



RIVEREAST

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It's My New Locker!... Incoming seventh-grader Maddy Murray of Hebron checks out her new locker before her first day at RHAM Middle School. Classes start at the RHAM middle and high schools Wednesday, Aug. 30. See related story on page 7.

Colchester Schools Still 'Innovation Nation'

by Julianna Roche

With a student population that continues to diversify, and the future of jobs changing in a technology-driven market, the "Innovation Nation" initiative that was introduced to Colchester schools last year will continue to be a focus district-wide for the 2017-18 school year, according to Interim Superintendent of Schools Karen Loiselle Goodwin.

"We're focusing on our commitment [to the initiative] this school year, which means really exploring personalized learning for each and every student," she said.

Loiselle Goodwin – who previously served as the district's superintendent from 2004 to 2012 – explained that focus on personalized learning includes incorporating technology fit for the 21st century into every classroom across the district.

At Colchester Elementary School, for example, new library media specialist Karen Groves will help implement technology across every grade level.

"In the past, librarians were available to work with classrooms when they requested help," Loiselle Goodwin said, adding this year, Groves will "work with every single classroom" to assist in "interdisciplinary research projects."

"We're really excited about that," she added. CES Principal Judy O'Meara agreed.

"We're so excited because we lost our media specialist midway through last year," she said. "[Groves is] going to work with every single classroom to incorporate literacy and technology [and] is also going to work with small groups of students in whatever area they show an interest or special talent in."

O'Meara furthered that another "big push" for CES this year will be "incorporating personalized learning through integrated arts" and implementing "more project-based learning" for students who want to pursue unique interests.

"I'm really looking forward to personalized learning. I've read so much [about it] and done a lot of research, and it really seems to push kids to the next level," she said. "I really feel that the media center, which is in the center of our school, can be such a way to infuse so many different things into the classroom and enrich every kid in whatever area they're interested in."

After partnering with community group Colchester is Kind, O'Meara said students can also expect to see "kindness rocks" they painted with positive and happy messages cemented into the area surrounding the buddy bench outside the school.

"We wanted to be able to display them and keep that kindness theme going," she explained. "It's a nice area where kids can be reminded of that and be kind to each other."

* * *

Jack Jacter Intermediate School – which is recognized as a state Higher Order Thinking (HOT) school – was also designated as one of just seven "spotlight schools" across the state this year for "implementing a very creative curriculum with students," Loiselle Goodwin explained.

JJIS Principal Elise Budson explained this means the school will serve as a training school

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MAT Eyes Trimming Belltown, Portland Bus Service

by Elizabeth Regan

The struggling Middletown Area Transit Authority (MAT) has announced a public hearing on a proposal that would cut bus service to Portland and East Hampton by half, eliminate all Saturday service and raise the Dial-A-Ride fee by 50 cents per trip.

The proposed changes come more than a month after the transit authority's governing board fired its director and financial consultant and asked the state to bring in an emergency manager to salvage operations.

The transit authority's interim administrator, Phil Pumphrey, informed local leaders about the proposed changes through an Aug. 14 email.

In a phone interview last week, Pumphrey said public input is crucial to figuring out which runs will be cut.

The ultimate decision will be based on balancing the needs of all riders in a way that does "the least amount of damage," he said.

The highest priority will be placed on making sure people can get to and from work, according to Pumphrey. That may mean keeping the first two runs of each weekday and the last two runs, he said.

Pumphrey acknowledged some mid-day trips have more riders than the earliest and latest trips, as indicated in ridership data collected through the Lower Connecticut Valley Council of Governments (see sidebar on page 5). But he said those who need the bus to get to work each day are most likely to be traveling on either end of the bus schedule.

Pumphrey said staff is also analyzing internal ridership data collected by bus drivers.

The first Portland/East Hampton bus sets off from Middletown at 5:45 a.m.; the last one pulls back into the bus depot around 6:30 p.m.

Despite the threatened elimination of Saturday service in the current proposal, Pumphrey's outlook was much more optimistic when he said it's likely the transit authority will be able to maintain all four runs that day. The decision is ultimately up to the transit authority's board of directors.

Other changes under consideration by the board of directors would increase the Dial-A-Ride fee from \$3 to \$3.50 per ride and would update the no-show policy to align with both Federal Transit Administration and Americans

with Disabilities Act guidelines.

Pumphrey said the rural route is funded by specific federal grants for small towns, which do not currently cover the cost of operation.

He described it as a mistake for the previous administration "to expand it beyond the revenue they took in."

Pumphrey said the biggest cost savings will come from the reduction of seven transit authority staffing positions, most of which are full time.

First Transit is currently providing emergency management services at the behest of the state Department of Transportation, according to Pumphrey. MAT's budget is currently \$2.6 million.

Pumphrey was optimistic that bringing services back in line with available revenue would put the transit authority on the path to sustainability.

"We have to make the cuts. We have to reduce the staffing. It'll be fine," he said.

The firing of MAT's previous leadership, as well as several other changes, was spurred by an aggressive campaign from Middletown

Mayor Daniel Drew over the past few months as the transit authority's shaky financial picture resulted in the threat of significant changes to Middletown bus service.

Drew, as well as other local and state leaders, fought to preserve evening bus service in the city and to maintain the bus link to Meriden.

While the cuts to Middletown's bus service were averted, questions remain about the source and extent of the transit authority's financial woes.

State and Local Leaders React

State Rep. Christie Carpino, a Republican from the 32nd district representing Portland, joined up on Monday with state Rep. Melissa Ziobron, a Republican from the 34th district representing East Hampton, to issue a statement.

They encouraged any residents impacted by the changes to attend the public hearing or to contact the transit authority directly.

"These changes, especially an elimination of Saturday service, will be harmful to our residents by negatively impacting those who de-

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pend on these services daily,” they wrote. “Seniors and families in our communities rely on regular bus service as their lifeline to get to and from work, the store, medical appointments and much more.”

The representatives said it took days for transit authority officials to return their call for more information about ridership and bus routes. They described the lack of responsiveness as “concerning.”

East Hampton Town Manager Michael Maniscalco said last week he has conveyed the proposed bus service changes to relevant town departments, including the senior center, library and youth and family services.

East Hampton pays \$19,000 to the transit authority under the terms of its current contract.

“I would love to be able to say they’re going to continue services the way they’ve been forever,” he said. “[But] financial challenges associated with MAT dictate some changes to occur.”

Portland First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield encouraged residents with concerns about the proposed changes to contact her office so she could convey their thoughts to the transit authority.

The town is paying \$10,677 to the transit authority for bus service based on the current contract.

“In many rural towns, the availability of getting a ride is challenging,” Bransfield said. “To be able to have a bus service is critical for many, many people.”

Important considerations to be addressed by the evolving transit authority, according to Bransfield, include what level of service it must provide, how it will be structured and governed, and how it’s paid for.

“We want to make sure that going forward MAT gets stronger and provides appropriate ridership service to us. How that proceeds is

something I’m certainly going to be at the table to learn more about,” she said.

Governance Structure Assessed

Lower River Valley Council of Government Executive Director Samuel Gold attributed the transit authority’s “serious financial challenges” to reduced state funding, rising costs and “potential issues” with the authority’s previous administration.

“At this point it doesn’t matter anymore how we got into the mess, it’s how we get out of this mess,” he added.

Gold reiterated the importance of the public hearing as a way to make officials aware how the possible changes would affect riders.

“This is not predetermined,” he said.

Meanwhile, the Middletown mayor has been reaching out to area leaders to reconfigure the Middletown Area Transit Authority Board of Directors to include representation from participating towns.

Middletown General Counsel Brig Smith, in an Aug. 10 email to the top officials in East Hampton, Portland, Cromwell, Durham and Middlefield, sent a draft memorandum of understanding outlining the framework for a potential new governance structure.

The proposed board would be composed of two representatives from Middletown and one each from the other towns.

Previously, the six-member board of directors included representation from the City of Middletown only. Four of those members have since resigned.

“Each of your communities are MAT customers, but not MAT stakeholders,” Smith wrote. “The Mayor would like to change that and enlist each of you as full voting members of MAT so that you will have a seat at the table in making sure your constituents are being served.”

Smith emphasized the wording of the draft

memorandum makes it clear that towns would not be taking on any of the transit authority’s “pre-existing liabilities.”

Maniscalco said East Hampton’s town attorney is currently reviewing the legal document. The council will discuss the issue once the attorney has issued an opinion.

According to Bransfield, selectmen will be looking at MAT bylaws and examining the agency’s financial situation to determine what “question marks” still exist as they weigh their decision, she explained.

The discussion will be taken up at its Sept. 6 meeting.

Bransfield noted last week that the transit authority still owes the town \$23,749 for Dial-

A-Ride services provided through Portland’s senior center since mid-2016.

A contract with the transit authority specifies it will reimburse the town up to \$27,717 for providing elderly and handicapped residents with medical, shopping and personal transportation between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays.

The contract states the reimbursement is contingent on the release of the funds from the state.

Pumphrey said last week the transit authority is waiting for the state to release those funds.

The public hearing on proposed bus service changes will be held at 5:30 p.m. on Aug. 31 in the council chambers of the Middletown City Hall, 245 Dekoven Drive, Middletown.

Snapshot of MAT Ridership

Data collected through the Lower Connecticut Valley Council of Governments gives a snapshot of ridership on the East Hampton/Portland bus route. The bus departs from downtown Middletown.

Weekday Morning
(Data collected on May 24)

- 5:45 a.m. - 4 riders
- 6:45 a.m. - 9 riders
- 7:45 a.m. - 11 riders
- 10:45 a.m. - 9 riders

Saturday Morning
(Data collected on July 1)

- 9:15 a.m. - 11 riders
- 11:45 a.m. - 3 riders

Weekday Afternoon
(Data collected on June 7)

- 12:30 p.m. - 9 riders
- 1:45 p.m. - 6 riders
- 3:00 p.m. - 8 riders
- 5:35 p.m. - 3 riders

Saturday Afternoon
(Data collected on April 29)

- 2:15 p.m. - 1 rider
- 4:45 p.m. - 0 riders

‘Innovation Nation’ cont. from Front Page

for other districts in the state.

“We’ve been a HOT school, but this is new for us,” she said. “We’re very proud. ... Our staff was really instrumental in making [becoming a spotlight school] a reality.

Budson also explained for the 2017-18 school year, personalized learning and integrating arts into the classroom will continue to be a main focus.

“A really big piece is also the democratic practice, [letting] students voice their opinions and have some choice in their learning, which goes hand in hand with [us] continuing to work to be part of Innovation Nation,” she added.

Meanwhile, William J. Johnston Middle School will continue to be something of a construction zone, as the renovation and expansion project heads into its final year; the new-look school is due to open in fall 2018.

Loiselle Goodwin said the construction project will continue to be incorporated into student’s learning in the classroom this year.

“Principal [Christopher] Bennett continues to use the construction project as part of the learning process for students,” she said, adding for example, that students may work on a math activity related to the geometry or angle of certain beams erected in the new building.

“We really want to involve the students as much as possible because it is their school,” the superintendent added.

At Bacon Academy, students and staff can expect to see some major technology upgrades, specifically with the wireless network connection, Loiselle Goodwin said, adding that in years past, there were dead zones throughout the school building.

“We’re extremely excited,” she continued. “Now you’ll be able to see the difference and [the network] will be capable of supporting all the devices that students need access to, as well as the teachers, to support 21st-century learning.”

The superintendent furthered that with uncertainty surrounding the state budget, “one of the first things we did” at the start of the school

year on July 1 was institute a spending freeze on 2017-18 budget funds.

“We’re only purchasing what is absolutely necessary to support teaching and learning,” she said. “We’re asking teachers to go into their inventories, share with other teachers. They’ve been great about that.”

Loiselle Goodwin added, however, that Bacon could see the biggest impact of potential state funding cuts, as they’ve decided at this point not to replace the seven district-wide staff members who have resigned unless they are mandated positions, such as a school nurse, and to reassign teachers with similar credentials and certifications.

“What that’s going to look like in some cases, particularly in the high school ... is increased class size in some areas, such as world language and science, [while] in some areas, like family consumer science, we may only be able to run courses with the largest enrollment,” she said. “It’s a disappointing outcome, but it’s an understandable outcome due to the magnitude of the situation.”

* * *

Loiselle Goodwin, who took over in July for retiring superintendent Jeff Mathieu, said, “Although I’m functioning as interim superintendent, I am completely committed to the work and to supporting our goal of personalized learning to ensure the success of each and every student.”

She added what she’s most looking forward to however, is the first day of school on Wednesday, Aug. 30.

“The administration, the office team, the custodians – we all work so hard preparing for the new school year and there is nothing more exciting than witnessing students getting off the bus that first day of school to experience all of the planning and preparation,” she said. “The other thing is that we know that the important work that happens in the district happens in the classroom, so I’m looking forward to visiting classrooms and observing the personalized learning first-hand.”

New Faces at Portland Schools to Start Year

by Elizabeth Regan

Returning students can expect to see a host of new faces on the first day of school in Portland this year.

Four new administrators – including two principals – and 13 new staff members will be greeting students when school doors open next Thursday, Aug. 31.

Allison Hine of Old Lyme has replaced retired Brownstone Intermediate Principal Laurie Boske, while Ryan Walstrom took over for retired Gildersleeve School Principal Eileen Katz.

Hine said she is looking forward to getting to know the students and families that make up her small fifth- and sixth-grade school. She said the district's structure, with only two or three grades in each elementary and intermediate building, appealed to her.

"I'm looking forward to really get to know families well," she said.

Hine served as assistant principal at the elementary and middle school level in Stonington for five years before coming to Portland. She was previously a third-grade teacher in Old Saybrook.

She said making the transition from elementary to middle school assistant principal in Stonington at the same time her students switched schools was a unique bonding experience.

"That was really neat for me," she said.

"There were students I was with for five years. I was able to have those great relationships with families and students."

Hine, who was also the social studies curriculum coordinator for kindergarten through grade eight in Old Saybrook, has a bachelor's degree from Binghamton University in New York and a master's in elementary education from the University of Massachusetts in Boston. She earned a sixth year diploma in educational administration from the University of Connecticut.

Walstrom arrived in Portland from Pine Grove Elementary in Avon, where he taught for four years.

He has been busy since early July with the operational details of preparing for the school year, but said he is eager "to have the kids back."

The first few weeks of school will involve establishing school rules that revolve around a "bee" theme established by the Parents Teachers Organization last year with guidelines like Bee Smart, Bee Kind and Bee Safe, according to Walstrom.

"We're going to run with that and establish school rules that are in alignment with those three statements and then spend some time really teaching students what that means on the playground, in the cafeteria, in the classroom and so on," he said.

Another initiative will involve the resurrection of a character education program focusing on character traits such as responsibility, respect, caring and citizenship. Assemblies held about eight weeks apart will focus on one of those traits through song, skits and recognition of students who have put that trait into action.

Walstrom said coming from a school of more than 600 students to one about half that size gives him an opportunity to get to know students and their families on a more personal basis.

A West Hartford resident, Walstrom grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania.

"In some ways I feel like I'm back home," he said.

He cited a sense of community that extends beyond teachers, students and their families.

"I'm getting the sense that everyone works together here," he said, adding that he already feels he could easily call on different community groups and town agencies if there was anything he thought they could help with.

"There's so much pride people have here," he said.

The new administrative lineup in the Portland school system also features a new director of student services and director of curriculum, instruction and technology.

Dawn Davis has replaced former Director of Student Services Mary Anne Morris, who resigned after two years in the position.

Davis was the Director of Pupil Services in the RHAM school district and a former assistant principal and director of early childhood education in Andover.

"Mrs. Davis brings her passion and commitment to working with students with special needs, staff, and family members and will provide the leadership and organizational knowledge necessary to meet the needs of Portland students," the district wrote in a press release.

The replacement for former Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Technology Krista Karch, who left to become assistant superintendent in the Cromwell School District, is Charles Britton.

Britton was a principal at Amity Regional High School and Coventry High School. Most recently, he was an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Literacy at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield. Britton earned a doctorate in educational leadership from the University of Connecticut.

According to a press release, Britton initiated research studies on topics such as efficacy of secondary literary interventions and reading instruction while at Sacred Heart University.

Traffic, Trees Highlight Elmcrest Project Concerns in Portland

by Elizabeth Regan

Members of the Portland Planning and Zoning Commission last week pinpointed traffic, trees and parking spaces as their main areas of concern about the proposed Brainerd Place development on the former Elmcrest Hospital property.

The commission met Aug. 17 in a workshop format with Danbury-based developer Dan Bertram, of BRT General Corp., and the team behind the proposed Brainerd Place development to get a clearer sense of the developer's vision for the former Elmcrest Hospital property.

The preliminary development plan workshop is outlined in local zoning regulations as an opportunity for an applicant to receive input, comments and suggestions from the commission before a special permit application and site plan is submitted.

Steven Sullivan of the Brookfield engineering firm CCA LLC presented the development to the commission as a two-phase project.

The first phase would include construction of a 37,500-square-foot retail and office building, a pharmacy, a coffee shop, a restaurant and a leasing center as well as a three-story apartment building with 102 units.

Phase two would finish off the final 37,500 square feet of the retail and office building and would add a 136-unit, four-story apartment building to the mix.

Estimated construction costs for the project are \$19.86 million, according to a documents provided to the commission by the developer.

The document estimated the developer will pay about \$238,274 in building permit fees to the town.

Traffic Impact

A schematic design shows a full-access entrance and exit on Marlborough Street. Sullivan said the current median would be reconstructed and a traffic light would be installed.

The Main Street entrance would only be accessible as a right turn to those traveling northbound. Traffic leaving the property on the Main Street side would have to make a right turn as well.

Planning and Zoning Commission Chairman

Bruce Tyler expressed concern about pedestrian and bicycle traffic around the traffic triangle at the intersection of routes 17A and 66.

"The people who are taking the right hand turn from Main to Marlborough seem to believe they can go as fast as they want anytime they want, and do," he said.

Joe Balskus, a Portland resident and representative of the transportation and engineering firm VHB, said engineers are planning to install a rectangular flashing beacon to slow down traffic when pedestrians are in the area.

The U.S. Department of Transportation describes the technology as a supplement to warning signs at crosswalks or intersections that emit an irregular flash pattern "similar to emergency flashers on police vehicles."

"That'll be one part of the overall process" to devise a traffic plan, according to Balskus.

Tyler asked Bertram if he'd been in contact with the state Department of Transportation, which requires a transportation study to be submitted for all large-scale developments.

"Our experience is that DOT is so slow, if you don't start early, it'll take ten years to get this thing done," Tyler said.

Bertram advised the commission that the state transportation department typically "wants the process to have reached a certain point before they're too heavily involved."

DOT spokesman Kevin Nursick said this week that his agency requires a "mitigation proposal" to address any traffic impacts for projects that exceed 100,000 square feet of gross floor area or more than 200 parking spaces.

Mitigation measures could include traffic signals, turning lanes, multiple entrances and egresses, and signage, according to Nursick.

Once a developer submits the mitigation plan, the Office of State Traffic Administration (OSTA) has 60 days to review the plan and, if necessary, recommend modifications.

The Planning and Zoning Department must approve a site plan before OSTA will sign off on a certificate authorizing the mitigation measures.

Nursick bristled at the idea that the state traffic administration is slow in doing its job:

"Ninety-nine percent of the time, it's a fluid, efficient, effective process," he said.

He emphasized that existing concerns about the junction of routes 17A and 66 underscore the importance of thoroughly analyzing any new traffic source in the area.

"It's no joke putting a massive development in a place that already has some kind of congestion taking place and where you have a dynamic traffic situation," he said.

According to Nursick, the pace of the process is ultimately up to the developer.

Bertram told commissioners he'd like to see the first shovels in the ground by next April.

Parking Spaces

Members of the commission expressed disappointment with the high number of visible parking spaces compared to the amount of dedicated green space in the plan.

Tyler said 828 parking spaces is "too many" and encouraged Bertram to reduce the count.

Sullivan had stated during the meeting that the team would be seeking a waiver to zoning regulations requiring two parking spaces per apartment. He said tenants in the planned unit mix – which includes studios as well as one- and two-bedroom apartments – do not need as many spaces as the regulations dictate.

Much of the commission's concern revolved around parking for the commercial element of the mixed-use development, however.

Bertram emphasized the largest parking area in the plan serves all the retail and office aspects of the site, including a 75,000-square-foot building and three smaller establishments.

Planning and Zoning Commission member Carolyn Freeman said the parking lot was the first part of the schematic she "zoned in" on.

She told Bertram she had expected a larger park-like area – "not for cars, for people."

Commissioner Chantal Foster agreed.

"It takes away from what I thought was going to be a bigger thing: public space," Foster said.

Mixed-use development zoning regulations require at least 20 percent of the project's total space to be set aside as green space.

Bertram said he envisions the area in front of the restored 1852 Brainerd House, which will be used as a clubhouse for the two apartment buildings, as "a nice community space."

The schematic shows a gazebo and benches in the designated green space.

Speaking for the Trees

Sullivan counted 13 trees that will be saved from destruction based on the preliminary design.

Tyler said he was hoping the developer would be able to save more of the trees, which he described as significant to the town and state.

The 2015 Vibrant Communities Initiative report, a grant-funded study of the property and the community's vision for it, noted there are several species of trees on the site that have been listed among the largest and most "notable" in the state. The species were identified as part of the Notable Trees Project sponsored by the Connecticut Botanical Society, The Connecticut College Arboretum and Connecticut Urban Forest Council.

The site's notable trees are the dawn redwood, the sassafras, the silver maple, the coppe beech, the magnolia and the Douglas fir.

Bertram did not respond by press time with details about which trees would be saved.

Describing the project as "a puzzle," Bertram said it's a difficult task to fit the historic houses and significant trees into a viable development that's attractive to prospective tenants.

On the town side, officials have enlisted the consulting services of land planners from the Simsbury-based firm LADA, PC. Terri-Ann Hahn, a landscape architect with 30 years' experience, was introduced at the commission meeting.

Hahn is working with land use department staff and town engineer Geoffrey Jacobson, who she said are conducting a thorough review of the regulatory aspects of the project.

"I'm just [taking] another look at big picture issues and making sure that it makes sense and becomes buildable – and is a landscape that people want to live in, because that's ultimately what we're talking about," she said.

Life at EHHS Goes on Without Fidler

by Elizabeth Regan

The East Hampton school district is preparing to begin its new year without beloved East Hampton High School principal John Fidler.

Fidler died on July 30 of a heart attack at the age of 60.

Stepping in on an interim basis is Nancy Briere, who is coming out of a months-old retirement to lead the school as a permanent principal is sought.

Briere is a former middle school principal who served most recently as the interim director of curriculum and instruction. She retired in June.

Like Fidler, Briere came to the district almost three decades ago. The day after his death, she recounted how she watched him establish himself as a teacher, coach, leader and friend. "We loved him," she said simply.

Superintendent of Schools Paul K. Smith said Briere will serve on a part-time basis through Dec. 31.

"Nancy's knowledge of the district, knowledge of the children, and knowledge of the high school programming and staff make her the perfect interim [principal] during this difficult time. More important is the love she has for East Hampton and our school district as she takes on this new role in her continued 'retirement,'" he said in his announcement earlier this month.

Briere will join Assistant Principal Michael Dalton as well as Director of Guidance Kaitlin Sullivan, who has been named Dean of Students to supplement Briere's part-time position.

Smith said this week that he created the Dean of Students role to ensure there are two administrators in the high school office at all times.

Smith said the school has hired a guidance counselor on a one-year contract while Sullivan splits her duties between the guidance department and the main office. He expects the move to be cost-neutral since Briere is not taking a full-time salary as interim principal.

According to Smith, the process to hire a permanent principal will begin in early September with the job posting. Interviews will be conducted in October. The Board of Education is slated to make an appointment in November so a new principal can begin in January.

"The biggest responsibility will be to fill John's shoes with someone who will carry on the traditions of East Hampton," Smith said.

He indicated the interview process would be broader than it has been in the past since the

school community is so heavily invested in making sure their new principal lives up to Fidler's example. He said students, teachers and parents would be involved in the process.

In the Back to School edition of his weekly newsletter, Smith closed with a tribute to Fidler.

"In a long life, if you change one person's life for the better, you have done the most important thing anyone can do," Smith wrote. "John Fidler changed lives every day. There were students who would not have graduated without his efforts. There were staff members who would not have blossomed without his efforts. Every encounter he had with another person in school and out of school mattered."

Monday's regular meeting of the Board of Education included a discussion about how to memorialize the longtime educator and confidant to students and staff alike.

Ideas compiled and read by board chairman Chris Goff included renaming the newly renovated high school after him or selecting one section to bear his name, such as the athletic field, gymnasium, auditorium or the seminar space currently called the "T-Bell."

Other ideas revolved around the area leading up to the high school. One suggestion was to rename North Maple Street for Fidler, while another would declare the entrance to the high school campus "John Fidler Way."

Goff said he would take all the ideas to Fidler's wife, Joan, and his two sons, Jack and Jeffrey.

Resident Thom Cordeiro, a former member of the East Hampton Town Council and a vocal advocate for the high school renovation project, spoke during the meeting's public forum about a memorial tribute for Fidler.

He presented a petition in favor of renaming the school John Fidler Memorial High School that had garnered 685 signatures.

Acknowledging discussion among residents who were worried about the cost implications of changing uniforms, letterhead and other manifestations of Bellringer pride, he didn't see why the school couldn't retain those elements by renaming it John Fidler Memorial East Hampton High School instead.

He said the other suggestions do not go far enough to remind visitors in perpetuity about what Fidler meant to the school community.

"I don't think any of those are worthy enough of a long-standing tribute to John Fidler, who was not only a champion for the renovation it-



East Hampton High School is ready for its new school year – one it will start without principal John Fidler at the helm. Fidler died of a heart attack late last month.

self, but a champion of the students themselves," Cordeiro said.

On the other end of the educational spectrum from the high school, the district is implementing a grant-funded full-day preschool classroom to focus on children who would not otherwise attend school until kindergarten.

The school continues to offer a half-day program in its other preschool classrooms. All preschool offerings are free, according to Smith.

"We were finding that a large enough percentage of our kindergarten students were coming in with no preschool experience that we were eligible for this grant," Smith said this week.

The \$150,000 Smart Start grant covers classroom renovations and a portion of preschool teacher Stacey Gibson's salary in the first year. A \$75,000 allocation for each of the next eight years goes toward salary, Smith said.

Gibson is a former kindergarten teacher in the district who Smith said brings an expertise

in "knowing where we want students to be when they enter kindergarten."

According to a press release from the office of Gov. Dannel P. Malloy, the Smart Start initiative began in 2014 to expand access to public preschool for low-income children.

Towns funded through the grant must give priority to children from low-income families, children with special needs and those for whom English is a second language.

Smith said sixty percent of the 15 students in the inaugural full-day preschool program meet the low-income threshold. The rest were selected by school staff members based on their knowledge of the students and which ones would benefit most from a full-day program.

"I don't know that we turned anyone away," he said.

East Hampton joined the *Rivereast* town of Andover in receiving the grant early this year, along with Cheshire, North Branford, Plymouth, Somers and Thomaston. A total of \$1.6 million was allocated to the selected towns.

MES Continues Newer Traditions to Kick Off Year

by Julianna Roche

Marlborough Elementary School Principal Dan White and Assistant Principal Kim Kelley are eagerly awaiting next Wednesday, Aug. 30 – when the school's hallways will once again fill up with about 500 students ready to kick off the start of the 2017-18 academic year.

As students empty off their buses next week, White explained they'll be welcomed by the sidewalk in front of the school building filled with chalk art, inspirational messages and positive quotes written by members of the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), who started the tradition last year.

"It was not only amazing to see the entire sidewalk section full of happy images and inspiration quotes, but watching the children's faces when they got off the bus the first day was priceless," Kelley said.

Several other newer traditions will continue this year, the vice principal furthered, including "Esteem Day" on Oct. 5 where Canton High School students will work closely with sixth-graders to help them build confidence and positive self-esteem.

"The kids loved it last year. It was a great experience," Kelley said, adding that even parents were "impressed" with the idea.

Last year, sixth-graders also started a new initiative which involved sending care packages filled with cards, candy and other items, to U.S. troops abroad.

White explained that one of the "thank you's" the students received from a soldier was an American flag that had flown over one of the troops' missions in the Middle East. It's now sitting in a glass display case in the school.

Kelley explained that sixth-grade students will also be working with art teacher Denise Ketterer this year to create a "thematic collage" representing their MES experience from kindergarten through sixth grade.

The collage, White furthered, will be done

on a large piece of plywood that will then be mounted to the building.

"This is the first one we've done in probably at least 10 years," he said.

New online science programs – Mosa Mack Science and Mystery Science – will also be incorporated into classrooms this year, which provide teachers and students with interactive lessons, videos and labs.

On Nov. 8, each grade level will participate in Junior Achievement Day – which introduces students to the intersection of financial literacy and personal economics through hands-on classroom experiences.

White explained the following day, Nov. 9, MES students will then host their annual Veterans Day Assembly, which is "spearheaded" by the sixth-grade class.

"It's an incredibly moving ceremony," he added, noting that while the sixth-graders lead the program, every grade level participates.

For the sixth-grade musical, Kelley said *American Voices* has been chosen as this year's production.

"It's like a walk through American history, so we're very excited about that," she added.

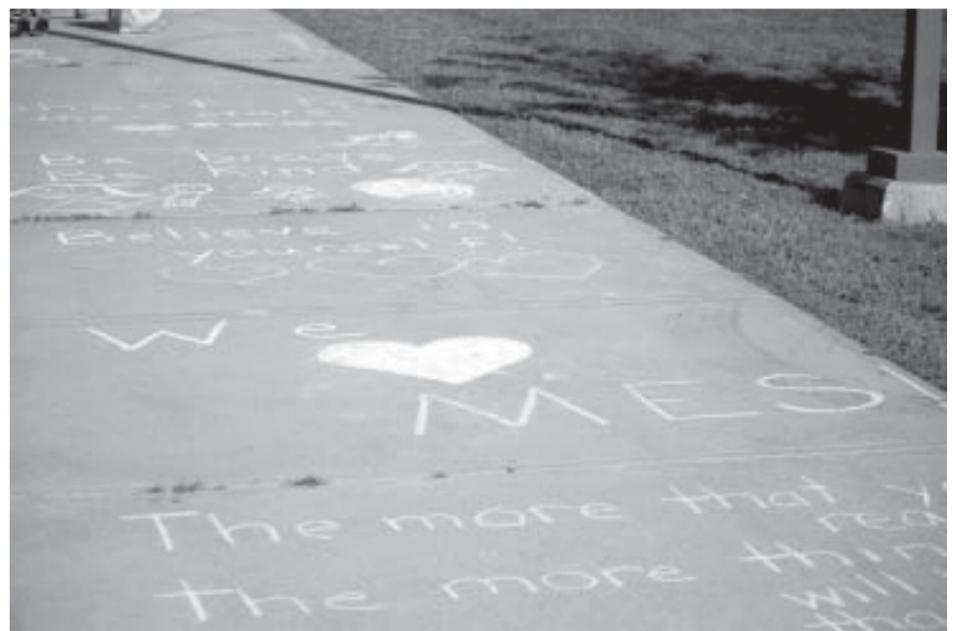
Another big event, Kelley said, is Science Day, which will be held on June 1 and allows students to complete and share different science projects.

"Each year we try to make science new and exciting," she furthered, adding for example, last year the school brought in an inflatable indoor planetarium for students to explore.

"It's one of our favorite events," she said.

In terms of goals for the 2017-18 year, both White and Kelley agreed that their main hope was to give each student the best possible educational experience they can.

"Five hundred kids is a decent-sized school, but it's small enough where we know every single kid," White said, adding he hoped "to take every single kid and make sure they move



Marlborough Elementary School's Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) will decorate the sidewalk outside the school with chalk art welcoming students on the first day of school Wednesday, Aug. 30.

along" through each grade level smoothly.

"Being in a small community, we're really able to meet every kid's needs," he furthered. "It's nice. I've been in bigger districts... [but] this community is special."

Kelley agreed. "It's exactly what Dan [White] said," she added. "This is a very, very special place to work."

Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz – who will be going into his 49th year working in education – shared similar sentiments this week, adding that despite "all the news going around the state [and] the doom and gloom" surrounding the financial crisis many towns are

facing, his "approach" this year will simply be "to keep focusing on what's good for the kids."

"We want to start the school year with a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of excitement," Sklarz said. "We'll deal with the other issues... as long as it doesn't permeate into the classroom."

"The biggest thing we have going for us is that we maintain what we're doing in the spirit of excellence here," he said. "It's [our] job to inspire that spirit every day."

On Tuesday, Aug. 29, from 8:15-9:15 a.m., Marlborough Elementary School will host its annual Meet and Greet – with the first day of school arriving the next day.

New School Year Starting at AES

by Lauren Yandow

Students heading to Andover Elementary for the first day of school on Wednesday, Aug. 30, will get a chance to experience first-hand the fruits of a “long, long list of projects” tackled over the summer, said Principal John Briody.

Preschoolers will see the biggest updates, thanks to a Smart Start grant from the state. In February, Andover was one of nine towns awarded the grant through the Office of Early Childhood. The town received \$75,000 in capital improvement funding and gets \$65,000 annually in operations funding for the next seven years, for a total of \$530,000.

A major focus of the funds has been on revamping the preschool playground. “We’re going to have an outdoor learning area and additional play areas,” said Assistant Principal and Director of Special Education Suzanne Guglietta. The new outdoor learning area will be housed by a vinyl oversized pavilion, which will allow students to learn outdoors even in inclement weather.

The biggest perk is getting to “take the classroom environment outside,” she said.

Extending the classroom by providing an outdoor space isn’t just beneficial to the preschool – it’s beneficial to all grades since every teacher will be able to utilize the space, said Briody. “The opportunity to have an outdoor classroom for any grade level is fantastic,” he added.

While the faculty is still working on the curriculum piece of the redesign, Guglietta said, some lessons will be done outside. The pavilion will be fully installed by the start of school – and will then be wired for electricity so it can be utilized for outdoor family events, said Briody.

Additional play areas with “natural-looking” rock-like climbing structures are currently underway and will be ready for use in early September, said Guglietta.

A brand new sandbox filled with “special moldable sand” is already ready for play, she added.

Before school starts, the blacktop on the preschool playground will be striped for four-square and hopscotch, and will have arrows for children to work on their “gross motor and visual motor skills,” said Guglietta.

The games help young children navigate which aids in their development, she said. “Everything has a specific purpose,” she added. The hopscotch and four-square games help with numbers, balance and motor skills, while the arrows work to teach children directions. “You can look at something and hit like five differ-

ent standards on one activity,” said Guglietta.

While the above playground upgrades may seem like a lot, Guglietta said the work is merely “Phase 1.” So far, two-thirds of the \$75,000 in capital improvement funding has been utilized.

Ideas for the next phase are already a topic of discussion. Earlier this month, faculty participated in Professional Development Training with EASTCONN called “What’s in Your Outdoor Classroom?” The training was done to get teachers to think about how to take learning outdoors, said Guglietta. Some ideas for the next phase include the addition of mud tables, hanging gardens and sensory music walls. Any updates will “hit on early childhood standards,” said Guglietta.

* * *

Over the summer, revamping took place inside the school too.

Custodians worked hard to get everything “refreshed and renewed,” said Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen. Everything has been cleaned “from top to bottom,” said Briody.

Students can expect some newly-renovated restrooms; preschoolers will also have access to a newly-added restroom. Three new eco-friendly water fountains with bottle-fillers have been installed; and the school’s Early Learning Center is now on full display with a brand new sign.

Doyen said families dropping off and picking up their children should be aware of a big change to the traffic flow. The redesign affects the traffic flow for buses and cars to make drop-offs and pick-ups “safer” and “more accessible,” she said.

From now on, the lower parking lot will be used for bus and car traffic, while the upper lot will solely be used for staff and visitor parking. “Our hope is that it’ll be a lot smoother for everybody,” said Doyen.

There will be direction given on the first day of school to remind parents and guardians of the new parking lot configuration.

When it comes to curriculum, Doyen said school administration is “really emphasizing science” this year. Working to align with new state standards for science, Doyen said the curriculum will include more hands-on experiments, activities and outdoor learning.

It’s more of an “inquiry-based approach to learning,” said Briody.

Students will have the opportunity to question, hypothesize and test things out, said Doyen. “Science is just a wonderful area for kids in elementary school,” she added.

All students from preschool through sixth



Over the summer, some major updates were done to the Andover Elementary School preschool playground. By the first day of school on Wednesday, Aug. 30, the blacktop will be striped with a four square and hopscotch; a new outdoor classroom housed under a pavilion will be completed; and a brand new sandbox will be ready for play.

grade will get a chance to play and learn with some fun gadgets in Kirstina Frazier’s class this year. The technology teacher plans to utilize the school’s new programmable robots, which work to teach children the basics of coding.

It’s important for kids to understand technology has “many purposes” when used responsibly, said Frazier.

“We want the kids exposed to the different types of technology,” she said. In doing so, a student’s “comfort level” with technology increases.

In Frazier’s classes, students will learn how to control a robot or other pieces of technological equipment. And by having control over “how they can manipulate it and what the results end up being,” Frazier said, kids will learn how to make corrections and changes if the results aren’t what was initially anticipated.

Even at a young age, she said kids are “able to take on that task and have fun with it at the same time.”

The current enrollment for Andover Elementary School’s 2017-18 school year is 210 students; 25 of those students are preschoolers, said Briody.

Preschoolers won’t be the only new faces in the school. Lucy Kiermaier will join the Andover Elementary team as the new preschool

paraprofessional. “She’s going to be a real asset to our program,” said Briody.

Looking ahead, Doyen said she’s “looking forward to everybody coming back.” All of the teachers are looking forward to seeing kids fill the halls, she said. “No matter how old you get the start of school is still exciting.”

Parents and guardians should be aware of the following upcoming dates:

On Tuesday Aug. 29, the school will hold a meet-and-greet for families from 2:15-3 p.m. During the meet-and-greet, families can check out classrooms and chat with teachers. Preschoolers and kindergarteners will have a chance to board a school bus for a sample ride.

The first day of school is Wednesday, Aug. 30. That morning, there will be an opening day ceremony at 8:45 a.m. During the ceremony, the school gathers outside around the flagpole for the Pledge of Allegiance and to sing the National Anthem. Bringing everyone together is a “nice way to start the year,” said Briody.

On Tuesday, Sept. 19, the school will hold a Parent Open House Curriculum Night for all grade levels. Families will have the opportunity to listen to a presentation from classroom teachers, said Briody. All grade levels “work together and present on the curriculum,” he added.

New Colchester Program Helps Kids ‘Suffering in Silence’

by Julianna Roche

It started with “a very tearful letter” that Josh Vinoski – Colchester’s assistant director of pupil services and special education – received from a mother who wanted to meet with him to discuss her 16-year-old son, who was struggling with anxiety about coming to school.

“She came in and told me a story I’d heard a bunch of times,” he said, adding that in the letter, the mother wrote, “there are a lot of children suffering in silence [and] my son is one of them.”

“I felt horrible for this family because at the time, I didn’t really have anything to help them,” Vinoski furthered. “For kids with acting-out behaviors, there’s tons of programs to support [them], but for kids with crippling anxiety or depression, there really wasn’t anything there.”

The assistant director then teamed up with school social worker Carissa Capozzi, and together, the pair have piloted Colchester’s first “school refusal” program – which will offer both clinical and academic support to students who are chronically absent from school due to strong feelings of anxiety, depression or fear.

This summer, the pair worked closely with three Bacon Academy students engaging in school refusal behaviors; in the fall, they’ll add a fourth, and possibly more, to the cohort.

Vinoski explained that school refusal programs are rare; yet, after speaking to countless other special education directors across the state, discovered there are “small pockets of these kids” everywhere.

“We decided if we were going to do this, we

needed to start now,” he furthered. “No one else is doing it, but there’s certainly a need for it and there was no reason we couldn’t do it.”

The assistant director added that he and Capozzi discovered “numbers supported” that chronic absenteeism is not just an issue across Connecticut, but also “throughout the Colchester school system.”

During the 2015-16 school year for example, 9.6 percent of Connecticut students and 5.6 percent of Colchester students were chronically absent – which he said is defined as missing 10 percent or greater of the total number of days enrolled during the school year.

However, school refusal differs from truancy in that the students suffering from anxiety are not avoiding school to engage in other desired activities, nor concealing their absences from the school or parents. Rather, in school refusal cases, parents are often aware of the child’s absences from school; the child typically will stay home for safety and security reasons, and has emotional distress about attending school, but is willing to do the schoolwork.

“All of [our students] have extremely diverse profiles and backgrounds, but the thing that unites them is this anxiety,” Capozzi explained. “Some of it is born out of loss, or trauma... and some of it just kind of happens and snowballs, and becomes a pattern of behavior where [going to] school is just not possible anymore.”

Beginning this fall, the school refusal program will run out of Jack Jackter Intermediate

School (JJIS) from 1:50 to 5:10 p.m., during which time Capozzi and Vinoski will provide students with a personalized and project-based learning curriculum, as well as daily counseling, parent and family support, and individualized school re-entry plans.

Capozzi said the program will also help students make “authentic” connections to adult mentors and the world around them.

This summer, Vinoski acted as one of those mentors when he discovered that one of the school refusal program students was a “gifted guitarist who had put down his guitar and stopped playing [and] shut himself off from a lot.”

When he met with the student, Vinoski explained he brought in an old guitar and had him string and tune it for him.

“The hook was music,” he said. “He then brought in his guitar and showed me a couple things. I gave him homework assignments. It was a trade-off.”

The assistant director furthered that “because a lot of these kids spent so much time isolated and disconnected from schools and their communities, they have a hard time trusting again.”

He hopes that the program will “give them the opportunity little by little to learn to trust people again and that relationships can be safe and fulfilling.”

However, Vinoski added he felt “it needs to be more” than just he and Capozzi to “show the kids that they have value.”

Capozzi agreed, explaining that they’re looking for members of the community, with or without an educational background, to become involved with the program, “either by sharing ideas with us or directly working with the students” even if that means just coming in to “paint, hang out, or play guitar with them.”

“We want them to walk away from this program with the feeling that they have value and that their community values them,” she said.

Vinoski agreed.

“We want Colchester people to know that these are our kids, so we have the responsibility to meet the needs of these kids,” he said. “You could even argue that these are the most vulnerable of our kids ... so here are these kids and here’s an opportunity to really make a difference for those kids out there struggling.”

“All it takes is one caring adult. It doesn’t take a lot of your time,” Vinoski furthered. “If you come share something you’re passionate about with these kids, it could potentially make a huge difference.”

* * *

On Thursday, Sept. 28, Vinoski and Capozzi will host a conversation about developing the school refusal program at Jack Jackter Intermediate School from 6 to 7 p.m. in the Pupil Services Office. All are welcome.

For more information, contact Vinoski at jvino5@colchesterct.org or 860-537-3103 or Capozzi at ccapozzi@colchesterct.org or 860-537-9421, extension 178.

Students, Faculty Look Forward to Upcoming RHAM School Year

by Lauren Yandow

As summer winds down, students from Hebron, Andover and Marlborough prepare to line the halls of the RHAM high and middle schools for their first day of classes on Wednesday, Aug. 30.

And while new superintendent of schools Patricia Law has been busy on updates at the school all summer, next Wednesday is the day she's anticipating the most. "To feel the energy in the building, to see the learning going on, that's what I'm most looking forward to," she said.

When it comes to the first days of school, Law said incoming middle-schoolers can expect to work on teams while getting to know their teachers, peers and new school. "There's a real focus on orienting kids to the building and helping them feel comfortable and familiar," she said.

Incoming seventh-grader Maddy Murray of Hebron said she's "nervous about starting school" but "excited" to meet new friends. Luckily, Murray has an older brother, Logan, who's heading into eighth grade – and therefore already knows the ropes.

Murray said her brother told her that at first, the size of the school can be intimidating, "but then after the first week it's easy and the teachers are nice," she said.

Aidan Rodriguez, also of Hebron, is heading into seventh grade as well. When asked what he's looking forward to, he said, "everything – the whole experience."

Rodriguez's mom, Erin Bussiere, will now have two boys in RHAM middle school; her eldest son, Noah, is heading into the eighth grade. Bussiere is a RHAM alumna herself, having graduated from the high school in 1996. "It's actually really cool for me to have my kids grow up in the same environment that I grew up in," she said.

Meanwhile, Shee Giannelli of Andover and Ava Byers of Hebron will each be starting their freshman years at the high school; they both

said they're "looking forward" to their high school days.

Over the first few days of high school, teens can expect to jump right into their scheduled classes, said Law.

With a focus on the state's Next Generation Science Standards, Law said the district is making shifts within the curriculum this year so students can experience more of an "inquiry-based learning environment."

Writing and reading continue to be a real emphasis, Law added – "not just in the English classes but across all of the different disciplines." RHAM supports students as readers, writers and communicators across all disciplines, she said "so that'll be something we continue to work on."

"Our curriculum is aligned with [state] standards and in a great place," said Law. But, she added, students are always "innovating and growing in the classroom." With that in mind, teachers will be using SAT and PSAT scores to tweak some of their instruction and "balance the curriculum to the needs of what they're seeing within the data," she said.

And, as with previous years, Law noted there will still be "plenty of opportunity for students to participate in sports and extracurriculars."

Every student has the opportunity to try out for a sports team; tryouts for fall sports are already underway. The arts and music programs, meanwhile, are "incredibly strong," Law said.

Over the summer, RHAM utilized funds from their capital improvement plan budget for a "variety of different projects that needed to get done around the district," said Law. Once complete the updates will total \$289,960.

What the community will notice most, Law said, is "quite a bit of concrete work both at the middle school and high school." The work includes newly-paved sidewalk areas at school entrances. The district also improved access to the stadium field and concession stand area, repaving the space and bringing it in compli-

ance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Come autumn, more ADA projects will hopefully be underway, Law said – including the completion of the parking and entrance area near the gymnasium. "It's a very busy drop-off area, so we need to do some work there," said Law. She said the sidewalks around the entrance area need to be repaved to make them friendlier to wheelchairs.

This fall, the tennis courts will be resurfaced with the capital improvement funds.

Currently, RHAM is in the beginning stages of utilizing a \$1.3 million grant awarded from the state Department of Transportation. The grant will allow the district to "deal with traffic and circulation issues on campus," said Law.

"We'll be working collaboratively with the Town of Hebron and the district to hire the engineering consulting firm to create plans and address some of the traffic issues," she said. Additionally, she said, "we'll be looking for public input in that process throughout the next few months and then move the project forward from there."

Also new: solar panels have been installed and hooked up to the back roof of the middle school. "We're utilizing solar energy now, which is very cool," said Law.

Smaller projects were also done over the summer. The middle school lockers all received new locks. Fields were maintained and irrigated, making them "ready to go" for all fall sports teams, said Law.

Also, the entire school was cleaned. "The building is sparkling right now," the classrooms are ready and "we're just waiting for our kids to get in and ready to learn," said Law.

While Law noted numbers often fluctuate, she said this week the current school year enrollment number for high schoolers is 1,058; 472 students are enrolled in the middle school.

When it comes to staff, Law said they're "well-prepared" to start the year.

Nine new teachers, in a variety of subject areas, have joined the district. "We've hired some really strong people that come with the RHAM philosophy of partnership and a strong knowledge base," said Law. It's a group of teachers she's "really excited about." The subjects they'll teach include math, science, Spanish, technology, social working, and speech and language. "These are not new positions to the budget; they're replacing vacant positions that we have in the district," said Law.

A new special education director, Jennifer Hoffman, was also hired to fill a vacancy. "We're thrilled to have her," said Law. Hoffman has a career background working as a middle school administrator and a special education teacher. "I think she's going to bring a wealth of knowledge to the district."

Among the returning teachers is Karl Jancis. Jancis has been with RHAM for the past 20 years, and, he said, "every year is a whole new adventure." Jancis currently teaches in the middle school's Inquiry Academy – a program that's currently in its second year. Students must apply to be a part of the program, he said. This year, "there were so many applications we had to conduct interviews" to select the final 90 students, he added.

Inquiry Academy is for "kids who are independent learners," said Jancis. In the program, students work on project-based learning by developing their own project ideas.

Eighth-grader Emma Braby of Hebron is participating in the academy this year. She said she's excited for school to start because "RHAM is a lot of fun."

For upcoming information, Law is urging people to head to the school website, reg8.k12.ct.us. Currently, the district is working to update the site in order to "make it a little bit more communicative and user friendly," she said.

"We're always looking for feedback," she added.

It's Almost Time to Head Back to School in Hebron

by Lauren Yandow

When the new school year starts next Wednesday, Aug. 30, kids at both Gilead Hill and Hebron Elementary will be greeted by new principals – but ones with familiar faces.

For the past two years, Katie Uriano has been the principal at Hebron Elementary School, which serves kids in grades three-six, but now she'll head Gilead Hill School. Meanwhile, Eric Brody – who's been principal at Gilead Hill School, which educates the town's pre-kindergarten through second grade students, for the past five years – is moving over to Hebron Elementary.

The switch is "kind of a homecoming for both of us a little bit," said Brody.

Brody started at Hebron Elementary, which serves kids in grades three-six, as an assistant principal. Meanwhile, for 13 years Uriano was a teacher at Gilead Hill, which educates children in pre-kindergarten through grade two.

Brody said he's excited to continue to work with some of the families he worked with at Gilead Hill as they move on to Hebron Elementary.

The switch-up was solely to play to their strengths, said Brody; Uriano comes from a primary background and his background is more intermediate.

Uriano said she's looking forward to getting back to her roots, since the "developmental age" is a group she enjoys working with most.

When it comes to curriculum, for the first year Gilead Hill students will have a science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM) program. Hebron Elementary has offered STEAM opportunities for the last two years and will continue the program this year.

"All of our students K-2 will be able to go work in the STEAM room once a week with our STEAM teacher," Uriano said. In the program, students will learn skills needed for everyday life such as "problem-solving, creativity and collaboration," she added.

"I think kids will love it and parents will be thrilled with what they're working on," she said.

"Our STEAM initiative complements the

work that we've been doing over the past several years," by shifting to 21st-century skills for students, said Superintendent of Schools Timothy Van Tasel. The program takes critical thinking, creativity and communication skills to "the next level," he added.

This year, Van Tasel said both schools will come together to create an "innovative team." The team will bring together STEAM teachers from each school, two library media specialists and members of the Challenge and Enrichment Program.

"Our hope this year is to not just work for developing our program for those 21st-century skills and inquiry-based learning," said Van Tasel, "but also we're looking to seek a high level of parent involvement and engagement this year."

The ultimate goal, he said is to provide programming that's "really cutting-edge" for students.

New for Hebron Elementary School this year will be a student council, said Director of Educational Services Donald Briere.

Meanwhile, at Gilead Hill School, an additional kindergarten section has been added. The need to add a fifth section came as a "surprise," said Van Tasel.

The school administration "did not anticipate" the increase in kindergarten enrollment this year, he said. With a total of 84 students entering kindergarten this school year, Van Tasel said the increase is an "indication of the growing popularity of Hebron and its school system." He attributes the increase to several out-of-state and out-of-town families moving into the school district. The Board of Education's decision to add the fifth section didn't come easy, said Van Tasel. The board deliberated over the course of three months, he said. "We waited until we honestly believed that we had no choice," he added.

Since, the school administration has hired Jessica Lynch to teach the new section.

Students will also see two other new faces this school year. Lillian Kasavage was hired to teach sixth grade at Hebron Elementary and



Gilead Hill and Hebron Elementary staff and administrators welcome kids to the start of a new year.

Megan Shah will teach second grade at Gilead Hill.

The school administration also hired a new food service director, Natalie Mather. The school administration is "excited to have her," said Van Tasel.

Parents and guardians looking for a primary way to stay up-to-date with their child's school should utilize the Hebron Public School App, said Briere. The app will provide up-to-date events, notifications, newsletters, school cancellations and twitter posts, he said. The app can be downloaded from the Apple Store or Android Store and is a "one-stop-shop for all things Hebron Public Schools," said Van Tasel.

For those entering the Hebron school system for the first time, Van Tasel had a message: "Welcome to Hebron Public Schools; it's an outstanding public school program with out-

standing staff and the rest of the community as a whole."

Both Gilead Hill School and Hebron Elementary School will hold their meet-and-greets on Tuesday, Aug. 29. The Gilead Hill meet-and-greet will run from 8:15-8:45 a.m., while the Hebron Elementary one is from 8:50-9:20 a.m. Van Tasel noted that while meet-and-greets used to be mid-day, the decision was made to shift to early morning was for parents so they didn't need to take a full day off of work.

Uriano said parents and students should attend the meet-and-greet since they're a "great chance for kids who are typically a little bit nervous about their first day," to meet their peers, find their classroom and meet their teacher.

"It helps them be excited about school," she said.

Hebron Agrees to Purchase Parcel on Gilead Street

by Lauren Yandow

Residents packed the downstairs meeting room at the Town Office Building on Aug. 17 for a special meeting to vote on purchasing roughly 47.5 acres of land on Gilead Street for \$175,000.

More than 20 residents showed up – making it a standing-room-only crowd – and it was “nice to see so many people” come out, said Board of Selectmen Chairman Daniel Larson.

The motion passed easily, by a 26-1 tally, authorizing Town Manager Andrew Tierney to enter into a purchase agreement with the property’s owners, the Fish Family Trust. The town will purchase the land from the Fish Family for \$175,000; the money will come from the Hebron Land Acquisition Fund.

Open Space Land Acquisition Committee Chairman Brian O’Connell, who’s also a Board of Selectmen member, said at a previous meeting that the town would apply for a grant in hopes to offset the cost, but the land must first be purchased outright by the town.

“It’s a win-win for the Fish Family and the town,” said O’Connell, who added land of this quality “comes around very rarely,” he added.

The idea to purchase the land was initially presented to the Board of Selectmen by the Open Space Land Acquisition Committee which sparked conversations with the Fish Family eight years ago. It wasn’t until a little over a year ago, when both the town and Fish Family started getting serious about moving forward.

The property abuts Gilead Hill School to the north; on the far end towards the brook it abuts preserved land; and on the opposite side is a cemetery.

The area has trails on it that line up with the existing Gilead Hill School trail system, said O’Connell. It runs from woodlands to the brook which is an “A-rated water source,” he added.

During the meeting, town resident David Morrison told the crowd it “warms my heart” to make the Fish Family parcel part of the town’s greenways, he said. The greenways pro-

tect valuable land and the streams around them as well as the habitat that lives there. “We’re connecting all the valuable pieces in Hebron,” he added.

* * *

Directly following the town meeting, the Board of Selectmen gathered to hold a meeting of its own.

The board unanimously voted to appoint a new member of the Planning and Zoning Commission. Gerry Garfield will now fill the vacant spot created by Lewis Hinman, who resigned after serving on the commission for more than 15 years.

“I’m honored and I look forward to working hard,” said Garfield.

Planning and Zoning Commission Member Judith Podell addressed the board in favor of Garfield. She opened by saying, “I’m here because I care very deeply what happens to planning and zoning.”

Hinman was an “excellent member of the board,” Podell said – and Garfield is “an excellent choice” to fill the vacancy.

Garfield is “thoughtful, intelligent, and cares about Hebron,” Podell added.

Republican Town Committee Chairwoman Catherine Marx said “people like Lew and Gerry are very special to our town.” Marx said that while Hinman will be difficult to replace, “I have all the confidence, as does the Hebron Republican Town Committee, that Gerry [Garfield] can fill those shoes and serve the public.”

Upon appointment, Board of Selectmen Vice Chairwoman Gail Richmond said Garfield will “make a great addition” to the commission.

Garfield’s term will run through November 19, 2019.

The next Board of Selectmen meeting will be held Thursday, Sept. 14, at 7:30 p.m. at the Town Office Building, 15 Gilead St.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

The Mets aren’t having a good year, and are right now all about trying to figure out who could be a good fit in 2018 – while at the same time putting together at least a somewhat respectable finish.

Still, while there may not be the playoffs in their immediate future, I still bleed blue and orange, and continue to watch the games most every chance I get – and cheer the team on from my living room. Monday night, that meant cheering them on against the Arizona Diamondbacks, who came to Citi Field this week for a visit.

And I discovered Monday that while a Mets loss is always painful, it stings a little bit less when it’s at the hands of Marlborough’s own AJ Pollock.

AJ – former star for the RHAM High School Sachems, and a previous first-round draft pick for the Diamondbacks – stepped up to the plate in the 10th inning, with the score tied 1-1. Arizona had the go-ahead run on second base.

So what did AJ do? After, somewhat curiously, taking a 2-0 fastball, he swung at the next pitch and knocked it over the centerfield wall for a dramatic two-run homer.

My initial disgust at the Mets giving up yet another long ball faded a bit as I watched AJ round the bases. I couldn’t help but smile. As I’ve written about in this space before, I’ve met AJ, a couple of times. He’s a nice guy, personable and very approachable. It’s been easy to root for him – even if he’s not a Met.

Plus, while his team’s having a good season – Arizona’s currently in possession of one of the National League’s two wild card slots – AJ himself is having a bit of a down year. The top prospect and 2015 All-Star missed a good chunk of the season due to injury, and while he’s been back since early July, he’s only hitting .266, and had just five homers on the year entering Monday’s action. August had been particularly tough for him, hitting under .200 with not a single homer and just one RBI.

So, he needed the pick-me-up that Monday’s homer undoubtedly gave him. And as AJ touched home plate, I noticed I could hear several fans chanting: “AJ POLLOCK! — *clap,clap,clapclapclap* — AJ POLLOCK! — *clap,clap,clapclapclap*” That was pretty cool. Some of AJ’s family and friends from the RHAM area had no doubt headed down to New York to see him.

Again, seeing the Mets lose always stinks and it always will stink – they lost again Tuesday, 7-4 – but when it’s AJ Pollock sending them to a defeat...well, it stinks a little bit less.

* * *

Speaking of baseball, here’s a trivia question: Which future Hall of Fame pitcher owns the record for most home runs allowed in a season? Keep reading for the answer.

* * *

It’s the *Rivereast*’s annual back-to-school issue this week. Inside the paper you’ll find stories about the upcoming school year in

Andover, Colchester, East Hampton, Hebron, Marlborough, Portland and the RHAM school district – as well as valuable pieces of information such as free and reduced-price lunch info.

Personally, I can’t believe it’s time for school to start up again. This summer has flown by. But, the new year is here – so I encourage all families to give these pages a look, and see what your school has in store.

* * *

On the topic of the new school year, I had an interesting notice float across my email inbox this week from the state police. With the new school year starting up, police are reminding all drivers to pay attention to increased bicycle, pedestrian and school bus traffic on the roadways.

State law requires drivers to stop for school buses that have their flashing red warning lights activated, whether they are approaching or following the school bus.

The yellow flashing lights are a warning to drivers that the bus will soon stop to pick up or drop off students. Drivers should anticipate that the red flashing lights will come on shortly after seeing the yellow flashing lights, police said, and that the bus will come to a stop. The red flashing lights on a school bus indicate that the bus is stopped and students are either getting on or off the bus – and drivers should never, *ever* pass a school bus that has its red lights flashing.

Not only does breaking this law put children at risk, it can also be quite expensive, police said. Fines for passing a school bus that has its flashing red warning lights on start at \$465 for a first offense.

Police also urge parents to remind their children to wait for their school bus in a safe place, out of the travel portion of the roadway – and that they should only cross the street after looking both ways, even if the red lights are activated.

Police added that parents should let their children know to tell an adult, and police, about anything that makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable on the way to or from school, and even while they’re in school. Children should be reminded not to speak to people they don’t know, or to get into the vehicles of people they don’t know, police added.

Police said troopers will periodically monitor school bus stops to help ensure the safety of all students as they head back to school.

* * *

Baseball trivia answer: Bert Blyleven, who gave up 50 homers while pitching for the Minnesota Twins in 1986. That year and the following year, in which he allowed 46 round-trippers, were strange aberrations for Bert, who otherwise never allowed more than 24 in a season over the course of his 22-year career. Blyleven, who wound up notching 287 wins, was inducted into the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame in 2011.

* * *

See you next week.

East Hampton Police News

8/11: Erik Scott Martin, 27, of 20 Greystone St., Willimantic was arrested and charged with failure to drive right, driving while under the influence, possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of narcotics with intent to sell, possession of oxycodone with intent to sell, possession of marijuana (less than half an ounce) with intent to sell and possession of heroin with intent to sell, East Hampton Police said.

8/12: Nelis Metiz, 27, of 141 Rhodes St., New Britain, was issued a summons for speed-

ing and failure to give proper signal, police said.

8/15: Frederick Everett III, 34, of 36 Namonee Tr., was issued a summons for breach of peace, criminal mischief and third-degree assault, police said.

8/15: Jason Edward Sweeney, 34, of 77 Main St., was arrested and charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct, police said.

Also, from Aug. 7-13, officers responded to 11 medical calls, eight motor vehicle crashes and nine alarms, and made 22 traffic stops.

Colchester Police News

8/15: Colchester Police said that at approximately 6:32 p.m., they received a report from a resident living on Carli Boulevard that an unknown person had entered a storage shed sometime between Aug. 13 and Aug. 15 and stole a John Deere push mower. The case is currently under investigation.

8/16: Colchester Police said at approximately 7:05 p.m., they received a report from a resident living on Felicia Barber Road that he returned from vacation and found various items missing from his residence, including numerous household items and jewelry amounting to approximately \$2,000. The victim stated he had a family friend housesitting while he was away and that the house sitter invited numerous guests

to the residence. The case remains under investigation.

8/16: State Police said Zachary R. Scranton, 34, of 27 Prasser Dr., East Hartford, was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol and failure to drive in the proper lane of a multiple lane highway.

8/16: State Police said Sarah Ford, 30, of 258 Main St., Apt. 2, Portland, was arrested and charged with violation of probation/conditional discharge.

8/19: Colchester Police said Cameron Woodin, 21, of 13 Falls Circle, was arrested and charged with illegal possession of a narcotic and drug paraphernalia.

Obituaries

Portland

Lorraine G. George

Lorraine Carroll (Grover) George of Portland passed away peacefully Saturday, Aug. 19, at Water's Edge in Middletown on her 91st birthday. She was the loving wife of the late Armand George.

Lorraine was born Aug. 19, 1926, in Wethersfield, the daughter of LeRoy and Isadora (Lewis) Grover. She was the owner of Handcrafted Baskets by Lorraine. She was a member of the First Congregational Church of Portland, past President of the Visiting Nurses Association, and a charter member of the Ladies Auxiliary Fire Department Co. No. 3 of Portland. Lorraine enjoyed crocheting and knitting. She was an avid UConn women's basketball fan, and watching NASCAR, especially Joey Lagano.

A loving mother, grandmother, and great grandmother, she leaves behind to cherish her memory a son, David George and his wife Leanne; two daughters, Eileen Marino and Lynda Andrew; a sister, Donna Haddox and her husband David; her beloved grandchildren, Maria Aresco, Joseph Aresco and his wife Tara, Gina Cymbala and her husband Chris, and Kimberly Sandbo; three great-grandchildren, Christopher, Gianna, and Dante; her lifelong friend of 85 years, Phyllis Curti; as well as several nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by two brothers, Allen and LeRoy Grover.

A funeral service will be held today, Aug. 25, at noon, officiated by the Rev. Theresa Temple, in the Rose Hill Funeral Home, 580 Elm St., Rocky Hill. Burial will be held in Rose Hill Memorial Park, Rocky Hill, Pallbearers will be Joseph Aresco, Chris Cymbala, Allen Grover, Mark Grover, David H. Haddox, and Eileen Marino; Honorary Pallbearers are Christopher C. Cymbala and Gianna Cymbala. Family and friends are invited to call at the funeral home from 11 a.m.-noon, just prior to the service.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Lorraine's memory to the Joey Lagano Foundation, 9911 Rox Commons Dr., Suite E-15, Huntersville, NC. 28078.

To send flowers or a memorial gift to the family of Lorraine G. George, visit the Sympathy Store at rosehillfuneralhomes.com.

courant

East Hampton

Clive A. Gudmundson

On Aug. 15, 2017, Clive A. Gudmundson of Putnam, formerly of East Hampton, passed away. He was the husband of Mary Louise Healey.

He was the son of Carl and Catherine (Bartek) Gudmundson, born in Middletown, grew up in East Hampton, and later became a lifelong resident of Putnam. He and his twin brother Calvin were co-owners and operated GB Tool Co. in Warwick, R.I., for over 30 years. Clive also served in the U. S. Army.

Besides his wife Mary Lou, he leaves his brother Calvin and his wife Elizabeth, and many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his brother Chester and sister Christine Lindquist.

Calling hours were Saturday, Aug. 19, at Smith and Walker Funeral Home, 148 Grove St., Putnam, followed by a funeral service that morning at the Emanuel Lutheran Church, 83 Main St., Thompson. Burial followed in Willington Hill Cemetery, Willington.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Visitation House, P.O. Box 60115, Worcester, MA 01610 or National Shrine of St. Jude, P.O. Box 6262, Chicago, IL 60680.

Share a memory at smithandwalkerfh.com.



Andover

Sally Boyd Tuttle

Sally Boyd Tuttle, 89, of Venice, Fla., formerly of Andover, passed away at Sunset Lake Health & Rehabilitation Center Friday, June 30, in the company of her brother.

Born in Hartford April 12, 1928, to Donald R. Tuttle and Eleanor (Hutchinson) Tuttle, Sally grew up in Andover and lived most of her life in the neighboring town of Columbia, where she was surrounded by family and began lifelong friendships. From early childhood she enjoyed animals and the great outdoors, including fishing, boating, horseback riding, golfing, skiing, skating, camping, croquet, gardening, and always the companionship of a dog.

From the one-room elementary school at Columbia center, she went on to Windham High School and then studied nursing and became an RN, at Hartford Hospital School of Nursing, Class of 1950. She was highly regarded as a talented third-shift obstetric nurse, for 40 years, at Hartford Hospital. She also worked an honest day in farming throughout three seasons with her dad. Tuttle's Corn Stand is still remarked about decades since; touted to be the best sweet corn ever grown.

Sally is deeply loved and will be greatly missed by her sister Olive (Tuttle) Shea of Columbia; her brother Boyd Tuttle of Chokoloskee, Fla.; and her sister-in-law Audrey Tuttle of Columbia, with whom she shared the joy of family. She leaves five nieces, five nephews, their spouses and children who will remember her kind heart and will always have yet another funny story to tell about her.

She joins in heaven her dearly-loved brother, Robert "Bub" Tuttle, and her dear friend, Virginia "Ginny" Ewig.

Friends are asked to join the family for graveside service held at West Street Cemetery, Lake Road, Columbia, on Saturday, Sept. 2, at 11:30 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Sally's honor may be made to the Donald R. Tuttle Scholarship Fund, Horace W. Porter School, 1 School House Rd., Columbia, CT 06237.

Portland

Marie Z. Keser

Marie Z. Keser, 84, devoted mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, formerly of Portland, died Sunday, Aug. 20, at Middlesex Hospital in Middletown. Marie was born Dec. 22, 1932, in Middletown, daughter of the late Patrick and Clelia Zampini.

Prior to her retirement, Marie was employed as personnel manager at Stone Container in Portland. Before her time at Stone Container, Marie worked at Keser's Flowers in Portland. Over the years, Marie volunteered in many organizations, including Portland Historical Society, The Hemlock Grange, The Quilters and Altar Guilds at Zion Lutheran Church, The Portland Senior Center and The Portland Land Trust.

In addition to spending time as a volunteer for various organizations, Marie loved to express her creativity through her many talents. Marie loved to spend time with her grandchildren and teach them some of her favorite crafts, especially making stained glass artwork. Her grandchildren will fondly remember their summers spent at Grandma's house.

Marie is survived by her son William Keser (Elise) of Charleston, S.C.; her son Thomas Keser (Beth) of Portland; daughter Lynn Caffery (William) of Portland, and daughter Elizabeth Hurlburt of Middletown. She is also survived by nine grandchildren: Garret Keser, Emilie Keser Krutoholow, Andrew Keser, Erin Keser, Jennifer Barrett, Nicole Migliore, Heather Brown, Raymond Hurlburt and Kathryn Hurlburt; and five great-grandchildren: Connor Hurlburt, Aedan Barrett, Raelynn Foster, Noah Krutoholow and Alexander Brown. She is also survived by her sister, Patricia Z. Trapp and her husband Edward of Glastonbury, and two nephews, Craig and Eric Trapp.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, Aug. 26, at 10 a.m., at Zion Lutheran Church, 183 William St., Portland, CT. Calling hours will be held from 9 a.m. until time of service at Zion Lutheran Church. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Alzheimer's Association CT Chapter: 200 Executive Blvd., Suite 4B, Southington, CT 06489.

Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, is in charge of arrangements.

Courant

Marlborough

John L. Chojnicki

John L. Chojnicki, 71, of Marlborough, the beloved husband of Mary T. (Slepski) Chojnicki, died suddenly Saturday, Aug. 12, at their summer home in Groton.

John also leaves their two sons and their families – Jason and his daughters Veda and Georgia; and Matthew (and his girlfriend Mandie Lovett and her children Casey, Hayden, Britney and Ashley) and his son Aidan Ingram.

John was predeceased by his sister Joanne M. (Chojnicki) Matyka; and is survived by his dear sister Fran (Chojnicki) Jedrzejczyk (and her husband Ray) of Kensington, their children Christopher and his family, Lisa Nelson (and her husband Steve and their children) and Shannon; along with many cousins, nieces, nephews, extended family members, close friends and business partners.

John was born in New Britain, the son of the late John and Nellie (Jedziniak) Chojnicki. John lost his father at a very young age and learned that working hard and taking care of his family was most important. He took a chance with three of his friends to invest and build an industrial park which grew into a successful business. Over the years, he also worked as an electrician and then moved into his career as a general building contractor, operating his own business, Chojnicki Builders, Inc. John was responsible for building many local neighborhoods and homes over the last 35 years. He acted as a mentor to so many in this trade; bringing them under his wing to show them the way.

While John worked hard his whole life, he knew the importance of knowing when to stop and enjoy life and all of the things he worked so hard for. Supporting his sons through their sports and interests when they were young – teaching them that they needed to be part of a team and always work hard toward their goals and to always follow through. He enjoyed traveling with his family, from skiing on the weekends to spending time in St. Maarten with friends every fall.

One of his greatest joys in life was spending time at their home in Groton. Heading off on his boat to Block Island with Mary to relax, and hours on the water fishing with his sons and many friends. He loved entertaining friends and sharing the view of the water over a glass of wine and some great conversation.

John left his footprint on this world and will be deeply missed by all. A celebration of his life with friends and family will be held in October.

In lieu of flowers, donations in John's memory may be made to support Saving the Long Island Sound at ctenvironment.org.

For online condolences, visit mulryanfh.com.

Colchester

Alice C. Sharkey

Alice C. Sharkey of Colchester, formerly of New Rochelle, N.Y., widow of the late Thomas A. Sharkey, passed away Thursday evening, Aug. 17, at the age of 85. Born in New Rochelle July 29, 1932, she was the daughter of the late George and Alice (Seacord) Stevens.

Mrs. Sharkey had worked as a secretary in real estate for many years before her retirement. Friends and family will remember Alice for her love of animals, especially her little dog, Johnny; but moreso, for her great sense of humor and love for her family.

She leaves three daughters (and their spouses), Karen and Robert Giglio of Yorktown, N.Y., MaryAnn and Kevin Holt of Wallkill, N.Y., and Elizabeth and James Post of New Windsor, N.Y.; eight grandchildren, Kevin, Christopher, Michelle, Lisa Marie, Meghan, Roger, Matthew and Caitlin; five great-grandchildren; her dear cousin, Patricia Corcoran of Salem; and numerous extended family members and friends.

Friends called Sunday, Aug. 20, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, with a chapel service held that afternoon. Burial was private.

Donations in her memory may be made to the animal rescue charity of one's choice. For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Portland

Kathleen Abigail Glynn

Kathleen Abigail (Holdridge) Glynn, 94, of Portland, died early Sunday morning after a brief illness, surrounded by her loving family, at Middlesex Hospital Hospice and Palliative Care.

She was born in Williamsburg, Mass., July 23, 1923, the daughter of the late Marcus LeRoy Holdridge. She grew up a country girl, her father teaching her to appreciate nature and to love animals.

She moved to Hartford, where she graduated high school, before moving to New York City to further her education. Upon returning to Hartford she met and married John Thomas Glynn. They moved to Clinton where they raised their family: Paul Marcus, Timothy Andrew, Kathleen Abigail, and Bliss Rebecca.

In 1988, Kay and John retired to the country in the farmlands of upstate New York, Palatine Bridge, where Kay enjoyed her favorite hobbies of gardening, tending to animals – domestic and wild – and participating in church activities.

When John passed in 2004, Kay returned to Connecticut to be near her children. She lived in Portland at Quarry Heights, then with Tim and Donna, then with Bliss, followed by Bliss and Paul, before a brief stay at Portland Care and Rehab Center.

She is survived by her four children: Tim's wife, Donna Lee (Aletta); Kathleen's partner, Willie Ortiz; her grandchildren: Abigail Bliss Glynn, Arthur William Foote III, Leah Careen Braley; Tim's two children, including Jessica J. Aletta; and one great-grandson, Caleb Alexander Eatmon.

Kay was a warm, loving person, mother, and "surrogate mom" for all of her children's friends. She spent her life loving and feeding all of God's creatures. She fed birds, raccoons, skunks, squirrels, and stray cats and dogs. She enjoyed gardening, reading, spending time at the ocean, and square dancing. Her all-time favorite activity was spending time with her family, children, and friends.

An avid reader, she delved into history and biographies. She had a keen sense of humor and an admirable ability to remain calm when presented with a broad array of challenges by her sometimes rambunctious children. She will be sorely missed by many.

A memorial service will be held at the Portland United Methodist Church, 381 Main St., on Saturday, Sept. 2, at noon. There are no calling hours. The burial will be private.

