

RIVEREAST

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Hebron native Steve Emt is headed to PyeongChang, South Korea, to compete alongside fellow members of the U.S. Curling Paralympic Team at the 2018 Paralympics.

## Hebron Native to Curl for the Gold

by Sloan Brewster

A teacher and coach at RHAM is getting ready to head to the Paralympic Games in PyeongChang, South Korea.

Steve Emt, 48, who currently lives in Manchester, was born and raised in Hebron, teaches seventh grade math at RHAM Middle School and coaches basketball at RHAM High School. He is also on the 2018 U.S. Paralympic Curling Team and will compete in the Paralympics next month.

Emt is hoping to raise some cash to defray some of his travel and training costs at a fundraiser in Marlborough Saturday.

Emt, who has been curling for five years and attended various international competitions during that time, said that over the years he's "spent probably \$10-15,000 of my own money doing this." But, he stressed, "it's not about the money; I mean, I do this for the sport."

He went on to explain that he loves curling but that competing is a sacrifice for Olympic and Paralympic competitors that don't have major sponsors.

Emt found himself in an international curling competition the day after he first hit the ice, according to Tony Colacchio, coach of the Cape Cod Curling Club in Falmouth, Mass. Someone from the team had backed out and Emt, who had come to Cape Cod to try out the sport, was able to fill in.

Colacchio recalled he first encountered Emt

when he and his wife were on their way to a local coffee shop in Falmouth, and he saw a guy pushing himself via wheelchair up a steep hill.

It was Emt. Colacchio said that while most folks would have been struggling with the effort, Emt – who has been paralyzed since a 1995 car crash – seemed to have no trouble.

"He zipped right up," Colacchio said.

Colacchio's wife had an inkling her husband was planning to approach the stranger and see if he had an interest in curling.

"I see this guy rolling up the hill. I didn't say anything," he said. "My wife said, 'You're not going to. You're not going to.' I said, 'I'm going to.'"

He did.

Colacchio went up to Emt and asked him if he lived in the area. After a long pause, Emt asked why, and the curling coach took the plunge.

"Well, I'm the wheelchair curling coach," Colacchio replied. "I'm looking at your physique; I could make you a great curler."

Curling isn't so much about strength, the coach explained, but rather "turning on" the effort – much like how Emt took on the hill.

"Just looking at him, I said this guy would have no problem with our sport, if I could get him to turn it on," he said.

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## The Gift of Life a Family Affair

by Elizabeth Regan

Sometimes the gift of life looks like a plush, purple pillow in the shape of a kidney.

That's the birthday present Judy Krauth received the year she decided to become a live organ donor for her brother-in-law, Ron Catrone.

The stuffed kidney came from Krauth's sister, Janice Catrone.

"I will never be able to thank her enough," Janice said. "And while I know my sister does not want endless praise, Ron and I will be forever grateful for her precious gift."

Two years elapsed between Judy's decision to give her kidney to Ron and the day the two patients were rolled into surgery last August.

Ron was 69 years old at the time of the surgery; Judy was 58.

Judy clutched the purple kidney as she lay in her hospital bed. There was a surgical cap on her head and, comically, there was one on the pillow.

"It was a hit with the nurses," Judy said. "They said they should give one to every live donor as they're leaving the hospital: a stuffed kidney."

The family journey began in 2015 one March day when Ron became violently ill. He had blood poisoning and kidney failure. The underlying cause was lifelong high blood pressure.

Ron was in the intensive care unit at Hartford Hospital with blood poisoning and kidney failure when Judy told Janice she would donate one of her kidneys to Ron if he needed it.

Even though there was no reason to be sure, Judy was confident she'd be a match.

"I was there the day the doctors came in and basically said Ron had zero function in one kidney and 15 percent of another," Judy said from the Catrone home in Portland last week. "I said, 'I'll get tested.' Mind you, I knew nothing about donating any organ. I didn't even know you could survive with one kidney."

Janice chalked up her sister's confidence to faith.

"Judy was the first and only one to get tested, and she was a match," Janice said. "To me, that's the miracle right there."

According to 2016 statistics from the National Kidney Foundation, there were 100,791 people in the United States on the kidney transplant list. The median wait time is 3.6 years. Thirteen people die each day while waiting for a kidney transplant.

While Judy was identified as a match within two months, it was a series of heart problems for Ron that pushed back the kidney transplant by two years.

The discovery of an aortic aneurysm led to

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Judy Krauth, of Middletown, said she knew her kidney would be a match for brother-in-law Ron Catrone, of Portland, even before blood tests confirmed it. The kidney was successfully transplanted last August. Judy and Ron are pictured here sharing a moment at Hartford Hospital before being wheeled into surgery.



Emt and teammate Penny Greely are shown here during a previous curling competition.

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Over the next 45 minutes, Colacchio explained what curling was and that there are very few wheelchair curlers in the country.

"In the whole country, there's probably only 50," he said.

Emt said he was interested.

Emt has since proven to be a dedicated athlete, Colacchio said. Besides the twice- or thrice-weekly trips to Cape Cod to train, he is a member of the Norfolk Curling Club and has worked out with the Nutmeg Curling Club in Bridgeport.

One of the reasons all that dedication is important is that ice is never the same and curlers need to know how to adjust to the conditions, Colacchio said.

"We tell all the curlers, you cannot expect the ice to do the same thing all the time," he said. "It's forever changing."

Emt missed tryouts for the national team in time to make it to the Paralympics in 2014, but when the team returned, he went through trials and made it. He has competed on the world team in the world championships and now he's moving on to the 2018 Paralympics, which he has visions of winning.

He promised his mother, Anne, who passed away in November 2012, that he would win.

"Literally, those were the last words that I said to her," he said.

Emt said he also wants to honor his father, who passed away when he was 19 and who, he said, was very proud of his athletic accomplishments. While a student at RHAM, Emt was an avid basketball, baseball and soccer player.

When Emt doesn't want to practice, or drive all the way to Cape Cod to train, or when the financial difficulties of training, competing and traveling get to him, he remembers the promise to his mother. He also looks at the goals he wrote for himself five years ago, which included making the U.S. Team and taking home a medal.

"I see it every day and I tell myself that I'm going to do it," he said. "If you want it bad enough you'll find a way to make it happen."

Colacchio is confident in the win.

"We've been coming in the middle for years,

always the middle of the pack, and we feel with the team we have this year, we have a good chance," he said.

He also pointed out that Emt is the team leader and the other members look up to him.

"He's like the one that runs it and fields confidence," he said. "He's considered the one that always the other four look up to."

Emt's girlfriend, Melissa Genovese, plans to watch the competition from home.

Emt is an inspiration to many people, she said.

"Everything that he's been through in his life, nothing gets him down," Genovese said. "He just keeps pushing. He's just been a great influence on my kids and so many kids in the community. Everybody looks up to him."

She also pointed out that Emt willingly shares the story of his 1995 car crash. And in a phone call Tuesday, he shared that story with the *Rivereast*.

"I was a drunk driver. I tried to drive home," Emt said. "I made a mistake that night."

The accident that resulted from his getting behind the wheel landed him in a wheelchair, but he said he remained positive, and "instead of dwelling on it," and "laying in the hospital bed," he got up, got his college degree – and is now going to the Paralympics.

"No matter what happens in life look for the good in everything," he said. "There's good somewhere."

According to [paralympic.org/pyeongchang-2018](http://paralympic.org/pyeongchang-2018), the PyeongChang 2018 Paralympic Winter Games will take place March 9-18. Athletes will compete in 80 medal events across six sports: alpine skiing, biathlon, cross-country skiing, ice hockey, snowboard and wheelchair curling.

The fundraiser for Emt will be held Saturday from 3-7 p.m. at the American Legion Hall at 128 East Hampton Rd. (Route 66), in Marlborough. In addition to a pasta dinner, there will also be a door prize of a 40-inch TV, various raffles, a cash bar and a DJ. Tickets cost \$10 and are available at [steve-emt-paralympic-send-off.eventbrite.com](http://steve-emt-paralympic-send-off.eventbrite.com). Tickets will also be sold at the door.



From left, Judy Krauth, Ron Catrone and Janice Catrone.

#### Gift of Life cont. from Front Page

open heart surgery in November 2015. Just days after coming home, Ron had a heart attack.

"The two-year wait was for his heart to heal," Janice said. "It was discouraging for all of us. We didn't know if the transplant was going to happen."

Meanwhile, Judy said she did everything the doctors told her to: "Eat well, exercise and be ready."

Ron, for his part, was getting kidney dialysis treatments three times a week for four hours each time. That's where he saw the dire need for organ donation with his own eyes.

The dialysis center operated three shifts per day with 24 patients per shift, according to Ron.

"I saw a lot of people in the dialysis center. Some of them passed away during my time there. A small number of others got transplants," he said.

Ron's chance came in August 2017, when a comprehensive team of doctors agreed it was time for the transplant.

It wasn't until both her husband and sister were undergoing their carefully coordinated surgeries that Janice finally broke down.

"It just all came out, all the emotion of two and a half years. Because I had a sister and a husband in the operating room," she said.

Janice's fears were allayed when both patients emerged from successful operations.

Judy had a cheering section of nurses as she went to visit Ron, who was situated on the opposite side of the hospital wing, just hours after the surgery.

"The doctors wanted me to get up and move as soon as I could," Judy explained. "I took it as a dare and I said, 'You know what, I'm going to stand up with my pillow against my belly and I'm going to walk to Ron's room.'"

With Ron fully healed by November, the family has committed itself to sharing their story as a way to bring awareness about kidney donation.

According to the National Kidney Foundation, most kidney transplants come from donors who have died. Those waiting for a transplant are put on a waiting list until a match becomes available.

In the case of living donations, it's typically

a family member or close friend who gives a kidney to the recipient. There's also a program called the Paired Kidney Exchange for the person who wants to donate a kidney to a specific loved one but cannot due to incompatibility. In this case, the donor's kidney goes to a compatible recipient while the donor's loved one receives a kidney from a compatible stranger.

Judy said it was educating herself about the process and the overwhelming need for kidney donation that made the decision easy.

"If I had three kidneys, I would do it again," she said. "It's risky, but every day's a risk just going out your front door."

Her three daughters – including former Miss USA Erin Brady – were hesitant about taking that risk at first, Judy said. But they all came around.

When Ron, Janice and Judy appeared on the TV news last month, Erin Brady took to Twitter to share the story.

"Words can't express how proud I am to call her my mom," she tweeted.

As Janice and Judy clasped hands on the sofa in the Catrone living room, Ron sat across from them in a chair.

Appearing less prone to outward displays of emotion than the sisters, his gratitude was nevertheless evident.

He said Judy's sacrifice has improved his quality of life substantially.

"I figure I've gained 15 hours a week that I don't have to sit down and watch my blood circulate in and out," he said of the dialysis treatments he no longer needs.

He also noted it was interesting that the doctors left the old kidneys inside him to shrivel up as the new one begins to "carry the load."

Judy laughed at the idea of what she described as her "girly kidney" taking over.

"I'm carrying the load, Ron. You are welcome," she said.

Janice, amid the comfortable banter between two of the people she loves the most, said she hopes the story will inspire those who are thinking about donating a kidney and those who need one.

"I think this is a miracle story, but it doesn't end here," Janice said.

# Lead Still a Problem for School Water in Hebron

by Sloan Brewster

Lead remains an issue in water at Hebron Elementary School.

At the Feb. 8 Board of Education meeting, representatives from the state Department of Health (DPH) presented Superintendent of Schools Timothy Van Tassel with a new administrative order regarding the lead problem. The district has complied with an initial administrative order, which was issued last year and expired in November.

"One of the things that we wanted to talk to you about tonight was updating that order," said Lori Mathieu, public health section chief for the drinking water section of DPH. "You've already done everything. You've upheld everything within the order."

DPH closed the expired order and issued the new one at the meeting. The order requires the district to continue to test the water at the school for lead.

Lead was first discovered in the school's water in November of 2016, according to a timeline Van Tassel presented at the meeting.

On Nov. 7, 2016, "DPH notified us that we had high levels of lead at Hebron Elementary School," he said. "When we learned about that we immediately discontinued the use of water for drinking at the school instantly."

A sample taken in June of last year was negative, indicating the fix the district had made was working ahead of schedule, Van Tassel said. However, two consecutive negative tests, six months apart, are required in order for the water to get deemed safe – and that's where the

good news ended.

Then, a sample taken in September was positive, and two rounds of samples taken in December were also positive.

The day lead was originally detected, the district notified parents, Van Tassel said.

Since November 2016, the only drinking water at the school has been bottled water, a measure that will continue until the lead issue is resolved. Van Tassel said in a phone call Monday.

The new order calls for continued notification of parents on the matter.

"The biggest part is that we're communicating to the public," Van Tassel said.

Due to a situation involving high volumes of lead found in drinking water in Flint, Mich., in 2014, Connecticut has been vigilant in making sure everyone in a community is informed if lead is detected in its water supply, Brendan Rowley, certified operator at DPH, said at the meeting.

"Flint, Mich., is quite the story; there are many issues today that remain," Mathieu said.

The problem in Flint occurred when water for the city was taken from the Flint River rather than from the city of Detroit, where it was previously sourced, Mathieu said.

"As soon as they turned that water on and let that into the system, the water changed," she said.

Residents of the city reported health issues, including among children, that they said were caused by the water, Mathieu said. High levels

of lead were ultimately blamed.

A number of people lost their jobs and there are state employees who have been charged with negligence, she added.

"Lead has a real impact on developing brains in young children; especially at an elementary school it's a severe issue that has to be dealt with and has to be dealt with instantly," Mathieu said. "Flint really changed the way every state looks at water."

Per the new administrative order, the district must continue monitoring the lead by sampling the water at the school.

"The requirement is that we have to submit samples to DPH every six months, but we're doing test sampling between that timeframe," Van Tassel said. "We have to have two simultaneous six-month samples that are clean or below threshold to be taken off the administrative order."

The third part of the order is that the district must continue to give DPH monthly reports regarding the injector system installed last year. The system treats the water with zinc orthophosphate, a corrosion inhibitor.

The lead was caused by corrosion in the pipes, according to Rowley.

"When you test the wells, there's no lead coming from the water," he told the board. "It's coming from the plumbing."

The district is also addressing radon and coliform bacteria in the water, as well as PH levels.

An aerations system aerates gas and radon,

removing it from the water, Rowley said. An ultraviolet system screens for bacteria, and calcite filters raise PH levels, neutralizing acid.

"So we have a lot of things going on in that area," Van Tassel said. "We're addressing bacteria, we're addressing PH, we're addressing radon, we're addressing lead."

Donald Mitchell, director of health at Chatham Health District, who was also present at the meeting, gave an analogy.

"This school is like a patient, the water operator is your doctor," he said. "The patient has a number of conditions you have to address, it has the bacteria issue you have to address, you have the radon issue you have to address, you have the PH issue you have to address and you have the lead issue you have to address."

"Your analogy just made your presence relevant," Van Tassel quipped, responding to a comment by Mitchell that the health district had no authority in the matter and he was only there to "look pretty."

In other board news, the board appointed Adam Parks to serve as acting principal of Gilead Hill Elementary School while Katie Uriano is on maternity leave. Uriano, who is in her third year as principal of the school, will be returning July 1.

Parks is currently the school's challenge and enrichment teacher, and according to Van Tassel, completed his administrative coursework at the University of Connecticut several years ago and received his licensure.

## Hebron Clergy Discuss Faith in Modern World

by Sloan Brewster

On Ash Wednesday, local clergy paused from giving ashes to discuss the state of faith in the ever plugged-in modern world.

Clergy from three local churches gathered at Veterans Memorial Park for Ashes to Go. The Imposition of Ashes is a Christian tradition to mark the first day of Lent, the 40-day period when Jesus was purported to have wandered through the wilderness before his death. Ashes to Go offers the tradition in a public setting outside the church, where it is regularly performed, giving folks the chance to slow down and get ashes in the midst of their busy lives.

Hebron clergy have been offering Ashes to Go for five years, they said.

Lent is a time to turn to God, the Rev. Denise Esslinger, pastor of Gilead Congregational Church, told folks, as one of the other two pastors present drew crosses of ashes on their foreheads.

"Today is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, the opportunity to turn back to God and to rend our hearts and to open our hearts to God's presence in life," she said. "A reminder to turn back and a reminder of our mortality and that this precious life is a gift from God."

In the modern world, people remain faithful, but – as seen on Wednesday when people came to get ashes on the go instead of attending an early service to get them – they have different churchgoing patterns, clergy said. Despite high membership numbers, churches don't necessarily fill to the brim every Sunday.

The Rev. Mark Santostefano, pastor of The Worship Center, said his congregation is growing but folks tend to go to church about twice a month rather than every week. On a given Sunday, about one-third of the members are not in attendance.

Santostefano and the other clergy attributed sporadic turnout to obligations elsewhere.

"People have to make hard choices," Santostefano said. "If everyone was there every Sunday, we'd have standing room only."

In days gone by, the fact that Sundays were

for church was represented in the overall society with places of business closed and activities on hiatus for the day, the Rev. Ron Kolanowski, pastor at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, said. Nowadays stores and restaurants are open and children who do sports or other activities have practices and rehearsals.

"I think there's a decline [in churchgoing] in some ways because the structure of the culture that used to support church no longer does," Kolanowski said. "When I was a kid nothing was open on Sunday."

Gilead Congregational has similar circumstances, with a membership that has been growing for a number of years and parishioners coming to church about two Sundays per month, Esslinger said.

"There is a sense among people, in our age of longing and desire, for spirituality in life," she said.

With modern technology and social media leading to emptiness, more people are looking for a relationship with God and want to be together in community, the clergy said. In particular, cell phones can lead to cravings for a connection with something deeper.

"Cell phones are great but they keep people connected to their work seven days a week," Esslinger said.

"We're now in an age where we're really being challenged," Kolanowski said. "People are returning to the truth of Jesus."

Relationships on social media also lend to the desire for more substantial relationships, the clergy explained. People want deeper connections and to be loved for who they are, not simply who they portray on Facebook.

"They're starved for it," Kolanowski said.

That's where the church comes in.

"God sent a person," Santostefano said. "I think people are starting to long for those personal relationships."

Additionally, churches are communities, bringing folks together in times of need.

"When people struggle, people are there to



Rebecca Harte receives ashes from the Rev. Mark Santostefano, pastor of The Worship Center, during Ashes to Go at Veterans Memorial Park.

be with them," Esslinger said. "Coming together in community to worship God, support one another and putting faith into action."

Modern society has disconnected from the church, removing it from the seat of power, Kolanowski said, thereby giving folks an opportunity to grow in their faith of their own accord.

"The church through its own culpability and sin has been coopted by the powers of the world," he said. "This is an opportunity for the church's faithful to rediscover who Jesus was."

Lorraine Kreeger, a member of Gilead Congregational who stopped by the park to get ashes, said her faith reminds her that she is not alone, despite the loss of her husband, John

(Jack) Kreeger Jr., who passed last year.

"It keeps me connected, knowing that every day I am not alone and even though my husband had passed that I have a faith," she said. "I see it in the sunrise every morning, I see it in the sunset every evening, I see it in children that are taking their journeys to faith and God."

Elissa Kavovit, a member of the Worship Center, said her faith also helped her at a time of loss after her son, Chaz Kavovit, died last year.

"So many people don't understand that bad things happen," she said. "If you believe that God is good and you know that his plans are perfect and his will for you is good, then you can have peace in your heart."



Members of Senior Friends of Hebron splash around in the pool during open swim at The Hemlocks Center last Thursday, as a pair of lifeguards look on. At right, the 22-acre pond and fishing launch at The Hemlocks Center bask in the sun on the chilly February afternoon.

## Hemlocks Center Reopens in Hebron Following Renovations

by Sloan Brewster

If winter is too long and the days too cold, invoke a summer vibe by taking a dip in the heated pool at The Hemlocks Center.

The Hemlocks Center – the location of Easterseals Camp Hemlocks, a camp for children and adults with disabilities operated by the nonprofit Oak Hill Center – has reopened after \$2 million in renovations, with aquatics memberships available to community members interested in taking advantage of the pool.

The facility, which was established in 1974, was closed from 2012 to 2014 and reopened in 2015 for camp only, Jillian McCarthy, center director, said. Summer camp was held there for the past three summers, but the facility and pool were closed to year round use.

One month ago the pool, which is heated to approximately 86 degrees, was reopened for membership based public use.

The facility was run by various Easterseals organizations until it was closed in 2012, McCarthy said. When Easterseals decided to close Hemlocks down, Barry Simon, president and CEO of Oak Hill in Hartford and a resident of Hebron, took action.

“[Simon] said ‘This is such a great resource for the community,’” McCarthy recalled. “‘It would be such a shame for it not to open and serve this community.’”

In 2014, Oak Hill took the center over – running it as an Easterseals of Coastal Fairfield County facility – and began renovations.

Renovations Oak Hill has completed include mostly structural improvements with some cosmetic upgrades, McCarthy said. Structural fixes include pool renovations, a new fire suppression sprinkler system, new windows, replacing the ceiling in the pool area and new duct work. The cosmetic makeover includes new carpets

and a spruced up dining hall.

The Senior Friends of Hebron used to hold occasional meetings at the facility before it was closed, said Barbara Soderberg.

“The seniors came a few times a year” for member programs, Soderberg said.

The group has had various programs including senior swims at the facility and once held a tea party there. Last Thursday, in celebration of the pool reopening and an early Valentine’s Day, the group held its monthly meeting at the facility. The visit included a tour, poetry readings by John Surowiecki of Hebron, Valentine surprises, chocolate treats and beverages, as well as festive adult beverages – in particular chocolate wine.

“They’ve done a really nice job,” said Dale Bland of Hebron during the tour.

The Senior Friends reminisced about past times there and about bringing their children or grandchildren swimming.

“This was a busy hub and now it seems to be getting busy again,” Soderberg said.

Bland, whose children took swimming lessons at Hemlocks, said she had been a physical therapist for the Visiting Nurses Association and, back in the day, brought clients to use the pool. She said she’d like similar programs to start up again.

The seniors inundated McCarthy with ideas for programs they think would be a great fit for the center and past programs they said should be revamped.

Staff is looking into programs, similar to pool memberships, that will be beneficial to the community and sustainable, McCarthy said.

“We also want to stay true to our mission and vision, which is serving the disabled community,” she said.

But while indoor activities give The Hemlocks Center a winter purpose, for McCarthy is all about summer camp.

“It’s magical,” she said.

She recalled one touching story.

When new campers want to spend time at Hemlocks, they first come for meet-and-greet visits, during which they receive tours, she said. Staff asks potential campers questions and they can ask questions too.

“This is a way for us to more formally assess if we can support them here,” McCarthy said.

During a visit with a young woman who does not communicate verbally but instead does so through writing, McCarthy noticed she didn’t seem to be writing much and was mostly doodling.

“She was very quiet,” McCarthy said. “She was listening intently but I couldn’t get a good read on how she was feeling about it.”

The young woman had never been away from home but had recently been moved to a group home, leaving the only constant and comfortable place she had ever known, McCarthy said. When she sat down with her and asked about the tour, the answer she received was telling and extremely moving.

“I said, ‘How are you feeling, what do you think about camp,’ and she wrote one word on her piece of paper, ‘Speechless,’” McCarthy said. “To see that, and her feeling that this was a place where she could enjoy herself and feel safe, was magical.”

Moments like that make McCarthy feel like she is doing work that matters, she said.

“Every late night, every stress, every difficult conversation, it’s all worth it for one moment for somebody to realize that they have an

opportunity to take a vacation like everyone else or discover something about themselves for the first time,” she said.

Summer camp begins the second week of June with orientation. The third week of the month hails the arrival of campers.

In fall, winter and spring, the 160-acre year-round facility, which has a 22-acre boating and fishing pond, walking paths and an open air pavilion, is available for rental for any and all kinds of activities, including weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs, group retreats, family reunions, fundraisers and celebrations. There are 16 rooms and three cabins, with dining room capacity for 150 and overnight accommodations for 100.

On their visit, the seniors took advantage of the library, where Surowiecki stood before a blazing fire and read and discussed his poetry.

“A poet is a kind of scientist,” he said as he spoke about one of the poems.

He compared the world of the scientist verses that of the poet, pointing out that the poet’s world – the world of emotion and the mind – is larger than the physical world of the scientist.

The poet also has more liberty, Surowiecki said.

“The poet, unlike the scientist, he can lie,” he said. “Because sometimes the lie generates a truth.”

The pool at Hemlocks Center is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 4:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

For more information, pricing or to schedule a tour, call 860-286-3116 or email [info@hemlockscenter.org](mailto:info@hemlockscenter.org). For more information about Oak Hill’s programs and services, visit [oakhillct.org](http://oakhillct.org).

## Colchester Superintendent Proposes Light Budget Trim

by Julianna Roche

Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mary Conway “cut right to the chase” at Tuesday’s Board of Education meeting and proposed a \$40.62 million budget for the 2018-19 year – a .05 percent decrease over current spending.

“Colchester has been hit very, very hard in terms of state revenue,” Conway said. She noted that, in addition to the state withholding \$1.77 million in funding from the town last fall, Gov. Dannel Malloy’s most recently-proposed 2018-19 budget calls for the town to lose another \$334,478 in Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding.

The cuts, Conway continued, are “a problem we all own. It’s not the school versus the town budget.”

“We need to keep in mind the taxpayer and our students,” she said. “Our students still need a good education and I do believe this budget provides that for them.”

Conway explained that while the administrative team’s proposed budget of \$41.05 million – or a 1.02 percent increase – “came to the table with absolutely no fluff,” she reluctantly dug a little deeper to dip below current year spending.

Included in Conway’s spending package are decreases of \$110,779 in employee benefits due to changes in some health insurance plans; \$152,884 in instructional materials (including \$29,000 for textbooks, \$15,000 for library books, \$30,000 for pupil services, \$27,000 for curriculum implementation, and \$54,000 for licensing and software support); \$55,735 in capital outlay; \$31,237 in office supplies; and \$74,000 in special education transportation.

Additionally, a .2 full-time equivalent (FTE) PE/Health teacher and .6 FTE speech/language teacher from Colchester Elementary School were reduced, as well as a .5 FTE Spanish teacher and .75 PE/Health teacher from William J. Johnston Middle School.

Despite decreases in some services, however, the superintendent’s proposal outlined how the district’s top budget priorities would still be met, including providing a system of Social Emotional Learning and support, providing scientific-research based intervention at all schools, and providing technology to support personalized learning.

Conway said her job as interim superintendent is two-fold, with her first obligation to ensure the “social, emotional, and physical health and safety” of her students.

“If I cannot assure that, there’s no way I can do number two, which is education,” she said.

In terms of additions, the budget proposal includes a \$337,176, or 1.34 percent, increase in salaries over current year spending due to contractual obligations, reallocation of 1.15 certified and 2.0 classified salaries from the Title I Grant and Medicaid funding, and the addition of a 1.0 FTE special education teacher at CES, 1.0 FTE special education teacher at WJMS, .6 FTE special education professional for pupil services, and .2 FTE school social worker for pupil services.

In technology support, three projectors are set to be replaced at CES, with an additional 18 to be reallocated from WJMS; Jack Jackter Intermediate School will receive 30 new iPads and 24 replaced Chromebooks; Bacon Acad-

emy will receive 48 new computers for its business labs and 63 Chromebooks for social studies; and the district’s resilience program – which works with students who have difficulties attending school – will receive six new Chromebooks. WJMS, meanwhile, will have all new technology funded through the new school building project.

Facilities and grounds saw an increase of \$75,465, as did professional services by \$68,576, and property/liability insurance by \$17,305.

Conway explained that when combined for the 2018-19 year, tuition for vocational agricultural schools and magnet schools, as well as special education has decreased over current year spending by \$264,465.

Conway said principals have told her about students who returned to Colchester schools after attending magnet schools and are “very happy” they have come back.

WJMS is undergoing a renovation and expansion project, and the school’s principal, Chris Bennett, has been taking parents and students on tours of the new-look school – and Conway said these have led people to change their minds about sending their kids elsewhere.

“Several parents indicated that they thought they were considering a magnet school, but once they toured the new facility and knew what was happening there, they said they were keeping their child at home in Colchester,” Conway continued, adding, “which we’re very proud of.”

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Only a handful of residents spoke out during the citizens’ comments portion of the meet-

ing, with one resident suggesting the school board take a closer look at what was included in the administrative team’s original 2018-19 proposal featuring a 1.02 percent increase, before going with a negative budget.

Board of Education Chairman Brad Bernier then asked if any other town officials present wanted to share their comments about the superintendent’s budget proposal, with First Selectman Art Shilosky agreeing with a statement made by Conway about the town and school being one.

“We’re a community. We’re a town [and] we have to work together,” he said.

Board of Finance member Andrea Migliaccio – who was also present at the meeting and serves as the liaison to the school board – called Conway’s proposal “very well-presented” and said she felt the superintendent’s explanation of how the budget book worked would make the finance board’s job “a lot easier.”

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Due to the number of snow days to be made up this year, the Board of Education was also presented with five options by the superintendent at Tuesday’s meeting – with board members agreeing to utilize Friday, June 22, as a make-up day should there be more snow days and reducing the school calendar, if necessary, by one day from 181 to 180 days. The current last day of school is Thursday, June 21.

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The next regular Board of Education meeting will be held Tuesday, March 13, at 7 p.m. in Bacon Academy’s Media Center.

# Portland Public Hearing Next Week on \$410K Land Purchase

by Elizabeth Regan

The public is being asked to weigh in on a plan by the Board of Selectmen to spend a total of \$410,000 on several vacant and contaminated pieces of land on Brownstone Avenue as part of continuing efforts to revitalize the riverfront.

The 5.28-acre property was a petroleum storage and distribution site before it was vacated in 2010, leaving five conspicuous oil tanks on the site.

Remediation of the property, which has been revealed through three phases of environmental assessment to contain soil and groundwater contamination, is expected to cost up to \$750,000. That's how much the town is set to receive in a brownfields grant approved in 2016 by the state Department of Economic and Community Development.

The assessments were conducted by the environmental engineering firm Tighe and Bond. Remediation is expected to take two years to complete, First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said this week.

The public hearing is set for Wednesday, Feb. 21, at 7 p.m. A special town meeting will be held Wednesday, Feb. 28, at 7 p.m. Both events will be held in the Mary Flood Room of the Portland Public Library.

Bransfield negotiated the agreement to purchase 222, 230 and 248 Brownstone Ave. for \$385,000, she announced at last week's meeting of the selectmen. Closing and bond issuance costs come in at \$25,000.

Selectmen have been meeting in executive session for over a year to discuss negotiations with O,R&L Commercial, the brokerage firm representing the estates of owners John and Rose Balletti.

The asking price was \$845,000.

In an interview this week, Bransfield described the project as an investment. The prop-

erty has been on the market for years without a buyer because private developers don't want to take on the costs of environmental cleanup, she said.

"It doesn't mean the town will forever and ever own this property, but the municipality is the only entity that can get these grants," she said.

A flyer produced by Tighe and Bond states that it will be up to public outreach, a market study and potential developer interest to determine "the final reuse" of the property.

Concept plans for the \$3.78 million riverfront revitalization outlined in the remediation grant application included a 5,000-square-foot restaurant and 1,500-square-foot brownstone museum with expanded parking for Riverfront Park and the Brownstone Exploration and Discovery Park.

The museum and restaurant were estimated in the grant to cost approximately \$3 million, with the bulk of the remaining costs attributed to remediation fees.

According to the grant application, the town intended to apply for tourism and historic preservation grants to fund at least part of the construction of the brownstone museum, while construction and operation costs for the restaurant would come from a private developer.

This week, Bransfield said she's heard the most positive feedback about the riverfront restaurant.

She seemed to back away from the free-standing museum idea.

"We need to make certain we can incorporate the history – maybe within the restaurant," she said, citing the possibility of creating an area devoted to information about the quarries and the Connecticut River.

The costs of constructing a parking lot would be covered by the brownfields grant, according

to Bransfield.

When asked how the town would fund the remediation if they ended up exceeding estimates, she said the town would go back to the state Department of Economic and Community Development to "see if they could assist us further."

She also noted she's been told by engineers that the project "could just as easily come in under that amount."

She pointed to the Brownstone Exploration and Discovery Park as a successful example of the kind of partnership she envisions for the property.

The town purchased a 40-acre swath of riverfront property and the adjacent quarries in 1999 for \$1.05 million. The popular Brownstone Exploration and Discovery Park leases the quarry side, paying \$468,932 in fees to the town in fiscal year 2017. Bransfield said the business has paid the town approximately \$2.75 million in fees since the park opened in 2005.

The town-owned riverside is now home to a park, including a performance stage and a picnic pavilion.

"Just as we did with the leasing of the quarries, we would look for a public private partnership," Bransfield said. "We would look for a private partner that would be vetted and would be willing to work with us in establishing a building and restaurant."

She noted the asphalt company Bitumar, which is situated on Brownstone Avenue just south of the properties the town wants to buy, is leaving Portland for Providence, R.I.

The company confirmed its departure plans on Wednesday.

She said the move "presents opportunities for other commercial operations" that could enhance the area – and will also put a halt to the

company's intermittent production of what she described as "quite an odor."

## Environmental Concerns

Three phases of environmental assessments have been conducted by Tighe and Bond since 2014 to determine the extent of the contamination from industrial activity going back to the middle of the last century.

The firm found that roughly 10,000 cubic yards of petroleum-contaminated soil will need to be remediated, possibly by capping the soil with asphalt parking areas or structures that may be part of a new development. About 1,500 cubic yards will need to be removed from the site due to contamination by PCBs or other significant environmental hazards, the report said.

Groundwater remediation will likely be needed as well, according to the report. The firm said work could be accomplished through natural attenuation, which the Environmental Protection Agency defines as natural biological, chemical, and physical processes used to treat contaminants.

Future use of the site would likely be restricted to commercial or industrial only. The environmental land use restriction is a method employed by the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to minimize the risk of human exposure to pollutants and environmental hazards by preventing specific uses or activities at a property, according to the DEEP.

Selectmen on Dec. 6 sent the proposal to the Planning and Zoning Commission for its review. The commission unanimously endorsed the plan on Dec. 21.

Bond projects under \$500,000 require approval at a town meeting. If the bond amount exceeded that threshold, it would have to be approved at referendum.

# Marlborough Town Clerk Retires After Nearly Three Decades of Service

by Julianna Roche

Sitting behind her work desk at Town Hall – which is covered in framed family photos, neatly stacked piles of paper and a bright bouquet of flowers – Nancy Dickson warmly smiles before leading me into the vault of town records, which she has kept and maintained for the town of Marlborough for the last 22 years as town clerk.

As of this Monday, Dickson has officially retired from the position, but will continue to stay on part-time as assistant town clerk for now.

Having grown up in Glastonbury, she explained that she and her late husband eventually made the move to Marlborough a little over 35 years ago and stayed put.

"I love Marlborough," she said. "Actually I feel like I grew up here, it's been so long ... the people here are just really nice."

In 1990, Dickson began working at the polls during the election first as a checker and then as an absentee ballot counter. When the registrar of voters at the time resigned, she saw it as a window of opportunity to become more involved in town.

During her sixth-year serving in that role over 22 years ago, Dickson decided to run for town clerk on a whim – and won.

"I feel I've done a good job," she said. "I especially love meeting the people of the town and new people coming in. The majority of people here are very nice and friendly."

Besides indexing and maintaining all the town records and meeting minutes – a mighty task in itself – Dickson said other parts of her job include assisting residents with notary work, locating land records, refinancing, and obtaining marriage licenses, and birth and death certificates.

"It's just been such a pleasure serving the town," she said, adding that the most rewarding part has been "satisfying people" in seemingly small ways.

For example, Dickson recalled once when a Marlborough family moved to Arizona around

Christmastime and later contacted her.

"They were going on a trip to Cancun with their family and because they had just moved there and were unpacking and everything, they couldn't find their children's birth certificates and needed them for their passports," she said.

Dickson worked hard to get the birth certificates copied and certified, and two days before the family's scheduled departure, the grandmother – who lived in West Hartford – came to pick up the birth certificates and FedEx them to the family just in time.

"They wrote a really nice thank you note because they were able to get on the plane and go on vacation," Dickson said. "And I think things like that happen a lot in this office. It's just such a satisfactory feeling to know that you've helped somebody."

Throughout her 22 years serving however, some requests or questions have not always been so ordinary, she said, explaining for example when a resident once called to complain about the snowplows.

"He told me that the snowplow was plowing all the snow on his side of the road on purpose. I said that the snow plow can't direct the way the snow goes because it's angled to plow a certain way," Dickson said with a laugh.

Another time, she continued, a resident came in to her office to ask if he had to pay the full price for a dog license since "his dog was going through menopause and could no longer have puppies." (Dog licenses for unaltered dogs cost \$19, while licenses for spayed or neutered dogs is only \$8.)

In town clerk speak, Dickson said there is a name for those humorous moments.

"They're 'oh really' moments when you have questions that are strange and people come in, and you say, 'oh really?'" she explained. "You could write a book of all the things we've been asked about over the years."

While Dickson has stepped down, she said her position is in good hands with the new town clerk Lauren Griffin, who previously worked



After acting as Marlborough's town clerk for 22 years and registrar of voters for six, Nancy Dickson has retired from the full-time position, but plans to stay on working part-time.

as one of Marlborough's board clerks.

"When Lauren came in to interview, I just liked her," Dickson said. "She is perfect for the job. She greets people with a smile and [when] someone comes in who's maybe not feeling quite right or a little bit upset whether it be about a death of a family member or some problem – to get them to have a smile on their face when they leave the office is something we strive to do and it's something she does a really great job with."

It's a skill Griffin said she's learned from Dickson herself.

"Nancy is wonderful and a remarkable

woman. She's a friend and a mentor and I just feel so blessed she's staying here [part-time]," she said, with tears in her eyes. "I can't even begin to say how much she's taught me."

Griffin added that it's clear Dickson is deeply loved not only by her family, but by Marlborough's residents as well – many of whom, she laughed, will come in asking for Nancy and if she happens to be out, will say "Oh, I'll come back!"

"Serving the town of Marlborough has just been a very, very rewarding experience," Dickson said. "It's been one of the best experiences of my life I probably would say."

# Chapel Proposed for Saint Clements Castle in East Hampton

by Elizabeth Regan

Saint Clements Castle and Marina is back in front of the East Hampton Planning and Zoning Commission with a proposal to build a chapel on its 4.96-acre Oakum Dock Road property.

Last week, Roncalli Institute President Dan Loos presented the special permit application for the *Roncalli Chapel of the Angels*.

“We’re proposing a non-denominational church for use by any religion for regular scheduled services, funerals, weddings, fellowship meetings, etc. [and] other functions as they relate to the religious use of the building and the property,” Loos told commissioners.

It’s the latest in a series of events that unfolded after a June 25 fire interrupted a wedding reception at the Port-Hampton Marina Club. Investigation by local, regional and state officials subsequently revealed the business had been holding banquets on the site for years without the proper permits and licenses.

The fire was ruled accidental by the East Hampton fire marshal’s office. Investigators found the blaze likely emanated from an unattended propane cooker being used on the back deck to boil water. A report from the State Fire Marshal’s Office has been completed, according to Connecticut State Police Reports and Records Division, but was not available by press time.

The application for a church – which is allowed in a residential area with a special permit – follows a failed commercial zone change request back in November that could have brought the business into compliance with local regulations.

Commissioners did not voice the reasoning for their decision when they voted 6-1 to deny the commercial zoning application.

Saint Clements Castle and Marina straddles East Hampton and Portland, with roughly 85 acres on the Portland side. The banquet facility exists under the umbrella of the nonprofit Roncalli Institute, a collection of businesses, charitable organizations and trusts overseen by chairman Edward Doherty.

Loos said Saint Clements Castle and Marina has been losing business to venues such as the Aqua Turf Club in Southington, which have freestanding, indoor chapels that can be used during inclement weather.

“Right now if you want to get married and it’s a rainy day, you have to have it outside, in between the raindrops,” he said – or in smaller areas inside the castle.

The Roncalli Institute would like to continue operating as a marina with the currently authorized maximum of 29 boat slips, according to Loos.

The site was grandfathered in as a commercial marina when the residential zone was established. Planning and Zoning Official Jeremy DeCarli has said the site could be used for anything “that would reasonably be expected at a marina,” but emphasized such uses do not include a banquet functions.

The proposed chapel will maintain the footprint of the 7,788-square foot building that caught fire last year. Schematics for the structure show two floors in the back portion of the building, while the front is dominated by a cathedral ceiling and balconies overlooking a “sanctuary/fellowship hall.” Other rooms include a large kitchen, community room, “pastor’s office,” and four administrative offices. Included in the plans are four separate bathrooms on the first floor and two bathrooms in administrative offices on the second floor.

When asked by commissioners if the church would be taxable to East Hampton, Loos was noncommittal.

He said of the tax implications: “I don’t know how the commercial-versus-church works out.”

According to state statute, a “house of worship” operated by a “religious organization” may be exempted from local property taxes for the land on which it stands, its pews, furniture and equipment. Statute specifies the property cannot be “leased, rented or otherwise used” for other purposes in order to qualify for the exemption. It also states that only the portion of the building used for religious purposes may be absolved from the local property tax.



Renderings of the chapel proposed for 49 Oakum Dock Road by the owners of Saint Clements Castle and Marina were revealed at last week’s Planning and Zoning meeting. The original building, which was used for banquet functions despite a lack of proper permits and licenses, was heavily damaged in a fire last June.

Statute grants local tax assessors the authority to “determine what part, if any, of the property claimed to be exempt by the organization shall be in fact exempt and shall place a valuation upon all such property.”

Collector of Revenue Kristy Merrifield said this week that the Roncalli Institute paid \$22,684.76 in taxes this year for the property, which is identified on the assessor’s card as a commercial office/warehouse.

Building, planning and zoning department records show the structure had been permitted as a storage facility.

Despite its status as a warehouse, inspection documents from the local fire marshal’s office show the building has been inspected by Fire Marshal Richard Klotzbier since 2013 as an “assembly occupancy” with a maximum capacity of 295 guests.

The town in 2010 paid Doherty, doing business as Saint Clements Marina LLC, \$673,000 for an easement to use two wells on the site. The town also paid for the remediation of contaminated soil and building removal as part of plans for a public water system that has not yet come to fruition.

## East Hampton Zone Change Would Affect ‘Butt-Ugly’ Development

by Elizabeth Regan

It was standing-room-only at the Town Hall during last week’s Planning and Zoning Commission meeting as members heard public feedback on numerous applications, including a controversial zoning change that could affect the Hampton Woods housing development.

Fire Marshal Richard Klotzbier was on hand to instruct the commission to reduce the headcount in the meeting room.

“You need to have 10 people leave the building,” Klotzbier said.

Enough people temporarily vacated the room to allow the proceedings to begin. They returned after space opened up as various agenda items were ticked off the list.

Planning and Zoning Official Jeremy DeCarli said during the meeting he will make provisions for a venue change for future public hearings “if need be.”

He also responded to criticism about holding the meeting despite icy conditions that had closed many schools and public events that day. He said he had consulted with the interim police chief and had evaluated several weather reports before making the decision to proceed with the evening meeting.

Many of the audience members had come out in opposition to a zoning regulation change introduced by self-described “semi-developer” Harry Freeman as a way to revive what he called the “financially non-viable” Hampton Woods development.

Hampton Woods, which is made up of 63.21 acres on 206 East High St., was approved in 2010 to include up to 253 townhouses and single family homes. The zone requires 30 percent of the units to be deed restricted for buyers who make less than 80 percent of the statewide median income.

The affordability threshold is outlined in the state statute known as 8-30g, which was enacted in 1990. The statute was created to promote the long-term availability of housing that people who make less than 60 to 80 percent of the statewide median income can afford. Hous-

ing is deemed affordable when those buyers or renters are spending less than 30 percent of their income on the property.

He described the already approved affordable housing development as a lower quality project that doesn’t benefit the town of East Hampton.

Invoking another project he worked on in Hartford, which he had dubbed the “Butt-Ugly Building,” Freeman described the Hampton Woods development as “the Butt-Ugly Building South.”

Freeman said the development team, which includes local developers Steve and Lisa Motto, was brought in by the bank that owns the property in order to “come up with a financially-viable project.”

Freeman’s proposal calls for the addition of a “Diverse Housing Development” zone to the regulations. The zone would allow condominium associations of single family homes, townhouses and one-level “flats,” otherwise known as apartments. Each building containing “flats” is limited to no more than three stories tall and 18 units.

According to Freeman, the proposal would allow the bank to recover some of its losses by eliminating the affordable housing component and adding the one-level “flats,” which he said are popular among retirees looking for single-level living.

With up to six units per acre, the proposed zone would require at least 20 percent of the development be dedicated as open space.

Hampton Woods is already approved for single-family homes and townhouses.

When asked this week by the *Rivereast* how many units the Hampton Woods developers could potentially build under the terms of the proposed zone, DeCarli estimated up to 267 units. The calculation subtracts steep slopes and wetlands from the total lot size.

Hampton Woods is currently part of the Housing Opportunity Development zone, which allows five units per acre and requires at least 15 percent of each development be reserved as open space. However, Hampton Woods devel-

opers were able to increase the ratio to six units per acre through court intervention under the state’s affordable housing statute back in 2010.

DeCarli said 36.7 percent of the development is currently set aside as open space in the approved development.

Properties already in the Housing Opportunity Development Zone, the Village Center Zone or the Design District Zone – which is situated on Route 66 near Lake Pocotopaug and was established to promote commercial and light industrial projects – would be eligible to apply for the new zone, according to the proposal.

The proposal is open to properties with more than 10 acres and less than 200 acres.

DeCarli showed commissioners and members of the audience a map indicating five properties that fit the eligibility criteria, including 37 South Main St. The as-yet-unbuilt Belltown Place development consists of 20.16 acres approved for 127 units under the affordable housing statute. The approval expires next June.

The proposed Diverse Housing Development zone also would eliminate the requirement that “affordable” units be deed restricted.

“The big fear is the affordable housing project: the low rent apartments and those kind of concepts,” Freeman said. “This regulation is actually the inverse of that. It prevents that from happening. Instead of having an 8-30g project forced upon the town, it’s actually removing – or has the potential to remove – the thing you fear the most.”

“Right now I could go out and build 253 units I can guarantee you wouldn’t like,” he said of the existing zone. “What we’re trying to do is be able to build something that people will be proud to live in.”

### The 10-Percent Threshold

If less than 10 percent of a town’s housing stock is deemed affordable according to state statute, a municipality is held to more stringent standards when it chooses to deny a developer who comes in with an affordable housing pro-

posal.

The statute puts the onus on planning and zoning commissions to explain to the court why they denied an affordable housing development. In order to win a case, the commission has to prove the benefits of offering affordable housing are outweighed by threats to public health or safety.

Critics say the statute makes it possible for developers to build a high number of apartments for which they would not otherwise get approval.

According to the state Department of Housing, 3.21 percent of East Hampton’s housing stock was considered affordable in 2016.

Mark Philhower, a current councilor and former Planning and Zoning Chairman who said he was speaking as a taxpayer, stood up during the public hearing to say the proposed zone would not help the town reach the 10-percent threshold that allows the Planning and Zoning Commission to remove itself from 8-30g oversight.

He emphasized the Hampton Woods development’s current zone includes affordable units that will push the town closer to the state-mandated affordable housing goals.

“That’s the only reason anyone wants to get to ten percent. When [developers] come in and say ‘we want to build six units per acre,’ we can say ‘no, sorry, we’re at ten, see you later,’” Philhower said.

Resident Judy Isele reiterated Philhower’s concern. She added that a hypothetical 30 acre property zoned in accordance with the proposal could result in almost 200 housing units that burden town services and take away from the commercial tax base.

“We’re taking commercial and light industrial use space and converting it to residential by implementing this...which concerns me as a taxpayer,” she said. “We want to have more commercial base, we don’t want to add more tax burden to our individual taxpayers, our schools, our police services and all that.”

# State Grants Result in Andover School Budget Surplus

by Sloan Brewster

The school district has received a grant to do some security updates.

The district will get back a percentage of its costs on security related projects, Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen said.

“We haven’t decided yet what we will be using those funds for,” she said. “We are very excited about it.”

Per a press release from the office of Gov. Dannel P. Malloy, the reimbursement grant covers \$47,213.57 while the town matches \$30,555.44 of the project cost.

The grant is part of a round of grants totaling \$10 million to enhance security infrastructure at 182 public schools in 51 towns. The funds were approved in 2013 under the School Security Grant Program and part of a legislative package, signed by Malloy, focusing on gun violence prevention, mental health and secu-

city issues.

Due to all the grants, Doyen said there would be about \$100,000 in surplus funds from this year’s budget.

Despite this year’s surplus, Doyen advised the board that, based on the state’s Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) law for schools, there is only so much wiggle room remaining in next year’s proposed budget.

The MBR penalizes districts that budget less for education than they did the previous year, with limited exceptions.

“As of right now, with our proposal with next year’s budget we still have about \$40,000 that we could cut out of next year’s budget to meet the MBR; however, we really could not go below that,” she said.

Last month, Doyen proposed an approximately \$4.20 million budget proposal that is

approximately 2 percent less than last year’s \$4.27 million budget, she said. The reduction reflects the anticipated \$58,000 in ECS cuts from the state this year and \$22,000 more in expected ECS cuts for next year.

Doyen said she had asked Town Administrator if there were any Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds available to cover a water tank that needs replacing in the district.

“Because we are an emergency center site (I asked) if there may be money from FEMA,” she said. “I talked to [Town Administrator Joe Higgins] and he said no.”

A few repair companies have come out and looked at the leaking tank to recommend possible fixes, Doyen said.

The water tank is one of many building projects that had been slated for completion over

the past couple of years, including outside weather sealing work and interior repairs to classroom cabinets and built-in storage cabinets, Doyen said.

Other necessary fixes she discussed included replacing copy machines, doing some work on the gym floor, and repointing some bricks on the exterior of the Andover Elementary School building.

The district also needs to do some pest and weed control after an infestation of ticks last year. “So these are things that we could go ahead [with] this year,” she said.

Doyen said she would like to discuss at the next meeting which project should be included in the budget.

The board will also discuss replacing broken bleachers in the gym at Andover Elementary School.

## Numerous Minor Crashes in Andover Caused by Ice

by Sloan Brewster

The roads were a sheet of ice during Wednesday’s morning commute, with multiple minor car accidents, according to fire officials.

Andover Fire Chief Ron Mike said the department responded to a crash involving “four or five” cars at the intersection of Routes 6

and 87 at about 6 a.m. Wednesday.

There were no injuries in the crash, which was the result of extreme ice conditions, Mike said. It was a scene that repeated many times throughout the morning.

“They were piled up from Andover all the way down to Columbia,” he said. “All minor fender benders.”

From the Editor’s Desk

## Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

The Donald is at it again.

While it almost certainly will undergo some wholesale changes once Congress and the Senate take a whack at it, President Trump’s 2018-19 budget proposal was released Monday – and in it he proudly shows off that, when it comes down to it, he really doesn’t give a damn about your healthcare.

Not only does the proposal contain yet another attempt to repeal Obamacare, it also calls for slashing funding to Medicare by \$237 billion. You might remember Medicare; it was that thing Trump promised on the campaign trail he wouldn’t cut.

He also promised he wouldn’t cut Medicaid and – woops, looks like Trump fooled us again! The budget would roll back Obamacare’s expansion of Medicaid benefits to poor adults.

Oh, and speaking of the poor – yeah, Trump’s budget proposal treats them pretty badly. The president calls for cutting food stamps by \$213 billion, or about 30 percent, over 10 years. Funding for Section Eight housing would be cut by 20 percent. He’d end the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which in Connecticut alone helps nearly 110,000 low-income families pay their winter heating bills, according to *CT News Junkie*.

The Department of Health and Human Services – which describes itself as the agency that “protects the health of all Americans and provides essential human services, especially for those least able to help themselves” – would lose 20.3 percent of its budget. The Department of Education would also be cut by 10 percent.

As the *New York Times* succinctly put it in an editorial Monday, “If Congress adopted Mr. Trump’s proposal, millions of people would stand to lose health insurance, subsidized food, low-cost housing and other benefits. The result would be to greatly increase poverty and hunger in America.”

I highly doubt this is what a big chunk of Trump’s supporters were expecting when they cast ballots for him in 2016. Look, I freely admit one of the reasons Hillary Clinton lost the election was she, and the Democratic Party as a whole, didn’t pay enough attention to the working class, the blue-collar folks struggling to get by. Trump didn’t ignore them; he promised their jobs would magically return, and he also promised to not touch Medicare or Medicaid.

Trump repeated it time and time again during his campaign: He was the candidate for the little man. Well, now Trump is president, and it turns out the little man can go pound sand.

Look, I know presidents breaking campaign promises is not exactly a new concept. But this isn’t Obama not closing Guantanamo Bay, or George H. W. Bush implementing a new tax after all. This is taking billions away from millions of people, the types of people who need it most – and the types of people who got Trump elected. It’s incredibly cruel.

Other lowlights of Trump’s budget proposal? There’s a 33.7 percent cut to the EPA; a 26.9 percent cut to the State Department; a 29.5 percent cut to the National Science Foundation; a 22.2 percent cut to the Army Corps of Engineers, an infrastructure program; and a 21.4 percent cut to the Labor Department.

Of course, not everything is seeing cuts in Trump’s budget proposal. Big shocker: military spending would go up 14.1 percent.

All in all, it’s a terrible budget proposal. And even if it gets altered along the way to Congressional approval, it won’t change the fact that we’ve seen what Trump’s intentions are – and they’re not good.

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From the same site where I came across those exchanges from *Hollywood Squares* last week, here are some one-liner gems from the late, brilliant Groucho Marx:

“You know, you haven’t stopped talking since I came here; you must have been vaccinated with a phonograph needle.”

“I worked myself up from nothing to a state of extreme poverty.”

“Politics doesn’t make strange bedfellows; marriage does.”

“I didn’t like the play, but then I saw it under adverse conditions – the curtain was up.”

“I’m not crazy about reality, but it’s still the only place to get a decent meal.”

“My favorite poem is the one that starts ‘Thirty days hath September,’ because it actually tells you something.”

“A black cat crossing your path signifies that the animal is going somewhere.”

“If you’ve heard this story before, don’t stop me, because I’d like to hear it again.”

“Home is where you hang your head.”

“Next time I see you, remind me not to talk to you.”

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See you next week.

## East Hampton Police News

1/28: Jacqueline A. Gambardella, 19, of 192 N. Airline Rd., Wallingford was arrested and charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, East Hampton Police said.

2/1: Kenneth Ayotte, 49, of 86 Langdon Ct., Berlin, was arrested and charged with driving under the influence, police said.

2/1: David Leonard Rowland, 47, of 481 East St., Hebron was taken into custody pursuant to a warrant for his arrest in connection with a single-car motor vehicle accident that had occurred Jan. 2 in the area of 10 Lakeview St., police said. Rowland was charged with operating under the influence, traveling too fast for conditions and assault on a police officer, police said.

2/2: Paul Distefano, 55, of 64 W. High St., was issued a summons for sixth-degree larceny (shoplifting), police said.

2/2: A 17-year-old juvenile was arrested and charged with risk of injury to a minor and fourth-degree sexual assault, police said.

2/6: Maria Johnson, 54, of 9 Wopowog Rd., was issued a summons for operating an unregistered motor vehicle, operating a motor vehicle without insurance and non-compliance with emissions standards, police said.

Also, from Jan. 29-Feb. 4, officers responded to 30 medical calls, seven motor vehicle crashes and eight alarms, and made 11 traffic stops.

## Man, Wife Each Charged with DUI in Colchester

by Julianna Roche

Following a crash in Colchester last month, a local woman was charged with DUI – as was her husband when he showed up at police headquarters to pick her up.

An East Hampton man was left with minor injuries after his car was struck by a drunk driver at approximately 11:36 p.m. on Sunday night, Jan. 14, police said.

According to police, shortly after 11:30 p.m. Jan. 14, Timothy M. Bellemare, 39, of 56 Spice Hill Dr., East Hampton, was driving a Honda Pilot EX heading westbound on Route 16 when he was hit by a Mazda 3 heading northbound on Cabin Road, being driven by Susan A. Budnick, 51, of 30 Harvest Ln.

After colliding with Budnick, police said, Bellemare’s car subsequently collided with a utility pole and overturned. He was trans-

ported by Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Department to Marlborough Clinic for suspected minor injuries.

Budnick was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol, operating an unregistered vehicle and a stop sign violation, according to police.

Shortly before 2 a.m. the next day, Budnick’s husband, Steven Budnick, 52, showed up at state police Troop K headquarters to pay his wife’s bail – and was also arrested.

According to police, Steven Budnick failed standardized field sobriety tests and was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol and operating a motor vehicle without a license.

## Man Charged in Marlborough with Coercion

by Julianna Roche

A 22-year-old North Carolina man was charged with illegal dissemination of an intimate image and coercion after posting a sexually-explicit video of a 17-year-old juvenile female from Marlborough on a pornography website, according to police.

State Police said Xavier U. Slade, 22, of 3143 Falling Rock Ct., Charlotte, N.C., was arrested and charged on Wednesday, Feb. 7, following a nearly yearlong investigation during which police uncovered that the suspect had allegedly posted a video of the female engaging in sexually explicit acts on the porn website Pornhub without her permission.

According to the affidavit, the alleged victim and Slade met via the dating application “MeetMe” and began talking via Skype and iMessenger in fall 2016.

Police said the 17-year-old claimed that Slade then began asking her to send him nude photos; however, after repeatedly refusing to do so, Slade sent her photos of a Smith & Western pistol threatening to kill himself if she did not oblige.

According to the affidavit, the 17-year-old contacted the website to have the video taken down and subsequently reported the incident to police in March 2017.

## Portland Police News

2/9: Gabriel Torres, 29, of 96 Union Ave., Bridgeport, was charged with first-degree threatening and second-degree breach of peace, Portland Police said.

2/11: Ruth Shea, 44, of 67 Hopewell Hgts., South Glastonbury, was charged with driving under the influence, failure to submit to chemical test, failure to drive in established lane and failure to renew license, police said.

## Marlborough Police News

2/8: State Police said Dylan G. Kermod, 25, of 51 Sashel Ln., was arrested and charged with third-degree larceny.

## Obituaries

### Cobalt

#### Raymond L. Markham Jr.

Raymond L. Markham Jr., 90, formerly of Warwick, R.I., died Monday, Feb. 5, in Cobalt, where he resided for many years.

He is survived by his wife, Charlotte Crocker Markham; a son, Richard and wife Sara; two beloved granddaughters, Katherine and Emily; brothers, Robert and William; sisters, Dorothy Green and Shirley Marsland and their families.

Raymond graduated from Lockwood High School in 1945. He served in the Army in Japan during the Korean Conflict. Later, he studied for several years at Harvard University. With the advent of the computer revolution, Ray became one of the first programmers in the Hartford insurance industry, a position he held until retirement.

Raymond chose to become an anatomical donor to the Yale School of Medicine. As was his intent, all observations of his passing will be private.

### Uncasville

#### Peter D. Quinn Sr.

Peter David Quinn Sr., 72, of Uncasville, died Tuesday, Feb. 6, at Middlesex Hospital. He was born in Meriden, the son of the late Howard F. and Frances (O'Connor) Quinn.

Prior to his retirement, Pete was a draftsman with Electric Boat and most recently Pratt & Whitney Aircraft. He was an avid NASCAR fan and will always be remembered as a jack of all trades. Pete will be greatly missed by his family and friends.

He is survived by his son, Peter D. Quinn Jr. of Portland; daughters, Catherine Quinn of East Hartford and Johanna Quinn of Niantic; sisters, Johanna Spencer of Norwich and Rosemary Mysatyukow of Meriden; grandchildren, Tyler Anderson, Thomas Quinn and Alexis Yarlott; several nieces and nephews; former wife and long-time friend, Mary-Ellen Quinn of Middletown.

He was predeceased by a sister, Patricia Quinn. Friends called at Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown, Monday, Feb. 12. Burial will be at the convenience of the family.

Those who wish may send memorial contributions to American Cancer Society or The Epilepsy Foundation of Connecticut.

To share memories or express condolences online, visit [biegafuneralhome.com](http://biegafuneralhome.com).

### Marlborough

#### Martha Dell Higgins

Martha Dell (Johnson) Higgins, beloved mother, grandmother, sister, aunt and friend, peacefully passed away Sunday, Feb. 11, at Marlborough Health Care Center.

Martha was predeceased by her husband, Martin M. Higgins Jr.; her sister, Helen; and brothers Charles and Donald.

Martha is survived by her children, Kathleen Berube (David) of Suffield, Christine Murphy (Michael) of Glastonbury, Jon-Ann Higgins (Michael Moran) of Glastonbury and Michael Higgins (Nita Sembrowich) of Cambridge, Mass.; and her cherished grandchildren, Claire Berube Sears (Bryan), Ellen, and Ned Berube; Sam, Liam, and Jack Murphy; Ruth and Josh Moran. Martha will be deeply missed by her sister, Ruth Turner of Florence, S.C., and many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Martha had a long career as an RN, including many years at Hartford Hospital and, in the summer, camp nurse at Camp Abnaki and Winona Camps for Boys. A longtime resident of Glastonbury, Martha Dell was born and raised in Manning, S.C., and held fast to her Southern roots. She took pride in cooking delicious Sunday dinners for her family and friends. Martha cheered for the Boston Red Sox and UConn women's basketball. She also enjoyed birdwatching, listening to big band music, walking the wide Carolina beaches and a good novel.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that gifts made in her memory be directed to the Maine Community Foundation, 245 Main St., Ellsworth, ME 04605. Please include notice to direct the donation to Winona Campership Fund. These tax-deductible funds will continue Martha's tremendous legacy at Winona for boys who could not otherwise experience camp. For more information, please contact Winona Camps at 207-647-3721.

A celebration of Martha Dell's life will be held Sunday, Feb. 18, from 2-4 p.m., at the Village at Minnechaug Clubhouse, 17 Fairway Crossing, Glastonbury. A memorial service will be held in South Carolina at a later date.

### Portland

#### Evelyn Mergel

Evelyn (Parker) Mergel, 85, of Portland, wife of the late Rudolph H. Mergel Jr., died Friday, Feb. 9, at Wadsworth Glen Health Care, Middletown.

She was born in Stewartstown, N.H., the daughter of the late Maurice and Irene (Cordwell) Parker. Prior to her retirement, Evelyn was a cafeteria employee with the Portland Schools and later an aide at Portland Health Care.

She is survived by her son, Wayne Mergel and his wife Beverly of Portland; and her daughters, Rosemarie Gagnon and her husband Norman of Vero Beach, Fla., and Heidi Colwell and her husband Cliff of Durham; sister, Ann Dineen of Massachusetts; five grandchildren, Nathan(Lisa), Michael(Sara), Brian, Justin(Gina) and Shawn; 15 great-grandchildren, Aaron, Jalen, Cheyanne, Brian II, Nathan Jr., Shawn Jr., Lindsey, Tyler, Miranda, Justin Jr., Raven, Wyatt, Mason, Amelia and Austin; sister-in-law, Elaine Ehrhardt of East Hampton, also several nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by her infant daughter, Phyllis Mergel; sister, Johanna Berkowicz; grandchildren, Sherry and Wayne Mergel.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, Feb. 24, at 10 a.m., at Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown. Burial will be in the State Veterans' Cemetery, Middletown. Friends may call at Biega Funeral Home on Saturday from 9 to 10 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Portland Fire Department or a charity of the donor's choice.

To share memories or express condolences online, visit [biegafuneralhome.com](http://biegafuneralhome.com).

### Hebron

#### Darren M. Scaramella

Darren M. Scaramella, 42, of South Windsor, beloved husband of Whitney (Peterson) Scaramella, died unexpectedly Friday, Feb. 9, at Yale New Haven Hospital. He was born Jan. 23, 1976, in Manchester, the son of Vincent and Leslie (Sheridan) Scaramella.

Darren grew up in Hebron and was a graduate of East Catholic High School with the Class of 1994. He went on to graduate from Bryant College in 1998. Darren was married to the love of his life, Whitney Peterson, Nov. 25, 2000, and they started their life together in South Windsor. Darren worked as an IT solutions architect for Pratt & Whitney, Dimension Data and NWN.

Darren had a wonderful sense of humor. He enjoyed skiing, running, and biking. Darren was a loving, caring, and devoted father to his children. In recent years he became a very spiritual person, which was important to him both for himself and for helping others.

Along with his parents, Vincent and Leslie Scaramella of Old Saybrook, and his wife, Whitney Scaramella of South Windsor, he leaves his children, Jace, Jadon, Skyler, Ryder, Sawyer, Madden, Cannon, Boden, and Tallon; his sister, Tracy Walker and her family in Belchertown, Mass.; and his mother-in-law, Geraldine Peterson of Manchester.

His family will receive friends today, Feb. 16, from 5-8 p.m., at the Samsel & Carmon Funeral Home, 419 Buckland Rd., South Windsor. A memorial service will be held Saturday, Feb. 17, at 10 a.m., at the funeral home. Burial will follow at Wapping Cemetery in South Windsor.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to help support his family at [gofundme.com/scaramella-family-memorial-fund](http://gofundme.com/scaramella-family-memorial-fund).

### Colchester

#### Maria E. Maryeski

Maria E. Maryeski, 63, passed away Friday, Feb. 9. She was born Aug. 13, 1954, in Ponce, Puerto Rico.

Maria worked as a procedure writer for Dominion Millstone for over 30 years. Her friends and family were her greatest loves in life.

Services and burial in Cedar Grove Cemetery are private.

Byles Memorial Home, 99 Huntington St., New London, is assisting with the arrangements.

### Portland

#### Linda Thorburn Gorin

Linda Thorburn Gorin, 81, of Portland and Haddam, died peacefully the morning of Tuesday, Feb. 6, surrounded by her family. She was married for more than 50 years to Dr. Malcolm Gorin, who passed away in 2015.

She was adored and will be dearly missed by her children: son Daniel and his wife Lisa, of East Falmouth, Mass., son Stephen and his wife Margo (deceased) of Golden, Colo., and daughter Janet Gorin Pierce and her husband John of Stratham, N.H. Her six grandchildren – Ali, Drew and Josh Gorin and Chris, Emily and Meghan Pierce – were the light of her life. She will also be dearly missed by her sisters-in-law Sarah Thorburn and Phyllis Epstein, as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

Linda was born in Hanover, N.H., March 19, 1937, to Milton and Hazel Morrison Thorburn, and spent her early years growing up in Norwich, Vt. She is preceded in death by her parents, her stepmother Esther Barnes Thorburn and her brother Dr. Neil Thorburn.

She was part of the first coed class at the University of Rochester, completing an honors program in English and graduating Phi Beta Kappa in 1959. While there she met Malcolm, a medical student, and they were married in 1960. Shortly thereafter, they moved to Charlottesville, Va. Linda taught history and English to seventh- and eighth-grade students, becoming a full-time mother after the birth of her children. She lived in Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, Md., before settling in the Middletown area in 1966. After raising three children, Linda found a second career when she became the co-manager of the Middlesex Eye Physicians Optical Department.

Linda was a tireless contributor to the community in which she lived. A strong advocate for public education, she served on the Haddam Board of Education, where she was eventually elected chairperson. She was a member of the Democratic Town Committee in Haddam, and served as the secretary for many years. She was an integral part of the Middlesex County Medical Association Alliance, with leadership roles including president and scholarship chairperson. She was also active in fundraising and bloodmobile drives. Closer to home, she was a member of her neighborhood associations: The Meeting House Association in Haddam and the Bartlett Hill Association in Portland.

Linda was a citizen of the world, and traveled extensively throughout her life. She and Malcolm were constantly planning adventures; sailing, rafting, horseback-riding, canoeing and hiking, as well as exploring cities on almost every continent. She grew up spending summers on Lake Winnepesaukee in cabins built by her father and grandfather. There she developed a lifelong love of the water, returning to the lake with her family. She spent extensive time on Cape Cod, the Florida Keys, and boating both in New England and the Caribbean. She loved the theater and was an avid reader. She was a longstanding member of her book club which has been together for almost 40 years.

Most importantly, Linda was intensely devoted to her friends and family. She leaves behind an almost endless list of people who were touched by her quiet warmth and generosity.

A memorial service was held at the Memorial Chapel at Wesleyan University, 221 High St., Middletown, Saturday, Feb. 10. A reception followed at the Russell House, 350 High Street, Middletown.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in her name to: The Sari A. Rosenbaum Fund for Women and Girls, c/o The Community Foundation of Middlesex County, 49 Main St., Middletown, CT 06457, 860-347-0025, [info@middlesexcountycf.org](mailto:info@middlesexcountycf.org), or Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, 345 Whitney Ave., New Haven, CT 06511, 203-865-5158.



### Portland

#### Salvatore Maggioro

Salvatore Maggioro, 83, of Portland, passed away Sunday, Feb. 11, at Middlesex Hospital. Born Dec. 19, 1934, he was born in Middletown and spent most of his life in Portland where he was known as "Peewee" Maggioro by his classmates.

At 18, Sal enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and was stationed in England and Germany during the Korean War. He was a purchasing agent first for Raymond Engineering and then worked for Bidwell Industrial Group for many years until he just recently retired.

Sal was an avid fan of the New York Yankees and UConn basketball. He enjoyed golfing, bowling, vacationing, restaurants, and watching his grandsons play baseball.

Sal was predeceased by his beloved wife Joyce in 2016, and his son John in 2007. He leaves behind his daughter, Jill Albert; son-in-law, Rob Albert; and his grandsons, Jeffrey and Brendan, who were his pride and joy. All are from Portland.

Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 17, at St. Mary Church in Portland, with burial at St. Sebastian's Cemetery in Middlefield. Calling hours are today, Feb. 16, from 5-7 p.m., at D'Angelo's Funeral Home in Middletown.

### Portland

#### Josephine Elizabeth Amenta

Josephine Elizabeth Amenta of Old Saybrook, formerly of Portland, died Sunday, Feb. 11. She was the widow of Louis Amenta. Josephine was born Aug. 19, 1925, in Middletown, the daughter of Salvatore Russo and Concentina DePaulo Russo.

Throughout her life, Josephine loved doing handcrafts, quilting, knitting, and sewing. She enjoyed tending to her flower garden. Josephine had a great sense of humor and loved to smile and laugh. She will be greatly missed by family and friends.

Josephine was employed at Elmcrest Hospital, later St. Francis Care Behavioral Health in Portland as an environmental services associate where she worked until retirement.

Josephine is survived by her daughter, Bonita Amenta of Old Saybrook; her son, Louis Amenta and his wife Janet of Middletown; her brother, Eugene Russo of Portland; grandchildren Amy and Alison; and great grandchildren Nikko, Kaiya, Nate and Henry; nieces and nephews.

In addition to her husband, she was predeceased by her brothers, Sebastian and Vincent Russo.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held today, Feb. 16, at 11 a.m., at St. John Church, 161 Main St., Old Saybrook. There are no calling hours. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Alzheimer's Association (Connecticut Chapter).

To sign the online guestbook, visit [swanfuneralhomeoldsaybrook.com](http://swanfuneralhomeoldsaybrook.com).

### Portland

#### Dean Randazzo

Dean Randazzo, 44, of Portland, passed away unexpectedly the morning of Thursday, Feb. 1.

Dean is survived by his mother, Rita Randazzo of Portland; his father, Paul Randazzo and stepmother Judith Randazzo of Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Dean's legacy will live on through his treasured children, Meghan and Kyle Randazzo.

Dean will be missed dearly by his sisters, Lisa Randazzo, Gina Randazzo, and Jill Hayes, and his brother Jeffrey Roy. Dean's nieces and nephews Damon, Whitney, Ashley, Brandon, Danny, Sarah, Ally, Katie, Tyler, Hailey, Aiden, and great nephew Logan will miss their one-of-a-kind Uncle Dean. Dean married the love of his life, the late Kelly Norton Randazzo, in 1998.

He enjoyed fishing, spending time with family and friends, woodworking, and was a very talented painter. Those who knew Dean well knew that he had a loving soul and could appreciate his humor, even if it was at their own expense. Not a day will go by that we won't miss his funny jokes and the joy he could bring to any room. Ca Caw!

Calling hours will be held Tuesday, Feb. 20, at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, from 5-7 p.m. A service will begin at 6:30 p.m. Burial will be private.

