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Jared Eaton, 11, of Hebron, lines up a shot in his driveway earlier this week. Last March Jared won the Knights of Columbus state free throw competition. His score of 24 of 25 was good enough to also be named national champion and co-international champion.

Hebron Kid Wins National Basketball Competition

by Sarah McCoy

Eleven year-old Jared Eaton has a routine down.

Dribble. Dribble. Spin. Up and in.

The routine works for Jared, a sixth-grade student at Hebron Elementary School. Jared was named this year's national champion in an annual free throw competition sponsored by the Knights of Columbus.

After seeing the event listed in the bul-

letin at Hebron's Church of the Holy Family, Jared decided to enter the contest. He had competed the year prior in Michigan and made it to the regional championships.

"We thought we'd show up to the local competition and see what happens," Jared's father, Scott Eaton, recalled. "Then we went to the districts and regionals."

The Eatons moved to Hebron last year from Ann Arbor, MI. Compared to their

home in the Midwest, Jared says he likes how Hebron is a little warmer and he has the opportunity to go to the beach.

Jared advanced from the local competition in Hebron, where a half-dozen other 10-year-olds competed, to district finals in East Hampton. From there he qualified for regionals, also held in East Hampton before making it all the way to the state fi-

Continued on Page 2

Inside This Issue:

Regional:

Obituaries
Page 30

Marlborough:

Car Thefts Investigated
Page 31

East Hampton

Meet New Town Manager
Page 16

New Pastor At HNCC
Page 15

Colchester:

Agricultural Study Presented
Page 24

Andover:

Eagle Project For Local Teen
Page 10

Hebron:

Hebron Cooks
Page 20

More News!

Hebron, Portland, Colchester and East Hampton readers can turn to pages 18 and 19 for more hometown news.

Continued from Front Page

nals. The winners of each of the four regionals qualified for the state championship, held in Terryville this past March.

“I was a little nervous,” Jared said of competing in the finals. “There was a gym full of people watching.”

But Jared’s anxiety sure didn’t affect his performance. In Terryville, Jared made 24 of 25 shots and was declared the winner.

“I could’ve made them all,” Jared said.

After hitting his first 19 shots, Eaton missed one, and then recovered to hit his final five.

Jared’s score of 24 was the highest of all the state champions (competitions were held in all 50 states), making Jared the national champion. He tied with Ryan Deschamps of Ontario for the title of International Champion.

Jared has been playing basketball for the past four years, following in the steps of his two older siblings. Maddie, a junior at RHAM High School, plays for the Sachem varsity squad. Eric, a seventh-grade student at RHAM Middle School, also plays.

The Eaton children play so much basketball that their father installed a light at the top of their driveway hoop to prevent nightfall from ending their shoot-a-rounds. A convenient bump

in the driveway acts as an estimated free throw line for the kids.

“All day and all night it seems like there’s a ball bouncing,” Scott Eaton said of his three children.

Jared said he shot about 50 free throws to prepare for the Knights of Columbus contest, but signed up only to have fun. “I never thought I would win anything,” he said afterwards. He now has a Knights of Columbus basketball and trophy to commemorate his title.

In addition to basketball, Jared Eaton also plays football for the RHAM Rams. He enjoys riding his bike, watching ESPN, and cheering on the Detroit Pistons (especially Chauncey Billups).

“If it’s about sports, I probably like it,” Jared said.

This past summer, Jared had the opportunity to travel around New England as a member of the Northeast Basketball Club AAU team. Next winter he plans to play in the Hebron recreational league before entering into the 2009 Knights of Columbus free throw competition next February.

“We’ll see what happens,” he said of next year’s tournament.

Colchester Police News

9/9-Augustine Rogers, 38, of 724 Montauk Ave., New London, was charged with two counts risk of injury, DUI, operating unregistered motor vehicle and no front plate, State Police said.

9/9-Joshua Rodriguez, 26, of 677 Old Hartford Rd., was charged with third-degree burglary, conspiracy to commit third-degree burglary and third-degree criminal mischief, State Police said.

9/9-Edward Smith, 35, of 100 Laurel Cove, East Haddam, turned himself in to State Police on the charge of second-degree failure to appear, State Police said.

9/9-Peter Linnane, 37, of 72 Oak Rd., East Haddam, was charged with failure to pay or plead, State Police said.

9/10-Maria Cuevas, 41, of 89 Oak St., Manchester, was charged with possession of a controlled substance, State Police said.

Hebron Police News

9/9-Maria Maldonado, 23, of 768 Gilead St., was charged with disorderly conduct and risk of injury, State Police said.

9/9-Mario Portuguez, 23, of 768 Gilead St., was charged with disorderly conduct and risk of injury, State Police said.

Portland Police News

9/10 — Jason Prince, 28, of 33 North Main St., East Hampton, was charged with second-degree harassment, Portland Police said.

9/10 — Jean Graham, 36, of 200R Main St., was charged with two counts of operating a motor vehicle without insurance and two counts of operating a motor vehicle without a license, police said.

On Roberts Road, the alleged victim had a compact disc player worth about \$250 stolen from one of two vehicles, police said. (The other vehicle was searched, but nothing was reported missing, police said.) The other alleged victim on Stage Harbor Road had an undetermined amount of personal items stolen from vehicle, police said.

Police said they are investigating whether the five thefts are connected.

“This should send a clear message to owners to be aware, observant and to lock your vehicles,” state police spokesman Lt. J. Paul Vance said. “Anything of value should be out of visible sight. Report to police any suspicious people around the neighborhood, walking in the road or anyone wandering through residences. We’ll follow the leads to where they take us.”

From the Editor’s Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

As September starts to wind down, notices about upcoming apple-themed events begin to pop up. There are many such events in the area every fall, with one of the biggest occurring in Glastonbury, where that town’s Chamber of Commerce puts on the Apple Festival every October. It’s a huge two-day affair, and sports on its second day an annual parade that routinely draws local TV celebrities (like Channel 30 newsmen Gerry Brooks) and state officials as well (the Governor’s been known to swing by G-bury for the apple parade). The festival itself offers food, craft booths, rides for the kids and, of course, lots of apple pies and cider.

Here in *Rivereast* land, there’s plenty of apple attractions coming up, too. And in the East Hampton section this week, you’ll see a notice that, when I came across it, made my mouth water. The East Hampton Congregational Church is holding a “Best-Ever Apple Pie Baking Contest” on Saturday, Oct. 4, during its Fall Festival. Anyone can enter (for a \$5 entry fee), but they must follow a few rules.....and these stipulations sound, well, delicious. The crust must be made from scratch, and the filling must be made with fresh fruit. No canned filling mixes can be used. I love all kinds of pie, but apple pie is perhaps my very favorite. And one that sports a made-from-scratch crust, filled with fresh apples, just seems heavenly.

And the best part of the contest? The judges don’t get to have all the fun. After they award the first-, second- and third-place winners, the pies will all be sold to the public. You can buy a slice or a whole pie. Yeah, I think I’ll get a whole pie.

In the Hebron section this week, there’s a little story about the Democratic Town Committee honoring Bill Cox for his service to the town. It’s an honor I’m happy to see bestowed. I covered Hebron from 2001-04, and during all three of those years Bill was on the Board of Selectmen. I always enjoyed talking to Bill. He wouldn’t shy away from talking to you for a story. He was usually available whenever I’d call him, and on the rare occasions he wasn’t, he’d get back to me in short order.

Bill never sounded like a typical politician, either. He carried himself like just an ordinary guy. You never got the feeling from talking to him that he wasn’t telling you how he really felt about things. He never sounded like he was simply saying what he thought sounded good, or what the public would want him to say. Frankly, it’s no wonder he kept on getting re-elected to the Board of Selectmen, only leaving the board after he chose not to run again last November.

So, congratulations, Bill. It’s a well-earned honor.

For good reason, the news this week has been focused on the economy and the nose dives Wall Street has been taking. But Monday, I came across an item that was a little startling. I’m sure many of you know about that deadly train wreck in Los Angeles last week. A commuter train collided with a freight train, and 25 people were killed, with another 135 injured. The apparent cause of the accident is that the commuter train engineer, who died in the crash, ran a stoplight. That’s not the most startling part. This is: federal investigators are looking into whether the engineer was text messaging at the time.

Texting? The nation’s deadliest railroad disaster in 15 years, an accident so bad it took nearly a day to recover all the bodies, might have been caused because the engineer was texting? What’s surprising is not so much that the engineer may have been distracted by the texting – composing and sending a text message on your cell phone while you’re driving a car seems like it would be a ridiculously obvious distraction, yet people do it every day – but that he might have thought it was a good idea to text while serving as the engineer on a commuter train. A train carrying 220 people.

While Metrolink – the company that operates the commuter train involved in the accident – has a policy prohibiting rail workers from using cell phones while on the job, the policies are widely ignored, according to the head of the California Public Utilities Commission, and there’s nothing on the books in California making it against the law to use the cell phones. The California legislature last month sent the governor a bill to outlaw texting while driving. Four other states – a rather random assortment:

Alaska, Minnesota, New Jersey and Washington – already have the bans. I think texting while you drive – whether it’s piloting a train, operating a bus or driving your car – is just a terrible idea, and it’s frankly a little disturbing that there need to be laws to tell people as such. You’d think that’s a conclusion they’d come to on their own.

I was a little taken aback this week when I drove past an ice cream shop in Glastonbury that had a poster in their window advertising ice-cream gingerbread houses and a yule log. I’ve gotten used to seeing Halloween candy appear in grocery stores in mid-September. True, it can be a little odd thinking about the last day of October when it’s still 85 degrees out. But at least I’ve gotten used to it. But Christmas-themed items? In September? It’s just too soon. The baseball playoffs haven’t even started yet.

There’ll be plenty of time to enjoy the Christmas season when it’s here. But Dec. 25 is still more than three months away. No need to break out the yule log quite yet.

Speaking of baseball, I read an interesting piece of news Wednesday. It seems the Mets had, briefly, considered shutting down Pedro Martinez and going with a four-man rotation for this, the stretch run of the regular season. They ultimately decided not to, but it’s not altogether shocking they considered it. Bothered by nagging little injuries, Pedro has made only 18 starts all year (he in fact spent most of April and May on the disabled list), and has compiled a 5-5 record with a poor (particularly for Pedro) 5.47 ERA. Shutting Pedro, who is in the last year of a four-year contract, would have been a sad ending to a relationship that hasn’t gone the way either side had predicted.

One of the main reasons the Mets got Pedro after the 2004 season was that they would give him a four-year deal, something the Red Sox and GM Theo Epstein were reluctant to do. Pedro was just 33 years old at the time, but Theo still didn’t want to go more than three years with him. Pedro always had a small-ish frame (for a baseball player, anyway) and had always thrown very hard. Theo didn’t want to go four years on someone who could wind up breaking down before the contract was finished. And while Red Sox fans at the time were sad to see him go – he was, I believe, the first member of that 2004 championship team to leave – you gotta admit: Theo was right.

The Mets really only got one season of Pedro when he was still being Pedro. That first year, 2005, he won 15 games, compiled a 2.82 ERA, struck out 208 and held opponents to a .204 batting average. I was fortunate to see a few Pedro starts live at Shea Stadium back in 2005, and I can tell you that when he pitched, it was an event. Fans would begin going nuts as soon as they saw him stroll in from the bullpen before the start of the game. It didn’t matter if it was the first inning or the seventh inning, the stadium was wild with enthusiasm for every pitch, it seemed. This was Pedro Martinez, who had for years been one of the best pitchers of the game, and now he was a Met, and still mowing down the opposition.

Unfortunately, 2005 was also the last time Pedro pitched a complete season. In 2006, bothered by injuries, he made just one start in July, three in each of August and September and didn’t pitch at all in the playoffs. In fact, he had right rotator cuff surgery in October of that year, and was practically a non-entity for 2007, only coming back to the mound in September. He made five good starts, but then, in his first start of the year this season, lasted only three innings and before you knew it he was on the DL for another two months.

Will Pedro return to the Mets after this season? Perhaps. He’s made comments in the past about retiring and, if he does come back, the Mets will almost certainly look to bring him back at a reduced rate: that four-year contract he signed before the 2005 season was to the tune of \$53 million. But one thing’s for sure: Theo was right. He didn’t think it’d be worth the risk to sign Pedro to a four-year deal, and time has proven him right. The Mets gambled and, unfortunately, lost.

But at least I’ll always have that wonderful 2005 season.

See you next week.

Police Investigating Overnight Car Thefts in Marlborough

by Kristina Histen

State Police are still investigating five overnight thefts that occurred last Monday, Sept. 8, in which approximately \$3,050 worth of personal items was stolen from vehicles.

The items were taken from unsecured and unattended vehicles that were individually parked in the driveways of the victim’s residences, State Police said.

The burglaries occurred on Fuller Road, Roberts Road and Stage Harbor Road, state police said. Three happened on Fuller Road alone, police said. One alleged victim had \$1,500 worth of personal items stolen from their vehicle, while another had a Tom Tom GPS worth \$300 stolen and another alleged victim had such personal items as a purse, money, identification, video camera and cellular telephone, worth approximately \$1,000, taken, Police said.

Agricultural Viability Study Presented to Colchester Land Trust

by Kristina Histen

The results of a Colchester agricultural viability study were presented to the Colchester Land Trust (CLT), local farmers and other community members last Thursday, Sept. 11, at Cragin Library.

And the results indicated area farmers aren't very optimistic about their future in town.

The report presented last week was a study of farming in Colchester and recommendations for keeping it viable, with the ultimate purpose of preserving farmland. The project was funded by a state Department of Agriculture "Agricultural Viability Grant" awarded to the town for \$30,000 back in January 2007. The specific plan for fulfilling this grant mission, as stated by the town in its application, was to "identify our agricultural land, inventory parcels and rank them-all in an effort to preserve our agricultural resources," the report said.

Lyn Kaimowitz, a private consultant specializing in agricultural and community relationships hired by the town, conducted the viability study and presented the findings and her recommendations last Thursday.

"If just some of the recommendations happen in this town," CLT President Lisa Hageman said, "that would be really great to support the farmers."

Kaimowitz worked with various community groups, such as CLT, Colchester Historical Society, Colchester Department of Planning and Zoning and the Connecticut Farmland Trust to identify the town's agricultural history, the current land use and owners of farm property.

Kaimowitz interviewed 18 Colchester farmers concerning their farm activities, the problems they encounter in farming and their plans for the future of their farms, she said. She then met with town officials regarding the issues brought up in the interviews.

"There are a lot of pressures on [farmers'] industries within in the town," Town Planner Adam Turner said over the summer. "They are looking for help from town officials in various regulations and tax savings to make it easier for them. Colchester was an agricultural community to start off with. Farmers made this town what it is today."

In general, the farmers in the survey indicated that the best ways to preserve farming in Colchester would be to help farmers to develop and promote sales of their farm products, for those farmers who sell to the public; make it easier for farmers to obtain and maintain their agricultural tax status; make it easier for farmers to navigate town zoning regulations when making changes to their farms; listen to the farmers and their needs to make an effort to understand the difficulties of farming and show that farming is important by supporting them, the report said. This support can include town adoption of the state's right-to-farm laws, showing a little flexibility in the strict application of regulations and being more helpful when farmers want to make changes to their farms, it said.

Kaimowitz also discovered that while the farmers are very knowledgeable about the business of farming, some might benefit from programs on farm financial and succession planning and conservation options, the study said.

Colchester has a long history as a farming community, the study said, but farmland has given way to housing subdivisions during the past 50 years. The modern demand for new homes on large rural lots and the town's location on major transportation routes combine to make the town a highly desirable location for residential developers seeking new business opportunities. In the face of high demand for land on which to develop new homes, some residents are concerned about preserving the town's farms and the benefits that they impart, the study said.

With the right balance, guided by the town government, development and agriculture can live together, the study said. According to the report, new residential areas can provide markets for farm products, while farms can provide the open space, ambience and tax support that maintain strong property values.

The results of the study indicated that nearly all of the Colchester farmers come from a farming background, some of them tracing their family farm connections back for several generations. Mostly all of the farmers themselves have been farming for decades.

Colchester's farmers are a hard-working group, the study said. About half of them work full-time at another job, then come home to work on the farm in their spare time. The other half are full-time farmers. While the work is somewhat cyclical for many farmers, it nevertheless continues throughout the year. Farmers generally rise very early to begin their work, and those who work at a job elsewhere, work well into the evening.

Unlike earlier times when many children were needed on the farm, today's farm families are much smaller, the study said. Though the children usually helped on the farm while growing up, only a few farmers receive help from their adult children now. As a result of this and the difficulty in finding affordable labor, Colchester farmers try to keep their farms and the products of their farms on a scale that they and their spouses can manage alone, with some occasional outside help, the study said.

The results of the study indicated that farmers feel strongly that they need more support from the town administration, especially in regard to right-to-farm laws and support of farming techniques, such as manure spreading, when other residents complain. They also asked for support from other residents in town. According to the study, the farmers feel that if more people are educated about farms and food production, this will be very helpful to them in many ways, including fewer complaints and more product sales.

Farmers had a great deal to say about their

interaction with the town administration, the study said. They are particularly frustrated with land use regulations and restrictions that farmers feel don't always make sense for farms. They are also upset about the difficulties they perceive in connection with getting approvals for land use changes, including the length of time needed for approvals.

Taxation also elicited great frustration, the study said. There is widespread concern over the possibility of farmers losing their 490A tax status without warning. Some farmers feel they are carrying a disproportionate share of taxes, according to the study. They feel that there are no tax incentives to keep farming in town, and that the town actually taxes things that could be exempt or taxed at a lower rate. "Most farmers are just one tax battle away from quitting and selling to developers," Kaimowitz said.

Regarding the general outlook for farming in Colchester, many farmers were quite gloomy, saying it is too late to save, the report said. Farming has many problems; in particular, the expenses of producing are too high in relation to sales income. Beyond taxes, feed or fuel, expenses such as repairing buildings or equipment, insurance, vandalism and buying livestock also have the farmers worried, the report said.

For Colchester, an important reason to preserve farms is for the open space benefits, the study said. The farms in this survey consisted of large parcels of land with naturally attractive features such as pastures, woods, and wetlands. The farmers who own them have a strong connection to their land and they care for it well, the study said, restoring the nutrients in the soil and maintaining it as a workable asset. The open spaces maintained by farms contribute to the character of the town, making it more desirable to residents and contributing to the full package of characteristics that make the town so appealing to homebuyers, it said.

Also, the study said, farms preserve this open land while paying taxes, unlike open land that is owned by governmental or nonprofit agencies and removed from the tax list. Farms actually pay much more in taxes than they cost the town in expenses, the study said, in contrast to residential developments which cost more in services than the residents pay in taxes. Farm taxes, therefore, help to support and balance the town's budget, the report concluded.

Farms also are beneficial to the town's wetlands, Kaimowitz said. Wetlands are vital parts of the town's landscape, she said. They control flooding, purify water, and aid in the recharging of groundwater reserves. Developments often disrupt wetland functions through construction of roads, paving with impervious materials, unauthorized dumping of fill, or changes to surrounding landforms and slopes. Farms, however, preserve natural wetlands and enable them to perform their natural functions, she said.

Farms provide vital natural habitats and travel

corridors for wild animals, the report said, and this in turn benefits humans. Habitat disruption, which occurs with land development, removes the natural predators in the food chain that keep mosquitoes and vermin in check, thereby increasing the danger to humans from diseases, the report said.

The results presented last week also indicated that local farms can be an important source of food security. As oil demand increases, especially from rapidly developing nations such as India and China, oil prices will rise and oil supplies will be less secure. This will inevitably affect the prices of produce and other foods in Colchester, the report said. Also, major food-producing regions of the U.S. have seen an upswing in the severity and unpredictability of disastrous weather such as droughts, flooding, hurricanes and frosts. Some of these regions also face severe water shortages during the coming generation due to diminishing ice packs that feed their rivers, the report said. Consumers of produce grown in areas such as California or Florida will see a rise in prices and the uncertainty of availability. Therefore, local farms that produce food should not only be preserved, they should be encouraged to expand in order to provide food security and price stability in the future.

Kaimowitz's recommendations for improving Colchester farming viability include economic development aid; educating town residents about their local farms and farm products; adoption of the state's right-to-farm laws, farming definitions and regulations; helping farmers to navigate the town's land use regulations more efficiently; creation of a town Agricultural Advisory Commission; self-study projects, such as identification of prime soils and investigations of the benefits of establishing equestrian-friendly parks or developments; and the education of local farmers about farm preservation programs.

Farmers in the audience on Thursday were pleased with the suggestions, but worried about anything actually getting done because of their busy schedules and the seeming lack of interest from town officials to build a positive relationship with them.

"The farms of Colchester are very important," Hageman said. "We need to continue to make farming an issue and keep bringing it up to the town."

Although the report is in its final draft stages now, farmers and community members are encouraged to send their comments and suggestions to Kaimowitz at kaimo@comcast.net and/or Turner at planner@colchesterct.gov before the end of September.

"We want everyone to feel like their input is heard," Turner said.

Copies of the report are available in the Planning and Zoning Department at Town Hall, 127 Norwich Ave. The report is also available on the Economic Development Commission portion of the town website, www.colchesterct.net.

East Hampton Police News

9/3 — Gary J. Cook, 7 Dogwood Dr., was involved in a one-vehicle accident that occurred on Lake Drive, 450 feet east of White Birch Road, Portland Police said, and added that Cook was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol and failure to drive right.

9/4 — Daniel Baruch, 22, of 8 Yellow Birch Rd., Middletown, was arrested for speeding and passing in a no-passing zone, police said.

9/5 — Melissa J. Ackerman, 39, of 60 Flanders Rd., was issued a ticket for using a cell phone while operating a motor vehicle, police said.

9/10 — Michael Plourde, 46, of 343 Charter Oak St., Manchester, was arrested pursuant to a warrant on charges of disorderly conduct, second-degree threatening and sixth-degree larceny, police said.

9/10 — Arthur Archambault, 53, of 183 A Pine St., Columbia, was arrested for failure to drive right and driving under the influence, police said.

Colchester Middle School Teacher ‘Humbled’ by Honor

by Kristina Histen

Jenn DelSesto, an eighth-grade U.S. History teacher at William J. Johnston Middle School (WJMS), was “humbled” and “honored” to be chosen as this year’s Colchester Teacher of the Year.

DelSesto teaches four classes of history to 87 kids at WJMS everyday. Having grown up in town, her classroom is actually one that she once sat in to learn. Except now, big round tables are scattered throughout to encourage collaborative group work and discussion while stuffed frogs and figurines leap out from every direction. (Past students saw she had a couple of decorative frogs and thought she really liked them; since then, the frogs have been “spiraling out of control,” she joked.)

After graduating from Bacon Academy, DelSesto went on to receive both her undergraduate and masters degree from St. Joseph College in West Hartford. She then taught at Preston Plains Middle School in Preston for 11 years, but decided to return to her Colchester roots where she has been teaching for the last seven years.

This past spring, WJMS science teacher Bonnie McAneny and two students secretly nominated DelSesto as the school’s Teacher of the Year.

“I have had the honor to work with Jenn for five years,” McAneny said in her nomination letter, “and I am truly amazed daily by her energy, her passion, and her unbelievable wit. There is no one who shows as much commitment to her students, her school and her community as Jenn.”

Nominations are solicited through staff based on what they’ve observed over time, WJMS Principal Candace Sullivan said. After all submissions are made, the Teacher of the Year Committee reviews all the letters and chooses someone to represent each school.

After a teacher is selected at the school level, the superintendent of schools, the principals, the assistant principals and other administration then review the four recommendations from each school to determine who will be chosen as the district’s teacher of the year.

Over the summer, Superintendent of Schools Karen Loiselle and Sullivan informed DelSesto that she had been selected as Colchester’s Teacher of the Year. “She is genuinely an outstanding educator,” Sullivan said. “I am very

proud.”

DelSesto then had the choice to compete at the state level, but opted not to. She said that if she was chosen as the state’s teacher of the year, she would be obligated to make appearances at conferences and such, and did not want to leave her classroom for anything.

For her students, DelSesto makes history come alive, McAneny said. Whether it’s through a “Land Rush” reenactment in the school yard, or a “make believe” phone conversation with past world leaders, she engages every student in her lessons, McAneny said. She also includes humor in everything she does, which will often reach the “unreachable” kid, McAneny said. DelSesto expects the very best from her kids, and they are more than willing to rise to the challenge, McAneny said.

“I have never heard her say ‘no’ to a student who is looking for extra help after school,” McAneny wrote in the nomination letter, “and she goes above and beyond to make sure kids receive the helping hand they need. Jenn differentiates lessons, assessments, and homework assignments to ensure that each child is capable of being personally successful.”

A big believer in the Socratic method, DelSesto said she feels kids come with knowledge. By sharing their ideas and experiences with each other, they can really learn rather than her “just blabbering on and on,” DelSesto said.

DelSesto also displays an incredible commitment to this school, McAneny said. She said in her nomination letter that DelSesto has participated on a wide variety of committees, has served as the PTO liaison, and has run after school clubs. She currently serves as the Student Council advisor, where she encourages and supports student leaders. They, too, are encouraged to rise to the challenges that she presents to them, always to the benefit of the school and community, McAneny said.

Currently, the Student Council is trying to push the food bank as its biggest initiative, not only because of the need, but because of a desire to help out the social worker that runs it. “We can offer the manpower through kid power,” DelSesto said. DelSesto is also always willing to help out other school initiatives, whether it’s at the Literacy Luau or Math night, McAneny said.

DelSesto’s commitment to her community is unparalleled, McAneny said. DelSesto said a



Eighth-grade U.S. History teacher at William J. Johnston Middle School Jenn DelSesto was congratulated by Board of Education Chairman Bill Hettrick for being selected as the district’s Teacher of the Year at last week’s board meeting.

big aspect of her history class is the civics component that focuses on the kids’ responsibilities as citizens. McAneny said DelSesto single-handedly organized and runs the Kappa Community Service program. Every week, over 30 Kappa kids go out into the community and volunteer, doing a variety of tasks.

“It’s great to connect kids,” DelSesto said. “It’s a way for them to be responsible in the community and also make a great name for themselves in the community. That’s a wonderful thing.”

DelSesto also organizes the “Make a Difference Day” at WJMS, in which kids collect goods to be distributed by the Colchester Senior Center, McAneny said. DelSesto has also organized the Holiday Hat Food Fundraiser (which benefited the Colchester Food Bank)

and the bookmark fundraiser (for the Jen Neril-Lorette reading corner). She is also involved with other schools in the district, even running the annual spaghetti supper at Jack Jackter Intermediate School, McAneny said. Parents in the district go to her whenever they have a question, whether it’s at football games, lacrosse matches, gymnastic competitions or even church, McAneny said. She answers their questions thoughtfully and honestly, McAneny said.

“It’s an absolute honor to be selected,” DelSesto said, “but it’s also overwhelming because there are excellent teachers everywhere. I was very surprised [to be nominated]. In my history department and social studies department the teachers are just phenomenal. My own co-teachers are amazing. It is humbling because there are so many good people.”

Meet the New Town Manager in East Hampton

by Michael McCoy

Choosing a permanent town manager has been a long, rocky road, full of division and heartbreak for the town of East Hampton, but the Town Council eventually came to a unanimous decision that they found the right man for the job.

That man is Jeffery O'Keefe, and it seems he could not be more excited to be in Belltown.

O'Keefe, 51, originally hails from Lorain, OH, a small city just west of Cleveland. In 1975, he graduated from Lorain High School, and enrolled in the police academy. He graduated as a cadet in 1976. "I was embarking on a career, I thought, in law enforcement," O'Keefe said. Unsure of just what he wanted to do within that field, O'Keefe then enrolled at Kent State University, and graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1982.

That year, he began graduate work at Arizona State University in law enforcement. Some of his friends took jobs at Phoenix's transit system, and O'Keefe followed suit. "That's when I began my career in public service," he said. And he never looked back. O'Keefe said he "saw how exciting public administration is, working in a world-class city" like Phoenix.

"I've always had a keen interest in public service and public administration, and, frankly, that's where my career has been spent," O'Keefe said.

In 1992, O'Keefe took a job as a project management team for the City of Las Vegas, building a public transit system for the city and its surrounding area "from ground zero." Within two years time, the system had 1,000 employees.

In 1996, he accepted a job with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority. "It was an opportunity to get engaged in a very large public agency," O'Keefe said.

Though he valued the experience, it was also enough to tell him that his heart lay with small towns.

In 2000, just after receiving his master's degree in public administration from California State University, O'Keefe was hired as the CEO for a regional transit authority that included Bridgeport, Stratford, Trumbull and Fairfield. He worked out of Bridgeport, but lived in Stratford.

Though "the opportunity to be a CEO of a truly public agency" lured him to Connecticut, O'Keefe said he eventually "fell in love" with the Nutmeg State.

"The people of Connecticut have been very friendly, inviting, and warm," said O'Keefe. He added that he saw no proof of the stereotypical New Englander.

"Connecticut made me feel very much at home," he added. "I've never felt that way anywhere else in the country."

During this time, O'Keefe was also chosen to serve on the governor's transportation strategy board, which especially addressed infrastructure concerns.

When speaking about this, O'Keefe said that many people believe transportation means nothing

more than buses and trains. He said there's so much more than that, including economic development and policy issues. "It's about quality of life," he said.

While living in Stratford, O'Keefe met his wife Donna. The two married in 2006. They have five children from previous relationships, ranging in age from 12 to 30.

The executive contract expired from this position in 2004, and O'Keefe moved on to his post as division manager for the Administrative Services Department for the City of Santa Clarita, CA. O'Keefe said Santa Clarita operates with a mayor and a city council (East Hampton has a similar structure, with a town manager and a town council). However, unlike Belltown, Santa Clarita has a population of about 177,000 and a \$165 million budget. O'Keefe headed up the second largest division in the city.

According to O'Keefe the job allowed him to get involved with "every aspect of development," including economic development, Brownfields, clean up and redevelopment.

O'Keefe said the most expensive line item in that city's budget was for its parks and recreation department. "They've got some world-class recreational facilities," he added.

When asked if the city has a skatepark (an asset East Hampton is currently exploring) O'Keefe replied, "They are building a skatepark unlike any in the U.S."

O'Keefe's wife is from Old Saybrook, and much of her family still lives in that area. "I knew my wife wanted to come home," O'Keefe admitted. Between this, and his own fondness for the state, he said he and his wife always had returning somewhere in their mind. In fact, the O'Keefes currently live in an Old Saybrook home that they had previously planned to retire to. They are preparing to sell it and move to East Hampton. "The thought of building a new home in East Hampton is very enticing to us," said O'Keefe.

O'Keefe recalled that when he learned of the town manager vacancy in East Hampton, he thought it would be "a perfect match."

As for the town, O'Keefe said, "I just absolutely love it... We have some tremendous challenges, as well as some great opportunities."

He added that "everything I've learned over the past 10-15 years ... has prepared me to bring a lot to the table here in this community."

However, O'Keefe doesn't think his new job will be a cakewalk. "There's a lot of things we need to address. We need to create that shared vision. We've got to celebrate the past, and yet embrace the future... I do get the sense that the community themselves are looking for the policy makers in town to create that unified vision."

He pointed to water, roads and buildings in disrepair as issues that need to be addressed. He also singled out the lake as a priority. As many have before him, O'Keefe referred to Lake Pocotopaug as a "precious jewel." (He



New Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe sits in his new office, a place, he says, where all residents are welcome.

also lamented the recent passing of Dennis Griswold, whom he called "one of the best friends the lake had.")

Furthermore, O'Keefe acknowledged that these things cost money, adding, "We're in a very tough economic downturn right now. It'll be very difficult over the next year or two to ask people to make investments, when people can't even pay their heating bills..."

He also made clear, "I have no intention of being a proponent of increasing taxes at this time," and instead said that the town needs to find more creative ways to fund such necessary projects.

The town manager also suggested the notion of setting up "neighborhood councils" that he and other officials could meet with to better stay in touch with the residents.

When asked his thoughts on navigating the often-arduous political landscape in town, he responded, "I think diversity is good," and added, "I've had an opportunity to meet with just about every Town Council member on an individual basis for an hour or more in a sitting. Each of them has the best interests of the town at heart. The differences are how do we do that."

In fact, instead of being intimidated by the political situation, O'Keefe admitted, "It was one of the challenges that enticed me to take the position." He also said that the town's three party system would make for a fruitful study at Harvard or Yale.

While O'Keefe seemed overwhelmed by the welcome he has received in town, he appeared to feel especially indebted to Bob Drewry, the town's director of public works,

who served as interim town manager for 11 months before O'Keefe officially started on Labor Day.

Drewry "was a godsend," O'Keefe said. "He brought me up to speed on all the issues. He was probably exactly what the town needed at that point in time. I cannot say enough about Bob. He could probably step in as town manager just about anywhere and be good at it." Drewry will retire from the town this Christmas.

Believe it or not, O'Keefe also has a life outside of his municipal career. "Both my wife and I just love family immensely," he said. The two just attended the wedding of their oldest daughter, Cara, last Saturday in Old Saybrook.

O'Keefe also spoke to his love of the outdoors, as well as recreation in general. "We need to get a racquetball court in the community somewhere," he said, figuring that the nearest one is in Middletown. He also said he hoped the town could one day get an indoor swimming pool. "I love all water sports," he said.

And, O'Keefe said, "I love people. I encourage anybody in the community to stop and see me anytime. My door is open." He said anyone who sought a more formal session can simply call executive secretary Cathy Sirois to set up a time.

"I think I can improve the quality of life for everyone in East Hampton," O'Keefe said, but added it will not happen overnight. Fortunately, it sounds like, if he has anything to do with it, he isn't going anywhere anytime soon.

"I'm hoping to spend the rest of my career here," he said. "This is my home now."

Andover Teen Finds Eagle Project at Transfer Station

by Sarah McCoy

For his Eagle Scout project Andover teen Kyle Penn needed to only look a mile down the road.

It's there, at the Andover Transfer Station, that Penn found wasted town revenue. Eight garbage cans sit by the side of the shed at the Transfer Station, each filled with redeemable recyclables. Bottles, cans, and plastic bottles fill the cans and the surrounding area.

Therein lies the problem.

All those recyclables aren't being cashed in on. Instead they are often targeted by those looking to make a few extra dollars. "People help themselves to the cans and bottles while the town is losing out," Kyle said.

Next month the RHAM High School senior and 12-year scout plans to change that. Kyle hopes to build a shed for the garbage cans that can be locked when the Transfer Station isn't in use.

"Unfortunately the ability to lock these bins up has become necessary," selectman Jay Linddy said. Linddy oversees the Transfer Station operation in town. "It's great that a community member has stepped up to make a difference."

Kyle's plans call for a six-foot by eight-foot structure using lumber beams for support and either chicken wire or kennel fencing for the walls. A slanted roof will be installed at approximately seven feet high. "I wanted to create something that people could walk in, drop their cans off and, at the end of the night, would be easy to secure," Kyle explained.

Currently the town's building department is reviewing Kyle's plans. Linddy said approval could come within the week. In the meantime Kyle is recruiting volunteers to help build and collecting donations to offset the cost of the shed.

He estimates that the shed will cost \$300 in materials in addition to the materials he has already collected from residents.

In order to attain the Eagle Scout rank, scouts must earn at least 21 merit badges and complete a service project. The project must utilize between 80-100 hours of man service (by the scout himself and other volunteers) and must be approved by both the town and scouting district. All this must be done before the scout turns 18. For Kyle, this means by March 20.

"There's certainly a lot to do between now and then," he said.

Kyle hopes to begin construction at the end of the month. He estimates that it will take two or three weekends of work to complete the project.

Kyle said his years of being involved in



For his Eagle Project, local teen Kyle Penn looks to build a shed for the garbage cans at the Transfer Station.

the Boy Scouts have helped him mature and given him leadership skills that would otherwise be lacking. For him, being an Eagle Scout would be confirmation that he could do it when others, and sometimes himself, have doubted him. "It would be a way of showing myself that I have the work ethic to do something big," Kyle said.

Over the years aspiring Eagle Scouts have worked on many projects across town, Linddy said. "We've been very fortunate to have kids that want to help out," he said. "They've been giving back for years. They, and their parents, should be proud."

In addition to being a Boy Scout, Kyle is also a member of the RHAM High School National Honor Society and a member of the high school cross country and track teams. He plans to attend college next fall to study exercise science or physical education.

**Obituaries on
Following Page**

Obituaries

Marlborough

Douglas Henry Secord

Douglas Henry Secord, 91, of Marlborough and Glastonbury, died peacefully at his home on Friday, Sept. 12. He was born in 1917 in Hartford, as the son of Bertha Wurz and William R. Secord, Sr. He was predeceased by his loving wife of 50 years, Eldoretta Baker Hartling, and leaves to mourn his passing a faithful and loving friend, Catherine S. Roberts of Marlborough.

He retired from Pratt & Whitney Aircraft after 40 years of service. He worked as a test operator, field service representative, design analyst and national and international aerospace representative for screw threads and aerospace fasteners. He also served as a consultant to the Society of Automotive Engineers and Pratt & Whitney after his retirement.

Douglas Secord also spent his life serving the community of Marlborough as a member of the Board of Selectmen, Police Commissioner, Justice of the Peace, and Tree Warden. He also served as the chair of the Marlborough Planning and Zoning Commission and the Regional School Board. Douglas also served as the Treasurer for Richmond Memorial Library for over 20 years. He was also a member and officer of the Marlborough Historical Society, Marlborough Lions Club, Marlborough Cemetery Committee, and the Marlborough Senior Citizens, among many other activities.

He is survived by his children, Elizabeth A. Secord, RSM, Brian D. Secord, Gregory C. Secord and his devoted daughter-in-law, Judith A. Secord, all of Hartford; two beloved grandchildren, Ian C. Secord and his wife Michele of Middletown and Heidi L. Secord and her husband Gary Bloss of Stroudsburg, PA. He leaves several nieces and nephews and was predeceased by his brothers, Ralph C. Secord and William R. Secord Jr.

Visiting hours were Wednesday, Sept. 17 at Spencer's Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton. For directions to the funeral home, call 267-2226.

A Homecoming Service was celebrated at Spencer's Funeral Home on Thursday, Sept. 18. Interment immediately followed the service at the Marlborough Cemetery on Route 66 in Marlborough.

In lieu of flowers, those who wish may send contributions in his memory to the Richmond Memorial Library, 15 School Dr., Marlborough, CT 06447. To leave online condolences, visit www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com

Hebron

Gertrude Ellen Toth

Gertrude Ellen (Stone) Toth, 91, of Amston Lake, passed away Wednesday, Sept. 10, at the Liberty Specialty Care Center in Colchester. Born Dec. 29, 1916 in Hartford, she was a daughter of the late Robert J. Stone, Loretta (Doherty) Stone and Irma (Johnson) Stone.

A graduate of New Britain High, Gertrude went on to work in the Quality Assurance Dept. at Pratt & Whitney in East Hartford for over 30 years. In 1958, she moved to her beloved Amston Lake where she lived until 2004. She had served as secretary of the Amston Lake Association for 25 years. She was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother who will always be in the hearts of her family. In addition to her family, UConn women's basketball, the Boston Red Sox and bingo brought her great joy.

She is survived by her son, Robert Davis and his wife, Pat, of East Hartland; her grandsons and their spouses, Christopher and Dulcie Davis of East Hartland and Matthew and Stacy Davis of Detroit Lakes, MN; and three great-grandchildren, Connor, Koby and Ruthy Davis; her sister and brother-in-law, Nancy and Robert Schatz of Newington; her niece, Karlyn Lempa and her husband, Michael of Newington; and her niece, Kyle Charette and her children, Michael and Kelly, all of New Britain.

She was predeceased by her former husband, Fred B. Davis, late of Warehouse Point; and her husband, Alexander S. Toth, late of Amston.

In addition to her family, she leaves her dear roommate of four years at Liberty, Gladys Deitch; and her special friends, Joan and Larry Zimmerman, Carol Chemerynski and Pat Luka. Gert's family wishes to thank all of the caring staff at Liberty, particularly her two special nurses, Anita and Pat.

Friends gathered Saturday, Sept. 13, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, before a Chapel Service. Burial will be private in St. Peter's Cemetery, Hebron.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the Amston Lake Association, P.O. Box 1054, Amston, CT 06231. For online condolences, visit www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Robert Washburn

Robert "Bob" Washburn, 67, of Port St Lucie, FL, formerly of Colchester, beloved husband of Judith (Johanson) Washburn, died Friday, Aug. 29, at home in Florida. Born Oct. 26, 1940 in Springfield MA, he was the son of Robert and Eleanor (Charron) Washburn.

He served in the US Navy prior to owning and operating his own business, Technical Instrument Company, Inc. of East Hartford. In the early 1970s, he moved his company to Colchester and operated as a master machinist and fabricator until retiring in 2004. He was an avid outdoorsman and enjoyed fishing and hunting with friends and family. In August of 2006, he and wife Judy moved to Port St. Lucie.

In addition to his loving wife of 48 years, he is survived by two children, Cory of Jensen Beach, FL, and Kim of Sebastopol, CA; his sister, Rita Dueman, and brother, William Washburn of Michigan.

Friends may call from 2-4 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 27, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A memorial service will be observed at 3:30 p.m. at the funeral home. Friends are invited to visit St. Joseph's Polish Society, 395 South Main St., Colchester following the service, from 4-6 p.m., to reflect and share memories with the family.

Donations in his memory may be made to Treasure Coast Hospices, 1201 SE Indian St., Stuart, FL 34997.

East Hampton

Michael F. Listro

Michael F. Listro, 60, of East Hampton passed away unexpectedly Aug. 23. Born Aug. 18, 1948, Michael was the son of the late Anthony and Dorothy Listro.

Michael graduated from Penney High School. He was in the Air Force with the 6986th Security Squadron (USAFSS). Michael graduated from CSI in computer programming. Michael worked for The Hartford, Aetna, Cigna and St. Raphael. Michael loved cooking, fishing, hiking and music.

Michael is survived by his son, Christian, wife, Amy; daughter, Nicole and five grandchildren. He leaves his brothers, Alan, Tony, Dean; sister, Debra; and his ex-wife, Corinne Hobbs.

A memorial service was held Wednesday, Sept. 17, at Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church, 511 Maple St., Wethersfield.

Colchester

Jean Pawlowski

Jean (LaPiano) Pawlowski of Rocky Hill, formerly of Colchester and Hartford, beloved wife of the late Edward C. Pawlowski, passed away Sunday, Sept. 14. Born in Hartford, daughter of the late Nicholas and Annie (Kearns) LaPiano, she lived in Hartford most of her life and attended Bulkeley High School and lived in Colchester for many years, moving to Rocky Hill seven years ago. Jean was a longtime communicant of S.S. Cyril & Methodius Church and a member of the Ladies Guild.

She leaves three loving daughters, Diane and her husband William Everitt of Colchester, Carol Ann (Bourret), formerly of Granby, and her husband Christopher Eagar of Rye, NH, and Debra Matson of Maine. She also leaves four grandchildren, Bill Everitt, Nicole and her husband Matthew Luedke, Adam Bourret, and Rachel Matson. She leaves a sister, Dolores and her husband Gerard LaChappelle of Rocky Hill.

She was predeceased by a granddaughter, Leah Joy Matson, and a sister, Mary Potz.

The funeral was held Thursday, Sept. 18, from the Waszkelewicz South Green Memorial Home, 43 Wethersfield Ave., Hartford, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at S.S. Cyril & Methodius Church, Hartford. Burial in Mt. St. Benedict Cemetery, Bloomfield. Her family received friends Thursday prior to the Mass, at the funeral home.

East Hampton

Robert E. Pisa Sr.

Robert E. Pisa, Sr., 83, of Old Coach Road, East Hampton, beloved husband of Josephine (DiStefano) Pisa, died Sunday, Sept. 14, at Marlborough Health Care Center. He was born in Middletown, the son of the late Alphonso and Lucy (Micciula) Pisa. Prior to his retirement, he was employed with the Russell Company and later had his own business, Pisa's Venetian Blinds.

Besides his wife, he is survived by a son, Robert Pisa, Jr. of Hartford; a daughter, Luciene Parsley and her husband Andrew of Baltimore, MD; a brother, Joseph Pisa and his wife Mary of Middletown; and two granddaughters, Haley and Madeline Parsley.

He was predeceased by a sister, Lillian Termine.

Funeral services will be held today, Friday, Sept. 19, at 8:15 a.m. from Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown followed by a 9 a.m. Funeral Liturgy at St. Mary's Church, Portland. Burial will be in St. Sebastian Cemetery, Middlefield. Friends called at Biega Funeral Home Thursday, Sept. 18.

Portland

Thomas A. Pierce

Thomas A. Pierce, 68, of Main Street, Portland, beloved husband of Theresa (Passeri) Pierce, peacefully died Tuesday, Sept. 16, at his home. He was born in Danvers, MA, the son of the late Stephen and Elizabeth (Stacey) Pierce Sr.

Tom graduated from Catholic University and later received his master's degree from Purdue University. He then served as a missionary for three years in Kenya before teaching for 40 years and retiring from Xavier High School in Middletown. At Xavier, Tom served as Science Department head for 20 years, played an instrumental role in the designing of the new science labs and development of an AP curriculum. Outside the classroom, he played an active part in athletics and activities. Among his activities, he served as coach of the baseball and volleyball teams, managed the bookstore, moderated the Student Council and coordinated the annual Red Cross Blood Drive. Tom was an active member of St. Mary's Parish in Portland. He was a Eucharistic Minister and along with his wife, coordinated the marriage prep program.

Besides his wife, he is survived by his two daughters, Michelle Griffin and her husband Jason of Pittsburgh, PA, and Stacey Casey and her husband Jason of St. Louis, MO; a brother, Stephen Pierce Jr. and his wife Jeanne of Stuart, FL; and four grandchildren, Patrick and William Griffin and Ainsley and Hayden Casey.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, Sept. 20, at 8:15 a.m. from the Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown, followed by a 9 a.m. Funeral Liturgy in St. Mary Church, Portland. Burial in St. Mary Cemetery, Portland will be at the convenience of the family. Friends may call at the Biega Funeral Home today, Friday, Sept. 19, from 5-8 p.m.

Those who wish may send memorial contributions to Middlesex Hospital Hospice, c/o Dept. of Philanthropy, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT, Xavier High School, 181 Randolph Rd., Middletown, CT and Mercy High School, 1740 Randolph Rd., Middletown, CT 06457.