

RIVEREAST

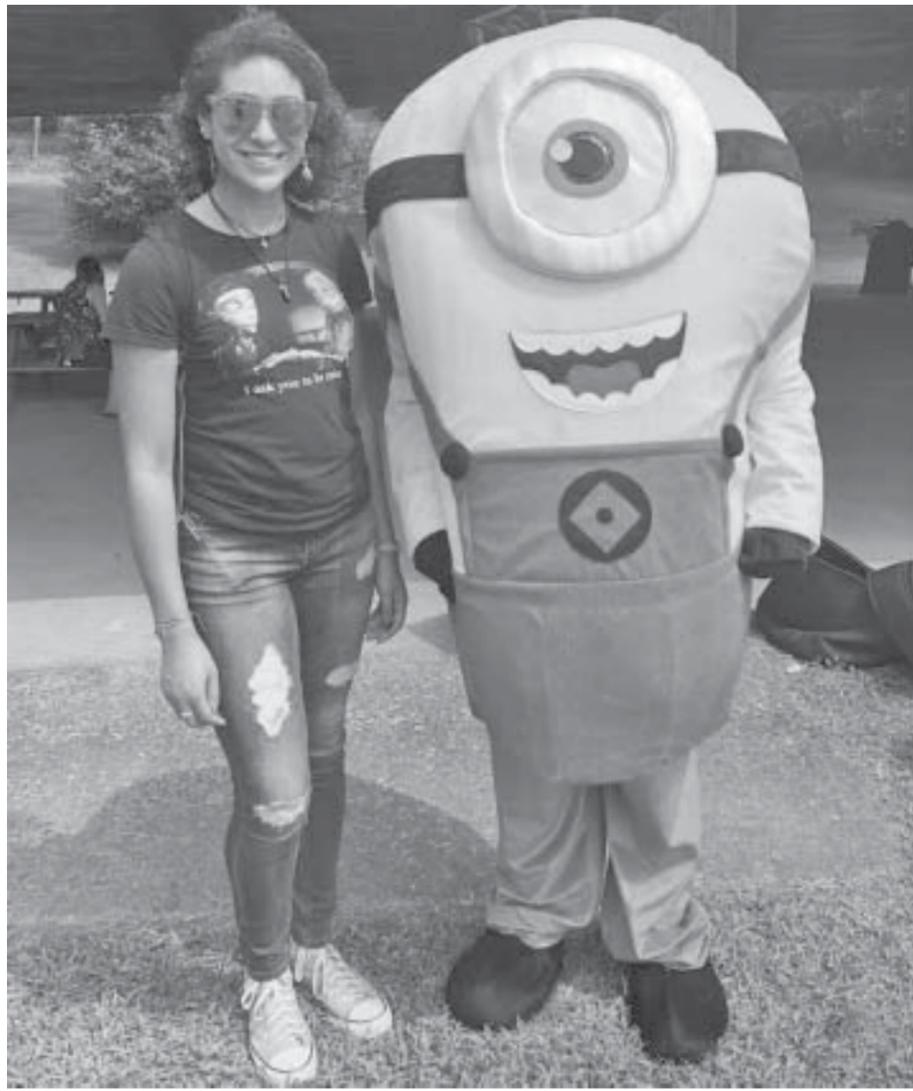
News Bulletin

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

Volume 42, Number 47

Published by The Glastonbury Citizen

August 31, 2018



Me and My Minion... Taylor Gallagher and Morgan Gallagher (dressed as a Minion, from the *Despicable Me* movie franchise), both of Glastonbury-based TeachArt2Me, were all smiles at the annual Marlborough Day last Sunday. See story on page 25.

How to Save A Dog's Life

by Elizabeth Regan

Rocky should not have to die.

That was the consensus reached at a preliminary meeting last week called by Portland First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield to discuss alternatives to a kill order issued in 2016 for the 90-pound pitbull mix.

"The agreement is, we don't want to dispose of the dog," Bransfield said this week.

The canine at the center of the controversial, years-long case was represented at the meeting by his owner, Paul Bell, and attorney Thom Page. A self-described civil rights attorney for animals, Page is currently representing several other prominent Connecticut canine death row cases.

Also present at the meeting were Town Attorney Kari Olson of Murtha Cullina, Animal Control Officer Karen Perruccio and Selectman Michael Pelton.

The February 2016 kill order was issued by Perruccio based on the severity of the attack, according to legal documents. Perruccio told the *Rivereast* earlier this year she felt "a lot of pressure" from town legal counsel and Bransfield to issue a disposal order instead of a restraint order that could have allowed Rocky to return home with certain protections in place.

Bransfield declined to go into specifics about any of the options currently on the table to save the dog's life. She said it is now up to Page and Bell to come up with a proposal that balances public safety and property rights.

Bell told the *Rivereast* this week he is in favor of a proposal that would allow Rocky to live with a professional dog trainer until issues related to the dog's territorial nature are addressed. Then Rocky would be allowed to return to Bell's home with as-yet-unspecified precautions in place, he said.

Bell said he immediately rejected an offer by the town to release the dog with the caveat that he cannot remain in Portland.

"I was like, that's not acceptable," Bell said.

Bell said he is in the process of speaking with several nearby dog training facilities to see what they can offer.

The case has garnered the attention of a devoted group of animal advocates who have been attending local Board of Selectmen meetings for the past several months to call for Rocky's release.

Rocky has been held at the pound for two and a half years stemming from a 2016 bite incident while Bell appeals the dog's death sentence in the New Britain Superior Court. According to legal documents, resident Stephen Demarest was transported to Middlesex Hospital for wounds to his left ankle, inner leg and upper thigh after he was attacked across the street from Bell's Old Marlborough Turnpike home. Demarest said the dog was unattended and unleashed at the time of the attack.

While Bransfield would not confirm or deny any of the alternatives that are being discussed for Rocky's release, she cited a case in Waterbury where officials are considering revoking a kill order based on a qualified animal behaviorist's review and recommendations for placement.

Bransfield cautioned Bell was "jumping to conclusions" by stating Rocky would necessarily be returned to him after spending time with a trainer.

"Consideration has to be given to the victim of the biting, of the attack," she said.

Demarest this week said his main concern revolves around Bell's fitness as a responsible

See A Dog's Life page 2

Almost Time for Hebron Harvest Fair

by Sloan Brewster

The Hebron Harvest Fair is nearly 50 years old – but that doesn't mean organizers have run out of new features to introduce.

From a floating boat greeting fairgoers to a first-ever roller coaster, there will be a spate of new offerings at the 48th annual Hebron Harvest Fair, which is hosted by the Hebron Lions Agricultural Society and takes place Sept. 6-9 at the Lions Fairgrounds on Route 85.

At the fairgrounds earlier this week, fair superintendent Michael Tarbell expanded on some of the sights people can expect to see at this year's event.

For starters – literally and figuratively – the pond at the entrance will be graced by a boat from Petzold's Marine Center of Portland. Representatives from the store, which sells a variety of different sizes and types of boats, will be on hand to talk about boating and sell boats, Tarbell said.

To prepare for the arrival of the boat, the Lions cleaned up the pond, installed a dock and,

when the *Rivereast* stopped by on Tuesday, were planning to put up guardrails, Tarbell said.

In addition, Devon Garner, Lions Club member, was planning to get in the water to install special lighting. His only concern was that he may encounter one of the pond's inhabitants, which he saw while fishing there with his son the day before.

"The problem is we've got like a 25-pound snapping turtle in there," he said while discussing his plans to go in the water to put in the lights.

A big newbie to the fun this year will be a 150-foot roller coaster that will be up and running for brave-hearted fairgoers to take for a whirl, Tarbell said. Getting the fair's amusement provider – Reithoffer Shows Inc. – to bring the roller coaster was no easy task, as the Florida-based company has a number of fair commitments.

"[It took] persistence," he said. "It's saying, 'I want a roller coaster, I want a roller coaster.'"

See Hebron Harvest Fair page 2



Workers from Durants Party Rentals in Danbury hammer supports in the ground for a tent for the upcoming Hebron Harvest Fair, which takes place Sept. 6 through 9.

A Dog's Life cont. from Front Page

pet owner.

He cited an incident that occurred the day after the attack during which a man walking on Old Marlborough Turnpike contacted the Portland Animal Control department to report that Rocky ran down the driveway of Bell's home and began to attack a bag the man was carrying.

Bell has said he was letting the dog outside before leaving to put him in quarantine. He briefly considered putting Rocky on a leash, but decided it wasn't necessary for the quick trip to the backyard.

Rocky "went to the bathroom, but then he looked over and saw another person down at the bottom of the driveway and started running toward him," Bell recounted earlier this year.

Demarest described the situation as an example of Bell's negligence.

"I could see where people would say 'It's not the dog's fault, it's the owner's fault.' And I tend to agree with that," Demarest said.

He questioned how effectively Bell would put into place any training methods and precautions required by a behaviorist.

"I hope he would take it seriously, but in the past he has not," Demarest said.

He emphasized the decision to issue a kill order was made by the town.

"I had nothing to do with that," Demarest said.

Demarest referred to symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder that prevent him from walking near Bell's house any longer. Instead, he and his wife use local tracks for exercise.

"Our lives have really changed," he said.

Bell has said his insurance company settled a lawsuit filed by Demarest and his wife for \$275,000.

Need for Reform

The first selectwoman cautioned it is ultimately up to the full Board of Selectmen to approve or reject any proposal from Page and Bell.

Bransfield said she is hopeful a settlement will be reached before Bell's case – which is a response to the state Department of Agriculture's decision to uphold the town's kill order – goes to trial. The state Judicial Branch website shows a pre-trial conference is sched-

uled for Oct. 1.

Meanwhile, she said she is devoting herself to reform of the state's bite laws, which she described as outdated and vague.

"I think we all agree, including the Department of Agriculture, that it's just too long a process and there needs to be a better review of existing laws," she said.

While a bill raised by state Rep. Christie Carpino (R-32) in the last legislative session would have established a working group to address weaknesses in current dog-related statutes did not become law, Bransfield said the state agriculture department decided to create its own task force.

State agriculture department spokesman Nathan Wilson said this week the Domestic Animal Control Working Group was created by the agency to recommend public policy changes regarding domestic animal restraint and disposal orders "while considering a fair and just process between the public, municipalities, dog owners and animal control officers."

The agriculture department invited Bransfield and Waterbury Mayor Neil O'Leary as well as members of the municipal police and animal control communities across the state, Wilson said. The group includes the head of the agriculture department's regulatory division, Bruce Sherman, and representatives from the Connecticut Humane Society, Our Companions Animal Rescue and Colchester Veterinary Hospital. Plainfield resident Lynne Denning, a cousin of Bransfield and the victim of a 2014 mauling by multiple Rottweilers, was also invited to be part of the working group, according to Wilson.

Many of the complaints with existing law revolve around the authority of animal control officers to order a dog to be killed in the aftermath of an attack and the length of time it takes dog owners to appeal the decision through the state.

"We're bringing all these groups together," Wilson said. "It's municipalities, it's dog bite victims, dog advocates. We're trying to work together on speeding up the process."

Critics of the failed bill have argued the measure was aimed at killing dogs more quickly instead of preventing attacks.



A boat from Petzold's Marine Center of Portland will be floating in the pond at the entrance to the Hebron Harvest Fair this year. Representatives from the store, which sells a variety of different sizes and types of boats, will be on hand to talk about boating and sell boats during the four day affair, which takes place Sept. 6 through 9.

Hebron Harvest Fair cont. from Front Page

This year there will also be additional rides from Nevada-based Dreamland Amusements.

There's a yearly push to make improvements to the more than 100-acre fairgrounds, according to Tarbell. For the past couple years, the Lions have been working on the barns, including installing new doors. They also put a roof on a portion of the arts and crafts building where there had been a leak, have made infrastructure changes for vendors and are bringing in more tents this year so folks can get out of the sun.

The Lions also make an effort to continuously bring new vendors to the annual affair.

"Particularly in the last five years we've been trying to expand on our vendor list, provide something different than other fairs do," Tarbell said.

This year that will include Scuba Shack, the Rocky Hill-based diving instruction center, which, according to Tarbell, is hoping to attract folks to scuba diving.

"My goal has been to provide a diverse clientele," Tarbell said. "I go to a fair and I buy food but then I want to see something, whether it be scuba or a car or a tractor."

The popular Demolition Derby will make its return, and the fair will have Massachusetts State and New York State tractor pulls as well as an oxen pull, he said. An agricultural fair, it will have its share of farm animals and livestock, including chickens, goats, rabbits, cows and pigs to be judged in a variety of categories with cash prizes awarded to winners.

The farm animals will not be the only four-legged critters at the fair. Rosaire's Royal Racing Pigs will have multiple shows, and the DockDogs will return, featuring dogs taking adventurous dives into a giant pool of water.

The Two by Two Zoo will return for the second straight year, featuring rescued animals including large turtles that will be allowed to wander on the grounds.

Food offerings will be standard fair fare including doughnuts, corn on the cob, hot fudge sundaes, fried dough and pulled pork, to name a few.

In response to feedback from locals, for the second year running, Thursday will be Hebron Night; on that night, everyone will get in for \$1, parking and rides will also be \$1, and participating vendors will offer something for \$1. Entertainment that night will include local talent and appearances by winners of Hebron's Got Talent, and soccer games by RHAM Youth Soccer.

There will be entertainment the other nights of the fair as well. On Friday, Changes in Latitude, a Jimmy Buffett tribute band, will play at 8:30 p.m. During the show the ground around the stage will be covered with sand and beach

balls will be dropping from the stage.

The next night, also at 8:30 p.m., Mike DelGuidice & Big Shot, a Billy Joel tribute act, will take the stage.

The headlining act on Sunday, at 3:30 p.m., will be the country music duo LOCASH. The duo, which was nominated for two Academy of Country Music awards earlier this year, has seen seven songs hit the Billboard country charts, with the song "I Know Somebody" hitting number one on the Billboard Country Airplay chart in 2016.

Other entertainment will include log rolling by the Axe Women Loggers of Maine. There will be plenty of entertainment for children, including baby chicks, coloring and a hay maze.

In addition, there will be a juried artisan show.

The Hebron Harvest Fair is the Lions' main fundraiser, with \$124,000 generated in 2017 from it and other fundraising activities and more than \$2.9 million raised over the life of the club, Tarbell said. The funds are distributed throughout the community to local and state groups and organizations.

On Tuesday, Krystin Strumskas, member of the Lions Board of Directors, stopped by the Lion's building on the fairgrounds, her children – Keira Strumskas, 7, and Rider Strumskas, 4 – in tow. The children said they were excited about the upcoming fair. Keira said she was most looking forward to doing arts and crafts and Rider said he wanted to go on the rides, check out the Fun House and go down the slide.

While the weeks leading up to the fair are a busy and hectic time for the Lions, they manage to have time to play pranks and Tarbell was anticipating one that recurs on a yearly basis.

"Every now and again somebody hides my golf cart," he said.

One year, a Lion removed the top of the cart and placed it in the pond so it looked like the cart had been tossed in and sunk to the bottom, with only the top peeking out of the water.

"That's a little bit of Lions family trade there to hide the superintendent's golf cart before the start of the fair," Garner said. "In the abyss."

This year the Lions said they were planning to make use of the dock on the pond for a lark. They described detaching it and letting it float while an unnamed member stands there watching the shore get further and further away. There would be no way to return to land without taking a swim, they said.

"There's no question," Tarbell said. "I feel confident someone's going in [the water]."

For more information on the Hebron Harvest Fair, including a list of activities, attractions and events, visit hebronharvestfair.org.

Collaboration, Perseverance Bring New WJJMS

by Allison Lazur

Last Friday, Aug. 24, approximately 200 residents and school and town officials gathered to welcome the opening of the new William J. Johnston Middle School. The ribbon-cutting ceremony kicked off a year of education based on personalization, innovation and collaboration for this year's students, said Principal Chris Bennett.

The \$48.66 million project utilized a combination of new construction and renovation in order to keep costs down, Bennett said Friday.

The complex has been home to several schools, including the old Bacon Academy in 1962 and Colchester Intermediate School in 1993.

A building committee was formed in 2011 to head the project and in 2013 voters were asked to approve a \$57.26 million project that would have combined a renovated and expanded middle school with a new senior center and community center. However, the project failed at referendum and a more focused concept of exclusively a new middle school was brought to voters in 2015 and subsequently passed.

"We are on time, we are under budget and we are ready to provide the next generation of Colchester's children with an outstanding education," Bennett said.

While the portion of the complex that used to be Colchester Intermediate School won't be completely renovated and finished until December, the new two-story main section is revamped from floor to ceiling.

Bennett said extensive thought went into the design of the building with focus on how to motivate students to learn and encourage "creative and innovative thinking."

Natural light and floor to ceiling windows can be seen throughout the school, as well as open spaces at the entrance where student art

CASTLE Tag Sale

CASTLE, a nonprofit child care center located at 396 Halls Hill Rd., is having a tag sale Saturday, Sept. 15, from 8 a.m.-2 p.m., at the center.

All are invited to stop by and shop, get their face painted, buy a baked good, and get a tour of the facility.

Call 860-537-0214 for more information.

will soon hang.

Other spaces meant to promote creative learning are located throughout the complex including an amphitheater area outdoors and spaces designated for collaboration in the hallways of the school.

Bennett also spotlighted the school's new black box theatre and completely renovated and air conditioned gym.

Superintendent of Schools Jeffrey Burt echoed Bennett's beliefs on the new building's impact on learning.

"I know that this building embodies the characteristics we value here in Colchester, including innovation and personalization," Burt said.

Students will each have their own Chromebook, according to Bennett. He said the mini-laptops can be synced to TouchIT boards, which take the place of traditional chalkboards, in a "technology rich" environment that will bring students into the 21st century.

Information from the Chromebooks and TouchIt Boards can be shared from student to student or student to teacher.

"This building embodies the commitment of the entire community to provide the best learning environment for our students," Burt said.

The school is also organized by pods where teachers will share the same 80 to 120 students, as well as the same schedule, which helps staff and students collaborate.

Throughout the ceremony several speakers acknowledged the level of perseverance of town officials, school staff and those involved in the construction to bring such a project to fruition.

Colchester's two state representatives, Linda Orange (D-48) and Melissa Ziobron (R-34), were both in attendance and expressed their excitement for the project.

Orange acknowledged that "perseverance" by the building committee, the superintendent and the board of education made this undertaking possible.

"It takes a village to raise a child and we as a community together made a great village for our children to be educated in by our finest educators," she said.

First Selectman Art Shilosky thanked the building committee he referred to as a group of "special people" who have contributed "thousands of hours."



The new-look William J. Johnston Middle School officially opened its doors last Friday at a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Approximately 200 residents were addressed by various speakers who expressed their excitement for the project, including Board of Education Chairman Brad Bernier.

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much," Shilosky said.

While every speaker acknowledged the man hours contributed by those involved with the undertaking, they always brought the focus back to the staff and students of William J. Johnston.

Building Committee Chairman Tom Tyler said "the goal was to deliver a wonderful tool, but it's the teachers that make the tool useful and apply it to educate our youth."

Board of Education Chairman Brad Bernier said he recalled the building committee's first meeting on Oct. 3, 2011, and noted he has seen

the project through its various phases.

"It's just a building," he said. "What makes it a school is the dedicated faculty and staff that fills it. Chris [Bennett] has put together an incredible team to do just that."

The ceremony concluded by the cutting of a ribbon by Dottie O'Meara, daughter of William J. Johnston, the late Colchester resident and U.S. Army veteran who received the Medal of Honor for his actions during World War II.

Scores of residents then flooded the school, eager to check out the fruits of a project that has been several years in the making.

State Picks Up the Tab for Main Street Sidewalks in Portland

by Elizabeth Regan

Sidewalk repairs already underway as part of a \$1 million taxpayer-funded initiative will be enhanced now that the state Department of Transportation has approved a \$204,358 grant to fix deteriorating sections of Main Street's concrete, slate and brownstone walkways.

Construction is likely to begin in the spring, according to First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield. The project will repair sidewalks on the east side of Main Street from Fairview Street to Trinity Church and on the opposite side from the post office to Russell Avenue. It will also create curb ramps at intersections within the project area to make the sidewalk safer and more accessible for those with disabilities.

The grant covers the full project cost as estimated in the grant application. The price tag comes in at \$170,298, with the remaining funds set aside for contingencies and incidentals.

The state Department of Transportation earlier this month announced the Community Connectivity Program award. The program is designed to make streets in urban, suburban and rural centers safer and easier to navigate for walkers and bikers. DOT Transportation Assistant Planning Director Colleen Kissane said this week details about the other towns receiving grants and the total amount funded will not be available until next month.

The grant application was submitted by town Economic Development consultant Mary Dickerson.

Bransfield hailed the state's commitment to enhance walkability, connectivity and safety for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists.

"It allows us to do more sidewalk improvement on Main Street, which is a state owned right of way," she said. "I'm grateful for the

state for recognizing this was an outstanding application and following through on funding it."

The Main Street project builds on \$1 million in bonds approved by voters in 2016 as part of a \$10 million bonding package to fund the Route 17 recreation park and to address infrastructure needs in town. The money was allocated to repair sidewalks on several downtown streets and to fix smaller sections of the area's most deteriorated sidewalks.

Bransfield credited the Portland Complete Streets Group, a grassroots effort of local residents, with laying the groundwork for the sidewalk initiative. The group, formed in 2014, commissioned an engineering study and road safety audit as part of the Complete Streets policy approved by the Board of Selectmen in 2016.

Sidewalks slated for repair on Main Street – some of them more than 100 years old – are currently marred by badly-cracked concrete, marbled concrete, settled areas, tree root damage and vegetation overgrowth, according to the grant application.

The sidewalks will be removed and replaced with five-inch-thick new concrete along the road and eight-inch-thick concrete sidewalk where it crosses affected driveways.

Dickerson said the goal of the Main Street sidewalk project is to link the state road with the rest of the village district, including Brownstone Intermediate School, Riverfront Park, and Brownstone Quarries National Historic Site.

"In addition, it will improve the quality and safety of the sidewalks directly servicing three healthcare/rehabilitation facilities, a church, US Post Office, a dental office, commercial businesses, and multifamily residential housing," Dickerson wrote in the grant.



Deteriorating Main Street sidewalks, like this one at the intersection of Fairview Street, will be replaced now that the town has received a \$204,358 grant through the state Community Connectivity Program.

Hebron Teachers Travel to Help Their Careers

by Sloan Brewster

Thanks to grants from Texas-based Fund for Teachers, a pair of local teachers spent time this summer traveling to further their careers as educators.

Meg Clifton, a Hebron resident and English teacher at RHAM High School, and Christopher Lapsis, a Mansfield resident and preschool teacher at Gilead Hill School in Hebron, each received grants from the organization.

Clifton studied Native American cultures and voices in South Dakota, Montana and Washington, and Lapsis studied play as part of education in Australia.

Fund for Teachers is a national organization with a very strong chapter in Connecticut with all grants funded by the Dalio Foundation, Lapsis said.

Clifton received \$5,000 and spent 10 days traveling in July.

What she learned will help her fill what she has perceived as a gap in knowledge among students in a Native American unit in Senior Topics – a one-semester English elective at the high school.

The journey took her into areas sacred or significant to the Lakota, including Mount Rushmore, the Crazy Horse monument and the spot where the Battle of Little Bighorn took place. She also attended a powwow in Seattle and met with students at the Red Cloud Indian School at the Pine Ridge Reservation, in South Dakota.

Places like Mount Rushmore are looked upon differently by the Lakota than they are by many other Americans, she said.

“Looking at it from kind of my perspective, which would be more of an Anglo-American perspective and a white person,” she said. “I look at it and I say, ‘Oh my gosh, this is so amazing.’”

The Lakota, however have a different take. “It’s carved into land that’s illegally taken from them – sacred land,” she said. “The Lakota believe that life originates in the Black Hills, which is where Mount Rushmore is.”

Meeting with the students at Red Cloud – a kindergarten through grade 12 school – also had a significant impact on Clifton, she said.

“I chose that particular school because of its history,” she said. “It used to be a government boarding school that did a lot of damage to the Native Americans that went there in the beginning of the 20th century.”

While founded by Jesuits, the government sent Native American children there, Clifton explained. Around the time it was founded, the government was starting to force Indian children to attend boarding schools that were often run by Christian missionaries.

It was part of a campaign to get the students to assimilate into American culture, she said. They were forced to cut their hair and forbid-

den to speak or learn their language or learn about their culture.

“It was all about forcing them into white culture,” she said.

In the 1970s, however, the school shifted away from that, and since then students there have learned Lakota beliefs, culture, language and art, Clifton said.

Students gave her a tour of the school and the church on the grounds and explained a lot of the core beliefs and symbols of the Lakota, Clifton said. They also spoke of plans for the future, what it was like to grow up on the reservation and how their Lakota identity ties into everyday life.

Clifton said she plans to bring the stories of the people she met to her classroom. She said many students think of Native Americans as people that “died in the Trail of Tears or live in teepees or have casinos. So I’m excited to share a lot of [the stories] with my students so they can put a name and face on something that has been kind of an abstract concept.”

Clifton said she plans to use the history and first-person accounts to give her students something to contemplate and to pair with literature they are reading, so that they come out of the lessons with a strong understanding of Native American culture “and may be able to develop empathy as well.” She said she’ll also share her personal growth through stories of interactions with Native Americans “where I was essentially the face of the oppressor.”

“One of the things that I was most worried about was that people wouldn’t want to talk to me,” she said. But, she said, “all of the people that I met were really willing to share personal experiences with me. I was kind of taken aback by that and I think part of that might be wanting to have your story told and heard.”

Clifton will also bring her trip to life in the classroom in another way.

“I also want to kind of incorporate it into this larger idea of the nature of storytelling,” she said. “Who gets to tell their stories? Whose are the stories that we hear?”

Her goal is that her students will apply what they learn to “everything: school, politics, the world, how you seek out information.”

Lapsis, meanwhile, received a \$10,000 team grant with his wife Amy, who is a speech and language pathologist in Columbia. The two used the money to travel to Australia in August.

Their trip was a means to come up with ways to combat the dwindling amount of outdoor play among today’s school children, he said. Children spend more time in front of screens and being over scheduled than they do outside.

“We were trying to figure out how to get back to bringing more unstructured play into children’s lives,” he said. “Not just in school



Local teachers Christopher Lapsis (left, with his wife Amy) and Meg Clifton (right) each received grants this summer from Texas-based Fund for Teachers. The money let the two explore new cultures, to help further them as educators.



but home too.”

At a friend’s recommendation, Lapsis had read *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Love, and learned about what the author coined as “nature deficit disorder.”

Love researched why children have become divided from the outdoor world, and the negative effect of this divide, Lapsis said. After he read Love’s book, he learned of countries that offer outdoor learning environments for preschool children – and decided to take a deep dive into a program in Australia, where children spend one day a week in the bush or at the beach.

In some schools there was not a bush or beach nearby, so classes would go to parks or other outdoor locations. On the days that school was held outside, parents would bring the children to the outdoor classrooms.

“You could just walk them down the street and you have forest or bush or stream,” Lapsis said. “That model seemed the most doable.”

The couple spent 23 days crisscrossing Australia going from Melbourne to Cairns to Port Douglas to Perth to Sydney. They spoke with teachers and saw and interacted with children in rainforests, at rivers, in parks and at beaches.

“It was very interesting. Going in we had the same fears and barriers that most parents and administrators would have,” Lapsis said. “How do we let our kids climb that tree that high? They’re playing near water, they’re x-number of yards from an adult. ... We both had the same anxiety.”

But, Lapsis said, he and his wife soon saw the benefits outweighed the risks.

Australian educators “come up with action

plans on how to minimize the risk,” he said. “What are the potential risks and what are the potential benefits and do the benefits outweigh the risks.”

Australia has adopted guidelines and principals for the schools.

Lapsis spoke of the things children fail to learn, such as depth perception, if they don’t do things like climb trees. He said it benefits vision as well, as children are moving while watching things like leaves in a corn field or other children running.

On the other hand, by being indoors and staring at screens, children are losing basic visual and auditory senses, he said.

“Although it’s fairly new research, the research is overwhelming on the benefits of outdoor learning for children,” he said.

And this had an impact on the teachers as well, Lapsis said.

“The role of a teacher was often not to step in but to step back,” he said. “The kids were solving their own problems.”

Lapsis said he used to teach third grade – and would see the opposite take place.

“Kids didn’t know how to solve problems,” he said. “They didn’t know how to think on their own.”

Lapsis said he traditionally brings his students on a nature walk once a year – but, after his trip to Australia, he hopes to establish an outdoor learning environment on the Gilead Hill School grounds, and bring the kids outdoors more often.

“My hope is to begin conversations with administration and the board and families to talk about what that would look like,” he said.

Andover Starts Looking Into Mold at Old Firehouse

by Sloan Brewster

Town Administrator Joseph Higgins said this week he’s “been investigating further into the mold” problems that the *Rivereast* revealed earlier this month have been plaguing the Old Firehouse – which also serves as the town’s senior center.

Higgins said he is specifically looking into the cost of having the air quality tested due to mold in the basement/garage area of the building, which is located on Center Street.

“My understanding after speaking with people who reported the mold is that they believe the mold is only in the basement,” he said.

Higgins said he expects to bring cost estimates for testing the air quality to the next Board of Selectmen meeting, next Wednesday Sept. 5.

Earlier in the month, Senior Coordinator Cathy Palazzi announced weekly senior lunches were being moved from the center to Andover Pizza. While the reason for the change was a permitting issue with Eastern Highlands Health District, she also said she expected the lunches would be better attended at the pizza place because of the mold at the senior center.

Palazzi reiterated this week that some seniors would skip lunches at the center because there is mold in the building.

“They have an allergy to the mold and they walk in and have issues,” Palazzi said.

Palazzi also pointed out that senior exercise classes are held in Town Hall because some folks have mold-sensitivity issues.

While giving the *Rivereast* a tour of the se-

nior center Wednesday, she reiterated her belief that the lunches would be more populated at the pizza restaurant.

“I do know that there’s a number of seniors that are excited to go to Andover Pizza to come to the luncheons,” she said.

Despite going in upstairs in the main portion of the facility, immediately upon entering the senior center a harsh mildew/mold-like odor hit this reporter’s nostrils.

Palazzi noticed it as well.

“The odor,” she said. “It was always in here. There’s always a smell, we just kind of get used to it.”

Not so down in the garage/basement area, where the smell was much more intense.

“Oh, you can smell it,” Palazzi said upon opening the door to the area. “Oh gosh, yes.”

The mold was also visible, appearing in patches along walls and on the ceiling throughout the space.

Palazzi said she wants the mold cleaned.

“I want this taken care of,” she said. “I feel that this is the seniors’ home.”

According to a town history on andoverconnecticut.org, the town purchased the circa-1883 building – which had served as a store – in 1938, and began remodeling it to serve as the home of the Andover Volunteer Fire Department, which was also formed that year. After a new fire station on School Road was built in 1990, the firehouse became the home of the Andover seniors, and it’s where they’ve remained ever since.

Palazzi said she was informed by members



Mold stains appear in patches along walls and on the ceiling throughout the basement/garage of the Old Firehouse, which serves as the town’s senior center.

of the Board of Selectmen this week that a new community building, which would also house the seniors, would not be built within the next 10 years due to budget constraints. She had previously said she believed that would happen in between two and five years.

The Long Term Planning Committee, which is looking at the needs of the town going forward, may include a community center in its goals, Eric Anderson, chairman said.

“I assume a recommendation would be a new community center starting by working on the

design,” he said. “That’s not set in stone; the committee has not made that conclusion yet.”

In June, the committee sent out a survey that was included with motor vehicle tax bills and was designed to help the committee determine the town’s goals and objectives on an ongoing basis. The two-page survey included questions about support for a community/senior center.

“There was a clear consensus,” he said. “A lot more people were in favor of a community center than weren’t.”

Douglas Library Director in Hebron Moving On

by Sloan Brewster

After four and a half years, the director of Douglas Library has resigned to take a position at a library closer to home.

Amanda Brouwer's last day was Wednesday. On Tuesday, Sept. 4, she'll start work as director of Acton Public Library in Old Saybrook, which is a shorter commute from her Waterford home, she said.

Town Manager Andy Tierney said Brouwer would be missed.

"I have a rule of thumb that I use in my own career; it's to leave a place better than you found it and she's done that," he said. "The library seems to be good and the staff's good. It's going to be a loss."

Among the improvements Brouwer made, Tierney said, were increasing patronage and programming, and diversifying the library.

"It's not just a library," he said. "It's a community center with lots of functions. She'll be missed."

Brouwer would not take sole credit for all the changes.

"I have to say it's not just me because I think that's a false narrative," she said. "It's me and the [library] board and the staff and the Friends and the community and the town. If we didn't all work well together it wouldn't have been as successful."

One of the other changes Brouwer introduced was the elimination of overdue fines. The measure took effect in January. Instead of a being charged a fine when returning overdue items, patrons are directed to a donation jar. The donations go to the library.

The library board and staff members worked on the policy change and the town was supportive, Brouwer said. Since implementing it, she said, there has been a "nicer feeling" in the library.

"Staff doesn't have to say, 'You owe me \$5,'" Brouwer said.

Also, she said, patrons are not using the occasion of no fines to abscond with library materials.

"It's a rare instance where things haven't come back," she said. "I think [the policy] is

really working."

Under Brouwer's tutelage, the library has also been working to build teen patronage through programs and the creation of a space solely dedicated to them – a work in progress.

In 2015, the library received a \$4,200 Library Services and Technology Assistance grant and a match from the Friends of Douglas Library in the form of a 3D printer, Brouwer said. The funds were used for a class to learn how to use the printer, and for Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) and Maker Space programs surrounding the printer, such as coding and using bots, meant to attract teens.

Additionally, the funds created a garden where teens perform volunteer hours they can use for credit, the library director said. The teens learned to plant and weed and care for the harvest and put in an irrigation system with help and instruction from a staff member who does a lot of gardening. The veggies, which include tomatoes, broccoli rabe, lettuce, peppers, garlic and cucumbers, are donated to the American Legion, which is next door to the library, for Friday lunches.

Tending the garden is enjoyable work for the staff and meaningful community service for the teens, Brouwer said.

"It gets [teens] coming back to the library," she said.

The Friends also donated \$5,000 for furniture for the teen space, Brouwer said. The funds were used to purchase a tablet desk bistro set. The plan is to configure the space so the teen collection encloses it. There will be computers and a smart television mounted to the wall with headphones at the desks for anyone watching, playing games or working on presentations.

"We just really wanted the teens to have someplace to be that's their own," Brouwer said. "It's just an area where they can be teens, where they can be slightly loud and we can still have eyesight on them."

Brouwer said the plans for the space started to come together when the Friends asked what the library needed at a time when the town had a freeze on spending.

"Our Friends have been a huge support to

us," she said. "One of our biggest goals was a teen space."

The hope is that the space will be completed in the fall.

The library has also become a part of the Maple Fest, Brouwer said, by offering arts and crafts during the two-day festival. In addition, the library hosts an annual holiday event the first week of December, with hot chocolate, crafts, a tree-lighting and a visit from Santa.

The collection has increased and evolved as well and now includes the lending out of hot spots via a small portable unit for use in places where Wi-Fi is not readily available.

There is also an increase in community usage of the library by businesses and local organizations. Staff have started clubs that meet there, including a knitting group and chess club, Brouwer said.

"I think we're a little more community-oriented in saying, 'Come on in, use our space, this space is for you to use,'" she said. "This is a safe space to have meetings."

Clare Betz, head of adult services at the library, and Cheri LaBombard, children's librarian, will hold up the fort as interim directors while the town looks for a replacement for Brouwer.

The two women each said they would miss her – with LaBombard conceding she will miss her so much she's rethinking her own future plans.

LaBombard said that because Brouwer "was fun to work with," she had been remaining with the library, even though she was eligible to retire "a couple of years ago." But now, she said, she's not so sure.

From energy and enthusiasm to her out-of-the-box thinking, the women praised Brouwer, getting dewy-eyed as they commented on her pending departure.

The programs and ideas she has implemented have pushed the library forward and made it more welcoming, they said. Her encouragement has made it possible for staff to come forward with their ideas.

"She's been a morale-booster too, for the staff," LaBombard said. "[Just by] being her



Amanda Brouwer, the director of Douglas Library in Hebron, has moved on to take a position closer to her Waterford home.

quirky self."

"Cause you always knew she had your back," Betz interjected.

Brouwer continuously gave kudos to others for the successes in the library, while admitting she always stood behind them.

"I feel like I support my staff and I think that makes this place better knowing they have my support," she said. "It's the people; it is the people. This is a great community."

She spoke of all the things volunteers have done at her behest, asking nothing in return. She gave the example of the gardening group that comes to the library at 8 a.m. on Mondays to weed.

"I'm going to miss the guys next door at the Legion because they're hilarious," she said. "The patrons, the friends. ... There's so many people in this town that I will miss a lot."

Group Honors Marlborough WWII Vet on His 90th Birthday

by Allison Lazur

The Not Just Quilters group gathered last Friday at the senior center to present a Quilt of Valor to World War II Navy Veteran Carl Carlson, as well as celebrate his 90th birthday.

Although the quilt is not made to be an exact replica of the flag, it bears the familiar colors of red, white and blue. The design is created with 3-inch strips of fabric provided by members of the group.

Carlson was presented with the 42-by-64-inch quilt by Karen Whitney, who brought the Quilts of Valor idea to the group in May.

"We all as quilters want you to know through our quilts you will be forever in our hearts," she said to Carlson. "It serves as a small token of our appreciation and a reminder of gratitude for your service and the sacrifices in defending our country."

At the conclusion of her speech, Whitney draped the quilt over Carlson's shoulders.

"Your willingness to serve and the sacrifices you made have led us to the freedoms we enjoy today," she said. "We want to cover you with the Quilt of Valor as a tangible sign of our gratitude for your service."

Carlson, who enlisted in the Navy at the age of 17, said he was a senior in high school when he decided to enlist, adding "all my friends were going."

"It wasn't fun, it was duty," he said. "I was proud to be there and I'm certainly proud to be here – thank you."

Whitney explained that the Quilts of Valor Foundation was founded in 2003 by "Blue Star" mom Catherine Roberts, whose son was deployed in Iraq.

While her son was overseas, Roberts had the idea to create quilts to serve as comfort and to "ward off war demons" of veterans.

Since its founding, the organization has awarded over 200,000 quilts, Whitney said.

Whitney said she learned of the idea while spending her summers in South Carolina with her husband.

"The quilters that I work with down there are big Quilt of Valor people," she said. "I was so enthusiastic about it that when I came back [to Marlborough] I asked if this group would be interested in doing it."

The Not Just Quilters group decided to undertake sewing several of the quilts in May.

Not Just Quilters has been active for 12 years, meeting up to three times a week over coffee and pastries at the senior center to quilt, sew and crochet. The group – initially established with about six members – has grown to 20.

Carlson's wife, Rosanna, has been a member of the group since its founding and told the *Rivereast* when she joined she had never sewed before.

Chuckling, Rosanna recalled one of her earliest experiences with the group.

She explained that Carlson had given her an old sewing machine that she had never plugged in until meeting with the group 12 years ago. When she attempted to use the machine, she quickly discovered it was damaged, which in turn caused the senior center to fill with smoke and sent the Not Just Quilters rushing to open windows.

The town's Director of Public Safety Services, Jay Kehoe, gathered with the seniors to enjoy coffee and admire several quilts laid out on the table.

"Aren't they gorgeous?" he said. "I just love the intricacy of the stars and the stitching."

Carlson explained while one meeting a month is dedicated to working on the Quilt of Valor, the group completes several other community service projects, including completion of 225 quilts for the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, lap robes for the senior housing center and Marlborough Health Care, as well as quilts



World War II Navy veteran Carl Carlson, with his wife Rosanna, displayed the Quilt of Valor presented to him at the senior center by the Not Just Quilters group.

for Paul Newman's The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp for seriously ill children.

Senior and Social Services Director Vi Schwarzmann told the *Rivereast* while she is usually busy working at the senior center, she contributes when she can by working on quilting projects at home.

"It's just a great relationship," she said.

Other members travel from surrounding towns such as East Hampton, Colchester, Glastonbury, and Moodus.

Beth Melzen, who has been with the group

for the past six years, commutes from East Hampton to bond over sewing and coffeecake.

"I love this quilting group mainly because everyone is so warm and welcoming," she said. "It's a great group of ladies. It's not anything you have to come to, you can come when you want and I'm very glad to be a part of this."

The Not Just Quilters group plans on presenting more than thirty quilts to veterans all over town at a ceremony to be held at the senior center in November. The exact date has yet to be determined.

Fun, Friends and Food at Marlborough Day

by Allison Lazur

Approximately 1,000 residents visited Blish Memorial Park Sunday for the town's 12th annual Marlborough Day presented by the Marlborough Business Association (MBA).

Newcomers to this year's festival included a Big Y booth and samplings from the Marlborough Tavern, which are both anticipated to open this fall.

Residents Jenny and Brian Mahoney said after visiting the photo booth, they enjoyed kielbasa and mustard from the tavern's smorgasbord.

"We are very excited for the Marlborough Tavern," they said.

Smiling faces could be seen as the Roaming Railroad – sponsored by Marlborough Health and Rehab – weaved in and out of booths while carrying excited young children.

Resident Krista Clark said she attends the celebration because of the community.

"It brings the community together – it's great," she said.

Clark said she checked out Soulful Sojourns, an organization which offers stand up paddle introductory courses and stand up paddle yoga and meditation on Lake Terramuggus.

"This is a great lake for paddling," Clark said.

The Marlborough Fire Department sat parallel to the lake with a fire truck demonstration for the kids in attendance.

Food vendors included Suhm Life Foods from Colchester, which served breakfast sandwiches while vendors were setting up before switching to barbecue for lunch.

Portland-based Top Dog served food from a hot dog shaped food hut pulled by a yellow taxi cab.

Attendees could also enjoy ice cream from Classic Scoop or local favorite Three Fellas Pizza.

The Democratic Town Committee offered the

option to create oversized bubbles while the Republican Town Committee served fried dough.

MBA Marketing and Membership Manager Niki Addington said she thought the day went "really well."

Addington could be seen enjoying the Roaming Railroad with her two sons, who were all smiling faces.

A minion – played by Morgan Gallagher – roamed the festival grounds accompanied by Taylor Gallagher.

Taylor said they were there as representatives from Glastonbury-based TeachArt2Me, a face painting and party entertainment company. The minion character had been well received throughout the day, she added.

"The kids are really into it," she said. "They've been coming up to say hello [and] have been having a great time."

Taylor pointed out that the several hugs that had been given out resulted in paint on the costume, adding with a chuckle that it was not a problem since "the costume is cleanable."

Balloon art could be seen in the hands of most attendees, while paintings were showcased at the Marlborough Art Center Booth.

Resident Carol Jeffries told the *Rivereast* she contributed oil paintings to the booth. Jeffries was attending with friend Barbara Sarnik, who has been attending Marlborough Days from the beginning.

"I started coming with my grandchildren who are now here on their own," she said. "After they grew up, we would wander over here just to see what was going on and run into people that we haven't seen for a long time."

Sarnik explained that while she's seen the celebration grow every year, the biggest difference this time was the appearance of Big Y and Marlborough Tavern.

"Everyone is enthused about the tavern and



The Democratic Town Committee gave attendees the opportunity to create oversized bubbles at the town's 12th annual Marlborough Day presented by the Marlborough Business Association. Pictured left to right are Bailey Fowler, Aileen Vrooman, Reese Fowler and Camryn Fowler.

the Big Y and people are really looking forward to all of that, so that's a nice thing for us to be waiting for," she said.

The boat parade hosted by Parks and Recreation had four participants - up from one last year – while the bands Modern Riffs and Old Dog New Trick provided the music.

Addington said she looks forward to adding

more vendors, games and entertainment in the future, as well as more boats in the boat parade.

"I'm thankful for all the sponsors, vendors and of course the Marlborough Business Association. It is because of their hard work and generosity that we had such a successful day," she said.

Hebron Police News

8/22: State Police said Christopher Yates, 25 and Stacia Sandone, 31, both of 15 Laura Dr., were arrested and charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct. The couple, who police said are dating, had a disagreement which turned physical. Police said Yates stated Sandone punched him in the face, resulting in minor injuries. Sandone said she received minor injuries to her ankle when Yates threw lawn chairs at her.

Andover Police News

8/20: State Police said Billy McNamara, 44, of 43 Times Farm Rd., was arrested and charged with second-degree criminal mischief and violation of protective order.

Marlborough House Fire Ruled Arson

by Allison Lazur

An early Monday morning fire at 242 West Rd. has been ruled arson by local and state fire marshals.

The Marlborough Fire Department was dispatched at approximately 2:30 a.m. to a structure fire that took place on the exterior, left side of the house, Fire Chief Kevin Asklar said. There were no injuries reported and minimal damage to the home's exterior.

At approximately 2 p.m. the same day, Reid Keener, 27, of 242 West Rd., was located, arrested and charged with first-degree arson, first-degree reckless endangerment and first-degree criminal mischief.

According to the town's property database, Randall and Marybeth Keener are owners of the property.

Fire Marshal Joe Asklar said Wednesday the fire was extinguished with a home fire extinguisher before they arrived, and added, "We did not use one drop of water to put the fire out."

Joe Asklar said five people were in the residence at the time of the fire, including three tenants. He explained that the owners of the property had plans to turn the residence into a bed and breakfast.

Joe Asklar said that after "looking at the evidence" with state fire marshals it was determined the fire was "caused by human hands." He said the parents of Keener "informed us of [Keener's] history of mental illness and said it's possible that he was responsible."

He emphasized that this was an isolated incident and there is no danger to the public.

According to the arrest warrant affidavit, Marybeth Keener told police she believed that Reid Keener "was experiencing stress and anxiety about guests coming to stay at their house. She said she thought the fire was set in an act of defiance."

Marybeth Keener disclosed that Reid Keener moved into the residence in March, according to the affidavit.

According to a press release from the state police, an attempt was made to locate Keener, utilizing the State Police Aviation Unit, K-9 Unit and the Marlborough Fire Department.

The affidavit states on Monday at approximately 2:15 p.m. investigators received a report of someone swimming in Lake Terramuggus.

Keener was located in the lake with the assistance of the Marlborough Fire Department and their boat, and troopers were able to remove Keener without incident, the affidavit states.

Keener was transported to Hartford Hospital for evaluation. State Police then took him into custody, the affidavit said, as there was an active arrest warrant issued in May for reckless driving, disobeying signal of officer and interfering with officer/resisting arrest.

According to State Police, on May 17, Keener was driving a Jeep Wrangler and was observed by police traveling the wrong way up the eastbound Route 2 onramp. The trooper attempted to stop Keener with lights and sirens, but was unsuccessful.

Keener later abandoned the vehicle in a wooded area on Jerry Daniels Road, after it became stuck in a creek, police said. Based on the license plate, police determined at that time the vehicle was registered to Marybeth Keener who told police Reid Keener was her son and identified him as the driver of the vehicle.

Keener was arraigned in court on Wednesday and pleaded not guilty to first-degree arson, first-degree reckless endangerment and first-degree criminal mischief.

East Hampton Police News

8/7: Jason Curtis, 44, of 22 Plains Rd., Moodus was issued a summons for misuse of plates, operating an unregistered motor vehicle, operating a motor vehicle without insurance and having a cracked windshield, East Hampton Police said.

8/13: After an investigation into a three-car motor vehicle crash in which the vehicle that caused the crash fled the scene, George Larosh, 90, 14 Wildwood Circle, Rockfall, was arrested and charged with evading responsibility and driving too fast for conditions, police said.

8/16: Heath Galvin, 31, of 54 Midwood Farm Rd., was issued a summons for illegal burning, police said.

8/18: Jonathan Jonah, 47, of 61 Loomis Rd., was taken into custody pursuant to an active warrant for his arrest and charged with possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of a

controlled substance, police said.

8/19: John Paul Schwall, 46, of 61 N. Plains Ind. Rd. 191, Wallingford, was arrested for failure to drive right, operating under the influence and operating under suspension.

8/21: William Choma, 64, of 20 Namonee Trail, was issued a summons for second-degree criminal trespass, police said.

8/22: Brandon W. Pearson, 30, of 12 West St., was arrested and charged with third-degree assault, second-degree harassment, disorderly conduct, third-degree strangulation, interfering with an officer and interfering with an emergency call, police said.

Also, from Aug. 13-19, officers responded to 23 medical calls, five motor vehicle crashes and six alarms, and made 20 traffic stops, police said.

Vehicle Strikes Tree in Marlborough

State Police said a vehicle traveled off of Jones Hollow Road, striking a tree and resulting in possible injuries for one man.

At approximately 2:43 a.m. on Aug. 26, police said Adam Casale, 23, of 58 Finley Hill Rd., was driving a GMC Sierra, traveling north on Jones Hollow Road, 50 feet north of the roadway's intersection with Standish Road.

The GMC traveled off the right shoulder and struck a tree with its front end.

Police said Casale complained of ankle pain and was transported by the Marlborough Fire Department to Middlesex Hospital. He was also issued an infraction for improper turn.

M shade box

Police: Man Illegally Sold Car in Marlborough

A Dayville man was arrested last week after, police said, instead of making promised repairs to a local woman's car, he sold it.

On Aug. 24, Scot B. Shear, 24, of 693 Chestnut Hill Rd., Apt. B, Dayville, was arrested and charged with theft of plates/inserts, operating a motor vehicle repair business without a license and third-degree larceny dating back to an incident in July.

According to police, Shear was supposed to repair a Marlborough woman's vehicle and repeatedly demanded several thousand dollars from the woman before repairing her vehicle.

Loud Noise Reported in Colchester

Colchester Police said a report was received of a loud noise and open basement door at a residence on Reservoir Road.

At approximately 7:19 p.m. on August 23, police received a complaint from the owner of the residence who said he returned home from a walk and heard a loud noise in the basement of his home and noticed the basement door was also open.

After police arrived, a K-9 track was conducted with no findings.

Police said this case is currently under investigation.

The woman provided Shear with the money and, after an extended amount of time, she requested the return of her car, police said. Shear did not respond to the woman's request, police said, and state police were contacted at that time.

After an investigation, police discovered the vehicle was never repaired and Shear kept the money and was operating an illegal repair shop. Shear also kept the license plates of the vehicle and illegally sold the woman's vehicle, keeping the money from the sale.

Obituaries

East Hampton

Wayne H. Denman Jr.

Wayne H. Denman Jr., 86, of East Hampton, beloved husband of Janice (Heath) Denman passed away peacefully Wednesday, Aug. 22, at Chestelm Health and Rehabilitation in Moodus. Born Oct. 22, 1931, in Middletown, he was the son of the late Wayne and Josephine (Tocco) Denman.



Wayne proudly served his country in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. He had worked as an I.T. professional for the Aetna Life Insurance Company before his retirement. Wayne was an active member of the Haddam Neck Covenant Church, a charter and founding member of the Haddam Neck Volunteer Fire Department and past chief. Wayne had also served as an EMT for the East Haddam Ambulance.

Besides his wife Janice, Wayne is survived by his daughter, Cathy Domin of South Glastonbury; sister, Nancy Szymaszyk and husband John of East Hampton; brother, Richard Denman of Portland; stepson, John Thompson and his wife Arlene; grandchildren, Cassandra Chand (Alex), Meghan Parke, great-granddaughter, Zoey Lynn Chand; and several nieces and nephews.

Wayne was a friend to all who knew him. His quick wit, contagious smile and endless supply of jokes for all occasions made him a joy to be around.

Wayne's family would like to thank the caregivers and staff of Chestelm and Masonicare for the compassionate care they gave to Wayne during his illness.

Friends called at Haddam Neck Covenant Church, 17 Haddam Neck Rd., East Hampton, Wednesday, Aug. 29. A memorial service followed that morning. Burial will be at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Haddam Neck Covenant Church, 17 Haddam Neck Rd., East Hampton, CT 06424; Haddam Neck Volunteer Fire Department at 50 Rock Landing Rd., Haddam, CT 06424; or to the East Hampton Ambulance Association, P.O. Box 144, East Hampton, CT 06424.

To leave online condolences, visit spencer-funeralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Gary Alan Keefe

Gary Alan Keefe, 65, of Colchester, passed away after a brave fight with extended illnesses at Backus Hospital in Norwich, surrounded by his loving family and friends. Born in Norwich on March 9, 1953, he was the son of the late Bruce and Dorothy (Stebbins) Keefe.



Gary was a 1971 graduate of RHAM High School, and attended Manchester Community College. He was the co-owner of Tangletree Horse Farm in Colchester along with his brother Bob. Family and friends will always remember Gary as having a special charisma with everyone he met. His presence in the lives of his family and friends will be greatly missed.

He is survived by his sister, Sharon (Douglas) Ashcom; his brother, Bob (Marguerite) Keefe; his niece, Jody (William) Yasich; his aunt, Brenda J. Keefe; his nephew, Paul Ashcom; and many extended family and friends.

The family would like to thank the doctors and nurses at William W. Backus Hospital, especially the staff in the critical care unit for their expert and loving care given to our beloved Gary.

A memorial service celebrating Gary's life was held at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home Saturday, Aug. 18. A reception was held that afternoon at St. Mary's Ukrainian Church Hall. Burial was private.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in Gary's memory to the American Lung Association, 55 W. Wacker Drive, Suite 1150, Chicago, IL 60601 (lung.org).

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthy-funeralhome.com.

Portland

Robert Wagner Jr.

Robert Walter Hans "Skip" Wagner Jr., 61, of Portland, passed away unexpectedly Wednesday, Aug. 22, at Yale New Haven Hospital. Born June 20, 1957, in Middletown, he was the son of the late Robert Wagner Sr. and the late Mary Jane Helveston.



Skip graduated from Portland High School in 1975. Soon after graduating he began his lifelong career at Local 24 as a millwright by trade and was trustee of the executive board for 15 years. He was also a delegate of the New England Regional Counsel of Carpenters and was currently working for Local 1121 when he passed.

Skip was proud to be a lifelong resident of Portland. He was especially proud that both of his daughters chose to raise their families in his beloved town. He was active in the Freemasons and a longtime member of the Elks Club. He enjoyed deep sea fishing, motorcycle rides, weekend lunches with friends, and spending time with his grandkids. He had a strong work ethic and cared deeply about the people he worked with. If he wasn't working, you could find him taking care of his yard or grabbing his cooler and heading out to the garage. If someone needed a helping hand he was always there.

Skip spent the last eight months mourning the loss his high school sweetheart and wife of 39 years. Although we will miss him dearly, we know that he is at peace with Mary.

Skip is survived by his daughter Heather Kissinger and husband Eric of Portland, his daughter Kasie Eason and husband Glenn (PJ) of Portland, and five grandchildren, MaryJane, Easton and Evan Kissinger and Aubrey and Alanna Eason. He is also survived by three sisters, Kimberly Fischburg and husband Kenn of Norwich, Gidget Matulis and husband George of Unionville and Jackie Gotta and husband Dickie of Portland; as well as many nieces and nephews.

Calling hours were held at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, Thursday, Aug. 30. A funeral service will be held today, Aug. 31, at 10 a.m., at Zion Lutheran Church, 183 William St., Portland, followed by burial at the Swedish Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Elks Club- B.P.O.E Middletown Lodge 771, P.O. Box 818, Middletown, CT 06457.

Colchester

Ronald E. Niemczyk

It is with profound sadness that the family of Ronald E. Niemczyk announce his passing on Wednesday, Aug. 22. Ron was born in Hartford July 18, 1950, the son of the late Michael and Helen Niemczyk. He grew up in East Hartford along with his two siblings, Richard and Linda.



Ron proudly served in the U.S. Navy for over 20 years, retiring as a chief petty officer. He received his bachelor's degree in accounting from ECSU. He worked for many years in real estate for Berkshire Hathaway. Ron was also a justice of the peace, performing wedding ceremonies with joy. He was also a member of the Colchester Lions Club and the American Legion.

He was married to his high school sweetheart, Marj, and they just celebrated their 47th wedding anniversary. Besides his wife he leaves his two sons, Aaron and wife Karen of New York City and Ryan and wife Erin of Columbia, and his loving daughter Jessica of Colchester, and two grandsons, Joshua and Benjamin of Columbia, who brought him so much happiness.

A Celebration of Life will be held at the St. Joseph's Polish Club, 395 S. Main St., Colchester, Friday, Sept. 14, from 6-10 p.m.

In keeping with Ron's spirit we ask that you do an act of kindness for "You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late." R.W.E.

Hebron

Carolyn J. Davis

Carolyn J. Davis, 80, of Hebron, passed away with her daughter by her side Friday, Aug. 24, at The Connecticut Hospice in Branford. She was born Sept. 22, 1937, in Braintree, Mass., to Joseph and Josephine Cambria.



She shared her childhood and adult life with three sisters. On Feb. 14, 1960, she married Arthur Davis in Quincy, Mass. They were married 50 years and raised two wonderful children.

Carolyn was a stay-at-home mom for many years, and later returned to work for Drs Bushell and Unger in their Hartford Endodontist office. She also volunteered at Oak Hill School for the Blind, and The Connecticut Hospice. Carolyn loved all things art, whether it was the ballet, symphony, or spending time crafting something beautiful with her two hands.

She was predeceased by her husband Arthur, beloved son Stephen, and sister Rose Kiwior.

Carolyn leaves behind her daughter, Kim Carino and her husband Francis; her granddaughter, Jorden Davis and daughter-in-law Jeryl Davis; her sisters, Dolores Calabro and her husband Michael; Valerie Handschiegl and her husband Robert; her dear friend of 38 years, Joan Shoham; an extended family of nieces and nephews; as well as her many friends from East Hartford, Hebron, and Hingham, Mass.

Family and friends attended a funeral Mass that was celebrated Thursday, Aug. 30, in the Church of the Holy Family, 185 Church St., Hebron. Burial will be private at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made in Carolyn's name to AHM Youth & Family Services, 25 Pendleton Dr., Hebron, CT 06248 (<http://ahmyouth.org/makeadonation>).

For online condolences, visit mulryanfh.com.

Portland

Joseph Ruitto

Joseph Ruitto, 87, of Englewood, Fla., formerly of Portland and East Hampton, died Friday, Aug. 24.