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Members of the RHAM High School Class of 2009 Tim Paradise, left, Keegan Lynch and Morghan Long share a laugh during commencement exercises held last Friday, June 19. Two hundred fifty students received their diplomas.

RHAM High School Graduates 250

by Sarah McCoy

Despite threatening skies and damp grass the RHAM High School Class of 2009 graduated at an outdoor ceremony last Friday, June 19. Two hundred and fifty students walked across the stage not only to accept their diploma but also to step into adulthood.

The annual commencement exercises were highlighted by keynote speaker Marc Gonsalves.

Gonsalves, a 1990 graduate of RHAM High School, served for eight years in the U.S. Air Force. Following his service he began work as a government contractor as a counterintelligence officer in the War on Drugs.

On Feb. 13, 2003, his helicopter crashed in the mountains of Columbia. Gonsalves and his two co-workers were captured and held hostage by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) until all three were rescued last summer.

Before saying a single word, Gonsalves was greeted by standing ovation from the hundreds in attendance. He spoke of his time in Columbia, chained to his colleague and friend, Keith

Stansell, and the hope he had of some day going home.

"I was in a place far from Hebron," Gonsalves said. "I was forced to march. Forced to starve. But, they could never get my spirit because they couldn't get my mind."

During his five years in captivity, Gonsalves said his dream of coming home was what fueled him. He encouraged the graduates to have their own dreams and chase after them. "There will be times when you think you can't get there, that you'll never get there. Be patient, you'll get there," he said.

After he spoke, RHAM High School Principal Scott Leslie took the microphone and announced that Gonsalves had been chosen as the first inductee to the school's Wall of Fame. Each year the school will induct one member to the Wall in recognition of alumni achievements and to serve as an inspiration to current RHAM students.

Class of 2009 Salutatorian Adrienne Matunas followed with her remarks. Adrienne

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Bacon Academy Class of 2009 Sent on its Way

by Adam Benson

Over his 16 years as chairman of the Colchester Board of Education, Will Hettrick has handed out nearly 3,000 diplomas and seen hundreds of students distinguish themselves at meetings.

So it was fitting, Hettrick said last Friday, that he end his career of public service with a graduating class that gained a reputation for its close ties to the teachers, staffers and community members who watched them grow up.

"I can't think of a better class to end this phase of my community service with," Hettrick said during last week's commencement exercises for the Bacon Academy Class of 2009. "What is especially significant for this graduating class above all other classes is that you have allowed adults into your lives to be a part of your integral development."

More than 225 students received diplomas during the hour-long ceremony held on the school's football field. In a Bacon tradition, members of the graduating class 50 years ago were also honored – 67 people from the Class of 1959 turned out to Friday's ceremony, the highest alumni participation rate in the history of the school, Superintendent Karen Loiselle said.

And a fitting testament to the current crop of graduates, she added.

"Members of the Class of '59 described themselves as extremely cohesive. A group of individuals who cared deeply about one another, who enjoyed being together and who made sure that everyone was included in all of their activities," Loiselle said. "This is precisely how Mr. Mathieu [Bacon Academy Principal Jeffry Mathieu] describes the Class of 2009."

Valedictorian Jake Barnowski said what he appreciated most about his time in high school was having a chance to break out of the mold of anonymity that he felt in the days leading up to his freshman year.

"We came to this school almost four years ago scared and anxious about what was to come. You go from being a big, bad eighth-grader to being nothing more than another face passing through the packed hallways of Bacon Academy," he said. "The thing that I love so much about this school is that every single person has become so much more than just a passing face. Everyone has made a name for themselves. That is what high school is meant to do. Give us the opportunity to find something we want to call our own."

Jake – who will attend Northeastern University – thanked his friends, family and teachers for helping him get ready for his next academic challenge.

"I feel as prepared as I ever will for college, and I'm sure the majority of my classmates feel the same," he said.

Stephanie Armagno, this year's Gilbert Lamb essayist, said she didn't begin to appreciate the transformative lessons of high school until she was halfway through her tenure there.

"It was during the summer of my sophomore year that I learned where the real high school experience began: with a hefty and merciless load of summer homework," she said. "Only once you are an influential part of the hierarchy can you dismiss your previous concerns."

Sitting in her upper-level courses, Stephanie said, she began to realize the impact her education was beginning to have on her life.

"Only then can you begin to appreciate that



Members of the Bacon Academy Class of 2009 proceed into their graduation ceremonies last Friday night in Colchester.

teachers can be your friends, and discover the unique way that you learn," Stephanie said. "I appreciate all of my opportunities to grow."

Loiselle said it was appropriate for the Class of 2009 to be honored alongside their predecessors, since both groups are uniquely defined by many of the same qualities.

"Clearly, relationships are what matter most to both classes being honored here," she said.

She imparted a bit of advice for Bacon's newest group of alums.

"While the academic skills that you mastered at Bacon Academy will be important tools to

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RHAM High School held its 2009 commencement exercises last Friday. At left, graduate Jennifer Schain looks back and smiles to her family after receiving her diploma, while at right, keynote speaker Mark Gonsalves holds up the bullet which his guard was instructed to use if he tried to escape while being held hostage in Columbia. Gonsalves, a 1990 RHAM High School graduate, spent five years in captivity before being rescued last summer.



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encouraged her classmates with five pieces of advice – keep wondering, keep giving, keep smiling, keep dreaming and keep being yourself.

Adrienne reminded her classmates of how lucky they all are and challenged her fellow graduates to use that to better the world. “It doesn’t matter the size of your paycheck or the number of shiny sports cars in your driveway,” she said. “It matters the amount of people you reach.”

Admittedly a “math and science” person, Class of 2009 Valedictorian Kirsten Salline stuck to what she knows best for her speech – numbers. She reported that 3.2 million people have graduated or will graduate from high school this year. Not only is that enough people to nearly repopulate Connecticut, but, Kristen said, “imagine what 3.2 million doctors, lawyers, engineers, or activists could do. Three point two million people might be enough to bear the weight of our future dilemmas.”

Kristen urged her classmates to work towards creating a better future. “We,” she said, “could have a sizable impact on the issues that now seem improbable.”

Because of the threat of rain, Leslie explained, the scholarship and award recipients were announced at graduation rehearsal held earlier on Friday. Instead, Leslie, joined by Superintendent of Schools Robert Siminski and BOE Chair Susan Griffiths, went right into handing out diplomas. The honor of announcing the graduates as they receive their diplomas was given to RHAM High School science teacher Wayne Moshier.

After each student had received their diploma, the Class of 2009 turned their tassels and celebrated with a few beach balls and a lot of silly string.

Following commencement exercises, gradu-

ates were invited to the annual AHM-sponsored Project Graduation, an all-night, alcohol-free party. This year, approximately 180 students attended the event, which was held at Champlions Skating Center in Cromwell.

The members of the RHAM High School Class of 2009 are:

Abby Margaret Ackerman, Jameson Whitehead Adams, Samantha Marie Adams, * Eric Carlsen Adamson, Amy Ashton Allen, Jon Robert Allen, Jennifer Lyn Anderson, Stefanie Brie Apatow, Aaron Charles Apmann, * @ Audrey Anne Arel, Megan Marie Armes, Keenan Evans Asbridge, Kyle Robert Baker, Mariah Seeley Barrows, Gary Michael Bartomioli, Cara Marie Bastiani, Christine Yvonne Belanger, Isaiah Somers Carter Bell, Lindsey Constance Belliveau, Michelle Lynn Bernard, Rebecca Ann Bielefield, Jared Michael Billard, Derek Chandler Billings, Sarina Leigh Bosco, Katherine Elizabeth Bosshart, Gregory Stephen Bowcock, Ellianne LeMay Bowen, * Michael James Bradley, Christopher Paul Briganti, Kelly Elizabeth Brooks, Brian Brown, Stephen Patrick Brunell, Christina Lynn Bullard, Ashley Patricia Burba, Brian James Burgess, Amanda Marie Burns, * Kristin LeAnne Burrington, Robert Michael Busque;

Tyler H. Cafro, Amanda Rose Canelli, Krystine Marie Carey, Allyson Marie Casale, James A. D. Cassarino, Joshua Christopher Caye, Michael Edward Chapman, Michael Joseph Charbonneau, Kyle Choquette, James Louis Colombo, Micaela Connelly, Gary James Connolly, Brandon Daniel Costa, Cassandra Victoria Cugno, * @ William Patrick Czaja, Tara Christine Dagesse, Julie Rachelle Daher, Elizabeth Mary Dandeneau, Jamie Lynn DeCaro, Nicholas Del Rosso, Ashley Morgan Desjardins, Nicole Danielle Desjardins, Nicholas Sheldon Dill, Robert Anthony DiLoreto, * @ Taylor Nicole Driscoll, Victoria Drum, Jeffrey Louis Durso, Jr., * Kirstie Marie Endrelunas, Richard James Evans, Alec J. Farquhar, * Courtney Averill Federico, Tyler Charles Ferrari, * Brian Andrew Griffiths Finn, Daniel Joseph Fish, Emily Michelle Flavell, Rachel Diane Fletcher, Allison Anne Foley, Timothy Robert Francks, Dane Fredrickson, Nicole Alma French, Chelsea Ann Fritzon, * Kyle Albert

Fromme;

* Renae Galvin, Alexa Rae Gattinella, Christian James Gerardi, Christopher Adam Giarnella, Michael D. Giuffrida, Jessica Alys Glazier, * Peter Benjamin Goode, Sean David Goodwin, Ryan Michael Goulet, Bobbie Leigh Grimes, Rebecca Marie Guimond, Brittany Hague, * Amanda Rene Hale, Kyle Watson Hall, Connor Perry Hallisey, * @ Phillip Michael Harder, John Paul Hatch, Jr., Jordan Lee Hearn, Gabrielle Meghan Heckman, Derrick James Hendrickson, Luan Ho, Taylor Alexandra Hogan, Margaret Elizabeth Horton, Erika Paige Houle, * @ Tyler Matthew Hovanec, * Michael Paul Hovey, Emily Reagan Hummel, Danielle Lynne Hussey, Taylor Diane Hyde, Daniel Thomas Ickes, Robert Harold Ives, * Amanda Marie Jolly, Matthew Allen Jones, * Alyce Victoria Jovanelly,

Chelsea Lyn Kasulis, Michael Steven Kearns, Reid Taylor Keener, @ Ryan Patrick Keeney, Eric M. Kelly, Carolyn Winsor Kenniston, Kathryn Rose Keurian, Kelly Grace Kimball, Sarah Elizabeth King, Jesse Daniel Kivney, @* Lynn Marie Kowsz, Laura Beth Kratochvil, Stephen Marlowe Kriksciun, @* Jennifer Ann Krist, Brendan Thomas Lamb, * Ashley Larkin, Antonino La Rosa, Andrew M. Leary, Nicholas Alexander Leclerc, Hannah Margaret Lee, Garrett Edward Lemire, * Hannah Lisbeth Dorothy Lents, @ Alexandra Grace Leonard, Alexandra Corina Leone, Sean Leser, Scott Dennis Lindley, Morghan Brittany Long, Sarah Matilda Loos, Heather Elizabeth-Leigh Lord, Ashley Lovett, Trevor John Lund, Keegan Michael Lynch, William F. Lynn;

Nicholas Alexander Macrina, Lauren Marie Madison, Daniel Christopher Maher, Kyle Lloyd Mahoney, Ian Alexander Malcolm, John Brian Mara, Kyle William Marceau, Carrie Elizabeth Margeson, ## * Adrienne Christine Matunas, Sara Nellie Anne McCann, Brian Edward McDermott, Katelynn Eileen McKinnon, @ Adam James McLaughlin, Devin McMahon, @* Jessica Jane McSweeney, Joanna Michalski, Nicholas Frank Montalti, Kathleen Edith Montana, Michael R. Morin, Lauren Elise Mucha, Melissa Mucha, @ Christopher Paul Murphy, Lawrence Maxfield Murphy, Alina Emily Nakos, Kristopher Jerzy Narowski, Bettina Charlotta Neubauer, @* Daniel A. Nissley, Dee King Oberlin,

Thomas John Ouellette, Rae Michelle Palka, Tim Paradise, * Dylan Robert Parr, Paige Jordan Pelletier, * Kyle E. Penn, Ryan Jeffrey Pereira, @* Adam Benjamin Phelps, @ Adam Joseph Pisker, * Ryan Eric Popper, Elise Powers;

Adam D. Ragusa, Corey Nicole Rath, @* Umar Muhammad Razzaq, * Benjamin Russell Reiner, Jaired Reveron, Garret Carlson Reynolds, Laura Caroline Reynolds, Michaela Rinaldo, Lindsay Marie Ritchie, John Coleman Rivos, Michele Ayn Roux, Rochelle Marie Roy, Sheila Rujoub, Shannon Lee Salinger, #* Kirsten Alexis Salline, Joshua James Sanchioni, Deanna Michele Santangelo, Ethan Anders Sarnoski, Jennifer Kathryn Schain, * Aaron Michael Schmidt, Kelley Anne Schwarm, Thomas Schweizer, Megan Linda Setaro, * Michael Tooley Shaffer, Zacharia Adam Sheehan, * Samantha Shook, Ross Matthew Silberquit, @ * Amanda Paige Smith, * Erica Paige Smith, * Nicholas S. Snieta, Meaghan Lynn Sprague, Rebecca Jeanne St. James, Brett Alexander St. John, Nicholas Frank Stefanovicz, Jennifer Ann Steiner, * Paige Jordan Stewart, @* Kelly Lynn Stratton, Stephen Christopher Streets, * Rebecca Vaughan Stuart, Lucian Szabo;

Jack Doyle Taute, Timothy Alan Tetrault, Stewart Turcan, * Kathryn Marie Turlo, Matthew Turner, Joshua O. Tyler, * Stephen Michael Uccello, Keith Richard Underwood, Cory Francis Upton, Devin Patrick Wagner, @ Cameron Boyd Ware, Mitchell Lenard Werner, * Joseph Daniel Whalen, Kaitlin Alyssa White, Nicholas Martin White, Jennifer Ashley Wilson, Alicia Marie Wojcik, Katelyn Nicole Wulfstange, Christian Paul Wysocki, Brittany H. Yeager, Victoria Higgins Yeager, * Jeffrey Alan Young, @* Alessandra Christelle Zimmerman and Clay Michael Zotta.

- # Valedictorian
- ## Salutatorian
- * Member of National Honor Society in good standing
- @ Green Cord/100 or more hours of community service

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achieve your goals, it’s the quality of your relationships with people that differ from you that will earn you happiness, respect and success throughout your life,” she said.

Stephanie said her classmates’ ability and desire to forge close bonds with adult mentors in the community has readied them for their post-high school lives.

“My wings are fully grown now. They are ready to be used. I am willing and able to start living my life and becoming my future,” she said. “And so, I fly.”

The members of the Bacon Academy Class of 2009 are:

Charles P. Abbott, Carolyn W. Aloia, Stephanie G. Armagno, Alexia Askitis, Donovan S. Backus, Brooke E. Bailey, Jacob M. Baine, Jason W. Baine, Jake A. Barnowski, Mariah M. Barrett, Hannah Elizabeth Bartol, Karleigh Evan Bator, Lauren Rose Bellarosa, Ian Rutka Bentley, Victoria Paige Bertrand, Adrian Andrew Bialobrodec, Nicole Marie Biederstadt, Danielle Katherine Bishel, Rachel Elizabeth Blandina, Ashley Raquel Boozer, Roseanna Lee Boston, Katherine Anne Bradley, Patrick Lynch Breen, Kaylin Heather Brennan, Kathryn Gourley Burgess, Sean Ali Burzycki;

Sabrina Lynn Camboulivs, Ryan Anthony Canning, David Oscar Carey, Katlyn Carrier, Sabrina Maria Cassone, Matthew S. Chapman, Emily Sara Chreiman, Matthew Martin Ciccone, Ronald Joseph Clark, Gary Robert Clauss, Jr., Erika Lindsay Cobb, Paul Alexander Colacicco, Meghan Amy Coletta, Rachel Lynn Corder, Kelly Costello, Charles Csere, Shaunna K. Cullen, Matthew Keegan Cydylo, Kyle James Allen Davenport, Denzel Davis DeBrady-Williams, Patrick John Decker, Dominique Ann Demar, Richard R. Demers, Kyle Depka, Katherine Elizabeth Deslandes, Heather Marie Dixon, Michael C. Dixon, II, Siobhan C. Dooley, Chelsea A. Downer, Franklin Ward Downing, Kelly Anne Doyle, Felishia Duddie, Meghan Dunn, Justin Matthew Durkee, Erin Rose Dyer, Meagan Elizabeth Dyer;

Christopher James Eckels, Alyssa Devon Eddy, John Blanchard Edgar, Ashley Eisenlau, Ian Michael Emerling, Jesse Charles Faipler, Gabriella Marie Farrick, Jordon Whitman Ford, Vito Michael Fornarelli, Amanda Renée Forthofer, Sarah Rachel Fox, Nels P. Frantzen, Ryan Matthew Gagne, Denica Marie Gagnon, Sean David Gallagher, Marina Nicole Gallicchio, Deven Andrew Galon, Jeremy Garcia, Brian Nicholas Gardner, Ishara Gardner, Natalie Lynn Gaudette, Kate Marie Gazdzicki, Ashley Jean Gillis, Sharon Gosselin, Emily Gottlieb, Rachel Elaine Govoni, Chelsea Granato, Joshua Michael Grivois, Matthew Miller Guarino, William Charles Gunther Jr.;

Matthew Colin Hagberg, Rachel Hunter Hahn*, Joshua A. Harper, Aaron R. Harris, Todd D. Henderson, Jr., Walker Donald Higgins, Amelia Stover Horn, Michael James Hussey, Karen Amanda Hutchins, McKenzie Joy Hyde, Dennis S. Ivers, Alexandra J. Johnson, Nicholas Joseph Kane, Joshua Michael Kelly, Kayla Ann Kermode, Nicole Marie Klusek, Jaimie Elizabeth Kowalsky, Gregory John Krupke, Julie Christie Kuhl, Rochelle Eva Kurth, Devin Andrew Kwolek, Normand Jonathan LaFlamme, Wayne Patrick Lagasse, Danielle Marie Lamarre, Brendan Thomas Lambert, Matthew James Lane, Amanda Nicole LaPlant, Jennifer Ann Lawler, Todd Allen Lee, Kelsey Mae Ley, Emily Elizabeth Leyland, Dylan Lincoln, Joshua Chaim Linsky, Kevin Michael Litwin, Connor James London, Jessica Holmes Loomis, Christiane S. Lynch;

Kevin E. Malits, Yuliya Vadimovna Manyakina, Nicole A. Marhefka, Rachel F. Martin, Richard J. Martinez, Lauren Ashley Marvin, MaryKate McCarty, Kevin Daniel McCormick, Colleen M. McGill, Sean C. McHugh, David Carlson McLellan, Arielle McMahon, Jordyn McNichols, Mohini Vijay Mehta, Elizabeth A. Middleton, Maximillian Mikunda, Brett T. Mirante, Helen Moarcas, Kayla Montalvo, Thomas Arthur Nardone, Matthew O’Leary, Stephanie Kay O’Neil, Katherine Ann O’Neill, Aaron Ogden, Joshua Andrew Ogden, Shelby Lynn Okarmus, Luis Olivencia, Brittany Ann Onofrio, Shannon Marie Ostroski, Teresa Gabrielle Parker, Shaun Michael Parmelee, Jr., Joseph Patch,



Above, some of the 225 members of the Bacon Academy Class of 2009 file into the graduation ceremonies. At right, the students line up at the stage to receive their diplomas.

Katelyn Ann Peterson, Athinaphone Phomphakdy, Cara Elizabeth Pianta, Edwal Anston Pierre, Chelsea Leigh Poirier, Stephen Danny Thomas Post, Nicholas Christopher Poulos, Maura Catherine Powers, Ryan Joseph Quinn;

Alison Sue Raulukaitis, Lydia Gabrielle Reenstra, Roxanna Elizabeth Repa, Jordan Reska, Maxime Martin Rheume, Lauren Elizabeth Roach, Kevin Michael Roccapriore, Christopher Joseph Roche, Marlena Marie Rockhill, Ryan Aubrey Rogers, Chelsea Marie Ruzzo, Cathryn Theresa Ryan, Victoria Maude Ryan, Jordan Mercedes Saucier, Justin Sawicki, Katherine Elizabeth Scalero, Lauren Samantha Schaffer, Marcella Joan Schroeder,

Michael R. Scrivano, Joshua C. Scutnik, Maria Dias Shishmanian, Melanie Nicole Silvernail, Alison Skowronski, Michael Small, Katherine L. Smith, Dubie T. Sowell, Daniel Stone, John H. Stula, Kevin N. Surratt, William Augustine Swanson, Lindsay Ann Szymanski;

Tonya Lee Tallman, Kendall Elisabeth Tarlov, Zachary T. Tirrell, Joshua Towne, Nikolos William Trantalis, Alexander F. Tripoda, Jessica Lee Tucker, Charles F. Tufo, III, Kelsey Lynn Tuttle, Nicholas Tuttle, Brian Vaill, Matthew J. Vitale, Adam David Wagner, Jordyn Grace Wall, Brian J. Webster, Louise Wickham, Davon Shawn Wilson, Chelsea R. Ziegler, Karly Lynn Zirkenbach and Marcin Zygmunt.

Portland Republicans Select First Selectman Candidate

by Michael McCoy

For the first time in six years, the Portland Republicans will have a First Selectman candidate on the ballot this November.

During its meeting Monday, the Republican Town Committee (RTC) nominating committee voted 5-0 to put forth Sandra M. Downes as its candidate. She will oppose incumbent First Selectman Susan Bransfield, who is currently in her third term in office.

Downes and her husband Jim moved from Glastonbury to Portland three years ago. Without missing a beat, she got involved with the Portland RTC. Together, the Downes have three children, ranging in age from 24 to 36.

"I decided we needed a change of venue," Downes said about the move to Portland. This is in part due to the fact that Jim spent his life in Glastonbury. So, the couple moved to Bartlett Hill, where Sandra is quite active in their association.

Downes practices technology law, currently as senior counsel and assistant vice president for The Hartford's Corporate Law Group, and has been an attorney since 1990, when she graduated from Western New England Law School. She also holds bachelor's degrees in psychology and education from UConn.

Downes is also the vice chair of the RTC, as well as the chairman of its finance committee. Three weeks ago, Downes threw her hat in the Republican ring for First Selectman, and no one else stepped forward after that.

A Trumbull native, Downes said, "When I came to Portland I really liked the community." However, she added, "It seems there are a lot of activities that could be coordinated just a little bit better." She pointed to the zoning regulations as one of these.

"Portland needs to think about what they want," Downes continued. "I think we need to look at the total picture and come up with a plan."

As far as plans go, she called the potential mixed-use development at the Elmcrest property "a great opportunity." (This is a project Bransfield has championed as well.)

Downes also said the notion of a water supply was crucial to the town, and cited this as something people wanted addressed on the RTC survey distributed in the *Rivereast* last month. She said the survey was broken down into categories like infrastructure, recreational opportunities and Board of Selectmen. She said the survey so far garnered 400 responses.

The Board of Selectmen currently has a 5-2 split, with a Democratic majority. When asked if that Democratic stronghold is conquerable, she surmised, "I think a lot of people are undecided. It's not a lock anymore." She continued, "There's enough independents [that] we can actually win, and we are going to win." She also predicted courting a number of Democrat votes as well.

"Frankly, there's a lot of potential, and the



Sandra M. Downes

people are friendly," said Downes of Portland. "That's how Glastonbury used to be.

"It feels like a homey town," she continued, adding, "You go to Tri-Town, you know everybody." She said the town was full of "people I would like to have dinner with."

Downes quipped, "I don't like the Arrigoni Bridge," but added, "But, other than that, it's great."

According to Downes, the Republicans will soon set up a campaign headquarters. Then they are planning events like coffee times with businesses, cocktail parties, wine tastings and other fundraisers. "We're just going to go out and start talking to people," she said.

On July 24, the RTC plans to hold an event at St Clements Castle, called "Honor the Past; Embrace the Future." During that evening, the Republicans will honor Republican of the Year Jack Sterry, as well as announce their slate of candidates. "That's sort of going to be our kickoff," Downes said.

Three days later, the Republicans will hold their caucus.

"I think this is going to be an exciting campaign," Downes said.

RTC Chair Cindy Varricchio said Downes "brings a fresh perspective to the town." And, through her experience with The Hartford, "She's used to large budgets."

In an RTC press release, Varricchio said that when Downes and her husband attended their first RTC meeting, "we immediately knew they were special people."

In the same press release, Republican selectman Carl Chudzick said, "Sandy will be a tremendous asset to Portland, with her extensive experience in employee benefits law and labor law, combined with her financial expertise."

Varricchio promised, "This is going to be a very positive campaign. We believe we are prepared to do a better job than the other party."

Siberian Husky is Colchester's 'Top Dog'

by Adam Benson

Ally hasn't let stardom go to her head. Named Colchester's "top dog" earlier this month after an online contest, the 11-year-old purebred red-and-white Siberian husky is sticking closely to her routine of lazy afternoons in the sun, dog treats and affection from family and friends.

"We have given her a few more dog treats and call her 'top dog' whenever we can," said resident Amy Barr, who owns the dog with her husband Jody. "She's one of those non-celebrity dogs."

Ally – named after actress Calista Flockhart's character on the former Fox hit television show *Ally McBeal* – beat out a pool of 36 potential pooches to take home the honor.

Town officials began the "Top Dog" competition 18 years ago as a way to remind dog owners to register their pets with the municipality.

Since then, the annual summer event has grown into a popular tradition, said Town Clerk Nancy Bray.

"I think, absolutely, people look forward to it," Bray said. "They get excited about entering their dog."

In addition to getting a free license, winning owners also receive a personalized "Number One" dog tag.

Historically, voting was left up to members of the Colchester Senior Center. But this year, for the first time, officials posted all entrants on the town's website and allowed residents to determine Colchester's champion canine.

Bray said about 320 people participated in voting, compared to around 15 in years past.

"We wanted to open it up to more votes," she said. "This year was the first year we decided to give it to the people."

Barr said she thought about entering Ally for several years, and was finally swayed when it became possible for her to enter the contest online.

"We happen to think she's the best dog ever," Barr said. "She's 11 years old but acts like a puppy every day."

And the importance of having Ally's information on file with the town came in handy. The night before Amy and her husband Jody were informed of Ally's win, the dog wiggled free of her leash and went missing for several hours.

"She was off wandering across the street for a good four hours before we saw her and she came home," Barr said.

Beginning July 1, dog owners will be fined \$1 per month late fee for not registering their



Ally, a Siberian Husky, has been named Colchester's "Top Dog," after winning an online contest.

pets, on top of additional state fees. However, dogs don't have to be registered until they're at least six months old to give owners time to get them spayed or neutered.

All animals must have a valid rabies vaccination certificate in order to get a license. The cost is \$8 for spayed or neutered dogs and \$19 for unaltered ones.

"That is the reasoning for licensing in the first place," Bray said. "The state wants to make sure dogs have an up-to-date rabies certificate."

Bray said traffic has been higher than normal so far, with nearly 80 dogs being registered on June 1 – the first day of eligibility. Normally, the town sees about 26 dogs the first day.

Every year, Colchester issues roughly 1,850 dog licenses, Bray said.

Due to budget constraints, officials aren't mailing out paper reminders to owners this year; instead, people can leave an e-mail address with the Town Clerk's office for online notifications.

Meanwhile, with the spotlight on her, Ally has no plans to up her profile over the summer, Barr said.

"As much as she loves to play, she loves being on her own too," Barr said. "She's a laid back, chill kind of a dog."

For more information on dog licenses, contact the Town Clerk's office at 537-7215.

Marlborough Voters Pass Budget on Third Try

by Adam Benson

After three attempts, Marlborough has a 2009-10 budget.

By a 291-231 vote, taxpayers last Thursday, June 18, approved a \$20.84 million spending plan for the upcoming fiscal year. The approved budget represents a \$150,436 increase over current year spending, or .73 percent. The budget also calls for a 26.48 mill rate, a .62 mill increase over the current year. This translates to a 2.4 percent tax increase.

While educators were able to avoid layoffs and increases to class size, several changes are in store for the local school district with the new plan in place, including a \$3,200 reduction to its summer literacy program, a \$13,859 reduction in the district's contribution to AHM Youth Services and passing on of weekend custodial costs at Elmer Thines-Mary Hall Elementary School to the town and organizations that use the building.

The school district's adjusted bottom line for the upcoming fiscal year is \$6.91 million.

Town side impacts include a reduction in Town Hall and Senior Center hours after the Board of Finance (BOF) unanimously accepted an offer from the municipality's three unions to have employees take four voluntary furlough

days.

Officials will shutter both buildings July 6 as a furlough day. And, starting July 1, the town's transfer station on Quinn Road will no longer be open on Wednesdays after the BOF voted to slash its operating hours as a cost-saving measure.

Despite the changes, town and school district leaders said they were relieved to have a budget in place.

"The good news is we have a budget. We take that and we move forward and we get what we can within the dollars that we have," First Selectman Bill Black said. "Quite frankly, with a 2.4 percent tax increase, it says a lot for the support the community is providing for both town operations and local education."

Board of Education Chairwoman Maria Grove echoed that.

"Our guiding principles were to maintain student services and to make sure that our class sizes stay low," she said. "That has been a commitment to our town, and the fact that we were able to weather this budget cycle without cutting a teacher is a testament to this board and this district."

But with a rising debt load that is expected

to increase in the current year, officials are steeling the community for what could be another budgetary battle next spring.

In an effort to streamline communication with all sides and the public, the Board of Selectmen (BOS) in August will host a meeting with the boards of education and finance to start talking about the 2010-11 budget process.

"I hope that if this process has taught us anything, it's that all those groups that the budget affects need to start working together as soon as possible, and that we start the process sooner rather than later," Grove said.

Board of Finance Chair Catherine Gaudinski said she supported the idea of an all-boards meeting early on in the fiscal year, but she also defended the work finance members did to keep residents informed of the process ahead of the June 18 budget vote.

"I'm hoping for next year's budget process that there's a more collaborative approach, and people have a realization of what we're facing in terms of numbers. There needs to be leadership from the town government and Board of Education members in terms of coming in with a really stringent budget," she said. "I think the Board of Finance did have the community in-

involved. We've followed the process we've always had."

Gaudinski offered a preview of what kind of concessions or cuts her board will be looking for next year – focusing on the furlough days offered by municipal employees.

"I would think we would want to look at that for a second year in terms of helping with a two-year budget plan," she said. The furlough days amounted to a savings of \$25,000 in the 2009-10 budget.

While they approved of the budget, voters weren't as supportive of a proposed \$1.5 million road bond that would enable crews to perform resurfacing and drainage work on several thoroughfares across town. Taxpayers killed the measure by a 296-214 vote.

With its failure, Black said improvements to Finley Hill, Jones Hollow and Parker roads along with drainage work on South Main St. will not be completed, though ongoing repairs on Cheney, East Lake and Lake Ridge roads is expected to continue.

"We've adjusted our planned projects for the dollars we were looking for through the road reconstruction" bond, Black said.

Proposed Hebron Charter Changes Sent to Selectmen

by Sarah McCoy

The proposed changes to the town charter are now in the hands of the Board of Selectmen.

On Wednesday, the Charter Revision Commission (CRC) concluded its work on the town's governing document.

The CRC held a mandated public hearing prior to Wednesday's meeting. However, with no members of the public in attendance, the commission worked to resolve any outstanding issues.

While most of the remaining work was grammatical in nature, one aspect of the town charter was debated. In Section 802 it is written that, "The Board of Selectmen shall meet with the Board of Finance to jointly review the budget." The CRC voted in favor of expanding that section to require a quorum of both the Board of Selectmen (BOS) and Board of Finance (BOF) at those joint meetings.

Executive Assistant to the Town Manager Donna Lanza stated that requiring a quorum could put the budget process behind schedule.

CRC Chair Karen Strid stated that being present at these meetings was the responsibility of the elected officials and helps the whole process go smoother. "This is the most important part of the job," she said of the budget, "Some [current] members are better than others at attending meetings. By requiring a quorum, maybe everyone will make it more of a priority to come."

Fellow CRC member Dave Morrison agreed. "Serving on these boards isn't something you do to build your resume," he said. "You do it for your community and you need to be there."

Lanza reported that typically the BOS reviews the budget in March and, while BOF members are invited, the finance board doesn't officially receive the budget until April 1. Lanza worried that, by requiring the BOF to attend approximately eight more meetings, BOS members might be prevented from doing their jobs.

"It's hard enough with five selectmen's schedules," Lanza said. "It will be even harder by requiring 11 people [to be in attendance]."

The CRC decided to include the BOF's required attendance in their recommended charter. This decision could still change with steps remaining in the charter revision process. "If they don't like it, they can come to the public hearing and tell us why," Strid said.

The other significant change made by the CRC was a recommendation for an Ethics Study Committee. "There are a lot of intricacies to consider when forming an Ethics Committee," Strid explained. "In order to do diligence to the subject, we felt, it was most appropriate to recommend a Study Committee to spend more time on the matter than we could as a Charter Revision Commission."

The recommendation for the Study Committee is included in the proposed changes to the charter, as a formal request for the Board of Selectmen. Other than that, and the aforementioned quorum requirement for budget meetings, most of the proposed revisions are more technical in nature, including grammatical, formatting and typographical changes.

The CRC will meet again next week to finalize a cover letter that will be sent to the BOS. In it, the commission intends to address additional items not included in their recommendations, namely bifurcation and a change in the fiscal year.

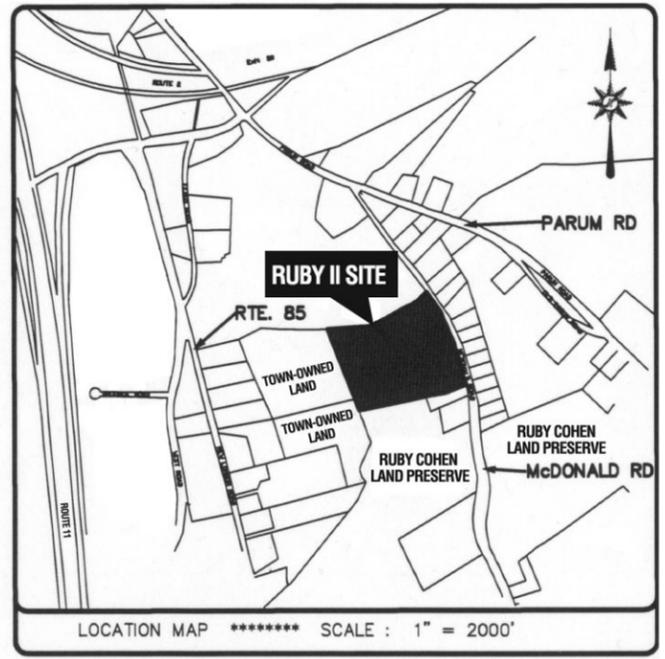
In March, the CRC vote on the Board of Education and General Government budgets separately. This process, called bifurcation, was ultimately voted down by the CRC. A discussion on the matter will be included in the letter to the BOS.

On Wednesday, CRC member Harvey Desruisseaux requested that the BOS consider changing the town's fiscal year from July 1 through June 30 to Oct. 1 through Sept. 30. "This way," he explained, "we can know what we're receiving from the state as we go through the process."

Morrison questioned how this would work for RHAM payments, considering that the two other partner towns – Andover and Marlborough – would continue to operate with July 1 as the start of the fiscal year. However, he and Strid voiced their support in recommending the BOS look into the matter.

The BOS could receive the recommended town charter revisions as soon as their July 2 meeting. After that, the selectmen may set aside time to meet with the CRC or they may opt to proceed with another mandated public hearing.

The public must vote to approve the updated town charter prior to any changes becoming effective. Town officials aim to have the changes put forth to voters at the November elections.



The proposed acquisition of an additional 31 acres adjacent to the town-owned Ruby Cohen Estate, known as "Ruby II," will go to town meeting next Tuesday, June 30. The town and the Colchester Land Trust would jointly fund the acquisition. The Ruby II property contains the headwaters of Meadow Brook and surrounding wetlands. Meadow Brook is the eastern most sub watershed of the Salmon River and the property is at the center of the town's largest aquifer, serving the town wells near the intersection of routes 2 and 16.

Colchester Town Meeting to Consider Land Purchase

On June 18, the Board of Selectmen approved moving forward to town meeting the possible acquisition of a 31-acre parcel adjacent to the town-owned Ruby and Elizabeth Cohen Woodlands on McDonald Road.

The town meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 30, at 7 p.m., at Town Hall, 127 Norwich Ave.

Cost for the acquisition is \$182,500. The town and the Colchester Land Trust (CLT) would jointly fund this acquisition. The action from the Board of Selectmen followed consideration and recommendations from the town's open space and conservation commissions.

The town acquired the Ruby and Elizabeth Cohen estate in the early 1980s. The town has been accumulating lands adjacent to the original parcel since then. Including this proposed purchase, the Cohen Focus Area would exceed 148 acres in size. This area has been set aside to promote environmental education and passive recreation.

The town was approached by the CLT regarding the purchase earlier this year. Several months before, the CLT had received a call from Maureen Howley, a recipient of her aunt's estate, which included the 31 acres in Colchester. When she set about the task of clearing out the contents of her aunt's home, she discovered several letters the trust had mailed to land owners of large properties in town over the years describing options they had on conserving their land folded into the deed to the 31-acre property.

"It was like a message from the grave," Howley said. "We knew my aunt wanted to conserve the land, so we made the call to the trust."

The land is directly adjacent to the town-owned 117 acres of the Cohen Woodlands and is in the town's adopted Open Space Plan. "I saw this as a once in a lifetime opportunity for us," said Chuck Toal, a CLT board member who has been in negotiation with the Howley family since last fall. "The family agreed to a 'bargain sale' for the town, offering the property for \$40,000 less than the appraised value, simply to make it easier for

Colchester to acquire. The parcel was owned by Marie Clair Fleming for over 80 years, and was a very generous gift from someone who does not live in the community."

Town staff was involved in the negotiation and upon review identified \$140,000 in funding that was set aside for land acquisition.

"This opportunity to enhance one of our most treasured sites cannot be overlooked," First Selectman Linda Hodge said. "It is a benefit to the entire community and a good use of the funds set aside for this purpose." Town staff and land trust members conducted site assessments, land appraisals and environmental rankings during the last few months. Final negotiations with the seller as well as presentations before the open space and conservation commissions were completed during the last month.

"No new revenues will be spent in the acquisition," Hodge said. Town funds already set aside for open space acquisition, combined with fees paid by developers, placed in an account for open space acquisition, known as "fee in lieu of" funds are proposed to be used to purchase the lands. The appraised value of the property is \$222,000. The Howley family agreed to accept \$182,500, with the town using \$140,000 of its land acquisition fees and the CLT contributing the rest.

"We have already received an anonymous matching challenge grant of \$5,000 to kick off the campaign," said Lisa Hageman, president of the trust. "In addition, each trust board member has committed their own personal funds to donate several thousand more toward the project. We are on our way to expanding the Cohen property by more than 25 percent."

Toal added, "The Ruby Cohen Estate is a real gem in Colchester. This purchase will give us a chance to make it bigger and better." Hodge called the possible acquisition "a real prospect to enhance our open space. In 50 years our great grandchildren will be enjoying these natural areas."

For more information, visit www.Colchesterct.gov. To learn more about the CLT or contribute to the acquisition fund, visit www.colchesterlandtrust.org.

Colchester Chevy Closes Suddenly

According to published reports, General Motors abruptly closed its Chevrolet of Colchester dealership Wednesday morning.

GM officials informed employees at the 120 S. Main St. site around noon Wednesday that the dealership would be closing, reports said. Some workers were expected to be transferred to Ford of Colchester on Norwich Avenue, according to reports.

A locksmith was reportedly on site Wednesday at the Route 85 dealership, and reports said suppliers were seen removing tires and other equipment.

First Selectman Linda Hodge was unavailable for comment at press time. A full story on the closing will appear in next week's *Rivereast*.

Birds Impact Portland Fireworks Schedule

by Sharon Hoy

The Fireworks Committee is frequently asked why the Portland fireworks are scheduled after the Independence Day weekend. After all, it is a celebration of our nation's freedom and other towns have their display much earlier than Portland.

There is a good reason for this.

There are many types of birds that nest along the river including eagles and herons. The Town of Portland received a letter from the Department of Environmental Protection requesting that the town's fireworks be delayed so as not to interfere with the nesting of the birds along the river's edge. Having the display later gives families an opportunity to have family get-togethers around the July 4th weekend but still have an exciting event later in the month.

Donations are still needed to have the quality of display of past years. This event is funded strictly by donations from businesses and the public. In addition to the fireworks, expenses include police protection, portable toilets, advertising, postage, etc. Don't delay in sending your donation to Portland Fireworks, c/o Portland Police, 265 Main St., Portland, CT 06480.

And remember, Cavaliere's Bakery on Main Street is donating 50 cents for every cup of coffee sold from 6:30-9:30 a.m. daily until the fireworks. Stop in and enjoy a delicious cup of coffee and help the fireworks at the same time.

The fireworks event will take place on July 18 at the Portland Exchange Club grounds on Route 17A with a rain date of July 19.

Sharon Hoy is a member of the Portland Fireworks Committee.

Andover Church Growing Food Pantry to Fill Void

by Sarah McCoy

The First Congregational Church of Andover is stepping up to fill a growing need in town. The church has begun to increase the size of its food pantry.

For the past two years Andover residents in need have been able to use the food bank at Hebron Interfaith Human Services (HIHS). However, due to an increase in need within Hebron, HIHS will no longer be able to serve Andover residents.

“Our needs in town have grown so much,” HIHS Director Terry Young explained. “We now serve 145 families in Hebron.”

The Congregational Church, which has operated a food pantry for several years, will work in conjunction with the Town of Andover to step in where HIHS has left off. Joan Soucy, who is heading up the endeavor for the church, said that she expects an increase in use and is working to prepare for it.

“There were approximately 19 [Andover] families being serviced in Hebron,” she said. “Those people, presumably, still need food. We’re working to get it stocked now.”

Soucy said the food pantry is still in need of pasta sauces, canned pastas, baking needs, and meals in a box, such as Hamburger Helper. She also said that the church is collecting personal hygiene items as well.

Donations to the food pantry can be left in the wooden bin at the backdoor of the church. The Congregational Church is located at 359

Route 6.

At the present time the Congregational Church has only a closet to dedicate for food needs. Soucy did say that she is working to see if there is any way to have a refrigerator available for perishable items. She is also reaching out to Food Share, a regional food provider to area food banks, to see if the town can receive items much like other area towns.

The food bank is available from 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. on Thursdays. Though Soucy is making herself available to those unable to make it during that time. Those looking to use the food bank outside of its regular hours can call Soucy at 860-208-3226.

There are no income requirements to use the food bank at the present time.

Soucy described the food pantry environment as “discreet” and “open to those who need it.”

“A lot of people aren’t aware that this is available to them,” she said. “We want to get the word out that this is here and we’re here to help in any way we can.”

Andover resident Dawn Quint has accepted the position of Social Worker for the town. She and First Selectmen Bob Burbank are currently in the process of finalizing her hiring. The food bank will fall under her purview once she gets started in the position.

Burbank stated that this is a part-time position that works on an as-needed basis.

FOIC Rules Against Andover

by Sarah McCoy

The state Freedom of Information Commission (FOIC) recently ruled that First Selectman Bob Burbank was guilty of holding an illegal meeting last year.

However, no penalties were levied, as the FOIC found Burbank’s violation “was not without reasonable grounds.”

On June 16, 2008, Burbank was notified through the town’s Tax Collector that a mill rate needed to be set, in order to print the tax bills in time to be mailed to residents by the June 30 deadline. An emergency Board of Selectmen’s (BOS) meeting was called at 1:15 p.m.; the meeting was held at 4 p.m. that same day. Three of the town’s five selectmen were present.

At that meeting the sole order of business was to set the mill rate for the 2008-09 fiscal year. As the budget had not yet been approved by the voters, the BOS opted to set the mill rate at 27.6, the level that had been proposed at that point in time by the Board of Finance.

After the 2008-09 was ultimately passed, the BOF set the mill rate at 27.3.

Andover resident Jolene Rocks filed a complaint with the FOIC on July 7 asking for the actions taken at the emergency BOS meeting be declared null and void and for Burbank to be assessed a civil penalty. In her formal complaint Rocks claims that this should not have been an emergency meeting and, therefore,

should have been posted at least 24 hours in advance.

Rocks declined to comment for this story.

Burbank said this week he felt the emergency meeting was necessary because waiting would have delayed the mailing of tax bills and, thus, hindered the town’s ability to pay its own bills. It would also cost the town an additional \$8,000, and added confusion, to send out second tax bills had Burbank sent out tax bills at the 2007-08 mill rate of 26.3 and then needed a supplemental bill for the remaining 1 mill discrepancy, Burbank said.

In an April 22 ruling, the FOIC wrote that, while it understood Burbank’s predicament, “the fact that subsequent adjusted tax bills might have to be sent out does not rise to the level of an emergency.”

The commission also wrote that Burbank must comply with the posting requirements in the future, though declined to dole out any further punishment.

The additional .3 mills, which equates to \$83,000, collected in 2008-09 taxes has been applied to reduce the 2009-10 fiscal year budget. With Andover residents having approved the town’s budget last month, the mill rate was set with plenty of time for this year’s tax bills to be printed and shipped by the June 30 deadline.

Marlborough School Board Nearing Deal for New Superintendent

by Adam Benson

The Marlborough School District is expected to have a new superintendent in place by Monday, Board of Education (BOE) Chair Maria Grove said this week.

The school board is expected to meet with its pick later today to finalize a contract and begin introducing the new superintendent to the district’s policies and employees, Grove said. Though she wouldn’t divulge the candidate’s name, as the contract had yet to be signed, Grove said Wednesday she was “confident and very excited” about finding a replacement for outgoing superintendent Sal Menzo.

The new schools chief will be a part-time position, whereas Menzo’s was a full-time role. Grove admitted “it’s going to be a challenge for the faculty, parents and members of the community who were very clear about wanting a part-time superintendent. ... It’s just going to be an adjustment for the community.”

Earlier this month, board members held three community forums to introduce finalists for the job to residents. The finalists were: David Sklarz, who is retiring this month as superintendent of West Hartford Public Schools; John Sullivan, a retired schools superintendent and currently the interim principal at East Lyme High School; and Wayne Sweeney, an education consultant and current interim associate principal at Old Saybrook High School.

Grove said the final selection will earn 45 percent of Menzo’s \$131,104-a year base salary, with the savings being rolled back into the school board’s general fund to help offset future expenses.

Board of Education members were split early

on in their search as to whether a part-time superintendent was the right fit for Marlborough’s 641-student single-school district, but coalesced around the idea of a scaled-back position after hearing repeated support of the idea from residents.

Among those who supported retaining a full-time superintendent was Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Principal Loraine Gianinni.

“I can see what happens when you have somebody in the building every day and willing to be a part of all decisions,” she told the school board in May. “The bottom line is we will always do the job, but I do believe you are going to see a difference with a part-time person.”

Grove acknowledged that Wednesday, but said she was optimistic the district’s new hire will be proactive and engaged on educational issues.

“Because we hired on a part-time basis, we got some older and more experienced people who can really hit the ground running, so we’re very confident that this will be a smooth transition for the district,” Grove said.

Menzo, 38, will leave the Marlborough July 1 to take over the Wallingford’s 12-school, 7,000-student district.

Under his direction, Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School was named Connecticut’s 2008 School of the Year by the state Association of Schools, and Wallingford board members noted Menzo’s close working relationship with district officials in data delivery and curricula in their appointment of him.

East Hampton School Boards Cuts Five Positions, Adds Pay-to-Play

by Michael McCoy

Throughout this year’s arduous budget process, people could only guess where the Board of Education (BOE) would find \$452,000 in budget cuts.

The facts were decided during Monday night’s meeting.

The reductions included the elimination of five full-time educator (FTE) positions. The school board also added an athletic participation fee, which would generate \$65,000.

The BOE voted 7-1 to make the cuts, with Donald Coolican dissenting. (Board member Alan Hurst was absent.)

On June 2, voters approved a budget four weeks after voting one down. The approved budget includes a BOE budget of \$25.02 million.

“We worked very hard to make this budget reduction,” Superintendent of Schools Judith Golden said. But, despite the five cut positions, Golden said she doesn’t anticipate having to lay anyone off, due to the positions either already being vacant or expected to become vacant before the start of the 2009-10 year.

Golden said the list of reductions was drawn up by the district’s administration, as well as the BOE finance committee.

She also said the large reduction was due in part to the public’s voting down the first proposed budget. “I hope that doesn’t happen in the future,” remarked Golden.

Golden has been the town’s schools superintendent for two years, and was an assistant superintendent for six years prior to coming to town. When asked if these were the most devastating cuts she’s ever been a part of, she said, “Absolutely,” without hesitating.

Coolican said the only thing he disagreed with was the athletic participation fee. The fee, commonly referred to as “pay-to-play,” will be \$150 per student per sport at the high school and \$75 per student per sport at the middle school. However, waivers will be available to families who cannot afford the fee, and there will also be a \$450 cap per family.

“I just think athletics at the high school is a very important part of the high school experience,” Coolican said. Instead, he offered a list of \$65,000 in cuts and other revenue sources to substitute for the athletic fee. These included dropping varsity golf and volleyball, reducing middle school interscholastic athletics, and requiring high school students to pay a fee to park at the school.

Coolican noted that he was BOE chairman about 10 years ago, when they cut most of the

middle school athletics budget. He said parents raised the money necessary to keep the program, and it was back in the budget the next year.

Coolican seemed less concerned with the budget reductions than most board members. “We’ve seen cuts before,” he said. Remarking on lost positions and programs, he said, “They’ve gone before, and they’ll come back.”

“This is not the end of the world,” he said. “It’s really not.”

The cut positions include an elementary school teacher, a high school teacher, part-time paraprofessional at the high school library and two other high school paraprofessionals.

However, none of the reductions involve layoffs. Fourth grade teacher Sandra Grzybowski passed away in February, and her position will not be filled. However, elementary staff will be shuffled, so that the missing class will actually be in first grade. Golden said the average first grade class sizes in the just-completed 2008-09 school year were 18 or 19 students. Next year’s will be 20 or 21.

Also, a vacancy currently exists at the middle school, which will now be filled by a teacher moving from the high school. Golden said all three paraprofessional positions will also be unfilled vacancies.

Like everyone else, however, BOE Chair Michael Vasquenza did not seem thrilled with the cuts, noting the big ticket items like staff and athletics, but said, “There’s no way you can nickel and dime for this kind of money.”

As for the athletic fee, he said, “The alternative was looking at cutting athletics.” He later added, “When budgets get defeated, there’s very little places to go.”

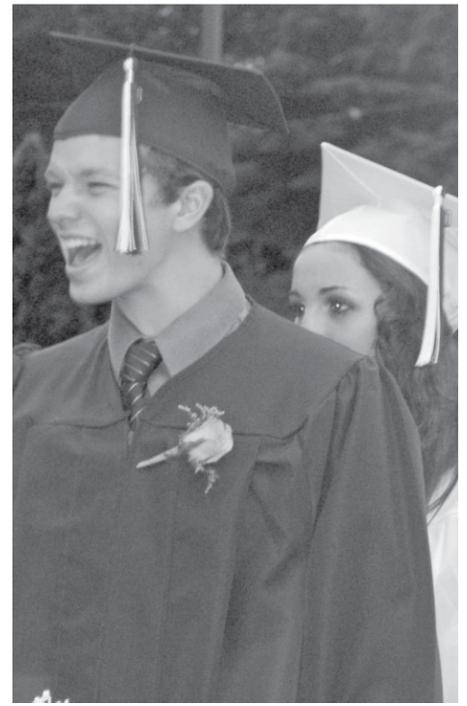
Board members weren’t particularly enthusiastic about the athletic participation fee, but they voted for it anyway.

“I don’t like the \$150 fee to play sports,” BOE member Sheila Wall said. “However, the people I talked to don’t seem to be too upset about it.”

The BOE also cut \$125,000 from the special education budget, but Golden said she felt the anticipated Economic Cost Sharing and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) money would suffice.

“I don’t think any of us are happy or excited about this,” said BOE vice chair Debra Robinson, who called the decision “gut wrenching.” But, she figured, “It’s the best that we can do for now.”

The Board of Education will next meet Aug. 24.



Members of the East Hampton High School Class of 2009 graduated Tuesday. At far left, Meghan Cavanaugh receives her diploma from Principal Linda Berry. At center, student Dana Boscarino flashes her diploma, and a smile, to those in attendance. At far right, Matt Hull enthusiastically lip-synchs to dance music as the graduates depart after the ceremony.

EHHS Holds Commencement Exercises

by Michael McCoy

An hour-long shower, which was fairly heavy at times, couldn't drive anyone away from watching members of the East Hampton High School (EHHS) Class of 2009 receive their diplomas.

Commencement exercises began promptly at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday night, after a cloudy, but not dreary, day. The overcast sky yielded a foreboding warning when salutatorian Audrey Saunders had to hold her cap down, due to wind, during the end of her remarks. When Superintendent of Schools Judith Golden took the podium two speakers later, the rain had started and umbrellas hovered over the audience.

Of course, what's a little rain after 13 years of hard work? The weather failed in wiping the smiles off the faces of graduates, parents, or the administration. One speaker whose good will was not averted was honor essayist Brooke Pitcher, who finished third in the Class of 2009 senior rankings.

Brooke reminisced that it seemed like only yesterday they were all "acting like monkeys" on the playground. She recognized that those days were long gone. "Over the last three years, we have all learned together and grown together," she said.

Brooke continued, "History has indeed been made over the course of our high school careers," citing events both trivial (the culmination of the *Harry Potter* series) and more significant (the historic election of Barack Obama as America's first black president).

As far as EHHS memories go, Brooke recalled the senior trip to Washington D.C., mentioning mishaps to buses (getting lost and being pulled over by police) and subways (boys taking the Metro out of town.)

Brooke also noted "the emergence of hip-hop sensation LB Fresh," which suggests EHHS Principal Linda Berry may have a hidden talent.

Brooke admitted that she used to wish she lived in Glastonbury, due to its big school and population, but came around to appreciate her small town. "Nothing compares to bonding in the Shaw's parking lot," she said.

Though Brooke said, "I have no tips for leading a happy and successful life," she left her class with one wish: "Let's not let high school be the highlight of our lives. This is just the beginning."

Similarly, salutatorian Audrey Saunders sought to challenge her classmates, explaining that adversity is necessary for growth. "Life shouldn't be driven by a juvenile sense of embarrassment," she said, instead commissioning her colleagues to take life by the horns and capitalize on obstacles.

In life, Audrey surmised, "The fact is that these infinite possibilities are under our discretion."

Class President Marilyn Dougan led off the evening. She said she's been in town since fifth grade, but recognized that some students have been in the district since preschool and "some of those friendships have remained strong."

Like Brooke, Marilyn alluded to the class trip, and specifically, "Bus No. 3 going around the Pentagon three times before finding the hotel."

Valedictorian Reilly Price may have topped her class, but she did not seem to think she was above it calling her fellow graduates "ambitious and truly remarkable." She predicted each and every one would "have a profound effect in whatever endeavor they pursue, big or small."

Acknowledging diversity among the class, such as eye color, hair color and race, Price said this will apply to their future as "we will be asked to work with people who are totally different from us."

On a more grand scale, she alluded to ills such as racial tension, and international con-

flict, and figured some of her classmates might even be responsible one day for ending partisan politics or finally bringing peace to the Middle East.

It's no secret people want to hear the students speak at graduation, not adults. But one of the evening's most poignant moments came during Board of Education Chair Michael Vasquenza's speech. Alluding to his successful bout with cancer, he recalled being in his hospital room in October 2004. "I prayed that I could be here tonight," he said. (He was forced to pause as the crowd gave him a round of applause.) About 20 minutes later, Vasquenza got to embrace his son, Nicholas, as he handed him his diploma.

As usual, Berry kept the focus on the students, allowing several from the Class of 2009 to share those who inspired them most. First, though, she said hers was Golden. "I'm not stupid," she said. "I don't want to be the only school administrator in the district whose office gets turned into a storage closet."

As the rain picked up, Golden spoke, saying, "Surprises, by their very nature, come in disguise," and that many chances come unexpectedly. As examples, she cited the inventions of Silly Putty. On a more serious note, she mentioned the travails of Captain Sully Sullenberger, who safely landed Flight 1549 in the Hudson River, saving the lives of 155 people.

"I wish you a bright future full of surprises," said Golden.

Finally, all 151 graduates walked the stage to take their diploma, and they didn't even seem to care they were wet.

The members of the East Hampton High School Class of 2009 are:

Ashley Marie Bernard, Michael John Bialek, Meagan Mary Bibisi, Dana Christine Boscarino, Andrew Carlone Briere, Lauren

Ashley Brochu, Amanda Jane Burbank, Francis Diorio Bussolini, Gina Lynn Bussolini, Amelia A. Cavanaugh, Meghan E. Cavanaugh, Alyssa Chapman, Chad Michael Chenail, April Cibula, Katherine Stanford Claps, Justin M. Clark, Olivia Gray Clausi, Chrystal Constant, Meredith Amelia Cook, Brandi Nicole Cross, Ryan Matthew Croxford, Christopher R. Cry;

Devon Frances Fitol, Luke Francis Flanagan, Eric Michael Foley, Alexander Fortin, Rachael Elizabeth Geary, Jacquelyn M. Giannotti, Cora Kristine Gingras, Ethan Paul Giorgetti, Adina Arielle Goodman, Jordan Nicole Gunning, Brendan Thomas Gustafson, Britta A. Gustafson, Sarah Marie Hall, Seth William Hall, Rachel Morgan Hawkins, Erin M. Henriksen, Megan Birdget Higgins, Joshua James Hill, Eric Hinxman, Marie Korkor. A Hughes, Matthew Tyler Hull, Erin Kelly Joyce;

Heather M. MacDonald, Patrick S. Maynard, Chase D McCabe, Katherine Grace McCluskey, Sean P. McGovern-Cullen, Nicole Elizabeth Messier, Margaret Kathleen Murphy, Meghan Ann Nicolletta, Stephanie Nielsen, Rachel Erin Nowakowski, Cody A. Okarmus, Tiffany Katherine Painter, Cassidy Jean Patten, Christina Elizabeth Peaslee, Steven Scott Pierce, Brooke Leigh Pitcher, Joshua Louis Plaskonka, Morgan Brittany Poulin, Justin Charles Prestash, Reilly Alexandra Price, Mary Elizabeth Puzzo, David Patrick Quackenbush;

Amanda Leigh Sirois, Nicole Marie Sirois, Kristina J. Smith, Stephanie Kay Somerville, Brittany A. Springer, Tiffany A. Street, Kyle Richard Sullivan, Meghan Kim Sutkaitis, Michael A. Sweet, Vincent Tigner, Jolene Marie Turner, Noreen Lynn Turner, Deanna Marie Valenti, Nicholas J. Vasquenza, Anthony Michael Viccaro, Melanie A. Voelker, Daniel G. White, Rebecca Anne Wilkie, Victoria E. Wilmot, Alexander Michael Zawodniak and David Zemina.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Well, that was fast.

I happened to look at the *Hartford Courant's* website Monday afternoon and saw up in the right hand corner a little box that said the staff of the paper is thinking of redesigning the cover page. Again.

Veteran *Courant* readers will remember that last fall, the paper underwent a fairly massive redesign. Sections were combined – some in a rather nonsensical way (put obits in the Life section?), several charts and graphs were added and the paper started containing lots of plugs for its website. Lots of plugs. Oh, and local news coverage was reduced.

But perhaps the most noticeable change – if only because it's what you saw when you first picked up the paper – was on the cover. The masthead was inexplicably moved from the top of the page to the left, and the words "Harford Courant" ran, vertically, up the side of the page. There was also a little ".com" added after the word "Courant," which helped to remind you that what you were reading was no longer so much a newspaper as it was a sort of *Reader's Digest* version of its website.

When the *Courant* unveiled the changes to its once-iconic newspaper late last September, a friend of mine predicted that the relocated masthead would be among the first things to go when the paper determined its reboot wasn't quite the success it had hoped. And lo and behold, it looks like he was right. Because less than a year after the new-look cover, the *Courant* is having second thoughts.

The front page of the paper was changed last fall, the *Courant* wrote, because "we were changing the format of the newspaper and wanted to signal that with dramatic design." But, the paper added, it's now "not so sure" and is thinking of moving the masthead back. It even let readers vote on three separate looks for the cover: the current, name-up-the-side look; the name of the paper across the front, black letters on a white background, the way it used to be (sort of; there'd now be a blue bar underneath the masthead); or the masthead across the front, like it used to be, only in white lettering against a blue background. While the East Catholic alum part of me likes the appreciation for blue and white, I can't quite figure that choice out. It looks silly, and a little unprofessional, considering this is the nation's oldest newspaper and all. Have some class, and save the blue background for.....I don't know what, but don't make it the background of the masthead. Even the current tan background looks better than that.

Of course, a redesigned cover wouldn't really address any of the other problems that came with the *Courant's* overhaul last fall. And, from a "reader comments" section on the website, it's clear readers would like to see those other issues dealt with. Several commenters wrote that they'd like to see more

hard news on the cover and fewer human interest and feature stories. Others wrote that they'd just like to see more local news and sports coverage in general. A couple of particularly pessimistic posters, in fact, wrote that redesigning the masthead is akin to "rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic."

Well, I certainly hope that's not the case. The paper is still salvageable. It just needs to get back to offering more local news. (And no, that "2 Do 2 Day" section doesn't count as local news.) I realize, with the amount of newsroom-trimming it's done in recent years, the *Courant* will probably never be what it once was. But, if it focused a little less on its website and more on news, it can give the people at least a *little* of what they want from their daily paper.

Making the masthead look like a real masthead again could be a step in the right direction.

* * *

A blogger I regularly read recently told this story, and while I had heard it before, I didn't mind reading it again. It's a funny, and pretty strong, example of not just the power of the media but also the power of a diligent attorney.

In 2003, a man named Juan Catalan was charged with murder. He had claimed he was at a Dodgers game with his daughter at the time of the crime. Unfortunately for him, he had no proof. His lawyer watched the telecast of that game, to see if he could spot his client in the stands. No dice.

But then the attorney learned that, on the night Catalan had said he was at the game, the producers of the show *Curb Your Enthusiasm* were shooting a few scenes at Dodger Stadium, for an upcoming episode. The lawyer obtained the footage of the taping and pored through it. Eventually, he spotted Catalan and his daughter, in the background of a shot that had been left on the cutting room floor. The footage was time-coded, proving that Catalan was at the game shortly before the murder took place, some 20 miles away from Dodger Stadium. The video helped convince a judge to release Catalan – after he had already spent nearly five months in jail.

I suppose you can guess what happened next. That's right, Catalan sued the City of Los Angeles for police misconduct, and ultimately settled with the City Council for \$320,000.

Had it not been for that footage, Catalan could have gone to trial and, if convicted, faced the death penalty. Catalan later admitted that, while he wasn't a fan of *Curb Your Enthusiasm* before he went to jail, he sure became one after he got out.

Can't say as I blame him. It's not every day a TV show literally helps save your life.

* * *

See you next week.

East Hampton Police News

6/4 — Eva Szpak, 26, of 224 West High St., was involved in a one-car accident on Route 66 near Barton Hill Road, East Hampton Police said. Szpak was issued a ticket for traveling too fast for conditions, police added.

6/10 — A 14-year-old male juvenile was charged with fourth-degree sexual assault, police said.

6/10 — Kyle Gardiner, 39, of 141 Comstock Tr., was involved in a one-car accident on Comstock Trail, police said. Gardiner was arrested for evading responsibility and an unsafe turn, police added.

6/11 — Jennifer Carter, 27, of 5 Prout St., Portland, was arrested for failure to have a front plate and operating under suspension, police said.

6/11 — Christopher Laurito, 18, of 85 North Main St., was arrested for failure to drive right, operating an unregistered motor vehicle, illegal operation without insurance and operating a motor vehicle under suspension, police said.

6/14 — Robert Harrison, 35, of 68

Dickenson Rd., Marlborough, was issued a ticket for illegal passing, police said.

6/15 — Stephen Banning, 54, of 24 Hill Top Rd., was arrested for disorderly conduct and interfering with police, police said.

6/15 — An 11-year-old male juvenile was referred to Juvenile Court, police said.

6/17 — Daniel Cyr, 46, of 272 Roast Meat Hill Rd., Killingworth, was arrested for possession of narcotics, possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of drugs/marijuana, illegal storage of narcotics, failure to drive right, driving under the influence, operating an unregistered motor vehicle and operating under suspension, police said. Cyr was also arrested pursuant to a warrant for failure to appear, police added.

6/17 — Mark Niglio, 21, of 4 Summit St., was issued a ticket for failure to drive right, police said.

6/18 — Thomas Barry, 38, of 253 Browning Rd., Bozrah, was issued a ticket for traveling unreasonably fast, police said.

Colchester Police News

6/18: Franco Gallitto, 31, of 289 Chestnut Hill Rd., was charged with driving under the influence, driving without insurance and making an improper turn, State Police said.

6/19: Evan Otgen, 20, of 11 Tartia Rd., East Hampton, was charged with operating a motor vehicle under a suspended license, making an improper turn, failure to carry registration and failure to have insurance, State Police said.

6/19: Carl Smith, 52, of Preston, was charged with breach of peace, first-degree trespassing and second-degree harassment, State Police said.

6/20: Jessica Minney, 26, of 1 Skylark Drive, was charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct, State Police said.

6/20: David Valentine, 20, of 17 Spice Hill

Drive, was charged with DUI, disobeying the signal of an officer and second-degree reckless endangerment, State Police said.

6/21: Alan McKenna, 20, of *where*, Amston, was charged with possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, State Police said.

6/21: Stephen Hultgren, 56, of Middletown, was charged with driving under the influence and failure to drive right, State Police said.

6/22: Willard Olmstead, 55, of Moodus, was charged with driving under the influence, reckless driving and driving without a motorcycle endorsement.

6/22: Chad Ranger, 37, of Whitewater, WI., was charged with driving under the influence, State Police said.

Portland Police News

6/15 — James Delaney, 48, of 568 Main St., was charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct, Portland Police said.

6/16 — Jeffrey Higgins, 36, of 9 Buddy Ln., was charged with third-degree assault, disorderly conduct and interfering with a police officer, police said.

6/19 — David Benjamin, 43, of 19 Main St., East Hampton, was charged with operating under the influence, operating under suspension and traveling too fast, police said.

6/21 — Cheryl Russin, 51, of 188 Main St., Apt. N, was charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct, police said.

6/21 — Matthew Florentz, 38, of 188 Main St., Apt. S, was charged with third-degree assault, disorderly conduct and narcotics not kept in original container, police said.

Marlborough Police News

6/19: Maegan Brzostowski, 20, of 44 Middletown Ave., East Hampton, was charged with possession of marijuana, possession of narcotics and possession of drug paraphernalia, State Police said.

Andover Police News

6/22: Nathan Price, 21, of 209 Burkee Hill Rd., was charged with third-degree burglary, fifth-degree larceny and first-degree criminal mischief, State Police said.

Hebron Police News

6/20: Kevin McGuire, 20, of 38 Ridge Rd., was charged with driving under the influence, State Police said.

6/20: Andrew Thompson, 19, of 97 Ridge Rd., was charged with interfering with an officer, State Police said.

Obituaries

Marlborough

E. Roy Wildeman

E. Roy Wildeman, 97, a West Hartford resident for 58 years, died Saturday morning, June 20, at Marlborough Health Care Center.

Born in Bloomfield, NJ, Roy grew up in East Orange, NJ, where he was active in scouting and earned the rank of Eagle Scout. He graduated from East Orange High School in 1930 and was a 1936 graduate of Upsala College in East Orange. Roy's first job during the Great Depression was with the Crucible Steel Company in Chicago, IL. In 1941, Roy married Eleanor Borden Hay and began his 30-year career with the Jessop Steel Company, becoming Jessop's district sales manager for New England.

In 1951, Roy and his family set down roots in West Hartford, moving into the house on Castlewood Road that became their home for the next 50 years. Roy took early retirement from Jessop in 1971. His post-retirement endeavors included a decade as a securities courier for Hartford National Bank and a brief period as a ranger for the Rockledge Golf Course in West Hartford. Roy was a charter member of the Golf Club of Avon. One of Roy's greatest pleasures was being near the ocean; he and his family spent many happy summers together in Quonochontaug, RI.

Roy is survived by his son and daughter-in-law, Roy and Karen Wildeman of Pineland, FL; his daughter, Carlisle Wildeman of Colchester; his daughter and son-in-law, Mimi Wildeman and Sal Tralongo of Hebron; and his dear companion, Eleanor Campbell of West Hartford. He also leaves behind three grandchildren and spouses, Kate Lammert and her husband Greg of St. Louis, MO; Roy Wildeman Jr. and his wife Pam of Braintree, MA; and Laura Tralongo of Hebron. Roy's great-grandchildren include Adam and Emma Lammert of St. Louis, MO and Clara Wildeman of Braintree, MA.

Roy was predeceased by his wife Eleanor in 2001 and his brother Cliff in 1982.

Roy's family would like to thank the caregivers of the Marlborough Health Care Center for their compassion and kindness, with special appreciation to Nadine, Chris, Emeka, Laurie, Diane and Vinsee.

Portland

Josephine Bartolotta

Josephine Bartolotta, 91, of Portland, wife of the late Rosario Bartolotta, died on Tuesday, June 23, at the Wadsworth Glenn Health Care Center. Born on Jan. 19, 1918, in Portland, daughter of the late Sebastian and Concettina (Mucula) Spada. Josephine had been a lifelong resident of Portland. She was a member of St. Mary's Church, Portland.

Josephine is survived by her loving family: a son and daughter-in-law, Thomas and Antonia Bartolotta of Portland; a daughter and son-in-law, Edward and Lorraine Zawilinski of Middletown; a brother, Sebastian Spada of Cromwell; a granddaughter, two great-grandchildren, also several nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by two brothers, Anthony Spada and Salvatore Spada, and two sisters, Rose Vinci and Anna Moncata.

The funeral was held today, Friday, June 26, at 10 a.m., from the Coughlin-Lastrina Funeral Home, 491 High St., Middletown, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial in St. Mary's Church, Portland, at 11 a.m. Burial will be in the family plot in St. Sebastian Cemetery, Middlefield. Friends called at the funeral home Thursday, June 25.

East Hampton

John Michael Shea

John Michael Shea, 57, of East Hampton, beloved husband of Maureen (Fitzgerald) Shea, died Friday, June 19, at his home surrounded by his loving family. Born Aug. 9, 1951, in New Haven, he was the son of the late Gerald and Mildred (Kenny) Shea.

John was a graduate of Notre Dame High School, West Haven, and attended Southern Connecticut State University. He was a 1988 graduate of the DARC Program and was a licensed and internationally certified addictions counselor. John dedicated his personal life to his family. He was a devoted husband, best friend and soul mate to his wife Maureen. He was loving, supportive and an inspiration to his children and he most enjoyed adoring and lavishing his grandchildren. They brought so much joy to his life.

John touched the lives of many people. He devoted his professional life to advocating for the behavioral healthcare needs of the recovery community. He was appointed and was an active member of many boards, commissions and committees, including the Conn. Assoc. of Addictions Prof., National Assoc. of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Councilors, the Dept. of Mental Health and Addictions Services and for the State of Connecticut.

Besides his wife, he is survived by his son and his wife, Raymond and Colleen Doyle; five daughters, Kimberly Joyner and her husband Max, Heather Piazza and her husband Edward J., and Jamie Lynn Shea, Amy Novak and Alina Novak; a brother Gerald Shea and his wife Rosanne; two sisters and their spouses Maureen and Michael Uttaro and Kathleen and Patrick Paulson; and his eight grandchildren and several nieces and nephews.

A memorial service was held Wednesday, June 24, in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton. Burial will be private. Friends called at the funeral home Wednesday morning before the service.

Memorial contributions may be made to the American Cancer Society 538 Preston Ave. P.O. Box 1004 Meriden, CT 06450.

To leave online condolences, visit www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Portland

Sharon Ceplenski

Sharon (Gayeski) Ceplenski, 62, of Clarence Court, Middletown, beloved wife of Paul Vasques, died Tuesday, June 23, at Middlesex Hospital. She was born and raised in Portland, the daughter of the late John and Johanna (Baginski) Gayeski.

Sharon was most recently a manager at Farrell's Restaurant in Portland, and a sales associate at Macy's in Meriden. She was a graduate of the Creative School of Hairdressing and worked as a hair stylist in Hartford and Middletown for many years. She also graduated from Central Connecticut State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in creative design and worked as a freelance graphics designer.

Besides her husband, she is survived by her brother, Richard Gayeski and his wife Sonja of Newington; and brother, Matthew Gayeski of Portland. She is also survived by her uncle, Bob Whitehead of Portland; nephew, Jim Gayeski of Suffield; niece, Beth (Gayeski) Brodeur of Newington; and niece, Ellen (Gayeski) Marini of Texas.

Sharon was an avid gardener, loved working with arts and crafts, and enjoyed being outdoors with her dog, Raven. Her home and heart was always open to friends and relatives who will all miss her deeply.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, June 27, at 10:15 a.m. at Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown, followed by an 11 a.m. Funeral Liturgy at St. Mary's Church, Freestone Ave., Portland. Burial will be in St. Mary Cemetery, Portland. Friends may call at Biega Funeral Home today, Friday, June 26, from 6-8 p.m.

Memorial contributions may be sent to Weiss Hospice Unit at Middlesex Hospital, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457.

Hebron

Olive Doubleday

Olive (White) Doubleday, 89, of Amston, widow of the late Almon S. Doubleday, passed away Tuesday evening, June 23, at home, surrounded by her loving family. Born Dec. 24, 1919, in Colchester, she was the daughter of the late Jesse and Ethel (Hills) White.

On Nov. 14, 1935, she and Almon were married in Colchester and shared nearly 60 years of marriage before he predeceased her on June 14, 1995. Mrs. Doubleday had worked with her husband operating Doubleday Garage in Amston for many years. Early on, she had also worked for S&S Leather in Colchester and Nameplate in Glastonbury. In her spare time, she enjoyed sewing, tag sales and playing cards and was a former grange member.

She is survived by daughter and son-in-law, Alma and Joseph Sanko Sr. of McAdoo, PA; four grandchildren; four great grandchildren; a great-great grandson; her very special brother, Jesse White Jr. of Amston, who lovingly cared for her during her failing health; and numerous extended family members and friends.

In addition to her husband, she was predeceased by an infant brother, Richard White.

Graveside services will be observed 11 a.m. today, Friday, June 26, at the Gilead Cemetery, Route 85, Hebron, with the Rev. Dr. Denise Esslinger officiating. There are no calling hours.

The family expressly requests that in lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to VNA East Hospice, 34 Ledgebrook Dr., Mansfield Center 06250, in recognition of their genuine care and concern extended to Olive and her family.

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