

RIVEREAST

# News Bulletin

Serving Amston, Andover, Cobalt, Colchester, East Hampton, Hebron, Marlborough, Middle Haddam and Portland

Volume 38, Number 36

Published by The Glastonbury Citizen

December 20, 2013



East Hampton resident Ernest "Skip" Kunz, a Vietnam War veteran, is shown here with his Quilt of Valor, which was presented to him on behalf of the Connecticut Chapter of the Quilts of Valor Foundation Nov. 19 in Colchester.

## Quilt of Valor For Local Veteran

by Elizabeth Bowling

Roasting chestnuts on an open fire and drinking hot chocolate isn't the only way to stay warm during the winter – a nice, handmade quilt would also do the trick.

The Quilts of Valor Foundation, a national foundation, provides quilts to military veterans in an effort to express the gratitude of the American people for their service members' dedication – not to mention, it's a great way to stay cozy during those cold nights.

Last month, the foundation presented an East Hampton resident with a quilt for his service in the Vietnam War.

Ernest "Skip" Kunz, an East Hampton resident since 1989, served his country for a total of 25 years – four of which on active duty and the remaining years on reserve.

Kunz, 69, began his service before he even entered college when he joined the navy reserve as a radar man.

After that he earned his bachelor's of science degree in mechanical engineering from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in Worcester, Mass.

His active duty started in 1966, just one week after graduating from WPI when he was accepted into Navy Officer Candidate School (OCS) in Newport, RI.

After completing his education at OCS, he continued his schooling when he joined the Civil Engineer Corps Officers School (CECOS) in California. His work there entailed supervising the construction of any navy buildings.

After that, Kunz – who was, at that point, an ensign – was assigned as shops engineer at the naval submarine base in Groton.

He recalled, "My first duty station was at the submarine base. I was called 'the shops engineer' and I was in charge of the maintenance of all the [400] buildings [on the base]. I had 360 people that worked for me and the interesting thing was it should have been a much more senior officer doing these jobs in the United States but they had all the more senior officers... abroad."

In his second tour of duty, Kunz served as Lt. Junior Grade with the Naval Mobile Con-

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## Better Not Pout, Better Not Cry...

Yep, it's time for Santa Claus to make his annual visit, depositing gifts for all good girls and boys. As is yearly tradition, Marlborough Girl Scout Troop 65220 has been collecting letters from area kids to Santa. But before shipping those yuletide wish lists up north, the scouts let us at the *RiverEast* have a look.

After giving the letters a gander, we decided to share some of them with readers. But don't worry, kids, we're not in the business of being Grinches around here. After typing up the letters – and yes, we left in those charming little-kid misspellings on purpose – we sent them on their merry way up to the North Pole, so the big guy would be sure to see what you all want.

And earlier this week, we heard from our inside source in Santa's workshop, that he did indeed get the letters, and will try to fulfill as many of these Christmas wishes as possible. Merry Christmas from all of us at the *RiverEast*.

Dear Santa Claus,

How are you? How's the reindeer? Jolly is my new elf on the shelf! Here are a few things I would like for Christmas.

Clay, X-box, guitar, phone, lap-top, trampoline, lacross stick, downhill skis, uggs, throw tic-tac-toe, balance beam, Noah ark, regular ski's, uneven bars, boggle board, Mystery Mansion, Klutz, encyclapedia (immaturity), clue, blurt, shut the box, pop the pig, hungry hippo, ella, electric scooter, exbo marker, and a surf board! Have an amazing Christmas Santa Claus!

With Love,  
Julia

Dear Santa,

How are you doing up in the North pole?

I would like the new Mega nerf gun and a I pod touch, a reamote control Battleship Yamato, and a reamote control Destroyer

From: Bryce

Dear Santa Claus,

Can you please give me things to build a tree house? And Kalin will get a kitty and a private island. And Daddy get to go to the first Red Sox game in 2014. And Mommy will get perfume called Addict. And Lily and Mac get her a chicken bone. And I want Katie to get me and her a dirt bike and quad.

Love,  
James

Dear Santa,

I want a soccer ball & an airplane and I want a sled, ski's and a skate-board. And I want a bike, and I want a.....um.....um.....a dinosaur, a blue one and I want a toy. I want to play bowling and that's it! That's all I want.

Love, Cole

Dear Santa,

You are Awesome!

Love,  
Nico

Dear Santa,

Thank you for the letter.

I am really looking forward to Christmas. I can't wait till Christmas morning. How are you doing in the North Pole? Is it fun in the North pole? Merry Christmas.

From,  
Jake

Dear Santa,

I know it is alot to ask for but I would really like it if I could see Mich and Jayneanne for Christmas. Seeing them would make my Christmas even more marrier because they are moving away and I will miss them.

Sincerely,  
Julia

Dear Santa,

Hi! Do you need help to carry your toys? I have been good this year. Please bring me Crayola light designer. Good luck on Christmas Eve!

Love, Reese



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**Holiday Shopping Guide Inside**

**Quilt of Valor cont. from Front Page**  
 struction Battalion Forty (MCB 40), also called “the Seabees,” in Davisville, R.I. He explained that the Seabees are “enlisted men that build for the military – if either the Marines or the Navy needs buildings in Vietnam, our battalion builds the northern half of Route 1, which runs from north to south through Vietnam.”

Essentially, the Seabees were responsible for building buildings for advanced bases in Vietnam, Kunz said. “The real mission of the Seabees is to support the Marines,” he said, which they did by building sleeping and eating quarters, for example.

The Seabees’ actual slogan was, “We build, we fight.”

While he was with the Seabees, Kunz served in Hue/Phu Bai, Vietnam, as a Security Communications Ordinance Intelligence and Training Officer (S-2 Officer) and worked his way up to Company Commander.

He recalled one job where he supervised the engineering and construction of a military base’s perimeter.

He also remembered when his battalion – made up of more than 700 men – went to Vietnam in 1968 to relieve another battalion and the men he relieved told him, “You’ll know what a rocket sounds like when it comes through camp.”

They were right. One unsuspecting morning, after four months of no rockets, 13 came flying into camp.

“The rockets came from the woods half a mile away,” he said, noting that his camp was well protected, as U.S. helicopters were able to shoot down the rockets.

“Security was good,” he said. He explained that the men built bunkers for protection for when rockets came through.

When he completed his active duty in 1969, Kunz served in the reserve before retiring as a commander in 1987. He went back to work for Exxon and simultaneously earned his master’s degree by attending night school. When Exxon didn’t give him a raise, he started working for a mining company called “Ammx” in Greenwich.

In addition to his military service, Kunz owned his own chemical trading businesses in Bridgeport for a handful of years, which proved to be very successful – though Kunz chalks it up to luck. But because of his success, Kunz retired early (in 1979) and moved to Florida.

He owned houses in both Connecticut in Florida, and he only returned to Connecticut 25 years ago, to visit his mother one more time before she passed away.

While he was visiting, Kunz met his now-girlfriend, Beverly, when he went to the Manchester Community College campus to use a computer – a novelty at that time. Beverly was a secretary at MCC and was working in the computer lab.

“I met her and we dated and we’ve been together 25 years,” he said with a smile.

Kunz said he instantly knew that Beverly was special to him and he wanted to stick around the area for her. So he got his real estate license in 1995 and has been working as a real estate agent in East Hampton ever since.

But the Quilts of Valor Foundation didn’t present Kunz with his star spangled quilt for his dedication to the real estate industry. Rather, for his dedication to his country.

For the 10 years of its existence, the Quilts of Valor mission has been “to cover all combat service members and veterans touched by war.”

Marilyn Finnegan, a Quilts of Valor coordinator for the state of Connecticut, presented

Kunz with his quilt in recognition of his service with the U.S. Army in Vietnam.

Kunz’s quilt in particular was created by a group of women from Connecticut and Rhode Island called the “Quilting Buddies.” The group is just a couple weeks away from its eighth anniversary and has made more than 600 quilts.

Finnegan said in a statement, the quilts are intended to be a “tangible reminder of America’s appreciation and gratitude” toward its returning servicemen and women.

Kunz explained that a veteran, or a veteran’s family or friends, must request a Quilt of Valor in order to be presented with one.

Only two weeks after reaching out the foundation, Kunz was presented with his quilt.

In a written statement to Kunz, the Quilting Buddies explained that back when the group

formed in January 2005, many of its members hadn’t sewn in years, but were “eager” to get to work on quilt-making.

The statement concluded, “It has been our privilege and honor to make this Quilt of Valor for you. When you wrap yourself in your quilt, know that you are wrapped in our love, concern and gratitude.”

However, Kunz said he won’t be getting wrapped up the blanket; instead, he has it hanging up on the wall in his bedroom.

Asked what it meant to him to be presented with a Quilt of Valor, Kunz said, “It’s an honor.”

He added, “It means a lot to the veterans in hospitals who have something to hug.”

To contact the Quilting Buddies, visit [blert.net/gov](http://blert.net/gov) or find “The Quilting Buddies” on Facebook. To learn more about the Quilts of Valor Foundation, visit [QOVF.org](http://QOVF.org).

**Santa Letters cont. from Front Page**

Dear Santa,  
 Marry Christmas and Happy New Year. Here is my Christmas list. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 is what I can not live without! The others is what I want! So lets get started!

1. Sage The American Girl doll
  2. Sages horse, art set, and Hot air blown
  3. New keybord/real keyboard
  4. A Blue IPod tuch/real IPod tuch
  5. New close
  6. A Blue phone/real phone
  7. A Raimbow loom
  8. More balnds for (a Raimbow loom)
- That is all. Thank you for your time!

**Love,  
 Autumn**

P.S. I would like a picbur of you and all the raindeer.

Dear Santa,  
 I know this is a little late but I wanted to tell you some things I really want for cristmas 2013.

Here we go:  
 Loving family grand dollhouse (causcadian family) and bedroom acsecorys

Well that’s really all I want if I have any other suggestions I promise I will be sure to contact you I m just thinking because the elves it’s a very big present and also because it is very heavy for you and the raindeer. I love you santa you’re the best.

**Love you,  
 Olivia**

I ts not a hoax its really me  
 LOVE YA!!!!  
 LIV  
 P.S. Phoebe want’s a squeeky goose like Nora.

Dear Santa,  
 I hope you are doing well. I have been a super good girl. I would like to ask for a few things but will be happy with whatever you bring.

1. Learning Computer
2. Baby carrier

**Love, Aubree**

Dear Santa Clause,  
 I have been mostly good this year. I try very hard. Please bring me a caterpillar and a butterfly movie. Can I ride with you in your sled this year? Give kisses to the reindeer.

**Love, Sawyer**

Dear Santa,  
 Thank you for the letter I appriciated it. In Jakes letter you mentioned your nephews, and I wondered if they are regular children or elves.

Well anyway I am really pumped about Christmas this year. Thankyou and good luck getting ready for the big day!

**Sincerely,  
 Aidan**

Dear Santa,  
 What I wont for Christmas is a Jule american girl doll whith long hair and you can do enething whith har long hair. She is so pritte thats why I wonet har.

**Love,  
 Izabella**

Dear Santa,  
 I love you. You bring the best presents in the whole wide world. Thank you for the straws, the army helicopter and the coin changer.

What I want got Christmas is the Polar Express Train, a play house with real windows and a pretend bus I can sit in.

**Thank you,  
 Connor**

Dear Santa Claus,  
 For Christmas I would like an iPod the 5th generation. If I get it I will be so happy and excited because I really need a new one. That is the only thing I’m going to ask because that is the only thing I need.

**Love,  
 Alex**

p.s. How are yours reindeers doing?

Dear Santa,  
 I hope you have been well and busy making many gifts. I am so excited for your trip to my house in a few weeks. I have been very good and was wondering if I could ask for a few things but I would be happy with whatever you bring.

1. Leap Pad
2. Baby Carrier
3. Doll

**Thank you,  
 Grace**

## Two Arrested After September Kidnapping, Murder in Portland

by Elizabeth Bowling

Two people were arrested and charged with murder Tuesday after they allegedly kidnapped a Hartford man in September and shot him in the head, leaving him to die in Portland.

According to a press release from Hartford Police spokesman Lt. Brian Foley, Madelyne Martinez-Mercado, 23, of New Britain, and Talib Shaheer, 32, of Waterbury, were each charged with felony murder, first-degree kidnapping with a firearm, first-degree robbery, criminal use of a firearm and criminal possession of a firearm.

The two arrestees each had their bonds set at \$1,000,000.

According to Foley, Christopher “T.J.” Jefferson, 26, was “abducted at gunpoint” from 51 Bond St., Hartford, on Sept. 5 by Martinez-Mercado and Shaheer.

Jefferson got into the back seat of a black Mercedes Benz – with Shaheer in the driver’s seat and Martinez-Mercado in the front passenger’s seat – on Bond Street, “to conduct a transaction,” the press release stated.

“The two suspects immediately attempted to rob Christopher Jefferson of his marijuana as Martinez-Mercado pointed [a] gun at Christopher Jefferson,” the release said. “A struggle

ensued as the car drove west on Bond Street. At this point a single shot was fired, fatally striking Christopher Jefferson in the head. The two suspects then took the victim to Portland CT where they abandoned him.”

Witnesses reported that Jefferson attempted to escape from the car as it drove away, Hartford Police said.

Jefferson was reported missing from Hartford approximately one hour prior to being found near St. Mary’s Cemetery in Portland. He was found partially-clothed and laying on his back on the side of the road, according to a September press release from Sgt. Scott Cunningham of the Portland Police Department.

Someone driving by spotted Jefferson on the side of the road on Riverview Street, Cunningham said in September. Jefferson was transported to Middlesex Hospital, and then Hartford Hospital, for treatment. He remained in critical condition until the following morning, Sept. 6, when he was pronounced dead.

The investigation is ongoing throughout the adjudication process, Hartford Police said in its statement.

## Upcoming Discussion on Lake Pocotopaug

by Elizabeth Bowling

Tuesday night’s snow didn’t keep the East Hampton Town Council from its appointed rounds – which, in this case, was a meeting.

The council scheduled a roundtable session regarding the levels of Lake Pocotopaug and dam operations for Thursday, Feb. 6, at 6:30 p.m. at East Hampton Middle School.

Chairwoman of the council Barbara Moore said members of the public are invited to the discussion, which will feature an expert from the state.

Town Manager Mike Maniscalco affirmed that he’s seeking a lake and/or dam expert from the state to partake in the discussion.

Regarding the upcoming session, Moore said, “It will be a great guide for the council and the town manager.”

Also at Tuesday’s meeting, the council voted unanimously to transfer \$38,173 from the Completed Capital Project and \$145 from the Capital Reserve Fund Contingency and transfer the \$38,318 total to the Fire Department Capital Equipment Account for the purchase of a new fire truck hose for the fire department.

The next regularly scheduled East Hampton Town Council meeting is Tuesday, Jan. 14, at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall.

# Substitute Teacher Addresses East Hampton School Board

by Elizabeth Bowling

During the public comment portion of last week's Board of Education meeting, an East Hampton substitute teacher addressed the board regarding a situation that arose when she was subbing at East Hampton High School last month.

East Hampton resident and 14-year substitute teacher Jennifer Goodman said at the Dec. 9 public meeting that she was "bullied by four senior boys" while substitute teaching on Nov. 19.

She said she called the main office and had the boys removed from class by EHHS Assistant Principal Michael Dalton.

Goodman said she posted "something" on Facebook about the incident and was later "fired."

She said to the board that she wants to know how, or if, the four boys were punished.

Goodman further explained the incident in a

phone interview Tuesday.

"My job was to take attendance and they [the four students] were preventing me from taking attendance," she said, stating that they boys did "whatever they could do to disturb the class."

She classified the boys' actions as "bullying," though she could not recall specifically what they said or did.

She said, "I was bullied into – I couldn't do my job that I'd done for 14 years."

She said she left the teacher a note explaining the problems she had with the four students.

After school, Goodman returned home and was still very upset about her day so she turned to Facebook. She said she posted on her Facebook page, "Sometimes seniors can be a—holes."

"I deleted my entire account, I am truly very sorry. I can't express how unprofessional it was," Goodman said. "I'm very ashamed. I'm

a grown woman with two grown kids."

Still, Goodman said she was "let go" from the subbing jobs she had lined up that went as far in advance as February.

She said EHHS Principal John Fidler called her and told her he couldn't have her substituting.

"Based on my post, he couldn't have me up there," Goodman said.

Fidler could not be reached for comment.

To answer the original question of whether the four students were punished, Superintendent of Schools Diane Dugas said in a phone interview Tuesday she was unable to share information about the discipline of students, but ensured that East Hampton schools have "high expectations" of students in terms of being respectful.

Regarding Goodman's claim that she was "fired," Dugas said, "I can't divulge personnel

information."

Goodman said that, aside from this instance, she has been a quality substitute teacher.

"I do everything I'm supposed to," she said, adding that she's been requested for "preferred jobs," which is when a teacher requests a specific substitute to take over for their class.

"I would like my job back," Goodman said. But "I don't expect to get it back because my writing on Facebook was really wrong...I'm angry at myself."

She furthered, "Of course I want my job back. They took my income away. ... They've taken my livelihood away."

Ken Barber, the chairman of the Board of Education, said in a phone interview this week, "The superintendent has reviewed the matter and we do not believe that any further action is necessary at this point."

## Former East Hampton Police Officials React to 1998 Murder Arrest

by Elizabeth Bowling

Former members of the East Hampton Police Department reacted this week to the news of a former resident being charged in the 1998 murder of a woman who was found in a stream in East Hampton after being strangled.

According to a press release from the office of the Chief State's Attorney, Gerald Tuttle, 51, was arrested last Tuesday, Dec. 10, at his home in Surfside Beach, S.C. He was charged as a fugitive from justice in the homicide of long-time East Hampton resident Gertrude "Trudy" Ochankowski. He is charged in an arrest warrant issued in Connecticut with one count of murder.

Tuttle's bond is set at \$1 million.

On Jan. 12, 1998, East Hampton police responded to a report of the partially nude body of a woman found in a stream, under a bridge, near Tartia Road. The woman, Ochankowski, 60, was pronounced dead at the scene.

Ochankowski was the subject of a missing person's investigation from earlier that day, after her car was found running in the front parking lot of 82 Main St. – which was Village Laundromat, as well as Tuttle's home address.

Witnesses said they had seen Ochankowski's car running with her dog inside at 9:30 p.m. the day before, the press release said.

An autopsy determined the cause of Ochankowski's death was strangulation, and the case was ruled a homicide, the chief state's attorney's office said.

Ochankowski's daughter, Cindy Ochankowski, said in a statement provided by her attorney, John Robinson of the Hartford law firm McCarter & English, "On behalf of my sister and our family, in essence on behalf of our mother, and based on our fond memory of her we are incredibly grateful for the news of the arrest. The family has never wavered from the belief that someday justice would be served. Trudy was a wonderful, loving person and mother. She is thought of every day by those who lost her. In some way, we hope she can now rest more peacefully."

The statement furthered, "The family is particularly thankful at this time for the overwhelming support of the community."

The East Hampton Police Department conducted the investigation in conjunction with the Office of the State's Attorney for the Judicial District of Middlesex and the Cold Case Unit in the Office of the Chief State's Attorney.

The investigation was led by Garritt Kelly, a longtime sergeant with the East Hampton Police Department who retired earlier this year. Kelly reflected on the nearly 16-year investigation earlier this week.

"In the beginning of the investigation, you have to consider all avenues and all possible suspects, which we did," he said. "And there were potential suspects that were ruled out and Tuttle remained as a suspect."

He furthered, "As time went on, there were a

great deal of circumstances that kept him ruled in."

Kelly explained the timeline of Tuttle's arrest: Tuttle first must go through a process in South Carolina, then he will be brought to Connecticut and arraigned here, then the court process will ensue in Connecticut and Tuttle will ultimately either go to trial or plead guilty.

Kelly affirmed that Tuttle hasn't been arraigned in Connecticut yet.

The former sergeant also explained how the 16-year investigation finally wrapped up just last week.

"Back in 1998, we investigated several different scenes and secured a variety of physical evidence from those scenes," he said. "Back then, technology was not nearly as advanced as it is now."

"Over time," he furthered, "we resubmitted evidence and with the advancement of technology we were able to re-examine evidence."

However, Kelly did not disclose any specific physical evidence.

Kelly said the case ultimately came down to physical evidence, as the circumstantial evidence for case was identified "pretty much immediately."

Former East Hampton Police Chief Matthew Reimondo, who also retired from the force earlier this year, reflected on the arrest as well.

"I have to commend retired Sgt. Kelly for his hard work, dedication and perseverance for completing this case," he said.

In addition to praising Kelly, Reimondo also noted the work of all the other agencies involved in the investigation including the chief state's attorney, the cold case unit, the forensics lab, and the past and present members of the East Hampton Police Department.

Still, he said, "The real thanks goes to Sgt. Kelly. He worked diligently on this case for years to bring it to this point."

Reimondo, who was a patrol sergeant at the time of the crime and was promoted to chief later that year, said he was both part of the investigation and the administration.

"We're just ecstatic that we can start to bring closure to this case for the family," Reimondo said, adding that he had hoped to close the case prior to his retirement about one year ago, but is satisfied with the closure regardless.

The Office of the State's Attorney for the Judicial District of Middlesex is prosecuting the case.

## Single-Car Fatal Crash in East Hampton

by Elizabeth Bowling

A single-car crash on Young Street last Friday, Dec. 13, at around 1:30 p.m. left the sole-occupant of the vehicle dead on the scene.

According to Sgt. Timothy Dowty of the East Hampton Police Department, Thomas Hansen, 53, of Emily Lane, was found unresponsive at the scene of the crash when officials arrived. He was "presumed dead" by a medic from Middlesex Hospital.

A press release from Dowty stated, "East Hampton officers found a single vehicle had left the travel portion of the roadway, struck a guy wire for a utility pole before continuing into the wood line on [the] eastbound shoulder of Route 196.

The vehicle struck a stone and trees on the roadside, which forced the car onto its driver's side doors and up against some other trees,"

it furthered

Local police, as well as fire services and the volunteer ambulance responded to the accident.

Because he was pronounced dead at the scene, Hansen was not transported to a hospital. Rather, his body was turned over to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for an autopsy, Dowty affirmed. Autopsy results were not in as of press time.

The car accident also damaged a utility pole and transformer, leaving several families in the area of Young Street without power until Connecticut Light and Power could restore it later that day, East Hampton Police said.

The investigation of this accident is ongoing.

# Satisfying Performance Results in Colchester

by **Melissa Roberto**

Connecticut school performance reports were released to school districts last week and Colchester's Board of Education was "very satisfied" with the results, according to board chairman Ron Goldstein.

The performance reports provide a School Performance Index (SPI), an average of the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) or Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) performance for all subjects tested in each of the schools. Each district is also given a District Performance Index (DPI), the corresponding average for all students in the district.

The state rates schools in six different categories: "excelling," "progressing," "transitioning," "review," "focus" and "turnaround." In Colchester, all targets for the 2012-13 school year were met. William J. Johnston Middle School received "excelling," the highest rating; both Bacon Academy and Colchester Elementary School received "progressing," the second-highest; and Jack Jackter Intermediate School received a "transitioning" rating.

An "excelling" rating concludes a school has a performance index of at least 88, according to a press release issued by the town's Board of Education department. That means more than 25 percent of students had advanced scores in a majority of the subjects tested. At WJJMS, those scores are related to the sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders' Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) scores. The CMT is administered to students in grades three through eight throughout the state.

WJJMS' "excelling" rating concluded that the school was ranked in the top 15 percent of schools in Connecticut giving the CMT. Additionally, the press release states 90 percent of

students at the middle school met the target in every subject. The percentage of middle school students who received advanced scores in each of the subject areas was also communicated: 37 percent in math, 37.6 percent in reading, 31.9 percent in writing and 22 percent in science.

Goldstein said the school board was "proud" of the middle school's results.

"We're glad to be in that category," he said of WJJMS.

Chris Bennett, the middle school's principal, also expressed enthusiasm about students' scores.

"We could not be more proud of our students and staff," said Bennett. "Everyone worked tremendously hard last year and we are happy to see that this hard work paid off with such strong results."

Bacon Academy's "progressing" rating means the school received a performance index between 64-87 percent, with a participation rate of at least 95 percent. The rating concluded 100 percent of Colchester's high school students participated in CAPT testing. To be considered for the "progressing" rating, high schools also must have a graduation rate – the percentage of students who graduate within four years – of 90 and a holding power rate – the percentage of students who graduate in more than four years rather than dropping out of school – of 93. Bacon surpassed both of those requirements, with a graduation rate of 94.7 percent and a holding power rate of 96 percent.

As a result, Bacon Academy ranked in the top half of high schools in Connecticut giving the CAPT. 82.4 percent of Colchester's high schoolers met the target in every subject. Additionally, the press release states "free and re-

duced-needs students, students with disabilities and high needs students" all met the 2013 targets.

And although CES is a non-tested school, as it is for pre-school to grade two students, who neither take the CMT nor the CAPT, the school received the classification of "progressing" based on the district-wide ratings. The district CMT DPI is 87.4 and the district CAPT DPI is 82. The reports concluded Colchester met its targets for 2013.

The final institution that makes up Colchester's four public schools, JJIS, received a "transitioning" classification. 85.4 percent of Jack Jackter students met the target in every subject and the participation rate was 99.9 percent. It was stated, however, that the school did not meet the 2013 target for the whole school and missed the SPI target in math and writing.

The school system's director of teaching and learning Barbara Gilbert, however, explained the JJIS "transitioning" rating is a result of a disconnect between the CMT tests and the district's early implementation of the Common Core State Standards, a nationwide mandate districts are expected to fully implement in the 2014-15 school year.

"Colchester was an early implementer of the Common Core in those content areas, which are not aligned well with the CMT," she stated. "Our district took very seriously the 3-year implementation plan recommended by the state, and began in 2011-12 to prepare students for the test to be given in 2015. We are making huge progress and are excited about the critical thinking and new learning we see as a result."

Goldstein also touched upon the differences of testing versus the new mandated curriculum

this week.

"Clearly there was a disconnect with what we were teaching and what we were tested," he explained. "At the lower grades in particular there wasn't enough time for kids to catch up."

It seemed at the state level this disconnect was to be expected. State Commissioner of Education Stefan Pryor released a statement regarding this.

"It is increasingly apparent that our legacy tests are out of sync with the new Common Core State Standards," Pryor said.

He furthered, "Results on legacy tests such as the CMT... may show a more significant drop because younger students have had less experience with traditional instruction and with the CMT, given schools' more pronounced shifts to the Common Core in earlier grades."

For that reason, Pryor continued the state has allowed districts to opt to administer the CMT again this year or to get a jump start on the new Smarter Balanced Assessment, which districts nationwide are expected to fully implement in the 2014-15 school year along with the Common Core. Earlier this year the Colchester district opted to go ahead with Smarter Balanced because it is aligned with the Common Core curriculum, what students are currently being taught in the town's four schools.

"That will show the degree of how effective we are to our new curriculum aligning with the correct assessments," Goldstein said.

He also reiterated the board's satisfaction with the performance reports – but noted the aim for the future is still high.

"We're pleased with the results, but always looking to do even better," he said.

## Colchester Selectmen OK Fire Appropriation, Finance Board Holds Off

by **Melissa Roberto**

The boards of selectmen and finance were visited by members of the Colchester Hayward Fire Department in recent weeks for the request of a \$48,000 appropriation that would continue the funding of the volunteer department's ambulance incentive program, which implemented pay incentives so the department could maintain and add to its network of volunteers.

While the selectmen unanimously approved the appropriation at their Dec. 5 meeting, on Wednesday the finance board held off on approving the overall appropriation, instead trimming it down to \$5,500 as a short-term solution.

The program initially went into effect March 1, and was funded through a \$34,000 appropriation, approved by both boards. That appropriation paid \$15 per six-hour shift a volunteer worked, and an additional \$15 per call each volunteer responded to. The money funded the program through June, when the 2012-13 fiscal year ended.

Similarly, the incentives were funded again

for the first six months of 2013-14 fiscal year budget through a \$32,000 appropriation, effective July 1 through the end of December, with an option for extension if found to be effective. In July, the department tweaked the way the money was spent. In order to attract additional volunteers to pick up shifts, the volunteers began to receive a flat fee of \$50 per shift. However, the change allowed only volunteers who responded to a second call to still receive an additional \$15 per call.

With the six-month appropriation reaching its end, Cox and members of the department have attended meetings in recent weeks, this time requesting a \$48,000 appropriation to continue the program. The \$48,000 request would fund the next six months starting in January. The increase in the appropriation has been caused by the original intent of the program, Cox confirmed Thursday, which was to increase the number of volunteers. He explained just how well the program has taken off in the Dec. 5 selectmen meeting.

"In my opinion the program has been a great success," said Cox. "We have drastically reduced the calls to mutual aid coming to this town and we've also responded appropriately to medical calls."

Deputy Chief Don Lee, Assistant Chief Ken McKenna and EMT Captain Audrie Babineau also attended the meeting to voice support of the program. Babineau said she was "in shock" over the response from volunteers.

"Since the inception of the program I have never seen a better response from membership," she said.

Lee reminded the selectmen of how difficult it is to often find volunteers anywhere, not just at the fire department. He coined the program's success a "win-win" for the department and the town "because our response times have been greatly reduced, our dependency on our mutual aid partners have been reduced and really the whole reason we're here is to serve the citizens of Colchester and ensure we are providing a high level of both emergency and medi-

cal care."

The selectmen also expressed their support due to the medical care it provides citizens.

"They're providing 24/7, 365 coverage," First Selectman Gregg Schuster said. "I think that's a tremendous value."

Selectman Mike Caplet continued, "It's an outstanding concept and program."

Tarlov explained Thursday the finance board held off on approving the total appropriation because they had additional questions for Cox regarding the increase in dollars. Cox, however, was unable to attend the meeting.

The finance board decided upon a \$5,500 appropriation based on the current \$32,000 used to fund the program. The \$32,000 funds \$5,033 a month, causing the finance board to "round up to \$5,500" to cover the month of January, Tarlov explained.

The long-term appropriation will be discussed at the finance board's next meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 15, at 7 p.m., at Town Hall. Cox plans to attend that meeting.

# Colchester Youth Center Gets New Sign to Increase Safety

by Melissa Roberto

There's reason for the flashy new traffic barrel that stands outside of the Youth Center on Norwich Avenue each weekday afternoon.

The barrel, which is orange and white in color with a flashing light on top, is the byproduct of a group of Youth Services employees and volunteers and town officials dedicated to upping safety precautions for students at the center who often cross Norwich Avenue.

Pam Scheibein, member of the Youth Services Advisory Board, was one of the individuals active in seeking a change. She said the new sign replaces the former "thin standard sign" that had constantly been hit by drivers.

"Several cars had hit it," she said. "We needed something larger. We advocated the need for a better system for the kids to cross."

Scheibein added speedy drivers on Norwich Avenue have posed a traffic concern for years. She recalled an incident that occurred in the early 2000s outside of Bacon Academy, just a couple miles up the road from the Youth Center, where a student had been struck by a car.

Scheibein was joined by the Colchester Public Works Department, Youth and Social Services program coordinator Jennifer Sloat for Youth and Social Services, selectman Stan Soby, the Police Commission, and Highway Department director of operations John Jones.

Sloat explained the new traffic barrel is put on the crosswalk during each afterschool session.

"It's just more of a reminder for cars to slow down and let the kids cross," Sloat said.

The program coordinator continued the department was "very worried" as the old sign repeatedly was getting hit because students are often walked to the green for activities.

"The sign is pretty much the size of a child," she said. "It was almost like, 'Oh my God, this could be a child.'"

The group was quite active in getting a new structure put in place. Jones, who helped create the barrel and attach a new sign to it, said the process took a total of five days. The Police Commission requested that the highway department buy a traffic barrel. Once the barrel was purchased, Jones said the town's fleet and maintenance department put wheels on it that lock in place so the center can wheel it out each afternoon when the youth center is in session.

Jones admitted he wasn't sure how much of a difference it would make because "people don't really adhere to pedestrian signs." However, the director said he hopes it does make a difference for the kids' safety.

"If it'll help the kids, then that's a plus," he said. "That's basically the thing we're worried about."

From Sloat's perspective, the sign has already impacted the traffic flow.

"It's been very effective," she said. "People are really noticing the sign and slowing down and stopping for people to cross."

Soby said he hopes the new sign is a reminder to those on the road.

"I just hope it would remind people to observe the state law," Soby said, "and to stop for people in crosswalks and slow down a little bit."



Seventh- and eighth-graders who use the Colchester Youth Center stand with its new crosswalk barrel, a new addition to Norwich Avenue during the center's afterschool programs. The sign was created to increase safety and awareness to drivers of students crossing the street.

## Discussion with Marlborough PTO Snowballs

by Melissa Roberto

What began as citizen Ken Hjulstrom addressing issues he had with the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) board back in October has since snowballed into multiple letters sent to three Marlborough boards.

Hjulstrom, a member of the Board of Finance and chairman of the Republican Town Committee, went to the Oct. 16 meeting of the PTO to, before the meeting, discuss two issues, he said. The first issue regarded wording the PTO used on a flier. The flier read, "With budget cuts, it is necessary more than ever for the PTO to raise money" in addition to stating what the PTO funded last year.

The second, Hjulstrom said, was concerning a letter to the editor that appeared in the *Rivereast's* Oct. 11 issue written by PTO co-president Debra Dalton endorsing Board of Education then-candidate Theresa Brysgel for the November municipal election. Hjulstrom expressed concern in the Oct. 16 meeting that Dalton stated in the letter she was MES PTO co-president, yet failed to state she was speaking as an individual.

On Oct. 14, Dalton reached out to the *Rivereast*, stating she hadn't realized the lack of statement would cause a conflict of interest. Upon Dalton's request, a correction ran the following week, in the Oct. 18 issue, stating Dalton was speaking as an individual and not on behalf of the PTO.

However, Hjulstrom's discussion with the

PTO board did not stop at the October meeting. According to the Nov. 13 PTO meeting minutes available on the Marlborough Elementary School website, PTO members present at the October meeting felt Hjulstrom's "behavior was aggressive and he made the members feel very uncomfortable."

As a result, the PTO board sent a letter to the Board of Finance dated Dec. 10 regarding the issue. The letter states Hjulstrom "identified himself as the chairman of the Marlborough Republican Town Committee and a member of the Board of Finance." It also quotes Hjulstrom from the October encounter, stating he told the PTO the "Board of Finance is outraged with the PTO."

The letter also expressed how PTO members viewed Hjulstrom's intentions.

"Ken Hjulstrom did not come that night to join our meeting or discuss an issue," the letter states. "Ken came to our meeting to intimidate the PTO board and any other members who happen to be in the room."

That letter led to a response from the Board of Finance, as well as a letter from Hjulstrom himself that he sent to the Board of Education this week. Finance board chairwoman Evelyn Godbout wrote a letter to the PTO on Dec. 13. Without getting into specifics, Godbout told the PTO "that no single member of the Board [of Finance] represents the Board of Finance."

Godbout wrote the exception would be "if the Board of Finance previously agreed or voted on a particular issue and requested that one of the officers or members of the board write a letter or speak on behalf of the board."

Due to the back-and-forth letters, Hjulstrom wrote his own to the Board of Education singling out one PTO member in particular, PTO co-secretary and MES teacher Pam Farrington. His letter expresses concern for Farrington's behavior, adding in the last two months he's been "subjected to a pattern of harassment from Mrs. Farrington."

His letter first references what he calls "a verbal tirade" that took place at the Marlborough Business Association's "Meet the Candidates" event in October. Hjulstrom states Farrington asked to speak with him and then "immediately launched into an angry and loud verbal attack... Insisting that I apologize to Deb Dalton."

Hjulstrom's letter then continues the issue "resurfaced a month later when Mrs. Farrington, while acting as the PTO Secretary, once again dragged the PTO into what I believe to be a politically motivated attack." Hjulstrom said the Nov. 13 PTO meeting minutes prepared by Farrington "included a very derogatory description of me and my demeanor."

His letter continues, "I have no idea why the PTO felt it was appropriate to write a letter to

the Board of Finance since the Board of Finance had nothing to do with the interaction between me and the PTO."

Within his letter to the school board, which he requested be read at Thursday's school board meeting held after press time, Hjulstrom states he feels Farrington's behavior "is both highly unprofessional and inappropriate."

He writes he would "NEVER use my position as an elected official or as a member of a volunteer organization to promote a political or personal agenda."

The *Rivereast* contacted PTO co-president Dawn Tavolieri this week for comment. She submitted a statement on behalf of the Marlborough PTO board.

"The PTO has no interest in making a public discussion of this incident," the statement said. "We reached our intended audience with our letter. The PTO board does not wish to make further comment."

Farrington could not be reached for comment.

According to school board chairwoman Ruth Kelly, it was decided the school board members would each receive a copy of Hjulstrom's letter and the board would accept it. However, the letter would not be read aloud into public comments per Hjulstrom's request based on advice given by the school board's attorney, Kelly said.

## Portland Selectmen Receive Update on Route 17 Park Complex

by Elizabeth Bowling

The Board of Selectmen reviewed a presentation on updates to the Route 17 recreational park complex at its meeting Wednesday night.

The chairman of the park's planning committee, Brian McCarthy, explained to the board that members of the public were given multiple opportunities to provide feedback to the committee regarding the complex's conceptual design in the form of surveys and a public forum, which was held back in October.

He said the committee received more than 500 surveys – both online and in print – as well as some verbal feedback, particularly from those residents neighboring the park site.

Regarding the online surveys, McCarthy said more than 90 percent of survey takers supported the project.

Most of the issues brought forward to the committee came from concerned neighbors – specifically, those on Strickland Street.

According to McCarthy, those issues included: park proximity to the neighborhood, security issues, noise, maintenance of the park, and how the park would be patrolled.

McCarthy said it would be "critical" to turn Strickland Street into a cul-de-sac in an attempt to reduce traffic.

Bransfield explained that the Board of Selectmen would get the final say in making changes to a road. She suggested the selectmen take a ride out to the neighborhood to see the street in question.

"It would be a town project," she said, noting that it would need to be studied and engi-

neered by a town engineer.

Selectman Mark Finkelstein said, "I'd like the opinion of the residents that live on Strickland Street."

McCarthy also noted there was a push at the public forum in October for the park to include a swimming pool. However, he said, "The committee, at this time, feels this is not the right spot for a pool; there's no public sanitary service here."

McCarthy predicted at Wednesday's meeting that the committee would have a revised layout of the park by February.

Also at Wednesday's meeting, the board voted unanimously to create a legislative sub-

committee, which would work to create an agenda for state legislators – specifically state Rep. Christie Carpino and state Sen. Art Linares.

One issue the subcommittee would look into is Tryon Street – a street whose residents pay taxes to Portland, but are otherwise listed as living in South Glastonbury.

Finkelstein and fellow selectmen Fred Knous and Ryan Curley agreed to be on the legislative subcommittee.

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The next regularly-scheduled Portland Board of Selectmen meeting will be held Wednesday, Jan. 15, at 7:30 p.m. at the Portland Public Library.

# Two Arrested in Connection with Fatal Hebron Crash

by Geeta Schrayter

Two arrests have been made in conjunction with an August accident that claimed the life of Hebron resident Paige Houston.

On Dec. 12, the Connecticut State Police issued releases regarding the arrests of Hebron resident Connor McKee, the 17-year old driver of the vehicle involved in the Aug. 6 crash, and Marlborough resident Paul Sibiga, 51, who allegedly hosted the underage drinking party McKee, Houston and several others had attended before the accident.

Although McKee wasn't named in the release due to his age, he had previously been identified in the accident report police issued in August. Police charged him with first-degree manslaughter, three counts of reckless endangerment, interfering with an officer, making a false statement, reckless operation of a motor vehicle, failure to obey a stop sign, two counts of license restriction violation and operation of a motor vehicle by a person under 21 while blood alcohol content exceeds .02 percent.

Based on restrictions listed on the DMV website, McKee shouldn't have been behind the wheel that night, as state law prohibits drivers under 18 from being on the road between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. In addition, McKee, who received his license in March according to published reports, was also not allowed to have anyone under 20 years in the vehicle with him.

According to the affidavit for Sibiga, the night of the accident McKee informed responding troopers he had been at a party on the Sibiga residence prior to the crash. He said he'd helped light a fire, hung out with friends and consumed one and a half beers (McKee's blood alcohol level was determined to be .11 percent) before leaving.

As a result of McKee's statement, troopers went to the Sibiga residence at 66 North Parker Rd., Marlborough – approximately .92 miles from where the crash occurred on West Street. Upon arrival, the affidavit explained Trooper Joseph Strogoff saw approximately 10-15 empty vehicles in the driveway. However, after speaking with Sibiga, Strogoff was told that while his son had a party earlier that night, no one was in his house at that time. Sibiga was then told to contact Troop K if he heard any-

thing about the location of the other two occupants of the crash vehicle, Hebron resident Andrew Burton, 16, and Andover resident Zachary Trapp, 18, who were also previously identified in the accident report and who fled the scene.

According to the affidavit, Trooper Michael Buck then received a tip as to where the party was being held and returned to the Sibiga residence with Strogoff. This time, Sibiga said he'd bring the troopers to where his son was having a party on a portion of his property located up a dirt road across the street that led into a wooded area.

After following the trail, Sibiga's son was located, who said he'd had 10-15 friends over for a party in the woods and that they'd been drinking alcohol, the affidavit said. After following Sibiga and his son further into the woods, the troopers said they recalled seeing a "large, white carport-type tent structure," a fire pit and a picnic table.

The troopers also saw teens hiding in the woods near the fire pit, some who "appeared to be sleeping near the fire, and some [who] appeared to be ready to camp out overnight," the affidavit said.

After asking everyone to step out of hiding, the troopers noticed two of the individuals had visible injuries and torn clothing. They were identified as Burton and Trapp, who said they'd been in the accident but had panicked and fled; they were then treated for their injuries.

Since the accident, the affidavit said several troopers were assigned the task of identifying everyone who attended the party at the Sibiga's that night: 28 underage individuals were identified, including Houston, McKee, Burton and Trapp.

As a result of interviews conducted with a number of witnesses who attended, it was discovered parties at the Sibiga residence were a regular occurrence over the summer. Some of the witnesses said the parties were held from a couple of times a month to as often as once a week during the summer of 2013.

At these parties, attendees drank alcohol and at times used drugs. The night of the accident, the party that took place was held by Sibiga's son with help from his brother, the affidavit said.

Several attendees said they recalled seeing cases of, according to the affidavit, Bud Light beer, Twisted Tea, Smirnoff Ice, a bottle of vodka, and mixed alcoholic drinks in red Solo cups like Red Bull with vodka. At times, drugs such as marijuana and "Molly," a version of ecstasy also known as Methylone, were also used at the parties, the affidavit said.

According to various witnesses, the area where the party occurred was known as the "White House" due to the long, narrow, tent covered in white plastic on the property that contained couches and tables. The property was further detailed in the affidavit, and said to include a fire pit that kids partied around and at times camped out by overnight.

Anyone who partied at the residence, the affidavit said, wasn't allowed to drive home and either camped out at the "White House" or in the Sibigas' basement.

One witness mentioned in the affidavit said they were present when Sibiga's son asked him if he could host a party. The witness said everyone parks at the Sibiga residence when they attend and walks across the road to the trail that leads to the clearing where the parties are held.

Another witness said Sibiga greeted them when they arrived at the residence and asked if they'd driven. When they said "no," the affidavit said Sibiga replied "good." The witness furthered they'd been to numerous parties at the "White House" and the general rule was you have to stay over if you're drinking.

However, that rule didn't keep McKee and the other occupants of the vehicle involved in the August crash from leaving that night, and it's a rule that didn't prevent Sibiga from being arrested. According to police, Sibiga was charged with 28 counts of first-degree reckless endangerment and 28 counts of permitting a minor to illegally possess liquor in their dwelling/private property.

Sibiga's bail was set at \$200,000. He was released from custody with a promise to appear and the additional condition that no minor other than family members are allowed on his property.

As for McKee, he was held on a \$150,000 court set bond as of Dec. 12 and transported to

Willimantic Juvenile Court for presentment.

McKee, and everyone else involved in the Aug. 6 crash attended RHAM High School. This week, Principal Scott Leslie wouldn't comment on the arrests because so many students are involved with each of the families. However, he said the most important question surrounded what the school currently does and potentially could do, to prevent students from holding or attending underage drinking parties.

"I think that yes – there's absolutely a lot the school can do" to stop those kinds of events, he said.

Leslie explained there were a number of drug and alcohol prevention programs for both students and parents at the school. Over the last few years he said the schools have been working closely with AHM Youth and Family Services to present parent forums about what resources are available and the challenges parents face.

"I think that we do need to continue to do more because it's obvious what we do now doesn't necessarily resonate with everybody," Leslie continued, explaining they were going to expand the programs at the school and in conjunction with AHM and add additional programs to address driving safety.

Leslie added he thought it was possible to keep students from attending and holding parties.

"I say that because I think the majority of our students don't find themselves in those impossible situations where either they themselves are drinking or they're with friends who might be," he said. "So it is possible and I guess I would stress with that, most students are already doing the right thing – not putting themselves in those situations."

"It's a huge challenge and certainly an uphill climb, there's no question," he furthered, "but certainly we can see by the behavior of most of our kids it is possible if not to totally eradicate it, to at least make significant improvements."

All with the hope of preventing an occurrence similar to the August accident from happening again.

## Schools Chief Proposes \$12.01 Million Budget in Hebron

by Geeta Schrayter

At the Dec. 12 Board of Education meeting, Superintendent of Schools Jeff Newton presented a proposed budget for 2014-15 of \$12,014,054. The number is a .49 percent increase over the 2013-14 budget, or \$58,131.

The largest portion of that covers certified staff which includes classroom teachers and administrators, and was listed at \$5,967,287 Thursday.

Although two classroom teacher reductions are listed due to declining enrollment that number is up \$8,275 from the current year and includes a 2.75 percent increase in certified staff salaries.

Newton explained a three-year contract for certified staff was approved through 2016-17 and includes a total increase of 8.65 percent over the three years. Newton called the numbers in the contract "fair and equitable" and said full arbitration was avoided during negotiations which saved the district \$50,000.

Also included in the certified staff account is a three percent increase for administrators, and funding for an additional work day (moving from two to three days) for the Director of Finance and Operation "to provide additional financial control and oversight to our school district," Newton wrote in a summary.

A position was also added for a Technology Integration Specialist who would be linked with the Library Media Specialist in order to bring services back to the library in both buildings (one of the media specialists was cut during last year's budget deliberations). The certified position would replace the existing non-certified technology specialist position.

In addition to the reduction of a technology specialist due to the above change, the non-certified account, which is listed as decreasing

\$29,976 to \$1,610,114, reflects the reduction of one secretary position in response to a recent retirement as well as a 2.5 percent salary increase in accordance with the non-certified staff contract which expires next June.

The second-largest account in the school budget is benefits. For the 2014-15 year, that account will decrease slightly, from \$2,381,701 to \$2,367,400 for a difference of \$14,301. Newton explained part of this decrease is due to a favorable health insurance increase of four percent, compared to over 20 percent last year "right out of the gate."

"This year we're sitting at four percent. That's a huge, huge difference," he said, but added that number could increase or decrease a bit (last year, the insurance increase dropped down to 13 percent).

In addition, Newton said savings were found after a full review of the district's health care enrollments was conducted. Interim Finance Director Dave Linehan took a look "at everybody in the district and where they were with enrollment with dental and medical," he explained.

"There were changes that came forth [including waivers and more enrollments in the high-deductible plan] and those changes provided a savings this year so we were able to budget accordingly next year which is at a decreased amount – so there's some big savings there," he furthered.

Although equipment and leasing decreased \$580 to \$101,600, the remaining accounts in the proposed budget were increases. Transportation increased \$14,047 to \$557,375 and includes a \$22,815 increase in special education transportation for students in out-of-district placements, a \$14,047 increase in the elemen-

tary transportation line item as a placeholder (the bus contract is currently in negotiations) and a \$10,591 decrease in diesel fuel due to a lower rate.

Tuition also went up \$20,276 to \$161,106 and includes magnet school tuition, tuition for students in day programs and costs for special education services at magnet schools. All three areas were listed as increasing due to the number of students estimated to attend magnet schools next year and the projected costs of supporting students with special needs.

Supplies and textbooks were listed increasing \$27,771 to \$253,551 which is primarily for new science and reading kits that are in line with the Common Core State Standards.

Newton said the Common Core was one of the "three big" unfunded mandates schools currently have to deal with along with the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and the new teacher and administrator evaluation plans. Although he said it was difficult to say exactly how much these mandates cost the district, Newton said he asked the administration to think about it, and so far they'd come up with approximately \$251,000 "and that's going to grow."

Purchased services also increased from \$376,741 to \$383,162 and Newton explained this was mostly for testing materials and professional development to assist with the Common Core and the district's Professional Development plan as well as funds for AHM Youth and Family Services to provide social worker support for students.

In addition, facilities and grounds increased slightly, up \$1,399 to \$495,116; dues and fees and meetings were listed increasing \$3,164 to \$13,000; and the communications, postage,

staff travel and insurance services account was listed increasing \$8,909 to \$103,842. The latter increase is due to higher postage rates and additional mailings, a higher mileage reimbursement rate and expected increases in property and liability insurance premiums.

Along with sharing the budget numbers, Newton discussed some of the achievements and accomplishments of the district. In the six months he's been superintendent, Newton said he's found students are excelling and the district is doing a "wonderful job" adhering to the mission statement, which is "to instill confidence, resolve, and the fundamentals of learning in each child so they are motivated to explore the possibilities in the world and to succeed in their chosen path."

Regarding achievements and accomplishments, Newton said "the district is loaded with them and that's a fabulous thing." He mentioned the Goal Oriented Adapted Learning (Goal) Program, which supports students with behavioral concerns and had brought some students who were outplaced back into the district, saving \$140,000.

"Bringing services into the district comes at a cost but it's less than outplacement" he said, giving "kudos" to the GOAL Program team as well as the entire special education team.

Newton also mentioned Hebron was one of the highest-performing schools in the state, yet ranked 157 out of 169 on per pupil expenditures.

"Students are excelling. We're at the top yet spending the least amount of dollars," he said adding "that's a phenomenal recognition."

Information on the budget can be found by going to [hebron.k12.ct.us](http://hebron.k12.ct.us) and clicking on "budget information."

# Obituaries

## Marlborough

### Irma E. Ervick

Irma E. Ervick, 82, of Marlborough, beloved wife of Rolf Ervick, died peacefully at her home Sunday, Dec. 15. Born July 29, 1931, in New Britain, she was the daughter of the late Adolph and Bertha (Chase) Conrad.

She was a graduate of New Britain High School and attended Nursing School. She had worked as an RN for most of her life. She was married to her loving husband Rolf in 1951, and had lived in Marlborough for 62 years. She was a member of the Red Hat Society, Tegnier Valcarian Lodge in New Britain and a member of Svea Lake Women's Group in Kensington.

Besides her husband, she is survived by her two sons, Glen Ervick and his wife Kathy of Marlborough; Roy Ervick of Danielson; a daughter, Gail Ervick of Marlborough; two sisters, Alma Seaburg of Florida, Constance Caron of Kensington; three grandchildren, Rolf Roy, Corey Ervick and Ashley Ervick.

She was predeceased by a sister, Joyce Hammick.

Funeral services will be private at the convenience of the family.

The Spencer Funeral Home has care of arrangements. To leave online condolences, visit [spencerfuneralhomeinc.com](http://spencerfuneralhomeinc.com).

## Portland

### Adrienne Moquin

Adrienne Moquin, 96, of Portland, wife of the late Lionel Moquin, passed away Sunday, Dec. 15, at Hartford Hospital. She was the daughter of the late Arthur and Laura (LaFlemme) Rioux.

Born April 17, 1917, in Manchester, N.H., she has lived in Portland since 1949. She worked at the Lynngrace Dress Company in Portland for over 30 years until her retirement. She was a member of St. Mary Church in Portland and also enjoyed gardening.

She leaves her sons, Leo Moquin of Texas and Ray Moquin of Florida; a daughter, Jeannette Parker of Portland; a sister, Emiline Ray of North Carolina; eight grandchildren; many great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren and nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were held Thursday, Dec. 19, with a Mass at Church of St. Mary, 51 Freestone Ave., Portland. Burial will be today, Dec. 20, directly at the State Veterans Cemetery, Middletown. Relatives and friends called Thursday morning at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, prior to Mass.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Portland EMT, P.O. Box 71, Portland, CT 06480.

To send an online expression of sympathy, visit [portlandmemorialfh.net](http://portlandmemorialfh.net).

## East Hampton

### Thomas John Hansen

Thomas John Hansen, 53, of East Hampton, beloved husband of Diana (Braun) Hansen, passed away suddenly Friday, Dec. 13. He was born Nov. 27, 1960, to Robert J. Hansen Sr. and Elizabeth Dagon Hansen in Hartford.

He grew up in Windsor before moving to East Hartford and ultimately made his home in East Hampton where he ran his own business Interactive, LLC, a graphic design firm.

Tom has always been interested in art and was very creative. He had worked for The Phoenix in their graphic arts department for twenty years and the Allied Group before going out on his own. He loved history and was a World War II buff, collected G.I. Joes and was a talented woodworker.

Tom was a quiet person and a thinker with a unique sense of humor. If there was one word to describe him it would be "genuine". He was a man who saw his success in the smile of his daughter and gained his strength from the love of his wife. He will be deeply missed by his entire family.

In addition to his wife and parents, Tom is survived by his son, Justin Barall; his daughter, the apple of his eye, Chloe Hansen; his brother, Robert J. Hansen Jr.; his step-mother, Anne Hansen; his niece, Jessica Hansen-Avery; as well as many extended family members.

Tom was predeceased by his sister-in-law, Gale Hansen.

A funeral service was held Wednesday, Dec. 18, at the Carmon Windsor Funeral Home, 807 Bloomfield Ave., Windsor. Burial was private. Tom's family receive friends that day, prior to the service, at the funeral home.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Tom's memory may be made to Chloe's college fund, Payable to: NexGen, c/o Merrill Lynch-Bank of America, FBO Chloe Hansen, 200 Glastonbury Blvd., Suite 302, Glastonbury CT 06033.

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

## Portland

### K. Jean Harmon

K. Jean (Treese) Harmon, a resident of Portland since 1962, beloved wife of Richard L. "Bud" Harmon, passed away at home surrounded by her husband and two sons Tuesday, Dec. 17. Born Jan. 10, 1935, in Clymer, Pa., she is the third of six daughters of the late Clarence J. and Erma N. (McCune) Treese.

Mrs. Harmon attended and graduated in 1952 from public schools in Clymer, Pennsylvania. She worked in clerical positions for the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington, D.C., and in Cleveland, Ohio, and for United Bank and Trust (now Bank of America) in Hartford. She also worked as a nursery school teacher at the Biz-E-Bee Nursery School in Portland for 10 years while her sons were growing up. She excelled in each profession by taking courses to advance her position as needed.

In addition to her loving husband of almost 59 years whom she wed Jan. 1, 1955, she is survived by her two sons, Bradley L. Harmon and his wife Charlann of Cabot, Ark., and Mark D. Harmon and his partner Ed Louie of Belmont, Calif.; two grandchildren, Richard L. Harmon II and his wife Courtney of East Haddam and Lisa N. Harmon and her fiancé Michael Johnston of Jacksonville, Ark.; three step-grandchildren, Melissa (Marshall) Lowell and her husband Ryan of Durham, Maine, Jayson Giffen of St. Peters, Mo., and Jennifer (Giffen) Childress and her husband Thomas of Las Vegas, Nev.; four great-grandchildren, Ethan, Breana, Jacob and Samuel; five step-great-grandchildren, Riley, Logan, Louis, Scarlet and Rylee; two sisters, Janet (Treese) Ackerson and her husband Arthur of Columbia Station, Ohio, and Ocala, Fla., and Jane (Treese) Mona and her husband Ronald of Timberlake, Ohio; one brother, Jerrold C. Treese and his wife Jayne (Fulmer) of Clymer, Pennsylvania; and one brother-in-law, Clyde Wheeler and his wife Paula (Rorabaugh) of Clymer, Pennsylvania; and many nephews, nieces and other members of her extended family. Mrs. Harmon was preceded in death by her parents; by three sisters, Joyce (Treese) Wise and her husband Carl, Joanne (Treese) Wheeler and Judy (Treese) Boruch and her husband George; and by one brother, James Treese.

Mrs. Harmon's interests were in her family and in family genealogy. She enjoyed golf and was president of the 9-Holers at the Portland Golf Club for several years in the 1970s. She was also a member of the Brownstone Quorum group, the Portland Historical Society and the Portland United Methodist Church. She was a keen fan of the UConn Huskies women's basketball. She and her husband traveled to all 50 states visiting state capitals and National Parks and to many of the Canadian provinces, and they also cruised in the Caribbean and to Alaska where they crossed the Arctic Circle.

Mrs. Harmon also toured nine European countries in 1955-56 while her husband was in the U.S. Army posted to Germany and she was able to join him there. They traveled through East Germany and into Berlin before the reunification of Germany. For many years in the 1970s and 1980s, they traveled to Quebec with their sons for fishing, camping and to enjoy the outdoor wilderness.

Services were held in Connecticut at the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland. Calling hours were Thursday, Dec. 19, and a memorial service will be Friday morning, Dec. 20, at the funeral home.

Services will also be held in western Pennsylvania at the Alcorn Funeral Home, 4065 Brookville St., Rt. 28, Hawthorn, Pa. Calling hours are Sunday, Dec. 22, in the afternoon or evening.

Mrs. Harmon will be cremated and, following the passing of her husband when her ashes and his will be mixed together, they will be interred together in the family plot at Mt. Zion Cemetery (Beautiful Lookout) in New Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be sent to Portland United Methodist Church, PO Box 459, Portland, CT 06480, or to the Clymer United Methodist Church, 495 Hancock Street, Clymer, PA 15728.

To send an online expression of sympathy, visit [portlandmemorialfh.net](http://portlandmemorialfh.net).



## Portland

### Elizabeth C. Flood

Elizabeth "Betsy" C. Flood, 55, of Manchester, formerly of Portland, passed away Sunday, Dec. 15, at St. Francis Hospital in Hartford. She was the daughter of the late Thomas W. and Mary (Kennedy) Flood.

Born Feb. 20, 1958, in Middletown, she lived in Portland for most of her life. At one time, she owned a toy store in Portland called "Elizabeth's" and a crafts enterprise named "Castle in the Woods."

She leaves her loving partner, Richard Sonntag and his granddaughter, Madison Stanchick; sisters and brothers, Ellin Murphy of Plymouth, Mass., Patrick Flood of East Calais, Vt., Mary Flood of Portland, William Flood of Queen Creek, Ariz., and Joseph Flood of Guilford.

She was predeceased by her brothers and sister, Thomas W. Flood Jr., Anne Flood Sandalls, Timothy C. Flood, John F. Flood and Michael E. Flood, and by a nephew, Benjamin Sandalls.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, Dec. 21, with a Mass at 10 a.m. at the Church of St. Mary, 51 Freestone Ave., Portland. Burial will be in St. Mary Cemetery, Portland. Relatives and friends may call Saturday at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, from 8:30-9:30 a.m., prior to Mass.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Connecticut Chapter 659 Tower Ave 1st Floor Hartford, CT 06112.

To send an online expression of sympathy, visit [portlandmemorialfh.net](http://portlandmemorialfh.net).

## Colchester

### Donald E. Shurtleff

Donald E. Shurtleff of Colchester passed away Monday, Dec. 16, at Hartford Hospital, after a long courageous battle with heart disease. Born Feb. 20, 1932, in Fall River, Mass., he was a son of the late Malcolm and Florence (Jewell) Shurtleff.

Donald was a proud veteran, having served with the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. He wed Hazel Ball June 20, 1955. The couple shared 55 years of marriage before she predeceased him Oct. 23, 2010. Donald retired several years ago after having worked in various positions for Northeast Utilities. He enjoyed hunting and lake fishing and was an avid fan of UConn women's basketball.

Donald was very active in every church he was a member of, from Maine to Florida. He was a very proud member of the Lions Club International where he was past president, past vice district governor and zone chair. He received many awards including the Melvin Jones Fellow, Ambassador of Sight, Knight of the Blind and he achieved Life Member status. For those who knew him, Donald will be remembered as a gentle, kind and caring man who was a great friend to many.

He will be sadly missed but always remembered by his children, John of Denver, Colo., Donald and wife Mary of Old Saybrook; a sister, Helen Collins of Little Compton, R.I.; four grandchildren, Erica, Michael, David and Christian; numerous extended family members and many special and dear friends.

In addition to his wife and parents, he was predeceased by a daughter, Gerri Balboni and two brothers, Malcolm and John.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, Dec. 21, at 11 a.m., at the Westchester Congregational Church, 449 Westchester Rd. (Route 149), Colchester.

Donations in his memory may be made to the church, 95 Cemetery Rd., Colchester, CT 06415.

Arrangements have been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester. For online condolences, visit [auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com](http://auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com).

## Hebron

### J. Todd Walters

J. Todd Walters, 55, of East Haddam, formerly of Hebron and Skaneateles, N.Y., beloved husband of Victoria (Bea) Walters, passed away suddenly Tuesday, Dec. 17. Born in North Brook, Ill., on May 3, 1958, he was the son of the late John and Katharine (Pleuthner) Walters.

Todd grew up in Skaneateles and graduated from high school there. He went on to college, earning his B.A. degree from Kent State.

Todd was passionate about helping seniors. As a result, he worked hard and became well known for his work in reverse mortgages. He was the former owner and president of Amston Mortgage, serving several states, including Connecticut. Most recently, Todd was the area branch manager for Security One Lending. He was an active member of his community, where he lived.

While in Hebron, he was a member of the Lions International; in East Haddam, he served for a time with the Board of Finance; he was past president for the Connecticut chapter of the Alzheimer's Association and is a current member of the Order of Cincinnatus.

Todd was a member of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association. He enjoyed flying and skydiving. He loved snowmobiling, biking, and his beloved Glenwood. Todd will be remembered by those who knew him best for his tremendous and wonderful sense of humor and for his kind and generous nature toward family and friends.

He will be sadly missed but always remembered by his wife Vicki, sisters, Kathy and husband Ken Dunlap of Seneca, S.C., Cheryl "CJ" and husband Fred Speno of Hebron, Karen and husband Jeff White of Syracuse, N.Y.; nephews, Glen and Mathew Dunlap; many nieces, nephews, cousins, aunts, uncles and friends.

Calling hours will be held on Saturday, Dec. 21, from 1-3 p.m., at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A memorial service will be held on Sunday, Dec. 22nd at 2 PM directly at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 30 Church St., Hebron.

Donations in his memory may be made to the Alzheimer's Association, CT Chapter, 2075 Silas Deane Hwy., Rocky Hill, CT 06067.

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

## Hebron

### Edward A Rudolph

Edward A Rudolph, 73, of Hebron, formerly of Windsor, beloved husband for 48 years to Gail (Lees) Rudolph, died Tuesday, Dec. 17, at Hartford Hospital, after a long, courageous battle with cancer.

Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., he was the son of the late Edward and Ellen Blanche (Golden) Rudolph. He spent his youth on Long Island, N.Y., dividing time between Floral Park in winters and Breezy Point in summers. He was a graduate of the State University of New York, Maritime College, Class of 1962 and earned his Masters of Business Administration at the University of Hartford, 1972.

Ed was formerly president of Windsor Jaycees, president of the Windsor Shad Fest Bureau, president of the Windsor Library Association, vice president of the Windsor Chamber of Commerce and president of Windsor Community Television. He was employed for 39 years at Combustion Engineering, which became ABB, and then Alstrom Power.

Ed was an avid skier spending many weekends with family and friends at his vacation home on Okemo Mountain in Ludlow, Vt. The UConn women's basketball team was also a favorite of his. Ed will be sadly missed but always remembered for his love and devotion to family and friends. He leaves this a better place for all he gave of himself to his family and community.

Besides his wife, he leaves two daughters, Christine and Mark Terranova of Colchester, Cathleen Rudolph and Shawn D. Laidlaw of Plaistow, N.H.; two grandchildren, Eli and Julia Terranova; brothers and sisters, Paul and Jessie Rudolph of Breezy Point, N.Y., Joan Rudolph of Long Beach, Calif., Maryellen Rudolph of Albany, N.Y., Rosemary Munro of Breezy Point, N.Y., Michael and Marie Rudolph of Belle Harbor, N.Y.; sister-in-law, Joyce Lodola of Windsor Locks. Ed is also survived by numerous extended family members and friends.

Calling hours will be held today, Dec. 20, from 4-6 p.m., at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral liturgy will be celebrated Saturday, Dec. 21, at 11 a.m., directly at Church of the Holy Family, 185 Church St., Hebron. Burial will be held privately in the Palisado Cemetery in Windsor.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Church of the Holy Family, Hebron, CT 06248 or the charity of one's choice.

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

## Andover

### Joseph L. Miett

Joseph L. Miett of Waterford, formerly of Andover, and Hampton Beach, N.H., died Friday, Dec. 13. He was the beloved husband of Kathleen (O'Connell), loving father of Thomas Miett of Quaker Hill, devoted grandfather of Timothy Miett of New York City and Patrick Miett of New Orleans, La. He is a World War II Army veteran.

There was a funeral from the Keefe Funeral Home, 5 Chestnut St. (Rt. 60, adjacent to St. Agnes Church), Arlington, Va., on Thursday, Dec. 19. The funeral Mass was at Saint Agnes Church that afternoon. Visitation was Thursday, before the funeral. Burial was in Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Arlington.

For a full obituary, directions or to send a condolence, visit [keefefuneralhome.com](http://keefefuneralhome.com).

## Colchester

### William R. Kreder Sr.

William R. Kreder, Sr., 67, beloved husband of Deborah Charbonnier of Colchester, passed away Monday, Dec. 9, at his home with his family by his side, after a four-year battle with lung cancer. He was born Oct. 27, 1946, in Brooklyn, N.Y., a son of the late Ernest and Patricia Gray Meza.

William worked for a cleaning service; he was a custodian for the Colchester schools and RHAM High School.

Surviving, besides his wife Deborah, is his daughter Michelle Kreder; three grandchildren, Tyler, Brianna and Jacob Kreder; two sisters, Elizabeth Giordano and Delores Smith; three brothers, Edward Kreder, David Meza and Daniel Meza.

He was predeceased by his son, William R. Kreder Jr., three brothers and three sisters. Funeral service will be held Saturday, Dec. 21, at 1 p.m., at the Belmont Sabrowski Funeral Home, 144 South Main St., Colchester, with calling hours starting at 10 a.m. till the time of the service burial to follow in Linwood Cemetery.

## Colchester

### Helen Virginia Parcak

Helen Virginia (Murray) Parcak, 93, went to be with her Lord Friday, Dec. 13, at 59 Harrington Court, Colchester, surrounded by family. She was born Jan. 9, 1920, in Richmond, Va., to Thomas Marron Murray and Virginia Rosenette (Wilkinson) Murray.

She was the oldest of three children. She married John Paul Parcak in March of 1944; together they raised five sons and two daughters until he passed away in March of 1967. Helen continued parenting without the love of her life and poured her life into her children while working full-time to support her family.

Helen worked in retail and then as a director of Huntington Home in Norwich and when she semi-retired, she continued working with Companions and Homemakers until she was 71. Helen's special interests included raising a family, singing, gardening and bowling. She especially enjoyed her time with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren and being a part of their lives. Helen was a loving and passionate advocate for her family.

Left to honor Helen are her two sisters, Mary (Murray) Daughterty and Mildred (Murray) Catterlin; her seven children, John (Marge), Thomas, David, Nancy, and Philip (Cindy) Parcak, Virginia (Jim) Humphrey and Jeffrey Parcak. Her grandchildren, Kerrie, Heather, Sarah, and Aaron Parcak, Kelly, Matthew, Rebekah, Rachel, Johnathan, and Benjamin Humphrey, Kristy (Chuck) Tardiff, Brittany Parcak, and Nicole (Brian) Ostrowski; and her great-grandchildren, Gabriel Aaron Mumford Parcak, William and Edward Tardiff, Dominic Ostrowski, Kayla, Zacary, Angel, Akhena and Avin Parcak.

Visitation was Monday, Dec. 16, at the Monville Funeral Home of Church and Allen, 53 Norwich New London Tpke., Uncasville, with a funeral service that evening. Burial was private.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the American Brain Tumor Association at [ABTA.org](http://ABTA.org).

Visit [montvillefuneralhome.com](http://montvillefuneralhome.com) to leave an online tribute or condolence.

## Colchester

### Christobel Riley

Christobel Riley, 94, wife of the late Laurence Riley of Colchester passed away Wednesday, Dec. 18, at the Middlesex Hospital. She was born in Maine April 29, 1919, daughter of Arthur and Iola Long Miller.

Surviving are three daughters, Barbara Riley, Jeanne and her husband Robert Gustafson-Crowley, Kathleen MacBride and her partner Robert Olbrias; four grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchild.

Funeral and burial will be private; there are no calling hours.

Belmont Sabrowski Funeral Home of Colchester is in care of arrangements.

## Middle Haddam

### Betty C. Dove

Betty C. Dove, of Haddam, formerly of Middle Haddam, beloved wife of the late Roger M. Dove, died Friday, Dec. 13, at Middlesex Hospital Hospice Unit in Middletown. Born April 20, 1919, in Edinburgh, Scotland, she was the daughter of the late John and Janet Shepherd.

Mrs. Dove was preceded in death by her husband Roger M. Dove, two sons, Jonathan and Timothy, and her sister, Margaret Blakely. She is survived by her daughter, Jennifer (Michael) McFerron of Greenville, S.C.; her son, Dr. Michael R. Dove of Killingworth; her granddaughter, Margaret Rose Carpenter-Dove of Killingworth; and many nieces and nephews.

Cremation has taken place and family services will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Rd, Newington, CT 06111 [cthumane.org](http://cthumane.org).

The Spencer Funeral Home has care of arrangements. To leave online condolences, visit [spencerfuneralhomeinc.com](http://spencerfuneralhomeinc.com).

## Portland

### Margaret C. Eimmerman

Margaret C. Quirk Eimmerman, 104, of North Haven, passed away Sunday, Dec. 15, at her home. She was the wife of the late Harry J. Eimmerman. Margaret was born in Portland March 9, 1909, daughter of the late Patrick and Bridget Delia Manning Quirk and had worked as a printer for the former William Mack Company until her retirement.

Margaret was an active parishioner of St. Frances Cabrini Church in her earlier years; was an avid bowler having bowled into her 80's; was a volunteer for the Battered Wives and Deprived Children's Associations; was a charter member of the Northeast Volunteer Fire Association Ladies Auxiliary and enjoyed UConn girls' basketball.

She was the mother of Maryjane Rudewicz, James (Marie) Eimmerman and the late Patricia Eimmerman, Marge Planz, Harry and Robert Eimmerman. Also survived by 12 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren and a great-great grandson. Predeceased by her siblings Nora Rybzczyk, Mary Berloni, James, Edward, Nicholas, Patrick, Catherine and Anna Quirk.

Her funeral procession will leave the North Haven Funeral Home, 36 Washington Avenue, Friday morning, Dec. 20, at 10:30 a.m. Family and friends may call from 9:30 to 10:30 am. A Mass of Christian burial will follow in St. Frances Cabrini Church at 11:00. Interment will follow in All Saints Cemetery.

Should friends desire, memorial contributions may be made to The Animal Haven, 89 Mill Rd., North Haven, CT 06473 or St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 262 Danny Thomas Pl., Memphis, TN 38105. [northhavenfuneral.com](http://northhavenfuneral.com).

## East Hampton

### John Raymond Bochinski

John Raymond Bochinski, 88, of East Hampton and formerly of Middlefield, widower of the late Ann (Murphy), died Wednesday, Dec. 18, at Middlesex Hospital. Born July 26, 1925, in Meriden he was the son of the late Stephen and Stella (Levendowski) Bochinski.

John proudly served his country in the Army during World War II. He had been employed by Pratt & Whitney as a painter until his retirement. He was a member of the Middlefield VFW.

He is survived by his son, Stephen Bochinski and his wife Judy of East Hampton; a daughter, Margaret Jones and her husband Preston of Florida; two sisters Eleanor Alfieri and Lorraine Traskos; and four grandchildren.

He was predeceased by a daughter, Susan Strickland.

Funeral services will be private at the convenience of the family.

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

## Colchester

### Alice Drago

Alice "June" (Burgess) Drago of Niantic, passed away peacefully Monday, Dec. 16, after a long illness, at Apple Rehab in Colchester.

She was born in Niantic June 11, 1925, the daughter of Frank Burgess Sr. and Alice Follows, and grew up in New London. She graduated from the Williams Memorial Institute and worked for the civil service during World War II. June married Anthony "Tony" Drago of New London at St. Mary's Church on June 4, 1949. June and Tony traveled with the Air Force for many years, including foreign countries such as Bermuda and Japan, finally returning to Niantic to raise their four children.

June was a loving wife, mother and homemaker who devoted herself to her family. Her joy in life was her children and grandchildren, bringing love, comfort and happiness to their lives. Many of her grandkids and younger relatives called her Juju, and she took time for them all, always willing to play "let's pretend" or treat them as adults, depending on what they needed.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 53 years, Tony Drago.

She is survived by her siblings, Frank Burgess Jr. and Nancy Mullen (Francis "Bud" Mullen); her children, Stephen (Linda Knaus) Drago, Susan (Richard) Duncan, Patricia "Jeanne" (James "Jay") Berryman, and Christopher (Terrie Lafferty) Drago; her grandchildren, Russell (Ashley Hutchins) Drago, Daniel (Jennifer Butler) Drago, Lindsey Duncan, Tim, Jeff, Greg and Michelle Berryman, Briana and Kaelie Drago, Krista (Mike Confer) Lafferty; and great-grandchildren, Hannah, Ethan, Lauryn and Abby Drago; and many well-loved nieces and nephews.

We'd like to thank all the wonderful people at Crescent Point at Niantic and Apple Rehab of Colchester for their loving care of our mother.

Our mother, sister, aunt and friend will be deeply missed.

The family will receive relatives and friends from 10-11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 21, at the Thomas L. Neilan and sons East Lyme Funeral Home, 48 Grand St., Niantic, with a service to follow at 11 am. Interment will follow in Union Cemetery, Niantic.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 262 Danny Thomas Place, Memphis, TN 38105. It can also be contacted by phone at 1-800-805-5856, or at [stjude.org](http://stjude.org).

Online condolences may be expressed at [neilanfuneralhome.com](http://neilanfuneralhome.com).



*From the Editor's Desk*

# Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Ladies and gentlemen, I have a confession to make.

Growing up, I didn't particularly care for *A Charlie Brown Christmas*.

Regarded by many as perhaps the best Christmas TV special of all time, I just didn't have a whole lot of use for it. Oh, it's not that I didn't like Christmas specials. I did, and watched them constantly. *A Garfield Christmas*, *A Claymation Christmas*, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*, *Santa Claus is Coming to Town* – all were perennial favorites. Then, of course, there was *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, which to this day is probably my favorite Christmas special. Heck, even *The He-Man and She-Ra Christmas Special* found its way into my holiday viewing.

But not *A Charlie Brown Christmas*.

I didn't openly dislike it. I just didn't enjoy it. It just struck 10-year-old me as *bor-ing*, and not very funny. So much so, I don't think I ever made it through the entire special; if I did, I don't remember it. It wasn't until I was in my 20s that I saw the whole thing for the first time.

As an adult, I've grown to appreciate it more. It's still not exactly a laugh riot, but it's peaceful, and quiet, and I really enjoy the jazzy soundtrack. I admit, it holds up better than the *He-Man and She-Ra Christmas*.

And, as the history of TV (as well as animation) has always been interesting to me, I'm fascinated by the special's backstory.

CBS, though they were successfully sold on the idea of the special, had lots of issues with it during production. They hated the idea of cast children to play the *Peanuts* characters, instead of the tried-and-true TV cartoon method of adults who sounded like children. They thought the jazz soundtrack would turn kids off. They insisted on a laugh track.

Schulz and the special's producer, Bill Melendez, fought tooth and nail against all of CBS' proposed changes. Schulz stood especially firm when it came to the part toward the end of the special, where Linus famously tells Charlie Brown "what Christmas is all about" by quoting an excerpt from the Bible. Even Melendez thought that was a little too much – that the religious overtones would limit the show's commercial appeal.

When all was said and done, CBS hated the special so much they thought they'd air it one time – after an episode of *Gilligan's Island* – and then never show it again. Lo and behold, it was a big hit, garnering a 50 share (meaning 50 percent of all television sets in use at that time were tuned into the special). The special won a Peabody award. It won an Emmy award. And it's been rerun every year since.

Despite being such a big hit – and despite, as the old saying goes, imitation being the sincerest form of television – there haven't been many attempts to copy the style of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. It's just as unique today as it was nearly 50 years ago – everything from the quietness of it, to the little kid actors, and especially to the Bible verse. Religion seems to make TV executives a little queasy, so it's not altogether surprising that, say, *Garfield* or *Shrek* hasn't opted to bust out some scripture quotes over the years.

I suppose one could say this is another sign people just don't appreciate the "reason for the season" – that the commercialization of Christmas, the focus on the giving and getting of presents, has taken over. And here's where I argue a point I've argued in the past in this space: The commercialization of Christmas gets a bad rap.

Is Christmas at its core a religious holiday? Yes – and that should never be forgotten. But in many ways the aspects demonized as the "commercial" parts of it are extensions of the religiousness. Particularly the oft-bemoaned gift-swapping part of it. If you think about it, the idea of giving someone a gift, showing them how much you love them and what they mean to you in your life – well, that's a pretty Christ-like thought, don't you think?

Also, a theme a lot of these Christmas TV specials, Christmas movies and Christmas songs on the radio all share is spending Christ-

mas with the ones you love, and bonding and developing as a family. How is this a bad thing? How is not in keeping with the spirit of Christianity?

So these other parts of Christmas don't have to take away from the "reason for the season" – indeed, they complement it pretty nicely. For giving a gift to a loved one, spending time with friends and family, telling them how much they mean to you, not to mention giving to the Salvation Army and the food bank and, heck, the overall concept of simply wishing people well – all of this ties in pretty nicely with the teachings of the man who is the "reason for the season." I think he'd approve – don't you?

\* \* \*

Speaking of Christmas, East Hampton Fire Marshal Rich Klotzbier passed along to me this week some general fire safety tips. I think a lot of us still remember that tragic story from 2011 when a Stamford woman lost her parents and her three young children in a devastating fire early Christmas morning. To prevent any other tragedies from striking, Klotzbier shared this advice, which is obviously good no matter what town you live in:

If a household holiday display includes a natural tree, keep the tree adequately watered. Improper care and decoration of live or artificial Christmas trees can lead to catastrophic fires. It takes only seconds for a tree to ignite and the entire room to become engulfed in flames.

Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood-burning stove. When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly. The best way to dispose of a natural tree is by taking it to a recycling center or having it hauled away by a community pick-up service.

When selecting a Christmas tree, needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull from the branches, and the needle should not break if the tree has been freshly cut. The trunk should feel sticky to the touch.

Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree trunk on the ground. If many needles fall off, the tree has been cut too long, has probably dried out and is a fire hazard.

Do not put a natural tree up too early or leave it up for longer than two weeks. Keep the tree stand filled with water at all times.

Keep Christmas trees away from heat sources including fireplaces and heat vents. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks. Be careful not to drop or flick cigarette ashes near a tree.

Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets, and excessive kinking or wear before putting them up. Use only lighting approved by UL.

Do not link more than three light strands into a single electrical outlet, unless the directions indicate it is safe. Connect strings of lights to a UL-approved multi-outlet power strip before plugging the cord into the outlet. Make sure to periodically check the wires; they should not feel warm to the touch.

All decorations should be nonflammable or flame-retardant, and artificial or metallic trees should also be flame-retardant.

Lastly, make sure you have working carbon monoxide detectors and smoke alarms.

\* \* \*

In last week's column, I plugged reporter Geeta Schrayter's book signing at Books and Boos in Colchester, which was to take place last Saturday afternoon. Unfortunately, last weekend's snowstorm led to the canceling of Geeta's book signing. It's been rescheduled to next year, and will likely occur in the spring.

\* \* \*

In closing, there will be no *Rivereast* published next week. The office will be closed Dec. 23-27. We'll reopen Monday, Dec. 30. However, our production schedule will be interrupted just two days' later, when the office will be closed for New Year's. Therefore, the deadline that week will be noon Monday, Dec. 23. No exceptions will be made.

Happy holidays from all of us at the *Rivereast News Bulletin*.

## East Hampton Police News

12/3: Blaire Ocelik, 31, of 81 Middletown Ave., was involved in a one-car motor vehicle accident on Old Middletown Avenue, East Hampton Police said. Police said Ocelik was arrested and charged with DUI, failure to drive right and operating a motor vehicle without a license. Also, on Dec. 9, Ocelik was charged with violation of probation, police said.

12/4: Morgan Poulan, 22, of 208 Main St., Portland, was issued a summons for operating a motor vehicle under suspension, police said.

12/9: Danielle N. Tyler, 29, of 137 Young St., was issued a summons for second-degree harassment, police said.

12/12: David Gaudino, 55, of 75 Old Marlborough Rd., was arrested and charged

with disorderly conduct, third-degree assault, second-degree harassment, possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia, police said. During the officers' investigation, it was discovered that Gaudino had an outstanding PRAWN warrant for his arrest stemming from a New Haven Police Department case. As a result, police said, Gaudino was also charged with violation of probation.

12/12: Alissa Hinxman, 21, of 9 Coughlin Rd., turned herself in pursuant to an active PRAWN warrant for her arrest and was charged with second-degree failure to appear, police said.

## Marlborough Police News

12/11: State Police said an East Hartford resident reported she was at the Post Office located at 16 East Hampton Rd. at approximately 1:30 p.m. when she left her black cloth purse on the counter in the outer lobby while putting her mail in a mail box. Upon returning 30 minutes later, the customer's purse was gone. Anyone with information is asked to contact Officer Randy Ransom at Troop K at 860-465-5400.

12/12: State Police said Christopher Palamar, 41, of 402 Lake Vista Dr., East Hampton, was charged with DWI and failure to drive in the proper lane on a multiple lane highway.

## Andover Police News

12/13: State Police said a one-car crash occurred at approximately 11 p.m. on West Street. Police said Kevin M. Burrell, 26, of 122 Cooper Ln., Coventry, was negotiating a right curve in the roadway when he crossed over the northbound lane and traveled off of the left side of the roadway. His vehicle then collided with a rock and caused the vehicle to roll over onto its driver's side. Police said Burrell sustained minor cuts and abrasions both to his hand and face. He refused medical treatment on scene. Police said Burrell failed a sobriety test while on scene and charged with DUI and improper turn.

## Colchester Police News

12/11: Colchester Police said a motor vehicle accident occurred at approximately 8:59 p.m. on Middletown Road. Police said Jeffrey Burgess, 44, of 96 Harbor Rd., was towing a trailer with another vehicle on it. Police said the Colchester Hayward Fire Department transported Burgess to Marlborough Clinic due to back pain.

12/12: Colchester Police said Joseph Boka, 63, of 350 Jurach Rd., was charged with unlawful discharge of firearms, carrying a firearm while under the influence and disorderly conduct.

## Hebron Police News

12/12: State Police said Heidi A. Burton, 48, of 25 Prentice Hall Rd., was charged with DUI, improper turn and operating a motor vehicle under a suspended license.

12/12: State Police said Alaina Struthers, 33, of 77 Old Cranston Rd., Sterling, was charged with DWI, failure to drive right, passing in a no passing zone and failure to carry insurance.

12/13: State Police said Steven J. Wochoski, 49, of 163 Christine Dr., East Hartford, was traveling east on Route 6, one-tenth of a mile east of the intersection with Route 316, when he failed to drive right and went off the left shoulder, striking a telephone pole. Police said Wochoski was transported to Windham Hospital by the Andover Fire Department for possible injuries.

12/13: State Police said Jeremy Jason Gorman, 20, of 6 Scoville Ln., Moodus, was charged with DUI, operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license, possession of narcotics and narcotics kept only in an original container.

12/13: State Police said Christopher Ryan, 39, of 145 Witer Rd., Salem, was charged with DUI and failure to drive right.

12/16: State Police said Charles Taylor Jr., 24, of 22 Virginia Dr., North Windham, was charged with failure to respond to an infraction.