

# RIVEREAST News Bulletin

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The late Gary Avery is shown here next to the 1936 Federal fire engine he spent three years restoring. The longtime Colchester firefighter died earlier this month at the age of 65.

## Colchester Resident Remembered Fondly

by Katy Nally

Gary Avery took his final ride in the 1936 Federal fire truck he spent three years restoring last Tuesday, Feb. 9, about a week after he died suddenly from a heart attack Wednesday, Feb. 3, at his Colchester home.

His longtime friend, Art Standish, had the honor of driving Gary, 65, from the Colchester Hayward Firehouse to his final resting place in Westchester Center Cemetery on the chilly February morning. Fifteen years earlier, Gary had driven Standish to his wedding in the same shining antique engine, Standish said.

Gary, Standish and John Jones – or the “three musketeers,” as Jones called the group – had been members of the Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Department for over 30 years. Shortly after Gary and his wife Roberta moved to Colchester, Gary joined the fire department and later acted as fire chief, deputy chief and captain.

During the 33 years he resided in Colchester, Gary joined many other associations, commissions and committees. “He did an awful lot of work in the town and he really cared,” said John

Malsbenden, who was a teacher at Bacon Academy when Avery worked as the director of facilities in the school system.

Gary was chairman of the Conservation Commission until he died and he also served on the Board of Education (BOE) for 29 years. “The district lost a true advocate and a friend,” Ron Goldstein, chairman of the BOE, said. “He was involved in so many ways.”

In addition to the BOE, Gary was a charter member of the Colchester Learning Foundation and a chef on the fire department’s kitchen committee. Gary also extended his carpentry expertise to many initiatives including the expansion of Cragin Memorial Library and the construction of the newest Bacon Academy.

Lynn Norton, who served on the library commission with Gary, said the “huge bundle of keys” that was placed on his coffin was a good symbol of his importance in the community. As he was a member of many committees and organizations, the keys showed Gary’s vast responsibilities within Colchester.

Even after Gary retired from the BOE and

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## East Hampton Shaw’s to Become Stop & Shop

by Claire Michalewicz

Shaw’s is leaving East Hampton, but Stop & Shop will take its place. The news, announced last Friday, was met with mixed reaction from residents and town officials earlier this week.

Shaw’s parent company, Minnesota-based Supervalu, is selling all of its 18 Connecticut stores. As of press time, it’s still unclear exactly when the store will change hands, and for how long shoppers will have to buy their groceries elsewhere.

Shaw’s has been in East Hampton since September 2006. Managers at the store were unable to talk about the sale, but many local shoppers are upset about the takeover.

“I love Shaw’s,” said Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel. “Most of the people I’ve spoken to say Stop & Shop’s prices are too high.”

Engel pointed out that there are already Stop & Shop stores in Glastonbury and Colchester. Once Stop & Shop takes over the Shaw’s in East Hampton, she added, “they’ll definitely have a little monopoly in our area.”

Barbara Wire of Lebanon agreed. “I hate not having competition,” she said. “Stop & Shop has good prices on some things, but Shaw’s has good prices on other things.”

Dave Lewis of East Hampton pointed out that the town had already lost several other businesses that stood on the site before Shaw’s was built.

“What was the point of building Shaw’s?” he wondered. “I don’t like Stop & Shop. Their prices are too high.”

But not everyone was so upset. “I’m kind of excited,” said East Hampton

resident Lori Jovel. “We just moved here, so I’m used to Stop & Shop.”

Kurt Comisky of East Hampton also said he didn’t mind the takeover, but said he was worried about people who work there.

“I hope the people inside fare well with their jobs,” he said. “I hope Stop & Shop hires them back.”

Stop & Shop spokeswoman Faith Weiner said the transaction should be complete in April, but couldn’t predict how long the takeover would take. Stop & Shop has promised to interview all Shaw’s employees who are losing their jobs, Weiner said, and hopes to rehire most of them.

A Shaw’s spokesman said Supervalu decided to close its 18 Connecticut stores because of poor sales.

“They weren’t meeting our goals,” said Shaw’s spokeswoman Dina Waxman.

According to published reports, some of the Shaw’s outlets will become Stop & Shops, while others will be either ShopRites or PriceRites.

Waxman said Shaw’s is concerned about the employees who are losing their jobs in the transaction, and that the company is doing what they can to help.

“Our HR department is doing what they can, but ultimately it’s up to Stop & Shop and ShopRite and those other stores,” Waxman said.

Brian Petronella is president of the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 371, which represents employees of both Shaw’s and Stop & Shop in southeastern Connecticut.

“We’re sad that Shaw’s is leaving Connecticut,” Petronella said, but added that the union is happy to be working with Stop & Shop.



East Hampton Shaw’s will soon be a Stop & Shop. The supermarket’s parent company announced last week it is unloading all 18 Shaw’s in the state.

The Shaw’s employees, Petronella said, are disappointed about the store closures. Many of them had previously been laid off from other companies, and are stressed about having to find jobs again.

Petronella said he’s working with representatives at Shaw’s and Stop & Shop to put together a severance package for any potential laid-off Shaw’s employees.

Tony Gargon of East Hampton said he knows several people who work at the store, and he

spoke to some of them after the news of the buyout broke. Gargon said employees had been hearing rumors about the sale for days, but didn’t know officially until the news broke last Friday.

Many Shaw’s employees are uncertain about what will happen to them when Shaw’s closes, Gargon said.

“There’s an awful lot of anxiety,” Gargon said. Employees are worried about having to

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Gary Avery was remembered this week as not just a good colleague but a loving family man. At left is a marquee outside the Colchester-Hayward Volunteer Fire Department honoring Gary, while at right, Gary and his grandson, Brandolf Schlieper, craft a tree made of copper wire.



**Avery cont. from Front Page**

several other commissions, he would still review and discuss the town budget and local issues with his friends and family. Standish, Jones, Gary and several others would gather at the firehouse a few times a week to “solve the world’s problems,” Jones said.



**Gary Avery**

“He was kind of a watchdog over the commissions” in town, Standish said. And if Gary uncovered something that he wasn’t satisfied with, board members would be sure to hear about it. “He wasn’t bashful,” Standish added. Roberta said Gary was always in former first selectman Jenny Contois’ office “giving her advice.” “He was extraordinarily opinionated, but he was very well respected,” First Selectman Gregg Schuster said.

But Jones said Gary was usually justified in his ways. “He was very opinionated, but 99 times out of 100 he was right,” Jones said.

Gary successfully convinced many firefighters down at the station, that their antique federal engine was a 1936 model, and not a 1934, as was commonly believed. Both Jones and Standish said Gary was adamant that the engine was from 1936 and eventually, he convinced them. “We all gave into him,” Standish said.

On the afternoon before Gary died, Standish said several firefighters were researching the 1934-36 debate and they came across an article from a 1937 edition of the *Hartford Times* that discussed Colchester’s new fire engine. Standish said the new piece of evidence was discovered around 4 p.m. and Gary died later that night around 9 p.m. “It was really weird,”

he added.

For about three years, Gary’s labor of love was restoring the antique federal, which was stripped down to the frame. According to Standish, Gary spearheaded the effort with about nine other men and finished about two years ago. He said it was Gary’s dream make the engine functional and pump water. Standish said Gary was dedicated to rebuilding the water pump for an entire winter, but the group never rebuilt the water tank. “Hopefully we can carry out his dream,” Standish said.

But the engine was simply one of many projects for Gary who was also an avid craftsman, designer, woodworker, gardener and cook. Roberta said she and her husband would often jest Gary’s workshop was worth more than their house because of the sheer amount of tools it contained. When asked what he did in his workshop, Roberta replied laughing, “What didn’t he do?”

According to Roberta, Gary created mini-firetrucks for his five grandchildren and made another, toddler-sized truck for the firehouse. “He would try something, master it and move on,” Roberta said.

Gary’s daughter Shawn Schlieper said her father was always trying to get his grandchildren involved in hobbies. “He wanted to inspire them,” she said. For Schlieper’s 3-year-old, Gary crafted a train table complete with a remote-control crane. “What ever my dad did he went above and beyond,” Schlieper said.

After his retirement in 2006, Roberta said Gary was finally able to delve deep into many of his hobbies. She said he loved to cook and bake and each spring he would start a vegetable garden from seeds.

Gary cooked holiday meals for both his families, the men and women at the firehouse and his own wife and children. Jones said Gary

would stay in the firehouse kitchen for three days, roasting turkeys and preparing the holiday banquet.

Roberta said since her husband’s retirement, she was the one to come home to a “nice hot meal.”

Though for Jones, who said he can’t even boil water, Gary’s meals were more than just tasty and filling. When Jones’ first wife died, Gary took him in. He told Jones, “You’re coming to my house to eat,” Jones said. But Gary’s dishes were more than comfort food for Jones, they were life support. “He was my backbone,” Jones said. “He was always there for me... There’ll always be a hole in my heart for him.”

For Schlieper, eating with her father at the dinner table, surrounded by her older brother John and her mother Roberta, was a nightly ritual. “He was such a busy guy, so that was our time,” she said.

Aside from filling bellies with food, Gary was also talented at filling rooms with laughter. Roberta said “it didn’t matter” what she and her husband were doing, they were always laughing. “If one of us did something stupid we’d just look at each other and roll our eyes and laugh about it,” Roberta said.

“Life isn’t as much fun as it used to be,” she added.

Roberta said Gary was “charming to the end.” He was charming when they first met in Lake George, NY, in June of 1969 and he continued the charm when they married just three months later.

Gary was working as an instructor on a nuclear submarine and Roberta was teaching near Sarasota, NY. She said she met him in a bar one night and said she was first attracted to his “sharpness.”

They were both 24 and smitten. The couple

married in August of that year and moved to Connecticut shortly after. Roberta said the family spent three years in East Haddam before moving into the Colchester home that Gary designed and built. In 1976, they moved in and stayed put.

The year Gary moved in was also the year he joined the fire department. There he met Jones and he later convinced Standish to join. And so the “three musketeers” were born.

Like Roberta, both Jones and Standish cited Gary’s dry sense of humor as one of his best qualities. An inside joke between the three men revolved around comedian Jeff Dunham’s ventriloquist skit with his dummy, an old guy named Walter. The dummy, a gruff individual, was always getting upset and referring to people as “dumbass.” Standish said Gary would emulate Walter and he even made up cards with Walter’s scowl on the front and the word “dumbass” on the back.

Standish said chuckling that he still carries the card around in his pocket.

For Jones, he said he keeps a bookmark in his truck with Gary’s picture, his obituary and a fireman’s prayer on it. “He’s going to be with me,” Jones said.

Roberta said she would remember her husband as honest and kind. “He was the type of person who you just knew was a real person,” Roberta said. “He cared about you and he showed it. He was always there for me when I was down. I could always depend on that hug to give me strength.”

Donations in Gary’s memory can be made to the Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Department, located at 52 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, CT 06415 or to the Colchester Learning Foundation, P.O. Box 215, Colchester, CT 06415.

**Shaw’s cont. from Front Page**

reapply for jobs when Stop & Shop takes over, he added.

Gargon wrote a letter to Stop & Shop, welcoming them to East Hampton. He said he wanted them to know what a close community the town is, and that fellow residents want to support the Shaw’s employees.

“People who work at Shaw’s are our community,” Gargon said. He said he wants to do what he can to help them.

Not all East Hampton residents were always so friendly to Shaw’s; some protested when the store was first proposed. Many residents were

concerned that having such a large store near the lake would change the character of the town.

State Representative Gail Hamm was among those who worried that a big box store would permanently change East Hampton. But she said in an e-mail this week that Shaw’s had been a good neighbor over the past few years, contributing to many local organizations.

Hamm said she doesn’t want East Hampton to be at the mercy of large corporations making business decisions.

“Let’s hope the next one will put down some roots and invest in our people,” she said.

# Local Youth Forming Bully Support Group in Marlborough

by Katy Nally

Nine-year-old Cassandra Burrows said she's afraid to go to school, ever since a bully has made the petite third-grader his target.

Going to school "makes me feel scared because I never know what's going to happen next," Cassandra said.

But rather than playing the victim, Cassandra and her mother Sophie Burrows have organized a bullying support group. The first meeting is scheduled for Monday, Feb. 22 at 7 p.m. in the upstairs meeting room of the library.

According to Sophie, the bullying began when the school year started at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School. Cassandra said the boy who bothers her is a fellow classmate who, although a few months younger, he is about seven inches taller, which to a 9-year-old is "very tall."

"She's intimidated by this kid by height alone," Sophie said.

Cassandra said the bullying does not occur every school day, but several incidents are still hard for her to discuss. On separate occasions, the boy made fun of Cassandra's height, he shoved her with his shoulder, he pulled her hair and he called her a vagina in gym class, Sophie said. He also convinced Cassandra's best friend to "hate" her, Cassandra said, and as a result, the former friend also takes part in the bullying.

"I just want him to leave her alone," Sophie said. "I just want my kid to go to school and not feel terrorized."

Sophie said the incidents do not occur in the classroom, but rather during recess, at lunch, in the gym and the library. Cassandra said it would not be enough to remove the boy from her class because "he would find me at recess."

Although the classroom appeared to be a safe haven, Sophie said she recently learned Cassandra and the alleged bully sat face to face for the first half of the year. "He's always there," Sophie said. "He follows her around. ... He's just relentless."

Since the bullying began, Sophie said she has spoke with Cassandra's teacher, a school social worker, Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz and Principal Loraine Giannini. According to a letter from Giannini to Sophie, the school conducted an investigation of the incidents and in-

terviewed the so-called bully and two "potential student witnesses." However, the letter, dated Feb. 12, said the investigation "determined that there was no verified act of bullying."

Giannini went on to write, school staff has been advised to limit interaction between Cassandra and the alleged bully. Sophie said she heard the boy was told to stay away from Cassandra since the complaints were raised, but she said was disappointed that the matter was "disregarded" by the school.

"I don't care what you call it, I just want it to stop," Sophie said.

Despite the investigation done by school officials, Sophie said Cassandra is still paranoid and anxious about attending school. To alleviate some apprehension throughout the school day, Sophie said she took her daughter out of lunch and recess several times last week, and also picked her up early from school.

"I dread Monday morning," Sophie said. "Every day it's been a fight to go to school."

Cassandra is still "very worried" about attending school next week because of the anxiety associated with the situation, her mother said. (There has been no school this week due to February vacation.)

Sophie made sure to clarify she has no problem with the boy who bothers Cassandra. In fact, she said, "I don't blame the kids; this is the way they grow and learn." Instead, Sophie said she is frustrated with how the bully is uneducated about the matter. "He's not a bad kid, but he's behaving badly," she said.

In addition to speaking with the school's administration, Sophie said she called the boy's mother, who told Sophie the teasing was merely an expression of a crush.

Because her daughter was still nervous about the bully and school, Sophie instituted her "four-step therapy" for Cassandra. The steps include asking the bully to stop, learning karate, having a cell phone to contact Sophie and the support group. "I'm doing the best I can trying to make my daughter strong," Sophie said.

So far, Cassandra said she is enjoying her karate lessons. As for the last step, Sophie said Cassandra feels the support group can really make a difference for other children who are



**Cassandra Burrows, 9, started a bullying support group that is scheduled to meet Monday, Feb. 22, at 7 p.m. at Richmond Memorial Library.**

being bullied.

"When people have someone to talk to, they feel less like a victim," Sophie said. Cassandra is "very vocal about what's happening and she really does think she can help."

Sophie said she is more or less trying to find her "way in the dark" when it comes to the support group, but she said that, as she runs out of other options, she feels she has to "do something." At next Monday's meeting of the group, Cassandra said she would speak to others who attend the support group about her own experiences. Bullies "count on your silence, they count on you being weak," Sophie said.

The support group would allow other children who are victims of bullying to not feel alone and "if nothing else it would be therapy for the kids," Sophie added.

Cassandra is not the only one being bullied, her mother said. Sophie said bullying is "eating kids up alive, and it's eating mine up."

The website [safeyouth.org](http://safeyouth.org) said almost 30 percent of children in the U.S. "are estimated to be involved in bullying as either a bully, a

target of bullying, or both," according to a study done in 2001 by the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Since the alleged bullying began, Cassandra has been to the doctor twice for stress and Sophie said her daughter thinks she's sick because the boy makes Cassandra feel nervous and anxious.

"This has broken down her self-confidence," Sophie said.

It got so bad that, after seeing commercials about depression, Sophie said Cassandra asked for anti-depressants because she thought the pills would make her feel better. (Sophie declined the request.)

"This is killing me," Sophie said. "It's making me age rapidly. ... I feel hopeless."

The support group is scheduled to meet Monday, Feb. 22, at 7 p.m. at Richmond Memorial Library, 15 School Dr. There will be a raffle and drinks will be provided. For more information about the group, contact Sophie at [spittfirre@gmail.com](mailto:spittfirre@gmail.com).

## Colchester Grand List Increase Lowest in 18 Years

by Katy Nally

A mere fraction of an increase in the 2009 Grand List, coupled with a stagnant economy, is the "perfect storm" for a brutal budget, according to First Selectman Gregg Schuster.

The Grand List, which catalogs the town's taxable property, rose 0.2 percent, or \$1.14 million, from the 2008 list. This equates to an additional \$68,000 in the town's tax dollars, based on last year's mill rate of 23.65.

"Every year, the town and school system can usually count on some significant growth in our tax base," Schuster said in a press release. "This year, our worst case scenario has come true. We have essentially no growth, an increase in costs, and no additional state aid forthcoming."

Tax Assessor John Chaponis said this was the lowest Grand List increase he's seen in his 18 years at Town Hall. This year "will surely be one of the most difficult budget processes our town has faced," Chaponis said.

Much of this sluggish increase is caused by the closing of many local businesses in town,

including two car dealerships and a few restaurants, Chaponis said.

Out of the three categories the Grand List covers, which are real estate, personal property and motor vehicles, both real estate and motor vehicle increased in the 2009 list. Personal property, which is mostly business equipment but also includes unregistered motor vehicles and horses, decreased 13.65 percent or \$5.01 million dollars.

The real estate portion increased 0.82 percent or \$9.22 million over the 2008 list. Chaponis said this figure was originally a decrease from the 2008 list, but more was added to the real estate section including new houses, and home additions such as garages, finished basements, pools, decks and sheds.

Although real estate increased a meager fraction of a percent, Chaponis called it "significant given the economy. ... If not for that 10-11 million dollars added in real estate, the Grand List would have surely gone down," he said.

The last section, motor vehicles, had the greatest increase of the three categories, coming out to a 2.595 percent increase or \$2.64 million. Though the motor vehicle section actually increased, Chaponis called the change "stagnant" because vehicles usually account for a \$3 to \$8 million per year increase.

In 2008 the motor vehicles Grand List went down, when compared with the 2007 list. Despite the increase in the same section in the 2009 Grand List, the figure is still lower than what it was in 2007, Chaponis said.

The 2009 Grand List will be used by the Board of Finance to set the mill rate. After the town finalizes a budget, the overall figure is divided by the Grand List to calculate the mill rate. A resident's property assessment is then multiplied by the mill rate to determine his or her taxes for the coming year.

The top 10 real estate taxpayer accounts for the 2009 Grand List are: Country Place of

Colchester LTD Partners at \$10.54 million, SS1 Colchester LLC at \$8.10 million, White Oak Development LLC at \$4.50 million, Genesis Health Ventures of Bloomfield at \$4.27 million, S&S Worldwide Inc. at \$3.83 million, Balaban Road Associates LLC at \$3.77 million, GND Too of Colchester LLC at \$3.394 million, Sharr Realty LLC at \$3.32 million, City of Norwich at \$3.155 million and Keystone Shoppes LLC at \$3.07 million.

The top 10 personal property taxpayer accounts for the 2009 Grand List are: Connecticut Light & Power at \$9.83 million, Alpha Q Inc. at \$2.23 million, S&S Worldwide Inc. at \$1.36 million, Stop & Shop Supermarket at \$1.18 million, Alliance Healthcare Services at \$904,000, AT&T Mobility LLC at \$806,000, Maxi Drug Inc. at \$552,000, ECCO Holdings Corp. at \$526,000, Health Resources of Colchester at \$489,000 and Baldi Richard P Jr. at \$489,000.



Third-graders from Jack Jackter Intermediate School dance to the Afghan song "Little Red Bird" at a presentation about Afghan children songs. Louise Pascale, far right, who spoke about the songbook she created, stands with Jason Shoemaker and his little brother Michael. Jason is in Merilyn Gustafson's fourth-grade class and sang "Ali Baba" and "Afghan People."



## Colchester JJIS Students Perform Afghan Songs

by Katy Nally

A sleeping culture was awakened last Thursday, Feb. 11, as Jack Jackter Intermediate School (JJIS) students performed lost Afghan children's songs.

Through singing forgotten songs, students helped to color the quiet world that has consumed many schoolchildren of Afghanistan. Over the past several decades, art and music have been eradicated throughout Afghan schools due to war and oppression.

Last Thursday, JJIS students brought six popular children's songs to life as part of the service-learning assignment The Afghan Children's Songbook Project.

Students sang from the songbook *Qu Qu Qu Barg-e-Chinaar: Children's Songs from Afghanistan*, written by Louise Pascale, who later gave a presentation about her time in the Middle Eastern country.

"They lost it for so long they forgot to look for it," Pascale said. "They forgot they ever had it."

Pascale, an associate professor at Lesley University, said the children of JJIS have "done their part" to keep these songs alive. "They are treasures you never want to lose," she said.

Third-graders from Linda Eakin's and Tammie Bakaj's classes sang the "Alphabet Song" in Dari, a prominent language in Afghanistan, and they danced to another song called "Little Red Bird." Each student performed with a teal, blue, red or white scarf dur-

ing the dance and together they formed a line that snaked around the gym in different patterns. The "Alphabet Song," Pascale said, is a favorite among Afghan children.

Fourth-graders from Merilyn Gustafson's and Theresa Viscardi's classes sang "Ali Baba," which is reminiscent of the American song "Old MacDonald." Accompanied by a tambourine and a recorded piano, the fourth-graders sang about the animals in Ali Baba's garden. Pascale called this song an "absolute favorite."

The same students also performed a more solemn song about the Afghan people. In Dari the fourth-graders said, "We are the Afghans of the mountains. We have one stance and one way. We have one faith and one hope."

Lastly, students from Patricia Tedford's and Kathleen Yanez's classes performed two songs in Dari. The first, called "Coo, Coo, Coo Maple Leaf" featured girls who picked seeds from a pomegranate. In addition to singing, the fifth-graders played the xylophone, hand cymbals and drums.

The last song, entitled "The Book," was an ode to reading and literature. The boys and girls sang in a cadence, "I'm beautiful and elegant, I have lots of words hidden in my heart."

When the performances concluded, Pascale discussed her trip to Afghanistan and the importance of children's songs with an audience of about 100 people.

Pascale first visited Afghanistan 40 years ago

when she joined the Peace Corps. She signed up to teach English to middle school students, but eventually found her niche in music. The boys in her class "loved the idea they could sing in school" and for two and a half years she taught in Kabul.

Pascale said last Thursday she wanted the children to learn traditional songs from their Afghan culture. She worked with a local poet and musician to record 16 Afghan children's songs and the songbook was published in 1968.

She returned to the state with one copy of her songbook and packed it away with the rest of her foreign keepsakes.

As Afghanistan began to surface in the news, Pascale said she remembered her songbook and felt compelled to help out the people of her Middle Eastern home. Pascale said she was saddened to learn how Afghanistan was ravaged by wars. "The worst thing happened," Pascale said. "The Afghan people were no longer allowed to sing." So Pascale took out her 40-year-old songbook.

"The pages were torn, the pictures were faded," she said. "But I opened the pages and I remembered the songs."

Pascale said she "needed to find a way" to get the songs back to Afghan children, otherwise, the music might be "lost forever."

Once again, Pascale worked with a musician to, this time, record the forgotten songs. In 2007, she published the updated version of her

songbook and sent over 14,000 copies with CDs to elementary schools, orphanages and women's centers.

Since Pascale's return from Afghanistan last November, almost 20,000 songbooks have been distributed throughout the country.

At last Thursday's presentation, Pascale showed photos of children from the Kunduz Kindergarten and from the Small Heaven Orphanage who had no other books but her songbook. Pascale said it was her mission to give one book to each child so it can double as a reading text.

The photos depicted youngsters each in their village dress reciting the songs. "In the two years, they had learned all the songs and were just thrilled to sing them," Pascale said. "Afghans realized their childhood songs were more important than ever."

Pascale said she is currently working on a second book with 18 songs. Each copy, she said, costs about \$5 to produce. At last Thursday's presentation, a total of \$905 was raised, which is enough for 181 songbooks.

JJIS Principal Deborah Sandberg thanked Pascale for her presentation and called the songbook project a "valuable, educational experience for us all."

Pascale closed by telling the children and the rest of the audience they had "made an important contribution to Afghan culture."

## New Law Could Help Disabled Vets in East Hampton

by Claire Michalewicz

A new law in East Hampton could ease the financial burden on some permanently disabled veterans.

The Town Council recently passed an ordinance that would eliminate property taxes for disabled veterans who require accessibility modifications in their home.

No one in East Hampton currently qualifies, but the exemption will be available for anyone who may need it in the future.

The exemption only applies to permanently disabled veterans who receive a state or federal grant to make their homes accessible for them. The federal Department of Veterans Affairs usually gives the grants to veterans with limited mobility that need barrier-free access to their homes.

The Town Council passed the ordinance on Jan. 26, and it officially went into effect this past Monday.

Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe says there are only 19 veterans in the state who would qualify for the exemption. None of them live in East Hampton, but some residents wanted the

law in place in case it was needed.

Dennis Erickson is the World War II veteran and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) member that proposed the East Hampton ordinance. He said this week he's happy that East Hampton approved it so quickly.

The new law is "no big thing," he said, but added that it could make a major difference in someone's life. "I hope we never use it."

Erickson said he wanted the law in place just in case an East Hampton veteran ever qualified for it. He proposed it after hearing about Willy Hodge, a veteran in Marlborough who was struggling to get a similar law passed in his town.

Injured in Vietnam in 1970, Hodge worked for three decades after his injury, until the VA declared him unable to work. "My husband was trying to work, but he couldn't," wife Robin Hodge said.

Willy Hodge now uses a wheelchair, and he received a grant from the VA to make their home accessible for him. With him out of work, the Hodges were left with limited income. When

they heard about the state statute that allows towns to make this exemption, they pushed for Marlborough to enact a similar ordinance.

Marlborough just passed the law in January, and Robin Hodge said she's grateful that they'll have fewer bills to pay.

"I know my husband has suffered since the war," she said. "He deserves this. These veterans are serving our country and fighting for our freedom."

Robin Hodge says she's happy to hear that East Hampton had put a similar law in place.

"I commend East Hampton for passing it," she said. "There are so many people getting hurt and they deserve these benefits."

Erickson said he's glad that no one in East Hampton currently needs the exemption, but that it's important that the law is in place for the future.

"The way those boys are fighting over there now," Erickson said, "any one of them could be in the same boat." He said he wanted the law in place so that no one would have to

struggle to get the law passed when they needed it.

The tax exemption for disabled veterans is part of Section 12-81 of the Connecticut State Statutes. Individual towns may choose whether or not to adopt the exemption.

East Hampton veterans applying for the tax exemption must have resided in the town for at least five years before filing a claim. The town won't collect taxes on the home for as long as the veteran lives there, or, if they die before their spouse, until their spouse remarries.

Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel said several veterans spoke out in favor of the ordinance at the Jan. 26 Town Council meeting, wanting assurance that the exemption would be available to anyone who needed it. She said she's happy that the town was able to give them that assurance.

Councilman John Tuttle agreed. "I'm glad that the town council unanimously supported it," he said. "It's great that we have it in place, but hopefully we'll never have to use it."

# Hebron Officials Looking at Ways to Craft Zero-Percent Increase

by Lindsay Fetzner

Coming in with a flat budget for the 2010-11 fiscal year is no easy task and the efforts to reach zero percent are equally as trying. Town officials have been working diligently to keep budget increases as minimal as possible.

A letter sent on behalf of the boards of selectmen and finance to both the RHAM and Hebron boards of education indicated that a zero percent increase was the goal for the current year. An all-boards meeting was held Feb. 8, attended by various boards in town. The present financial state of Hebron, town finances and the challenges that taxpayers are facing were among the topics highlighted.

Selectman Daniel Larson said the “taxpayers are taxed out.” Comments and letters from the public have voiced concern to keep taxes down in light of the tough financial times.

“This is reality,” he said. “We don’t want people to lose their jobs.”

Larson said budget negotiations will begin next month and once they have begun, the board will see exactly what can be done with the presented budgets.

School officials are presently in the early stages of discussing how a zero percent increase could be reached, which would amount to a reduction of \$467,144. On Jan. 28, the BOE passed a 3.99 percent increase to last year’s budget with a vote of 5-2.

Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz said that out of the \$467,144, roughly \$32,000 would include insurance reductions, textbooks and supplies. The remaining balance would cost the present school staff 10 and a half teachers, including unemployment costs. “At the end of the day, to get to zero, we simply can’t save jobs,” Cruz said. Although the intent is for no one to

lose his or her job, Cruz said it is not feasible in working with a flat budget.

No firm decisions have been made yet, as Cruz said this is a general first look at the situation. School officials are weighing the priorities and looking at everything that can be done to cut costs, she said.

In an interview last week, Board of Education (BOE) Chairwoman Jane Dube said the all-boards meeting went through the town’s financial situation and what a zero percent increase to the budget would look like. Dube said it was not a budget she would recommend, as the cuts to the teaching staff would increase class sizes. BOE member Kathy Shea said she feels it will be very difficult to reach a flat budget for the next year. She said trimming all-day kindergarten would bring the numbers down significantly. Her kids are the product of the half-day program and feel that they “did not suffer.”

Many residents have voiced concerns on the BOE budget on the superintendent’s blog. (It can be reached from the Hebron Public School’s website, [www.hebron.k12.ct.us](http://www.hebron.k12.ct.us), under the Quicklinks tab at the top of the page.) In response to one parent’s inquiry regarding cutting the all-day kindergarten program, Cruz said “Even if All-Day k were cut from the budget, we would still have approximately \$267,000 to reduce to get to zero percent.”

Shea said she anticipates a “lively conversation” at the next BOE meeting, where further discussion on the topic will take place.

Cruz expressed her concern in the school district falling behind if the necessary resources are not available in the schools. She said in the

past, school officials have made significant decisions that saved the district money, but the school’s ability to maintain its present status could be jeopardized if teachers and programs are cut. “We have to keep our focus on what will move the district forward,” Cruz said.

Cruz stressed that she does not want people to panic or to get upset. “We are trying to make it simple for people to wrap their head around,” she said.

School officials are looking at exactly what the town can sustain without losing the hard work of parents, teachers and the administration. Cruz said the decision-making process going forward will be extremely challenging. “We have legal, professional, and moral obligations to the children of this community,” she said.

Further discussion at the next BOE meeting will take place on March 11 at 7 p.m. at Gilead Hill School, located at 580 Gilead St.

The 2010-11 BOE budget will also be presented in a joint meeting of the boards of selectmen and finance on March 18 at 7:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Douglas Library, located at 22 Main St.

Other town officials, in addition to those on the BOE, are also currently exercising their judgment on a workable budget to present to the selectmen.

Interim Town Manager Andy Tierney said he is currently reviewing all of the budgets coming in and meeting with town department heads. Tierney called it “creative budgeting” and said “we’re doing the best we can to come in with a flat budget.” Tierney said the budget is very close to zero, and is below one percent, but the

process has not been completed yet.

“We are trying to do the best we can,” he said.

Tierney expressed that many residents in town have been going through tough financial times this year, and in turn, wants to hand in a very responsible budget to the Board of Selectmen for review.

“We will show the selectmen what we’ve done and how we got there,” Tierney said.

RHAM BOE Chair Michael Turner said the budget for the school district would be presented on Monday, Feb. 22. Although there is not much out yet on the topic, Turner said they are looking at presenting a budget of 2.5 to 2.6 percent for a continuum of where they stand now. Last year, there was a budget increase of 1.45 percent, extending over the 2008-09 school year. There will be subsequent talks on what it would take to reach a budget with a 1.5 percent increase and also, what a flat budget would look like at Monday’s meeting. Turner said discussion and further talks would start from there.

Turner said he foresees a significant amount of discussion on what cuts can be made and where they will come from. Turner expressed that there is a wide degree of problems facing residents at the current time, with unemployment and cut working hours just a few of those problems. Turner said he knew this year “would not be easy” but has a bright outlook that these troubled times “won’t go on forever.” During the month of March, the BOE will host a series of budget workshops at various locations.

The RHAM BOE meeting will take place at 6:30 p.m. in the choral room of RHAM High School, located at 25 RHAM Rd.

## Ethics Complaint Leads to Argument at Portland BOS Meeting

by Claire Michalewicz

Tensions flared at the Portland Board of Selectmen (BOS) meeting Wednesday over a complaint filed with the town’s Ethics Commission.

The commission decided that the BOS acted unethically in deciding to hire two attorneys. Several selectmen say the commission’s opinion is illogical and will prevent the town from getting any work done.

Selectmen John Anderson and Carl Chudzik, the two Republicans on the board, went to the Ethics Commission over the proposed appointment of the two attorneys. Anderson and Chudzik contended that hiring Joseph McQuade and David Rintoul was a conflict of interest, because the attorneys were members of the Democratic Town Committee and had previously contributed money to it.

In its advisory opinion, the commission also decided that hiring the two attorneys is a conflict of interest, basing its argument on two sections of the Ethics Ordinance. Ethics Commission secretary Terri Larson, speaking for the commission, said that the board had violated sections 1.1(b) and 1.7(b) of the ordinance. These sections require town representatives to act with integrity, and to not accept any personal benefit that was intended to influence them.

Democratic selectmen feel that the advisory opinion has broad implications that prevent them from doing their job.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said that the decision opened up a “Pandora’s box” of questions. She explained that in such a small town, it would be extremely difficult to only do business with people who had never been involved with a political party.

“You have to contemplate how we conduct business in this town,” she said to Larson.

Selectman Brian Flood agreed, and said, “Just about everyone on a commission has contributed to a party one way or another.”

Bransfield advised the board not to take any action on appointments until the issue could be resolved. In a request for a second advisory opinion, Bransfield brought up other parts of the ordinance that contradict the commission’s opinion.

Under the ordinance, Bransfield explained in her typed request, the advisory opinion should only apply to the selectmen, not to the town attorney. The ethics ordinance also specifies that lawful campaign contributions are public, not personal benefits. This section of the ordinance, Bransfield said, negates the commission’s decision.

“This is absolutely insulting,” said selectman Mark Finkelstein of the commission’s decision. “It was not done with the best interests of the town in mind.”

Chudzik defended his decision to make the complaint, insisting that partisan politics were

not a factor.

“It wasn’t a political ploy,” he said. “It’s the politics of the ethics commission.”

Larson insisted that she was trying to administer the ordinance “fairly and truly,” and that the commission would reconsider its decision if they were asked to.

“I really do think this is just politics at its worst,” Flood said. He pointed out that neither Chudzik nor Anderson had asked the attorneys about their political affiliation during the interview process.

“I do not want this ordinance being used for political purposes to hold the town hostage,” Flood continued.

The ethics ordinance is currently under review, and Larson presented the commission’s proposed changes at the meeting. She said that most of the changes were just clarifications of passages that are difficult to understand. For the changes to be approved, the ordinance would go to a public hearing and then be passed by the selectmen.

The other big discussion at the meeting was about the High Street water main project. Public Works Director Richard Kelsey proposed a change to the project, suggesting that the town only replace the main to Spring Street, rather than all the way to the tanks.

“We do not have enough money in our fund-

ing to do the entire job,” he said. The town has allotted \$816,000 for the project, but Kelsey says he should have applied for \$950,000.

Kelsey explained that to get more funding, the town would have to start the entire project over. He added that 27 companies were bidding for the project, and he wouldn’t expect such good bids if they delayed the project.

The best course of action, Kelsey said, would be to go ahead and replace only the damaged parts of the water main.

“If we had breaks above Spring Street,” he said, “I’d be the first to tell you.” The further up the hill towards the tanks, he explained, the lower the water pressure is in the pipes. Kelsey said that since these sections are at lower risk for damage, they do not need to be replaced immediately.

The Board of Selectmen decided to review the proposed changes to the project at its next meeting on March 3, after looking at the bids.

Kelsey also discussed proposed improvements to the municipal parking lot at 270 Main St. He explained that the total cost would be about \$70,000, half of which would be picked up by the adjoining owners, Portland Country Market and Cavaliere’s Bakery.

The Planning and Zoning Commission was due to discuss the proposal further at its meeting on Thursday, after press time.

### East Hampton Police News

2/3 — José Jaramillo-Egas, 41, of 114 Buell St., New Britain, and Susan Constanzo, 39, of 13 Pecaussett Tr., were involved in a two-vehicle accident on Flanders Road, two-tenths of a mile west of Smith Street, East Hampton Police said. Jaramillo-Egas was issued a ticket for traveling too fast for conditions, police added.

2/4 — Benjamin D. Scroggin, 19, of 20 Lakeview St., was arrested for speeding, police said.

2/5 — Winston Tate, 39, of 22 Edgerton St., was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol and failure to obey a traffic signal, police said.

2/6 — David Turcotte, 26, of 118 Newfield St., Middletown, was issued a ticket for failure to obey a control signal and failure to carry license, police said.

2/6 — Ronald J. Dipalma, 37, of 38 Edgerton St., was issued a ticket for failure to obey a control signal, police said.

2/6 — Carl Kloo, 44, of 311 Burnham St., Manchester, was arrested for interfering with police and third-degree assault, police said.

2/7 — Tonya J. Weir, 36, of 191 Chestnut Hill Rd., was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol and failure to drive right, police said.

2/7 — Meghan Dwyer, 25, of 17 East Lake Rd., Marlborough, was arrested pursuant to a warrant for operating under the influence of alcohol and failure to drive right, police said.

2/8 — Bryan Kneeland, 26, of 22 Lake Dr., was arrested pursuant to a warrant for disorderly conduct and third-degree criminal mischief, police said.

2/8 — Kevin Walsh, 50, of 120 Jones Hollow Rd., Marlborough, was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol, failure to drive right, failure to carry license and following too closely, police said.

2/8 — Jason T. Morin, 34, of 263 Young St., was issued a ticket for operating with unsafe tires, police said.

2/10 — Noreen L. Turner, 18, of 159 Main St., was arrested for disorderly conduct, third-degree criminal mischief and second-degree criminal trespass, police said.

### Hebron Police News

2/8: A female suspect cashed what appeared to be a fraudulent check at Ted’s Supermarket on Main Street in Hebron, State Police said. The case remains under investigation.

2/10: At 2:15 p.m. a 1997 Ford F150 slid across Gilead Street, drove off the road and struck a road sign and a tree, State Police said. The driver, 22-year-old Shannon Whitham of Hebron was “partially ejected” from the vehicle and transported to Windham Hospital for non-life threatening injuries. She was issued an infraction for traveling too fast for conditions and for not wearing a seatbelt. Whitham’s passen-

ger, 23-year-old Eric Hunter of Hebron, was also issued an infraction for not wearing a seatbelt.

2/12: Justin Piggott, 35, of 243 Broadway, Norwich, was charged with DWI, evading arrest and operating a motor vehicle without a license, State Police said.

2/14: Barton Wallace, 25, of 463 Lake Rd., Andover, was charged with evading after causing physical injury or property damage, operating a motor vehicle when license is suspended and stop sign violation, State Police said.

# Mold Discovered in HES Portable Classrooms

by Lindsay Fetzner

Efforts to remediate mold discovered in Hebron Elementary School took place this week while students were on February vacation.

During the last week of January, a loose piece of windowsill in the hallway of the fourth-grade portable classroom was found to contain a mold-like substance, Hebron Elementary School (HES) Principal Kevin Hanlon said. Hanlon said the south-facing window was not sealed well on the outside of the building. Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz confirmed that the caulking had come off of the window and a heavy rainstorm that occurred a few days before probably had a role in the problem.

Mystic Air Quality was contacted to perform tests the first week of February and subsequent results were received on Feb. 5, Cruz said. An oral report from Mystic Air Quality identified the presence of stachybotrys, which is caused by water damage. In the hallway, there were 3,200 parts per million of stachybotrys in the air. In rooms 47 and 48, there were two parts per million of stachybotrys in the air. There was no presence of stachybotrys in either room 50 or 49.

The company was also asked to inspect all classrooms, portables and any possible entry points while onsite.

This week, the affected material was removed and replaced while classes were not in session, at a cost of approximately \$3,000, which will come from the maintenance and repairs fund, Cruz said. The area has been sealed off with plastic under the recommendation of Mystic Air Quality to prevent any further spreading from occurring. Hanlon said this was not a permanent solution for the problem and was only meant to be effective in the short term until further action was taken.

On Wednesday, Cruz said the wall was opened up and found that it was not as extensive as originally believed. The wall around the window was removed and the material was not soaked through. The floor and carpet were also checked and no evidence of mold was found.

Cruz said that by today at the latest, the area would be fully reconstructed. Both the window and affected wall are being replaced. Another subsequent testing will be performed by Mystic Air Quality to ensure that the completed efforts were effective.

"We took every precaution possible," Cruz said.

Cruz said the school nurse made personal phone calls to the parents of children who were having issues with allergies. School administrators also looked at whether any children had been ill and the data that resulted helped with making decisions going forward, Cruz said. Interim Town Manager Andy Tierney said the mold was caught quickly and that all the precautionary methods were taken by the elementary school. Tierney said he did not believe any students had been affected by the mold.

In a letter sent to parents of affected students on Feb. 8, Hanlon said Mystic Air Quality pinpointed that the fungal-growth had indeed been caused by water damage, identifying the window as the source of the growth. Hanlon informed parents that there was no evidence of any fungal growth or mold in the classrooms, according to the correspondence.

Hanlon's letter also stated that there are currently no guidelines at either the national or state level in regards to airborne mold and fungal growth. Information provided by the state Department of Public Health confirmed that there are indeed no appropriate standards for indoor air quality in schools. The variability in people's reactions to mold is the reasoning behind the lack of standards for indoor levels of mold, as well as the absence of scientific support for determining specific mold measurements as "safe" or "unhealthy," according to the fact sheet provided by the state.

Despite the absence of such guidelines, the necessary steps to remove the substance found were being taken to ensure the safety and well-being of the elementary school students and staff members. Hanlon said mold had not been found in the school prior to this incident.

# Colchester PZC Passes Big-Box Development

by Katy Nally

The Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) passed the big-box development between Parum and Chestnut Hill roads Wednesday night, by a vote of 4-1.

PZC alternate James Miller voted against the proposal, both Linda Hodge and PZC Chairman Joe Mathieu were unable to vote (as Hodge is a new arrival to the PZC and Mathieu, being the chairman, usually doesn't vote on proposals unless it is needed as a tie-breaker) and Mark Noniewicz was absent.

Zoning Enforcement Officer Craig Grimord said the proposal passed with many conditions, including one that addresses the ongoing three-pipe issue. Grimord said the bulk of these conditions are minor and deal with "housekeeping" changes.

The condition for the third pipe states that if/when the applicant finds the third pipe, it must be reported to the state, because it's a state pipe.

The third pipe has been a topic for discussion between PZC members for the past few meetings. At both the Jan. 20 and the Feb. 3 meetings, the board discussed a discrepancy between the applicant's plans and a map. The plan showed two pipes while a map displayed three in the same area.

At the Feb. 3 meeting, Town Planner Adam Turner told the commission the state Department of Transportation reviewed the area and did not find a third pipe. The inspections from town staff and the applicant also yielded the same results, he said.

Grimord said Thursday the pipe is probably there because the state has no record of taking it out.

If the third pipe is found, it is up to the state to determine what should be done. If it's found to affect the drainage pattern of the site, the applicant would most likely be asked to revise its drainage calculations. The state may also determine the pipe should be abandoned, Grimord said.

With the proposal passed, Grimord said a 15-day appeal period will begin once the legal

notice of the decision runs in the *Rivereast* next Friday. Grimord indicated an appeal would most likely be filed by John Fedus. Grimord said anyone can appeal, but generally only abutting property owners carry enough weight to win.

If an appeal is filed by Fedus, it would be nothing new for this proposal. Fedus, who owns a farm across the street from the proposed development, began fighting the application after the PZC first passed it in 2002. Fedus and his family sued the PZC that year, claiming the commission acted illegally by going against its regulations.

The case first went to the Norwich Superior Court where Fedus lost. But he later appealed the decision at the Appellate Court in 2004 and the case was picked up by the state Supreme Court. In 2006 the Supreme Court published their decision to reverse the original ruling from the Superior Court.

However, when the case was sent back to the Norwich Superior court in 2007, Fedus lost his case. But he appealed again and according to published decision, the Appellate Court sided with Fedus on several aspects regarding the PZC's regulations.

As a result of the Appellate Court, the PZC has amended its regulations in July 2009.

Even if an appeal is not filed, Grimord said there would be other roadblocks before the applicant can break ground. Grimord said the proposal was designed to drain to a town-owned pump station, which has been funded, but not yet built.

He said bonding and pre-construction meetings would also have to take place.

Yet despite the many holdups First Selectman Gregg Schuster is excited for the plans. "This is a business which is desperately needed in Colchester," Schuster said. "I'm glad the Planning and Zoning Commission approved it and I look forward to them breaking ground."

# Search Underway for New Assistant Principal at RHAM

by Lindsay Fetzner

A search for an assistant principal at RHAM Middle School is underway, with the departure of Anne Starr last week.

The RHAM Board of Education is currently forming a search committee, and Superintendent of Schools Robert Siminski said the period of applications will close on Feb. 26. So far, between five and six applicants have applied for positions on the committee. They will have the responsibility of screening candidates for the middle school administration opening. RHAM Board of Education (BOE) Chairman Michael Turner said he foresees a good amount of interest in the committee.

"There are always some eager to do that," he said.

Siminski said the screening committee will consist of a BOE member, a high school and middle school principal, parents and both special education and regular education teachers. Turner identified the BOE member of the committee as James Cherry.

The committee will be responsible for meeting and screening applicants and choosing which candidates will be chosen for subsequent interviews. Siminski said he is looking for between three and four recommendations for final interviews in the March to April time frame.

RHAM Middle School Principal Michael

Seroussi said that at least 30 applicants have expressed interest in the assistant principal position, but said the high number is not uncommon at all for a role in administration. Turner agreed with Seroussi and said "we usually get quite a few" when this type of position opens up. Seroussi and Turner said they are both very confident that the search committee would find suitable candidates to interview for the vacancy in the next few months.

Seroussi said Starr pursued a position in Virginia, after having expressed interest in moving there. Turner described her as a "nice, very personable and even-tempered" person. Starr was able to help the school "smooth over" issues relating to a population bubble and took on several responsibilities during a time of renovation, construction and transitioning away from a common central office in the school system.

"We have an ambitious time schedule," Siminski said. He hopes to have the new assistant principal begin working at the beginning of May. Seroussi said he is confident that the goal of May will be reached. However, Siminski said the opportunity to complete the year in their current assignment will be a possibility if requested.

# East Hampton Residents Charged in Jewelry Store Theft

by Claire Michalewicz

East Hampton Police has charged two residents with stealing over \$21,000 worth of jewelry from a local store.

Tasha Saltus, 25, and her brother Robert D. Saltus, 27, both of 18 Middletown Ave., East Hampton, were arrested on Feb. 1. Tasha Saltus was charged with first-degree larceny, and her brother with aiding first-degree larceny. Both suspects were arraigned at Middlesex Superior Court on Feb. 2. They were released after each posting \$10,000 bail.

The two were arrested after police said an investigation showed that they were involved in the theft of nearly 20 items from Devine's Jewelers on Summit Street.

Store owner Bill Devine said Wednesday he had come to know Tasha Saltus when she was working at a local restaurant. He said she was having financial problems, and he was considering hiring her to do some cleaning.

He said the theft happened in October, when Tasha Saltus came into the store when

he wasn't there. According to Devine, a friend who was watching the store for him thought that Saltus was cleaning, and didn't notice when she took the jewelry out of the cases.

Devine said that by the time he discovered the theft, the suspect had pawned the jewelry. He says he was able to recover some of the items, but most of them had already been sold.

"I'm angry because I was trying to give her a chance," Devine said. "That's how I was able to start my business. People gave me chances."

Devine added that the past two years have been difficult for his and many other businesses.

"I think it's sad because the economy is so bad," Devine said. "That was probably my retirement."

"It's a sizeable theft," Kelly said of the incident. He said that thefts of gold have become increasingly common recently because its price is high – around \$1,000 an ounce.

## Portland Police News

2/10 — Greg Overton, 35, of 13 Clinton Ave., Middletown, was charged with second-degree criminal mischief, sixth-degree larceny and breach of peace, Portland Police said.

2/14 — Steven Marino, 19, of 47 Copper Beech Ln., was charged with possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, police said.

2/14 — A 17-year-old male was arrested for possession of drug paraphernalia, police said.

## Colchester Police News

2/9: Donald Dumsar, 54, of 38 Long Dr., North Windham, was charged with second-degree harassment, State Police said.

2/10: Joanne Halpern, 51, of 55 McDonald Rd., was charged with disorderly conduct and possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, State Police said.

2/11: Michael Ritchotte, 28, of 282 Lake Hayward Rd., was charged with failure to appear, State Police said.

2/12: Ryan Henk, 18, of 297 Old Hebron Rd., was charged with third-degree larceny, State Police said.

2/12: Todd Pugh, 42, of 203 Amston Rd., was charged with sixth-degree larceny and first-degree criminal mischief, State Police said.

2/12: Carlton Versteeg, 21, of 54 Windham

St., was charged with violation of probation, State Police said.

2/13: Connor London, 18, of 85 Heatherwood Dr., was charged with failure to carry license, DUI and stop sign violation, State Police said.

2/13: John Mullaney, 36, of 191 Maple St., Agawam MA, was charged with DUI, motor vehicle license violation and failure to drive in proper lane, State Police said.

2/14: A 16-year-old was arrested on an outstanding warrant for charges originating from an incident reported on Dec. 12, 2009. The accused was charged with third-degree burglary, second-degree larceny and criminal mischief, State Police said.

## Life Star Called to Head-On Crash on Route 85 in Hebron

by Lindsay Fetzner

Life Star was called Monday afternoon after a head-on crash involving three people occurred on Route 85, according to police and fire officials.

The two-car crash happened around 3:30 p.m., State Police said. According to Rich Shok, EMS captain of the Hebron Volunteer Fire Department (HVFD), the crash occurred near the intersection of Daly Road. The road remained closed near Gay City State Park as a result, Shok said.

Extrication at the scene of the accident was administered by the HVFD. The operator of one of the pick-up trucks was taken by Life Star to St. Francis Hospital. The operator of the second pick-up truck, along with the passenger, was taken to Hartford Hospital. According to State Police, all three sustained

serious injuries. However, as of Wednesday, State Police had not identified the names of those involved in the crash.

Shok said the three people involved in the crash were transported to area hospitals within one hour. The two pick-up trucks involved, a Ford F-250 and Dodge 2500, sustained heavy front-end damage.

This is the third call to Life Star in less than a month's time. A crash in Amston on Jan. 23 and another on Feb. 1 in Hebron resulted in Life Star transportation to Hartford Hospital in both crashes.

Assistance at the scene was received from a Middlesex Hospital paramedic, Manchester paramedics and Life Star, Shok said.

According to State Police, the case is currently still under investigation.

*From the Editor's Desk*

## Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Boy, the weathermen *really* blew it last week.

Having spent most of my life in Connecticut, I know predicting the weather here can be a rather delicate science. This is, after all, the region that inspired Mark Twain's famous quote, "If you don't like the weather in New England, wait a few minutes." But rarely have I seen all the weather forecasters united so strongly in a prognostication that turned out to be so utterly wrong.

As it got closer to last Wednesday, the weathermen seemed to get more and more excited. This was going to be big, they promised. Perhaps not as large as the storm that hit Washington, but significant all the same. Some stations said eight to 14 inches, others 10-16. Even WTNH-Channel 8, which just based on my own observations the last couple of winters seems to be right most often when it comes to snow events, was calling for six to 12 inches.

And it was going to be one of the worst kinds of snows too – a middle-of-the-week snowstorm, with the snow coming during the day, not at night, while everyone sleeps. The evening commute would be a mess wrapped in a catastrophe baked in a disaster.

Sure enough, as I was watching either the 10 or the 11 o'clock news Tuesday night, I noticed the cancellations had already started rolling in. The vast majority of schools in the state – including most of *Rivereast*-land – had already pulled the plug on Wednesday classes. This, despite the fact a single flake of snow had yet to fall from the sky.

And that's when a thought crossed my mind: I flashed back to an incident from when I was in elementary school, when the schools were so convinced a snowstorm was a-coming classes were dismissed at noon. Not only did it not snow that day, the sky didn't even cloud up. *Wouldn't it be interesting*, I thought to myself last Tuesday night, *if that same thing happened again?* I immediately dismissed that notion; the weathermen seemed to be in unanimous agreement on this one. We were going to get clobbered.

When I woke up Wednesday morning, there was no snow. This was not unexpected; the weathermen had been saying the snow was going to start anywhere between 7 and 9. The snow would get heavier as the day went on. In fact, people were urged to stay home if at all possible. Many heeded their call, and some businesses in fact just closed up shop altogether for the day.

I of course didn't really have the option of staying home – as Spiderman's uncle once told him, with great power comes great responsibility; in other words, the paper ain't gonna edit itself – but I admit I wasn't at all looking forward to crawling back to Manchester that afternoon through heavy, blowing snow. And sure enough, as I started to leave Manchester, the flakes had begun flying. *Only the beginning*, I thought. Oddly, though, by the time I got to Glastonbury, the flakes had largely subsided.

Light snow seemed to fall intermittently throughout the morning, and didn't really get going in earnest until about 1 p.m. *This wasn't what they said would happen*, I told myself. I thought that perhaps the storm was just a late-comer, and now that it was here the snow would really come down, like they said it would.

But as we all know, it never did. By the time I left work, despite the fact it had been snowing most of the afternoon, I had maybe two or three inches of snow on my car. So I dusted it off and went home. The roads weren't super-great, but they were certainly passable, and the trip didn't take nearly as long as I had feared that morning it would.

Look, as I've written here before, I'm not a big snow lover. I can appreciate it around Christmastime; it just seems fitting for that time of year. But the further and further we get from December, the less and less happy I am with the white stuff. So am I disappointed we didn't get a massive snowstorm? No. But it was just a little frustrating the weather forecasters threw everyone into a panic over what was really nothing. (And yes, I know it's not all the weathermen's fault; the newscasts themselves seem designed to cause the snow panic, as they lead with the "weather center alerts," feature "live team coverage" of idling snowplows and people scrambling for that last gallon of milk at the supermarket, and are stuffed with reminders that the news will come on at 4 a.m. to help people cope with Winter Storm Miley or whatever the hell they're calling it.)

Now, to be fair, most of the weathermen felt pretty bad when things didn't develop the way they had predicted. The *Journal Inquirer* last Thursday quoted Channel 30 meteorologist Ryan Hanrahan as writing in his blog, "We understand that people close schools and businesses and money is lost when we're forecasting a foot of snow. None of us take that responsibility lightly. We messed up on this one, it's time to admit it and say sorry." And Channel 3's Scot Haney – in true Scot Haney fashion – apparently literally wore an egg on his face throughout last Thursday's morning newscast. And they're human; they can screw up, much the same as we all can.

This was just a pretty big screw-up. An interesting follow-up to last Wednesday's much-ado-about-nothing storm came earlier this week, with the snow that fell Monday night and Tuesday. The roof of my car saw a good deal more snow from that system than it did from last week's "storm." And the drive home Tuesday afternoon stunk. This time around, though, there seemed to be little, if any, hype. Perhaps the weather forecasters didn't want to go back to the well quite so soon?

Whatever the reason, I was fine with it. After the events – or non-events – of last Wednesday, I could do without the snow-related hysteria for a while.

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See you next week.

## Argument Leads to Arrest on Multiple Charges in Hebron

by Lindsay Fetzner

A Wall Street resident was arrested on multiple charges after a domestic disturbance that began at a local bar, according to State Police.

Brian Lysak, 46, of 162 Wall St, Apt. B-7, was arrested Feb. 1 and charged with first-degree unlawful restraint, second-degree threatening, first-degree reckless endangerment, second-degree strangulation, third-degree assault and disorderly conduct.

Around midnight on Jan. 30, an argument took place between Lysak and his girlfriend, according to an affidavit on file at Rockville Superior Court. The two had spent the latter part of the evening at Butterball's Café in town. According to the affidavit, the alleged victim stated the argument began at the restaurant, but Lysak stated it began upon leaving the establishment. According to the affi-

davit, the fighting continued as the couple returned back to their apartment on Wall Street.

The verbal dispute escalated and according to the affidavit, the alleged victim stated that Lysak put a pillow over her face and suffocated her. She was able to break free from him and exit the apartment, the affidavit said. Upon leaving, the affidavit said, the alleged victim received multiple text messages from Lysak described as "verbally abusive and vulgar in nature." A search for physical evidence identified two large scratches on the chest of Lysak's girlfriend as well as what appeared to be a blood blister on her hand, according to the affidavit.

After appearing at the Rockville Court on Tuesday, Feb. 2, Lysak was released on a \$1,000 surety bond, according to State Police.

## Obituaries

### East Hampton

#### Ronald I. Holland Sr.

Ronald I. Holland Sr., 74, of East Hampton, husband of Shirley M. (Dufresne) Holland, passed away Monday, Feb. 15, at Hartford Hospital. Born in Vershire, VT, he was the son of the late Arlow M. and Gladys (Orton) Holland. Ronald had lived in East Hampton since 1962 and was an elder of Middletown Bible Church.

Besides his wife, he is survived by three sons, Ronald Holland, Jr. and his wife, Barbara of East Hampton, Kenneth R. Holland of East Hampton and Daniel R. Holland and his wife, Mary Jane of Cromwell; a daughter, RoseAnna Lois Smith and her husband, Charle J. of East Granby; three sisters, Pauline Holland of ME, Helen Newsome of SC and Nellie Holland of AZ; 16 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held today, Friday, Feb. 19, at 3:30 p.m., at Middletown Bible Church, 349 East St., Middletown, with the Rev. George F. Parsons officiating. Burial will be private and at the convenience of the family. There will be no calling hours and in lieu of flowers, friends may make donations in Ronald's memory to Middletown Bible Church, 349 East Street, Middletown, CT 06457.

Messages of condolence may be sent to the family at [www.doolittlefuneralservice.com](http://www.doolittlefuneralservice.com). The Doolittle Funeral Home, 14 Old Church St., Middletown, is handling the arrangements.

### East Hampton

#### John L. Smithwick Sr.

John L. "Jack" Smithwick Sr., 86, of Brookside Court, East Hampton, formerly of Coleman Road, Middletown, beloved husband of 65 years to Helen Smithwick, died Friday, Feb. 12, at Middlesex Hospital. Born in Middletown, the son of the late Daniel and Mabel (Anderson) Smithwick, Jack was an accomplished pianist and avid photographer. Prior to his retirement, Jack was co-owner and operator with his wife of Nutmeg Glass, East Hartford.

Besides his wife, he is survived by his son, Michael Smithwick and his wife Gail of East Hampton; three daughters, Kathleen Mazzotta of Aurora, CO, Eileen Janicke of Cromwell and Patricia Hill and her husband Thomas of East Hampton; a brother, Daniel Smithwick of Vermont; nine grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

He was predeceased by a son, John Smithwick Jr.

Funeral services and burial in Pine Grove Cemetery, Middletown, are private. There are no calling hours.

Those who wish may send memorial contributions to Weiss Hospice Unit, c/o Dept. of Philanthropy, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457 or Parkinson's Disease Foundation, 1359 Broadway, Ste. 1509, New York, NY 10018.

Biega Funeral Home has care of the arrangements.

### East Hampton

#### Harriet D. Wall

Harriet D. (Hough) Wall, 97, widow of Clement H. Wall, died Monday, Feb. 15, at the Marlborough Health Care Center. Born May 22, 1912 in Waterbury, she was the daughter of the late Charles and Gertrude (Porter) Hough.

She had grown up in Hebron and after her marriage to Clement moved to East Hampton, she returned to Hebron in 1997. Harriet was retired from Hartford Hospital, where she had worked as a dietary aide. She was a member of the Belltown Garden Club of East Hampton for more than 70 years.

She is survived by her son and daughter-in-law, Harvey D. and Sharon Wall of Columbia; a grandson, Eric Grant and his fiancé Jennifer; two great-grandchildren, Miniya and Mikaylie; two nephews, Richard Keefe and Darrell Keefe; three nieces, Josephine Korwin, Louise McFerran, and Joan Keefe; a great nephew, Matthew Keefe; and great niece, Jacqueline Harriet Keefe.

She was predeceased by her nephew, Dennis Keefe.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, Feb. 20, at 11 a.m. in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, with the Rev. Thomas Kennedy officiating. Burial will follow in the family plot in St. Patrick Cemetery in East Hampton. Friends may call at the Spencer Funeral Home on Saturday from 10 a.m. until the time of the service.

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

### Hebron

#### Francis G. Damon

Francis G. Damon, 77, of Vernon, formerly of Hebron, beloved husband of the late Ethel (Bennett) Damon, passed away peacefully Friday, Feb. 12, at Rockville General Hospital. Born in Boston, MA, Dec. 22, 1932, he was the son of the late Charles F. & Katherine (Mitchell) Damon, and resided in the Hebron area most of his life. Prior to his retirement Francis was employed as a Machinist for Pratt & Whitney Aircraft.

Francis will be remembered by his family; his four brothers, Paul N. Damon and his wife, Ellen, of Keene, NH, William Damon and his wife, Patricia, of Deep River, Daniel Damon, and Mark Damon and his wife, Lisa, all of Barre, MA; two sisters, Diane DiLeo and her husband, Julio, of Shrewsbury, MA, and Denise Lentz of Worcester, MA; several nieces and nephews.

In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by a brother and sister, Charles Damon and Donna Wright.

A memorial service celebrating Francis' life will be held Saturday, Feb. 27, at 11 a.m., in the Farley-Sullivan Funeral Home, 50 Naubuc Ave., Glastonbury. Burial will be private and at the convenience of the family. There are no calling hours.

To extend online expressions of sympathy to the family or for further information, visit [farleysullivan.com](http://farleysullivan.com).

### Colchester

#### Mary Bashiloff Raczewski

Mary Bashiloff Raczewski, beloved wife of the late Thomas A. Raczewski, of Colchester, passed away Sunday, Feb. 14, at the Middlesex Hospital. She was born Nov. 22, 1931, in Norwich, daughter of Alexander and Helen Zemenski Bashiloff.

Mary was a graduate of Saint Francis Hospital School of Nursing, where she worked as a registered nurse and head supervisor for several convalescent homes over the years. Her last employment was with the Salmon Brook Convalescent Home in Glastonbury. She was very active in the community. She was a member of the Colchester Democratic Women's Club, St. Andrew's Church, Salem Seniors and the Colchester chapter of AARP.

Surviving are three sons, Paul and wife Sue, Kenneth and wife Catalina and Thomas Raczewski, daughter Linda Dzagan, eight grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, several nieces.

She was predeceased by her brother, John Bashiloff.

Visitation will be held today, Friday, Feb. 19, from 4-8 p.m. at the Belmont/Sabrowski Funeral Home, 144 South Main St., Colchester. A Mass of Christian Burial will be held Saturday, Feb. 20, at 11 a.m., at St. Andrew's Church on Norwich Avenue, Colchester. Interment private.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Covenant Soup Kitchen, 220 Valley St., Willimantic, CT 06226.

### Hebron

#### Antonio Giguere

Antonio Giguere, 86, of Hebron, entered into eternal life on Monday, Feb. 8. He was born in St. Aurelie, P.Q., Canada, son of the late Jean Giguere and Emma Talbot.

He was predeceased by his wife, Anne Marie (Laberge) Giguere. He loved woodworking and enjoyed gardening and spending time with his family.

He is survived by his loving children, Jeanot Giguere and his wife, Michelle of Montreal, Canada; Charles Giguere and his wife, Sylvia of Florida; Aurel Giguere and his wife, Louiselle of New Britain; Lucie Simoneau and her husband, Marcel of Newington; Yves Giguere and his wife, Nancy of New Britain; Marie Levesque and her husband, Herman of Hebron; Rejean Giguere and his wife, Roxine of Coventry; Andree Miller and her husband, Glenn of Coventry; 19 grandchildren; 19 great grandchildren; and a sister, Helen Larochelle of Montreal, Canada.

There are no calling hours. The memorial liturgy will be celebrated at 11 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 20, at the Church of the Holy Family, 185 Church St. (Route 85), Hebron. Interment will be observed July 3 in St. Aurelie, P.Q., Canada.

