

RIVEREAST

# News Bulletin

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**Reading with Pizza!... Colchester Elementary School children and their families enjoyed books, pizza, cookies, and sand castles at the school's Summer Reading with Pizza Series at Cragin Memorial Library. Dr. Charles Hewes, director of teaching and learning and teachers, Barbara Stiles and Lori Drube shared children's books by author Robert Munsch Monday evening. This opportunity for students and families to connect with friends and meet teachers during the summer will continue through Monday, Aug. 15. Pictured from left are Lori Drube, Dr. Charles Hewes and Barbara Stiles.**

## Belltown Kids Playing Dangerous Game

by Elizabeth Regan

Some members of the East Hampton community are working to stop a dangerous game of traffic chicken by standing up for the kids who are playing it.

Reports began emerging on social media at the start of summer vacation about a group of middle school-aged children running out in the roadway in front of cars or, in some cases, lying in the road to see who stays down the longest when a car comes.

The reports and the resulting media attention sparked a mixed reaction. While some people talked about bad parenting or Darwinism, others focused on the need for a concerted community response to give the kids somewhere to go – and someone to go to – for positive interaction and support.

Police Chief Sean Cox said there are about six children, ranging in age from about 11 to 14 years old, doing the risky stunts.

East Hampton resident Sheryl Dougherty heard about what was happening in the streets of the small town and decided to organize a group of people willing to mentor, organize outreach events, and create programs to support at-risk children and families.

"Each kid has a unique and sometimes difficult story," Dougherty said. "My response was to promote something positive, to help them become aware that they have a community wanting to help and be in support of them. The exact opposite of what's been portrayed on

Facebook and even on the news."

Her newly-formed group is working with existing agencies like the East Hampton Parks and Recreation Department to come up with ways to address the issue in a constructive and far-reaching way.

While she cited the creation of a youth center as one of the recreation department's eventual goals, immediate efforts could include events like open gym time, free yoga or free karate at one of the schools or at Sears Park. The important thing is giving them a place to interact with adults, she said.

"Many positive things can come of building relationships – and sometimes that's just consistent visibility," she said. "When a kid sees an adult or group of adults consistently showing up for them, it breaks down barriers and builds trust."

Dougherty acknowledged organized programs aren't always the best way to engage middle school students; in some cases, reaching out on an individual level is more effective.

"Things as simple as bringing dinner to a family and letting them know they aren't alone in their struggles, despite the judgements and negativity of Facebook posts and news stories," she said.

Cox said he put concerned citizens like Dougherty in touch with the town recreation department to see what they could do to help

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## Colchester Land Trust to Acquire 200 Acres

by Julianna Roche

Colchester Land Trust has reached an agreement with two property owners in town to conserve 200 acres – and is launching a campaign to raise money to help with the acquisitions.

According to CLT president Andy George, the trust needs to raise \$850,000 to complete the two acquisitions, which are a parcel of land on Bulkeley Hill Road and purchasing development rights on Tangletree Farm in eastern Colchester. Since the trust was nationally accredited in 2015, George said many offers have come "knocking at the door," but these two projects represent the best use of trust funds and resources.

"With national accreditation, the trust's commitment assures land has conservation value and we have resources to care and steward it forever," he said.

The 115-acre Bulkeley Hill Road property is one of the largest remaining undeveloped pieces of land in town. Sitting about one and a half miles south of Route 16, the wooded area is also adjacent to 15 acres acquired by CLT in 2007, and would make the total preserve 130 acres. Two-thirds of the land sits in the Eightmile River watershed, and one-third is in the Salmon River watershed.

According to George, as a preserve, the land

will be kept natural with a mapped-out trail system used for hiking and recreation. The land will also provide community use for environmental education, school and youth access. For example, he said the trust plans to use the pond on the property for fishing opportunities in the summer and ice skating in the winter months. CLT also plans to build a parking area for cars and school buses, and an outdoor amphitheater, which could be used for educational purposes.

"We have an established relationship with the Colchester schools here, so that would be a common area for them to use and the kids could hike and do scavenger hunts," he said.

Additionally, George said CLT would like to use the forest as a teaching forest. "So for example, if you own 50 acres of forested land and you don't know what to do with it, we would like to offer courses at our forest to show techniques on managing your property," he said. "We want community support and we want the community to feel like they can use [the land]."

The Bulkeley Hill Road property had originally been approved for a 42-lot housing development in 2007, but the project fell through when the economy went south. According to George, the property has since been appraised for a little over \$400,000, but the CLT negoti-

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**Colchester Land Trust's 200-Acre Campaign involves acquisitions of two properties, including horse-breeding farm Tangletree Farm in eastern Colchester, which sits on 86 acres of farmland overlooking a scenic pond.**

**Belltown Kids cont. from Front Page**

him address the problem – “because right now we’re not staffed to facilitate better community policing efforts.”

The 14 officers on two-man shifts have, however, maximized the relationships they’ve built within the small community to identify the children involved in the traffic games. They’ve done so the old-fashioned way, he said: by walking up to groups of kids in the evening in areas where they tend to congregate and asking questions.

“We believe we’ve spoken to the parties involved – to their parents – and we’ve tried to use an approach of working together to a positive solution rather than waiting for a tragedy,” Cox said.

But despite all the clamor on sites like the “Let’s Talk East Hampton” Facebook page, he said his department has only received three formal complaints.

The calls allowed officers to hone in on the area the incidents were occurring, from Sears Park to the Village Center. Reports ranged from children on bikes congregating in the parking lot of Stop and Shop to kids challenging vehicles in the road near the intersection of Main and Skinner streets, according to Cox.

He said his department was “behind the eight ball” because the first calls were made after the reported events had occurred.

But a witness on Tuesday afternoon contacted police as soon as children were spotted walking in the roadway, according to Cox – and, as it happened, an officer was already on scene. The officer had spoken to the children and put them in the custody of a grandparent even as dispatchers sent out police units to respond to the witness’s complaint.

“We were proactive policing,” Cox explained.

Cox encouraged anyone who sees a serious incident to call the department as soon as possible.

“We are asking that you provide our officers and dispatchers with as much detail as possible, such as the location of the incident, description of clothing and the behaviors being observed,” the East Hampton Police Department said in a press release. “If the incident is currently ongoing call 911, otherwise please call 860-267-9922.”

Cox said an incident that occurred late last week, during which a kid on a bike was hit by a car at McDonald’s on East High Street, does not look like an intentional act by the youth.

“We don’t believe that to be related based on evidence at the scene,” he said. “As the investigation stands now, it appears as though an operator simply didn’t perceive the bicyclist as they emerged from the McDonald’s parking lot.”

He added that children engaging in other acts – like playing the popular Pokemon Go app that involves people wandering around focused on their phones instead of what’s happening in the world around them – could be confused with the willful traffic games everyone in town is talking about.

“I think because of hypervigilance now, perhaps people are seeing other behaviors being exhibited and assuming it’s that,” he said. “But that’s not to dissuade anyone from calling us. I would rather investigate first.”

According to Dougherty, people in town are doing the right things to point the kids in a positive direction.

“Honestly, in a town with a population of several hundred middle school age children, having only six to seven acting out in such a manner, as dangerous as it may be, speaks volumes to the positive things the police department, Parks and Recreation Department, youth services and social services are doing,” she said. “I really fail to see the news story in this – but if there is one, it should be positive.”

**Land Trust cont. from Front Page**

ated a bargain sale of \$200,000 from the California creditor holding the title.

“This project has received the highest project evaluation by our board of any property we have considered,” George said. “The preserve is a bargain not to be missed.”

According to CLT, a 30-month loan from The Conservation Fund will allow the trust to close on the property and raise the funds needed to repay the loan. The Connecticut Land Conservation Council will also provide a land management plan at no cost to CLT, as part of a pilot project that other Connecticut trusts will follow.

“This is a model conservation project for Colchester,” George said.

The second acquisition is the purchase of development rights on Tangletree Farm, which is located on Route 16 near the Lebanon border. CLT has already received a federal grant for \$176,500 from Natural Conservation Service, a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which is about half of the land’s purchase price. George said he anticipates no problem raising the balance of those funds, and expects the deal to close by the end of the year.

While the price for the two properties totals about \$550,000, the campaign is for \$850,000. George said the balance would go toward other costs associated with the acquisition process – including surveys, appraisals, environment assessments, closing costs and attorney expenses – and would also be used to cover stewardship costs, which involve monitoring and maintaining the preservation of both properties.

The 86 acres on Tangletree Farm are located adjacent to Colchester Commons, a community of about 100 families, which according to George, makes it a property developers would be very interested in. The land also covers a town designated aquifer, which helps provide clean drinking water for local wells.

“If we did not take immediate action, this land would have been at risk for development, said George. “Purchasing the development rights helps to stabilize taxes, preserve clean

drinking water and secure a farm for future generations.”

According to the farm’s owners, Gary and Bob Keefe, handing over their developing rights to the trust also allows them to continue their business as a horse-breeding farm, which has been around for about 50 years.

“We wanted to stay here,” said Bob Keefe. “We’ve been here for 40 years... but it’s been a farm for several hundred years. The opportunity [to sell the developing rights] came up so we can keep the farmland. It’s a good feeling to look out here and see these fields are always going to be farmland. There’s never going to be a Walmart out here.”

The Colchester Land Trust, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, is currently raising needed funds for the 200-Acre Campaign, which will rely on funds from a variety of sources, including grants, major donors, community groups, private environmental groups, and grass-roots efforts. George said he hopes members of the community will also consider donating to the cause.

“It took us between five and six years to get accredited, but the proof of that is if somebody were to give us money, they know it would be used for what they want it to be used for, that we have the capacity to stay a vibrant organization and that we protect land for perpetuity,” George said, adding, “You wouldn’t go any place, like a doctor, teacher, lawyer... unless they were credentialed. We are credentialed, so we’re hoping it gives the public more confidence.”

George also offered his thanks to the Land Trust Alliance, Connecticut Land Conservation Council and The Conservation Fund – three organizations he said helped with the accreditation process, and continue to help the trust with acquisitions.

To learn more about the acquisitions, or to donate, visit [colchesterlandtrust.org](http://colchesterlandtrust.org) and click on the “Donate Now and Help Save 200 Acres” button or search for Colchester Land Trust on Facebook.



A group of 13 RHAM High School students – plus three RHAM teachers and a teacher’s spouse – recently returned from a trip to Costa Rica. The group got to experience various aspects of the culture, including the food, wildlife, weather – which included plenty of rain – and traditional dance. Shown here, at left, students stand with members of the folkloric dance troupe they saw on their final night. At right, students Gabrielle Benson-Clarke, Tyler Lovejoy, Taylor Baran and Garrett Fisher prepare fruit for the animals at the wildlife rescue center where the group volunteered.



## Costa Rica Memories at RHAM

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Earlier this summer, 13 RHAM High School students left the comfort of Connecticut and their usual summer schedules for a trip to Costa Rica. There, the group, which also included three RHAM teachers and one teacher’s spouse, had the opportunity to explore a different culture – and practice their Spanish skills, too!

The trip was organized by high school Spanish teacher Amy Nocton with the help of some students. Nocton explained Reileigh Fleeher and Gabby Benson-Clarke were “two hard-working students” she chose to be the student ambassadors with ACIS, the student travel company she chose.

“They did a lot of work recruiting students and helping everyone get ready and excited,” she stated.

Then, on June 26, the group departed for an adventure Nocton said was meant “to give students an opportunity to explore the world and to visit somewhere that is very different from what we see every day in Connecticut.”

She added, “Many of the students traveled with some knowledge of Spanish and they were able to use their language skills to communicate with others, especially when we were working at the wildlife rescue center and even more so when we played with the children at the orphanage we visited on the last day.”

Throughout their time there, through July 5, the group participated in a number of activities including the aforementioned time spent volunteering at a wildlife rescue center and visiting an orphanage. In addition, Nocton shared the group also had a memorable night in Tortuguero when they went on a turtle walk. After being delayed due to weather, the group

took a boat to the seaside of the canals, trudged through the forest in pitch black, and waited in a gazebo with a tin roof where they learned about nesting sea turtles. They then headed to the beach where they walked for over an hour, waited, then walked some more before their guide spotted a turtle digging.

“He sat us down on the beach and told us that we could whisper among ourselves. There was an excited hushed murmur of voices. We waited for about 10 more minutes and then he roused us. The turtle was moving,” Nocton explained. “She didn’t like the spot she had chosen and was heading back to sea. Our guide invited us to follow her quietly back to the water. I think everyone was in awe. We don’t have any photographs of the moment, but it was a shared experience that felt somehow mystical and ancient and beautiful. Everyone understood how lucky we were to have been there together at that exact moment in time.”

Marlborough resident and incoming RHAM junior Maggie Bielaczyc was one of the 13 student travelers, and mentioned the turtle encounter as something she enjoyed as well.

“It was amazing to get to walk right up to this gigantic turtle and see her walk down the beach,” she explained.

In addition, Bielaczyc said she enjoyed zip-lining through the jungle – “going over cows and a waterfall, the views were spectacular” she said – and working at the animal sanctuary where, with two other girls, she got to feed parrots. Bielaczyc was also pleasantly surprised by the food, something she initially thought she might not like.

“I ate the best pineapple I have ever eaten in

my life, and the chicken, pasta, rice and beans were also all delicious. I couldn’t get enough of the food,” she stated.

Chris D’Antonio, a Marlborough resident and 2016 graduate of RHAM High School shared this week he also enjoyed the cuisine.

“We had many delicious buffets. My favorite feature was the fresh juice machines that seemed to be at every venue; it included pineapple, mango, orange and other exotic fruits native to Central America. In the country, we saw many fruit farms and roaming chickens, and the food tasted as fresh as can be.”

For D’Antonio, one of the experiences that stood out was a boat tour in Tortuguero National Park where he got up close and personal with a crocodile.

“The caiman, a small crocodile, swam right alongside our boat in a very curious manner, and proceeded to sun itself on a log next to our boat, making for a great photoshoot,” he explained.

Speaking on some of the differences between home and Costa Rica, D’Antonio mentioned the weather – “it rains a lot more in Costa Rica – as well as the number of exotic animals such as sloths and parrots.

He added, “I noticed more solar panels on roofs at the hotels, and they also had public trash cans separated into three containers: glass, plastic and organic waste.”

While the trip was positive overall, Nocton said the trip was not without its challenges, including a number of would-be travelers who didn’t come because of concern over the Zika Virus, flooding that prevented a hike one day,

and the first night in the hotel, when a number of students had an issue with black beetles invading their rooms.

“The bugs came in through cracks around the windows and doors and infested everything. It was pretty creepy. The following day even the locals were talking about this odd phenomenon as something very out of the ordinary,” Nocton stated of the event, dubbed “The Night of the Beetles.”

But despite the above, Nocton said the trip was “amazing.” Bielaczyc added it inspired her to travel more, and made her realize how much she takes things for granted – like a washing machine, air conditioning and sleeping in a bed without worrying about bugs crawling in it.

“Being put into situations that I have never been put in was an exciting experience,” she stated. “I love seeing how different other people live. I would definitely encourage people to travel and take trips through RHAM.”

As for D’Antonio, he was also a fan of the experience and, as a result of his time spent at the animal rescue center, has started collecting donations.

“It was apparent that they were underfunded,” he explained. “They don’t have the resources they need to help all of the animals that they receive, primarily from the government, who need rescue and rehabilitation. I would like to help fund their mission to save wildlife in Costa Rica” he said, showing what a lasting impact the journey made on those involved.

To donate, go to [gofundme.com/animalscostarica](https://www.gofundme.com/animalscostarica).

# After 25 Years at AHM, Meade Takes a Bow

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Mary Rose Meade was originally slated to fill the role of director of the AHM Summer Youth Theater Program for a year. But one year has since turned into 25, and it's only now that the curtain is closing on Meade's tenure, as she decided this year would be her last.

"I returned to full-time work two years ago, and I'm tired," Meade shared this week; she teaches English at RHAM High School and is the English department coordinator. "I feel like I need to press reset in my life and just regenerate and regroup."

Meade added she wasn't ruling out the possibility of being involved again in the future, but she was looking forward "to not being on call for six weeks" each summer, and spending more time with her family.

"There's only so much time, and even though my kids are getting older, we still have my entire family home in the summer, and I just feel like I'd like to put a little bit more focus on my own family," she said, but added, "I do love it – I love doing it."

Looking back on her time with the program, Meade recounted some of the "massive changes" she's seen, including a shift from including students in fifth-12th grade to those in seven-12, an increase in the number of rehearsals each week from three to four, the opportunity for grants to hire musicians for the performances – and the "big change," which was moving into the new RHAM High School in 2003.

"We continue to be so grateful," she stated. "There are more lights on one of the light bars on the new stage than there were in the entire old stage!"

She added there was no pit in the old building – "we had to take out three rows of seats and fit it in the right-hand corner of the auditorium" – and no air conditioning, coupled with poor air quality, the occasional animal in the building, "and the roof over the stage leaked, so if there was a downpour during a performance in the old building water would come in over the stage."

Meade concluded, "It was horrible – but we did great theater in there."

And that "great theater" continued in the new building. Over the years, Meade has helmed a wide array of productions including *Cinderella* – her very first – as well as *Bye Bye Birdie*,

*Annie*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Godspell*, *State Fair*, *Damn Yankees*, and, just last month, *L'il Abner*.

Although Meade said she couldn't pick a favorite production, she instead had moments from several that stand out, including an ensemble tap dance in *Anything Goes* with around 60 cast members, "some of whom had never ever danced – like not even slow danced – before."

"We started practicing [that routine] the very first night and I looked at the kids on the stage and was like, 'I don't know about this...'" Meade shared. "But we practiced and practiced and practiced and I am so proud of that moment."

Meade also mentioned *Fiddler on the Roof*, in which there was a young man who had special needs.

"The fact that he was able to stand still for an entire song and only move when he was supposed to – I was so proud of him, to see how hard he worked just to be able to do that," she explained.

And, naturally, Meade also mentioned *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, which her son was part of.

"The whole cast in that show was awesome," she said, "and it was just awesome to see my own son perform."

And it's the students Meade said she's enjoyed the most while working for the program: "I love working with students in a setting that is creative," she said. She added that she also liked to see them come into their own through participating, "not just in terms of their talent in art, but talent as kind people, as generous people – as people who can make a positive difference in the community. To me, that's absolutely the most wonderful part of it all."

Meade said she was also proud to be involved with AHM Youth and Family Services.

"I'm really proud of that work and so proud of that organization," she said. "So many people in our towns do not know the incredible impact that the work of AHM has had on youth and families in our community. So much of it is done without fanfare and yet what that small organization has done has had incredible impact."

AHM Director of Fund Development Joel Rosenberg – the organization's former executive director, who interviewed Meade for the



Mary Rose Meade has spent the last 25 years working with students through the AHM Summer Youth Theater Program to stage a major musical production each July, and while she said she loves doing it, she announced this year would be her last. Meade is shown here with several students during the 2014 production of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. From left are Kelly Whitesell, Meade, Gordon Perret and Brittney Breault.

position in 1991 – had similar praise for Meade this week.

"We were looking for someone that would hopefully make a long-term commitment to Summer Youth Theater," he said, "but never did we imagine there would be someone who would stay for 25 years."

Rosenberg added, "Mary Rose literally took a program that was still fairly in its infancy and just ended up crafting a program that's highly-respected throughout the region and even across Connecticut. She's going to be missed."

AHM Executive Director Michelle Hamilton added, "It's going to be a tough act to follow with her being the leader for that many years. She really has built an empire. ... I hear from students that have reported how much fun they

had, that they want to do this forever, and it just goes to show how well of a job she does – she's just done a wonderful job."

And as she moves on to focus on family and that regeneration, Meade said she hopes her students remember "to keep the spirit of the community alive as they move forward, not just next summer, but as they walk into the school this year and see people they worked with this summer – to remember they worked with them and created something wonderful."

She concluded, "Reach out and continue to build that community, and next summer remember all you learned this year and over the years about how wonderful a show can be when everyone comes together to work toward something bigger than themselves."

## Assisted Living Development Approved for Hebron Village Green

by Geeta S. Sandberg

The Planning and Zoning Commission last week unanimously approved an application for an 111,000-square-foot assisted living development in the Village Green District on John E. Horton Boulevard.

According to information provided by the applicant, Optimus Senior Living LLC, the facility will contain a 113-unit, three-story building with a mix of independent living units, assisted living units and memory care units.

Each independent unit will have a full kitchen, while the assisted units will include a small kitchenette; each bathroom will contain a shower with a grab bar and fold down seat, grab bars at the toilet, and a call for aid system monitored 24/7.

Meanwhile, amenities in the facility will include a chapel, barber shop/beauty salon, exercise and fitness rooms, a movie theater, a pub and billiards room, several activity rooms for arts and recreation, courtyards, patios, balconies on most upper floor units and Wi-Fi throughout the building.

This will be the first development to occur in the Village Green District, which is a 130-acre parcel in the center of town owned by Horton Brothers LLC and rezoned in 2000 to mixed-use to encourage economic development in town (more information can be found at [hebronvillagegreen.com](http://hebronvillagegreen.com)).

Speaking on the approval this week, Town Manager Andrew Tierney said, "This is a project that fits into the usage we have in the master plan [for the Village Green]."

He added, "It's a large facility. It's going to

bring a lot of new revenue to the town. We worked with the owners and we went and saw a project they built [in Windsor Locks] that's going to be similar to the one we're building here and we're happy with that."

Tierney furthered, "I think it'll be a boost in the arm for some of the local businesses like gas stations, coffee shops, grocery stores for supplies and people getting lunch."

Town Manager Mike O'Leary emphasized that point Thursday, mentioning the market study finalized in 2013 that analyzed the town center, identified potential uses and made recommendations. One of those recommendations was to look at bringing development to town that would create a daytime population – and the assisted living proposal does just that.

The facility is expected to provide 80 jobs, O'Leary said, plus the residents and any visitors. "So it will generate an activity spot and is consistent with the market study."

Fred Miekke, managing partner with Optimus, also spoke about the economic development related to the project, explaining "even during construction, there's a Dunkin' Donuts across the street that will be used, people will be buying gas... so the [construction] activity will be good that way."

And, he added, "It's going to create jobs, and a closer proximity for people looking for that type of housing – adult children looking for some place mom and dad can go to that they'll consider safe."

Speaking to the decision to build in Hebron, Miekke stated, "We felt that there was a hole in the market there as opposed to what's in the



A rendering from the architects working with Optimus Senior Living, LLC shows what the future assisted living development proposed for the Village Green District, and approved last week by Planning and Zoning, will look like.

surrounding communities."

He added, "There's a master plan for that whole [Village Green] area. We're just one seven-acre site out of 130 acres there; some will remain open space, other stuff is going to be developed – there's a lot of interesting things going on – so for the town it's a move forward with the start of something that they've expressed they've wanted for quite a while, so we're excited about being part of that."

O'Leary added of the project, "I think it's a really good use for the Village Green that was created back there for long-term future economic development."

The area is zoned for mixed use including residential, retail, and office space and O'Leary

said "this really fits into that overall plan."

"It creates a residential component at the very edge of the Village Green, which is what we were hoping for, and it's a \$20-plus million development which is a plus for the town in terms of economic development," he stated, mentioning the development would be tax-generating.

"I think it's going to be great," Tierney concluded. "Hopefully it's going to be like an anchor facility down there that will hopefully bring other development."

Groundbreaking is expected to take place sometime in September, and the project is anticipated to take 14 months from the time of approval to the opening of the facility.

# East Hampton Manager Evaluation Morphs Into Fire Marshal Critique

by Elizabeth Regan

The annual evaluation of Town Manager Michael Maniscalco turned into an impromptu review of the fire marshal's performance at last week's meeting of the Town Council.

Councilors James "Pete" Brown, Melissa Engel and Mark Philhower expressed concern about what they described as Maniscalco's failure to address numerous resident complaints against Fire Marshal Rich Klotzbier.

While many written comments, both positive and negative, had been submitted by councilors as part of Maniscalco's evaluation, the brunt of what was said out loud at last Tuesday's meeting revolved around Klotzbier.

"Several of us have had calls and personal stops at the grocery store with regard to this one particular staff member," Engel said. "Maybe others, but I'm focused on this one because that seems to be the one that's had the majority of complaints."

Maniscalco said he received three complaints from residents about Klotzbier between 2014 and 2015 but has not received any since. He investigated each complaint fully and found Klotzbier's actions to be in compliance with state statute or fire code, he said.

Maniscalco also noted he found out in early July that the position of fire marshal should report to the Board of Fire Commissioners, not the town manager. He had been looking into a suggestion by Brown and Philhower to explore regionalizing the fire marshal's office when an opinion from the town's legal counsel revealed the correct chain of command.

State statute gives the town's Board of Fire Commissioners the authority to appoint, supervise and, if necessary, dismiss a fire marshal for cause.

While councilors discussed the fire marshal's oversight and the complaint process, council member Kevin Reich said they were getting off topic.

"This is an interesting conversation, but I'm looking at the agenda and we're here to talk about the town manager's, not the fire marshal's, evaluation," Reich said. "I don't want to take away from the conversation, but it really isn't germane to what we're here for. I would like to cease and desist."

Maniscalco, as specified in his contract, submitted his own printed summary in response to the councilors' evaluation. It was seven pages long with numerous attachments.

The written response pointed to a July 12 memo sent to the Board of Fire Commissioners, a copy of which was also sent to the council

and Klotzbier, which outlined the commission's authority and the council's reservations about job performance within the fire marshal's office.

In it, he asked members of the fire commission to reach out to members of the town council to "gain an understanding of their concerns."

Klotzbier, reached Tuesday by phone, said he is reserving comment at this time.

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While discussion at the meeting focused on the fire marshal, a packet of individual written evaluations from each councilor went into more detail about their view of Maniscalco's performance. A summary sheet compiled by Chairwoman Patience Anderson listed all the comments together and attached an overall rating in each category, which did not include council member Ted Hintz Jr.'s responses because they were not submitted in advance.

On a scale of "superior" to "needs improvement," the six councilors' combined scoring gave Maniscalco above average ratings in the categories of fiscal management and professionalism. They rated him average in communications, services, and personnel.

Hintz's evaluation said Maniscalco needs improvement in fiscal management, communications and personnel. Hintz assigned him an average rating for services and professionalism.

One of Hintz's criticisms revolved around the building department, which he said had been struggling in the absence of former Zoning Enforcement Officer James Carey. Carey retired in May 2015.

"The town manager, instead of giving [building department staff] help, reduced their overtime and additional assistance," Hintz wrote.

Hintz, an accountant, said he knows there are funds set aside for those items. He suggested Maniscalco contact Finance Director Jeff Jylkka for assistance understanding the budgetary system and fund accounting.

In his written response, Maniscalco said the department at the time was forecast to be over budget by \$14,000 to \$17,000 and was looking at a state revenue shortfall of \$88,000. He attached two emails from May and June of that year to the council's then-chairwoman Barbara Moore detailing his interaction with Hintz on the issue.

In the emails, Maniscalco described Hintz's displeasure with the length of time it took to process a resident's demolition permit. According to Maniscalco, Hintz shouted during a phone call that it was "bulls\*\*\*" it would take

so long and that it was "bulls\*\*\*" the town manager couldn't find the money to bring in extra help to address the backlog.

Maniscalco told Moore he put Hintz on speakerphone once the call started to degrade so there would be a witness.

"I am very concerned by Councilman Hintz's desire to attempt to harass and bully me," Maniscalco wrote to Moore. "I would never allow an employee of the town to be talked to the way he has spoken to me."

Reached by cell phone Wednesday, Hintz said it was the first he's heard of Maniscalco's complaint.

"If it was this much of an issue, then why wasn't it addressed a year ago?" he asked.

He reiterated his concern that the department was not getting the resources it needed following Carey's retirement and that staff was behind on all types of permits. "It was no bullying," he said of his prior comments to Maniscalco. "It was a matter of fact."

Hintz also complained in his evaluation that Maniscalco needs to work on teamwork and building morale in the town hall.

Maniscalco responded in writing he had developed an employee morale task force and has focused on bringing together teams of employees to address pressing issues. He said the work is compromised by aging equipment, tight working spaces and, in some cases, substandard conditions.

"During my tenure, I have stuck up for staff and intervened on their behalf when a customer is out of line and have even gone so far as banning residents from town facilities," Maniscalco wrote. "Morale is built from every direction, not just one."

In the area of communications, Hintz wrote he has been stopped by residents who said the town manager is not as responsive as they would like. Reich reiterated the concern when he wrote "there is a perception among some of the public that [Maniscalco's] responsiveness could be improved."

Maniscalco responded with statistics from his public interactions, including an estimated 3,888 emails and 2,088 phone calls per year.

"Furthermore, I attend as many public functions as I can and attempt to speak with the coffee crowds on a weekly basis," he wrote. "As I am sure the council is aware, oftentimes it is my job to say 'no' to citizen requests. I try to do this in as respectful a manner as possible and with as much explanation as necessary."

Councilors positively reviewed Maniscalco's

handling of this year's budget process, which passed in its first referendum, and the way he managed the transition of dispatch services from Colchester Emergency Communications to the Glastonbury Police Department.

While evaluations of town employees may be held behind closed doors per the state's Freedom of Information Act, Maniscalco invoked his right to open his job review discussion to the public as he did last year. Prior to that, he had allowed councilors to discuss his evaluation privately.

According to the town charter, he is also entitled to participate in any meeting, even when the topic is his own evaluation.

The public airing of the review process and Maniscalco's participation was met with resistance by several council members, including Hintz and Brown. Hintz described the process in an email to council members as "the fox watching the hen house."

This year, the whole evaluation process was marked by confusion among council members at the two meetings during which it has been discussed so far.

"There's two words to describe how this all went down," said Philhower at last week's meeting. "I can't say those in public, except the first one, which is 'cluster.'"

The practice in prior years had been for council members to formulate a final evaluation by collecting their individual responses, discussing them together, and keeping only the responses upon which a majority of the members agreed. The joint evaluation would then be sent to the town manager for his review and response.

This year, members did not discuss their individual evaluations as a group even though they did talk about the need to do so.

Maniscalco said he had "significant concern and disappointment" with the evaluation process.

"Consistent with the previous four years, the council has violated my employment contract in regard to the completion and timing of my evaluation and, this year, also in its format," he wrote in his response.

Maniscalco asked for his first public evaluation in March 2015, when the council led by Moore held a mid-year evaluation that Maniscalco said violated his contract. The contract specifies an "annual review" be held around his July 1 anniversary date.

Councilors will discuss proposed contract changes and salary at their next meeting.

## Esteve Departs Colchester Board of Finance

by Julianna Roche

The Board of Finance Wednesday began interviews to fill the seat of member Rob Esteve, who recently tendered his resignation. The departure takes effect Sept. 1.

At Wednesday's meeting, Board of Finance Chairman Robert Tarlov said Esteve, a Republican and the board's current vice chair, is leaving the board due to conflicts with his schedule.

"His commitments with travel and doing this, and his family, have been a real struggle with him as he's on the road a lot now and doesn't have the control on his schedule as he used to have," he said. "I, for one, will sorely miss his presence on the board."

Esteve has been on the board since 2010. He could not be reached this week for comment.

Per the town charter, the opening must be filled by an elector of the same party as the person who resigned. Republican candidate Roberta Lepore, who has lived in Colchester for the last 20 years and has an accounting back-

ground, was interviewed during the meeting.

Lepore said she felt the role of the Board of Finance is as a "check and balance, quite honestly." She added that the board should act as a "gatekeeper making sure we keep the right balance."

Lepore also stated her goals during the interview, which included focusing not only on budgeting, but increasing revenue, and making sure the community stayed well-informed with accurate information regarding the town's important financial issues.

"For me, it really comes down to: how do we increase our revenue?" she said. "I view it like a house – you can pay the mortgage, but if you don't keep the house up, it's going to fall. ... We want people to keep coming to Colchester [so] finding additional possibilities for revenue to me, is very critical."

Board member Thomas Kane asked Lepore if she were appointed to the board, would she be able to accept and move forward if there was

a board decision she disagreed with. Lepore said she would. "I think that's life, and I deal with that every day in corporate life," she said.

Lepore currently works as senior director of Global Risk, Compliance and Control at Pfizer. Her previous experience includes working as an auditor for Arthur Andersen, LLP and executive director of finance for the Mohegan Tribe of Indians.

When asked what her biggest strength was, the candidate said it was her ability to put emotion aside when it came time to make difficult decisions. "I'm very analytical. I ask a lot of questions and I like to get creative in how we find solutions."

Lepore was then given the opportunity to ask questions of the board, to which she wondered how the board functioned as a whole. Board member Andrea Migliaccio said "we're cohesive" and "we leave our parties at the door despite what some people think."

Board member James McNair agreed.

# East Hampton Officials Forge Ahead With Municipal Hub Plan

by Elizabeth Regan

Town officials at a joint meeting of the Town Council, Board of Finance and Board of Education reached consensus Tuesday to move forward with the idea of turning Center School into a municipal hub.

Only two of the 13 officials present at the meeting disagreed with authorizing a feasibility study for the project, which would convert Center School into a town hall and police complex and would renovate Memorial School to accommodate the displaced students.

Kenneth J. Guyette, of the project management firm Colliers International, said the feasibility study and related consulting and assessment fees would cost roughly \$250,000. The study would establish the scope of the project and provide preliminary floor plans and cost estimates to send to voters at referendum around March 2017, Guyette said.

Colliers has prepared specifications on Memorial School to put the first phase of the project out to bid to qualified architectural and engineering firms, according to Guyette; it is finalizing bid specifications for Center School.

The appropriation from the general fund for the first phase of the project would have to be approved by formal votes of both the finance board and Town Council before being sent to taxpayers at a town meeting.

Town Council Member Kevin Reich, despite ultimately conceding to move forward with the feasibility study, delivered a stinging rebuke of the estimated cost of \$36.22 to \$44.40 million for entire project.

He asked the councilors and board members sitting around him if anyone thought taxpayers would actually support such an expensive project after a \$52 million high school renovation and this fiscal year's 1.66 mill increase to

the mill rate.

"I'm going to tell you right now, I have a problem with it," Reich, a Democrat, said. "I'm also probably the most liberal person in this room. Probably the most liberal person who would spend the most money and could care less how high his taxes are because I want the best education for the kids. But I also want the best services for the town."

Finance board member Marc Lambert, a Republican, said elected officials aren't supposed to decide what taxpayers want. Instead, it's their responsibility to present a reasonable proposal to address infrastructure problems so the taxpayers can decide for themselves if they can afford it.

"Now, if the town chooses not to support it, then the town's made that choice. But I don't think we have the option, to be perfectly honest, to continue to ignore the problem that exists," Lambert said. "And, yes, it's going to cost money and, yes, it's going to be unpopular. But what's the option? Do we wait until [the town hall] falls down on itself? Do we wait until Center School is no longer inhabitable for its students?"

Rough project estimates by Colliers at a workshop in March showed that renovating Center School for use as a town hall/police department and constructing a 14,700-square-foot addition to Memorial School to accommodate the displaced students could cost about \$36.22 million. The costs assume both the renovated Memorial School and the new town hall complex would be completed between the fall of 2019 and the beginning of 2020, respectively.

Another proposed option included a 34,000-square-foot addition to Memorial School instead of 14,700 square feet. The larger expansion

could cost \$44.40 million.

Republican Town Council member Josh Piteo said there are other, less expensive options than turning Center School into a municipal hub. As an example, he suggested moving the police department to another site and expanding the existing town hall so it can accommodate staff and parking needs for all town departments, including those currently housed at the Middletown Avenue annex.

"We have needs and we have wants," Piteo said. "What do we actually need? We need a police department. We need a town hall. That's it. That's where it ends. We do not need another school."

According to Piteo, current and former students are attached to Center School, its unique two-grade configuration, and its long history.

"All its quiriness, they think it's great. Teachers like it too. And you want to get rid of it? It's not going to work. It's too much money and it's not needed," Piteo said.

Piteo was a member of the Facilities Evaluation Committee that several years ago recommended moving the police department, and eventually Fire Company No. 2, to property on 195 and 201 West High St. currently owned by local developer Wayne Rand. The total estimated cost for the purchase of the land and the construction of a police facility was put at roughly \$6.9 million, according to the 2014 report compiled by the committee of local volunteers.

Board of Education member Tania Sones, a Republican, joined Piteo as the only other member of the three boards not to support the feasibility study.

She said she didn't know if enough had been done to fully explore other options to address

the needs of the outgrown town hall and police department.

Now that the three boards have agreed to move forward, town officials will come up with a better idea of how much space is necessary to fit two more grades into Memorial School.

Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith said at the meeting that 14,700 square feet is definitely not enough space – but he wasn't sure if 34,000 square feet is necessary.

Smith explained school officials, including district- and school-level administrators, came up with the preliminary 34,000 square foot estimate at a meeting early this year. He said another meeting has not yet been held to refine the figure.

In a phone interview Wednesday, he said the school district has been waiting for guidance from the town since the last Town Council workshop on the subject in March.

"My impression is that the town now, between the Board of Education, Town Council and the Board of Finance, have at least agreed to move forward and do a realistic investigation, with the permission of voters, of what the needs of the students in grades four and five would be as well as the needs of the town hall and police department," he said.

Smith reiterated the size and cost of a renovated Memorial School will be determined in the feasibility study stage with input from school administrators, staff and parents – "keeping in mind that nobody wants a huge building project at this time."

The important discussion will revolve around how to incorporate Center School's close-knit, supportive and unique culture into a new wing of Memorial School in an economical way, according to Smith.

## Colchester Comic Book Store Celebrates 15-Year Anniversary

by Julianna Roche

Peter Raber loves Wednesdays.

"It's the best day of the week," he said – it's when AJ's Comics gets their shipment of new comics in each week. He's dubbed it "Comic Book Wednesday."

AJ's Comics, located on 35 Lebanon Ave., was originally opened in 2001 by Ken Fargnoli and named after his two children, Alycia and Joseph. Fifteen years later and it still serves as Colchester's only comic book shop, selling everything from comics and *Dungeons & Dragons* merchandise to *Magic: The Gathering* and *Pokémon* cards and decks. Within the last year, Raber became business partners with Fargnoli, and now helps run the shop.

"My favorite part of working here is just talking to people when they come in and are really excited about what's coming out, what they just read, or what they think about certain characters," he said. "And they ask me my opinions on certain stories that ran in the past and what they should read next. I try to steer them to what I think is a good thing for them to sink their teeth into."

Standing next to the store's front counter in his black thick-rimmed glasses, long blonde beard, and DC Comics superhero-themed shirt, Raber looks like he belongs inside a comic book shop. Behind him, a collection of *Watchmen* graphic novels and *Batman* and *The Amazing Spider-Man* comics hang from the shop's sunshine-yellow colored walls.

"I first got into them when I was five or six," Raber said. "If I was ever sick and couldn't go to church that Sunday, my father would stop at the grocery store and pick up a couple comics for me and I'd read them."

It wasn't until he was 15 years old however, that he bought his first comic, which he said he believes was *The Amazing Spider-Man*, either issue 270 or 269. "Then I remember when I

first started collecting, I went back and thought 'Oh I remember that comic from when I was five. I need to go get a copy of that,'" he said, explaining his comic collecting took off from there.

"Once I started getting into collecting, I just started filling out old runs," he said. "So I have *Batman* all the way back from [issue] 160 on, which I think is up to 850 or something. If I go all the way back to The Silver Age, I've got *Justice League* from issues 60 on up, *The Amazing Spider-Man* from issue 39 up. These are all books from the mid-'60s moving forward."

AJ's Comics employee John Candela shared a similar story, saying he's been interested in comics since he was a kid growing up in Hartford, where he lived next door to the great aunt and uncle of one of the creators of *Spider-Man*. "So I got tons of free comic books and I just soaked it all in," he said.

While Raber and Candela may be huge comic book collectors and aficionados, they said they also have outside careers and work in the comic book shop mostly out of their passion for the hobby.

"We're all here because we want to be. We all have careers. Comic book stores aren't these big mega cash cows," Candela said.

Raber, for example, is also an author and has been writing for about 25 years. He has published two novels, including a young adult fantasy novel *The Power Within* and an adult fantasy novel, *Heaven's Hell*. He's also a book collector, he said, adding that, like with comic books, if he finds an author or character he likes, he'll try to fill out an entire collection of their work.

"Comic books are a little bit different," Raber said. "You collect them because you want to read them and you like them, but you also collect them because they may be worth something down the road."



AJ's Comics employee John Candela, left, and co-owner Peter Raber look forward to celebrating the comic book store's 15-year anniversary Saturday, Aug. 13, from noon-5 p.m.

However, Raber noted there are more similarities between regular books and comic books than one might think. "It's another way of just telling a story," he said. "That's all it is. It's not just words on a paper. It's the picture that tells you just as much as the words do; if not, even more."

"This is a growing town," he added. "If you want something local, we like to have stuff for people who are looking to entertain themselves for a little while... we're down to earth. We're a family friendly-type store. If we don't have a

certain comic, we'll get it for you. You can always come in and let us know what you're looking for."

On Saturday, Aug. 13 from noon to 5 p.m., AJ's Comics will celebrate its 15-year anniversary, offering 15 percent off everything in store (except for comics that come out on Aug. 10) and 20 percent off to regular subscribers. Raber will also be in store selling and signing his new novel *Heaven's Hell*.

For more information, visit [ajscomics.com](http://ajscomics.com) or search for AJ's Comics on Facebook.

## Obituaries

### Hebron

#### Roger Dale Crosby

Roger Dale Crosby, 82, of Hebron, passed away Friday, July 22, at Salmon Brook Nursing Home in Glastonbury, with his family by his side. He was born in Princeton, Maine, July 13, 1934. Roger was the youngest son of twelve children of the late Lester and Lulu (McLaughlin) Crosby.



He married Ruth Johnston Oct. 28, 1955. The couple made their home and raised their family in Hebron. Roger was active with the Hebron Lions Club, he was a life time member of the Hebron Volunteer Fire Department and a former constable for the town. Roger retired several years ago after having worked as a mechanic and professional truck driver throughout his career.

In addition to his beloved wife of 60 years, he leaves three children and their spouses, Raymond and his wife Michelle Crosby of Redding, Regina and her husband Leonard Larson of Hebron, Robin and her husband Kevin Kilton of Lebanon; seven grandchildren and their spouses, Leonard Larson Jr. (Stephanie), Erin Crosby (Aderito), Corey Larson (Lauren), Kelly Larson, Raymond Crosby, Amanda Kilton (John), Kayla Crosby; five great grandchildren, Cameron Crosby, Jordan Morales, Jonah Larson, Lucas Amado, Amari Amado; and numerous extended family members and friends.

Funeral services will be held privately, according to his wishes. Burial will also be private in the Gilead Cemetery in Hebron.

Donations in his memory may be made to the Alzheimer's Association, 279 New Britain Ave., Suite 5, Kensington, CT 06037.

The Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester has been entrusted with these services.

### East Hampton

#### Anna Hanson

Anna (Zaiko) Hanson, 88, of East Hampton, wife of the late Hilding G. Hanson, died Sunday, July 31 at Middlesex Hospital. Born November 13, 1927 in Cromwell, she was the daughter of the late Stephen and Anna (Andrewkavitz) Zaiko.

Anna lived most of her life in East Hampton and was a member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, where she served for many years on the Alter Guild. She is survived by her son, David Hanson of East Hampton; daughters Deborah (Gordon) Champion of Deep River and Sandra (Raymond) Curry of Sturbridge, Mass.; grandchildren Christopher Hanson, Eric (Ashley) and Mark (Christie) Champion; as well as her sister Mary Smith of Cromwell and several nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her sister Anastasia Shimchick and brother Stephen Zaiko.

Funeral services were held Wednesday, Aug. 3 at Spencer Funeral Home in East Hampton with the Rev. Beth Anderson officiating. Burial will be Private in Lake View Cemetery in East Hampton. Friends called at the funeral home Wednesday morning from 9 a.m. until the time of the service. In lieu of flowers memorial contributions may be made to Bethlehem Lutheran Church, P.O. Box 31, East Hampton, CT 06424.

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

### Andover

#### Jeanne Alice Nicholson

Jeanne Alice Nicholson of Valrico, Fla., from Andover, passed away Saturday, June 18, after a short illness.

Jeanne was predeceased by her parents, Mary and Charles, and her beloved Aunt Alice.

She is survived by her brother Daniel of Wallingford, his wife Carolyn, and their children Christopher and Mary; brother Peter of Honolulu, Hawaii; brother Tim of South Windsor and his daughter Briana; sister Barbara of South Windsor, her husband Robert, and their children Rachael and Bobby; and stepmother Barbara of East Longmeadow, Mass. In addition, Jeanne is survived by the many loyal friends she made during her years in Florida, including John Weyand Jr., whose selfless devotion to Jeanne over the years and during her last moments will always be remembered with great affection.

Jeanne spoke fondly of her childhood in Andover, and it was her wish that she be laid to rest beside her parents there. Jeanne's family will gather Saturday, Aug. 6, at 11 a.m., at Townsend Cemetery, Townsend Road in Andover, to honor that wish and celebrate her life. We welcome all who would like to join us.

### Cobalt

#### Janet Newman

Janet (Mourey) Newman, 62, passed away peacefully Tuesday, July 19, surrounded by her loving family at Cobalt Health Care in Cobalt.

Jan was born July 21, 1953, in Springfield, Mass., and raised in Southwick, Mass. Her parents, Charles and Mary Mourey, later moved to Springfield, Mass., where Jan graduated from High School of Commerce in 1971. She married Russell Newman in Springfield, Mass., in November 1972 and they later moved to Colorado and lived 12 years in the Rockies, where she was a stay at home mom and developed her love for the Denver Broncos. Her family moved to Connecticut in 1985. In 1987 she found a career as an office manager at a local chiropractic office and retired after 23 years there.

Jan was the most beautiful person inside and out, her smile and laugh were contagious and her heart was filled with pure love and concern for everything and everyone. Jan enjoyed watching and feeding birds, sewing, gardening, fishing, traveling out west, spending time with her grandchildren, family and friends and watching her beloved Super Bowl champs, the Denver Broncos.

Jan is survived by her loving sons Joshua, his wife Melissa, Daniel, his wife Melissa; four grandchildren, Samuel, Lilah, Kiara, Joseph; her mother, Mary Craig; her sisters, Pamela and her husband Joseph Rovelli, Cathy Coache; Jan's ex-husband Russell and his wife Carol; best friend Estelle Tardi; and several nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by her father, Charles Mourey.

Services will be private.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating on her behalf to the Alzheimer's Foundation of America ([alzfdn.org](http://alzfdn.org)) or for her everlasting love of birds to the Audubon Society ([audubon.org](http://audubon.org)).

### Portland

#### Alain Joseph Dulac

Alain Joseph Dulac, 53, of Portland, passed away peacefully Sunday, July 31. Born Oct. 7, 1962, in Saint-Jean, Canada, son of Gabri-elle (LaChance) Dulac and the late Clement D. Dulac, he lived in Connecticut for most of his life.

Alain graduated from Prince Technical High School, which led to a lifelong career as an auto technician and he worked for Newman Lincoln Mercury Ford in East Hartford for many years.

Alain was adventurous and most happy riding on his four-wheeler through the trails on his property in Vermont and while snowmobiling in Vermont and Canada. He was an active member of the Drift Dusters snowmobile club in Vermont. He loved spending time with his son Kevin and his many friends and enjoyed vacationing with his good friends in Maine. His other interests included hunting, boating and fishing.

He is predeceased by his father, Clement Dulac.

He is survived by his mother, Gabrielle Dulac of Wethersfield, his son, Kevin Dulac of Portland, and his girlfriend, Cheryl Rannou of Newington, several aunts, uncles and cousins and many lifelong friends.

His funeral service will begin Tuesday, Aug. 9, at 9 a.m., at the Newington Memorial Funeral Home, 20 Bonair Ave., Newington, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at 10 a.m. at the Church of the Holy Spirit, Newington. Burial will be private. Relatives and friends are invited to call on Monday, Aug., 8, from 4-7 p.m., at Newington Memorial.

Memorial donations may be made to a charity of the donor's choice.

To share a memory with his family, visit [newingtonmemorial.com](http://newingtonmemorial.com).

### Portland

#### Robert Russo

Robert Russo, 69, formerly of Portland, passed away Sunday, July 31, at the Summit at Plantsville. Born July 27, 1947 in Middletown, he was the son of the late Frank and Josephine (Milardo) Russo.



Bob was employed as a foreman for the Electric Division of Wallingford. He was a member of I.B.F.W. Local 42. Bob also worked as a lineman in many parts of the world including Saudi Arabia and Nova Scotia. He enjoyed his days on Jobs Pond in Portland with his many friends and family. His hobbies included riding his Harley, his fast cars, running road races and fishing.

Mr. Russo is survived by his sister, Beverly Skinnon and her husband Ned; a sister-in-law, Kathy Russo; three nieces: Kelly Russo and her son Andrew, Jody Backman and her husband Daniel, Amy Rogers and her husband Eric and their children, Jonah, Cosette and Boden; a nephew, Robert Skinnon and his wife Erika and their daughter Lilliana.

He was predeceased by his brother, Frank Russo Jr.

His funeral was held Thursday, Aug. 4, from the Portland Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, when the funeral cortege proceeded to the Church of St. Mary for a Mass of Christian Burial that morning. Burial followed in St. Mary Cemetery. Family and friends paid their respects Thursday morning at the Portland Funeral Home.

Donations in memory of Robert Russo may be made to the charity of one's choice.

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

### Marlborough

#### Mary Ann Harvill

Mary Ann Harvill, 83, of Manchester, died Friday, July 29, at Marlborough Health Care Center, where she received tender care from kind staff. Born in Bristol, she had lived in Manchester for many years.

Mary Ann received her bachelor's degree from St. Joseph's College and her master's degree from Penn State. She retired as a registered dietitian from the W.I.C. program at Rockville Hospital.

She was a devoted wife to her husband Martin L. Harvill, and her devotion continued for 44 years after his passing, and she was a strong and loving mother who raised three boys on her own.

She is survived by her sons, Brian Harvill and his wife Jennifer of Old Lyme, Ken Harvill and his wife Amy of Marlborough, and Mark Harvill of Bolton; and her grandchildren, Kyle Harvill, and Will and Jacob Coates.

The funeral service was held today, Aug. 5, at 9:15 a.m., from the John F. Tierney Funeral Home, 219 West Center St., Manchester, with a Mass of Christian Burial at 10 a.m. at St. Bartholomew Church, Manchester, followed by burial in St. James Cemetery, Manchester. Family and friends called at the funeral home Thursday, Aug. 4.

Memorial contributions may be made to The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, P.O. Box 5014, Hagerstown, MD 21741-5014.

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

*From the Editor's Desk*

# Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

As those of you who get the Colchester edition of the *Rivereast* saw last week, the Fedus family recently held a large family reunion at St. Joseph's Polish Club, to commemorate 114 years of the family being in this country.

One of the highlights was the attendance by Steve Fedus of Southwick, Mass., who turned 96 years old last week. Eric Fedus, who put together the family reunion, told me Steve actually was recently honored by the West Hartford Police for an incident that happened nearly 70 years ago, and sent along an article from the West Hartford news site [we-ha.com](http://we-ha.com), explaining just why Steve was honored. Due to space constraints, I needed to condense what happened to Steve all those years ago – but it's a fascinating story.

At around 3:30 p.m. April 13, 1948, according to [we-ha.com](http://we-ha.com), Steve was on duty at the intersection of Asylum Avenue and Steele Road in West Hartford, helping children cross the street from Beach Park School (now the University of Saint Joseph School for Young Children). Steve was standing at the northwest corner of the intersection when a speeding vehicle approached, heading westbound on Asylum Avenue. The car was being driven by two 17-year-olds, John Maciuszka and Richard Lacy, who went AWOL from Fort Dix in New Jersey and had hitchhiked from New Jersey to Hartford, where they then stole a car.

The two were speeding down Asylum when, [we-ha.com](http://we-ha.com) reported, they attempted to pass another car on the right and, while doing so, struck the curb and veered back into the street. Steve noticed this and went into the roadway to try to stop the car. However, the car began to skid and struck Steve, breaking his left leg in several places. The car continued to skid, took down a mailbox and ultimately flipped over after striking a fire hydrant.

Maciuszka and Lacy were uninjured, and fled the scene. Meanwhile, Steve lay injured in the street. Residents quickly came to his aid – and a manhunt for the two AWOL teens began. The two were captured by police a short time later in Elizabeth Park, and were eventually sentenced to the State Reformatory.

Meanwhile, the injuries to Steve's leg were so severe that, several days after the incident, it had to be amputated; in May 1949, Steve took a disability separation from the West Hartford Police Department, cutting short a policing career that, Steve had written in his 1947 application to West Hartford Police, he'd wanted to make his "life's work."

Did what happened to Steve leave him bitter or depressed? No way. In fact, [we-ha.com](http://we-ha.com) reported, Fedus in 1951 won a letter-writing contest sponsored by WTIC radio. Letters were to address the topic "The Nicest Thing That Ever Happened to Me" – and Steve wrote that he considered the love and support he received from the public following the incident to be the best thing that had ever happened to him.

After retiring from West Hartford Police, Steve worked a variety of non-police jobs – including a position with the state that he held for 30 years – and he married and had three children. Tragedy struck in 1970, though, when his wife passed away, leaving Steve to raise three children, ages 12, 11 and 5. The three all went on to become doctors.

Unfortunately, these days Steve is in failing health, and his son Henry reached out to West Hartford Police and asked if someone from the department could maybe pay him a visit; through all these years, Henry said, Steve still considers himself a police officer.

West Hartford Police did more than just say 'hi.' Chief Tracey Gove and two assistant chiefs drove up to Southwick to present Steve with the Police Cross, a West Hartford Po-

lice award developed after a detective was shot and significantly injured in 1995. The award recognizes members of the department that suffered a dramatic injury in the line of duty.

I think it's great Steve was honored with the award; after reading his story, I'm sure he was thrilled by it. Steve Fedus does not seem to me to be a man who backs down from adversity; in fact, he's beating the odds to this very day. Just a few months ago, his doctors had given him a month to live at most. But there he was on July 20, showing up to the Fedus family reunion in Colchester, all smiles.

I'm very happy for Steve – and for the whole Fedus family – that he was able to make it.

\* \* \*

I was out with some friends recently at a restaurant that was holding one of those "bar trivia" types of nights. A question dealt with Halley's Comet – namely, when is it due to appear next, since it last appeared in 1986 – and, when giving the answer, the trivia host shared this interesting piece of, well, trivia. Mark Twain both was born and died in years Halley's Comet made appearances.

That got me thinking about Twain himself – maybe Connecticut's favorite author, and certainly someone I should read more of. While doing some researching of him online, I came across a list of great – and often inspirational – Twain quotes, including:

"If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything."

"The secret of getting ahead is getting started."

"To succeed in life, you need two things: ignorance and confidence."

"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear – not absence of fear."

"The fear of death follows from the fear of life. A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time."

"It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog."

"Get your facts first, then you can distort them as you please."

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

"Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see."

"I have never let my schooling interfere with my education."

"You can't depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus."

"The lack of money is the root of all evil."

"A man's character may be learned from the adjectives which he habitually uses in conversation."

"Better to keep your mouth shut and appear stupid than to open it and remove all doubt."

"Never put off till tomorrow what may be done day after tomorrow just as well."

"Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."

"Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect."

"The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read."

"Don't go around saying the world owes you a living. The world owes you nothing. It was here first."

"A lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes."

"Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great."

"Good friends, good books, and a sleepy conscience: this is the ideal life."

I've said it before in this very space and I'll say it again: the man was brilliant.

\* \* \*

See you next week.

## East Hampton Police News

7/24: Jose A. Feliciano, 36, of 226 Winfield Dr., New Britain, was issued a summons for speeding, East Hampton Police said.

7/25: Justin Wilson, 34, of 97 Spring St., Middletown, was arrested pursuant to an active warrant and charged with third-degree assault, first-degree reckless endangerment and operation of a motor vehicle with a suspended license, police said.

7/27: Timothy C. Evans, 30, of 64 Main St., was taken into custody pursuant to an active warrant and charged with failure to respond to a prior charge of possession of marijuana, police said.

## Colchester Police News

7/21: Colchester Police said Benjamin Randazzo, 20, of 9 Turner Rd., Amston, was arrested and charged with failure to display a front plate and possession of a controlled substance after police found less than half an ounce of marijuana in his vehicle.

## Two-Car Crash in Marlborough

A Toyota Camry driven by Bertha A. Hatem, 56, of 11 West St., Andover, was traveling eastbound on Route 66 at approximately 4:15 p.m. behind a Hyundai Elantra, when the driver, Lisa-Ann L. Madison, 49, of 76 Johnson Rd. slowed to make a right turn on Johnson Road. The Toyota continued driving eastbound and struck the rear end of the Hyundai with the front end of its vehicle.

According to police, both vehicles sustained minor damage and Madison was transported by the Marlborough Fire Department to Marlborough Medical Center, due to moderate injuries.

Hatem was found to be at fault for the accident and was issued an infraction complaint ticket for driving unreasonably close to a vehicle, police said.