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A Mapley Good Time... Despite the cold weather, crowds flocked to Hebron last weekend for the annual Maple Festival. Many congregated in the center of town for burgers, chili dogs, ice cream – and a chance to meet Mr. Maple Leaf himself. A story and additional photo appears on page 22. Photo by Julie Kristoff.

Engel Sues Town, Reimondo, Kelly

by Joshua Anusewicz

Melissa Engel is no longer chairwoman of the East Hampton Town Council, Garritt Kelly is no longer a sergeant in the East Hampton Police Department, and Matthew Reimondo will soon be on his way out as police chief. But the animosity that has built between the prominent Belltown figures doesn't seem to be going away any time soon.

On March 12, Engel filed a lawsuit in federal court in New Haven against Kelly, Reimondo and the Town of East Hampton, alleging a violation of her First Amendment rights to free expression and assembly, malicious prosecution, and intentional and reckless infliction of emotional distress. According to the suit, the claims relate to Engel's time as chair of the Town Council and the council and then-Town Manager Jeffrey O'Keefe's decision to remove Reimondo from his position as police chief.

The issues between Engel and the police department have deep roots, according to the suit, which states that, prior to her election to the council in 2000, Engel "addressed many personal and community concerns regarding the cost of the Town of East Hampton of maintaining a police chief as opposed to a resident state trooper." Those concerns came to fruition after Engel became chair in 2010, when O'Keefe made the controversial decision to eliminate the police chief position, essentially firing

Reimondo and promoting Sgt. Michael Green to a newly-created lieutenant position.

"This was based in part upon the concerns of the Town of East Hampton, which were raised by the plaintiff [Engel] at numerous times both to East Hampton citizens on an individual basis and at public meetings and hearings at which she addressed town members," the lawsuit states.

The council approved the decision to eliminate the position, but Reimondo was reinstated months later after a citizen petition led to a town-wide referendum that was approved by a wide margin. Reimondo has held that position since then – though not without continued criticism from some town officials, police officers and residents – and is currently serving in an interim capacity until his retirement, which is expected this spring.

In the lawsuit, Engel alleges that during the time he was removed as chief, Reimondo "began a campaign of harassment and intimidation against" Engel, both directly and through Kelly, who was still a sergeant in the department at the time. Engel claims that Reimondo and Kelly's actions include "intentionally refusing to provide protection to the property" of Engel in August 2010, where Kelly allegedly allowed trespassers on the property that she had

See Engel Sues Page 2

Despite Title Loss, a Successful Season for Bacon

by Melissa Roberto

They say getting there is half the battle, so returning to the Class L State Championship game for the second straight year is certainly a feat for Bacon Academy's girls' basketball team. And although the team suffered an upset in last Saturday's final against Farmington, Bacon coach Dave Shea says the team has much to be proud of.

By just five points, top-seed Bacon Academy lost the state championship title – which they were also defending – to 10th-seed Farmington High School at the Mohegan Sun Arena on Saturday, March 16, with a score of 49-44.

But Shea said his team put up a good fight – in the state championship game and all season.

Revisiting the casino's court was always a goal, Shea said, but never an expectation. However, the coach admitted this year Bacon Academy was no longer running under the radar like it had at the start of the 2011-12 season, when the team had lost three seniors.

But with the 2012 state championship on their backs, players entered into this year's season with confidence, Shea said.

"This year everyone knew about us," he said, adding that a majority of the team was made up of returning players.

Captain Taylor McLaughlin admitted that the team felt the added pressure this season. "This

year being the top seed, it was definitely hard," she said. "Everyone wants to see an upset happen."

The team ended the regular season with a record of 19-1 as number one in their division.

But the pressure did not stop the team from giving it their all in the final game. McLaughlin said practices leading up to the final game were harder but "thrilling."

Bacon's loss was a result of a low shooting percentage of 33.3 percent, but high scorers of the game were McLaughlin with 25 points (and 12 rebounds), and fellow senior Carlee Putnam with 15 points.

Shea said the team needed to make "a few more shots" to win the game but that the team gave it 100 percent.

"They gave it everything they had," he said.

McLaughlin said emotions were high for players at the end of the game but looking back on the team's overall success is what puts a smile on her face.

"We have so many things to be proud of individually and as a team together as a whole so I wasn't going to let that one game ruin it," she said.

Putnam agreed. The senior admitted she cried during the last minute of the game, but it was because the season was over, not because of the loss.

See Successful Season Page 2



The Bacon Academy girls' basketball team smiles with their silver medals after coming up short in the Class L State Championship final against Farmington High School on March 16 at the Mohegan Sun Arena. The players, five of whom are seniors, led a successful season coming out as the top-seed and ending with an overall record of 24-3.

Engel Sues cont. from Front Page

requested to remain off the property, as well as Kelly “knowingly and willfully” refusing to follow the direction of the Town Council to address “the disruptive conduct” of individuals in attendance at a council meeting in November 2010.

Engel also alleges that Reimondo and Kelly, based on a complaint from a resident, initiated an investigation of Engel based on her “providing absentee ballots to East Hampton’s citizens in order that they may participate” in the referendum to reinstate Reimondo as police chief. The investigation, performed by the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC), cleared Engel of any impropriety, but Engel claims that the true intention of the investigation was “to intimidate and harass [Engel] because of her advocacy and protected speech.” (A subsequent independent investigation, spurred by the town, into Kelly and Reimondo’s actions cleared the two officers of any wrongdoing.)

Due to the actions alleged in the lawsuit, Engel claims that she “has suffered and continues to suffer irreparable harm for which she has no adequate remedy of law” due to “actual and threatened deprivation of her constitutional rights.” The suit adds that Engel “did not violate any laws or ordinances of the State of Connecticut or Town of East Hampton,” but she was “compelled to retain an attorney and expend sums of money on her behalf.”

Engel “suffered great mental and physical stress and has been damaged in good name, reputation, and credit and has been subject to public humiliation, embarrassment and shame to her damage,” the suit continues, adding that the actions of the defendants were “extreme and outrageous.”

According to the lawsuit, Engel is seeking judgment against the defendants that may include attorney’s fees and costs, compensatory damages and possible punitive damages. However, an exact dollar amount for damages was not specified in the suit.

Though much has been said about the issues surrounding the police department in the past, both by public officials and the public itself, lips

were tightly sealed this week. Both Engel and Kelly declined to make any comment on the suit this week, while Reimondo was unavailable for comment. Town Manager Michael Maniscalco also passed on making any statements, stating simply in an email, “I am not able to comment on any current lawsuits.”

The attorney handling Engel’s suit, Derek Oatis, of Lobo & Associates in Manchester, however, said Thursday that what the case “boils down to is her speaking out in what she believed was the best interest of the town” in replacing the police chief position with a resident state trooper. Oatis said that the alleged retribution from Reimondo and Kelly made Engel “nervous about speaking out,” a violation of her constitutional right to free speech.

Oatis also pointed out the investigation regarding the absentee ballots, calling it “slipshod, at best.”

“It’s kind of a strange case,” Oatis said, pointing that Engel was “just doing her job” and that reporting the matter to the SEEC for an investigation was “kind of ridiculous...particularly with all of the talk of voter suppression in the country today.”

“It may be relatively small,” Oatis continued, “but for the town and its citizens, it’s big, and I think the principle is big.”

As for the damages, Oatis, who deals mostly in First Amendment cases, stated that it’s “hard to put a dollar value” on a constitutional violation, and that any favorable ruling for the plaintiff is generally to clear the individual’s name and account for their legal fees.

Though it is not known who will represent the town and the officers in the lawsuit, the *Rivereast* reached out to Reimondo’s attorney, Leon Rosenblatt, this week, but he was not available for comment. Oatis said the town has recognized the lawsuit and the federal court has begun the process of issuing a “scheduling order” that will establish when and if the two sides will meet.

As of now, however, there is no date for any legal proceeding. “It’s a slow process,” Oatis said.

From the Editor’s Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

A letter to the editor in last week’s paper brought up an interesting point too often avoided whenever gun control is brought up. Simply put, the letter-writer wondered, why is it whenever those opposed to more gun control bring up the Second Amendment as justification of their stance, they never mention the “well-regulated militia” part of the amendment?

It’s a very valid point. The full text of the amendment reads: “A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.”

The amendment – which the editor side of me wants to scrub clean of its poor punctuation, by the way, but that’s beside the point – makes it pretty clear the right to bear arms is in order to maintain a well-regulated militia. That’s a fairly substantial part to leave off. Let’s leave aside the fact it suggests you have the right to bear arms only if you’re part of a militia. Look at the words “well-regulated.” So when people rally against stiffening gun control laws, they seem to conveniently overlook that regulations were always intended to be part and parcel of owning a gun.

As the *Washington Post* wrote in December, “while gun possession is as old as the country, so is gun regulation.” In colonial times, the laws were things that would never even be considered today. The Virginia House of Burgesses made the transfer of guns to Native Americans punishable by death. It was against the law to sell or give firearms to slaves, indentured servants, Catholics, vagrants and to those who refused to swear a loyalty oath to revolutionary forces. And even after the Constitution was written, there were events that would make the gun rights enthusiasts of today cringe. For example, in the late 1700s and early 1800s, the state and federal governments conducted several arms censuses. This sounds to me an awful lot like a gun registry – the very thing the National Rifle Association has decried (while advocating instead for a national mental illness registry – because, sure, that wouldn’t deter those who need it from seeking treatment).

So, the idea of having gun regulations is as old as the Bill of Rights itself. And yet there are so many people opposed to one iota more of gun control being enforced, as if the founding fathers themselves would be rolling over in their graves. Even the smallest thing, such as registering your gun, has prompted outrage – in rather strange ways sometimes. At a forum in Hartford last week against more gun control, one of the members of the public who spoke said, “Registration is a prelude to confiscation.” Okay, the words rhyme and all but...what?? As Spock would say, that is highly illogical. I’ve been registering, and re-registering, my car for years; I’m pretty sure this hasn’t been one big lead-up to the DMV taking my car from me.

Another thing I don’t get: the opposition to universal background checks. In Colorado last week, the state Senate and the state House passed a law requiring such checks. There wasn’t a single Republican vote of support in either chamber. And to that I ask: why?

Oh sure, I know what the Republicans *said*. The same thing those opposed to more gun control argue almost every time it comes up: It won’t help anything.

“If the goal is to enhance public safety, this bill won’t do it. If a criminal wants to perpetrate a crime he can still get a gun,” Colorado Republican House minority leader Mark Waller said.

Like I said, I’ve heard this repeatedly since Newtown. “It won’t help anything” is the standard argument whenever various measures of gun control are suggested. Fine; maybe additional gun control won’t help. But will they hurt? I have yet to hear one argument against the gun control measures that have been proposed indicating that they would in fact lead to more death. So, as I’m pretty sure I’ve argued before in this space, if they won’t hurt, don’t we owe it to the Newtown victims, and the Aurora, Colo., victims, and the Tucson, Ariz., victims, and indeed the victims of all senseless, tragic gun violence, to see if they’ll help?

On a lighter note, I had a delightful time at the Maple Fest this weekend. The weather was really quite cold – perhaps the coldest I’ve ever experienced at the Maple Fest – but the festival was quite enjoyable nonetheless. The American Legion’s cheeseburgers – and you gotta get them with the grilled onions – were delicious as always, as was the frosty Maple Milk being sold by the Hebron Historical Society.

I remember, several years ago, doing a story about Majestic when I was the Hebron reporter for the *Rivereast*. I fell in love with their out-of-this-world corn then, and just within the past couple of years owners Christine and Bill Kasulis have now expanded their business to offer burgers, kabobs, ice cream and more. I haven’t yet tried their other offerings, but if they’re anything like the pair’s kettle corn, I’m sure they’re delicious.

And of course, I stopped by one of the sugar houses – Wenzel Sugar House this year – and scooped up some syrup, as well as the one-of-a-kind maple pudding cake offered by Gilead Congregational Church.

So, while it was a little chilly, the Maple Fest was once again a fantastic time. If for some reason you’ve never checked it out, you really should next year. It’s always the second weekend in March – well, unless it snows a foot and a half the day before, that is – so mark your calendars now. You won’t be disappointed.

See you next week.



Seniors Carlee Putnam, left, and Taylor McLaughlin, right, walk off of the Mohegan Sun court together one last time after the state championship game. The pair played basketball together since third grade, and will both continue to play in college.

Successful Season cont. from Front Page

“We already won it once,” she said. “Winning it again would have just been a cherry on top.”

Overall, the Bobcats finished with a season record of 24-3.

The team went undefeated (10-0) in the large division of the Eastern Connecticut Conference playing against some of the biggest schools in the region like Norwich Free Academy, East Lyme High School and Fitch Senior High School in Groton.

Shea – who has coached the girls’ team at Bacon for 19 years – said he always reminded the team to do three things this season.

“Play hard, play smart and play together,” he said. The seasoned coach said the girls did just that.

As for playing together, that is what most of the girls on the team have been doing since third grade. McLaughlin pointed out the strong connection her teammates had with one another is what helped them come so far.

“We’re the type of girls who were best friends

on and off the court,” said McLaughlin.

The team will lose five seniors this year, all of whom were starters.

“They will be hard to replace,” Shea said of the seniors.

The Bobcats won the state title in 2009, went to semi-finals in 2011, and won again in 2012. Making it all the way to finals once more this season was another accomplishment that set the bar high for Bobcats girls’ basketball.

According to McLaughlin, this year’s season was “unforgettable.” The all-state senior will continue to play at Southern Connecticut State University in the fall, as well as Putnam, who will play next year at Framingham State.

Maintaining the pattern of successful seasons may be hard for the Bobcats, but coach Shea said he believes next year’s players have potential as well.

Despite the loss, Shea said the girls should be proud.

“It was a successful season,” he said. “Anytime you get to the finals it’s tremendous.”

Andover Teen Wanted in Connection with House Fire

by Geeta Schrayter

State Police have determined the fire at a School Road home last week was intentionally set, and 16-year-old James Bayer, who lives at the residence, is wanted for questioning about the arson.

Bayer went missing shortly after the house, located at 62 School Rd., caught fire just after 10 a.m. last Monday, March 11. He was apprehended in Virginia the following day.

According to a news release from the Wythe County sheriff's office in Wytheville, Va., Bayer was spotted off of Interstate 81 at approximately 3 p.m. on March 12. A patrolling deputy noticed a Connecticut vehicle parked off the road in a gravel area, and after running a wanted check, the release said the deputy discovered the vehicle was linked to a missing juvenile "wanted for questioning in an arson and assault." The deputy approached the vehicle and tried to open the door, but it was locked. Bayer was ordered out of the car but refused, and, according to the release, drove off after the deputy attempted "to bust the window" with a baton.

He then led police on a high-speed chase

that ended when he attempted to cross the median and got stuck in the mud. After trying to escape through a nearby field, Bayer was caught and taken into custody.

Bayer is being charged with attempting to elude police, a felony, and last week Wythe County Chief Deputy Keith Dunagan explained the teen could be in Virginia for the next 30-45 days.

"Sometimes when the charge [in another state] is more severe than down here, [juvenile court] will hurry it up so he can be extradited, so that's a possibility too," he said.

As of Wednesday, no further details had been released, but State Police Public Information Officer Lt. J. Paul Vance confirmed that once Virginia is finished with Bayer, he'll be brought back to Connecticut for additional – and, at this point, unspecified – charges.

"The juvenile is going to be extradited to the state of Connecticut to be charged," he said. "The actual charges will be determined when he gets here."

Vance said he couldn't elaborate since the crime is still being investigated, but the fire, he said, "was intentionally set. We know that."

Manchester Man Arrested in Marlborough Gas Station Robbery

by Melissa Roberto

State Police arrested a Manchester man who is believed to be connected to a robbery that took place at the Citgo gas station in Marlborough last Tuesday, March 12.

The robbery took place at approximately 10:54 a.m. at the Citgo on South Main Street.

According to a State Police news release, the arrestee was Joshua D. Strong, 38, of 26 Orchard St., Manchester. Strong was charged with sixth-degree larceny and first-degree robbery.

Police said the clerk at the gas station reported Strong entered the store area and implied being in possession of a weapon while demanding money.

State Police Lt. J. Paul Vance said Strong "kept his hand inside of his coat," while claiming he had a weapon. Vance said Strong only implied he had a weapon but did not indicate what kind of weapon it was. However, no weapon was used during the incident.

An undetermined amount of cash was taken from the store out of the cash register, Vance confirmed. A confrontation between Strong and the clerk then took place outside of the

store, where the victim was able to obtain a facial description of the accused and the vehicle he entered into before leaving the area, the press release said.

Vance said the visual description the victim reported was "very helpful" for the police when locating Strong.

State Police submitted information about the robbery and Strong's description to area police departments. Strong was located by the Manchester Police in that town, police said.

State Police are currently investigating the case. Strong is being held on a \$75,000 bond, and is scheduled to appear in Manchester Court on April 18.

In 2006, Strong pled guilty to first-degree robbery with a firearm threat in connection to a robbery in January of that year. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison, suspended after 54 months, and was given five years' probation, according to court records.

According to records, Strong has also been convicted of second-degree larceny, disorderly conduct, possession of narcotics and violation of probation.

Marlborough Selectmen OK Plan for Voting in Emergency

by Melissa Roberto

The Board of Selectmen Tuesday approved a contingency plan that will be used in case natural disasters, power outages or other emergencies occur during an election.

In light of severe storms in recent years that occurred very close to Election Day and threatened to hamper the voting process, the secretary of state last fall requested all towns in Connecticut develop a contingency plan so that voters could continue to participate in the election process in case of an emergency. Towns were told to submit their own plans by March 28, or they could use one created by the state.

Democrat Registrar of Voters Ann M. Kilby and her Republican counterpart Rosanna M. Carlson worked together to develop Marlborough's plan, which Kilby said Wednesday is an elaborate version of the state's general plan for towns.

The emergency plan specifies where the polling place would be relocated, as well as procedures that would be carried out if severe weather, a poll machine malfunction or other disruption was to occur at the polling location or in the town of Marlborough.

Marlborough's polling location for elections, primaries or referendums is the Community Room at Marlborough Elementary School (MES). Alternative locations within the plan include the MES gym, the MES cafeteria, the Marlborough Senior Center or the firehouse on West Street.

On Wednesday, Kilby said the procedures in the plan vary by the type of election that occurs and the type of emergency.

Approval of the plan was only needed by the selectmen, and it will now be sent to the secretary of state by the March 28 deadline.

* * *

Also at Tuesday's meeting, First Select woman Cathi Gaudinski shared reductions to the town operations budget with the board. Gaudinski explained that she met with Anthem – the town's insurance company – last week and received rates that will reduce the percentage increase in the health insurance and dental insurance accounts.

The selectwoman explained that the originally proposed 25 percent increase in the health insurance account will drop to a 15 percent increase. Gaudinski said the drop will lower the town operations budget by \$30,000 to \$35,000.

Also, Gaudinski said dental insurance was proposed as a 5 percent increase over the current year but it will actually be lowered to a 2.46 percent increase over the current year.

The board then decided to make an addition

to the town operations budget that will increase the spending package by \$700.

The \$700 is in the form of a raise that will go to a part-time transfer station attendant, which will bump the employee's hourly rate from \$12 an hour to \$13. The raise was based upon recommendations made to the selectmen by the town's transfer station supervisor and public works supervisor.

Lastly, the board appointed resident Robert Jackson as a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals. Jackson was serving as an alternate member but will now replace John Valentine who moved out of town. The term will expire in November 2015.

The next meeting of the Board of Selectmen is scheduled for Tuesday, April 2, 7 p.m. at Town Hall.

Former East Hampton Fugitive Sentenced in 2002 Teen Death

by Joshua Anusewicz

An East Hampton man found to be responsible for the death of a local teen in 2002 was sentenced this week to four years in prison for the crime.

Jason Nedobity, 33, was sentenced on Tuesday at Middletown Superior Court for supplying drugs to 16-year-old Makayla Korpinen in May 2002; Korpinen died several days later from complications related to a drug overdose. According to the state's judicial website, Nedobity was sentenced to one year in prison for criminally negligent homicide and ten years in prison for sale of a hallucinogen/narcotic, a felony. The sentence will be suspended after four years, and Nedobity will be on probation for three years following his expected release.

The sentencing brings to an end an 11-year odyssey that began May 18, 2002. According to police reports, Nedobity and his brother, Joseph, supplied Korpinen with a white, powdery substance, a lethal form of ecstasy known as Molly, which caused her to vomit and become unconscious.

Police said that Korpinen was dating Joseph Nedobity at the time and was not living at home with her mother, Catherine.

During the time that Korpinen was unconscious, police said that nobody at the residence called the police, and it took eight hours for Korpinen to receive treatment. She died three days later, the first person ever to die from

ecstasy in Connecticut.

Joseph Nedobity and another individual were arrested shortly after the incident; according to published reports, Joseph Nedobity pled no contest to criminally negligent homicide as well as unrelated burglary charge, and was sentenced in

2006 to five years in prison, suspended after 30 months, and two years' probation.

Jason Nedobity, however, went on the run. He was featured on the series *America's Most Wanted* in November 2005, where it was reported he had been spotted along the East Coast and as far away as Colorado, and that he most likely lived as a drifter, selling drugs to make money.

In January 2012, Nedobity reportedly turned himself in to authorities in Enfield, who then transported him to East Hampton to be formally charged. At the time, he was charged with first-degree manslaughter, first-degree reckless endangerment, sale of a hallucinogenic substance, sale of a hallucinogenic substance to a person under 18, possession of a hallucinogenic substance and violation of probation.



Jason Nedobity

Two Colchester Men Charged with Assault

by Melissa Roberto

Two Colchester men were arrested last week following a physical altercation that took place at a residence on Bull Hill Road, Colchester Police said.

On March 9 at approximately 4:50 p.m., Colchester Police received a call from a witness that reported an active fight between Craig Butterfield, 33, of 47 Windham Ave., and Eric Ploof, 35, of 138 Bull Hill Rd. The fight started out verbal and turned physical inside of Ploof's home on Bull Hill Road, Officer Craig Scheel said.

Upon arrival, police found Butterfield unconscious in the driveway of the residence with a head injury.

Inside of the home, police located Ploof with minor injuries.

According to a press release, Butterfield was charged with disorderly conduct, third-degree assault and threatening while Ploof was charged with disorderly conduct and sec-

ond-degree assault with a weapon.

On Tuesday, Scheel said Ploof had a hammer on him at the time of the fight that he had been using earlier in the day inside of his home. During the altercation, Ploof used the hammer to hit Butterfield in the head.

Scheel said that Butterfield was initially transported to Marlborough Clinic by the Colchester Hayward Fire Department for a "blunt trauma" head injury but was then flown to Hartford Hospital via LifeStar medical helicopter due to the extent of the injury.

On Tuesday, Scheel confirmed that Butterfield's injury was non-threatening and after receiving medical treatment he was taken into custody and processed at Troop K in Colchester.

Ploof, however, was arrested at the scene.

Both men were scheduled to appear in Norwich Superior Court yesterday, on Thursday, March 21, after press time.

East Hampton Finance Board Presented With Town Budget

by Joshua Anusewicz

At a meeting of the Board of Finance on Tuesday, Town Manager Michael Maniscalco presented the town's 2013-14 proposed budget, which represents a 3.78 percent increase from the current fiscal year.

The proposed spending package totals \$39,793,422, up from the current year budget of \$38,345,762. It includes \$28,096,310 for the Board of Education, \$9,724,919 for town operations, \$1,102,277 for debt service, and \$869,916 for fund transfers.

The budget proposal would yield a mill rate of 27.13, Maniscalco said, a 1.16 mill increase from the current fiscal year.

"Balancing the ongoing services the town needs while at the same time recognizing the current economy is no easy task," Maniscalco stated in his budget proposal. "This budget document attempts to do that very thing. It allows us to continue to move forward by maintaining current levels of service delivery while shifting funds to meet new and ever-changing short-term priorities."

The Board of Education budget was approved by the school board last month, but Tuesday was the first time the budget had been presented to the finance board. The school budget is a \$1,385,470, or 5.19 percent, increase from the current fiscal year. Like most years, the school budget is driven by employee and staff salaries and insurance costs, but this year, the increase also includes mandated upgrades in technology, the integration of all-day kindergarten, additional certified staff, and a decrease in the amount families pay to play sports at the high school.

With information on the school budget publicized over the past month, Tuesday's meeting was the first real opportunity to present the general government budget. In Maniscalco's proposal, the town operations budget increased \$289,538 from the current fiscal year, while debt service and fund transfers went down \$94,260 and \$133,088, respectively. Maniscalco said that after receiving requests from the various down departments, he had cut the requests by \$217,844 for town operations and \$288,616 for fund transfers and capital.

"There were no cuts to debt, but we did make cuts to capital, though," he explained, adding that some projects proposed for the capital fund "didn't make sense to invest in at this point."

Some of the major increases in the budget that Maniscalco highlighted included a \$145,000 jump in medical insurance for town employees, \$20,000 in union/non-union wage increases, \$25,000 for legal fees, \$17,500 for road materials, and \$15,000 for fire department vehicle maintenance.

To explain where the funds for general government would go, Maniscalco explained it by describing "six different buckets" for the budget: \$3,376,674 for town administration; \$2,213,807 for public safety; \$2,036,004 for public works; \$975,526 for culture and recreation; \$368,664 for building, planning and regulatory items; and \$393,244 for health and human services. Of the money proposed for the general government budget, Maniscalco said 69 percent of it would go to salaries and benefits.

Whether it was the matter of a thorough presentation or an uncontroversial budget is up for debate, but very little of the ensuing conversation by the finance board – and comments by the sizeable audience – focused on the general government side of the budget. Instead, as has been the case in past years, the discussion focused on the school budget, its growth in recent years, and its uncertain future.

Finance board chairman Matthew Walton was the first to point out that since 2005, the share of the budget approved for the Board of Education has increased from 66 percent to 71 percent in the proposed budget. The question that Walton and other members of the finance board raised was simple: "Do we have a long-term plan to contain these costs?"

The answer, however, was not as simple. Interim Superintendent of Schools Mark Winzler explained that the share of the budget for the school board "depends on how much the town is spending on other things," and that if the town isn't spending money for improvement and expansion, the school budget will inevitably become a larger portion of the budget.

Board of Education Chairman Mark Laraia

piggybacked off of Winzler's thoughts, adding that growing state mandates mean that the district "can't plan" far ahead. The district's business manager, Karen Asetta, also offered that by looking at schools in the state with similar demographics, the percentage East Hampton spends on education is not far off the average, but the amount of money spent per pupil is considerably lower.

Still, Walton pointed out that the recent Grand List numbers show only a \$72,000 increase in tax revenue in the upcoming fiscal year, a far cry from large number the school board is requesting. "That's taxes," Walton said plainly.

The discussion also veered into the topic of magnet schools, which have proven to be a sticking point in any recent budget discussions. The amount of East Hampton students attending magnet schools has increased exponentially in recent years, Winzler has said, due mostly to the lack of certain academic programming and dated technology. But while the education at a magnet school may be better for the student, it's a difficult hit for the municipality, which has to foot the bill for the student to go there.

To keep students in East Hampton schools, the school board believes it takes improvements like the ones included in the budget, which come with price tags that could eventually add up. But by investing now, the board feels, the town will save in the future, in the shape of better schools, higher property values, and an attractive community for residents and businesses.

"We build our tax base, by building better roads and schools," answered Laraia to the finance board's discussion of keeping students in town. "We need to strike that balance."

Laraia continued to the board, "I understand the difficult position you're in. But [the budget increase] is not that much when you consider what we'll get back from it in the future."

"We believe the town is aware of some of the deficiencies we have at this point," said school board member Bill Marshall of the school system, "and we think they're willing

to take [the budget increases] on."

Any doubts in Marshall's confidence might have been cast aside by the residents in attendance who spoke out, all in favor of approving the school budget as presented. Many focused on the inclusion of all-day kindergarten and upgraded technology, changes that a number of towns in the state are making.

Jessica Stewart was one of the residents to advocate all-day kindergarten. "I don't think we have a choice but to pass it at this point," Stewart said. "The longer we wait, more people will make the decision to get up and leave."

Resident Amy Conklin, a mother of two in the school system and an education professional, explained that despite having great teachers, the lack of technology is putting East Hampton students at a disadvantage. "We are behind," Conklin said. "No doubt."

William Denuzio, a father of one student in elementary school and another that will be attending school soon, echoed Laraia's thoughts of what could happen if the town was to put off making much-needed improvements.

"It may be difficult to justify these increases in the short-term, but it's a small price to pay for what could happen if these changes aren't made," Denuzio said. "Be bold, be courageous, make the right decision."

While the public comments and those of the school board were met with applause, the decision on the fate of the budget will ultimately lie with the finance board and the Town Council, which will deliberate on the budget before sending it to a town meeting and a referendum.

As of now, the Board of Finance is scheduled to deliberate on the budget on Monday, March 25, at 7 p.m. at the middle school, and then hold a special meeting to adopt the budget on Wednesday, April 3, at 7 p.m. at the middle school. The council would then review and deliberate on the budget at its Tuesday, April 9, meeting, before sending the budget to a town meeting on Monday, April 29.

If all of those dates go according to plan, the budget referendum would be held on Tuesday, May 7.

Peanuts Musical Coming to EHHS

by Joshua Anusewicz

When you come into East Hampton High School on any given weeknight, it's not uncommon to hear music emanating from the auditorium near the front entrance. Singing and piano tunes can be heard flowing into the hallway, attracting curious patrons that pop their heads in for a few moments to take in the scene.

Usually, this is a rehearsal from one of the town's several theater groups, like Podium Players or Young People's Center for the Creative Arts (YPCCA). But, for the first time in at least a decade, the music coming from the auditorium is the work of the East Hampton High School Drama Club, which will soon perform the musical *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*.

The show is the first under the tutelage of theater director Rachel Mansfield, who is well known in community theater for her work with YPCCA and, most recently, as theater director at Bacon Academy in Colchester. At the beginning of the school year, Mansfield took the position at the school, which has seen its number of students in the drama club diminish in recent years.

According to Mansfield, the lack of involvement hasn't been due to a lack of talent, but rather less student interest. With the lack of musical inclusion, in particular, Mansfield said many students jumped to other extracurricular

interests, such as dance and athletics. Because of the small number of students involved in drama, the shows have been smaller and geared more towards abstract acting pieces.

"It's focused more on artistic shows, which is great," said Mansfield of the drama club. "But I always like to do it big; I'm much more about the big show."

With Mansfield's connection to community theater, the size of this year's group has essentially doubled in size, with 20 cast members joining this spring's show. While some upperclassmen are involved, almost all of the major roles have been given to freshmen, a good sign for the future of the group.

"I think this program will grow," said Mansfield. "I hope we're able to hold on the kids and I think that will attract more kids as they enter high school."

To kick off her first musical production, Mansfield said she picked an "easy, fun and simple" musical, a popular and well-known show about Charlie Brown and the rest of the *Peanuts* gang. The musical focuses on a day in the life of the hard-luck comic character and his friends, who each struggle with their own issues before coming to the realization of what truly makes them happy.

"I think the kids can relate to it and I think it

really appeals to the audience, too," said Mansfield.

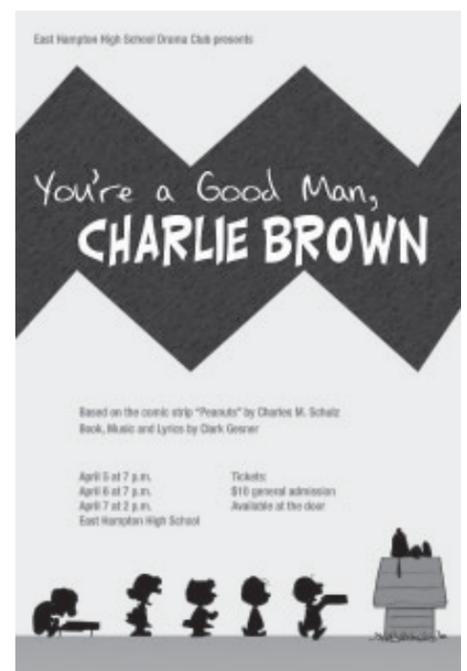
All of the familiar *Peanuts* characters are involved including Charlie Brown, played by Matt Cote; Lucy, played by Kaitlynn Morris; Linus, played by Lucas Gerolami; Schroeder, played by Sam Laraia; Sally, played by Jaimie Farren; and Snoopy, played by Mason Cordeiro.

All of those lead roles are played by freshmen, which Mansfield called a testament to the work of Kim Cordeiro, the theater director at East Hampton Middle School. "These kids have a good idea of what it takes to perform a musical," she said.

And the nerves aren't setting in for the young cast, most of whom are veterans of the community theater groups. Farren and Cordeiro both admitted this week that they were "a little nervous," but they've enjoyed working on the show so far.

"It's been awesome, and just really fun," said Farren.

The show, with the musical accompaniment of Evan Roider, a piano performance major at the University of Hartford, will premiere on Friday, April 5, at 7 p.m., and will run again on Saturday, April 6, at 7 p.m. and Sunday, April 7, at 2 p.m. Tickets will be sold at the door; \$10 for adults, \$6 for students and seniors.



***You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, the East Hampton High School drama club's first play in at least a decade, will be performed April 5-7.**

Town, School Budgets Sent to Public Hearings in Colchester

by Melissa Roberto

The Board of Finance Wednesday sent the proposed 2013-14 town operations and Board of Education budgets – packages that total more than \$52 million – to public hearings in April.

The action comes after multiple meetings between the board and First Selectman Gregg Schuster and the Board of Education, who all worked together over the last month to reduce the bottom line numbers of each budget and to chip away at the 1.99 increase in mills that produced a 30.79 mill rate.

Initially, Schuster presented the town operations budget to the board on March 4, at a total of \$13,420,676, or an increase of \$663,310 over the current fiscal year – a 5.20 percent increase. That same night, the local Board of Education presented its proposed school budget at \$39,376,054, which was an increase of \$1,851,894, or 4.94 percent, over the current spending package.

The budgets – which are voted on separately each year at referendum – totaled \$52,796,730 when first presented to the finance board. But since the beginning of the month, approximately \$270,000 was reduced from town operations, and \$300,000 was reduced from the school board's budget.

Without specifying an exact bottom line number of the town operations budget with its reductions, the finance board on Wednesday highlighted line items that have been eliminated or reduced from the town's portion of the Colchester spending package.

Several reductions were a result of the elimination of jobs that are currently vacant, Cosgrove confirmed after the meeting.

"That means no person will be affected by the cuts," said Cosgrove. "Some of the positions haven't been filled for a long time."

Those positions include a maintainer – whose job is to plow the roads – at a cost of \$47,919; a delinquent tax collections clerk at \$15,700; and a food bank coordinator at \$2,400. A reduction in weekly hours for the Parks and

Recreation administrative assistant position – from 35 hours to 20 – resulted in a savings of \$18,700.

Additionally, earlier this month the board decided to remove smaller capital items from the budget and to instead pay for those items through the town's equipment reserve, a fund that has been set aside for the purpose of paying for small capital items on an as-needed basis.

On March 13, with Schuster's help, the finance board removed \$54,685 worth of capital items to be funded through the equipment reserve. Earlier this week, the board removed an additional \$12,000 worth of equipment to be paid for by the reserve.

Smaller items that would be paid for by the reserve include firearms and bulletproof vests, a laptop, radio and mobile video recorder for the Colchester Police Department, and two heavy-duty lifts and a used golf cart for the Public Works Department.

One of the largest capital items that the reserve would pay for is an upgrade to the town's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at \$11,385. The town's EOC is used when Colchester is in a state of emergency.

On Wednesday, the library account was also reduced by \$9,000. The reduction will come from small adjustments, as well as trimming the Tuesday hours from 10 a.m.-8 p.m. to 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

However, the budget proposal calls for the library's Saturday hours, which were trimmed last year, to be restored. The budget would allow the library to be open until 7 p.m. on Saturdays, instead of closing at 4 p.m.

Lastly, a cut that also took approximately \$39,000 off of the town operations budget was a reduction in the originally proposed \$75,000 to be used for volunteer incentives at the Colchester Hayward Fire Department. The money was proposed in the budget to fund vol-

unteer incentives for a whole year but the board decided to reduce that to six months to see if the incentives work.

The volunteer incentives would pay \$15 to each person that works a six-hour shift, and \$15 to each person that responds to a call. The incentives are being funded in the current fiscal year after members of the fire department requested an appropriation due to difficulties of maintaining volunteers in order to staff ambulances.

Also, finance members announced that approximately \$300,000 in cuts was made to the Board of Education budget over the last month.

The highest reduction from the school budget is the removal of one special education student's tuition at a cost of \$60,118.

Another large reduction is the elimination of a proposed air conditioning repair at Bacon Academy at a cost of \$57,000.

Other, smaller reductions include cuts to instructional supplies, materials for classrooms, cleaning and maintenance, dues and fees, staff development and equipment.

However, three Apple computers for the Bacon Academy music theory class, which had been cut from the budget proposal earlier this month, were restored, at a cost of \$4,500.

Also at Wednesday's meeting, Board of Finance Chairman Rob Tarlov explained that the amount of reductions could climb even more in the next few weeks, due to the possible elimination of seven mid-day school buses used to transport half-day kindergarten students.

In the proposed budget, Superintendent of Schools Jeffry Mathieu has included all-day kindergarten for all students. School board members haven't touched this initiative when making their budget reductions, as they say the expansion of all-day kindergarten is highly favored by parents in town.

If all-day kindergarten passes, the mid-day school buses wouldn't be needed, thus result-

ing in the extra savings. Tarlov said an estimate of the savings hasn't been determined yet by the school's bus company, M&J.

The finance board's goal in Wednesday night's meeting was to lower the overall mill rate that is calculated from the total of both the town operations and Board of Education budgets.

While board members admitted it wasn't a huge decrease, the mill rate was lowered from 30.79 mills down to 30.27 due to nearly \$600,000 of reductions in both budgets.

After the meeting, Tarlov explained the board's goals when it comes to Colchester's budget.

"We try to make cuts where possible and defer where possible," he said. "We also try to present as effective and efficient a budget without cutting services."

The public hearings – which will include presentations of the town and school budgets – will take place on April 1.

Based on public feedback from the hearings, the Board of Finance will then decide on April 3 whether it will move the process along to the Board of Selectmen, who has the authority to set a town meeting for both budgets.

* * *

Also at Wednesday's meeting, the finance board approved an appropriation not to exceed \$30,000 to update the town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).

The appropriation was decided by the Board of Selectmen in its March 7 meeting and passed along to the Board of Finance for approval.

Selectman Jim Ford attended the meeting to briefly discuss the importance of updating the town's POCD to the board, and selectmen Stan Soby and Rosemary Coyle were also in attendance to support it.

The next Board of Finance meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 3, at 7 p.m., at Town Hall.

Osten, Sawyer Discuss State Issues

by Geeta Schrayter

On March 19, state Sen. Cathy Osten and state Rep. Pam Sawyer made their way to Hebron to discuss what's been going on at the capitol. To an audience that consisted mostly of board and commission members, Osten and Sawyer shared the different things that are occurring in Hartford, and the ways they could impact Hebron and other towns around the state.

Sawyer, a Republican, represents the 55th Assembly District, which covers Hebron, Marlborough, Andover and Bolton. She shared some key points from the state's proposed budget. Despite Connecticut's current deficit, she explained Gov. Dannel Malloy wants to increase money for town road aid to \$60 million and fund it with borrowing, instead of money from the general fund. She explained the problem with this is that the money will then be paid for over 10 years, and if the state wants to borrow again in the following year, that could then, again, mean a 10 year repayment and a continuous cycle.

"The question is if that's a good way to go," she said. "So that's in the mix."

In addition, Sawyer said the governor was looking to add \$62 million for Local Capital Improvement Program (LOCIP) bonding to cover the elimination of the Pequot Fund, which consists of revenue from Foxwoods Resort and Casino. Sawyer said the downside to this was that it would limit what towns could use money they received on.

Originally, Sawyer said the state had said money from the Pequot fund would go to the towns – but that never really happened.

"The state put some of it to the towns, and that has shrunk over the years [as the money's

been taken] for the general fund as it's grown," Sawyer said.

But the money that was given to the towns was given in the form of an open-ended grant that could be spent at the town's discretion.

"When it gets rolled into LOCIP, there are a finite number of things that it can be spent on," she said. "It's no longer open-ended with that."

Sawyer added Malloy was proposing \$24.9 million for school transportation be eliminated and replaced with a \$5 million grant to encourage towns to regionalize transportation. Sawyer called this "a clear loss to the towns," and said Hebron probably wouldn't even qualify for the grant.

"You guys already [regionalize transportation] and I suspect you wouldn't qualify for the money," Sawyer said.

Sawyer also touched base on the much-talked about proposal to eliminate the car tax on vehicles under \$25,000. Sawyer said in her experience, budgets tended to have a "laundry list of things that make it work and one or two things on a wish list at the end." These wish list items are the ones, which, during negotiations, could be done away with.

"My experience tells me that this is his throw-away," she said. "He'll give this up, because there's not a legislator out there that hasn't heard from their town mothers and fathers saying 'you can't do that.'"

If the proposal to repeal the car tax is adopted, Sawyer shared Hebron would lose \$2.3 million.

Osten, a Democrat, represents the 19th Senatorial District, which counts Hebron and Marlborough among its 10 towns. She said she

agreed with Sawyer in that "this is something that's probably not going to make it through." However, she added that most other states don't have property taxes on vehicles, it's the hardest tax to collect particularly in municipalities with a lot of renters, and it will probably come back in future years.

"I agree with a couple people who said it's not well thought-out," Osten said. "I don't think it's going to make it through but I think it will come back again because I think the state is trying to mirror some other states with our expenses."

In the budget presentation packet she provided, Sawyer said when the municipal aid numbers are examined, it looks like Hebron isn't losing money overall under Malloy's proposal. However, she reiterated that the town won't have as much flexibility as to how certain money is spent, while some funds the town previously received could be disappearing completely. For every dollar Hebron residents pay to the state in income tax, Sawyer shared the town only receives 44 cents back.

After Osten and Sawyer finished discussing the budget and its impacts, they also touched upon the new teacher evaluation requirements expected as part of the state's Education Reform Act. Sawyer said she'd been talking with Stefan Pryor, the commissioner of education, about the requirements. She wondered why schools that were already high-achieving were going to be mandated to change the process that they use.

"I understand when you have failing schools – very mediocre schools – that you would require them to change their process," she said,

"but when you have something that's successful, that's working to produce the results the town expects, that the state puts out literature as being successful – why would you change that?"

Sawyer said she'd had discussions on that and "we're still working on it."

But thanks to Bill 1097, "An Act Concerning Revisions to the Education Reform Act of 2012," the new evaluation plans won't have to be implemented until 2014, a year later than originally proposed. This additional time would allow for the pilot program to be evaluated before everything was put in place.

"Most people are saying they're ok with the program," said Osten, "but they don't want to implement it without the pilot program being fully vetted."

"I also know the Common Core Curriculum is coming in now, and to have that and the evaluation seems to be an imbalance," said Sawyer. "But let me tell you, I'm still going to work on this, because now I have a year, and I would still like a chance to be able to debate it more and to be able to hear from those successful towns."

After they were done speaking, selectman Mark Stuart thanked the two state legislators for speaking and summarized everything they'd been told. He said he felt Osten and Sawyer were doing "a lot of things right" in their work, but added the legislative office "needs to start thinking rationally."

"It's not always one size fits all," he said. "What Hebron needs is not what Hartford needs and Hebron shouldn't have to pay for the mistakes of other [cities and towns]."

Hebron Business Showcase Deemed a Success

by Geeta Schrayter

Tuesday night, close to 30 Hebron businesses came together to network and share their services with the public. And while poor weather seemed to deter some from venturing in for a visit, the first Hebron Business Showcase was deemed a networking success.

Hebron Economic Development Coordinator Randy Anagnostis said the event turned out “very good” and those who attended seemed “very pleased.”

“Based on the feedback from many of the business owners in attendance, everyone seemed very well pleased with the Business Showcase and the opportunity to present their products and services,” he said Wednesday.

The showcase was co-sponsored by the Hebron Economic Development Commission and the Hebron Lions Club and took place from 4-7 p.m. at the Hebron Lions Den.

Valerie Shorts, Lions Club co-vice president and manager of the Hebron branch of the Savings Institute Bank and Trust, said she hoped more people would attend, but the event was still beneficial for the town’s businesses. (Anagnostis estimated a small attendance of about 50, but said “I expected this for the first show.”)

“I was hoping more people would come, but I think the weather affected that,” Shorts said. “So today was more of a networking event [for the businesses], but it is something we’d like to do again on a bigger scale for residents to see what’s in town and where they can get information.”

She added she’d like to see it become an annual event, and Anagnostis said he’d already been asked if another event would be held in the future at a larger venue that could accommodate more businesses.

Described as “the opportunity for individuals and families to learn more about the Hebron

business community,” the event featured a variety of businesses including local banks, medical resources, restaurants and realtors as well as individuals offering an array of services.

Hebron resident Mark Falade was there to let people know about his heating and air conditioning services with Marx Diversified Interests as well as his work as an Ambit Energy consultant *and* music producer with Marred Productions, and he said he was impressed with the event.

“It turned out better than I expected,” he said. “It’s good to be able to talk to people and hand out my card. People come to be presented with products so it’s a relaxed environment.”

Elaine Massa, who has lived in town for 30 years, offers information technology services, and said Hebron is a “great town” to live and work in. The showcase, she stated, was a great way to get to know the community.

“It’s important to know the community and this has been great,” she said. “Hebron is a great town with good resources and a lot of different businesses too.”

A few tables away, Mike Sherman of Sheridane Kennels sat with his Great Dane. For him, the showcase was an opportunity to inform people about what his kennel provides.

“Everybody knows that we’re here [in town],” he said, “but now they know what we do” – which, he said, is just about everything related to cats and dogs apart from veterinary work.

Hebron, Sherman said, has become “more and more business-oriented.” He said there’s still a focus on preserving the small, local, community feel, but the town has “grown quite a bit.”

Shorts agreed, saying the town has “absolutely grown” over the years and was “bound to succeed.”

“More businesses are coming,” she said. “More people are getting out and networking.”



From realtors to restaurants, contractors to a kennel, the services Hebron businesses provide run the gamut. And on Tuesday, the public had an opportunity to learn about them all, as close to 30 businesses filled the Lions Den for an evening of networking, at the Hebron Business Showcase.

And the showcase, she furthered, provided “great business-to-business networking possibilities.”

“There was a lot of positive feedback,” she stated.

In one area of the room, all of the businesses located in The Village Shoppes – which includes Ted’s IGA Supermarket, Angie’s Pizza and the Colonial Country Store - had, quite fittingly, set up shop together.

Ted’s owner Todge Armada said the town needed more business in the center of town and

called the showcase a “great start” as far as promotion is concerned.

“It helps to have businesses come together,” he said, and Anagnostis felt similarly.

“I believe this event was successful by the very fact that it helps build a stronger, more cohesive business community in town,” he said. “The Business Showcase offered a great opportunity for everyone to network and develop more awareness of the variety of resources each business contributes to the economic vitality of Hebron.”

Hebron School Board Still Waiting for Cruz Response

by Geeta Schrayter

The Board of Education is still awaiting sufficient response from former schools superintendent Ellie Cruz regarding around \$15,000 worth of questionable expenses she’s alleged to have made from January to December 2012 – her final year in town.

On March 4, the board requested written documentation responding to the seven-page summary they released Feb. 20 and so far, Board of Education member William Moorcroft said, “we haven’t received any supporting documentation indicating that any of those charges were for the benefit of the district’s children.”

“What we were looking for was any additional information or documentation that was responsive to the detailed summary,” he said. “So we were looking for reimbursement and any documentation supporting the position that any of those charges were for the benefit of children, and we have not received that.”

In the summary released by the board, Cruz is alleged to have made several payments to herself without a contractual basis including a \$2,400 travel stipend, an overpayment for insurance and \$390 worth of fuel purchases.

Cruz is also alleged to have made a number of questionable charges on the district credit card including groceries – like a \$90 charge at

Ted’s IGA Supermarket on Dec. 15, the day after her employment ended – and landscaping supplies, items at gift and/or jewelry shops or boutiques, pharmacies, food stores, farmers’ markets, florists, a toy store, a car wash and charges at online retailers, restaurants – even a Nordstrom Rack in Maryland.

The card on which these charges occurred had a \$50,000 limit and was applied for in October 2011. Moorcroft said that application was new to the school board.

“The board wasn’t aware that there was an application for a \$50,000 credit limit,” he said, and a review of the Webster Bank Corporate Liability Application reveals the form was signed by Cruz and then-business manager William Mazzara.

The services of Mazzara, who is an employee of the RHAM Board of Education, had been contracted out to Hebron two days a week. However, Mazzara was placed on paid leave Jan. 2 due to “an ongoing investigation” with the Hebron Board of Education, and the Hebron board voted at a special meeting March 5 to have acting Superintendent of Schools Kathy Veronesi negotiate an agreement with RHAM to terminate the arrangement. The RHAM Board of Education then voted on March 11 to

“enter into an agreement” with Mazzara regarding his employment as RHAM’s business manager and his services for Hebron.

In addition to the above allegations, Cruz is said to have paid a consulting group \$2,375 to help her research the Plymouth School District, her current place of employment. Cruz is currently on personal leave, while the Plymouth School District conducts a forensic audit of its own; the Plymouth Board of Education signed an agreement with Marcum Advisory Group on March 7 to examine Cruz’s expenses since her employment began Dec. 17.

On Tuesday, Plymouth Board of Education Chairman Patrick Perugino said Cruz will remain on leave until the audit is completed, at which point the board will hold a meeting and make a decision regarding her employment.

“We’re hoping – and there’s a word in there, ‘hoping’ – that it will be ready by the week of March 25,” he said. “Then once that report is brought in, there will be a meeting scheduled of the Board of Education.”

Perugino said the board was “very confident” in the procedures the district has in place.

“If the audit does show something that we can tighten up on, fine,” he said, but added the district had “very stringent controls” and an

excellent business manager.

“Nothing gets by him,” Perugino said.

As far as Cruz’s performance, Perugino said it was “very early to tell” how she had been doing as Plymouth’s superintendent.

“She was involved with things – she joined the Rotary like we asked her to – but she was here less than 90 days,” he said. “She had some different ideas which seemed very progressive and that was fine for education.”

But whether Cruz will have the opportunity to show Perugino and the rest of the board how she operates is yet to be seen – as is whether or not the requested documentation will be provided to the Hebron Board of Education.

Cruz didn’t return a call for comment for this story, and her attorney John Gesmonde couldn’t be reached. Due to a family emergency, his paralegal expected him to be out of the office for the next two weeks.

On Monday, Moorcroft added that after the board made the authorities aware of the district’s findings, a criminal investigation was initiated.

“There is a criminal investigation,” he said, “and [the board is] cooperating with the authorities and so, based on the fact that it’s an open investigation, there is nothing further to say at this point.”

Cold, But Successful, Hebron Maple Fest

by Geeta Schrayter

The chilly temperature and crunchy snow that covers the ground can make it hard to believe, but spring is officially here. In Hebron, the change of seasons was welcomed with the annual Maple Festival – the first real opportunity to enjoy a community event outdoors and begin to shake off that cabin fever.

The sun shone bright Saturday, March 16, while the wind blew and temperatures remained wintry-like on Sunday. Winter weather had postponed the festival from its originally scheduled weekend of March 9 and 10, and while various participants said that change – and the cool temps during the weekend – may have deterred some from coming, the event still went well.

“I thought it went very well, considering we had to postpone it,” said Town Manager Andy Tierney. “Then, downtown, even though the snow was gone, it was still chilly in the morning, so I think it took a little longer for people to come out.”

Ron Wenzel, proprietor of the Wenzel Sugar House, also deemed the weekend a success.

“It went great; it went very, very well,” he said Wednesday.

Throughout the event, Wenzel could be found inside his packed sugar house on East Street. Visitors interested in learning how the event’s main attraction – pure maple syrup – was made, listened intently as Wenzel explained the process, answered questions and shared facts he’d learned about maple trees during his 25 years making syrup.

“There was a great crowd,” he said. “There was great enthusiasm for making maple syrup, and showing everyone how to do it – it was a good time.”

Visitors at the sugar house were able to purchase syrup Wenzel had made, visit with the Farmer’s Cow and some other farm animals, and enjoy warm maple pudding cake with vanilla ice cream that was sold by the Gilead Congregational Church.

Sally Fritsche, administrative assistant at the church, said everything went “very well.” What amounted to 43 cakes’ worth of slices were sold during the weekend, she said, and the money will be split between the church’s youth group for their April mission trip, and different projects taken on by the Women’s Fellowship.

In addition to selling cake, the church held a craft fair on Saturday with over 30 crafters, and Fritsche said it has become “a very popular place” for crafters to show off and sell their work.

Along with the church, a number of other groups in town participated in the festival, each

adding their own special touch to the event which contained much more than maple syrup (although there was plenty of that, too).

The Hebron Historical Society held tours of the town’s World War II Observation Post and two one-room school houses, along with an exhibit at the Old Town Pound, a raffle and, a Maple Fest staple, the annual Quilt Show.

The society’s interim vice president, Maryellen Gonsia, said this week “all things considered, we did well.”

“We don’t normally have a postponement and I was nervous that we would have people not show up because of that,” she said. “But there were good crowds.”

Gonsia said there was a lot of interest in the quilts that were displayed, and a lot of people inquired how they were made and where they could learn the craft. The raffles the church held were a success as well, she said, and included a one-year supply of shampoo and hair care, a chocolate house, baskets of children’s toys, wine “and things of that sort.”

Gonsia said people also enjoyed the tours of the town’s historic buildings, saying people “enjoyed the opportunity” to learn how the Observation Post was used in the early days of World War II and what it used to be like for kids in school.

At the Old Town Pound, Gonsia said people discovered it’s not exactly what they might think. “Many people don’t know why it exists,” she said, and explained in the 1700s, if animals wandered away from their owner’s farm, they were brought to the pound once found and their owner’s would go there to retrieve them.

A new attraction at the festival was a tractor parade, which residents Kevin McDonnell and Marc Baribault put together, due to their interest in the machines. The event consisted of nearly two dozen tractors that journeyed down Main Street on Sunday.

“Everybody was very pleased with the turnout for the first year,” McDonnell said. “The crowd on the street for the parade was very good and there were quite a few people that actually made the walk or drove down to the parking lot and walked around and asked questions.”

McDonnell said the oldest tractor present was a 1930 John Deere, while the newest was a 2006 Komodo.

“Most were in the range of the early-’40s to the mid-’50s,” he added, and said the parade was enough of a success for him to “definitely” want to hold it again next year.

Returning for the festival this year was the Birds of Prey Exhibition with Wingmasters and AHM Youth and Family Services. AHM board member Pat Morency said the exhibition, which



During last weekend’s Maple Festival, Ron Wenzel was kept busy at his sugar house explaining how maple syrup is made; a stop at the Wenzel’s was one of the many sweet events the fest featured.

allows people to learn about and see a variety of birds including owls, hawks, falcons and even a golden eagle, went “extremely well.”

The turnout was less than in previous years, which Morency attributed to the change in date, but she said those who attended responded with “tremendous excitement.”

“They were just overjoyed that they got to witness this program,” she said, adding people of all ages – from a 4-year-old who was thrilled to have caught a tiny piece of down from one of the owls to an elderly resident who attended for the first time and left impressed with the event – enjoyed the program.

“There was a great, positive response from all spectrums of the age group,” said Morency.

AHM Executive Director Joel Rosenberg added along with the Birds of Prey, AHM also held a street sign auction, where individuals could bid on the old town signs that were replaced with new ones last year.

“The street sign auction that we did was really successful,” he said. “I believe we sold about 16 signs and we’re in the process of calling the winners now.”

In between visits between the various exhibits and events the Maple Fest had to offer, attendees were able to enjoy a variety of maple

and non-maple goodies. There was maple milk, maple sundaes, maple cookies and maple cotton candy. Maple ham, egg and cheese sandwiches waited to be devoured, along with sugar on snow and maple and chocolate covered pretzels. There was warm fried dough which could be enjoyed in the traditional manner, with pizza sauce and cheese or cinnamon and sugar or made more event-appropriate with a drizzle of maple syrup.

And particularly on Sunday, when the temperature and wind turned noses red and fingers numb, a stop at Something Simple Café for a hot maple walnut latte was the perfect cure.

Bellies could also be filled with homemade soup and bread at the Church of Hope, or chili dogs, hot dogs, French fries and cheeseburgers from the friendly faces of the Hebron Veterans Association or kettle corn offered by local business Majestic Concessions.

In short, if the cold was tolerated, there was something for everyone at the 23rd annual Maple Festival – and plenty of reasons to look forward to next year. And until then, assuming the opportunity was seized to purchase a stockpile of pure Connecticut maple syrup, attendees will be able to reminisce over breakfast about last weekend’s events for months to come.

Hebron Mom Launches Dyslexia Support Group

by Geeta Schrayter

Hebron resident Allison Quirion said she knew something was off with her youngest son when he was in kindergarten. She couldn’t quite figure out what it was though, and the schools kept telling her his academic progress was normal. But it wasn’t normal, and at the end of second grade he was diagnosed with dyslexia.

“When he started second grade, he was struggling with letters and letter sounds and putting them together, and reading and spelling,” Quirion explained.

As a result, she approached the school about testing, and it was determined her son had what the school considered “a specific learning disability” and a special education program was put in place to assist him. However, Quirion said the program they were using wasn’t appropriate.

“As a dyslexic, he learned in a different manner,” she said.

When Quirion saw her son wasn’t making any progress, an outside consultant was used to diagnose him who then shared what the appropriate type of program would be. The school then sent his third grade teacher and special education teacher to training, and the program was implemented for third grade. Now, she said, “he’s doing excellent.”

“He gained three years of reading in one year.

He had to work extremely hard and so did the school,” Quirion said. “But it just goes to show that with the appropriate instruction and the appropriate teaching that someone with dyslexia can read.”

Now that her own son is on the track to success, Quirion said she felt that with the advocacy she had done for him and all of the education she’d given herself about dyslexia and the services and programs that are available, that there was a need in Connecticut – and across the nation – for dyslexia legislation and raised awareness.

And so, at the start of the year she founded Decoding Dyslexia-CT, the Connecticut chapter of a grassroots parent support group that began in New Jersey. Quirion explained the New Jersey group has been guiding people in other states who want to open up their own chapter; the Connecticut chapter is one of 19 nationwide.

The group’s purpose, according to decodingdyslexia.org, is to “raise dyslexia awareness, empower families to support their children and inform policy-makers on best practices to identify, remediate and support students with dyslexia in our public schools.” The group is “driven by individuals who are concerned with limited identification and access to edu-

cation interventions for dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities within our public schools.”

Quirion said while the group isn’t made up of experts, it features individuals who know about the disability due to their personal experiences.

“We’re not experts, we’re not a business, not an educational organization,” she said, “but what we can offer other parents is the benefit of our experiences and encourage them to meet with local policy makers to tell their story, to ask for political change.”

Quirion said the group is slowly gaining momentum. Its Facebook page, which was created Feb. 1, already has 150 “likes,” and the website has been seeing “a lot of action.”

“We have not approached legislators or gone up to the [Legislative Office Building in Hartford] yet,” Quirion stated. “Currently we’re trying to get members together – trying to get Connecticut families together on this issue.”

With the group, Quirion stated she hoped to bring awareness about dyslexia to the area and hopefully, pass legislation that will help catch students with dyslexia early, ensure their interventions are quickly implemented and that teachers are properly educated on the signs and

symptoms of the disability so they can provide the appropriate programs and teaching methods.

Quirion says she also hopes to encourage parents to rely more on their “parental feelings” and concerns.

“I had the concerns early on, but I kept relying upon the education system for their expertise when I felt, like, deep down in my gut, that I have this bright, creative kid who can do so many things but he just can’t read,” she said, and wondered, “What’s the puzzle piece that’s missing here?”

Quirion said that, as a parent, “if you think something is up with your child then you should follow-up on it” – which could potentially lead to an early discovery of that “missing piece” and the ability to help a student with dyslexia receive the proper “fuel” to succeed.

“It’s like putting diesel in an unleaded car,” she said. “It’s not going to run... but you put the right fuel in the car and it goes great.”

For resources or more information on Decoding Dyslexia-CT, visit decodingdyslexia.org. Anyone who is interested in sharing their own stories of struggle with dyslexia and the school system to provide insight to other parents can email ddct@yahoo.com.

East Hampton Gets Small Bump in Grand List

by Joshua Anusewicz

The East Hampton assessors' office recently released the preliminary town Grand List for the year ending Oct. 1, 2012, showing a 0.24 percent increase from the previous year.

The list shows the total value of taxable properties in East Hampton is at \$1,128,365,076, a increase of \$2.7 million from the 2011 list. The 2012 Grand List numbers released, however, are subject to change slightly, with residents recently appealing their property values before the Board of Assessment Appeals.

The increase in the overall Grand List was driven by leaps in both real estate values and personal property; in real estate, the total value of properties rose 0.44 percent, from \$1,001,807,950 to \$1,006,242,382, and in personal property, the total rose 2.31 percent, from \$24,813,760 to \$25,386,500. The total value of motor vehicles decreased 2.33 percent, however, from \$99,042,103 to \$96,736,194.

The Grand List represents the net value of assessed property in town, and is used to help set the mill rate for the upcoming fiscal year. The rate is determined by dividing the town's budget by the Grand List total. Residents can calculate their taxes by multiplying their total assessments by the mill rate. Currently, the mill rate in East Hampton is at 25.97. (A mill is \$1 tax per \$1,000 of assessed property value. So, for example, a person with a house assessed at \$200,000 pays \$5,194 in taxes on it.)

These taxes are used by the town to cover expenses in its budget.

Finance Director Jeff Jylkka said Tuesday that, despite the slight increase, the growth rate of the Grand List was the lowest it's been in at least 10 years. (By comparison, the 2011 Grand List grew by 0.33 percent from the prior year – still low, but at least higher than this

year.) Jylkka said the lack of growth in property values was "probably due to the overall housing market," as the revenue the town collects from permits, licenses, and fees from housing is down, and added that the town doesn't have a large commercial base, either.

Despite the low growth rate, Jylkka said that even a slight growth was a good thing. "Sure, you'd like to see more of an increase," he said, "but any growth is positive."

Town Assessor Carol Ann Tyler agreed. "We did go up, so that was good," she said Wednesday. "And our market values seem to look pretty good from the revaluation [which took place in 2010]."

Tyler said, as in recent years, that the lack of growth is due to the overall state of the economy, pointing out that building costs, in particular, are high and fewer people are building houses and buildings. Since 2006, the growth of the town's Grand List has dropped from 5.6 percent to 0.24 percent.

But Tyler added that she has seen positive indicators for the coming years, including an increase in building over the last year and plans to build in the next year. She added that the Board of Assessment Appeals is close to completing the appeals process, and that the total numbers of appeals are down, possibly lessening any decrease in property values.

The top 10 combined taxpayers in the town are: Connecticut Light & Power at \$14.62 million; Landmark East Hampton at \$7.4 million; Easthampton NE Development at \$3.31 million; Jackowitz Edward at \$3.26 million; Skyline Estates at \$3.06 million; Rehovos Corporation at \$2.53 million; East High Street Realty at \$2.34 million; Paul's and Sandy's Too at \$2.08 million; Global Self Storage at \$1.86 million; and Noslen Inc. at \$1.85 million.

Combined, the top 10 taxpayers own \$42.29 million of taxable property in East Hampton.

East Hampton Resident Dies in Salem Crash

A two-car crash in Salem Wednesday claimed the life of an East Hampton man.

Richard Banning, 55, of 70 Flanders Rd., died after his car collided with one being driven by Thomas Moriarty, 41, of 97 Overlook Dr., West Springfield, Mass., State Police said.

The crash occurred at around 5:45 a.m., police said. Banning was driving south on Route 85, near the intersection with Skyline Drive, when his vehicle entered the northbound lane and was struck by Moriarty.

Banning was listed as sustaining blunt trauma in the crash, police said, and was taken to Backus Hospital in Norwich, where he died.

Moriarty was taken to Lawrence & Memorial Hospital due to reports of chest pain, police added.

The collision remains under investigation, police said, and witnesses are asked to call State Police Troop K in Colchester at 860-537-7500.

Colchester Police News

3/6: Timothy Charlelouis, 42, of 91 David Dr., was charged with forgery, State Police said.

3/12: Colchester Police said at approximately 7 p.m., a resident of Carli Boulevard reported that jewelry was stolen from his/her home. Police said it could have been stolen over the past several weeks. Anyone with information about this incident is asked to contact Officer Jonathan Goss at 860-537-7555 ext. 4083.

3/13: James Baker, 27, of 261 Norwich Ave. Apt. 5, was charged with third-degree burglary, third-degree criminal mischief and third-degree larceny, Colchester Police said.

3/13: Two juveniles were found in possession of marijuana inside a motor vehicle on Williams Road by Mill Hill Road, Colchester Police said. The juveniles, ages 16 and 17, were each charged with drug paraphernalia and possession of less than a half ounce of cannabis,

police said.

3/14: Michael Steven Smith, 42, of 27 Gardner Lake Heights, Salem, turned himself into Troop K in Colchester on an outstanding warrant for second-degree failure to appear, State Police said.

3/14: Eric M. Garthwait, 49, of 27 David Dr., Middletown, turned himself into Troop K in Colchester on an outstanding arrest warrant for violation of probation, State Police said.

3/15: A woman reported that her purse containing \$213 was stolen as she shopped at Stop & Shop in Colchester on 3/14, Colchester Police said. Police are currently investigating the incident.

3/16: Gary Fraser, 56, of 460 Woodbridge St., Manchester, was charged with DUI, disobeying signal of an officer and failure to drive in the proper lane, State Police said.

East Hampton Police News

3/7: There was an evading motor vehicle accident on Brook Trail, East Hampton Police said. The evading vehicle was driven by Shane Ferwerda, 31, of 9 Depot Hill, Cobalt. Ferwerda was issued a summons for evading responsibility. The other vehicle involved was driven by Jack Warner, 41, of 22 Walnut Ave., East Hampton.

3/9: Tiffany Jean Dellacamera, 25, of 15 Porges Rd., East Haddam, was arrested for two counts of second-degree failure to appear, stemming from two separate incidents, police said.

3/10: Zachary James Morgan, 19, of 88 Britany Farms, Apt. 302, New Britain was arrested for failure to respond to an infraction/violation.

3/13/13 – Kristen Chapone, 22, of 4 Depot Hill Rd., was arrested for third-degree larceny, disorderly conduct, operating a motor vehicle under the influence and operating a motor vehicle without a license, police said.

Portland Police News

3/13: Zachary Colonghi, 22, of 234 Farm Hill Rd., Middletown, was charged with disorderly conduct, interfering with police and second-degree threatening, Portland Police said.

Marlborough Police News

3/13: Brian M. Smith, 28, of 25 Fernwood Rd., East Hampton, was charged with DWI, operating a motor vehicle without minimum insurance, failure to return registration due to a lack of insurance and failure to obey a stop sign, State Police said.

3/16: State Police said someone entered into a residence on Jones Hollow Road through an open window between 10:30 a.m. and 3 p.m. and took jewelry from the residence. Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to contact Trooper Danielle Panarello at Troop K at 860-537-7500.

Hebron Police News

3/16: Jamie Fonseca, 32, of 10 Mint Brook Lane, Amston, charged with failure to respond, State Police said.

3/14: Jonathan Morin, 31, of 5 Elsmere Rd., Amston, was charged with third-degree assault, second-degree strangulation and disorderly conduct, State Police said.

Obituaries

Portland

Wilhelmina Gustafson

Our beloved mother Wilhelmina (Helma, Willie) Ruimerman Gustafson, age 97, of Portland died peacefully Wednesday, March 13, at Portland Care and Rehab Center. Wilhelmina was born July 21, 1915, in Middletown, the fifth of 10 children to the late Jacob and Everdina (Brinkman) Ruimerman, immigrants from the Netherlands.



She was devoted to her family and friends, living a quiet but full life. Wilhelmina was proficient with a needle, whether knitting, crocheting or sewing. She was an accomplished seamstress, making her own patterns and fashioning dresses for her two daughters. She will long be remembered for her ready smile and quiet demeanor. She was a gracious hostess and good neighbor, always ready to put the coffee pot on for any visitor. Her care and concern for others continued throughout her 5½ years at Portland Care where she always reached out to other patients and staff with a handshake, a tap on the arm and even a high five.

She lost her own mother when she was 16 and had to leave high school to take her mother's place at home, caring for her newborn sister and running the busy farm household. She often told her daughters that they didn't know what work was until they had ironed shirts and peeled potatoes for six brothers.

She married the late Arnold C. Gustafson in 1940 and during their 50 years of marriage she was a loving and true helpmate to him. After his death, she enjoyed many trips to Maine and Cape Cod with her two daughters. She was a member of Trinity Episcopal Church and also a quilter at Zion Lutheran Church.

She is survived by two daughters and sons-in-law, Jeannie L. and Richard Pogmore of Lebanon and Patricia M. and Vincent Genereux of Clinton; two granddaughters, Leslie R. (John) Koch of Dale, Wis., and Meagan M. (Stan) Lively of Mentone, Ala.; three great-granddaughters, Brianna M. and Rachel L. Kohlbeck of Dale, Wis., Amelia M. Lively of Mentone, Ala.; and one great-grandson, Brian C. Koch of Dale, Wis.. She is also survived by a sister, Clara J. Lee of Cromwell and a brother, Edward R. Ruimerman of Georgia and four sisters-in-law. She leaves many nieces and nephews, including two special nieces, Linda Folger and Marie Logan.

She was predeceased by two sisters, Margaret C. Charbonnier and Everdina A. Ruimerman, and five brothers, Hendrick, Jacob, Carl G., Walter J. and Harold J. Ruimerman.

Her daughters wish to thank the CNAs, nurses, Dr. Raider and staff at Portland Care for the loving and compassionate care given to our mother.

Burial will be private at the convenience of the family honoring Wilhelmina's wishes.

Contributions in her memory may be made to the Portland Care and Rehab Recreation Fund, 333 Main St., Portland, CT 06480. At her daughters' request, please bless an elderly neighbor, relative or nursing home resident with the gift of your time.

To send an online expression of sympathy, visit portlandmemorialfh.net.

Portland

Daniel J. Dowling Jr.

Daniel J. Dowling Jr., 54, of Portland passed away unexpectedly Friday, March 15, at home. He was the son of Beverly (Neumann) Bartolotta of East Haddam and the late Daniel J. Dowling Sr.

Born on August 13, 1958 in Hartford, he lived in Portland for most of his life and was a graduate of Cromwell High School.

Besides his mother, he leaves a son, Daniel J. Dowling III of Plantation, Fla.; a sister, Donna Gear of Rogers, Ark.; nephews, Richard, James and Sean and a niece, Carleen.

Graveside services were held Wednesday, March 20, at Rose Hill Memorial Park, Rocky Hill. There were no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to St. Vincent de Paul 617 Main St Middletown, CT 06457.

To send an online expression of sympathy, visit portlandmemorialfh.net.

Marlborough

Theresa M. Gallo

Theresa M. Gallo, 65, of Marlborough, beloved wife of Richard Gallo, died Sunday, March 17, at her home, surrounded by her loving family. Born April 21, 1947, in Hartford, she was the daughter of the late Raymond and Dora (Golembieski) Tupper.

Theresa had lived in East Hartford before moving to Marlborough nine years ago. She had retired from her supervisor's position at Connecticut Transit after 27 years of service.

Besides her devoted husband, she is survived by her two sons, Kenneth M. Arbo of East Hartford, Robbie Arbo of Oakland, Calif.; a daughter, Shelly Mondo and her husband Vince of Marlborough; two brothers, Edward and wife Pam Tupper of Wolcott, Howard and wife Bobbye Tupper of Ocean Springs, Miss.; a sister, Karen Wolfe of Somers; five grandchildren, Justin Arbo, Rebecca, Olivia, Madeline and Isabella Mondo; a great-grandson Maddox Arbo.

She was predeceased by her brother, Dennis Tupper, and her sister, Dorothy Cheney.

Friends may call at Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, on Saturday, March 23, from 3 p.m. until the time of the service at 4 p.m. Burial will be private at the convenience of the family.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Portland

Palma Wilk

Palma "Pam" (Serra) Wilk, 98, a lifelong resident of Portland, wife of the late Frank M. Wilk, died Tuesday, March 12, at home, surrounded by family and friends. She was born in Portland Oct. 29, 1914, daughter of the late Joseph and Josephine (DiMauro) Serra.

Pam was a devoted communicant of St. Mary Church, Portland. She was retired from the Portland School System cafeteria department and will be remembered for her love of children.

Pam is survived by her daughters, Jane Wilk Sterry and her husband John of Portland, and Bobbie Wilk Smith and her husband Tom of Cromwell; a sister, Joanna Formica of Portland; a brother, Paul Serra of Amston; four grandchildren, seven great grandchildren, and several nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her daughter, Mary Ann Wilk; seven brothers, Connie, Mike, Joseph, Angelo, Salvatore, James, and C. John Serra; and two sisters, Mary Serra Salustro and Anna Serra.

Calling hours were Tuesday, March 19, at the Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown. Funeral services were Wednesday, March 20, from the Biega Funeral Home, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial that morning at St. Mary Church, 51 Freestone Ave., Portland.

Memorial contributions in her memory may be made to St. Mary Altar Guild, 51 Freestone Ave., Portland, CT 06480 or to Shriners International, 2900 Rocky Point Dr., Tampa, FL 33607.

To share memories or express condolences online, visit biegafuneralhome.com

Colchester

Myra Smith Ackerman

Myra Smith Ackerman, 83, passed away Monday, March 18, at Middlesex Hospital, surrounded by her family. She was the beloved wife of the late Vincent Ackerman Jr.

Myra was born in Norwich on Nov. 5, 1929, to the late Thomas C. and Ethel (Taylor) Smith. She grew up in Colchester and resided in Old Saybrook, Westbrook and Killingworth.

She worked for L.L. Doane's in Essex for over five years, and volunteered her time at the Old Saybrook Estuary Council Thrift Shop, which she enjoyed very much. Myra was an avid Yankee fan and loved the color purple. She loved vacationing at Walt Disney World in Florida with her favorite character Mickey Mouse. But her true love was her family; she will be sadly missed.

She is survived by her sons, Edward Briggs of Colchester and Vincent Ackerman III of Killingworth; her daughters, Ethel Roy and Audrey Briggs and Michelle Ackerman Jones of Clinton; one sister, Alice Sanzone of Florida; and her two brothers, Thomas Smith of Virginia and Robert Smith of East Hampton. She is also survived by many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Myra is predeceased by her daughter, Jessie Briggs, and son, Raymond (Billy) Briggs.

Memorial services will be held today, March 22, at 11 a.m., at the Old Saybrook 1st Congregational Church, 366 Main St., Old Saybrook. Interment will follow at Riverside Cemetery in Old Saybrook.

Visit swanfuneralhomeoldsaybrook.com for tributes and condolences.

Hebron

Michele Goldman FitzSimmons

Michele "Shelley" Goldman FitzSimmons, 51, of Hebron, passed away Saturday, March 16, at Middlesex Memorial Hospital Hospice Unit, following a brief but courageous battle with ovarian cancer.

Shelley leaves behind her husband Mark, her two beloved children, Emily, 16 and Kyle, 12. She also leaves her mother, Helen Goldman, and sister Debra Goldman, both of Middletown.

Her father, Milton Goldman, predeceased her. Shelley was born in Middletown July 13, 1961, and attended Middletown schools until her graduation from Woodrow Wilson High School in 1979. Her childhood was spent at her family home on Randolph Road where she lived with her parents, sister and her poodle, Puffy, a gift from her dad. She attended dancing school, could be frequently seen riding bikes with her many neighborhood friends and, as she got older, 4-H Camp where she spent her summers as a camp counselor, and at her beloved Westbrook beaches. After graduation, she pursued a successful career in banking.

Shelley's husband and two children were her greatest joy. Shelley participated in many local activities with her family including Hebron Parks and Recreation and Andover Lake. Wherever she went, she brought the party with her. An accomplished cook and entertainer, Shelley's kitchen island was the hub of activity in the home, where conversations, laughs, meals and snacks with her family and friends would take place. She was always ready to offer a meal or a drink to any friend who entered her home, a warm and loving environment that was filled by her unique sense of style and wit.

Her love for cooking inspired her to begin working in the Bakery Department at Ted's IGA Market, Hebron. She loved her job there and brightened the day of staff and customers alike. Shelley was also gifted with a green thumb and she enjoyed sharing her beautiful gardens with family and friends.

Shelley was a loving wife and mother who will be greatly missed by her husband and children. She will be fondly remembered by family and friends for her funky hair and glasses, unique sense of style, "smiley face" Jeep, quirky sense of humor, her friendship and loyalty.

To honor Shelley, a Celebration of Life took place Thursday, March 21, at D'Angelo Funeral Home, 22 South Main St., Middletown.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Shelley's name to Middlesex Hospital Hospice/Palliative Care, c/o Office of Philanthropy, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457.

Colchester

Timothy Dean Lewis

Timothy Dean Lewis, 51, of Colchester, formerly of East Hartford, beloved husband of Margaret "Meg" (Bauerschmidt) Lewis of 28 years, passed away Wednesday, March 20, after a long, courageous battle with cancer.

Born Dec. 11, 1961 in Hartford, he was a son of Barbara (Penfield) Lewis of Colchester and the late Richard J. Lewis. He was a 1979 graduate of East Hartford High and went on to study at Southern Connecticut State University, graduating in 1983.

Mr. Lewis dedicated his life to working in the field of special education, working with behaviorally challenged youth at the Manchester Regional Academy for 27 years before moving to Iling Middle School two years ago. He was recognized as Manchester's teacher of the year in 1994. Meg and Tim were the first houseparents at the TLC Group Home in Manchester.

Tim held an avid love of the outdoors, from working in his yard to spending time at the beach. He also loved to work with his hands, especially reconstruction projects, birdhouses and house painting for many years.

His love, devotion and passion for his students was second only to that which he felt for his family.

He leaves his mother, his wife, two children, Jacob and Teagan; his brother and sister-in-law, Gerry and Ellen of Windham, N.H.; his sister-in-law, Marybeth, of Colchester; Meg's parents, Charles and Carol Bauerschmidt of Fairport, N.Y.; her six siblings (whom he loved as his own); and numerous nieces, nephews, extended family members and friends.

He was predeceased by a brother, Richard P. Lewis.

The family will receive guests 5-8 p.m. today, March 22, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Road, Colchester. The funeral liturgy will be celebrated at 11 a.m. Saturday, March 23, directly at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, P.O. Box 849168, Boston, MA 02284 or via dana-farber.org/gift.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Helen Patricia Churney

Helen Patricia Churney, 87, of Ft. Myers, Fla., and formerly of Colchester and East Haddam, widow of the late Joseph A. Churney, passed away Wednesday, March 13. Born at home in Colchester on May 30, 1925, she was a daughter of the late Kazimier and Benedykta (Dyczewska) Olubowic.

She grew up in Colchester and attended Bacon Academy with the Class of 1943. She left school to help both her family and country in the war effort, working at Hamilton Standard.

Following her husband's discharge from the Navy, they lived in Chicago for a time, where Helen worked assembling ballpoint pens by hand for the Eversharp Company before returning to Colchester.

She always kept busy – from running a garden market at home, peddling fruits and vegetables, helping with the horses, creating reproduction baskets, collecting antiques, traveling and working at the Central School cafeteria and Towne Auction Sales, but her main focus always remained on caring for her family.

Mrs. Churney moved to East Haddam in 1970. After her retirement, she moved to Ft. Myers, still returning to Connecticut to visit regularly. She traveled extensively, touring the country with her longtime companion, Lawson Howatt.

Mrs. Churney was a charter member of the Adler-Boluck Post 6990 Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary in Colchester and a lifetime member of the Golden Age Passport traveling group.

She leaves two children, Joseph Churney and his wife Gail of East Haddam and April Wisutskie and her husband Ross of Raymond, Maine; four grandchildren, Jenna Purdell, Brian Churney, and Stephen and Erik Wisutskie; five great-grandchildren, Phoebe and Parker Churney, and Kaleigh, Mackenzie, and Andrew Purdell; her longtime companion, Lawson Howatt of Ft. Myers, Fla.; a sister, Anna Raymond; and numerous nieces, nephews and longtime friends.

In addition to her husband, she was predeceased by her brother, Steven Olubowic; and five sisters, Katherine Raymond, Stella Bashiloff, Benedykta Wilcox, Patricia Lambert and Leona Butova.

Private graveside services will be observed later in the spring at the New St. Andrew Cemetery, Gillette's Lane, Colchester.

Donations may be made in Helen's memory to either The Broad Street Community Garden in care of St. Mark Lutheran Church, 248 Broadway, Norwich CT 06360 or to Hope Hospice, 9470 HealthPark Circle, Fort Myers, FL 33908.

Funeral arrangements are being handled by Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Road, Colchester. For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Hebron

Marissa Nicole Olson

Marissa Nicole Olson, 21, of Hebron, beloved daughter of Lynne C. and Michael P. Lawrence of Hebron, died unexpectedly Tuesday, March 12. Marissa was born March 24, 1991, in Manchester and had been a lifelong resident of Hebron.

She attended Trinity Covenant Church in Manchester and enjoyed going to Camp Squanto in New Hampshire every summer. She also enjoyed snowboarding, swimming, soccer and spending time with family. Marissa loved giving hugs and was best known for her smile and bright blue/green eyes.

In addition to her parents, she is survived by two brothers and a sister, David C. Olson and his companion Stephanie N. Brown, their daughter Arianna Nicole Olson, Robert M. Lawrence and Rachel C. Lawrence, all of Hebron. Other survivors include her grandparents, Robert and Carol Olson of Glastonbury and Martha Sue LaBonne of East Hartford; her little Chihuahua "Yippee" and numerous aunts, uncles, cousins and close friends.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, March 23, at 11 a.m. at Trinity Covenant Church, 302 Hackmatack St., Manchester. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals by going to aspc.org/donate.

To sign the online register book, go to holmes-watkinsfuneralhomes.com.

Portland

Margaret Alice Higley

Margaret Alice (Dunham) Higley, 91, formerly of Groton and Portland, passed away peacefully Thursday, March 14, at Apple-Rehab, Mystic, where she had been a resident for the past 10 years, after suffering a major stroke in October 2001.

Margaret was born April 27, 1921, in West-erly, to the late John Raymond Dunham Jr. and Laura Veronica (Rose) Dunham, and resided until her early 20s in the Stonington/Pawcatuck area, surrounded by numerous aunts, uncles and cousins. Margaret and her family were witnesses to and survivors of the 1938 hurricane, and she was a proud graduate of Stonington High School's Class of 1939.

During World War II the entire family moved to Portland, where Margaret and her dad worked for the war effort in a local factory. It was there she met Clarence Edwin Higley, whom she married on Sept. 1, 1945, and they resided in Cromwell, where their three daughters, Susan, Kathi and Lorri, were subsequently born at nearby Middlesex Memorial Hospital.

In 1961, the Higley family moved to Madison, where Margaret began work as a school cafeteria volunteer, later working her way up to becoming head cook of the (then) Madison Junior High School. In 1968, Clarence passed away from heart disease and diabetic complications. Shortly thereafter, their eldest daughter, Susan, wed Craig L. May, formerly of Bayshore, Long Island.

When Susan and Craig eventually moved to Mystic in 1970, Margaret, Kathi and Lorri moved with them to form a multi-generational household. From 1970, Margaret was employed as the head cafeteria cook for the Mystic Middle School until her retirement in 1986. In 1992, Margaret moved from Mystic to Groton, where she resided with her daughters, Kathi and Lorri, until her stroke in 2001.

She is survived by two of her three daughters, Kathi Lynn and Lorri Ann Higley of Groton; and by her granddaughter and husband, Melanie and Doyle Cummings of Ledyard, and their six sons, Branden, Samuel, Jeremiah, Eli, Nathaniel and Gabriel; and her grandson and wife, Christopher and Emily May of Mystic, and their unborn son, Joseph Craig.

Margaret is predeceased by her eldest daughter, Susan Carol (Higley) May, and son-in-law, Craig Leonard May, both of Mystic; as well as her two younger siblings, John Raymond Dunham II of Wallingford, and Walter Francis Dunham Sr. of Cromwell; and her nephew, Douglas Dunham formerly of Georgia.

Margaret's family wishes to thank Apple-Rehab, Mystic, for the kind and compassionate care she received during her residency there.

Pursuant to Margaret's wishes, there will be no calling hours or memorial service. Interment of Margaret's remains will be at the Rose family plot in St. Mary's Cemetery, Route 1, Stonington, at a later date.

Any donations in her name may be made to the donor's charity of choice.

Visit mysticfuneralhome.com to leave an online message of condolence.

East Hampton

Richard H. Banning

Richard H. "Dick" Banning, 55, of East Hampton, beloved husband of Patricia (Daly) Banning died unexpectedly Wednesday, March 20, as a result of a traffic accident. Born Aug. 29, 1957, in Middletown, he was the son of Barbara (Ackley) Banning and the late Joseph B. Banning V.

Dick was a lifelong resident of East Hampton graduating from East Hampton High School in 1975 and was married to Patricia on Oct. 22, 1982. He was a carpenter and was employed by the Carpenters' Union Local 24. Dick was a member of the Haddam Neck Fair Assoc. and had been a past director of the fair. He was an avid New York Yankees fan and Buffalo Bills fan.

Besides his wife of 30 years Patricia, he is survived by his three loving daughters, Caitlin Daly Banning of Philadelphia, Kelsey Mae Banning of Boston, Kathleen Ackley Banning of East Hampton; his mother, Barbara Ackley Banning of East Hampton; his mother-in-law, Margaret Quinn Daly of East Hampton; three brothers, Joseph B. Banning of Storrs, Stephen M. Banning of East Hampton, Dennis G. Banning of East Hampton; two sisters, Laura L. Landry and her husband Ronald of East Hampton, Karen A. Ennen and her husband Robert of East Hampton; 10 nieces, nine nephews, a host of godchildren, great nieces and nephews and extended family. Dick also leaves four very special beloved friends for whom he would have done anything: Anthony, Gabriel, Gianna and Luca DiStefano.

A funeral liturgy will be celebrated Wednesday, March 27, at 11 a.m., in St. Patrick Church in East Hampton. Burial will follow in St. Patrick Cemetery. Friends may call at the Spencer Funeral Home Tuesday, March 26, from 5-8 p.m.

In lieu of flowers memorial contributions may be made to Autism Speaks at autismspeaks.org.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

East Hampton

Caroline Turner Memorial Service

Caroline "Carrie" Turner, of East Hampton, widow of the late Clifford Turner died Sunday, Jan. 27, at the age of 86. Her full obituary appeared in the Feb. 8 *Rivereast*.

A memorial service was slated for Saturday, Feb. 9, but was postponed due to the blizzard. The memorial will now be held Saturday, March 23, at 11 a.m., in Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St. East Hampton.