

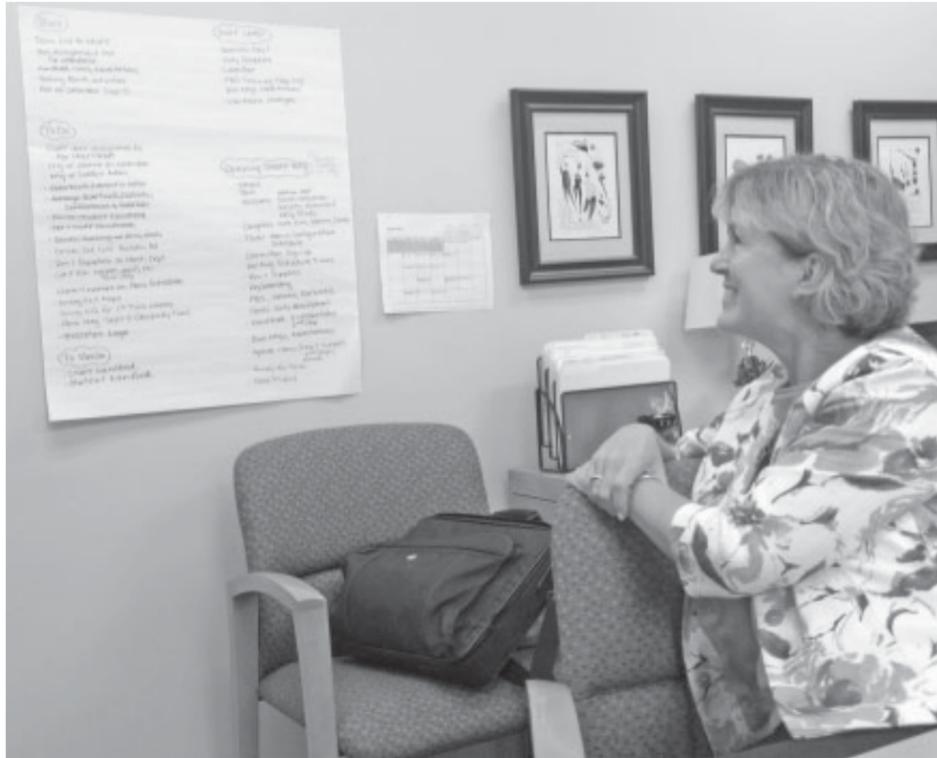
RIVEREAST News Bulletin

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

Volume 38, Number 19

Published by The Glastonbury Citizen

August 23, 2013



Hebron Elementary School Principal Amy Campbell is all smiles as she looks over her summer to-do list, to get ready for another bustling school year. Hebron schools start next Wednesday, Aug. 28.

A New Day Comes For Hebron Schools

by Geeta Schrayter

Hebron schools contained an exciting buzz this week, as preparations continued for the start of school Aug. 28. Many of the administrators were present, as were some of the teachers at Gilead Hill and Hebron Elementary School, who moved about the halls and added finishing touches to their classrooms.

Second-grade teacher Kim Waldron could be found at Gilead Hill with her daughter, who was excited to start first grade. As Waldron stood in her colorful classroom with name tags and bottles of water on each tiny desk, a comfy reading spot waiting to be utilized and materials neatly organized all throughout the room, she said she was ready for the start, and looking forward to the meet-and-greet on Monday.

"It's exciting to meet the students," she said. Second-grade teacher Kristin Gladding was also looking forward to their arrival.

"I'm looking forward to seeing the new faces and getting to know them" she said, her arms full of classroom supplies.

A few students could be seen as well, and Gilead Hill interim principal Eric Brody took the time to speak to each one, asking them about

their summer and what they were most excited about in the upcoming year.

For Brody, the new year would arrive with some "big changes," including the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, a standardized education plan, and new teacher and administrator evaluations. Brody called the evaluations "pretty comprehensive," and said a lot of time had been spent in training.

"It's pretty time intensive for teachers and administrators," he said. "But it will make us better: what we're going to have in place will make us better educators."

As far as challenges, Brody went on to say there were "quite a few."

"Between the curriculum and the evaluations and the recent changes in the administrative team there's a lot of transition," he explained, but he finally felt "we have all the pieces in place."

(This is Brody's first full year as principal. He took over when then-principal Kathy Veronesi stepped into the role of acting superintendent after Ellie Cruz left last December. Rather than return to her role as principal at

See A New Day Page 2

Kids Karnival Proves to be Fun Celebration

by Elizabeth Bowling

Sunday afternoon's blue skies were perfect for Chatham Court's second annual Kids Karnival, which featured family-fun activities to celebrate the end of summer.

School is right around the corner – Portland goes back to school Tuesday, Sept. 3 – for the nearly 80 children of Chatham Court, and this year, like last year, residents wanted to give the children an outlet to have some fun, as well as generate a sense of community for the entire neighborhood.

Chatham Court, a low-income housing complex under the direction of the Portland Housing Authority, was decorated with balloons and chalk, and in case that wasn't enough to establish a party atmosphere, dance music played the entire day.

Resident Dawn Wadding, the tenant commissioner of Chatham Court and a board member of the Housing Authority, said, "The Chatham Court families really united together and put on a great party."

The event kicked off at 11 a.m. with an 18-foot inflatable water slide – a crowd favorite for the kids. Children spent the day outside in their bathing suits, enjoying the water slide before Tony the Magic Man arrived around noon for some clowning around, balloon animals, and, of course, magic.

"I think it's great," resident Kristy Patton said about the Kids Karnival. The mother of

four said this is her family's first year living in Chatham Court and she'd been hearing about the Kids Karnival for months.

"It gives the kids something to look forward to," she said.

Patton's son, DJ, 11, said the clown was his favorite attraction at the Karnival. "He does all different types of magic," DJ said.

Tonyque Davis, 12, agreed. "My favorite part is the magic man because he does cool tricks," she said.

Tony the Magic Man spent two and a half hours with the kids and said his goal was to "make the kids laugh." Mission accomplished; the kids loved it.

Some broke off, though, when the Portland Fire Department stopped by with a fire truck for the kids to check out, climb inside and walk through. It was a great learning experience, not to mention a great photo op.

Shortly after, lunch was served. Residents sat underneath a big tent for shade and enjoyed pizza and hot dogs, followed by a "fabulous dessert table" that featured a lot of desserts that were made by the families, Wadding said.

But the fun wasn't over yet. Later, Officer David Bond from the Portland Police Department showed up with his dog Lightning, who performed tricks for the kids. The Karnival went on until 3 p.m., just as it started to rain.

See Kids Karnival Page 2



The second annual Kids Karnival was held Sunday, for children of Portland's Chatham Court. Youngsters enjoyed the sunny, warm weather by having fun on a water slide, jumping on an inflatable bouncer, playing badminton and volleyball, eating pizza and hot dogs, and being entertained by Tony the Magic Man, seen here.

Back to School Section Inside



The classroom of second grade teacher Kim Waldron has been cleaned, restocked, organized and decorated and, like the other classrooms at Gilead Hill and Hebron Elementary School, is ready for the return of students Wednesday.

A New Day cont. from Front Page

Gilead after new superintendent Jeff Newton began July 1, Veronesi resigned and has since been hired as the interim principal at Marlborough Elementary School.)

"It will be a very challenging but positive year and I'm looking forward to it; all three of those pieces kind of go hand in hand and to me, it's very exciting. Everything goes towards the same goal," Brody said. "The Common Core curriculum expands beyond just learning, and the evaluations require setting goals based upon student and school needs. Then, the administration facilitates all of that, so all three work toward the common goal of how best to educate. This is the way education should be," he said.

Over at Hebron Elementary School, principal Amy Campbell was preparing for some of the same changes. She commented on the new evaluations, and said they would be "much more time-consuming."

"We worked to get most meetings with groups of teachers and administrators already on calendars so we know we can do them all," she said. "Additionally, we continue to further implement the Common Core State Standards."

Campbell added when anything new comes along, "that raises stress a little bit."

"But if I know anything about Hebron," she said, "we can do it."

Also different this year would be bussing. Campbell explained there would be more group stops than before. And, in an effort to address the ongoing issue of bus safety and student behavior on the ride to and from school, each bus would be assigned to a group of three to four staff members. Those members would then be tasked with holding periodic meetings with the students who ride the bus they'd been assigned.

The idea, Campbell said, is that the meetings would help students get to know one another, and provide an opportunity to problem solve and discuss how to be more tolerant of each other and foster a positive community environment.

"Last year bus rides were one area we had a lot of concern over and not a lot of control," Campbell explained. "If the students knew each other a bit better, it may help. It's just another way to open up and host conversations and that's exciting."

Overall, Campbell said the changes that were

occurring would help make the schools better, "and I'm ready to get going with it."

But before students return, there are a few things left to do at each school.

At Gilead Hill, some asbestos abatement had been completed throughout July and new tile had been put down in the hallway by central office, the main foyer and the gymnasium.

The project was "quite a process," said Brody, as it made a mess and required particular sections of the building be taped off.

"The custodial staff did a wonderful job given the amount of time they had," he said. "The project basically paralyzed the building."

However, changing the tile by the main foyer allowed for a last-minute addition: Brody happily shared red letters reading "GHS" had been tiled into the floor, and waited to welcome back the students.

And now, what remained were some "last-minute tinkering of schedules," he said, and making sure everything is in order.

"Overall we're in really good shape," he said.

At Hebron Elementary, Campbell gazed over her to-do list and said she still had little things to work on like student and staff handbooks.

"Nitty-gritty things that have to go for day one," she said.

But the nitty-gritty and the last-minute tinkering are all for a purpose: they lead up to the sight of smiling faces come Wednesday, something both principals are looking forward to.

"There's nothing better than being outside on the first day," said Campbell. "I pace the sidewalk while the buses are unloading and the parents are unloading and the level of excitement you see with the students, parents and teachers is great... for that first day I don't think there's a student that's not excited to be here with friends and meet a new teacher."

"The beginning is very exciting. It's a fresh start. The slate is kind of wiped clean: there are new students and new materials," Brody said, calling the fresh start the teacher equivalent of a student purchasing new sneakers for the first day.

"We're ready to have [students] back at school," said Brody. "I think the stage is set for some really positive changes."



The Karnival proved a big hit for all in attendance, and organizers are already eagerly planning next year's event.

Kids Karnival cont. from Front Page

According to Wadding, \$1,815 were donated to the Karnival – that doesn't include donations that came in the form of time and supplies – and some of it has been set aside for next year.

Wadding said she's pleased the Karnival has turned into an annual event, and said she's "looking forward to next year."

Marlborough Finance Board Approves Year-End Transfers

by Melissa Roberto

The Board of Finance last Wednesday approved its year end transfers for the 2012-13 fiscal year – but one member believed the action was not in compliance with the town charter.

First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski explained outside of the meeting that year-end transfers are conducted each year to balance out the line items that result in either deficits or over-expenditures.

"Some of the line items did go over the budget because of unanticipated purposes," she explained, "but other line items ended up coming up under budget so basically transfers are moving funds from one line item to another to balance everything out."

The transfers are done each year after the fiscal year ends on June 30. Both the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance approve their transfers separately. Per town charter, the selectmen can only approve transfers that do not exceed \$2,000 within any account except for salary accounts.

The board briefly discussed some of the deficits and expenses with Gaudinski last Wednesday night. Transfers that were highlighted included the overspending of \$10,004 in the professional line item of the Landuse Department. That money was a result of the building official working more hours than anticipated, Gaudinski explained. The money was approved to transfer into the personnel account.

Additionally, \$25,266 was overspent in the professional engineering services line item under contracted services. Gaudinski said this was due to additional engineering services conducted throughout the year that rose unexpectedly. These services included engineers tending to the bridge on South Main Street that suddenly faced damages, as well as sidewalk and culvert improvements. The \$25,266 was transferred to the public works payroll line item, which had a deficit because one public works supervisor had been vacant for a majority of the fiscal year.

Before the votes were taken to approve the Board of Finance transfers, member Beth

Petroni explained she would not be approving the transfers because she believed they went against the town charter.

"I actually believe it needs to go to a public hearing per town charter which says that we are not allowed to appropriate more than \$10,000 in any one budget without a public hearing," Petroni explained. "Since there are two line items here over \$10,000 I would suggest that we send this to public hearing because I don't believe we're authorized to do over \$10,000 under the town charter."

However, Gaudinski – from the audience – said the section in the charter Petroni was referring to had to do with "special appropriations," which year end transfers do not fall under.

"The \$10,000 limit is under [the] 'special appropriations' [section of the town charter] not under the section 'transfer unexpended funds,'" she explained.

Gaudinski then referred to section 6.7 of the town charter.

"The Board of Finance, when requested by the selectmen, may transfer unexpended balances from one line appropriation to another in accordance with Section 7-347 of the Connecticut General Statutes," Gaudinski read aloud.

The selectwoman then read aloud section 6.7.1 of the town charter which only lists transfer limits for the selectmen.

Additionally, Gaudinski said the finance board approved two year-end transfers last year over \$10,000. The transfers included a \$62,554 transfer for compensated absences and a \$67,000 transfer to professional engineer services. According to the minutes viewable on the town website, Petroni was absent from the Aug. 8, 2012 finance meeting that approved these transfers.

The board ultimately approved a total amount of the year-end transfers – of \$69,319 – by a vote of 5-1. Members Evelyn Godbout, Ken Hjulstrom, Cliff Denniss, Susan Leser and Doug Knowlton voted in approval while Petroni opposed the vote.



On Tuesday, staff at Andover Elementary School could be found working on final preparations for the new school year. The grounds were orderly, the corridors and lockers were clean and empty, and the classrooms were decorated, organized and stocked with fresh supplies, ready to welcome students next Wednesday, Aug. 28.



Andover School Year Starts Wednesday

by Geeta Schrayter

The end of what Andover Elementary School Principal Dave Griffin called “a very busy summer” is fast approaching; on Wednesday, Aug. 28, the halls will once again be filled with students.

But despite being a “busier than usual” summer – due to training teachers and administrators had to take part in to learn about the new teacher and administration evaluation plan required by the state – preparations for students were just about complete when the *Rivereast* dropped by the school for a visit Tuesday. The floors in the corridors on the lower level of the school were still being cleaned, but Griffin said teachers had been “in and out all summer” to ready their classes.

“It’s amazing,” he said. “We have a very dedicated staff.”

That staff will feature two new faces for the upcoming year: music teacher Matt Piros and kindergarten teacher Carrie Gilbert.

Griffin explained Piros received a Bachelor of Arts degree in music from Trinity College in Hartford and a Master of Science degree in music education from the University of New Haven. And he called Gilbert, who is filling a spot left vacant when Lisa Handfield moved into the reading department after a retirement, a “delightful young lady.”

This year, Griffin said curriculum in accordance with the Common Core State Standards will be fully implemented in kindergarten

through third grade while grades four-six will continue to follow a transition plan for math as they have for the past two years.

“We’re just about there,” he said, “but it’s difficult because we had to balance between the state standards and the Common Core.”

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are, according to the website corestandards.org, a single set of education standards in math and English language arts for grades k-12 that states can voluntarily adopt. To date, the standards have been adopted by 45 states as well as the District of Columbia, four territories and the Department of Defense Education Activity.

Under the new standards Griffin explained some math topics have been removed, which allows other topics to be studied with “greater breadth and depth.”

In language arts he furthered there are “big changes,” like the use of Lexile Measures for reading. Under the Lexile framework, each student is assigned a reader measure from a reading test or program. Books and articles are similarly analyzed and given a text measure.

“The idea behind The Lexile Framework for Reading is simple” the website lexile.com explains. “If we know how well a student can read and how hard a specific book is to comprehend, we can predict how well that student will likely understand the book.”

In addition to the above, Griffin said students will be required to look at more challenging

texts than in the past. As an example, he said the breakdown of reading materials for fifth-graders was 50 percent fiction and 50 percent non-fiction. But once those students reach sixth grade that changes to 70 percent non-fiction and 30 percent fiction.

“That’s a big change from the traditional curriculum,” he said.

As school begins, Griffin mentioned one of the year’s uncertainties was whether or not the school would be administering the Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMTs). He explained the state had submitted a waiver and if it came through, it’s possible the Smarter Balanced Assessments, which are aligned with the CCSS, may be used instead. However, he added he was unsure whether they would be administered to a sample of students or all of them.

Currently, Griffin said, students are jumping through a couple of hoops by taking the CMTs while simultaneously preparing for the CCSS and Smarter Balanced Assessments. As things currently stand, the assessments are supposed to be fully implemented during the 2014-15 school year and the CMTs will cease being used.

“There’s a lot of fluctuation that’s out there right now,” he said. “We’re working to the best of our ability and trying to stay as flexible as possible.”

In addition, the results of last year’s CMTs were received later than usual, and Griffin said

there was still a lot of analyzing to prepare for the teachers: the scores are used to help teachers plan for their incoming students and see how last year’s performed.

In regard to the scores, which were released to the schools Aug. 9, Superintendent of Schools Andy Maneggia said, “Our scores are good, but we’re always looking to make them better.”

Maneggia furthered Griffin’s thoughts and said the new evaluation plan for teachers and administrators and becoming more familiar with the CCSS were two areas of focus for the upcoming year.

“Our goal, in addition to the important areas of focus,” said Maneggia, “is to make sure that our students receive the educational programming and support that they need throughout the school year and that we do everything we can in the process so they live up to their potential.”

And according to Maneggia, “things are in pretty good shape” to begin that work next week, when, according to Griffin, the school will once again become a school.

“A school is not a school unless the kids are here,” he said. “I can’t wait to have the children back in the building and the staff back – then the school is energized. And collectively, we’ll work together to master the hoops we need to jump through.”

Veronesi Already Getting to Work in Marlborough

by Melissa Roberto

It’s been a busy past few days for Kathryn Veronesi. The recently-appointed one-year interim principal of Marlborough Elementary School has already walked the school’s premises, peeked at its new furniture, met with the office staff, engaged in conversations of new school initiatives, and has met with the Marlborough Education Foundation (MEF), all since she started on Tuesday.

Her next plan of action? Welcoming students and the entire staff she’ll be working with when the school year starts next Wednesday.

Veronesi comes to the district after leaving Marlborough’s neighboring district, Hebron. She spent the last six years at Hebron Public Schools, first as principal of Gilead Hill School, then as acting schools superintendent from last December until she left the district in June. Finding herself in Marlborough as a principal, she said, was unexpected, but “feels right.”

The interim principal is taking the place of Scott Nierendorf, who led MES the past three school years. He has decided to further his career by taking on a greater role outside of the district at EASTCONN, a Regional Educational Service Center (RESC).

Of course, assuming the role of MES’ new leader comes with big responsibilities, and Veronesi has made it clear she’s aware of that.

“This is truly an unprecedented time” with

the implementation of the new state-mandated Common Core State Standards and the new, also state-mandated, teacher evaluations, Veronesi said.

Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz admitted Nierendorf’s sudden resignation, just three weeks before the start of the school year, didn’t leave him with a lot of time to find someone fitting and capable of carrying out these new initiatives. So, he said, he was “honored and thrilled” to be able to add Veronesi, especially because her experience will come in handy during a time of transition.

In addition to the new state mandates, Veronesi will also have to deal with results of the school’s two feasibility studies, one on a world language program and one on all-day kindergarten, which are both expected to come to the board this fall. The studies were started in May by Sklarz, Nierendorf and MES Assistant Principal Maureen Ryan, and Veronesi said she is confident in assisting them through the final leg of the process. She’s particularly got experience with all-day kindergarten, as she was with the Hebron schools when they implemented it.

When it comes to the task of completing a world language feasibility study, Veronesi said she’ll tackle the research by doing one thing first: learning about the district’s former pro-

gram.

“Anytime I think you’re going to a new district it’s important to understand the existing culture and understand the history,” she said. “That’s where you start as a new leader. You have to respect that and start from a place of understanding current culture and history before you move forward.”

Veronesi furthered she’s confident “we’ll do good work on both studies.”

On just her first day at the school, Veronesi – alongside Nierendorf, whose final day has not yet been decided – met with the school’s curriculum specialists team to identify what is in place for the upcoming year and what else needs to be done.

“It was a great meeting,” said Veronesi, who mentioned the team’s two new specialists, Lauren Donovan and Kim Kelley. “There is tremendous skill and energy on the team.”

As an administrator, Veronesi coined herself an “idea person and a creative thinker.” She hopes to use these characteristics to “always be a part of a team who determines how we can do things more effectively and more efficiently so that we’re always clear of what the outcome is and of what we want for kids and adults.”

The interim principal stressed she’s “grateful” for the time she’s able to spend with Nierendorf through the start of the school year.

“It’s important when there’s a leadership change that there’s an overlap,” she said.

And the former Hebron administrator knows that from experience, as she coached current Gilead Hill School interim principal Eric Brody during the process when she became acting superintendent in Hebron last year.

Early on in her new role in the new district, Veronesi said she’s already taken *so* much out of it.

“It’s been two days and I feel like I’ve learned two months worth of information,” she said Wednesday with a laugh.

The interim principal is also respectful of Nierendorf’s leaving – which she said she realizes may affect students he’s had connections with at the school. In fact, she’s currently working on a “bit of a surprise” for the principal that will allow students to say goodbye to him in a “fun way.”

Overall, the seasoned administrator has already coined the Marlborough district a “tremendously welcoming place.”

Though there are many more faces for her to meet, and plans that need to be carried out, the thing she’s most eager about is meeting the kids.

“I really cannot wait,” she said. “I can’t wait to get to know them and to interact with them because a school is just a building until the kids get there.”



MES teachers have been present at the school in recent weeks decorating their classrooms and preparing for the upcoming school year. From left to right, third-grade teacher Mary Cochefski, second-grade teacher Ann Loftus, and first-grade teacher Sue Rector sit around one of the school's new reading tables discussing curriculum.



One of MES' exciting new additions is its new furniture that will appear in three of the school's classrooms. The furniture is a part of the school's one-year pilot program coined "Classroom of the Future." In Mary Cochefski's third-grade classroom, triangular desks are arranged in square tables, though the teacher said they can be arranged in multiple ways.

Marlborough Ready for 'New and Improved' School Year

by Melissa Roberto

It's safe to say several changes are in order at Marlborough Elementary School for the upcoming school year, and outgoing principal Scott Nierendorf said he's pleased to know he's leaving the school district in a "new and improved" state.

"It's been an extremely productive summer," Nierendorf said last week. "This is not the same school that teachers and students left in June."

The anticipatory changes the MES community is sure to recognize on Aug. 28, the first day students arrive, are hinged on a slate of new staff members, classroom furniture, technology upgrades, and security improvements.

One significant change that occurred in recent weeks was the news of Nierendorf's resignation and the interim appointment of former acting superintendent and principal of the Hebron school district, Kathryn Veronesi. Veronesi comes with a background of six years as an administrator in the neighboring town. She assumed her new role earlier this week alongside Nierendorf, who is expected to be present at the school until early to mid-September. (An article on Veronesi's appointment appears elsewhere in this week's issue.)

Along with a new face in the main office, newcomers will also be found in the classrooms. In last Tuesday's Board of Education meeting Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz said a significant amount of shifting has occurred for the upcoming year. The school was left with nine vacancies for the upcoming school year with one teacher position not being filled due to declining enrollment. Two of the vacancies were a result of long-time teachers who retired and another two – the math and English curriculum specialists – accepted new roles outside of the district. Sklarz said five full-time teachers have been appointed as well as one part-time kindergarten teacher and two spe-

cialists.

Sklarz explained a majority of the vacancies at the school were due to teachers who have accepted new roles outside of the district to further their careers. With all of this movement, Sklarz pointed out only two teachers will be completely new to the district. The remaining recruitments were made by teachers at the school moving into new roles, which allowed the district to bring back former professionals on temporary contracts to fill the permanent positions. He concluded "the people" are the most important aspect of the school.

"When it gets right down to it, schools are about people and that's probably the most exciting piece," the superintendent said adding he believes the group of newcomers is made up of "incredibly capable teachers."

An exciting pilot program is also expected to enthrone a fraction of students when they step into their classrooms for the first time next week. This one-year program has been coined "Classroom of the Future" and is a result of a committee made up of one teacher from the first, third and fifth grades who researched ways to upgrade classroom equipment.

The "forward-thinking furniture," as Nierendorf described it, will appear in three classrooms of the school for one year. The furniture consists of desks in shapes other than the typical rectangular school desk as well as new chairs and teacher desks. The pilot program will allow the district to decide whether or not it will continue with upgraded furniture in the future.

For example, fifth-grade teacher Mary Rose was arranging new triangular desks in her room earlier this week. She anticipates the desks will allow for better grouping.

Other upgrades in the classrooms include technology and security improvements. MES

is now equipped with two new sets of computers. One new set will be placed in the library computer room. The other set will appear in the school's new "Ed Tech Center" housed in a former sixth-grade classroom. This room is expected to be utilized by upper grade students as well as being used for the new technological method of the Smarter Balanced assessments, Nierendorf said.

Additionally, 98 percent of the classrooms will be complete with SmartBoard systems. And thanks to PTO support, MES is also home to five new document cameras teachers can use inside of the classroom.

Keeping up with the technological advances, the school website is also encountering an upgrade. Based on a parent survey conducted last spring, it was brought to the administration's attention parents would like to see more communication from staff about the progress of their children in the classroom. The new website will include new tools that allow staff to do that, Nierendorf said.

Additional security improvements exist inside and outside of the school. The school's former video surveillance system was upgraded, giving office staff "a clear vision of what's happening around the building," Nierendorf said. The building's indoor classrooms also have new locks to ensure safety to students and staff.

Just one walkthrough of the school left teachers commenting on its cleanliness in recent weeks, Nierendorf said. New custodial supervisor Ken Avelin has been present at the school this summer getting it prepared and the floors shining.

One initiative carried over from last year is the community's cohesive project of bringing a new basketball court to the school's premises. Nierendorf – who has worked with a group of parents in Marlborough on the project – said it

should be paved by the first day of school. Additional funding will need to be raised to finish the plan, which includes the installation of basketball hoops and lines to be added.

For Sklarz, this year marks a year of possible sweeping changes in the district. In addition to a full principal search anticipated to take place during the last half of the year, the district is also continuing to implement new initiatives demanded at the state level. Like all other districts in the state, Marlborough will continue its preparation for the 2014-15 common core implementation, a new Smarter Balanced Assessment, as well as the new teacher evaluation system set to swing into motion this year.

To Sklarz, MES is "always evolving." Other than new people inside of the rooms, he's also pleased with the advancement of its curriculum. The third grade has received a new reading series called "Journeys" which was funded in the fiscal year's budget, he said. Additionally, administration has been working since May on two feasibility studies, the language study and all-day kindergarten, with the findings being reported back to the school board in October and November, respectively.

Sklarz pointed out the field he works in is exciting because each year brings "a fresh start."

"It's like a little bit of Christmas anticipation," he said.

However, Sklarz's main focus is making sure the school defines itself this year.

"This is going to be the year we define ourselves and come together as a board, a school community, and a broader community of taxpayers," he said, stressing the new principal search to come. "We will define what we value and what's important."

Students will begin the 2013-14 school year next Wednesday, Aug. 28.

Colchester Blight Ordinance Task Force Created

by Melissa Roberto

The Board of Selectmen last Thursday, Aug. 15, unanimously approved the formation of a task force responsible for drafting and recommending a blight ordinance to town officials.

The approval followed a town meeting earlier that evening, which was held to discuss the issue of blight in Colchester.

The selectmen's support was in response to a motion made by resident Steve Schuster during the blight meeting. Schuster and several in the crowd endorsed the formation of a task force – an approach initially pitched by the selectmen at the start of the town meeting.

Per town charter, the Board of Selectmen is responsible for interviewing and selecting candidates for the task force and establishing a charge for it to follow. The selectmen agreed Thursday the task force should consist of seven members, and to begin forming it at their next regular meeting, which will be held Thursday, Sept. 19, at 7 p.m.

The town meeting was scheduled after resident Bob Prentiss issued a petition of 242 signatures to Town Hall in May. Prentiss formulated the petition in hopes the selectmen would "draw up a strong blight ordinance with teeth," the petition stated.

Nearly a dozen residents spoke of their concerns regarding blighted properties in their neighborhoods last week. A common concern seemed to be that blighted properties have a negative effect on residents' property values.

The choice words "junkyard" and "eyesore" were used to describe a few. According to resident Dave Anderson, one residence in Colchester has a front yard filled with unregistered boats, trucks, motor homes and construction equipment.

"You name it, it's there," he said. "On the front yard in plain sight."

Others described blight they've seen in town as overgrown grass and hedges that cross over

to their own properties.

Resident Patricia Blaauboer said her household's situation is a "little different." In the last five years, Blaauboer said her neighborhood has been the scene of three houses in foreclosure. She highlighted the appearance of one in particular.

"The gutters are falling off the house; the shudders are falling off," she explained, adding that "occasionally someone will come by and mow the lawn."

Still, the deteriorating appearance of the house is "as much blight to us as a broken-down car is to someone else."

Residents eager to see an ordinance in place to address the issues suggested the ordinance be drafted sooner rather than later. A handful declared they'd like to see it enforced in 30-60 days.

At their board meeting that evening, the selectmen agreed the issue is in need of resolu-

tion, but seemed to feel that quality of the ordinance is most important.

"Though it is an urgent need, it is also very complex," selectwoman Rosemary Coyle explained. "It's easy to pass something but if you can't do anything with it, it really doesn't do any good for citizens or us as a town."

Coyle furthered she feels an ordinance will be helpful "if you give it enough time and if you give it enough effort."

Selectman Jim Ford added it's "critical" to take time to create the ordinance so it's done seriously.

First Selectman Gregg Schuster pointed out a similar task force has been formed at the state level to create a model of blight ordinances for communities to follow. He said the ordinance is expected to pass in February.

"I'm sure we can monitor that and have some information from [that task force] and incorporate [it]," said Schuster.

Colchester School Year Starts with New CES Principal

by Melissa Roberto

For Colchester's youth, each new school year brings a new setting to become acquainted with, a new teacher to meet, perhaps a new bus route, and a time where milestones like learning to tie a shoe or learning addition and subtraction await.

This year, the students at Colchester Elementary School will also be welcomed by a friendly new face, their new principal, Anne Watson.

One month into her new administrative role, Watson said she's already impressed by the pre-kindergarten through grade two school and the district as a whole.

"I am really, really impressed by the dedication of the staff and the amount of time they put in," she said. "I consider myself fortunate to be a member of such a collaborative team."

Watson joined Colchester Public Schools in July after spending a majority of her career as an administrator in elementary schools in and outside of the state. Her career in the education field began as a teacher in the early 1990s when she taught for eight years at Naubuc Elementary School in Glastonbury. She then spent an additional two years in that district, taking on her first administrative role as assistant principal at Hebron Avenue School, where she also taught students of the school's gifted and talented program on the side.

During her time in Glastonbury, Watson also taught technology at the graduate sector of the University of Hartford.

In 2002, Watson transitioned to the Middletown school district as principal of Macdonough School, a kindergarten- through fifth-grade school. She stayed in Middletown for one year – which included the implementation of a school-wide reform in literacy – before her family moved to Maine. Watson then assumed another principal position at Woodman Park Elementary School in Dover, N.H., for three years. On top of her principal duties,

Watson also taught at the graduate level, this time in the education department at the University of New Hampshire.

For the past seven years, Watson has spent her time as a principal back in Connecticut within the Avon district at Thompson Brook School, a fifth- and sixth-grade intermediate school.

Watson highlighted, however, that through most of the administrative titles she's held, spending time in the classroom with students was a constant.

"Up until I left my principal position in Avon I would teach in the classroom as often as I could," she said.

"My true passion is making learning fun for students," she furthered.

As an administrator, Watson said she likes to think of herself as a "collaborator," which her fellow administrators find fitting. Superintendent of Schools Jeffrey Mathieu said that, like "all of the new administrators," Watson "believes in the Colchester spirit."

Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein said he feels confident with Watson's entrance to Colchester as well.

Watson "comes to us from Avon with terrific experience at a high performing school," he explained. "We're confident that she's going to bring that same philosophy here."

Like other administrators and teachers in Colchester, Watson spent several hours this summer training for the new teacher evaluation system. The new principal said it's been "great" to be alongside other professionals in the district during that training.

"It's given me an opportunity to really get to know them," she said.

The seasoned administrator added this coming year at CES will be significant due to the implementation of all-day kindergarten for all, which she supports.

"It's a gift of time for students," she con-



Following the retirement of Colchester's longtime elementary school administrator, Jacqueline Somberg, the Board of Education appointed new principal Anne Watson at the start of the summer. Watson comes from Avon with lengthy experience as an administrator. Watson will welcome students on their first day next Wednesday, Aug. 28.

cluded.

The principal furthered additional time for kindergartners will allow the town's youngest students to take their time succeeding in even common, everyday actions like going through the lunch line.

"Even that is a huge change and they really have to spend a lot of time learning," Watson said. "It will be interesting; it will be fun."

CES' school atmosphere, which is summarized in its slogan, "Soar to Success at CES, a school that C-A-R-E-S," is also something that Watson said attracted her to the school. Primarily, her decision to apply for the role came from

her knowledge that CES is classified as a school using the "Responsive Classroom" approach – which, according to responsiveclassroom.org, is an approach that "leads to greater teacher effectiveness, higher student achievement, and improved school climate."

Additionally, she hopes to maintain the happy environment current at CES.

"It has a happy and nurturing and comfortable environment," she said. "The bottom line is to make sure every child is learning to their potential and enjoying themselves why they do it."

Getting Ready for School 'the Colchester Way'

by Melissa Roberto

Colchester's youth and adolescents are most likely spending their last few days of summer vacation trying to savor every last minute possible, sleeping in and basking in the sunshine before the pens and pencils and books come out.

But the lack of enthusiasm most students may feel as the summer comes to a close is easily made up for in excess by Colchester administrators and teachers ready to take on a new school year, as Superintendent of Schools Jeffrey Mathieu put it, "the Colchester way."

The Colchester method Mathieu highlighted is the district's "unique" environment created by the community as a whole.

"It's a spirit of helping out, helping your neighbor and going beyond what's expected," Mathieu said.

Mathieu described some of his anticipation of the upcoming year in a back-to-school letter he wrote to staff.

"I wrote, 'if you watch TV around the holidays they always say December is the most exciting time of the year but for educators, the end of August and the beginning of September is the most exciting time because we get to see the students again,'" the superintendent recalled.

Colchester students will break the hush that's existed in the four public schools all summer next Wednesday, Aug. 28. At Colchester Elementary School (CES), new principal Anne Watson will greet the town's youngest scholars and lead the kindergartners through Colchester's first year of full-day kindergarten for all. (A full article on Watson's appointment appears elsewhere in this issue.) The all-day kindergarten for all has been a long-time coming for the Colchester district, Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein explained.

"We are excited to see this happening," Goldstein said, "because we know research shows it's when you get kids started early where you have your biggest impact."

At Jack Jackter Intermediate School, new assistant principal Jen Reynolds will welcome students. Already familiar with the town, as she also lives here, Reynolds will experience her first administrative role in Colchester. Mathieu and Goldstein both said Reynolds' impressive performance during what the superintendent described as a "rigorous" interview process played a big role in her recruitment.

William J. Johnston Middle School may be the talk of the town this fall, as information of the town's proposed building project – which would renovate and add to the middle school and include a senior center and community center – will be presented by the Building Committee at each of the schools' open houses. The project will go before the voters at a town meeting on Sept. 18 and a subsequent town-wide referendum on Oct. 1.

"Getting out information about the project is what the building committee's focus will be during the first few weeks of school," Goldstein said.

Meanwhile, at Bacon Academy, 902 Colchester adolescents will also experience an exciting start. Neal Curland, the interim assistant principal for the 2013-14 year, comes to the school after spending the last 17 years as a special education teacher at Norwich Free Academy. He will fill in for assistant principal Charlie Hewes, who is taking a leave of absence to finish a doctorate degree in curriculum. Mathieu said Hewes will return for the following school year. However, because Hewes' focus for his doctorate in curriculum, he'll help out the district from time to time during the upcoming school year, as it works on the implementation of new state mandates like the Common Core State Standards and new teacher evaluations.

Curland is excited to start his administrative endeavors in Colchester, and Mathieu said the district is just as thrilled to receive him.

"From my visits last spring when I was interviewing for the job I loved the family atmosphere [Bacon Academy] has," said Curland. "It seemed like a very happy place. It has a great culture and friendliness to it that was very attractive."

That Bobcat culture will be experienced starting the first day, Principal Marc Ambruso highlighted this week. In typical Bacon fashion, high school students will continue the school's tradition of celebrating the first day of school instead of dreading it. The tradition, "First Day the Bacon Way," is a student-organized "amping ceremony" similar to a pep rally, Ambruso explained. The day will begin with the distribution of T-shirts to all students and a pep rally followed by a quick run-through of classes. The remainder of the day features activities on the football field including an inflatable water slide and dunk tank.



The halls of Bacon Academy may be quiet now but that will soon change next Wednesday, Aug. 28, when students file in for the first day of school. The day will begin with the high school's annual celebration, "First Day the Bacon Way."

The tradition is of no cost to the district, Ambruso said. A committee of students led by one staff member fundraises for the event each summer. One of the chairwomen of the committee, senior Jen Cole, said \$4,500 was collected this year through fundraisers and the help of sponsors.

"I think it's something everyone remembers," Cole said. "School spirit starts off on the first day."

On day two, though, academics will be in full effect. The high school is going to be staffed with seven new teachers and seven new paraprofessionals. Ambruso said a library media specialist position became vacant this summer and the interview process is still being conducted. Ambruso – also fairly new to his position, being named interim principal last fall and then tapped for the permanent position this past spring – thinks the new staff coming to Bacon will strengthen the school's culture.

"I think anytime you get new blood it's an infusion of new ideas," said Ambruso.

Similar to the last few years, the district will continue making significant improvements to its kindergarten- through 12th-grade curriculum to implement the demands of Common Core State Standards per mandates descending from the state level. This year will also mark the district's first stab at its hybrid of the new teacher evaluations, or System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED). The state gave all districts a choice of implementing it fully or in phases, Goldstein explained. Colchester chose to fully take it on this year, he said.

"We decided we needed to be fully invested in it to make it work," the board chairman said. Earlier this week Mathieu spent time touring each of the four Colchester schools "walking each hallway, checking outside grounds and seeing what custodians and maintenance staff did."

"We're very prepared," Mathieu said, "and ready for the students to start."

Marlborough Day Just Two Days Away

by **Melissa Roberto**

Though backpacks may soon be of greater use than beach totes, families interested in spending one last day of fun outside without traveling too far can head to Blish Park this Sunday, Aug. 25, for Marlborough Day, to celebrate local businesses within the community.

Marlborough Day is a community-wide event free to the public hosted by the Marlborough Business Association, association executive Jessica Olander described. The event has been held for a total of 25 years and was originally run by the town before it took a brief hiatus. In 2007, the MBA took over the planning duties and has followed through with its agenda of “showing off what Marlborough has to offer” ever since, Olander said.

The event’s focus of showcasing Marlborough businesses means all participating businesses or civic organizations who will have a booth on site at the park are MBA members. This year, 38 have chosen to participate.

In addition to free admission, the day is filled with pluses for attendees, who do not have to be residents of Marlborough to attend. In fact, attendance is the only thing required for the opportunity to snag free goodies and win prizes.

Like years past, activities sure to please the

youth are the Monster Mobile Arcade, a 75-foot air-conditioned arcade trailer, and the Roaming Railroad, a trackless train that offers rides to kids around the park. Local musician Jim Ferguson and bands Dino and the No-Names and The Modern Riffs will also be on site providing the tunes.

But this year, the select few music groups won’t be the only ones in front of a mic. This year’s event will host its first-ever “Marlborough Idol,” where attendees will have the opportunity to compete in a singing competition. The first round of acapella auditions will begin at 11 a.m.

Some of the sponsored activities will also remind attendees that summer hasn’t ended. Those who pay a visit to the AHM Youth and Family Services booth will be able to make their own lemonade while another stop to Oneida Holistic Health Center will treat attendees with chair massages, reiki and reflexology.

Last year’s favored activity of spray-on tattoos will make their way back to the park this year, sponsored by Organized East of the River.

“People waited in line for a half hour last year,” Olander recalled. “It was a great, great activity.”

Hot Stepz Dance Academy is also going to perform for attendees with The Modern Riffs.

And the celebration wouldn’t be complete without food. Olander said items like pizza, chicken tenders, chili cheese fries, a “walking taco” consisting of Fritos chips, seasoned ground beef and other savory additions, will be available – possibly the only things that will cause attendees to reach into their wallets.

The local Boy Scouts will also serve cheeseburgers and hot dogs, while the Republican Town Committee will sell fried dough.

Last year, about 650 attendees came through the park to partake in the festivities, Olander said. But this year, the executive strives for an even bigger crowd.

Craig Robinson, chairman of the Marlborough Day Committee and owner of Its So Ranunculus flower shop, defined the event as “simple and comfortable.” The MBA member pointed out that he hopes Sunday’s weather is similar to last year’s perfect low-humidity temperatures and clear skies.

Robinson said two years ago a tornado warning caused the event to wrap up early; the year prior it was held in tents due to rain. But that

hasn’t put a damper on his excitement each year when the event gets close.

“I’m looking forward to it,” Robinson said. “You walk away with some possible gift ideas or ideas of areas to go for gifts that are supplied in town.”

Whether it’s the arts and crafts, extra goodies and prizes, entertainment or food that attracts attendees, Olander highlighted the event’s true purpose.

“It really is a community give-back,” she explained.

Marlborough Day is pretty much a break-even event for the MBA, she furthered. The businesses use it as a way to give back to the community that keeps them going, she said.

And according to Robinson, kids, teens and families – or really anyone who attends – will most likely walk away with miscellaneous items supplied by Marlborough’s own, some that might fill up those backpacks just in time for the school year.

The event will be held from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. at Blish Park in Marlborough on Sunday, Aug. 25. Attendees are reminded pets are not allowed.

Belltown Goes Back to School Next Week

by **Elizabeth Bowling**

Belltown schools will ring in the 2013-14 school year Thursday, Aug. 29, and a lot will be new – from administrators, to teachers, to the curriculum, East Hampton academics are getting a facelift.

According to Superintendent of Schools Diane Dugas, Tim Vantassle on Monday was hired as the new assistant superintendent of schools, a position that has been vacant since Kevin Reich retired from the position last fall. (Reich currently serves as part-time facilities director for the schools.)

Vantassle comes to East Hampton from Enfield, where he was the principal at John F. Kennedy Middle School, Dugas said.

She called Vantassle a “very strong curriculum leader,” a “team player” and a “collaborator.” She furthered, “He brings a wealth of background and experience.”

Dugas also said Vantassle has a “deep understanding” of the national Common Core State Standards, which Connecticut – and 46 other states – adopted in 2010. The new standards highlight the “expectations of what all children should know to be college and career ready,” Dugas explained.

She said the Common Core requires that students have a “deeper focus” rather than a wide breadth of curriculum, which differs from the way East Hampton schools have taught in the past. This year’s curriculum will adapt to “best prepare students for college and career,” she said, “and by doing that, they will inevitably meet the requirements for the new testing.”

The “new testing” is the Smarter Balance Assessment, a field test created by the state that will replace the Connecticut Mastery Test in the 2014-15 school year, Dugas said. The Smarter Balance Assessment program will assess students in grades three through eight, as well as grade 11.

Dugas called the Smarter Balance Assessment “a much more rigorous assessment” with “different teaching and learning expectations.”

Because the new test must be completed online, Dugas said students will need to become more digitally-literate than ever before.

“One of our big focuses this year is preparing both the district to be digitally-ready as well as preparing the students to be digitally-literate,” Dugas said.

The town is also implementing fiber optics that will “support high-speed Internet as well as to help support additional technology resources for the delivery of the new curriculum,” Dugas said. The process is already “in the works” and should be completed by January, but the town is applying for a state grant to ease the financial burden, Dugas said.

Echoing Dugas’ thoughts on digital literacy, East Hampton High School principal John Fidler said that this year it will be crucial for

students to master technology – specifically, computerized testing.

This year, high school students will practice computerized testing in EHHS’s four computer labs. “It’s a pilot year,” Fidler said.

But after this year, the high school renovation project calls for increased technology in the building. According to Fidler, the renovation project will be in its “schematic design” phase for this entire year. No part of that design development should impact the students, he affirmed, and construction isn’t scheduled to begin until fall 2014.

Dugas said she is excited for the renovation project. “We’ll be designing for what the future holds for the students,” she said.

But looking more to the present, Dugas said 11 new teachers were added to the district this year. She said, “We’ve been working very collaboratively this summer” and she hopes they’ll bring a great energy to East Hampton schools.

New teacher and administrator evaluations will be implemented this fall and will emphasize “developing rich opportunities for conversation between teachers and administrators and colleagues around teaching and learning,” Dugas said. She noted the importance of teachers and administrators working together in a professional learning community.

The state mandated that every district in Connecticut implement the new teacher and administrator evaluation system this year. The system will measure effectiveness based on student learning, observation of performance and practice, and stakeholder feedback. (Parents will have the opportunity to fill out a survey this fall to contribute to the new evaluation system.)

Regarding teachers, Fidler said the high school teachers have been filtering in and out all summer, getting their classrooms ready, and reworking their curriculums.

He said the teachers are working to “align our curriculum to the standards of the Common Core.” He furthered, “We have a very hard work faculty” and he knows his teachers are up for the challenge.

In addition to curriculum changes, one major change at the high school this year will be the elimination of the one-hour delays every Wednesday, which were implemented last year, Fidler said. The weekly delays were used to give teachers time to assess their students’ work and, based on those assessments, make “improvements to their own instruction...in their classrooms,” he said.

But the weekly delay was “too disruptive” so it will not continue this year, Fidler said. Instead, he said, faculty and department meeting time may be consolidated to provide time for teachers to do those assessments.

Last year also marked the beginning of the



Next week the chairs in this East Hampton High School classroom will be in their upright positions and filled with students. Classes start next Thursday, Aug. 29.

high school’s academic support system called “X-block,” which happened every Tuesday and Thursday. Essentially, it is a time when all teachers and all students are accessible and it will continue this year.

“We’re really trying to bring everyone to mastery,” Fidler said explaining why X-block will continue.

Mastery is a common theme in East Hampton schools for the 2013-14 academic year.

Memorial Elementary School’s new principal, Mindy Wilkie, said she and her staff went through a lot of professional development and training to master the new evaluation plans. The principals evaluate the assistant principals and the teachers, and Dugas evaluates the principals, Wilkie explained.

Regarding the “nuts and bolts” of going back to school, Wilkie said she and her staff are working on updating the school website, getting handbooks together, cleaning the building, and finalizing registration, which will continue until the first day of school.

Wilkie said there will be a three-day teacher professional development Aug. 26, 27 and 28. In addition, the new teacher orientation was this week, as well as kindergarten orientation.

According to Wilkie, Memorial Elementary School has about 150 kindergarteners. To put that in perspective, those kids are the class of 2026.

A little more than 60 students will attend all-

day kindergarten – there are three full-day sections – and about 80 will attend half-day kindergarten sections.

Because many parents have expressed dissatisfaction in sending their children to half-day kindergarten, Dugas will conduct a feasibility study, via a feasibility committee, to explore the possibility of implementing all-day kindergarten for all kindergarteners in the future.

Wilkie said all-day kindergarten is “definitely a benefit” because it gives the kids time to “really dig into the curriculum.”

Also to help dig into the curriculum, Wilkie said each classroom was outfitted with projection screens and two newer computers. She called the advancement of technology in East Hampton’s schools a “huge initiative.”

“We’re moving very fast toward that [wireless access] because every student will be assessed through electronic means,” Wilkie said.

Wilkie said Memorial’s schedule has been modified so that teachers have more “collaborative time” together, a notion that Dugas strongly supports.

Wilkie said, “I’m most looking forward to creating the culture and the climate – that teaching and learning climate.” She furthered, “It’s not just about students learning anymore. It’s about teachers learning.”

“I’m so excited to just see the school in action,” she added.

East Hampton Fireworks Return With A Bang

by Elizabeth Bowling

Last Saturday's return of East Hampton's fireworks show was nothing short of a success. This year the East Hampton Volunteer Fire Department commemorated its 90th anniversary of service to the town with a 30-minute fireworks display that left hundreds in awe.

It was a perfect night – clear and 70 degrees – for families and friends to spread out a blanket on the lawn of the East Hampton Middle School athletic fields and enjoy a sense of community, great food from Franks' Mobile Kitchen, and a great show.

The display, put on by Ocean State Pyrotechnics from Rhode Island, went off without a hitch.

Each vehicle that entered the East Hampton Middle School parking lot was welcomed by a friendly greeting from members of the East Hampton Volunteer Fire Department. Members handed out notes to each vehicle, explaining the purpose of the show and thanking the people of East Hampton.

The note called the show a "family-oriented fireworks display" and a "public service, solely for the entertainment and enjoyment of the residents of our community and surrounding towns." Indeed, it was.

Jim Burke, the fire department's public information officer, said he hopes this year's fireworks revival will lead to a yearly tradition for the town.

"We are planning on making this an annual event," he said.

Admission was free and many spectators arrived early, giving kids time to run around excitedly. Some youngsters played with the glow sticks that the Junior Division sold that night.

Each child under the age of 12 was given a free raffle ticket as they entered the complex. According to Burke, 238 raffle tickets were handed out.

Excitement was in the air as the crowd waited for the show to start.

At 8:45 p.m., the audience was teased by a couple practice fireworks. By 9:10 Burke announced that the winning ticket belonged to Thomas Cromwell. The winner and his family – his grandmother and three younger brothers – were upgraded to "VIP seating" for the fireworks show.

The crowd gave Cromwell a round of applause as he and his family took their VIP seats and seconds later the lights illuminating the athletic field were suddenly turned off, causing some spectators to shriek. But the pitch black lasted only a moment because then the show began with a bang, literally.

After the loud and bright grand opening, one spectator said with amazement, "Oh wow! Did you see that?!"

"Ooh's" and "ahh's" spread like wildfire throughout the crowd. Any lull generated a great cheer from impressed spectators. And the bigger the fireworks, the bigger the cheer.

The grand finale left one spectator saying, "That's what I'm asking from East Hampton!" Another said, "I don't know if I can contain myself for the rest of the evening!"

Jim Kostin, who enjoyed the show with his wife, Trudy, said, "We thought it was a lot of fun. It was well-organized and it was a great night for it."

Tina Lanzi watched the show with her family. She said simply, "We had a wonderful time."



Hundreds gathered at the East Hampton Middle School athletic fields to watch the Fire Department's 90th anniversary commemoration fireworks display. The show used to be an annual event and the fire department hopes to revive the community's tradition.

Hamm Wins Citizen of the Year Award in East Hampton

by Elizabeth Bowling

East Hampton's Citizen of the Year is typically an individual who has made a difference in the town throughout his or her life – and this year's winner is no exception.

Gail Hamm, the 2013 recipient of East Hampton's Citizen of the Year Award, said, "It's obviously a great honor."

The former state representative said she was "pretty surprised actually" to have been named Citizen of the Year by the East Hampton Village Lions because "there's so many people in our community who have done so much that to be singled out was a bit overwhelming."

According to a press release sent by the Village Lions, Hamm was chosen for her "decades of unselfish service to both the local community and our state."

Hamm served East Hampton for over 20 years. Her work for the town included serving on its Democratic Town Committee and Board of Education. She was also elected state representative for the 34th Assembly District of East Hampton and Middletown in 1998.

It was her time in the state assembly, Hamm said, where she did her most significant work for East Hampton.

"I was able to successfully bring some funding back," she said, referring to two \$25,000 grants she helped the town receive to improve Lake Pocotopaug, as well as federal money she helped secure for East Hampton for Comstock Covered Bridge over Salmon River.

Village Lions member Teri Schlosser agreed. "She's done so much for East Hampton in terms of our resources, such as Lake Pocotopaug and helping to get Comstock bridge restored," she said.

Schlosser also said Hamm was "instrumental" in getting the restoration of the Joseph N. Goff House underway.

While those were big accomplishments for East Hampton, Hamm said she felt her most

significant work in general was her work with juveniles.

"I was very interested in status offenders and decriminalizing runaways," she said, regarding proposed legislation to ease punishment for some youth offenders.

Since her retirement from office late last year, Hamm said she's "been resting."

While Hamm may be best known outside East Hampton for her time as a state legislator, in Belltown she has served in many clubs and organizations. She is a life member of the Chatham Historical Society, Middlesex Land Trust, and Friends of the East Hampton Library, and she and her husband, Alan Hurst, are also members of East Hampton Rotary.

Being named Citizen of the Year was just one of the accolades that have been bestowed on Hamm this year. In addition to being honored at the Old Home Days Parade in July, Hamm earlier this year was feted at the Humanitarian Awards Program for the Eastern Connecticut District of Lions Clubs International, where Lions clubs from the eastern part of the state honored individuals for outstanding service to their communities. The Village Lions nominated Hamm for that award as well.

Schlosser said Hamm has done so much work locally, but also beyond the local level, and that's what sets her apart from other Citizen of the Year award winners.

Hamm's name has now been added to the Citizen of the Year plaque on display at East Hampton Public Library. Past years' recipients include: Joan Youngs in 2012, Red McKinney in 2011, JoAnn Ewing in 2010, Donald Ingraham in 2009, Dennis Erickson in 2008, Cindy Baloga in 2007, Ray Krupa in 2006, Eugene Hubbard in 2005, Joseph Becker in 2004, Frederick Everett in 2003, Monica Murray in 2002, Ronald Christopher in 2001, Emma Prince in 2000, Gladys Smith in 1999, and Charles Nichols in 1998.



Gail Hamm, East Hampton's former state representative, recently won the 2013 East Hampton Citizen of the Year award, presented by the East Hampton Village Lions. Village Lion Linda Brogan is shown at left, with Hamm and Hamm's husband, Alan Hurst.

Portland Prepares for Back to School

by Elizabeth Bowling

The Portland Highlanders will hit the books running after an extended summer vacation – at least, one that seems extended in comparison to surrounding towns.

According to Portland's Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen, students will return to school Tuesday, Sept. 3, the day after Labor Day, but teachers will go back Monday, Aug. 26, for four days of a "concentrated period of time for staff development."

Doyen said the Portland school district doesn't have any new administrators this year, but eight new certified staff will join the team.

During the week of professional development before classes actually start, staff will go over the new teacher and administrator evaluation system and implement the new curriculum standards of the national Common Core State Standards to their respective curriculums, Doyen said.

The Common Core was adopted by Connecticut and 46 other states in 2010 and Portland has been working the Common Core into its curriculum for a couple of years already.

Doyen noted that teachers will need "a good chunk of time" to continue to rewrite their curriculums because the Common Core standards shift a lot of the previous standards to different grades; for example, what was expected of second graders in the past may now be expected of first graders.

Doyen said some curriculum changes will be minimal, while others will be more "significant." For example, she said, the way teachers teach writing and language arts will change a lot. Previously, writing was taught progressively – young students in elementary school focused on writing narratives, middle school students learned expository writing, and in high school they were taught persuasive writing. But now students must be taught all types of writing as soon as kindergarten, Doyen said.

"The standards, overall, emphasize writing a lot," she said. She noted that even math and physical education teachers will have to learn how to teach writing.

Portland schools started integrating the Common Core standards for math into the curriculum two years ago; last year, the new standards for reading were added to the curriculum; and this year, writing will be added to that list.

"We still have a lot of work to do in that [language arts] area," Doyen said.

The Common Core curriculum will prepare students for the Smarter Balance Assessment, or SBA. The SBA is a field test, created by the state, that will replace the Connecticut Mastery Test no later than the 2014-15 school year, but maybe as soon as this year.

That means that this spring, students will either take the Connecticut Mastery Test or the "rigorous" SBA, Doyen said. The SBA would assess students in grades three through eight, as well as grade 11.

"Next year we're absolutely going to the new [Smarter Balance Assessment] test based on the Common Core," Doyen affirmed.

The Board of Education last week submitted a technology grant application for \$476,750 to help pay for additional bandwidth with new fiber optic transmissions lines, Doyen said. The updates to technology are important to the school district because the Smarter Balance Assessment is an online test.

"Right now we do not have the resources for the online tests," Doyen said. "We don't know how far we're going to get with the funds we have."

It is uncertain for now whether Portland schools will receive additional funding for technology from the state, Doyen said, but because improvement to technology is essential, Portland schools will proceed, on some scale, with upgrading bandwidth and infrastructure.

Also regarding technology, Doyen said the schools got some new computers this year, as well as four portable Macintosh labs, each with 25 computers.

Also new this year is full-day classes for all kindergarteners. Doyen said the 95 registered kindergarteners are split up between six teachers. Doyen said all-day kindergarten is what she's most excited about for this upcoming year, and she's not the only one. "The teachers are very excited and the parents are very excited," she added.

"We're really thrilled," Doyen furthered, regarding all-day kindergarten. "The new requirements for Common Core start in kindergarten."

Portland High School principal Andrea Lavery said the three major focuses this year for both the high school and the middle school are: continuing to incorporate Common Core standards into the curriculum, the new teacher evaluation program, and the New England Accreditation Evaluation in May for grades seven through 12.



Portland High School Principal Andrea Lavery, right, and Scott Giegerich, the middle school principal, are excited to start the 2013-14 school year – and are literally opening the doors to the new year. Portland students hit the books Tuesday, Sept. 3.

The schools have been preparing for the accreditation – something that happens once every 10 years – for two years already, Lavery said.

"As an administrator, I'm most excited about going through the evaluations and the accreditation," Lavery said.

Portland Middle School Principal Scott Giegerich said the middle school and high school had opened two hours late, once a month since last year and dedicated that time toward collaborative efforts between the two schools in regards to the preparation.

Lavery said, "We're so proud of our staff." She confirmed that the monthly delays will continue this year, as well.

According to Giegerich, the school performance index for the Portland school district received an 89.1 out of 100 in the 2011-12 school year. Last year, the district exceeded that

number (though the official new number is yet to be disclosed). This year, the district will aim to continue to improve.

"When you set goals and you make a plan and you work toward that plan, you can be successful. And we were successful," he said.

The music program at the middle school is also finding success. Giegerich said the middle school music program is "flourishing."

Similarly, the world language program at the high school is flourishing.

"We have expanded our world language classes," Lavery said. "We hired a part-time world language teacher so we can offer more sections of world language."

Lavery said that after the wild weather the past couple of winters, as well as the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown last December, she hopes for a mild year.

"We're just hoping for a quiet year," she said.

Portland Selectmen Gear Up For School

by Elizabeth Bowling

With the start of school rapidly approaching, the Board of Selectmen was faced with last-minute decisions regarding Portland's school bus contract and school lunch fund at its regular meeting Wednesday.

According to Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen, Nichols Bus Service of East Hampton has been the bus company of choice for Portland schools for years. At the request of the Board of Education, the selectmen decided to waive the bidding requirements so that Nichols Bus can extend its contract with the Board of Education by two years. For the 2014-15 school year, Nichols will charge the Board of Education a zero percent increase; but in the 2015-16 school year the company will increase its charges by 1 percent.

Doyen also informed the board about an issue that arose with the Board of Education's contract with Sodexo, an outside company that provides the schools with their lunches.

In the past four years that Sodexo has been serving Portland, the company has not been able to make any money from its school lunch program, Doyen said, so in order for it to continue in Portland, Sodexo is asking that the Board of Education pay the company \$20,000 if the company can't make that amount through selling lunches.

Doyen said, "This is a problem every small school district in Connecticut is facing."

Every selectman but one voted in favor of transferring up to but not more than \$40,000 (more likely approximately \$10,000) to the

school lunch fund from the Board of Education's unspent funds from the 2012-13 year. Selectman Carl Chudzik was opposed.

He said, "I feel like we're having our feet held to the fire here and I don't like it."

Also at Wednesday's meeting the board was introduced to the C-PACE (Connecticut Property Assessed Clean Energy) energy saving program. C-PACE offers businesses the opportunity to update their facilities to be more energy efficient and pay for the program through taxes, according to Andy Bauer, the chairman of Portland's Clean Energy Task Force.

Implementing C-PACE comes at no cost to the town, he said. Rather, the town simply collects the payment from the business and delivers it to CEFIA, the company that coordinates C-PACE, he furthered.

"C-PACE is generally available to projects that are \$100,000 or more," Bauer explained to the board. "And it can be a combination of energy efficiency and clean energy."

He said there are about a dozen businesses in Portland that would be eligible for C-PACE if the town adopts the program. He also said the task force supports C-PACE.

"The town gets reimbursed for any cost," he added.

First Selectwoman Bransfield said the board will revisit the C-PACE program at a later meeting.

Other business that was brought to the board included the installment of a new, uniform phone system in town and school owned build-

ings – a \$70,000 expenditure.

Dave Kuzminski, the town's technology coordinator, said the phone system is "five years past end of life." The new system would not include upgrades to the high school and middle school building; that would come later.

The board will make a decision on the installation of a new phone system in the fall, Bransfield said.

Another request to the board came from the Portland Library. The library is seeking to submit a request for a construction grant from the state to improve handicapped accessibility to the building's restrooms.

The board agreed to go forward with the grant request for \$20,000 on behalf of the library. If the grant is approved, it would cover half of the cost of the construction project, Bransfield said.

Also at Wednesday's meeting, a Brownstone Quorum representative, Howard Rosenbaum pitched some ideas to the selectmen regarding potential improvements to Brownstone Quorum to "bring the park up to its full potential," as well as ways to fund those improvements.

Rosenbaum said his top priorities are contingent upon providing a water system to the pavilion – for an estimated \$30,000 – and they include installing a sink in the utilities room and installing bathrooms.

He also suggested installing barbecue grills, picnic tables and an exercise trail in the park, for example.

Regarding the cost of installing water, Chudzik said, "I think it's an awful lot of money."

Because these projects would take "multiple years" and some significant funding, Rosenbaum suggested to the board that the funds be raised by having the town set aside 15 percent of the revenue earned by the park each year for five years and put that money "back into the park."

Bransfield said she would look into alternative options and she would report back to the board members and to Rosenbaum.

After viewing a different presentation by local chiropractor John Mormile Wednesday night, the Board of Selectmen announced that the month of September will officially be Subluxation Awareness Month.

According to Mormile, the entire practice of chiropractics was developed around subluxation, which is a partial dislocation, specifically in the spine.

Also at Wednesday's meeting, the board appointed members to various boards and commissions. Carol Caldes was appointed as a full member to the Planning and Zoning Commission; Christian Rubenbauer was appointed as an alternate on the Planning and Zoning Commission; and Jan Janowski was appointed to the Portland Housing Authority.

The next Board of Selectmen meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Sept. 18, at 7:30 p.m., at Portland Library.

Portland School Board Decides to Buy Minibus

by Elizabeth Bowling

The local Board of Education just needs to dot the i's and cross the t's before school begins for students on Sept. 3, and that's just what it did at its regularly scheduled meeting Tuesday night.

Last month, two school vans that transported students to and from their school buildings did not pass the state's safety inspection and now the countdown to the first day of school has the Board of Education scrambling to buy a vehicle to take the place of the rejected vans.

"We really are in a bind," Doyen said. "We have looked at a variety of different approaches."

According to Doyen, the best option is to purchase a minibus from the state bid list for approximately \$45,000, which would come out of the Board of Education's operating budget.

The town schools already have three minibuses, so this new purchase will be the fourth and will serve as a "back-up" in emergency situations, Doyen said.

Without a back-up vehicle, Doyen said, "We'd literally have to get a taxi to transport students."

But board member Ben Srb said he wasn't comfortable making a decision on the purchase

of a new vehicle just yet, because he wanted to "sit down and do a thorough [financial] analysis." He asked if the board could push back its decision by one meeting, but Doyen told him "we can't put it off."

The new vehicle would need to be ready by the first day of school and Board of Education Chairman Christopher Phelps echoed Doyen, pointing out that the board didn't have "the luxury of time."

"It's unfortunate that our backs are sort of against the wall," said board member Andrea Alfano. "Maybe it's not the best decision, but maybe it is. We have to trust the folks that make those financial decisions."

Those "folks" are the director of finance, the school business manager, the school district facilities manager and the superintendent of schools.

Doyen said, "We've done our homework." Alas, the board went to a vote and Phelps, Alfano and board member Michael Pelton voted in favor of the purchase of a minibus through the state bid for approximately \$45,000. Srb abstained.

The two vans in question can no longer trans-

port children, but they can be used for something else. Doyen suggested using them to transport food for the schools' lunches, for example.

Also at Tuesday night's meeting, Doyen said the repaving of the Brownstone Intermediate School parking lot is "well underway." The paving portion is completed and the curbing will be completed Monday, she said. All that will remain at that point will be the painting of the parking spot lines.

But the Brownstone Intermediate School parking lot isn't the only thing in Portland academics that's getting a facelift. The curriculum will continue to adapt to include material that matches the Common Core State Standards.

"The principals and the teachers have worked really hard for a couple years to do two things at once," Doyen said regarding the work that has gone into incorporating Common Core material into the existing curriculum.

Also on Tuesday, the board reviewed Portland's test scores from the 2012-13 academic year.

"We were really, really pleased with our test scores," Doyen said, "We really did extremely well."

In many of the testing sections, the majority of students reached the "goal level" and none were below the "basic level," Doyen raved. CAPT test results stayed "about the same," she added.

It's possible that a new test called the Smarter Balance Assessment will be given this spring in place of the Connecticut Mastery Test. "We don't know 100 percent what test will be given this spring," Doyen said. Regardless, the Smarter Balance Assessment will be given for the 2014-15 school year.

* * *

According to Doyen, all of Portland schools' certified staff has been hired and one paraprofessional still needs to be hired.

"We're in good shape" regarding the hiring process, she said.

The district is also in good shape in terms of security. First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield confirmed that police presence will continue at Portland schools this year, according to Doyen.

* * *

The next Portland Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Sept. 3, at 7 p.m. at the Portland High School media center.

Albino Burmese Python Found in Portland

by Elizabeth Bowling

A Portland resident recently stumbled across an albino Burmese python near the cranberry bog on South Road while on a walk with her husband and dog.

When Janet Nocek found the six-foot-long, yellow and white snake Sunday, Aug. 11, she said the animal was "beautiful" and "very docile."

Nocek informed Portland resident John LeShane, whose home is close to the bog, of her discovery. LeShane didn't hesitate to approach the snake.

LeShane, the founder of the Meshomasic Hiking Club, said he's come across a handful of snakes in the past – mostly rattle and water snakes – so he felt comfortable enough to make contact with the python.

"It just looked friendly," he said, "and so I stroked its back. That's when it slithered away slowly."

After the snake slithered into the bog, where it lingered along the edge, LeShane walked back

to his house and called the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to inform them of the misplaced reptile.

DEEP officer Harold Lindo arrived about an hour later, and then identified the snake as an albino Burmese python, LeShane said.

He said he and Lindo then stepped away for a minute to Lindo's truck to gear up for the capture. But when they walked back to where the snake had been, it was gone.

LeShane said the two men, as well as four other DEEP officials who had joined them, looked for the snake for two hours before they "deserted the hunt that day."

The following morning, at around eight o'clock, DEEP officer Michael Godart was already at the bog looking for the snake when LeShane joined him. A couple hours later, after still no luck, Lindo joined them.

But soon the search party was over.

"Godart's the one that spotted the snake curled up with a bunch of ferns on a little pen-

insula," LeShane said.

Godart called Lindo for backup, LeShane said, and they "went in for the capture." Lindo took the head and Godart got the tail, he explained. The snake, who "struggled a little bit," was placed in a canvas bag for the time being.

The next day the snake was sent to Rainforest Reptiles Shows Inc., a company in Massachusetts that will use the snake for educational purposes. Rainforest Reptiles works closely with DEEP to find and collect all exotic animals that are released into the wild, according to Rainforest Reptiles' herpetologist general curator Michael Ralbovsky.

Ralbovsky said the albino Burmese python is on the federal government's "injurious species" list, which means it has been deemed illegal to move across state lines without the proper permits. Rainforest Reptiles Shows Inc., however, has the license necessary to transport the snake, he said. The company travels nation-

wide with its exotic animals and brings them to schools, museums, libraries and lecture halls.

The particular snake found in Portland was between six and seven feet long and was the width of a tennis ball, Ralbovsky said. He said the snake was not big enough to harm anyone. In fact, he said it was "bitten several times by a snapping turtle."

"It's going to take some months of rehabilitation before the animal is in good shape again," he furthered.

Ralbovsky said he is convinced that someone released the snake into the wild and that it did not end up in cranberry bog by natural causes. "This type of python is from Asia," he said, proving his point.

Ralbovsky pleaded that if someone is considering releasing an exotic pet into the wild, they should call DEEP or Rainforest Reptiles instead and "we'll come get the animal. Don't dump it in the wild."

Huge Crowds Anticipated for Hebron Fair Headliner

by Geeta Schrayter

The Hebron Harvest Fair is just around the corner, and this year the Hebron Lions, who hold the annual festival, have had a unique challenge to deal with: how to handle the fact that the headline music act this year has become one of the most popular groups in the nation.

Florida Georgia Line, a country duo made up of Brian Kelley and Tyler Hubbard, soared to fame last year when their song "Cruise" became the fastest debut single to reach Billboard's country Top 10 (after 14 weeks) since Brooks & Dunn's "Brand New Man" in 1991. "Cruise" went on to set the record for the longest number one song on Billboard's Hot Country Songs after it was remixed featuring hip-hop artist Nelly, and became the third best-selling digital track ever.

This week, the single dropped to number two on the Hot Country Song's list, but it remains number one on Billboard's Country Streaming Songs.

The remix with Nelly made a crossover hit on pop radio as well, peaking at number four on the Billboard Hot 100; as of press time, it's still in the Top 20.

Their album *Here's to the Good Times*, released last December, has since gone platinum, and peaked at number one on Billboard's Top Country Albums list (like the single, the album dropped just this week to the number two spot). It also hit number four on the Billboard 200, which charts albums across all genres.

Tickets to see Florida Georgia Line during their tour are currently on sale, but on Sept. 8, their website floridageorgialine.com lists a concert in Hebron, Conn. – for free. The statement isn't entirely true: those who want to see the group will need to purchase admission tickets to the Hebron Harvest Fair that day, but with general admission at \$13, the price is less than a concert ticket.

However, the group's popularity and the cost to see them in Hebron that Sunday means the Hebron Lions Club and the town have had some extra planning to do in preparation.

Fair President Adam Miclette said this week the Lions are expecting Sunday ticket sales to reach upwards of 25,000. As of Wednesday, around 2,500 advance tickets had been purchased for the fair, and at a planning meeting for the event held Friday, Aug. 16, Miclette said advanced ticket sales were up over 355 percent compared to last year.

But, Miclette noted this week the advance tickets are general admission tickets to the fair and there's no way to tell how many are for Sunday. He added it was important for fairgoers to know they were purchasing a fair ticket, not a concert ticket, and purchasing a ticket didn't guarantee a view of the band.

"Our viewing area is a restricted count and there's only going to be so many viewing spots to the number of people that may be at the fair," he said, "so there will be some obstructed viewing, but the concert will be heard throughout the fair."

Miclette said while it will be harder to do so this year, attendees who have been coming to see the shows for years and come early to set up their chairs can still do so.

"We're not going to discourage the traditional people that have been coming for years," he said. "We're going to have people coming down to that area and sitting there all day."

While in the past the fair has hosted artists who later went on to become well-known, such as Kenny Chesney, or were at one time extremely popular, like Charlie Daniels, Miclette said this is the biggest artist to perform while they're at their peak.

"When I started booking them [last January] they didn't even release their CD yet," Miclette

explained. "I really follow up-and-coming artists trying to find that diamond in the rough that could possibly have something, or a hit record, when they get to the fair" and – Miclette added with a laugh – "I guess we hit the lottery with this one."

While Miclette said it was "absolutely" ideal to have an artist of this caliber perform at the fair, with their popularity comes a number of concerns, like traffic and parking.

"We've worked as a group and secured various parking lots and we're going to park various locations at once, something we've never done before so that should ease traffic flow," he explained.

In addition to parking at the fair grounds, the Lions have secured parking at RHAM and Gilead Hill School as well as Gilead Hill Cemetery and Burnt Hill and Veterans Park.

The parking capacity the group secured was confirmed at 8,000 cars at the Aug. 16 meeting which, based on 3.5 people per vehicle, would amount to 28,000 people. But with the two parks, which were confirmed after the meeting, there is enough parking around town for a crowd of 31,000.

In addition, Miclette said there would be free parking and free shuttle buses to the fair at various locations and extra lanes of traffic would be added to help ease the backup on Route 85.

"There will be three [lanes] instead of two in the area of the fairgrounds" he said, so that there will be a line for fairgoers and thru-traffic will be able to continue on.

"Traffic should be kept at a minimum we're hoping," he said.

Safety and security has been another area of concern. In order to address the larger crowd, Miclette explained there will be added security, added state police and a larger presence of

medical assistance.

Some of the additions include extra security guards in the concert area and six additional hired ambulances with emergency vehicles from Hebron and Colchester on the fairgrounds as backup.

Chatham Health District Emergency Response Coordinator Bill Kramer added at the meeting there would be 18,000 gallons of water on site and the Chatham Health District would have extra people around for inspections.

At the Aug. 15 Board of Selectmen meeting, Town Manager Andy Tierney said he had been "working very hard with the Lions Fair due to the influx on Sunday."

"We want to make sure we have everything covered," he said, commenting on the concert being advertised on the band's website as free.

"With all that out there we're taking steps," Tierney added. "We've notified every barracks around us of that day and what's going on."

"The influx of people in Hebron," added selectman Dan Larsen, "may potentially be one we've never seen before."

Miclette said the realization there could be a larger-than-usual crowd and the need for extra preparations came to the group slowly.

"It came to us gradually as [Florida Georgia Line] started winning the award shows and their popularity grew," he said. "We knew we would have a hard time maintaining the crowds and that we'd have to step up our team in order to do so."

But Miclette felt everyone was prepared. "We should do okay," he said, adding he hoped "for a nice sunshiny day and everybody getting in and having a good time" Sept. 8 as potentially record-setting crowds "cruise" into the fair to see the record-setting group.



New teachers met in the Media Center at RHAM Tuesday to prepare for the upcoming school year, beginning Aug. 28. The meeting included an overview of the new and more time-intensive teacher evaluation plan by Superintendent of Schools Bob Siminski. The new plan will be given to a third of the staff this year.



The hallways at RHAM were gleaming – but noticeably empty – this week as staff and administrators made their final preparations for the new school year. All the preparations will come to a head, and the silence will dissipate next week when students return.

Getting Ready for a New RHAM Day

by Geeta Schrayter

Walking through the halls at the RHAM middle and high schools this week, the most notable attribute, aside from the sheen on the freshly-waxed floors, is silence. There's enough silence for footsteps on the tile to echo off the walls. There's enough silence for the administration – while they admit they enjoy the quiet to an extent – to be ready for students to return and liven things up a bit, as they will next Wednesday, Aug. 28.

On Tuesday, high school principal Scott Leslie said things were in order for their arrival.

"Right now we're pretty much all done," he said. "We're in pretty good shape."

Mike Seroussi, principal of the middle school, added, "The building looks good, which is nice."

But as the students come back, Leslie explained they were going to be asked to do certain things differently. This, he said, was because of the impending shift to the Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessments from the Connecticut Mastery and Connecticut Academic Performance Tests.

The new assessments, which are scheduled to implement fully next year, are focused more on an individual student's skills rather than working through content which is the same for everyone. The difficulty of a particular question, for example, is based on whether or not a student answered the prior question correctly.

These changes would hold true at the middle school as well. And, in addition, Seroussi explained a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) program was going to be piloted in the upcoming year with 31 students – out of 70 who applied.

"It's an attempt to formalize a pre-engineering program," he said of the STEM program, explaining the courses would incorporate more technology and instead of the normal specials

offered at the school, students could take a course in, for example, robotics or music technology.

"We're looking at math and science and where we lack and pushing in more programs," Seroussi said. "I hope it expands – I'd love to be able to accommodate everyone [who applies]."

In addition to academic changes Leslie mentioned there are about 15 new staff members at the schools including a social studies, English, and science coordinator, new teachers, and a new assistant principal, Penny Bryzgel, who took over for Don Wilson when he retired at the end of the 2012-13 year.

"We have all our hires," Seroussi furthered. "It's nice to start with a full slate."

Along with staff and curriculum changes, there will also be changes for administration and teachers in the form of new evaluation requirements from the state. The evaluations, which are expected to be much more time-intensive (a third of the teachers will need to be evaluated this year) and required a significant amount of training, have been a common topic of discussion among school administrators.

Seroussi explained there had been three weeks of training for the evaluations over the summer, and although the school developed their own state approved plan to follow, staff still needed to participate in the training.

That training continued at the school Tuesday, as Superintendent of Schools Bob Siminski shared an overview of the teacher evaluations with new staff.

Among those present were English coordinator Lauren Fierman and social studies coordinator Jennifer Stachowiak. Between presentations, Stachowiak said she was "grateful" to be a part of the RHAM community and was looking forward to the return of "structure and routine," while Fierman added she was look-

ing forward to "getting to know the community and what's been described as a warm and welcoming family."

All of the training has meant less time to prepare for the start of the year, and for Seroussi that meant doing "a summer's worth of work in less than two weeks."

But "school has to start," he laughed. "There's not much of a choice."

Returning for the third year will be the "One Book, One School" program at the middle school, as part of the school climate plan to address bullying. In the program, the entire school as well as parents and even community members if desired, will read the same book.

This year that book is *Ok for Now* by Gary D. Schmidt, the story of a boy who moves to a new town and, in addition to starting up at a new school, has to endure an abusive father, suspicious residents and his older brother's return from Vietnam, among other things.

"This year [the book] is based on kids creating a positive climate and how to treat others," Seroussi explained. "The book is about a student on the fringe."

Along with reading the book, various activities are planned that coincide with the themes and topics presented. The book also has a focus on birds, and Seroussi said this could possibly translate into some work with the Connecticut Audubon Society in Glastonbury and making birdhouses in shop class.

"It'll be interesting," he said.

But while there are a lot of positive things to look forward to, there will also be a sense of mourning at the school as the new year starts. Hebron resident Paige Houston, who would have started her senior year at RHAM next Wednesday, died in a car crash Aug. 6. Both principals said the situation could prove difficult as the year begins.

"It'll be hard; it's never easy," Seroussi said, adding some students may not fully process the situation until they return to school and she isn't there.

"It's our job to try to maintain a normal routine," he said.

Leslie added on the first day back, something would "definitely" be done to remember and celebrate Houston.

"And I know that students will want to memorialize her," he said. "As the year goes on we'll come up with a permanent way to memorialize her and will be working on that and how to handle the situation."

Leslie added the guidance office at RHAM will be available for any student should who needs counseling or grief support.

As the year begins, and then continues on, Leslie said one of the biggest challenges would be "effectively balancing some of the more significant needs of the districts."

He commented on the recent volunteer cleanup weekend at the school, and called the event "fantastic." But now, he said the challenge will be figuring out how to sustain the grounds.

"We just don't have the resources to maintain them – so as a region, how do we do that?" he wondered.

As usual the challenge, Leslie continued, "seems to be the budget and resources."

And so, both students and faculty will have their fair share of challenges and hard work in the upcoming year: but the administration is looking forward to it.

"I look forward to the school year," Seroussi said.

"After summer it's always exciting to get everyone back in the building," Leslie furthered. "I know our students excel academically, and I'm looking forward to pushing them a little more."

Hebron Selectmen Discuss STEAP Dreams

by Geeta Schrayter

Discussion of how best to apply for state grant money was on tap at last Thursday's meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

The selectmen talked about Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) priorities, in order to provide Tierney with some direction as far as what area to focus on when submitting an application for the next round of STEAP grant awards.

Selectwoman Gayle Mulligan explained she had talked to state Rep. Pam Sawyer the day of the meeting in order to get an idea of what the state was looking for in terms of projects.

Mulligan said she shared the top projects with Sawyer, which included the addition of more sidewalks in the center of town, a water line to Amston Lake, a new public works facility and an amphitheater in Burnt Hill Park.

"It sounds like they are not supporting any recreations kinds of things," Mulligan stated. "So the least likely on this list right now would be the amphitheater."

Mulligan added she thought it would be "great" to have an amphitheater in town but she felt more planning was necessary. She added the upcoming concert featuring the artist Florida Georgia Line during the Hebron Harvest Fair would be a "telltale sign" of how well the town could handle concerts at the park.

Florida Georgia Line is expected to draw upwards of 30,000 people, and has required extra planning regarding parking and security. Mulligan said holding concerts at Burnt Hill

Park "would have the same kind of issues."

She went on to say the public works department wasn't a shovel-ready project yet – an attribute that's usually looked for in STEAP project applications. In addition, Sawyer said more research should be conducted regarding bringing water to Amston Lake before the town tackles that project.

That left extending the sidewalk in the center of town down to Hebron Elementary School.

"She said what we may want to focus on is the project we've been working on," which is the sidewalk, Mulligan said.

Town Manager Andy Tierney and the other selectmen agreed.

"There may be people in the audience saying 'why do we keep applying for sidewalks?'" Tierney said. "But when you're applying, the governor who is in there picks the projects and we want a lot of different things but we have to pick what has the best chance of getting funding."

"One of the reasons we looked at this, from a Main Street standpoint, is for more foot traffic," added Board of Selectmen Chairman Jeff Watt.

He said the sidewalks that were already in place had increased the amount of people who walk around, helped to accommodate those who would rather walk than drive, and helped open up opportunities for individuals coming from the Russell Mercier Senior Center to get around the center of town.

Selectman Mark Stuart felt similarly.

"If you look at the long-term plan, this links into the trails," he said. "It gives people an incentive to get out of their cars and walk around."

Selectman Brian O'Connell added the extension would benefit the Memorial Day parade as well.

"With the way we have the current parade [route], it would also afford people to park safely down toward the school and set up on the sidewalk. I think from a good old fashioned practicality standpoint [the sidewalks] make sense," he said. "Like the town manager pointed out, it's dependent upon what the powers that be up in Hartford are willing to consider. We have to roll with those punches."

"They may change their focus next time around to look at parks and recreation," Mulligan added. "And by that time, some of the other projects, like the amphitheater, may be more shovel-ready."

In the end, the board agreed the best route for this round of STEAP grant priorities would be to apply for money to extend the sidewalk from Hebron center to Hebron Elementary School.

Also at the Aug. 15 meeting, the selectmen appointed members to the newly-established Library Board of Trustees.

The new board consists of Peter Casarella, Marjory Graham and Robert Nickels who were nominated by the selectmen, along with Althea

Carr, Karen Cohen, Susan Porter, Gail Richmond, Judith Sawicki and Deborah Witt who were recommended by the Douglas Library of Hebron Association from the association membership.

The purposes of the board include the adoption of policies, goals and objectives for the operation of the Douglas Library, monitoring and reviewing library operations, developing the budget with the library director, accept gifts or donations on behalf of the town and having sole authority over the use of private funds currently held or donated in the future to the library.

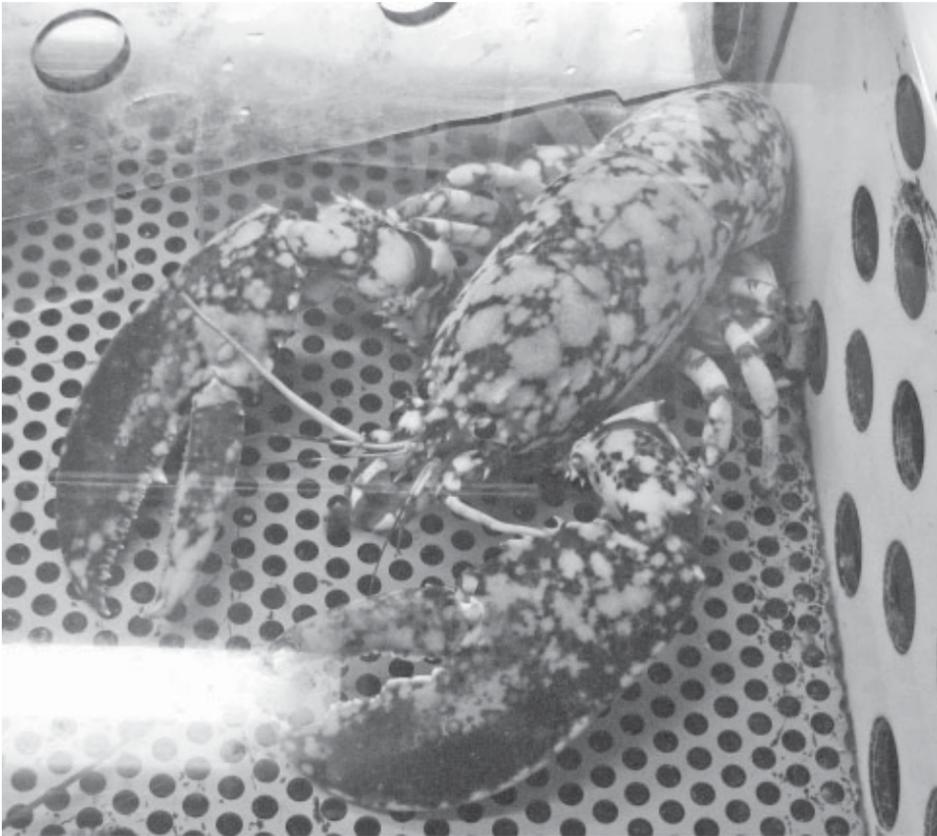
The Library Board of Trustees was unanimously appointed.

The selectmen also awarded a bid for upgrades to the generator at the town office building.

While there is \$58,400 budgeted in the Capital Improvement Plan budget for the project, Tierney recommended awarding the bid to Higgins Enterprises, Inc. out of East Hampton for an amount not to exceed \$54,035.

Dan Larson recused himself from the motion since he works for another company who applied, and the motion passed 4-0.

The next Board of Selectmen meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Sept. 12, at 7:30 p.m. in the Hebron town office building.



This photograph, taken Wednesday Aug. 14, shows the calico lobster that was shipped – most likely unknowingly – to Tri-Town Foods in Portland. The lobster was to be donated to Mystic Aquarium, but died en route.

Rare Calico Lobster Found at Portland Tri-Town Foods

by Elizabeth Bowling

Last week an unusual type of lobster washed up to Portland's Tri-Town Foods, again.

Just last month, customers and employees at Tri-Town Foods were in a frenzy of excitement when a rare blue lobster, which employees named Blue Lou, made its way to the grocery store's lobster display tank before it was donated to the Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk. Then three weeks later a calico lobster, another rarity, found its way to the same Tri-Town Foods before it was donated to Mystic Aquarium.

Unfortunately, the calico lobster died on its way to the aquarium last Friday, Aug. 16. The cause of death is unknown.

Dan Smith, the manager of Tri-Town Foods in Portland, was away on vacation when the lobster shipment that contained the calico lobster came in but he said it happened the "same way as the last one."

The same company – The Lobster Co. in Kennebunkport, Maine – sent a regular shipment of lobsters, probably not even aware that a calico lobster was in the mix.

Smith said he didn't think his employees or customers really understood the rarity of a calico lobster, probably because it wasn't as shockingly different looking as a blue lobster.

Regarding the calico lobster's death, Jacinta Simoncini, Mystic Aquarium's assistant director of marketing, said, "The supermarket was transporting it but it did not survive."

She added, "We were excited to be able to get this lobster."

She explained that there was a mix up last month when Tri-Town Foods offered to donate Blue Lou to Mystic Aquarium but an aquarium employee mistakenly turned down the offer.

"We always take donations of blue lobsters," Simoncini said. She even called Tri-Town Foods after the mix up to see if Blue Lou had been donated yet. Alas, he had been; he's currently taking up residence at Norwalk Maritime Aquarium.

Smith said it was "too bad" that the lobster died on its way to the aquarium. He wondered if calico lobsters are more prone to sickness due to their unusual coloring.

According to Laura Wandel, the supervisor of fish and invertebrates at Mystic Aquarium, the calico coloring is due to a "genetic mutation to the colors gene." Aside from the unusual coloring, though, a calico lobster is a "completely normal lobster," she said.

Two Vehicles Set on Fire Near Air Line Trail in Colchester

by Melissa Roberto

Colchester Police are investigating what they're calling a case of arson, after two abandoned cars near the Air Line Trail went up in flames.

Police said a call was made from a passerby at about 6:30 p.m. on Aug. 12. Two vehicles sitting in an old junkyard near the walking trail on Old Amston Road were on fire, Officer Craig Scheel, on scene at the time of the incident, recalled this week. Scheel could not give an exact address of the junkyard; he said the department is still investigating who owns the property.

Fire fighters from the Colchester Hayward Fire Department arrived at the scene and put out the fire in under 30 minutes, Fire Marshal Reed Gustafson confirmed. He said the fire was only contained to the two vehicles and did not spread anywhere else.

There were no medical transports or injuries from the fire, Gustafson said. The marshal said the fire is classified as "incendiary."

"Someone lit it," he explained. "All of the other factors, like lightning and electricity, were ruled out. There is no other plausible

explanation."

Scheel added that "gasoline or lighter fluid" is believed to have been used to ignite it.

Scheel said the abandoned cars were rusted, and did not belong to anyone using the trail. He added the vehicles are believed to be from the 1940s or '50s.

Both Scheel and Gustafson classified this incident as a "rare occurrence" in the town.

"This is the first time we've responded to vehicle arson," said Scheel. "We've had similar instances to trash cans and smaller items being lit on fire."

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to contact the investigating officer for the case, Officer Jonathan Goss, at 860-537-7555 ext. 4083.

Scheel further requested anyone who sees suspicious persons or activity in general, specifically in the evening and overnight hours, should call Colchester Police at 860-537-7270. State Police at the Troop K barracks in Colchester can also be reached at 860-537-7500.

Route 66 Car Crash in East Hampton Under Investigation

by Elizabeth Bowling

A two-car car crash occurred at the intersection of routes 66 and 16 early in the morning on Saturday, Aug. 17.

The vehicles involved were a 2003 Acura JP 560 and a 2011 Hyundai Elantra, said Sgt. Timothy Dowty of the East Hampton Police Department. Because the accident is currently under investigation, Dowty was unable to disclose further information regarding the drivers.

Dowty said that both drivers – neither of whom were identified – were taken to Marlborough Clinic and "rerouted from there for further care."

According to a press release from East Hampton Police Sgt. Jarod Boynton, both of the vehicles' operators were transported in stable condition to Hartford Hospital for treatment of their injuries.

The press release stated that the crash caused Route 66 to close for approximately an hour and a half.

The cause of the crash is currently under investigation and anyone who may have information regarding the accident is asked to contact the East Hampton Police Department at 860-267-9922.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Not many people have the whole “adults acting like children” thing down to a science quite like the fine folks of the Republican National Committee.

(Note I said “national.” Let me stress I’ve met a number of delightful local and even state Republicans over the years. I eagerly attended longtime Hebron Republican Donna McCalla’s going-away party back in June – and I didn’t even get thrown out – and Pam Sawyer remains one of the nicest people on the planet. But, I don’t know, something about when they hit that national stage, they just start spewing the strangest, stupidest things, and I just scratch my head and go, in the words of my former editor Kathleen Stack, “What’s *wrong* with these people?!”)

Case in point: The RNC agreed last Friday to ban CNN and NBC from hosting Republican presidential primary debates. And why was this? Because both networks are developing movies based on the person who, if it weren’t for that pesky President Obama, would be the Republicans’ Public Enemy No. 1: Hillary Rodham Clinton.

NBC has decided to make a movie based on Clinton’s life apparently because, well, hers would make for an interesting movie. She went from lawyer to governor’s wife to president’s wife (becoming the embodiment of the old song “Stand By Your Man”) to U.S. senator then to secretary of the state. It’s quite the ride – even if you leave out the fact that she might run for president again in 2016.

But, the Republicans would argue, you can’t overlook that she may run for president again. And I suppose they’d have a point – if the movie painted a completely rose-colored version of her, scrubbing away any possible unpleasantries, and, worse still, opted to air the film like a week before Election Day 2016.

Here’s the thing, though: nobody knows what the movie will be like. Sure, Diane Lane has been cast as Clinton. But a script hasn’t been written yet. The Republicans can’t even pretend to know what the content of the movie will wind up being. They’re basing their opinions on the mere announcement of the movie – and reacting in best little kid fashion: “Oh yeah? Well you can’t play in our clubhouse!”

Plus, barring NBC from the primaries is really just punishing the network’s news division of NBC for something its entertainment division is doing. In fact, when the project was announced, some with NBC News expressed concern that the project might make things difficult for the news division. Did they anticipate something like this? Perhaps; they know how the RNC operates.

(By the way, I should note that, after Fox News commentators roundly trounced the movie, Fox TV studios, which was going to be coproducing the project, has pulled out. The company said the move was purely financial, but forgive me if I don’t really buy that.)

I actually find the Republicans’ barring of CNN from their primary party to be even worse. At least you can argue the NBC piece is going to be along the lines of a “docudrama” – and some parts of it may be fictionalized to build excitement. But CNN’s is going to be a straight documentary; a film documenting the interesting history of this interesting woman.

And, once again, as was the case with NBC’s work, CNN’s movie is still a work in progress. It’s not expected to debut on the channel until 2014 (which, I might add, is still

two years before the next presidential election. This just further drives home the ridiculousness of the RNC’s overreaction. NBC’s movie would I’m guessing come out around 2014 as well. If these movies are as the Republicans seem convinced they will be, then they have plenty of time to ban CNN or NBC from the debates.)

CNN, fortunately, had the guts to call the RNC out on this, issuing a statement that said, “We encouraged all interested parties to wait until the program premieres before judgments are made about it. Unfortunately, the RNC was not willing to do that.”

NBC, meanwhile, seemed to backpedal a little from its movie, hinting it may not even get made: “[The film is] ‘in development,’ the first stage of any television series or movie,” NBC Entertainment Chairman Bob Greenblatt said, “many of which never go into production.”

True, Fox TV’s pulling out of the Clinton movie probably hurt the project. But I hope it still goes forward, and I’m glad CNN’s standing firm. To scrap either one would give the RNC exactly what it wants.

I think the Republicans will eventually cave, as they would want as much of the media spotlight as possible for their primary debates. But as of now, they’re standing by their stupid, childish decision – and showing they didn’t learn anything from the 2012 elections.

* * *

Connecticut made national news on Monday – and not for a good reason. In fact, it was for an incredibly stupid one.

A power outage left Cablevision customers in Fairfield unable to watch TV Sunday night. Instead of merely waiting for their cable to be restored, some enraged residents (who, according to CNN, appeared to be very upset they were missing *Breaking Bad*) called 911 to complain. So many called, in fact, that the Fairfield Police Department finally had to post something on its Facebook page.

“We are receiving numerous 911 calls regarding the Cablevision outage,” the police department wrote. “This is neither an emergency or a police-related concern. Please direct your inquiries to Cablevision.”

The message went on to remind residents 911 should be called “for life-threatening emergencies ONLY,” and warned them, “Misuse of the 911 system may result in an arrest.”

Moral of the story: If your cable’s out, don’t call 911. It seems like common sense – but apparently it is not.

* * *

Lastly, eagle-eyed Hebron residents may have noticed something funny on the front page of their *Rivereast* last week. The date was inadvertently listed as “August 16, 2016,” instead of “August 16, 2013.” No, Hebron didn’t momentarily jump ahead three years in time, nor did the town get delivered the paper ahead of time, a la the old Kyle Chandler show *Early Edition*. It was a simple – albeit stupid – production gaffe, one that I can’t recall ever happening in the six years I’ve been editing this paper. Just when you think you’ve seen everything....

Fortunately, the mistake was caught in time to be fixed for all other editions of the paper. But for anyone in Hebron wondering just what was up with their cover page last week.....well, now you know.

* * *

See you next week.

East Hampton Police News

8/7: East Hampton Police reported responding to the Route 66 Citgo/Food Bag for a reported fight in progress. Susan Ann Shea, 51, of 279A Middle Haddam Rd., Portland, was arrested and charged with second-degree unlawful restraint and second-degree breach of peace, police said.

8/8: Christopher Sarahina, 26, of 37 Old Middletown Ave., was arrested and charged with possession of a controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia, police said.

8/8: Police reported responding to a Meeks Point Road residence to a report of a fight in

progress. Barton Walter Blau was arrested and charged with third-degree assault, third-degree strangulation and second-degree breach of peace, police said.

8/11: Christopher A. Nosal, 36, of 1 North Maple St., turned himself in pursuant to an outstanding warrant for his arrest. Nosal was charged with second-degree larceny and theft of electric service for profit or economic gain, police said.

8/14: Brandon Allen Yon, 20, of 188 Marlborough St., was arrested for third-degree burglary and fifth-degree larceny, police said.

Colchester Police News

8/12: Colchester Police said a citizen turned in found property at Troop K belonging to an unknown person(s) in the CVS parking lot. The property is secured at Troop K. Anyone missing property is asked to call Officer Craig Scheel with an accurate description of the property.

8/12: Colchester Police said Michael J. Fiondella, 31, of 640 Old Hartford Rd., was charged with second-degree failure to appear and interfering with a police officer.

8/12: State Police said Marisa Haggett, 21, of 35 Blish Rd., was charged with second-degree failure to appear.

8/13: State Police said Anthony Caye, 20, of 79 Gill St., was charged with breach of peace, first-degree reckless endangerment and first-degree attempt to commit assault.

8/14: State Police said Lawrence James, 34, of 383 Green Hollow Rd., Moosup, was arrested on an active PRAWN arrest warrant for violation of probation.

8/15: State Police said Thomas J. Tortoriello, 55, of 15 Asinof Ave., Chicopee, Mass., was charged with reckless driving and DUI.

8/15: State police said Wesley Letendre, 38, of 35 Carlton St., Apt. 1, New Britain, was charged with possession of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia.

8/16: State Police said Nicholas Inkel, 23, of 32 Hammond Ct., was charged with sixth-degree larceny.

8/17: State Police said Randolph T. James Jr., 23, of 117 Westbourne Parkway, Hartford, was charged with second-degree failure to appear.

Marlborough Police News

8/14: State Police said Joseph Lacaffa, 38, of 14 Meadow Rd., Enfield, was charged with possession of a narcotic, sale of a narcotic and possession of paraphernalia.

8/17: State Police said Karen J. Torromeo, 56, of 25 Old Mill Rd., Agawam, Mass., was charged with DUI and speeding.

Obituaries

East Hampton

Benjamin J. Neiweem

Benjamin J. Neiweem passed away Monday, Aug. 12, in Anchorage, Alaska. Born Sept. 29, 1988, Ben was a graduate of East Hampton High School ('06) and Lincoln Technical School ('07).

He is survived by his parents, Anne and James Neiweem, as well as his sisters, Cheryl Brew, Holly Neiweem and Rebecca Pratt, and his brother, Daniel Neiweem. Ben is also survived by several loving nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles and cousins. Ben was generous, kind, and was always a giver of whatever he had. His smile could light up a room and his family and friends will sadly and dearly miss him.

Ben worked in HVAC and masonry with numerous local businesses. He loved music and played the drums. Ben was also an avid sportsman and outdoorsman. He loved athletics, especially baseball and epic home run derby competitions with his sister. Ben liked to run, and enjoyed all activities that brought him outdoors. He shared this love with his young nieces and nephews, playing with them outside, and taking them for hikes and nature walks. Ben enjoyed spending time with his family at his parents' cottage on the Salmon River where he found great pleasure in kayaking.

Visiting hours were at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, on Tuesday, Aug. 20. A funeral service followed that morning in the Spencer Funeral Home, followed by a family burial at Lakeview Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that you instead make a donation to The Salvation Army (donate.salvationarmyusa.org) or Feed the Children (feedthechildren.org).

Portland

Robert E. Parker

Robert E. Parker, 79, of Portland, husband of the late beloved Dorothy (Csere) Parker passed away Saturday, Aug. 17, at Yale New Haven Hospital. He was the son of the late John and Harriet (Bailey) Parker.

Born April 2, 1934, in Middletown, he grew up in Cromwell, graduated from Middletown High School and lived in Portland for the past 55 years. As a teenager, he worked in tobacco fields. For most of his life he was a tool and die maker at Parker Bailey Manufacturing Company. For the last 15 years he worked at Precision Plastic Products in Portland. He was a U.S. Army veteran having served in Korea as a sergeant. He was also a lifetime member of the Korean War Veterans Association, and a member of Glastonbury Elks Lodge 2202.

He leaves his daughters, Suzanne Parker of Old Greenwich and her significant other Alfonso Formisano, and Mary Genta and her husband Mark of Hamden; brothers, John (Vera) Parker of East Hampton and Clifford (Mary) Parker of Cromwell; a sister, Mary Parker of East Hampton; grandchildren, Meredith Siller of Los Angeles, Calif., and Stefanie Siller of Old Greenwich, and their father, Randy Siller; many nieces and nephews; his loving cat, Mitzi; and his second family from Precision Plastic Products.

Memorial services were held Thursday, Aug. 22, at Portland Memorial Funeral Home 231 Main St. Portland. Burial will be private. Relatives and friends called Thursday, before the service.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Pet Animal Welfare Society, 504 Main Ave., Norwalk, CT 06851.

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

East Hampton

Marjorie Ann Lester

Marjorie Ann (Dyndiuk) Lester, 69, of East Hampton, passed away Wednesday, July 31, at St. Francis Hospital. Born Sept. 10, 1943 in New Britain she was the daughter of the late Theodore and May V. (Benedict) Dyndiuk of Plainville and Bristol. She was a graduate of Plainville High School Class of 1961.

Marjorie proudly served her country in the U.S. Navy. She was retired from the State of Connecticut where she was a clerk in the Chief State's Attorney's Office for Juvenile Matters in the Hartford District.

She leaves behind her loving brother Ted Dyndiuk of Los Angeles, Calif., and many close friends and colleagues.

A memorial service will be held today, Aug. 23, at 1 p.m., in Agawam Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Agawam, Mass.

East Hampton

Kathleen Sabourin Abraham

Kathleen Sabourin Abraham, 78, of Belchertown, Mass., passed away peacefully at home with her family by her side Tuesday, Aug. 13. She was born Oct. 11, 1934, in College Point, N.Y.

For 22 years, Kathleen was an educator in the sixth grade in the Wellesley, Mass., school system. Following her retirement, she worked part-time as a teacher and at UMass Disabilities Services Refugee Services. Since 1992, Kathleen and her husband Len have lived in Belchertown, previously residing in Stowe, Mass. She was a master gardener and part of the Friends at Clapp Memorial Library in Belchertown.

Kathy also worked in ESL in Amherst and South Hadley and was very involved in St. Francis of Assisi Church in Belchertown as a Eucharistic minister, a member of the Spiritual Life committee and on the pastoral council. She loved to travel and greatly appreciated photography.

Kathleen will be greatly missed by her husband of 35 years, Leonard G. Abraham, along with his four sons, Roger, Rich, Bob and Charlie; her 12 nieces and nephews; and 9 Abraham grandchildren.

A memorial Mass will be held at St. Francis of Assisi Church, on today, Aug. 23, at 10 a.m. Burial will be private at the family's convenience.

For further details, visit beersandstory.com.

East Hampton

D. Elaine Dutch

D. Elaine (Randall) Dutch, 85, of Moodus, formerly of East Hampton, passed away Saturday, Aug. 17, at the Hebrew Home and Hospital in West Hartford, surrounded by her loving family. Born in Johnston, R.I., on June 25, 1928, she was the daughter of Charles Howard and Doris (Green) Randall of Weston, Maine, and Portland.

Elaine was a long-term resident of East Hampton, where she was a 51-year member of the Congregational Church and a Sunday School teacher. She served as a lifeguard and a swimming instructor at Sears Park, worked for the East Hampton High School student hot lunch program and retired from the Post Office after 10 years of service.

An active civic leader, she served as the East Hampton PTO president and as the mentor and leader of the East Hampton chapters of the Brownies, Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts. She worked on many service projects and fundraisers, including sewing quilts with the Monday Morning Quilt Club for donation to adults with cancer, making teddy bears for children with cancer, and serving the visually impaired as a member of the East Haddam Community Lions club.

A sports enthusiast and lifelong Red Sox fan, she attended the sports games of her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, bowled with the East Hampton, Portland, Glastonbury and Middletown women's leagues, and golfed with the Portland 9 West women's league. She also enjoyed crafts and playing mahjong, bingo, and cards, and was an active member of both the East Hampton and East Haddam senior centers.

She is survived by two sons, Charles R. Dutch of Salem and the mother of his children, Susan L. (Jacobson) Dutch of Middletown, Bruce M. Dutch and his wife Frances (Haglund) Dutch of Moodus, and a daughter, Susan E. Dutch of Westfield, Mass. Elaine is also survived by nine grandchildren (Christopher Dutch, Stephen Dutch, Deanna Nason, Brian Dutch, Bruce Dutch, Robert Dutch, Elaine Dutch, Randall Dutch, and Miranda Morse) and 10 great-grandchildren (Jordan Ziobron, Jasmine Ziobron, Lily Dutch, Lydia Dutch, Kyla Dutch, Lucas Dutch, Kayla Nason, Tanner Nason, Christine Morse and Liam Deleno-Ohland).

She was predeceased by her husband of 55 years, Robert A. Dutch, a son, Eric A. Dutch, and a grandson, Gregory C. Dutch.

A celebration of Elaine's life will be held Saturday, Sept. 7, at 11 a.m., at the East Hampton Congregational Church, 59 Main St., East Hampton, with the Rev. Thomas Kennedy officiating. Burial will be at the convenience of the family at Gracelawn Memorial Park, Auburn, Maine.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the East Haddam Community Lion's, P.O. Box 328, East Haddam, CT 06423.

Messages of condolences may be sent to the family at spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Amston

Edward Kenneth Winter

Edward Kenneth Winter, 52, of Weathersfield, Vt., died Wednesday, July 10, following a long and valiant battle with cancer. Ed was born Aug. 26, 1960, to Judith Gothreau of Hartford.

He was raised in Amston and, after a year in Maine with the Larabee family, returned to graduate from RHAM High School in 1978. He attended CCSU on a full scholarship and pursued a career in computer programming. In 1990, Ed settled in Vermont where he met Mary Matthews, his wife of the past 20 years.

Ed's pride and greatest joy was his children: Josiah, 16, Grace, 14, and Jonathan 9. Ed also leaves behind his siblings, Gael Chase of Higganum, Dale Winter of W. Windsor, Vt., Anne Saucier of Willington, Mary Jean Gothreau of Cheshire, and Libby Chowanec of Windsor. He will be greatly missed by his many loving aunts, uncles, cousins and nieces. Ed possessed a brilliant mind and truly generous spirit.

Ed was an All-Star baseball player, a founder and original member of both the Amston Lakers and the Scorpions. He was an avid sports enthusiast, gifted hockey player, intrepid golfer and deacon at Trinity EFC in Windsor, Vt. He enjoyed digging for old bottles, sailing and making us groan at his jokes. Most of all, he loved being with family and friends. As we so loved being with him.

Throughout his life, Ed's unwavering faith, quiet stoicism and indomitable sense of humor were an inspiration to us all. He touched the hearts of everyone who knew him. Although comforted that he is reunited with his beloved Gramma and Gramps (Esther Lillian and Louis Alexander Steves), we will miss him profoundly.

A memorial service will be held at Hebron Church of Hope in Hebron Saturday, Sept. 14, at 1 p.m. A reception will follow at Butterball's in Hebron. Additional information is available on Facebook at Ed Winter Memorial Page or by email to: EdWinterMemorial@gmail.com.

With hope that someday other families may be spared this heartache, contributions in Ed's memory may be made to the American Cancer Society.

Colchester

Viola K. Nystrom

Viola K. Nystrom, 93, of Colchester Commons passed away Monday afternoon, Aug. 12, at Harrington Court in Colchester. She was born Oct. 23, 1919, in Detroit, Mich., daughter to the late John and Armo Kauranen and thereafter spent her childhood years in Pomfret.

Upon graduation of Putnam High School, she moved to Brooklyn, N.Y., to further her business skills. She married in 1943 and was lovingly devoted to Henry E. Nystrom, who predeceased her in October 2000.

Viola's most-cherished life's work was as a homemaker, yet she also became an owner/operator of hardware stores in Brooklyn and Scotland. She served too, as a popular central figure in the town of Scotland, as a highly "well liked" tax collector. Viola was very proud of her heritage, as part of a large group of friends with Finnish and Swedish heritage. She warmly welcomed and loved to entertain friends both in Connecticut and in Florida. She always enjoyed baking, sewing, musical gatherings, gardening and golf. In her retirement she also enjoyed exploring her artistic talents in oil painting. She and Henry traveled stateside and abroad, seeking out friends as excursions on "trains and trolleys" (her husband's passion). Viola was always giving to others and also became the oldest member of the First Congregational Church of Griswold.

She is survived by her sons John Nystrom of Andover, Carl Nystrom and his wife Janice of Merrimack, N.H.; a daughter, Virginia Valace and her husband Tony of Norwich; sister-in-law Helen Kauranen of Ballouville; four grandchildren, Zenas Zelotes, Greg Valace, Jennifer Nystrom and Rhonda Pieper; three great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews.

Besides her husband, she was predeceased by two brothers Leo Kauranen and Carl Krupula and his wife Alice. Viola was also blessed in having a very dearly and devoted friendship with Annie Baker of Gales Ferry.

A memorial service will be held at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 24, at the First Congregational Church of Griswold.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Griswold Congregational Church, 878 Voluntown Rd., Griswold, CT 06351 or to the Finnish Aura Hall, P.O. Box 243, Voluntown, CT 06384.

The Gagne-Piechowski Funeral Home, 490 Voluntown Rd., Jewett City, has been entrusted with arrangements. For online condolences, visit gagnepiechowski.com.

Andover

Michael Pelletier

Michael Pelletier, 52, of Ellington, formerly of Manchester, loving husband of Patricia L. (Willett) Pelletier, died peacefully while sleeping at home on Wednesday (August 14, 2013). Mike was born in Manchester on Dec. 29, 1960, one of four children of Odette Caron (Pelletier) Kennedy of Manchester and the late Leo Pelletier.

He attended Manchester schools, graduated from Cheney Tech, and had lived in Andover and Stafford before moving to Ellington 15 years ago. He was a former employee at Hartford Bearing for 20 years and has worked in the Hartford area all his life. Mike was a member of the Rockville Elks and the Knights of Columbus, was a Red Sox and Patriot fan, and enjoyed playing darts back in the day. He loved life, the outdoors, and especially his fire pit.

With his wife and mother he is survived by his step-daughter, Jessica (Cosman) Ruggiero, her husband Louis, and their son Louis of Tolland; his step-father, Benoit Kennedy of Manchester; two brothers and a sister, Gaston Pelletier, and his wife Joyce of East Hartford, Luc Pelletier and Pam Holmes of White City, Fla., and Nancy Parandes and her husband John of East Hartford, and many nieces, nephews, and extended family.

Mike's family would like to extend a special "thank you" to the Crystal Lake Fire Department for all their help.

A prayer service was held Monday, Aug. 19, at the Holmes Funeral Home, 400 Main St., Manchester. Burial followed in St. James Cemetery in Manchester. Visiting hours were Sunday, Aug. 18, at the funeral home.

Memorial contributions may be made to the American Heart Association, P.O. Box 417005, Boston, MA 02241-7005.

To leave a message for his family, visit holmes-watkinsfuneralhomes.com.

Colchester

Albert J. Garrison

Albert J. "Al" Garrison, 85, of Coventry, formerly of Manchester, beloved husband of the late Ann M. (Sartori) Garrison, died peacefully Thursday, Aug. 15, at Harrington Court in Colchester.

He was born July 18, 1928 in East Hartford, son of the Late Wilbert and Rose (Slater) Garrison. He served in the United States Navy and was a lifetime member of the Manchester Army and Navy Club. Al enjoyed collecting watches and antique banks, going to Mohegan Sun and he loved to drive. Prior to his retirement he had worked at Manchester Sand and Gravel for over 32 years.

He is survived by three sons, Michael T. Garrison and his wife Sheryl of Scotland, Richard J. Garrison of Lebanon, Ronald A. Garrison and his wife Joan of Coventry; his daughter, Debora Garrison of Colchester; sister, Carol Fiaschetti of Enfield; two sisters-in-law, Dot Garrison and Gladys Garrison, both of Manchester; 10 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by three brothers, Bud Garrison, Sonny Garrison and David Garrison, and his stepmother, Evelyn Norton Garrison.

The family wishes to extend special thanks to the nurses and staff at Harrington Court and Windham DaVita Dialysis.

Graveside services were held Monday, Aug. 19, at St. James Cemetery, 360 Broad St., Manchester. There were no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers memorial donations may be made to a charity of the donor's choice.

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

Portland

Joseph Paul Vinci Jr.

Joseph Paul Vinci Jr., 83, formerly of Middlesex Avenue Ext., Portland, husband of Cecile (Sylvestre/Mercier) Vinci, died Saturday, Aug. 17, at Chestelm Health & Rehabilitation Center. He was born March 28, 1930, in Middletown, the son of the late Joseph and Maria (Salemi) Vinci.

Joe was a veteran of the Korean War serving with the US Army. Prior to his retirement, he was a sheet metal assembler with Pratt & Whitney Aircraft.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by his son, Joseph P. Vinci III and his wife Judy of Knoxville, Ten.; three daughters, Susan Tyler and her husband James of Portland, Nancy Boudreau and her husband Kevin of Somers, and Barbara DeVost and her husband Richard of Coventry, Vt.; two sisters, Rose Marie Vinci and Elena Vinci, both of Middletown; six grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; also several nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by his brothers, Sebastian (Mike), Salvatore, John, Nicholas and Louis Vinci; and a sister, Sebastiana (Anna) Rousseau.

Funeral services were held Thursday, Aug. 22, from Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown, followed by a funeral liturgy in St. Sebastian Church, Washington Street, Middletown. Burial with military honors will be in the State Veterans Cemetery, Middletown. Friends called at Biega Funeral Home Wednesday, Aug. 21.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Alzheimer's Association Connecticut Chapter, 2075 Silas Deane Hwy., Ste. 100, Rocky Hill, CT 06067; American Diabetes Foundation, 2080 Silas Deane Hwy., 2nd Fl., Rocky Hill, CT 06067; or the American Heart Association, 5 Brookside Dr., P. O. Box 5022, Wallingford, CT 06492.

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