, 91, of Amston, formerly of Cromwell, widow of the late Paul Francis Serra, passed away Sunday, Dec. 24, at Hartford Hospital. Born July 19, 1926 in Cromwell, she was the daughter of the late Emanuel and Lucia (Malone) Spada.



The greatest legacy she leaves to the world is her family, to whom she was ever devoted. In her passing, she leaves five children, Jean Zacchio (husband, John) of Thomaston, Paul Serra, Jr. of Plainfield, James Serra of Lebanon, Joseph Serra of Amston and Lynn Ristau of Bozrah; 21 grandchildren; numerous great-grandchildren and five great-great-grandchildren; three siblings, Emanuel Spada of Middletown, John Spada of Wethersfield and Nellie Mandracchia of Cromwell; along with numerous nieces and nephews.

In addition to her husband and parents, she was predeceased by two children, Paulette and Francis Serra; and six siblings.

A memorial service will be observed at 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 6, at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 297 Westchester Rd. (Route 149), Colchester. There are no calling hours and burial will be private.

Should friends desire, contributions may be sent to: c/o Jean Zacchio, 197 Pine Hill Rd., Unit 9E, Thomaston, CT 06787.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

John A. Bear

John A. Bear, 86, of East Hampton, quietly passed away shortly after midnight Friday, Dec. 22. He was born Feb. 12, 1931, in Presque Isle, Maine, and was the youngest child of Edith (Dustow) and Mitchell Bear. His upbringing instilled those most valued qualities of integrity, honesty, modesty, service to country and, most importantly, love of family.



John was a devoted and loving husband to his wife, Lenora (Ferrigno) Bear, for 62 years. Besides his wife he is survived by his four children and their spouses, Carolyn and Robert McEvitt, Christine and Brian Hurt, John Jr. and Susan Bear, and Mark and Victoria Bear. He also leaves nine grandchildren, Melinda Hurt, Andrea Hurt, Patrick Hurt, John Bear Jr., Emily Bear, Andrew Bear, Michael Bear, Peter Bear and Janay Bear; and one great grandchild, Makenzie Hurt. He dedicated his life to providing for and protecting his family.

John was a retired civil engineer for the state of Connecticut as well as spent his time as a private land surveyor. He enjoyed working on various projects around the house whether they involved home maintenance or machinery. He especially loved his music and would spend time every night playing his guitar or giving music lessons to youngsters. John was a member of the Walter K. Bauer Band as well as provided music in the past for folk Masses at St. Patrick in East Hampton and St. John Fisher in Marlborough. John also enjoyed coaching Little League baseball while his sons were growing up.

John A. Bear was a good man. He took a sincere interest in everything and everyone. He was one of the gentlest souls that God placed on this earth. His life was straightforward and genuine.

A funeral liturgy was celebrated Wednesday, Dec. 27, in St. Patrick Church in East Hampton. Burial followed in St. Patrick cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to East Hampton Little League Association, Smith Street, East Hampton, CT 06424 or to St. Patrick Church, 47 West High St., P.O. Box 177, East Hampton, CT 06424-0177.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Betty Janice Ezarik

Betty Janice Ezarik, 86, of Norwich, formerly of Colchester, Danielson and Stratford, passed away Saturday, Dec. 23, at the Wm. W. Backus Hospital, surrounded by her family. Born Nov. 20, 1931, in Bridgeport, she was the daughter of the late Gerard and Bessie (French) Taylor.



Betty was an alumni of Milford High School; former president of the Ladies Auxiliary of the East End Yacht Club, in Bridgeport; an antique show coordinator/promoter in the southern Connecticut area; and former owner of Lynnmere Motel, Winnisquam, N.H. She retired in 1994 as tax officer for Fleet Bank/Bank of America. In addition, she owned and operated The Tax House from 1983 to 2015, providing tax preparation services to several small business and individual clients. She enjoyed preparing individuals' tax returns, bingo, traveling, shopping and being with her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Mrs. Ezarik is survived by her devoted children: William G. Ezarik Sr. and his wife Maureen of Stratford, Betty Healy of Sanford, Maine, Suzann Ezarik and her partner Betsy Herrick of Springvale, Maine, and Maryann Rivera and her husband Wayne of Colchester; and Betty's longtime companion, Barney Robinson of Norwich. Also surviving are six grandchildren, William G. Ezarik Jr., Jill Solomon, Matthew Ezarik, John E. Taylor Jr., Seth Rivera and Sean Rivera; four great-grandchildren, Scott, Emma, Andrew and Chance.

She was predeceased by two sisters, Corrine Taylor and Karen Williamson; her former husband, William Frank Ezarik; a son, Richard, and twin daughters, Grace and Janice Leigh.

Visiting hours were Saturday, Dec. 30, at Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A funeral home chapel service followed. Burial was private in Lakeview Cemetery, Bridgeport.

Memorial donations may be made in Betty's name to the American Diabetes Association (diabetes.org/honor).

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Bernard J. Erickson

Bernard J. Erickson, “B.J.,” 87, of Colchester, widower of the late Clara (Creutzberg) Erickson, passed away peacefully Thursday, Dec. 28, at home. Born Oct. 23, 1930, in Prairie View, Kan., he was the son of the late Theodore and Ida (Hardens) Erickson.



After graduating from Prairie View High School in 1948, he went on to serve in the U.S. Coast Guard from 1948 to 1957, during which time he married the love of his life, Clara, in May of 1950. The two shared 62 years of marriage until she predeceased him Jan. 13, 2013.

After leaving the Coast Guard he went on to join the Naval Reserves and retired as a lieutenant commander. Bernard graduated from Linfield College in 1961 and for years he was employed as a computer programmer for the U.S. Forest Service working in places such as Fort Collins, Colo., Washington, D.C. and Boise, Idaho, until his retirement in 1990.

After moving to Colchester, Bernard was active in the Colchester Senior Center and enjoyed singing with the Senior Center Choir. He also served proudly on the Colchester Commission on Aging for many years.

Mr. Erickson was a member of the Colchester Federated Church and the Donald A. Bigelow American Legion Post 54, in addition to having volunteered at the VA Hospital in Boise, Idaho. He is survived by three children, Jane and Luis Carvalho of Colchester, James Erickson of Spokane, Wash., and Peggy Erickson of East Haven; five grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; and numerous extended family members and friends.

In addition to his parents and wife, he was also predeceased by a grandson, Eric Carvalho.

Services and burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to the Eric J. Carvalho Scholarship Fund, c/o East Catholic High School, 115 New State Rd., Manchester, CT 06042.

Care of arrangements has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester. For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Portland

Jane Eaton Sweet

Jane Eaton Sweet of Portland, wife of the late Dr. Richard T. Sweet, passed away peacefully at home surrounded by her family Friday, Dec. 22. She was born July 28, 1923, in Middletown, daughter of the late Robert and Ruth (Hill) Eaton.



Jane attended Middletown schools, and received her B.S. from Boston University in physical education. She was a teacher in Levittown, N.Y., Hanover, N.H., and Waterbury. She volunteered at the Middletown YMCA for 45 years, teaching water ballet and was a board member. She was a Girl Scout leader in Middlesex County and taught many children how to swim at her own home. She was also a member of the Portland Garden Club, and became a master gardener through UConn. She was very active in her church for many years and volunteered for several different charities. She was a dedicated Patriots and UConn fan. Jane loved to travel with family and friends.

Her greatest joy was her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and her many beloved dogs. Along with her husband Richard, Jane was predeceased by their infant son Robert Eaton Sweet, her beloved son-in-law Aurelio Grisolini, and daughter-in-law Dana Jacobucci Sweet.

She is survived by her five children and their spouses, Susan T. Sweet of Portland, Barbara Grisolini of Lebanon, N.Y., Holly Doherty (Beau) of Portland, Richard Sweet (Jerilyn) of Portland and Jeffrey Sweet (Linda) of Portland. She is also survived by 11 grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.

There are no calling hours. Funeral services will private at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, please send a donation to the charity of your choice.

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