

# RIVEREAST News Bulletin

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The annual Scarecrow Decorating Contest is underway in Colchester. Among the entries is this display from Shattered Endz Hair Salon, advocating breast cancer awareness.

## It's Scarecrow Time In Colchester

by Katy Nally

A group of not-so-scary scarecrows are livin' it up on Colchester's town green both this week and next, as part of the 10th annual Scarecrow Decorating Contest.

This year, figures with jack-o-lantern heads play musical instruments and bust dance moves, while others read a book to learn "how to howl."

There are 18 entries displayed on the town green and residents can go to a variety of local businesses to vote for their favorites. The event is organized by the Colchester Business Association (CBA) and the Parks and Recreation Department. The kickoff was last Friday when people came out to craft their straw-stuffed figures.

"I love it," said Colchester Parks and Recreation supervisor Anita Pizzutiello, an organizer of the contest. "I think it's a great idea so that people can get excited about fall in New England. It's just a nice group activity."

For the most part, Pizzutiello said the only qualification for the decorations is that they can withstand any weather. She said in the past, the scarecrows were decorated with photographs,

props like tables, chairs and even a soccer goal. "It's limitless," she said. "It's whatever people's imaginations and creativities will allow them to create."

Out on the green this year, there is a diverse mix of scarecrows. The senior center created "Modern Millie," who wears bright purple leggings, a black cape and has huge painted lips. Next to Millie is the Riley family's wooden scarecrow, who rides a bike with E.T. in the front basket. The friendly alien looks a bit more modern since his 1982 debut, as he totes a shiny cell phone to "call home" with. The duo was appropriately named "E.T. Phone Home."

According to Pizzutiello, any Colchester organization, business, youth group, individual or family can enter into the contest. There are winners for each category, she said. Prizes are donated from local businesses or are purchased with the money from the entry fees (which were \$10 per display).

The business category had the most number of entries, with eight, and includes the Shattered Endz Hair Salon's scarecrow scene called "Ta-Ta."

This scene features three women figures dressed in hot pink sweatshirts and matching sweatpants. The women wear florescent pink wigs and white masks. They sit on bails of hay and are guarded by a clan of petit lawn flamingos. Written across the three figures is "SAVE THE TA-TAS," and behind them is a large banner advocating breast cancer awareness month.

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This "E.T. Phone Home" display, by the Riley family of Colchester, shows the alien with a cell phone as his scarecrow friend wheels him around on a bicycle.

## Hebron Finance Director Placed on Leave

by Sarah McCoy

Hebron Director of Finance Jim Day has been placed on paid administrative leave just eight months after beginning work – a move that comes immediately following Day's distribution of a letter calling into question the organization and transparency of town government.

Day started in Hebron in mid-February. As a new employee, he was placed on a six-month probation period, as is customary in Hebron. That period was extended for another three months over the summer.

Interim Town Manager Andy Tierney would not comment on the reasons for the probation extension, but referred to the town's Employee Handbook of Personnel Policies and Procedures. In that document, it is written that an extension of the probationary period may be necessary to "additionally evaluate the employee's performance."

Day said he received no fewer than three unsatisfactory reviews, thus the decision to extend his probation didn't come as a surprise to him. That's not saying he thinks the decision was just.

Day said his evaluations were conducted by four town employees and the three members of the town's Management Team – Tierney, Town Planner Mike O'Leary and Executive Assistant Donna Lanza. However, Day said he didn't get to see the individual evaluations but only the average of everyone's response. He said he was told the individual evaluations were destroyed.

"I scored just low enough that they could keep me on probation," Day said earlier this week.

He also said that he wasn't given any goals, a customary piece of evaluation documents, he said, or specific guidance into what was being asked of him. "Day One, I jumped right in the chair and started working," Day said.

As to why he's been placed on administrative leave, Day said he surmised that the decision came as a response of a letter he distributed to Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance members over last weekend. In the letter, Day charges that he was asked, but refused, to illegally stalk a Hebron resident to determine if they were living in a residential home without a code of occupancy and hush up over a budgeting deficit.

The deficit was a \$61,000 overspending in the Village Green road that was completed in 2007. According to Day, he found the error earlier this spring and was initially told a transfer from the town's undesignated fund balance could be made by the auditor without BOS and BOF approval. Knowing that the town's charter requires BOS and BOF approval for supplemental appropriations, Day insisted that the matter be placed on the BOS agenda in the name of transparency.

He reports that O'Leary was angry with him for the handling of the situation.

Day also charges that the three members of the Management Team were paid extra while former Town Manager Jared Clark remained at the helm.

Day closed his letter by writing, "The Management Team and the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen have tied my hands in performing my duties as a Finance Director in having

an open, honest government where I can protect the taxpayer's assets."

Contrary to Day's belief, Tierney insists that the decision to place Day on administrative leave was made prior to the letter. Because it's a personnel issue, Tierney said he couldn't comment on the matter other than to say that the town is currently conducting an investigation.

Day responded that he doesn't know what Tierney is looking for. "I haven't done anything wrong," he said.

Earlier this fall, the BOS held a workshop to discuss the organization of the town manager position if the duties were to be split amongst three individuals. At that meeting, held on Sept. 3, Day voiced concerns over many aspects of the plan including the day-to-day operation of the town and the checks and balances system to safeguard the town's assets.

Those comments, he believes, made him the enemy of the office. "They want me to be a 'team player' by not reporting stuff that clearly needs to be," Day said this week.

A personnel matter with Day was listed on the agenda for the Board of Selectmen's meeting yesterday, Oct. 15. While the discussion was scheduled to be held in executive session, Day reported on Wednesday that he intended to ask the BOS to speak about the matter in public.

He said he went into the meeting with a clear conscious, convinced he acted appropriately during his time in Hebron. However, Day still doubts he will get an opportunity to return to his post.



**For their entry in the Scarecrow Decorating Contest, the Wyatt family created a small scarecrow reeling in a big fish.**

#### Scarecrow cont. from Front Page

Owner of the hair salon, Debi Rushford, said she went with the pink theme this year to raise awareness about the disease.

Rushford said she and Alice Tipton, who also works at Shattered Endz, are both survivors of breast cancer. Rushford was diagnosed in 2006 and Tipton, two years prior. She said she and Tipton saw each other through chemotherapy and radiation. She said the scarecrow contest was another way to raise awareness, and the flamingos, she said, "just add a little cutesy theme."

Shattered Endz also participated last year, when the business constructed a politically-themed scene with scarecrows resembling Barack Obama and John McCain. Rushford said her business has won in the past, but for her, "it's not about winning." She said it's more about "putting our name out there."

Not only are businesses using the contest to get the word out, but organizations like the Republican and Democratic town committees both have scarecrows on the green. Along with the candidate-crows, "Alive At Your Library," submitted by the Friends of Cragin Library, is also

in the organization category.

In this scene, four cardboard figures sit around books about mummies, witches and fairies. The middle scarecrow appears to be a werewolf dressed in red-flannel and sits near a tall vampire with a black cape. Signs in the scene boast, "They live in books" and people can "Check them out at the library."

The scarecrows will be on the green until Sunday, Oct. 25, when the winners will be announced. Pizzutiello said the prizes have not yet been determined.

To vote for a favorite scarecrow, you can go to: the Parks and Rec. Department at Town Hall, 127 Norwich Ave.; Again! Again! Kids Consignment, 128 Mill St.; Apple Rehab Center, 36 Broadway; AT&T, 95B Linwood Ave.; Plotkin's Jewelry & Gift Shop, 119 South Main St.; Plum Tomato Restaurant, 275 South Main St.; Shattered Endz Hair Salon, 75 Norwich Ave.; Skin Deep, 11 Hayward Ave.; Skyview Realty, 35 Hayward Ave.; and Subway Restaurant, 31 Halls Hill Rd. You can also mail ballots to CBA at P.O. Box 453, Colchester, CT 06415.

## Hebron Schools Receives Grant for New Track

by Sarah McCoy

The Hebron school district recently received a \$3,000 grant to install a new track at Hebron Elementary, as part of an effort by administrators to help curb bullying through exercise.

Last spring, school officials noticed a trend of disciplinary referrals from recess time. In an effort to promote more focused, positive behavior, Hebron Elementary School (HES) Vice Principal Vonda Tencza and physical education teacher Mike Corona marked out a loop at Hebron Elementary School using spray paint and cones for walking or running at recess.

"Our hope was that by targeting a specific behavior we could engage students in a healthy, fun activity," Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz said.

In May, to coincide with Physical Fitness Month, school officials introduced the track and asked students to log their loops. "What we saw were students who were eager to participate," Tencza said. "Even teachers got in on it."

She added that every classroom in the school participated with the fifth grade classes logging over 1,500 miles. One staff member, fifth-grade teacher Jason Kearns, logged 41 miles on his own.

But more than promote a healthy lifestyle, HES staff noticed a significant decrease in the amount of referrals from recess. "It was like night and day," Tencza said. "Prior to the track we were seeing about 17 disciplinary referrals from recess a week. While students had access to the track that number went down to two a week."

With this data, Cruz prepared a grant application from the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund Discovery Grant. This grant provides funding to improve education by sup-

porting school change through personal development and leadership.

The school district received word in September that their program had received the \$3,000 grant, split evenly between this year and next.

With that money, Cruz said the district will install a more formalized track with a gravel surface and lanes for running.

School officials are currently partnering with Town Planner Mike O'Leary, Parks and Recreation Director Rich Calarco and Town Engineer Tom Fenton to combine the track project with the scheduled installation of a soccer field at HES. Next summer, the town will build a soccer field behind the fourth grade portable classrooms at HES, as part of the town-wide park project that was approved in 2007.

The track will likely be installed around the soccer field.

And, since much of the work will be handled in house at a lower cost, Cruz and Tencza are hoping to use the balance of the grant to purchase pedometers for students to track their distances.

Cruz said school officials plan to award plastic bracelets, similar to the yellow ones for Live Strong, to students once they cross a certain mile marker. This incentive, she hopes, will keep students focused and engaged in a positive activity.

"We have seen a real improvement in students working together collaboratively," Cruz said. "Not only that but the exercise students are engaging in ties in with the district's wellness plan."

While the track won't be installed until next summer, Tencza did say the school would be marking out another loop for students to use this year. She said many students have been asking about it this year.

## Gains Made on CMTs, CAPTs in Colchester

by Katy Nally

The results of the Connecticut Mastery Tests and Connecticut Academic Performance Tests are in, and they show that three goals set for Colchester students were achieved during the 2008-09 school year.

All students surpassed the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements for 2009, some district gaps were closed and boys made strides in reading.

The Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMTs) were administered to students in grades three through eight in March. The Connecticut Academic Performance Tests (CAPTs) were given to 10th grade students in March as well. Altogether, about 1,750 children in the Colchester schools were tested.

The CMTs test students in three areas – reading, writing and math – while the CAPTs test them in four – reading, writing, math and science. Scores for both the CMTs and the CAPTs fall in to five categories: below basic, basic, proficient, goal and advanced.

In five grade levels, the number of boys who scored at goal or above on the reading portions of the tests increased from last year. The greatest jump was in 10th and fourth grades, which each saw a 16 percent increase. In third grade, there was a 10.5 percent increase, in fifth a 9.2 percent increase and in sixth a 7.3 percent increase.

Curriculum director Barbara Gilbert said she was excited to see growth from the boys because "we worked on that." She said last year the English curriculum was changed to add more non-fiction, which boys respond to better

than fiction. Other subjects taught more vocabulary and incorporated "more interesting" textbooks, Gilbert said.

Yet, according to the CAPT test scores, girls are still performing better than boys in reading. In reading, 58.7 percent of girls scored at goal or above while only 43.9 percent of boys scored at the same level.

Like the boys, special education students also made improvements in the area of reading. Looking at a cohort of data (where the same students are analyzed over a period of time – in this case, three years), special education students who moved from third to sixth grade had a greater increase in their vertical scores (a system designed to track students' scores from third through eighth grade) in reading than regular education students.

The overall cohort of data for students' progress from third to fifth grade also showed great improvement. "Math, reading and writing all went up significantly for the three years," Gilbert said. In math, there was a 27.7 percent increase in the number of students who scored at goal or above. In 2007, as third-graders, only 65 percent of the students scored at goal or above, while 83 percent of the same students achieved the same mark in 2009.

However, Gilbert said the cohort showing students' progress from sixth to eighth grade did not show the same growth. "There was a little decline with the eighth grade cohort," she said. Students in this cohort, who were sixth-graders in 2007, did not show improvement as eighth-graders.

There was a steady decline in writing over the three years. Only 64 percent of eighth-graders scored at or above goal, while, as sixth-graders two years ago, 67 percent of these students scored at the same level. Reading saw the steepest decline of students who scored at or above goal. Only 72 percent of eighth-graders scored at or above goal, compared to when the students were in seventh grade last year, when 82 percent of them scored at the same level.

This year, students in all grade levels in Colchester met the federal NCLB proficiency standards in reading and math.

For 10th grade, the nationwide standard was for 81 percent of them to score proficient or higher in math and 80 percent to score at the same level in reading. At Bacon, 92 percent of 10th-graders scored proficient or better in math and 91.2 percent scored the same level in reading.

Students at William J. Johnston Middle School and Jack Jacter Intermediate School had similar scores in math. The national proficiency standard was 82 percent for students in third through eighth grade and an average of 94 percent of Colchester students scored at proficient or better in math. For the most part, these students completely surpassed the national standard of 79 percent scoring proficient or better in reading, with an average of 86.18 percent of students achieving that score. However, there was one close call, where only 79.3 percent of third-graders scored proficient or better.

Compared to the district, Gilbert said, "We're

seeing that gap shrinking a little bit." In 10th grade, students surpassed the district in all areas: reading, writing, math and science. Students in grades four and five also scored above the district average in all three areas: reading writing and math. The latter group ranked fourth out of 24 schools in the district in math.

In seventh grade, students scored above or the same as the district and were ranked fifth in reading out of the 24 district schools. However, in grades three, six and eight, students were below the district average. The largest gap was in writing, where there was an average difference of 15.23 percent between Colchester students in these three grades and the district average. In eighth grade, only 64 percent of students scored goal or above, while 76 percent of the district scored at the same level. Yet, Gilbert said this was a good year for Colchester students compared to the district.

For this school year, Gilbert said the target is to have 90 percent of students at all three schools scoring goal or better. "If you have 90 percent making goal, you're doing pretty good," she said.

This year, with the addition of a few new programs, that goal could be achieved. According to a presentation about the scores that was given on Sept. 8, these new programs include a core-based reading program and Scientific Research Based Instruction (SRBI), which is state-mandated. Through SRBI more vocabulary instruction and programs to monitor progress will be implemented.

# Meet the Portland Board of Education Hopefuls

by Michael McCoy

When Portland candidates ran for the Board of Education two years ago, they probably didn't expect to face three hot-button issues all in 2009, namely curriculum alignment, the Nichols Bus Service contract, and Open Choice. And let's not forget the unprecedented budget process.

Who knows what the future holds for this year's Election Day winners?

There are seven candidates running for four slots on the Board of Education: Democrats Andrea Alfano, Rosemary Murphy-Woitowitz and Ben Srb, and Republicans Joseph Dinegar, Jennifer Godwin, Brenna Kosicki and Christopher Orcutt.

If the BOE were a career, Alfano, 49, got plenty of on-the-job training over the last year. Alfano has filled a vacancy since 2008. On filling the vacancy, she said, "It was nice to have the opportunity... to see if it was something I wanted to pursue."

Clearly it was, because Alfano is running this fall. This is in spite of the fact that last year was not quite rookie-friendly. Alfano listed the school bus bid and eventual waiver, the Open Choice decision, and the unprecedented budget process as challenges, and she has come out on the other side.

Pleased with the way the board handled all three, she said, "Generally speaking, we work well together," and specifically credited Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen for her part in the budget process.

Alfano said that, in the upcoming years, she hopes to retain more students in the system, figuring that a somewhat inordinate number choose other options, especially at the high school. However, this is where Alfano noted particular strengths, such as Advanced Placement Courses, the Water and People Program, and the science curriculum's Project Lead the Way. Alfano said the school "offers an awful lot for a small town."

Alfano is also proud of the recent strides the district has made with technology and said she hopes to push that forward. She also said facility improvements continue to be a priority.

"Quality education and student achievement are first and foremost," Alfano concluded.

Alfano has lived in town for 13 years. She and her husband, Ralph, have a son attending Brownstone Intermediate School.

Prior to coming aboard the BOE, Alfano had been part of the Junior Women's Club, as well as the PTO, at every level of her son's education. She also teaches Sunday school at the First Congregational Church, and was part of the effort to build new playscapes at both

Gildersleeve and Valley View Schools.

Professionally, Alfano has logged over 20 years in social services. She currently works for the University of Connecticut School of Social Work as a trainer for the Department of Social Services.

As for Dinegar, while he was not available for comment, the Republicans had previously furnished the *Rivereast* with some biographical information.

Dinegar grew up a "Marine Brat," according to the Republicans, and eventually graduated from the University of New Haven. He moved town in 2004 and lives with his companion Sharon Paddock.

He has been active in local organizations such as the Middlesex Hospital Vocal Chords, and currently teaches high school chemistry in Hartford. Through his career, Dinegar is "impassioned to help his students achieve success through positive goal setting strategies, academic diligence, and community awareness" and understands "it takes a village to raise a child."

Though Godwin, like Dinegar, was not available for comment, the Republicans had previously furnished the *Rivereast* with some biographical information.

Godwin has lived in town her whole life, and is days away from marrying her fiancé Steven Lohmayer. A graduate of Mercy High School and UConn, she currently works at Liberty Bank in Portland.

Kosicki, 38, has filled a vacancy on the BOE for the past year, but she's racked up 15 years in education professionally. During that time, she said, "I've experienced a tremendous amount of progress in the way we educate our children."

"I've had an amazing experience," she said of her time on the BOE, saying it has left her "enlightened" and "very excited about the future."

One of the pleasures of serving on the board she mentioned was working with Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen, pointing out "how strong she is as a leader in this district."

Kosicki credited Doyen and the BOE for "thinking outside of the box." She said an example of this was the new Water and People course. She also praised the school board for the early 2009 decision to align the middle school and high school schedules.

When asked about the arduous 2009 budget process, she said, "I thought it was fabulous," explaining that it was somewhat less complicated than the Hebron school district process. (Kosicki recently resigned from her position as Director of Special Education at in Hebron, and on Monday will start a new job, as Director of Pupil Personnel and Instructional Support at Hartford Public Schools.)

Kosicki promoted a somewhat defensive strategy for the next couple years, saying, "I'd like to move forward with what we have in place. Our focus needs to be not to lose progress, not to lose staff." She said the "status quo" was not such a bad word at a time like this.

Kosicki and her husband, Brian, have two young children, the older of which attends Valley View School. They've lived in town since 2004.

Lifelong Portland resident Murphy-Woitowitz, 41, has sat on the BOE since 2005. When asked what made her run in the first place, she noted having kids in the school system and "her long family history of public service" starting with her grandfather, William.

Murphy-Woitowitz said she's spent the last four years on the board "trying to ensure the kids are getting the best education they can for the buck."

Pointing to facilities as stated priority, she vouched for the BOE's past actions toward this, and felt the town was ahead of the game with technology, citing "SmartBoards in almost every classroom." She also counted Project Lead the Way and the new Water and People course as forward thinking initiatives.

She also expressed pleasure over the students' performances on standardized tests, offering, "We're making some advances there."

Murphy-Woitowitz also stood behind the BOE's decisions during this year's budget process. "Did we make everybody happy? Probably not," she mused. "We did the best we could with what we have." She said she expected the coming budget cycle to be just as challenging if not more so.

Murphy-Woitowitz has two children (one at Brownstone Intermediate School and one at Gildersleeve) and a husband named Fred. She is currently a nurse at Wesleyan University's Student Health Services.

Orcutt said that, if elected, he will "make sure they listen to all involved while they're making policy." He added that right now, "I

don't think it's happening all the time," while adding, "My goal is not to bash the present board."

Orcutt also said he wants to ensure policy is not rushed. He cited last winter's Open Choice decision as an example of this, commenting, "I would have liked to see some more time and thought" devoted to that issue.

"I think the board's made some tough decisions," he said. "I think that's going to have to continue to happen."

Orcutt, 44, sits on the board of directors on the Irish Red and White Setter Association, a part of the American Kennel Club. Just after moving to town, Orcutt was active as an EMT and firefighter in town for eight years. He and his wife, Tami, have two sons, one at Portland High School, and one is a graduate there of. The family has live in town since 1995.

He is currently the associate director for expedited safety reports for a large pharmaceutical company.

Lifelong resident Srb, 34, has filled a vacancy on the BOE since early this year. "I love giving to the community," Srb said about his accepting the seat.

Srb said he's proud of the varied curriculum Portland offers, including Project Lead the Way's pre-engineering curriculum, and the new Water and People course. "We have a ton of courses with college credit," he said.

He figured, "The more things you expose a child to, the more options, the better." However, he recognized this isn't free and counted his priority as providing the best education "with the funds that we have." This is, of course, never easy, and, through a nervous chuckle, said of the upcoming budget cycle, "The next one's gonna be tough."

Srb praised the board's effectiveness as a whole, specifying he felt both parties were a part of this.

Since 2003, Srb has sat on the Zoning Board of appeals as well, and he also volunteers with the Portland Exchange Club. Srb runs Primary Landscaping in town. He and his wife, Holly, have a two-year-old son.



Alfano



Dinegar



Godwin



Kosicki



Murphy-Woitowitz



Orcutt



Srb

# East Hampton Caregiver Charged With Defrauding Elderly Patient

by Michael McCoy

A local visiting nurses' aid could face prison time after taking a 74-year-old woman for close to \$25,000, East Hampton Police said last week.

On Oct. 6, East Hampton Police charged Michelle Cherry, 29, of East Hampton and Middletown, with first-degree larceny, first-degree identity theft, criminal impersonation, fraudulent use of ATMs, credit card fraud, and misapplication of property. (As for her residence, Sgt. Garritt Kelly explained she lived in Middletown during the crime, and moved to East Hampton quite recently.)

The arrest came after a five-month investigation by Officer Mark Pekar. According to police, Cherry, working through Middlesex Home Health Care, began working at the home of the victim in November 2008. Before long, Cherry began running errands for her patient, using the patient's debit card to purchase incidentals such as groceries. However, in no time, Cherry "had her way with it," according to Kelly.

Kelly mentioned that even if Cherry had never misused the card, she should never have been running such errands in the first place, as that did not fall under the purview of her job as caregiver. Instead, Kelly said, "She chose to help herself out primarily."

Personal purchases by Cherry included groceries, electronics, "you name it," Kelly said. Virtually all the purchases happened in the area: East Hampton (Food Bag, Rite Aid), Portland, Haddam and Cromwell (Stop and Shop and K-mart), but Kelly said Cherry would take the card home with her "for days at a time" to make purchases even when she

was off the clock.

All the purchases were either by way of debit or by making ATM cash withdrawals, Kelly said.

Kelly said Cherry even took the initiative to intercept the mail and destroy bank statements before anyone could be the wiser. Despite this, by May of 2009, the patient's daughter noticed excessive withdrawals, Kelly said.

Kelly said that when questioned, Cherry said she "began by taking a chance at" using the debit card and before long, "it spiraled out of control." This actually affected her visits to the patient as well. Though she was assigned to come by twice a week, once the habit started, Cherry "started showing up more than she was required to," Kelly said.

According to Kelly, part of the tedious investigation involved Pekar visiting many of the businesses where purchases were made, as well as sifting through all the purchases to separate the legitimate from the fraudulent.

Though Kelly said Cherry was immediately fired from her job when police were contacted in May, he mentioned that in December 2008, another family of a patient under Cherry's care lobbied a complaint with her employer over an alleged missing \$900. Kelly said Cherry was never charged with anything over it though, and retained her employment.

Cherry was released on a \$20,000 bond, Kelly said, and is scheduled to appear in court on Oct. 20.

Kelly singled out the larceny charge and called it "a serious felony charge," with a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison.



Kids at the Enchanted Jungle Learning Center review where their mouths are with staff member Meghan McDowell. Pictured from left are Laurelin Boyer, 2, McDowell, Jared Pierce, 2, and Samantha Renninger, 2.

# New Colchester Daycare Off to Strong Start

by Katy Nally

Three playrooms, 2-year-olds and a jungle in a daycare is just what you'll find at the Enchanted Jungle Learning Center. Filled with giggling children, multitudes of toys and an attentive staff, the center is off to a good start since it opened on Sept. 8.

Last week on Oct. 7, after naptime, kids could play with toys in the tub full of green water (dyed with food coloring), have story time or decorate a paper pumpkin. There were shrieks of laughter coming for the water tub, where 3-year-old Bryan Sowell played with plastic fishes, but it was just business as usual for owner Kim Anderson.

Anderson is a first-time business owner and said she was happy with the progress the Enchanted Jungle has made.

Anderson worked at KinderCare in Oxford for nine years and took classes in early childhood education at Western Connecticut State University. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in liberal arts after switching from the teaching program, when she realized a career in daycare would "be more fun."

"I didn't want to test them," Anderson said, "I wanted to play with them." Since then, she opened the Enchanted Jungle Learning Center where she oversees a staff of six. "I think it's great so far," she said. "I'm in charge, but I can still go in and play with the kids."

Unlike other daycares, Anderson said there are unique activities offered at her center like piano lessons. Anderson assumes the role of piano teacher, sharing her 12 years of knowledge with the kids. She said there are other additions to the center's curriculum, but would not divulge, so parents and kids will just have

to come and find out.

The center is in the same building where former daycare center First Step, was, at 67 Hayward Ave. After Anderson leased the building, she did intensive renovations to the inside and out. She painted the inside with bright colors and pictures of jungle animals to appeal to kids' sensory nature. She said the painting was the hardest part about the renovations, but it was worth it because Anderson said she "created a really great center."

Anderson said the center is equipped with manipulatives like blocks, books, art projects and sensory objects like the animals on the walls. Last week, three 2-year olds sat quietly and listened to *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Eric Carle. The kids excitedly pointed out a blue heron and a mountain goat as the book was read. Then staff member Meghan McDowell led the three in a song about bears. Later, the group reviewed where their ears, eyes and nose were.

On the opposite side, three other kids happily played with toys floating in a tub full of green water. Four-year old Anthony Brandwein played with a watering can and sang a song about fish with his friend Bryan.

The Enchanted Jungle Learning Center is open to children ages six weeks to 12 years, Anderson said. Because the daycare is on the bus route, kids can get dropped off at the center after school and parents can pick them up after work. The center is open from 6:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

For more information, call the center at 531-3211.

# Marlborough Vet Suing Town Over Ordinance

by Katy Nally

Willie Hodge, a disabled veteran in Marlborough, is suing the Board of Selectmen (BOS) for allegedly violating the town charter.

The lawsuit asks for an injunction to stop the BOS from adopting a controversial ordinance. Hodge's attorney, Pasquale Amodeo, said the lawsuit is not asking for money, but only to recover court fees, which he said would be \$300 or less. The lawsuit was filed last Friday and the board was served Tuesday.

Amodeo is representing Hodge and his wife Robin, who have been trying to become property tax-exempt since May. Hodge is entitled to be property tax exempt in Connecticut because of state statute 12-81 § 21(C). According to the statute, if a veteran has received a special adaptive housing grant from the federal government and is 100 percent disabled, they are eligible for property tax exemption. The Veterans Association deemed Hodge 100 percent disabled, because he has very limited use of his legs and uses a wheelchair or a cane to get around, and he received this grant in 2008. Robin Hodge asked the BOS in May to adopt this state statute, so she and her husband could become tax-exempt.

On Sept. 15, the selectmen voted to have the town attorney draft an ordinance that would adopt the state statute. The board presented a draft of the proposed ordinance at the Oct. 6 meeting. It included a "sunset clause," which gives the ordinance an expiration date. In this case, the ordinance will continue to be effective for the grand list of 2010, but it will expire on Oct. 1, 2011. It also excludes the surviving spouse from property tax exemption in the event of the veteran's death. The selectmen decided to bring this draft to a public hearing on Oct. 27, where residents could voice concerns.

For the most part, the lawsuit revolves around one phrase of the state statute. The statute reads the "legislative body" of the town must decide to adopt this tax exemption and must also decide to extend it to the surviving spouse.

The Marlborough charter defines the "legislative body" as both a town meeting and the BOS. The duties of the BOS are defined in sections 3.3 to 3.6 and chapter four of the town charter. According to these sections, the BOS has the authority to appoint and oversee boards, handle day-to-day matters and enact ordinances.

Although the BOS has the power to enact

ordinances, according to the lawsuit, a town meeting should be held to decide this tax exemption. The charter states a town meeting handles matters that are "deemed of sufficient importance."

Also, the lawsuit states, statute 12-81 § 21(C) does not require the town to enact an ordinance to make a resident property tax exempt.

Part of the lawsuit asks for a temporary injunction that would stop the BOS from adopting this proposed ordinance. The selectmen would vote to adopt it after the public hearing on Oct. 27. This injunction, Amodeo said, would halt their vote.

The BOS has been ordered to appear before the Hartford Superior Court on Monday, Oct. 26, the day before the scheduled public hearing.

Amodeo referred to this lawsuit as "a last resort." He said the BOS had already heard the same complaints made in the lawsuit at several past board meetings. On Oct. 6, veterans from neighboring towns came out to the BOS meeting to rally against the selectmen.

Amodeo even wrote a letter to the board dated Oct. 2 telling them if there wasn't a town meeting to decide on the tax exemption, the BOS could face litigation. The board read the letter into the record at the Oct. 6 meeting.

Amodeo said a town meeting should have been held by now, so people in town could vote on the tax exemption. He said it's "anti-American" to deny residents the chance to vote on something that would affect their taxes. Robin Hodge agreed, saying, "I understand the town meeting to be the legislative body of the town, so we want the town to decide."

According to the tax assessor, Marie Hall, the tax exemption works out to about .42 per person per year. The Hodges' property tax is \$4,416 and there are roughly 10,000 taxpayer accounts in Marlborough.

Robin Hodge and Amodeo said it's unfortunate the conflict has resulted in a lawsuit. Hodge said "it's a shame" to spend money on lawyer fees, just to receive something she and her husband are entitled to. Amodeo said he's not receiving much from the Hodges, but he's doing the work because "it's the right thing to do."

First Selectman Bill Black declined to comment on the lawsuit because of pending litigation, but he did say on Wednesday, "It's unfortunate."

# School Board Candidates Talk About Issues

by Michael McCoy

How can you get blood from a stone during the budget season? Can East Hampton graduates excel in the 21st century's world economy? And just how does the town update that darn high school building?

These are just a few of the issues the dozen Board of Education candidates are thinking about this fall. The 12 are running for five seats.

Chatham Party candidates are Molly-Kate Hall, Scott Minnick, Democratic candidates are Joanne Barmasse, Glenn Gemma, Chris Hetrick, Mark Laraia and Rich Leone. Republicans are Carol Lane, Karen Lee, Sal Nucifora, Josh Piteo and Gina Ritchie.

Barmasse is seeking re-election to the school board. She said that when she ran for the BOE four years ago, she thought it was time to "volunteer my efforts where it was really important." When asked to point out some of the board's wisest decisions during her tenure, she mentioned hiring Superintendent of Schools Judy Golden, shifting toward full-day kindergarten and hiring language arts and math coordinators, people she said who do "a tremendous amount of work." Furthermore, Barmasse, 50, said she quite often attended meetings for the eight years prior to being elected, and said she pushed for those coordinators during that time in the audience.



**Barmasse**

She also pointed to the opening of the career-based Learning Center, which the school shares with East Haddam.

Barmasse said that, on the school board, she considers herself to be the "knowledge seeker." She is the district's representative on LEARN's executive board and frequents Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) workshops and conferences. In April, she attended the National School Board Association Conference in San Diego.

As for the future, Barmasse said the school board needs to develop a "new vision statement and strategic plan." She explained, "We're in the 21st century now... We don't really know where our point B is."

One issue that will be hashed out in the future is possible facilities improvements. On this topic, she didn't mince words: "I'm not willing to risk accreditation by not doing anything. I strongly believe we need to do something, and we need to do it now."

More specifically, she said these improvements were necessary to enhance learning in the areas of science, technology, math and engineering. Along the line with this modern approach, she promoted the teaching of critical thinking and problem solving, and encouraged projects that are "more real life based."

"We're in a new century here," she summed up, and also pointed to foreign language as something that needs to be taught earlier.

She also mentioned the addition of school psychologists as a necessary step in recent years, figuring if students "can't concentrate on learning, they're not gonna learn."

She and her husband Mark have two children who spent kindergarten through 12th grade in the East Hampton school system.

Prior to her election, Barmasse, who moved to town in 1986, racked up quite a public resume, including, the Junior Women's Club, PTO, Playscape Committee, and high school sports boosters.

Though she said she stopped working when her kids were young, her career has included retail and the textile industry. She is currently "exploring opportunities" professionally.

Gemma, who is also seeking re-election, is a self-described "advocate for education," who wants it to be "high quality." He has been on the school board since 2005, and also, more specifically, is on the board's Building, Grounds and Transportation Committee. Along that note, he pointed to the facilities critique from New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) several years ago, and said, "I think we need to move forward to meet these requirements. We need to bring the schools into the new millennium."

Gemma said "our science labs are way out of date," and described these as "tools for teachers."

Gemma also counted the hiring of Golden two years ago as a great success, and also commended the board for passing "tight" budgets

that nonetheless "met the needs of the students."

But he wouldn't go any further than calling the 2009 process "okay," explaining, "I'm not an advocate of cutting teachers." Though no teachers were laid off, he pointed to two positions that were unfilled. Though he reluctantly voted for the budget, he said of those unfilled positions, "I'm not proud of that."

He said, ideally, he would like cuts to not adversely impact the students, but asserted, "There's no way you can tell me that cutting a teacher didn't do that." Gemma said the district is making progress, but, "It's a sloooooo process."

Gemma, 49, has spent over 20 years as a social worker, and he now does so in a school. He has a wife named Deborah and a daughter in the high school. He moved to town in 1988.

When he first moved to town, Gemma was a member of the Ambulance Association. He is currently a member of the Connecticut Critical Incident and Stress Management Team.

As for Hall, while she could not be reached for comment, the Chatham Party previously furnished the *Rivereast* with some biographical information. The mother of two preschool-aged children has lived in East Hampton for nearly 40 years. She is currently employed as an insurance writer, but has a background in education.



**Gemma**



**Hall**

Though new to town, Hetrick is a BOE veteran. He moved to East Hampton in March, shortly after wrapping up 13 years on Portland's BOE last year. "I'm experienced, but this will also be a very new experience," Hetrick said of his candidacy. He recognized, "I know East Hampton is a different town," going on to add "different school system, different people, different needs."

It seems that Hetrick, 51, is encouraged by the current BOE. "I think things look pretty good," he said. "I'm not necessarily coming in to change anything." Hetrick said he has already been to "a number of" meetings.

As for future initiatives, Hetrick said he was aware of the NEASC findings, specifically at the high school. "I have been involved with major renovations," Hetrick said, alluding to the Portland high/middle school complex.

Hetrick also said, "I've always enjoyed being involved with contract negotiations."

Speaking on the topic of budgets he said that, given the economy, if elected he would approach the process somewhat differently than in the past. But he said of the current board, "They seem to be doing the right things to balance the budget." As for his own experience, he pointed to a year when the Portland BOE maintained a 1.2 percent budget increase in the face of a four percent rise in fixed costs alone.



**Hetrick**

While in Portland, Hetrick coached little league, taught CCD, and served as Eucharistic minister at St. Mary's Church. "I'm just getting involved with St. Patrick's now," he said.

On a larger scale, he has also served on the Northeast Quality Council and the Statistical Process Control Authority.

Hetrick and his wife, Colleen, have four grown children, all of whom attended the Portland school system. Professionally, Hetrick is a Quality Insurance Manager, and works at Airex Rubber Products in Portland. His grandfather started the company in 1943.

Lane, 69, moved to East Hampton in 1967, and said she's "really been involved in education ever since I moved here."

"Being a teacher, I really think there's a lot right happening in East Hampton," Lane said. For instance, she called the district's teachers "committing" and said they "work hard."

However, speaking to a national level, she criticized No Child Left Behind and standardized testing, saying, "There's too much emphasis on that right now."

Lane said that, if elected, she would have a lot of perspectives to offer. In addition to obviously being a board member, she would also have put time in as a parent, volunteer and teacher. She said, though, that as a newcomer, she expected to "sit there and listen for a while."



**Lane**

However, not to be mistaken for a wallflower, and noting the tough economy, she said, "I'm going to look to push for education as the best investment we can make."

"I guess that's what I bring is experience," surmised Lane.

Both of Lane's children graduated from East Hampton High School, and from 1972-78, Lane served on the BOE. As a teacher, she racked up 26 years in the district before retiring last year.

Lane has also been a member of the PTO, the East Hampton Library Board and Middlesex Visiting Nurses Association. She is currently a member of the Joseph N. Goff House Board.

After filling a vacancy for the last year-and-a-half, Laraia, 44, is looking to retain his seat this year. Laraia is no stranger to the town or education in general, having lived in East Hampton since 1997, and racking up 21 years as a teacher. (He currently teaches fourth grade in South Windsor.)

Speaking of his initial involvement with the BOE, he said, "A lot of it obviously stems from what I do for a living." He continued, "I really felt that East Hampton was behind the time in a lot of areas."

However, contrary to disparaging the BOE, he said, "They're so forward thinking. It kind of meshed with the thinking that I have as well."

Seemingly proud of what the BOE has accomplished during his tenure, he made special mention of the spring's budget challenge, remarking, "Just being part of the budget process is eye opening," he said. He added that this particular cycle highlighted the importance of distinguishing needs from wants, a challenge he said the board met, while letting the constraints impact students as minimally as possible.

As for the future, Laraia said, "One of the biggest things is the facilities," alluding to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' (NEASC) report that stated, among other concerns, the high school science labs were inadequate. However, as such a project of this scope transcends the purview of the BOE, Laraia figured, "Really, it sits in the lap of the town council."

Though recognizing that now seems an inopportune time financially to proceed, he asked, "When is ever a good time? If not now, when?"

Laraia said his other priority is streamlining curriculum from grade to grade. However, he said the district is already making progress on such cohesion, thanks in large part to the superintendent. "Judy Golden has done a great job making sure we're aligned."

"In addition to his time on the BOE, Laraia has also coached little league baseball and youth soccer in town. Prior to this, he served in the town he grew up, on Rocky Hill's BOE from 1991-4. He and his wife Laura have a son at Center School.

As for Lee, after being interviewed for this story, she retracted her comments upon being told she could not review what she said before the story went to print.

This seems an appropriate time for Leone to make a bid for the BOE, as he is in the middle of making a career change to teaching.

"I just feel the town needs qualified, strong leadership," Leone said of his initiative to run, and said that he looked forward to serving on a board that helps shape policy.

As for the current BOE, he said, "You've got a lot of well-intentioned people for the most part," but also pointed to "some outdated views."

However, he resisted being too critical, recognizing that at budget time, "Every year, the Board of Education has the biggest bullseye on their back."

If elected, Leone said he "hoped to bring a marketing flavor to the board" and encourage "better collaboration" with the Town Council, town manager and superintendent.

Looking at the high-profile facilities issue, he looked to "ensure we are pursuing any and every opportunity for grants," and figured anyone who thinks all these things can be accomplished "without increasing our revenue stream" are kidding themselves.

Since 2007, Leone has been a part of the Economic Development Commission, which he has chaired since last year. He is also a part of the Middlesex County Revitalization Commission, and has volunteered for YMCA Adventure Guides, East Hampton Youth Soccer, basketball and Little League. He may also be spotted as the lead vocalist for Johnny 5, a regular musical act at Old Home Days.

Leone, 47, is currently pursuing certification as a secondary social studies teacher, and has regularly been a substitute teacher in East Hampton. Prior to this, he racked up 20 years in the corporate arena, primarily working in marketing and sales, most recently in the mortgage industry.

Leone and his wife Kris Anne moved to town in 1997 and have two children in the East Hampton school system in Glastonbury.

Minnick, a French teacher at Smith Middle School, these last 12 years, and said he hopes to use his educational insight on the BOE. "I'm hoping to make the Board of Education stronger than it is," he said.

However, Minnick seemed to think highly of the current BOE, but noted one criticism: "They've allowed the Town Council to control it." He cited an example of this as the Town Council prioritizing the moving of town hall to Center School over the high school improvements. He said of the BOE, "They didn't advocate for students as well as they could have or should have."

Minnick said this spilled into the budget process. While he commended the budget they submitted, he admonished them for being content when the superintendent and town manager cut it before it reached the council. "They didn't have the right to do that," he said.

A budget decision he opposed was the shift to pay-to-play. "I would advocate for finding other options next year."

"One thing that lacks is debate and honest talk," he said of the board.

Minnick pointed to the high school renovation, specifically updating the science labs at the top of his to-do list. He also said the BOE meetings need to be recorded. Though minutes are taken, he said there is no audio or video recording, something he said the Freedom of Information Act requires. "You need trust," said Minnick.

Minnick (who is 40, but will turn 41 by Election Day) has lived in town his whole life. He and his wife Lynn have two children.

As for Nucifora, he said he wants "to see an improvement in our schools," and said his primary focus was to provide more "accelerated classes" for students. He said the lack thereof "only encourages boredom and lack of interest" before leading to worse.

"We should be pushing our kids to do more in school," he said.

"I think the current board is complacent," he said, adding that he hopes the Democrats lose control of the BOE after this election. Nucifora explained that he felt all too often the BOE prac-



**Leone**



**Laraia**



**Minnick**



**Lee**

tices “rubberstamping” of the superintendent’s decisions.

Nucifora noted the current push “to expand the schools a lit bit,” promising, “I’ll be right on top of that.” However, he did not endorse the merging of the Memorial and Center Schools or the immediate updating of the high school science labs. “I’d have to really see a need,” he said of the latter, explaining the student’s education wasn’t “lacking because of it, not yet.”

Speaking on budgeting issues, Nucifora said he did not condone the decision to adopt pay-to-play, and hoped to save through other measures this year, adding that teacher’s salaries was another area he did not wish to cut.

He also expressed criticism over the BOE’s depending on an auditor to look at items line by line. “I’d like to see that myself,” he said, a process he said the Board of Finance already employs.

Nucifora, 41, who has previously served on the Chatham Historical Society, has lived in town since 1972 as is currently a mechanical engineer for Electric Boat.

As for Piteo, technology seemed to be first



**Nucifora**

on his mind, as far as education goes. He said the BOE needs to keep up with this, “especially for the older students.” He continued, “I don’t know if that’s a priority to this board.”

He called the district “behind the ball” when it comes to teaching communications, specifically television. He said there was a program at the middle school, but added, “Then, it kind of disappeared at the high school.”

“You gotta be wired,” he asserted.

Facilities is another issue that has been debated a lot in town. “The high school is antiquated,” he said, figuring it needs to be addressed in one way or another. However, he went on, “I’m not certain of this current plan at all,” holding that the demographics may not support such ambitious changes.

Piteo also mentioned concern over language skills in the early grades, citing CMT scores as the foundation of his worry. “They do tell a story,” he said of the scores. “If they don’t come out well,” he continued, “the administration has to answer to that.”

“If you can’t communicate, everything else



**Piteo**

goes by the wayside,” he said, championing language skills as the bedrock of success in all area.

“[The students] have to be ready for a world economy,” he said, surmising that in today’s world, East Hampton graduates may be competing with people from 5,000 miles away.

Since 1998, Piteo, 46, has served on the state’s Commission on Children, and now, along with his wife, Karen, he has a son at Memorial School.

Piteo moved to town in 1990, though he has summered on Lake Pocotopaug, since he was a kid. His family has done likewise, dating back to the 1940’s.

Piteo served on the Board of Finance for four years at the beginning of the decade, and since 1999, he has been a member of the Rotary Club. But he wears a number of hats. Professionally, he is a private equity management investor for a limited partnership. But, he is also a professional videographer on the side. Playing to that strength, he has also hosted the Comcast public access show *Get Real* since 1996, which addresses local topics.



**Ritchie**

Ritchie said she thinks “education is highly important,” which makes sense since it’s her bread and butter. An East Hampton resident since 2006, Ritchie is currently a learning specialist at Franklin Academy in East Haddam.

Because of this, Ritchie admitted she has not had much time to immerse herself in the finer points of East Hampton BOE operations, but said that if elected, “That’s something I’m looking forward to.”

Similarly, Ritchie said she could not really weigh in on the recent performance of the current BOE, but acknowledged that they have to negotiate a difficult, and somewhat ironic balancing act as far as the economy. She figured that students need to get “the type of education that makes them competitive” once they leave high school. At the same time, she said this same economy is “challenging taxpayers,” making it hard to fund everything the students need.

Ritchie, 36, figured it may behoove the BOE to explore what other districts do to find solutions that “may be underutilized” currently.

However, Ritchie was not critical of the BOE, and while not pointing out any deficiencies on the board said curriculum was something she was “strongly interested” in exploring.

For the past year, Ritchie has served on the Middle Haddam Historic District Commission. She and her husband Steve live in Middle Haddam

## Five Running for Colchester School Board

by Katy Nally

A mix of incumbents and challengers are running for the Board of Education (BOE) this year.

Five candidates are running for the school board, but there are only four seats open.

The five are Republicans Betsy Ciccone, Ron Goldstein and Mitchell Koziol and democrats Monica Swyden-Bolles and Donald Kennedy. Mary Tomasi, a Democrat, is running unopposed to fill a two-year vacancy within the board.

Ciccone, Swyden-Bolles and Kennedy are incumbents. Current BOE chair William Hettrick and board member Mary Lynn Burke will not run for another term, and after elections, a new chairperson will be appointed.

Of the five candidates, Ciccone has spent the longest time on the BOE, as she had been member for the past eight years. In 1984, Ciccone moved to town and since then all four of her children have attended Colchester public schools. She has a son and a daughter who still attend Bacon Academy.

Ciccone graduated from Churchland High School in Portsmouth, VA. For a while she was a stay-at-home mom, until she became a part-time hall monitor at East Haddam High School, then later a part-time secretary. This summer, Ciccone found a full-time position at MCC Construction in Colchester where she works as a project coordinator. She is also the co-president of the PTO at Jack Jackter and William J. Johnston Middle School.

Ciccone said she decided to run again this year to “continue making a difference for Colchester and its students.” She said, as a board member, “My first and foremost focus is doing the best we can for our school district.” She



**Ciccone**

said much of the job is “common sense,” which, she said, comes naturally to her. She added that lately society as a whole seems to be lacking common sense, so this trait is quickly becoming a viable resource.

Running on the Republican slate with Ciccone is Goldstein. As a Board of Finance member since 1995, Goldstein said he wanted to make the switch to the BOE because, “I have a true passion for education and making sure students are prepared for their future.”

Goldstein, 41, was “born and raised” in Colchester, where he went to Bacon Academy. From there he earned a Bachelor of Arts in economics and history at Brandeis University and went on to Harvard University to earn his law degree. Goldstein returned to Colchester in 1992. He works as an attorney in town.

In addition to being the vice president of the finance board, Goldstein is also a liaison to the BOE and has attended all the past meetings. He said he is “very involved” with the school board. He said he would make an excellent board member because he has a “passion for every student and the school,” and the commitment to “serve every student.”

Koziol is also running on the Republican slate. He said his decision to run was largely due to his two young daughters who will soon



**Goldstein**

enter the school system. “They’re basically the reason why I decided to run,” he said. “I wanted to make sure the education they got was a good one.”

Like Goldstein, Koziol is also a native of Colchester. After graduating from Bacon, Koziol earned an Associate of Science in computer and electrical engineering from Hartford Technical Institute.

Koziol said because he represents the views of many people in town and has “a vested interest” in the school system, he would make a good board member.

Like Koziol, Swyden-Bolles has a “vested interest” because her two children are enrolled in Colchester public schools. However, Swyden-Bolles said her kids are not the only reason why she decided to run for re-election. As the first person in her family to go to college, she said she has “first-hand experience in the importance of education.” Swyden-Bolles, 35, graduated from Trinity College with a Bachelor of Arts in bio-chemistry and chemistry. She now works at Pfizer doing analytical research.

Swyden-Bolles also works closely with schools in Colchester through two organizations that she founded. In 2003 she began Colchester Advocates for Public Schools, a political action committee that informs voters about referendum questions regarding schools. Then in 2008 she founded the Colchester Learning Foundation, which brings “innovative learning experience to Colchester schools and the community,” she said.

During her past two years on the BOE, Swyden-Bolles said she has learned to “work



**Swyden-Bolles**

very closely with teachers, the superintendent and with test scores to find, and target those areas for improvement.” She said for this year, she wants the board to work on “rigor” and “raising the bar” for students.

The other Democrat on the slate is Kennedy, another incumbent. Kennedy replaced former board member John Mazzerella in December 2007.

Kennedy has lived in Colchester for 17 years. His three boys are all currently enrolled in the Colchester school system. Kennedy has a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from the University of Connecticut and has worked for 24 years in the information and technology department at Hartford Insurance Company. Kennedy said his IT background would give the board “a different view on things.” As a board member, he said he would try and “bring in technology to reduce costs and increase efficiency.”

For this year, Kennedy said the board should focus on “economic development.” He said the tax burden placed on residents should decrease, but school programs should be kept. “It’s going to be a difficult budget year, but we have to keep our ground,” he said.

Elections for these candidates will be held Tuesday, Nov. 2. There are three voting locations, which will be open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. Residents in District One vote at Town Hall, 127 Norwich Ave.; those in District Two vote at the Assembly of God, 16 Wall St.; and those in District Three vote at Bacon Academy, 611 Norwich Ave.



**Kennedy**



**Koziol**

# Four Candidates for Three Spots on Hebron School Board

by Sarah McCoy

In just two and a half weeks Hebron voters will cast their ballot for many of the town's municipal boards and commissions. Four candidates are vying for three positions on one of Hebron's most powerful boards – the Board of Education (BOE).

Republican Kathy Shea is the lone incumbent seeking another term on the BOE. She was elected in 2005 and now, four years later, she's throwing her name in the hat once again. Shea is joined on her party's ticket by Tina Blinn and Will Moorcroft.

Moorcroft was appointed to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) a year and a half ago but is now opting to run for the BOE in an effort to, both, have a hand in one of Hebron's most significant budget pieces and to "maintain the excellent educational system" the town presently has.

The Democratic Town Committee has endorsed Brett Monroe for a position on the BOE.

Monroe has been in Hebron for the last three and a half years. Although his one-year old son is still a few years away from formal education, Monroe decided the timing felt right to run for the BOE.

"When I heard that the town was looking for candidates, I decided that that was something I wanted to do," Monroe said. "And the Board of Education made sense for me because I'm interested in schools and supporting the work that needs to be done."

Monroe works as an IT consultant, and much of his time is dedicated to helping schools and municipalities create networks and/or online infrastructure. Monroe takes pride in the fact that he has a role in equipping teachers and students with the tools needed to learn.

"My participation in schools enables teach-



Monroe

ers to do their job better," he said. "I hope I can do the same thing as a Board of Ed member."

As a rookie to the political scene, Monroe is the first to admit that he has a lot to learn. But he's also eager to help. "I am the type of person that listens when they need to listen but can also make the push towards making a decision," he said.

Monroe grew up in Lyme. He lives with his wife, Kathleen, and their son, Julian.

For Shea, the opportunity to seek re-election to the BOE is an opportunity to continue the progress she feels the board has made over the past four years. "We're pretty much out of the tumultuous time that Hebron experienced in the past and we're now able to focus on student achievement," she said this week.

Shea said she has been pleased to see the strides the district has made on the Connecticut Mastery Test as well as the commitment to maintaining a Challenge and Enrichment program despite the recent budgetary pressures.

In the near future, Shea said, she sees the district's full-day kindergarten program as a priority for the board to discuss and act on.

Full-day kindergarten started in two classrooms at Gilead Hill Elementary School in the fall of 2008. At that time, the intention of Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz was to expand the program to another two classrooms the following year. However, due to budgetary constraints, the expansion didn't happen.

Shea said that it's time the district either go for it or scrap the program. "A lot of parents aren't happy when their child isn't selected," she said. "I think we need to either make a commitment to the program as a town or pull out. There are tremendous pressures that the board members will need to consider."



Shea

Another commitment she feels the BOE needs to make is maintaining the school facilities. Whether it's painting or general maintenance, Shea feels that the town needs to start funding the repairs that will keep the facilities in shape. "It's just like a house," she said. "If you don't take care of it, it will fall apart. I'm a common sense person and, I feel, this is a common sense approach to protecting our assets."

In her addition to her time on the BOE, Shea also served on the Zoning Board of Appeals from 2001-05. She was also Chair of the Hebron Republican Town Committee (RTC) from 2002-06.

Shea lives with her husband, Brendan, and their two children, Liam and Katie.

Also endorsed by the RTC is Tina Blinn. Blinn moved to Hebron in 2008 after falling in love with the town at the Maple Fest. She said everything felt right for her, her husband Roger and their two children, Meredith and Douglas.

Now, just a year later, Blinn is hoping to be able to give back to the town that she now calls home. She's running for the BOE because of her passion for working with young kids and support for a flourishing educational system. "I really, truly believe that a strong public school system benefits everyone in town," she said. "It attracts people and increases property values."

If elected, Blinn said she intends to spend a good deal of time listening to concerns. She said her past experience as vice president of the quality department at a machine shop has honed her skills at keeping the peace and encouraging cooperation for a common goal. Blinn has attended many of the most recent BOE meetings to get a feel for the district and said she would "be excited to be a part of it."



Blinn

The fourth candidate for the local school board is current selectman Will Moorcroft. Moorcroft was appointed to his current post a year and a half ago to fill the spot vacated by David Schoolcraft. (Schoolcraft was forced to resign from the BOS after accepting a job that prohibited serving in town government.)

Prior to his time on the BOS, Moorcroft was on the Planning and Zoning Commission for eight years. He also served on the Peters House Use Study Committee.

Moorcroft said his decision to seek election to the BOE rather than the BOS was due, in part, to how the town approaches the budgeting process each year. "Education is the largest part of our budget," he said. "There are significant challenges facing this town and I'd like to be a part of maintaining the excellent educational system we currently have."

While the BOS reviews and can make recommendations to the Board of Finance on the town government's budget, selectmen have little say in the BOE budget. As a member of the BOE, Moorcroft said, he brings experience and a desire to advocate for education.

He moved to Hebron with his wife, Joyce, in 1998. They have three sons, two of whom are currently enrolled in the Hebron public schools.

Moorcroft grew up in Glastonbury and came to Hebron largely for its strong educational record.

Hebron voters will cast their vote for three of the four candidates with the top three earning a spot on the Board of Education. If elected, candidates will serve a four-year term.

Voting will take place on Tuesday, Nov. 3, from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. in the gymnasium at Hebron Elementary School, 92 Church St.



Moorcroft

# Four Running Unopposed for Marlborough BOE

by Katy Nally

Four candidates are in the running for the local Board of Education (BOE) – although it's not much of a race, as all four of them are guaranteed victories..

The four are Shannon Margaret Bielaczyc, Mimi LaPoint, Karen McKinney and Carole Shea. McKinney is the only incumbent. The others will be replacing board chair Maria Grove and board members James Angelo and Christine Brudz, none of whom are seeking re-election.

This year, candidates said working on the board could present certain budgetary difficulties due to the nationwide economic downturn. One controversial result of school budget cuts was the changes made to the challenge and enrichment (C&E) program. The core ideas of the program were retained, but the teacher who headed the program for the past 12 years went back to teach fifth grade.

On the Democratic slate there is Bielaczyc, 37, and LaPoint, 47. Bielaczyc has lived in Marlborough since 2006 and all four of her children are enrolled at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School. Bielaczyc, currently a stay-at-home mom, said she is already very involved with the school. She said she volunteers in her kids' classrooms at least once a week if not more, and is member of the PTO as well as the school advisory board.

Bielaczyc graduated from George Washington University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology. She then went on to Central Connecticut State University where she completed all the secondary social studies teacher certification coursework, but did not obtain her teaching certificate due to family obligations.



Bielaczyc

Regarding this year's budget and how the challenge and enrichment (C&E) program was altered, Bielaczyc said in a written statement, "I think everyone did their best and they handled it the best they could given the amount of resources they had." She said her children were not affected by the changes made to C&E.

Bielaczyc said she is running because, "I wanted to be involved in the decisions that affect my kids' education." Because her children are enrolled at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall, she said she has a "vested interest in seeing the school continue to grow and improve." She said she would make a good board member because, "I know how to get things done. I'm very organized and I'm experienced in making tough decisions in our small little town. I'm very motivated to see this school move forward."

LaPoint, the other Democrat for BOE, has lived in Marlborough for seven years. As the co-vice president of the PTO, she too is involved at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall. She also has twin girls in fifth grade.

LaPoint graduated from Wesleyan University with a Bachelor of Arts in math and a Bachelor of Fine Arts. She works part-time as a freelance graphic designer.

Concerning this year's budget, LaPoint said she was "actively involved." "I rallied my peers to come out and vote, because I wanted people to be aware as to what was happening with the budget," she said. She had similar sentiment to Bielaczyc about the changes made to C&E, "I think it's unfortunate when any program gets cut, but I think [BOE members] did the best they could considering the circumstances," she said.

LaPoint said she is running for the school board not only because she has kids in the



LaPoint

school system, but because, "public education is very important," she said. "It's one of the greatest things we can give to our kids. It's the idea that everybody has an equal opportunity to learn," she said.

On the Republican slate there is McKinney and Shea. McKinney, 49, has been on the BOE for nearly six years. She has lived in Marlborough for 15 years during which time her two kids graduated from Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall.

McKinney received her undergraduate degree from Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, NY, and her master's in business administration from New York University. She is currently studying landscape architecture at the University of Connecticut.

She said part of the reason she decided to run for a second term was because of the difficulties the board faced with this year's budget. "It is more important now than ever before to have people on the board who have been involved in the school for many years, are familiar with the budget process, and will continue to advocate for sensible compromises," she said in a written statement.

This year's BOE voted to change C&E. Defending this decision, McKinney said in a written statement, "I believe that advocating for children requires careful examination of all of the options available for meeting educational need, and that we must examine all options through the lens of what is realistically sustainable. We must be willing to see beyond what is ideal and secure what is essential."

McKinney cites her years of experience on the board as to why she would make a good board member.

Shea, the other Republican, is a relative new-



McKinney

comer to Marlborough. She and her husband Richard, who is running for the Board of Finance, have lived in town for two years. Shea graduated from UConn with a Bachelor of Fine Arts and then went to the University of Hartford where she earned a master's in art education. She taught art at Ellington High School, where she said she had "a full spectrum of students."

After eight years of teaching in Ellington, Shea began designing and space planning commercial, healthcare and educational spaces for architectural firms. Shea is now an interior design consultant for local architectural firms where she worked on a number of school projects throughout Connecticut.

"I feel my school design experience brings an added dimension to my teaching background, and will be of value to the Board of Education, whether we are dealing with policy, curriculum, staff, budget or facilities related issues," Shea said about her current job in a written statement.

Like the other candidates, Shea said this year could be particularly tough for the board because of town-wide budget concerns. Similarly, Shea said changing C&E was an example of "keeping spending under control while maintaining services." "The gifted program is an example of that process and I think they did a good job," Shea said. "It's a viable solution and there's always the option of adding in back in later."

Shea said she is running for the BOE because she has experience in education and wants to give back to the community.

Town-wide elections will be held Tuesday, Nov. 3, from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School, 25 School Dr.



Shea

# New Faces Coming to RHAM School Board

by Sarah McCoy

There will be some new faces on the RHAM Board of Education later this fall, as Hebron and Marlborough voters will elect members to the regional school board next month.

In Marlborough the most noticeable change comes not from a candidate but, rather, the absence of a candidate. Dieter Zimmer has served on the RHAM BOE for the past 20 years. He is stepping down from his post this fall, opting instead to run for the Marlborough Planning Commission.

Democrat Jim Cherry is seeking reelection to his post on the board. Republican Sandra Sudduth will join him on the ballot.

Cherry taught science for 35 years before retiring six years ago. Though, for him, retirement has hardly meant slowing down. Five years ago he was named as an Einstein Fellow and went down to Washington, DC, for a year to work with the Senate on improving education. The following year he was back in the classroom as a local school couldn't find a qualified science teacher.

For the past four years, Cherry has served on the RHAM Board of Education. Prior to that he was on the Marlborough Board of Education for six years. For him, education is a part of life and Cherry wants to keep devoting his time to today's students.



Cherry

He's said he's proud of the work the BOE has done over the past four years especially as it pertains to curriculum and policy rewriting. Cherry is also pleased at the availability of challenging courses that students can take. "It is so important that kids are well-prepared," he said earlier this week. "They're going to be changing jobs and responsibilities. It's vital that they are life-long learners and are able to acquire new skills along the way."

Cherry said that the biggest challenge facing the board will be balancing the budget. "The reality is we have to maintain a budget that people can afford," he said. "It's a challenge to improve our quality academics while being mindful of the bottom line."

The other Marlborough candidate is Sudduth. A newcomer to the political scene, Sudduth writes on the Marlborough Republican website that while "a top notch education is foremost" she believes "we must find ways to do this with-

out draining taxpayer's pockets.

Sudduth writes that she intends to look at the way the district runs to see if there are cost saving measures that could be taken to "combine functions, improve existing programs, eliminate unnecessary expenditures, or find other means of support."

Marlborough voters will vote for two candidates for the two vacancies. Considering there are only two candidates Cherry said he isn't too nervous about the outcome.

Voting in Marlborough will take place on Tuesday, Nov. 3, from 6 a.m.-8 p.m., in the Community Room at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School, 25 School Dr.

In Hebron there are five candidates vying for just three spots on the RHAM Board of Education.

Two candidates – Debra Dee and T.J. Morelli-Wolfe – are seeking reelection. The third vacancy comes from BOE Chair Sue Griffiths. Griffiths said earlier that she has decided to pursue different ways that she can serve the town.

Also running for the board are Lorraine Davey, a Democrat who lost by one vote in 2007, and Republicans Laura Steiner and Brenda Casoni.

Dee said she is running again because she considers public service to be a vital thing for residents. She said that she's proud of the work done by the BOE and considers RHAM to be a top-tier school with excellent staff. However, Dee believes, the challenge will come from building on past successes in a way that's fiscally responsible.

Dee said she's enjoyed her time on the board thus far though admits there was a steep learning curve on the outset. Now comfortable in her position Dee hopes to be able to serve for another four years.

For the past eight years, Dee has worked as a middle school teacher. She feels that perspective has served her well on the board as she's able to understand how actions the board takes



Sudduth

will translate to the classroom. Prior to teaching, Dee practiced law for 15 years.

Also running for the RHAM Board of Education is Laura Steiner. Steiner moved to Hebron as a middle school student in the 1970s and went on to graduate from RHAM High School. Steiner said she and her husband plan to live in their house forever as they have fallen in love with Hebron over the years.



Steiner

With her daughters now teenagers, Steiner is looking to give back to the town she loves. She is a self-described "regular person" who hopes to bring an "uncluttered" mind to the BOE. Steiner said that, if she's elected, her actions will always be for the betterment of students.

Over the past few months, Steiner has attended some of the board's meetings and is eager to learn more. She said she is impressed by the participation of the student representatives on the board and hopes their perspective can be utilized more.

Casoni, a Republican, ran for the RHAM BOE in 2007 but fell short of being elected. She's back this fall for another go of it.

Casoni was unable to be reached for this article but on the Hebron Republican website she writes that she's a "kid" person and wants to see the school board create new extracurricular activities for students.

Casoni moved to Hebron in 2003 and currently serves as an alternate to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Casoni writes on the website that she is a team player and wants to work for the benefit of children. She's running for the RHAM BOE because she believes she and her family, "have been in town long enough to learn where things are and how things work."

"I feel that I am ready to devote the time necessary to assist our wonderful town in any way that I can," Casoni continued.

On the Democrat's side, Morelli-Wolfe is seeking reelection. He is an attorney by trade and has served on the board for the past four

years.

Morelli-Wolfe did not return calls to the *Rivereast* regarding his candidacy for the BOE post.

Rounding out the field for the RHAM Board of Education is Davey. She is a former member of the Hebron Board of Education and ran for the RHAM BOE in 2007 only to see her bid fall short by just one vote.

Davey has one son who is currently a freshman at RHAM. She said while he may be the reason for putting in late nights working on board issues, her son is not the reason she's running. She's running, Davey said, because she cares about the well-being of the entire school district.

Education is a part of life for Davey. She grew up in Middletown with a mother who served as both a teacher and administrator. "I've always been a huger supporter of public education and the Board of Education is one way I can serve the district," she said.

As much as she is passionate about promoting education, Davey knows it comes at a cost. "If you can justify spending money then maybe it's a worthy cost. If you can't then it's just a wish list," she said.

Davey said her time on the local BOE gave her experience working with budgets, a chance to see how school districts work as well as time on search committees for hiring school administration. She feels these skills will serve her well on the RHAM board and is eager to serve. "I know how to work on a board," she said. "It's not about one person. You have to listen and keep an open mind."

Hebron voters will vote for three candidates with the top three being elected to the RHAM BOE. Voting will take place at Hebron Elementary School, 92 Church St., on Tuesday, Nov. 3, from 6 a.m.-8 p.m.

There will be no changes made to the Andover contingent of the RHAM board next month, as Andover holds its elections in May.



Morelli-Wolfe



Casoni



Dee



Davey

## Police to Charge Middletown Man in Multiple Portland Robberies

by Michael McCoy

Portland Police this week said a Middletown man committed two robberies, and attempted a third, within just 36 hours earlier this week.

Robert Doucette, 54, of Middletown, was arrested Oct. 13, just after reportedly trying to break into Dunkin' Donuts on Main Street by the Arrigoni Bridge. He was charged with third-degree criminal attempt to commit burglary, second degree criminal mischief, and possession of burglary tools. (He attempted to break in with a tire iron, police said.)

Though Doucette was charged for this incident, Portland Police Sergeant Scott Cunningham said Doucette actually confessed to two others as well.

Police responded to a call at 12:39 p.m. on Oct. 11 at Main Street's Super Moon Mart. According to store employees, a white male, later identified by police as Doucette, approached the front counter "telling the clerk that he had a gun and didn't want to shoot anyone," Cunningham said. Then the robber "grabbed the money" from the cash register "before fleeing out the front door" and headed east on foot, Cunningham said.

That same day at 9:10 p.m., Doucette reportedly knocked off the Super Moon Mart again, and ran in the same direction. He did not mention a gun this time, and Cunningham said it was later determined he didn't have one.



Robert Doucette

Doucette once again made off east on foot. Both times, a canine track failed to locate him, Cunningham said.

Kelly said Doucette took just \$100 during the first go-around, but came up with next to nothing during his encore performance.

Speaking to the double-header, Kelly said, "That's pretty brazen. You're only steps away from the police department."

Then, at 12:30 a.m., early in the morning on Oct. 13, police were dispatched to the Dunkin' Donuts. Employees who were closing down the store at the time said they saw what was later deemed Doucette trying to break in, Cunningham said. This caused all four to flee the building, he said. According to Cunningham, the burglar realized he was being watched by the employees and fled towards the Arrigoni Bridge. When police arrived, they noticed that the drive-through window had been "forced open" and a security plate on the rear door had been tampered with, Cunningham said.

But he didn't slip through the police's fingers this time. Minutes later, Officer Eric Grant and members of the Middletown Police Department caught up with Doucette on the north side of the Arrigoni Bridge, walking toward Middletown.

According to Cunningham, Doucette was trying to fund a \$400-a-day crack cocaine habit.

Cunningham said he expected to submit the other two arrest warrants, in connection with the Super Moon Mart robberies, to Middlesex Superior Court by the end of the week. Bond was initially set at \$100,000, but Doucette is now being held at Hartford Correctional Institute on a \$10,000 bond.

## East Hampton Police News

10/1 — Ashley R. Alling, 20, of 17 Ellis Rd., was issued a ticket for failure to obey a stop sign, East Hampton Police said.

10/2 — Ronald Albert, 57, of 496 South St., New Britain, was issued a ticket for operating a motor vehicle while using a cell phone, police said.

10/2 — Kenneth L. Fountain, 31, of 103 Bridge St., Middletown, and Maurizio Damico, 49, of 91 Wopowog Rd., were arrested for speeding, police said.

10/2 — Robert Maceachern, 54, of 7 Caffyn Dr., Marlborough, was arrested for towing an unregistered motor vehicle, misuse of plates, operating an unregistered motor vehicle and operating without insurance, police said.

10/2 — Burke Bergman, 37, of 348 Bayonett St., New London, Robert Olzacki, 46, of 14 Flanders Rd., and two parked vehicles owned by Mathew Hickey, of 80 East High St., were involved in a four-vehicle accident on Rt. 66, two tenths of mile east of Route 196, police said. Bergman was arrested for operating under suspension and having unsafe tires, police added.

10/3 — Brittany G. Rose, 18, of 67 Flanders Rd., and Karen L. Pio, 59, of 240 Divinity St.,

Bristol, were both arrested for speeding, police said.

10/3 — Vanessa Y. Colello, 28, of 15 Brentwood Rd., Newington, was issued a ticket for failure to drive right, police said.

10/3 — Ryan L. Bartson, 19, of 451 Jones Hollow Rd., Marlborough, was issued a ticket for traveling unreasonably fast, police said.

10/4 — Robert Dickenson, 23, of 89 Collie Brooke Rd., was issued a ticket for failure to wear a seatbelt, police said.

10/5 — Samuel Ruggiero, 25, of 423 South Main St., Torrington, was arrested for operating under suspension, police said.

10/7 — Mark C. Ahearn, 34, of 160 South Cherry St., Wallingford, was arrested for operating under suspension, failure to display front plate and failure to carry insurance, police said.

10/8 — Robert A. Dickenson, 48, of 4 Wangonk Tr., was arrested pursuant to a warrant on charges of first-degree criminal trespass and sixth-degree larceny, police said.

10/9 — Deborah C. Lanzi, 55, of 16 Dogwood Dr., was arrested pursuant to a warrant for possession of marijuana, use of drug paraphernalia and first-degree failure to appear, police said.

## Portland Police News

10/5 — Cody Sanford, 19, of 133 West High St., East Hampton, was charged with possession of narcotics and possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, Portland Police said.

10/8 — Kevin Darna, 33, of 177 Wopowog Rd., East Hampton, was charged with evading responsibility, police said.

10/9 — Kelly Randazzo, 38, of 17 Waverly Ave., was charged with failure to respond to infraction, police said.

10/9 — Dean Randazzo, 35, also of 17 Waverly Ave., was charged with second-degree failure to appear, police said.

# Obituaries

## East Hampton

### George W. Downey Jr.

George W. Downey Jr., 75, of East Hampton and formerly of Stratford, beloved husband of Doris (Niemeyer) Downey, died Saturday, Oct. 10, at Middlesex Medical Center in Marlborough.

Born Aug. 10, 1934, in West Haven, the son of the late George and Catherine (Finnan) Downey, he had lived in Stratford for most of his life having moved to East Hampton three years ago. George was an active member of the Moose Club in Stratford.

Besides his wife, he is survived by his son, Tony Niemeyer and his girlfriend Dawn Siok of Waterbury; three daughters and their husbands, Patricia and Michael Brogan of Bloomfield, Susan and Bob Walton of East Hampton and Pearl and Michael Pierangelo of Niantic; two brothers, Eddie and William Downey; eight grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

He was predeceased by a sister, Joyce Downey, and a brother, John Downey.

Friends called at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, on Wednesday, Oct. 14, from 7-9 p.m. A graveside service will be held at a later date in Union Cemetery in Stratford.

To leave online condolences, visit [www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com](http://www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com).

## Colchester

### Mary Sawchuk

Mary (Holiman) Sawchuk, 87, of Colchester, widow of the late Alex W. Sawchuk, passed away Thursday, Oct. 8, in Norwichtown. Born Dec. 13, 1921 in Poyen, AR, she was a daughter of the late Benjamin and Ella (Reynolds) Holiman. On March 4, 1944, she and Alex were married in Little Rock, AR, and shared 50 years before he predeceased her on Jan. 11, 1995.

She was ever devoted to her family and is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Doris and James McTigue of Griswold; two grandchildren and their spouses, Angela and Thomas Kneeland of Putnam and Michael and Ann Thompson of Norwalk; three great-grandchildren, Emily, Alex and Andrew; and numerous extended family members and friends.

Care of private arrangements with burial in the Salem Green Cemetery has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester. For online condolences, visit [www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com](http://www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com).

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the American Lung Assn., 45 Ash St., East Hartford, CT 06108-3272.

## Colchester

### Charles R. Soulia

Charles R. Soulia, 84, of Colchester, passed away peacefully Wednesday, Oct. 6, at Bennington Veterans Home in Bennington, VT. He was the beloved husband of Margaret (Maggie) Allen Soulia. Charles was born to the late Henry and Emma (Richard) Soulia.

Charles proudly served our country as a United States Marine in WWII. After the war he worked at Pratt & Whitney and retired after 35 years. Charles was a member of St. Andrew's Roman Catholic Church. He was an avid hunter and fisherman. He enjoyed being a member of the Pratt & Whitney golfing league.

Charles was predeceased by two sisters, Joyce Anderson and Constance Argo, one brother, James Soulia, and a daughter, Shirley Gipson.

He leaves behind three sons and three daughters, William Collins of Lebanon, Peter Soulia of Taftville and Joseph Soulia of West Rutland, VT, and Mary Radway, Christine Lamprey and Kathleen Petro of Colchester; 18 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; and one sister, Norma Fish, of Fairhaven, VT.

There were no calling hours. A graveside service was held Saturday, Oct. 10, at St. Mary's Cemetery in Fairhaven, VT.

Memorial contributions may be sent to Our Lady of Seven Dolours Catholic Church, 10 Washington St., Fairhaven, VT 05743.

## Colchester

### Doris Williams

Doris Williams of Colchester, loving mother and grandmother, passed away Saturday afternoon, Oct. 10.

She is survived by two children, Donna Wetmore and Keith Williams, both of Colchester; four grandchildren, Michelle Harris of California, Denise Falbowski of Colchester, Dustin Williams of New Britain and Joshua Wetmore of Colchester; three great-grandchildren, Shawn Falbowski, Alyssa and Jacob Howard, all of Colchester; and numerous extended family members and friends.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the Colchester Food Bank, 127 Norwich Ave., Colchester, CT 06415. Care of private arrangements, with burial in the Ponemah Cemetery, has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester.

For online condolences, visit [www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com](http://www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com).

## Portland

### Katherine Lynn Guinn

Katherine Lynn (Davis) Guinn, 64, of Portland, formerly of Columbus, OH, died Tuesday, Oct. 13, at home. She was the wife of the late Charles Guinn. Born in Pittsburgh, PA, the daughter of the late James H. and Grace (Lynn) Davis she lived for many years in Ohio before moving to Connecticut a year ago.

She is survived by two sons and a daughter-in-law, Chase J. Guinn of Honolulu, HI, and Witt C. and Kathryn L. Guinn of Portland; a sister and brother-in-law, Marianne Neill and Jay Lagemann of Massachusetts.

Funeral service will be Saturday, Oct. 17, at 1 p.m., at South Congregational Church, corner of Main and High streets, South Glastonbury. Burial will be at a later date in Kingwood Cemetery, Delaware, OH. Family and friends may call at the Mulryan Funeral Home, 725 Hebron Avenue, Glastonbury, today, Friday, Oct. 16, from 5:30-8:30 p.m., and again at the church on Saturday from noon-1 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to: ALS Association, 4 Oxford Road, Unit D4, Milford, CT 06460 or to South Congregational Church, P.O. Box 187, South Glastonbury, CT 06073.

## Andover

### George Downing

George Downing, 85, of Manchester, formerly of Andover, beloved husband of the late Jacqueline May (Giroux) Downing, passed away peacefully at home Tuesday, Oct. 6. George was born April 26, 1924, in Manchester son of the late Albert and Margaret (Turner) Downing and had resided in Manchester until the mid 1950s before moving to Andover where he had lived for over 20 years.

He was a veteran of World War II, serving in the Army Air Corps as a Gunnery Sergeant. He flew in B-24 night missions over Denmark and France dropping supplies for the Underground Resistance. After the war George worked as a letter carrier for over 31 years for the US Postal Service, along with his two brothers and father. Upon his retirement he and his wife Jackie moved to Cape Cod and a few years later they moved to Maine where he truly enjoyed his retirement for over 20 years. He returned to Connecticut four years ago. George was especially fond of his dogs and had a passion for cars, as anyone who knew him could tell.

He is survived by his son, George Scott Downing and his wife, Beverly of Manchester; four grandchildren and their spouses, Scott and Pamela Downing of Auburn, WA, Benjamin and Danyaal Downing of Cheshire, Sara and John Beggans of Wellesley, MA, and Julie and Michael McCormack of Darien; nine great-grandchildren; his brother, Albert Downing Jr. of Manchester; his sister, Margaret Dilworth of Warren, MA; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Besides his wife and parents he was predeceased by his daughter, Linda May Downing, and his brother, James E. Downing.

Private services and burial with military honors will be in East Cemetery, Manchester. There are no calling hours.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Visiting Nurse & Health Services Inc. (North Central Hospice) 8 Keynote Dr. Vernon, CT 06066 or to the National Foundation for Cancer Research 4600 East West Highway Suite 525, Bethesda, MD 20814 or to a charity of the donor's choice.

Holmes Funeral Home, Manchester has care of the arrangements. To sign the online guestbook, visit [www.holmes-watkinsfuneralhomes.com](http://www.holmes-watkinsfuneralhomes.com).

## Colchester

### Gerald L. Plante

Gerald L. Plante, 93, of Windsor and Cobalt, beloved husband of the late Madeline (Heim) Plante, passed away peacefully Sunday, Oct. 11, of natural causes. Jerry was born in Fall River, MA, on Aug. 23, 1916, to the late Leopold and Albina (Moreau) Plante and grew up in Berlin.

He attended business school at Hillyear College. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II in the European Theater as a master sergeant and was awarded the Bronze Star for his service. Jerry was a principal purchasing officer for the State of Connecticut before his retirement after 35 years. Jerry was a loving son, husband, father, father-in-law, and grandfather and will be greatly missed.

He is survived by two sons, Robert J. Plante and his Maria of New York City; Peter Plante and his wife Marjorie of East Granby; a daughter, Anne Timko and her husband Thomas of East Hartford; five grandchildren, Lydia Plante of New Orleans, LA, Sara, Matthew, Benjamin, and Jonathan Plante of East Granby; a brother, Hector Plante and his wife Carol of Russia Corners, NY; sisters-in-law, Anna Terhune of Manchester, Rose Heim of Westbrook; as well as many nieces and nephews.

In addition to his wife and parents, Jerry was predeceased by his sister Jeanette Plante.

His family would like to express heartfelt gratitude to the caring and compassionate staff of the Cobalt Lodge, where he resided during his final years as well as the wonderful staff at the Middlesex Hospital Hospice Unit.

Services will be private and at the family's convenience. Jerry's interment will be at Mount St. Benedict Cemetery in Bloomfield. For donations in Jerry's memory please donate to a charity of your choice.

For online condolences, visit [www.carmonfuneralhome.com](http://www.carmonfuneralhome.com).

## East Hampton

### George W. Downey Jr.

George W. Downey Jr., 75, of East Hampton and formerly of Stratford, beloved husband of Doris (Niemeyer) Downey, died Saturday, Oct. 10, at Middlesex Medical Center in Marlborough. Born Aug. 10, 1934, in West Haven, the son of the late George and Catherine (Finnan) Downey he had lived in Stratford for most of his life having moved to East Hampton three years ago. George was an active member of the Moose Club in Stratford.

Besides his wife, he is survived by his son, Tony Niemeyer and his girlfriend Dawn Siok of Waterbury; three daughters and their husbands, Patricia and Michael Brogan of Bloomfield, Susan and Bob Walton of East Hampton and Pearl and Michael Pierangelo of Niantic; two brothers Eddie and William Downey, eight grandchildren and one great grandchild.

He was predeceased by a sister, Joyce Downey and a brother John Downey. Friends called at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton on Wednesday, Oct. 14. A graveside service will be held at a later date in Union Cemetery in Stratford.

To leave online condolences, visit [www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com](http://www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com).

## Portland

### Allen Francis Grover

Allen Francis Grover, beloved husband of Ruth A. (Johnson) Grover, passed away peacefully surrounded by his loving family on Thursday, Oct. 8. He was born in Rocky Hill on Feb. 1, 1928.

He grew up in Rocky Hill and later moved to Portland in 1949, when he married Ruth at a double wedding ceremony with her twin sister Evelyn at the Zion Lutheran Church. Allen retired from Cigna Insurance after 40 years of service in July of 1987. He enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 1952 where he served as staff sergeant at Quantico, VA.

Allen enjoyed chasing down the history of the Grover family and started documenting all of the information he could find over the last 50 years. This grew into many field trips throughout New England, and many new friends and contacts throughout the world. Allen grew this hobby into a huge computer data bank that now contains over 22,000 names and entries throughout the world of the Grover family. Allen was a member of the Connecticut Genealogy Society and a member of the Middletown Godfrey Library. Allen also enjoyed his vegetable gardening and yard work.

He is survived by his loving wife of 60 years, Ruth A. Grover of Portland. He was the son of the late Roy and Isadora Grover of Rocky Hill. He also leaves behind two sons, Richard A. Grover and his longtime companion Peggy Grover of Middletown, their children Christina and Melissa, and three great-grandchildren; Mark Grover and his wife Stephanie Heil-Grover of Portland, their children Aaron and Nathan Grover and Michaela, Kerianne, and Madison Heil. He also leaves behind his grandson Carl Grover Jr. of Arizona and granddaughter Amy Grover of Rhode Island; his sisters, Loraine George of Portland and Donna Haddox and her husband David of Vernon; his sisters-in-law, Marion Anderson and her longtime companion Al Carlson of Portland and Evelyn Johnson and her husband Robert of Cromwell; and many nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by his son, Carl Allen Grover, and his brother, Leroy Grover.

Relatives and friends attended his funeral service Thursday, Oct. 15, in the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland. The Rev. James Reemts, Pastor of Zion Lutheran Church, officiated. Interment, with military honors, followed in the Swedish cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that gifts in Allen's memory be sent to the Middlesex Hospital Hospice Unit, c/o Office of Philanthropy 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457 or to the Zion Lutheran Church 183 William St., Portland, CT 06480.

For directions, or to leave an online expression of sympathy, visit [www.portlandmemorialfh.net](http://www.portlandmemorialfh.net).

## Observations & Ruminations

by **Mike Thompson**

It's not every day that my alma mater, Marist College, winds up in the national news. But last week, it, or, more specifically, the Marist College Institute of Public Opinion, found its way onto the news pages. And for a very good reason.

It seems people hate the word "whatever."

Apparently, the student pollsters at the Marist College Institute of Public Opinion (or MIPO, as they call it; and I ought to know, seeing as how I used to be one of their student pollsters) surveyed people across the country to see what the most annoying word or phrase is. And, 47 percent of those polled chose "whatever." Up next, with 25 percent of the vote, was "you know," which seems, by my observation, to be used more by pro athletes than anyone else. (Watch a post-game interview or two on TV and you'll know what I mean.)

Eleven percent of those responded selected the phrase, "It is what it is." I can see where they're coming from, as it's a rather defeatist attitude to take, as well as a fairly dismissive one (as in, "I don't need to explain this any more to you, or even justify it, really. It is what it is.") Next in line, with 7 percent of the vote, was "anyway." This is a word that's never bothered me all that much. Perhaps it's because I tend to use the word myself, but I can think of far more annoying choices of vocabulary.

And bringing up the rear, with 2 percent of the vote, was the phrase, "At the end of the day." I have to admit, that phrase instantly brings me back to my days of covering town meetings; the phrase seems to be popular among town officials and politicians. In fact, I don't know if I've ever heard anyone say it in casual conversation. Perhaps others feel the same way, and that's why it only got 2 percent of the vote.

Anyway – see, told you I used it – when the story about the MIPO poll broke, after I finished getting nostalgic about my days sitting at a cubicle calling people up and asking them things like, "If the presidential election were held today, who would you vote for if the candidates were..." I started thinking about what, to me, is the most annoying word. Without question, I'd have to say "guesstimate." Come on, this doesn't even sound like it should be a real word; stop using it as such. Something's either a guess, or an estimate. And isn't an estimate really just a fancy guess anyway?

When people say "guesstimate," it sounds kinda like they think the word "guess" makes them sound uneducated, but "estimate" makes them sound too much like a financial director giving projections at a Monday morning meeting. So they combine the two. The result of said combination makes me grate my teeth. People need to lose this word from their lexicon; the world will be better for it.

A friend of mine has his own vocabulary word pet peeve: "literally." And I can definitely see where he's coming from there. The word has become incredibly overused and, as such, is used incorrectly far more often than not. I'm guilty of having used it in the past, in casual conversation, like saying, "It'll take literally two seconds to do this." But perhaps the most egregious misuse of the word is when people say, "I literally died." Uh, no, unless I have also passed on and the two of us are communicating as ghosts, I can say, quite assuredly, that you did not literally die.

But at least there is a time and a place to correctly use "literally." In my opinion, there is never an adequate time and place for "guesstimate."

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See you next week.