

Rainbow Connection Ties RHAM Graduates

by Sloan Brewster

A rainbow shone over RHAM High School's 2019 Graduation.

The tiny rainbow – hovering in the sky directly above the stage – showed itself moments before the RHAM High School Wind Ensemble ushered graduates to their seats.

"There's a rainbow," a mother in the front row noted. "There's a rainbow. What a great day."

When the ceremony began, after Principal Scott Leslie offered his introductory remarks, senior class president Rachel Salamone took the podium, and started by asking folks to take a second and look at the graduates.

"You probably see a bunch of kids who can barely contain themselves to not shoot silly string everywhere or open confetti poppers or start smoking a cigar right now," she said. "You probably see the kids who were really loud and obnoxious during that RHAM sports game you went to. You probably see a bunch of funny-looking and impatient teenagers who still have so much to learn in life – but also your kid, who's definitely acting perfect right now."

Salamone went on to say that the observations were probably correct but that she sees "kids that are willing to step up for one another and support each other in every way possible."

She admitted she too saw "the goofy parts" but highlighted all the positives, from being kids comfortable in each other's company to showing compassion in the little moments.

"Yeah, we look like a bunch of rowdy kids,"

she said. "But we are proud because we care about each other and we recognize that we are a part of something greater than ourselves when we are with our peers at RHAM."

Following Salamone, Pete Joseph, a long-term substitute at RHAM known by students as "Papa J", offered his own farewells to the graduates and school, as he is leaving. While he spoke, Joseph repeatedly sipped a bottle of water.

"A few weeks ago my cousin told me that if you drink water while you're giving a speech that you can't cry and we're going to see if that's true," he said.

At intervals when he was notably touched by recollections or adieus, he took yet another long sip.

"Finally, like you I stand here tonight saying farewell to the place that has been so safe and important to me for a significant part of my life," he said, taking another sip.

"Just going to keep the [bottle] cap off," he then quipped. "It works; gotta thank Steve for that."

Joseph told graduates to be brave as "you turn the first pages of the next chapter in life."

In his speech, Justin Han, salutatorian, invoked his favorite shows, *Survivor* and *The Amazing Race*, but noted they weren't the best source of inspiration for a graduation speech.

With less than a week before graduation, Han said he was still unsure what he was going to say, but then he realized all the topics he had

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RHAM High School seniors filed into the graduation ceremony Wednesday evening. The students would soon hear a variety of speeches from teachers and peers – and then be ushered into the world, as the Class of 2019.

Colchester Girl Awarded Patent Application

by Allison Lazur

Not many seventh-graders can say they've been awarded a patent application – but Colchester resident Abigail Belding can.

Combining fire safety and pure ingenuity, Belding created the "EZ Exit."

The invention combines an automatic window opener, a ladder and a flashing button triggered by a fire alarm to make escaping during a house fire possible, if the front door is not an option.

Belding said the way the EZ Exit works is if there is a fire and the fire alarm goes off, it triggers a button positioned below a bedroom window to start flashing a yellow light.

"So if it's in the middle of the night when



Abigail Belding

the smoke alarm goes off, in the dark you know exactly what to press because it's blinking at you," she said.

Once you press the button, the window opens using a series of motors and belts, she said. "When that happens there's already a ladder attached to the window so you don't have to go through your closet or underneath your bed trying to find an escape ladder. So you just throw it out the window and let gravity unravel it and you can climb down it and you're safe," Belding said.

Belding, who brought the EZ Exit to the National Invention Convention and Entrepreneurship Expo (NICEE) last month at the Henry Ford Museum located in Dearborn, Mich., walked away with a patent application.

The application was presented by WilmerHale, a law firm that files on average of about 1,000 U.S. and foreign patent applications a year, according to the firm's website.

Of the approximate 1,000 competitors in attendance, only five were awarded patent appli-

cations, Belding said.

Innovations teacher Kristina Ngai teaches a STEAM-based class to sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders. After being introduced to the class, Ngai said several students go on to be involved in the school's invention convention and then possibly the state and national competitions.

Ngai said at the state level the well-known Black & Decker was already very interested in Belding's invention.

Winning the patent application at the national competition means WilmerHale can file a patent, which can be worth about \$100,000, Ngai said.

"They fund all the costs and all the hours are pro-bono, which is incredible, so her invention could really pay off someday," she said.

Belding said she began work on the EZ Exit in November, trying to work weekly on the invention and eventually completing the project in about 5 to 6 months at home, she said.

With the help of her father, she was able to

use a variety of materials from sheet metal and motors to belts harvested from two printers.

"My dad is an engineer and he works with the different tools I had to use so he showed me how to use the tools and then I applied learning that to my invention," she said.

Being able to bring her invention to a competition at the Henry Ford Museum, Belding said, was "really cool."

"We were in the Henry Ford Museum, which had all of these different big inventions and you have your invention along with them," she said.

The invention convention, Ngai said, has been a part of the district for at least a decade and allows for preparation of a generation who will need to be future problem solvers.

"If you look at the types of jobs kids are going into today out of college, out of high school there are no longer a lot of jobs that are 'Sit down, here's your directions,'" she said. "As a society we're looking for problem-solvers because we're facing some pretty big problems

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The RHAM High School senior chorus offered a musical farewell to the graduation class before the salutatory and valedictory addresses during the 2019 commencement ceremony.

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considered had been too focused on himself and his own likes and dislikes and that this moment was about offering insight to the entire class.

He discovered the time he had spent exploring ideas had inadvertently led him to the perfect theme: exploration.

“If the last couple weeks have taught me anything, it is that exploring different opportunities and prospects can be incredibly thrilling, even if most of them are not as glorious as they might have been in your head,” he said. “In just a couple of months all of us will depart off on our own separate ways, and I encourage you to consider all your options and experiment with them, especially if you do not have set endeavors.”

Han circled back, however, to his favorite subject when he said he hoped graduates would learn something new about themselves in their exercise in exploration.

“Hopefully it’s that you love those shows as much as I do,” he said before closing his speech and making way for Leslie to introduce Erica Deskus, valedictorian, whom the principal noted, was the person who introduced Han to the shows.

Deskus – promising her speech was the last

of the evening – spoke of all that the graduates have learned in their high school careers from handling stressful situations to being surprised by the amount of work they were expected to put into classes.

“Also, some of us may have come in expecting it to be like the movies, like *High School Musical*, but we realized there isn’t really any singing in school... except on Mondays in the cafeteria,” she said, to laughter from the seated graduates.

Deskus spoke of things that happened that felt like the end of the world, such as doing worse than expected on an assignment or “tripping up the stairs” and said they were able to move past those challenging moments.

She said she hoped her fellow graduates would carry those lessons with them and be the best versions of themselves.

With whoops and cheers and a tiny rainbow shining overhead, the graduates marked the end of their high school days and stepped into the rest of their lives.

Note: A list of graduates was unavailable at press time. The complete list will be published in next week’s Rivereast.

From the Editor’s Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Unless you live in Andover you missed Sloan Brewster’s story on it last week, because the story was published in an exclusive for-Andover-eyes-only portion of the paper, but only two words can describe last week’s Board of Selectmen meeting in Andover:

Hot mess.

A little over a month ago – just before town elections – Town Administrator Joseph Higgins (he was basically the town manager, but Andover for some reason wanted to go with the weak-sounding “town administrator”) announced he’d be leaving in 30 days. While Higgins never really said why, both of the first selectman candidates had been pretty clear they weren’t huge fans of his. One even said a “day of reckoning” would soon be on the way for him. So, perhaps operating under the adage of “it’s better to quit than to be fired,” Higgins handed in his notice. The Board of Selectmen had a month to prepare for what to do about replacing him.

And during that time – at least as far as actions in the public eye are concerned – the selectmen did a whole lot of nothing.

So last Wednesday – the literal eve of Higgins’ last day in office – arrived and the Board of Selectmen had its regular meeting, and finally went about discussing what to do about replacing Higgins as town administrator.

Selectman Jeff Maguire proposed the idea of people simply filling in for Higgins: a little bit here, a little bit there – and all for free. To be honest, it wasn’t a great look for the man who’s set to be the town’s next first selectman just over two weeks from now.

Being a town manager is tough work; there’s a reason why most of them are paid six-figure salaries. Higgins was not, but still, even his salary of \$85,000 – coupled with a basic understanding of what his duties were – should indicate this isn’t exactly the kind of job you just do when you have some free time on your hands. It’s not volunteering to shelve books at the local library.

Other selectmen, understandably, didn’t want to leave the position vacant. “We need to have somebody in charge,” Cathleen Desrosiers rightfully said. “No other town would leave it.”

Desrosiers suggested current First Selectman Bob Burbank – who was the head of the town from 2006 until a charter change approved by voters in 2016 established the town administrator role and stripped Burbank of most of his power – fill in as interim town administrator until a permanent replacement is hired.

Burbank made clear he’d only do the job if he was paid for it, and Maguire bristled at this; he apparently expected Burbank to do it for free as well. Burbank accurately pointed out being the head of the town is a full-time job, telling his fellow selectmen, “I don’t think any of you, until you do it, realize how much is involved on a day-to-day basis.”

Maguire – who over the past couple of years has made it crystal clear he doesn’t much care for Burbank – continued to push for other solutions, with one being have Higgins’ administrative assistant, Linda McDonald, grab some extra hours at Town Hall filling in, with himself and other selectmen pitching in when they could, for free of course.

McDonald – who was at the meeting recording minutes, as an administrative assistant tends to do – put the kibosh on that herself, flatly declaring she wasn’t going to be taking any extra hours. It was a smart move, in my opinion, for her to stay out of this mess.

I frankly don’t know why Maguire was so insistent that people could just pitch in when they had time to be the town administrator – almost like it was a hobby or something. Nobody is a volunteer town manager. And Maguire seemed appalled that Burbank, who was in this role for 11 years and knows what it takes, wouldn’t do it for free as well. I suppose it speaks volumes of the regard he had for Higgins’ performance, but still, it doesn’t instill a whole lot of confidence in me when it comes to his decision-making abilities.

In the end, selectmen agreed 2-1 to make Burbank interim town administrator, and to pay him a weekly rate equivalent to Higgins’ salary. Burbank abstained from the vote, and

a clearly annoyed Maguire voted against it.

The fact that there were only four selectmen at last week’s meeting is another indictment of how the town’s been run lately. For nearly two full years, the board has been short-handed, as Jay Linddy hasn’t attended a single meeting since August 2017, when accusations of sexual harassment first surfaced against him. So, for nearly two years the best the board could do was have four people at a meeting – which could wreak havoc when it came to votes. If a vote on a motion is tied 2-2, the motion fails. If somebody is sick for a meeting, you’ve only got three members, and is a three-member Board of Selectmen really a good way to get things done? (Sorry, Marlborough: It isn’t.)

I’ve known Linddy for a long time, and I’ve always found him to be a nice guy. But frankly I was disappointed in him that he was content to let the board just sort of twist in the wind like that. I get that he may have felt he’d have just been a distraction, but in that case the proper thing for the good of the town would have been for him to resign and let somebody else fill his seat so that there could be a complete board again.

But I was even more disappointed in members of not just the Board of Selectmen but Board of Education as well (on which Linddy also had a seat) for not caring more that he wasn’t there. When asked about it, as the *Rivereast* would repeatedly do, board members would hem and haw and be wishy-washy about the whole thing, saying they’d like him to resign but they couldn’t force him. While that may have been true they sure as heck could have placed some pressure on him – let him know how much it was hurting both boards not to have a full complement of members there.

Instead, as has been the case in Andover far too many times in recent years, apathy ruled the day. As a result, the board remained shorthanded and the likelihood of 2-1 votes like the one last week greatly increased. Had there been another member on that board, maybe the motion fails 2-2 and things go differently.

Not that things going differently would’ve been necessarily good either. Again, it’s kind of appalling Maguire expected people to pick up Higgins’ work for free, so to that end I’m not disappointed the motion passed and Burbank is interim town administrator. He’s also definitely a veteran at the position, and I’m sure will do a capable job until a permanent town administrator is found.

There’s a certain irony in Burbank running the town again. While it was never outwardly said, I always had the sense that, when the new town administrator position was cooked up three years ago, it was seen at least partly as a way to get Burbank out of office. An increasingly vocal and mobilized group of people had grown tired of him, and seemed to view this as the best way to remove him.

But now, Burbank’s back. And for people like Maguire – who said after last week’s meeting that he was “disgusted” with the turn of events – there are lessons to be learned. For starters, when someone gives you 30 days’ notice of his leaving, don’t wait until literally Day 29 to do something about it. Also, don’t assume being town manager is something folks will want to do for free in their spare time.

And lastly, when a board looks like it’s going to be shorthanded for the long term, do something about it – or at the very least act like you care.

Look, I like Andover; I really do. When I was a fresh-faced 22-year-old, just out of college, an Andover Board of Selectmen meeting was the first town meeting I’d ever covered. (For longtime Andover folks, Ed Turn was the first selectman back then.) So it’ll always hold a special place in my heart. But the town could be run so much better. In recent years, the Board of Selectmen meetings have tended to be, frankly, dysfunction junction. That’s no way to get things done.

Simply put, the town needs to clean up its act. Like I said before, last week’s meeting was a hot mess – and it shouldn’t happen again.

See you next week.



William J. Johnston Middle School seventh-grader Abigail Belding was awarded a patent application last month at the National Invention Convention and Entrepreneurship Expo for her invention of the EZ Exit.

Patent Application cont. from Front Page

between climate change and infrastructure. And as technology advances the tagline we keep using is: The careers these guys are going to

have, most of them haven’t even been invented yet. So we are trying to prepare them for whatever comes their way.”

Meet the New Executive Director of AHM

by Sloan Brewster

AHM Youth and Family Services has a new executive director.

The Board of Directors announced this week it had hired Tressa Giordano for the post. She succeeds Michelle Hamilton, who announced in March that she would be stepping down.

Giordano will start on July 1, she said in a phone call Wednesday. The 40-year old Ellington resident is currently assistant director of Youth and Family Services in Ellington, where she has worked for the past 19 years.

According to a press release from AHM, she was director of Our Savior Preschool & Child Care in South Windsor for 11 years before becoming program coordinator for Ellington Youth Services, where she developed community and youth programs before being named assistant director.

Giordano said she was encouraged to apply for the position when she saw the number of



Tressa Giordano

towns that work with AHM and that it sounded like “a place she wanted to be a part of.” She said she’s looking forward to working with local administrators and principals and getting to know the members of AHM’s Board of Directors.

“Everyone I’ve met has carried a lot of energy,” she said. “I’m really excited to start developing relationships with new people.”

Giordano said she hopes to implement new programs to go along with the AHM’s current successful programs.

While she said she will miss seeing people she works with in Ellington on a daily basis, she will continue to see them at state functions, will rely on them for advice in her new position and plans to foster a relationship with the town and AHM. She also plans to continue to support programs in Ellington and volunteer in the community.

“Ellington is a community that I have grown up in and love very much,” she said.

Giordano’s hiring was the result of a thorough search, said Steve Fish, AHM’s incoming Board President.

A recruitment panel unanimously recommended selecting Giordano, according to the press release. The Board of Directors then offered her the position.

The panel based its recommendation on a

wide range of factors, including professional experiences, leadership qualities, demonstrated knowledge of mental health, prevention, and positive youth development work, outstanding references, and direct experience managing Youth Service Bureau programs, the press release states.

While admitting it was a tough decision, Fish said that due to a number of factors Giordano “rose to the top” of the pool of 8 to 10 candidates interviewed and three or four finalists.

“She seemed to have the passion and the right attitude that we felt was going to bring us into the future, a lot of great ideas,” he said. “She’s got a lot of experience working with the youth service bureau in Ellington and we were looking for someone with direct experience with children and families.”

Giordano had those qualifications and the skills to work with staff and town leadership, he added.

“Her personality seemed a perfect fit for AHM,” he said. “We had the feeling that she would be a good fit for AHM.”

Board President Peter Yorio said a large part of Giordano’s appeal was the “depth of her experience,” her familiarity with youth services – and how similar the programming offered at Ellington Youth Services was to that offered at AHM.

According to the press release, Giordano led a popular and successful high school leadership group called Rise Above, created Parent/Child Playgroups and Drop-Off programs, and was an integral part in creating Recess Zone programming, Mindfulness Zen Zone activities for elementary school children, and acted as Ellington’s School Readiness liaison.

Giordano was also a key player in planning town-wide annual community events, Mental Health Awareness Programs, Suicide Prevention programs, and numerous parent workshops and professional development trainings for the district and private program staff, the press release states.

Members of Ellington community gave “outstanding feedback” about Giordano, including about the way she deals with the constituents, Yorio said.

“The children – the youth themselves – the parents, the schools were all very positive,” he said.

Yorio said Giordano “exudes” qualities of someone who will collaborate well with AHM’s current leadership team.

Yorio said the AHM community was “obviously very sorry to see Michelle go.”

“We’re just excited to be able to find a high-quality candidate with experience to come in and take her place,” he said.

PHS Top Two Students Reminisce

by Elizabeth Regan

Portland High School’s top two students share a disciplined approach to turning dreams into reality.

Valedictorian Rebecca Tripp, 18, will be attending the University of Connecticut this fall to major in physiology and neurobiology. She told the *Rivereast* she’s considering minors in women’s gender and sexuality studies as well as psychology.

“My hope is to become a medical doctor someday, and also have the knowledge to work on comprehensive health care reform and rectify gender inequities,” Tripp said.

The students sat side-by-side in the high school office conference room early Tuesday morning for an interview with the *Rivereast*. Salutatorian Glenda Black smiled and nodded at her classmate’s lofty ambitions.

“There’s a reason she’s our valedictorian,” Black said.

Black, 17, will be going to Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, to realize her life-long dream of becoming an elementary school teacher. A member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Black had already been to a 6 a.m. high school seminary program in Cromwell and a 7 a.m. capella rehearsal with choral teacher Sam Tucker by the time she met up for the interview just before 8 a.m.

Both women described intrinsic self-motivation combined with support from family as crucial to their success.

Tripp’s 4.55 GPA earned her the top spot; Black’s GPA came in at 4.32.

Tripp, with a straight-faced sense of humor, said she’d prepare for a typical science test by typing out a master study guide that she would in turn read aloud to herself, her dog and then to family members, like her father, over the course of many hours.

“My dad is honestly earning this diploma as much as I am, because of 1 a.m. sessions on the digestive tract,” she said.

Tripp is the daughter of Portland Land Use Department administrative assistant Liz Tripp and Selectman Jim Tripp. Her sister, Kaitlyn, is in ninth grade.

Tripp recalled her parents’ caring and intellectual influence back when she was a small child afraid of the night time noises outside.

“A lot of parents would just write that off and say ‘go to sleep,’” Tripp said. “But they actually took me out onto the porch and would identify all the sounds. That’s just one example of how they’ve always taught me to be curious, but to seek the right answers and to never shy

away from that.”

For Black, the Mormon religion also plays a major role in her personal and academic life.

“The main things in my life are family, school and church,” she said.

Black has been participating in the early morning seminary program for all four years of high school. It’s based on the four books of scripture in her religion.

She said the group covers one book of scripture per year, using it as a time to learn, talk together and “get grounded” every morning.

“It’s really helped me to start each day on the right foot, and it’s definitely helped me with my academics, too,” she said.

Black said her father, Patrick, is one of 10 siblings, while her mother, Elizabeth, is one of five.

For Black, who has four sisters of her own, that focus on family translates to an affinity for working with children that is leading her to pursue a career in education.

“I love kids,” she said. “I’m so passionate about teaching and just hanging out with kids. And I love school; it’s just such a big part of my life. I can’t see myself anywhere else.”

For the valedictorian, an interest in medicine emerged over the course of a junior year psychology class that proved pivotal to her career path.

“I really want to understand the psychology, but I also want to understand the underlying, biological ‘why,’ and see how can I apply that to help people in my local community, possibly in a hospital setting, but also in the global community,” Tripp said.

Her penchant for public policy was honed through involvement in student government under the guidance of social studies teacher Michelle Stotler, she said.

Stotler this week told the *Rivereast* in an email that Tripp’s academic accomplishments are unparalleled – but it is her “social consciousness and proactive citizenship” that the advisor admires the most.

Stotler cited Tripp’s efforts to address both global and local issues affecting the high school.

“At a student-run, school-wide assembly about school climate, Rebecca took the microphone and extemporaneously gave a speech about how kindness and language have an impact on the school climate and the role and responsibility her fellow students need to take to help alleviate the issue,” Stotler said. “After the Parkland shooting, Rebecca helped to organize a [grades] 7- 12 event honoring those who passed.”



Rebecca Tripp, left, and Glenda Black are the Portland High School Class of 2019 valedictorian and salutatorian.

Tripp also served as co-captain of the cheerleading team this year. She said four years on the team taught her about what she can accomplish and how she can best support others.

“You can’t build a pyramid if one of us is down,” she said.

Black said her own high school experience has helped her realize what she can achieve when she sets a goal and goes for it. That was never more apparent than when she landed the lead role in this year’s musical production of *Bye Bye Birdie*.

“I worked so hard for that,” she said. “I had a goal that I wanted. After getting it and putting so much work into the musical, it really taught me a lesson. If there’s something you really want, if you work hard enough, you can get it.”

Tucker, her music teacher and co-director of *Bye Bye Birdie*, called Black an “amazingly talented individual and an all-around great kid.”

“She blew us away with her acting audition this year and landed one of the lead roles,” he said of the fledgling actress, who had never even

had a role before.

Black had the script memorized before many in the cast and “really took advantage of the whole experience,” according to Tucker.

“She absolutely shined on stage,” he said.

Both students expressed gratitude to teachers like Stotler and Tucker, as well as everyone else who helped make their high school experience so successful.

“I’m incredibly thankful to be here,” Tripp said. “There are a lot of opportunities that have made me who I am that I’m not sure I would have had, or had to the same quality, at other educational institutions.”

Black said the small high school presents a sharp contrast to the university she will be attending along with more than 30,000 undergraduates in the fall.

While excited for the change, she described herself as “incredibly blessed” to have had such a strong foundation in the Portland school system.

“I don’t think a lot of people realize how great an education you get here,” she said.

Meet Bacon's Valedictorian and Salutatorian

by Allison Lazur

Out of 185 members of the Bacon Academy Class of 2019, Jessica Savage and Amber Deslaurier rose to the academic top as the valedictorian and salutatorian, respectively.

While not only flourishing in academics, Principal Matthew Peel said both have also managed to be involved with sports and extra-curricular groups, contributing to their "well-rounded" characters.

"It's great to see kids that can excel so well academically, but still balance so many parts of their lives," he said.

Over her four years at Bacon Academy, Savage has played everything from basketball and lacrosse to soccer and track.

"I tried to stay pretty involved. I did sports every single season, all four years and then I did First Day Committee; I was the head of that," she said.

The First Day Committee organizes, fundraisers and plans events for the first day of school including food trucks, bouncy houses and a DJ, as a way to welcome incoming freshman students and new teachers, Savage said.

Deslaurier, also an athlete, has been a varsity softball player for all four years, as well as being involved with Unified Sports – a registered program of the Special Olympics that pairs special needs athletes from high school through age 21 with Bacon Academy athletes to practice and compete.

"Of all the stuff I've done in high school that was the most rewarding and my favorite," Deslaurier said. "Seeing how little things can have so much of an impact on the athletes is amazing. I feel like people think about unified as enabling kids to do something, but it's more about just giving them the opportunities that we all get and that's amazing."

Savage agreed that Unified Sports was also one of her high school career favorites, adding, the happiness of the athletes is "contagious."

When asked by the *Rivereast* how the two managed to rank number one and two, the girls each attributed their successes to a positive and supportive family life, understanding teachers and making sure to prioritize their own personal

schedules.

"There are definitely the hard nights where you're slammed with homework and staying up until two in the morning trying to finish something that you waited until the last minute to do, but then there are the easy days where you're just coasting along, getting your day-to-day homework done," Savage said.

Deslaurier said "it really helps to have teachers who understand what you're going through."

Savage agreed, adding "a lot of teachers at our school will ask 'Oh do you have a lot of projects going on this week because if so then I won't assign a test.' They communicate; it's really helpful," she said.

Both Deslaurier and Savage had the same list of favorite teachers from their high school careers, chuckling over the fact they have shared so many classes together.

Biology teacher Christopher Juhl, English teachers Karen Christianson and David Williams and Science teacher Joseph Hage were among those listed.

"I want to be some conglomeration of them when I become an older human, except without gray hair and not male because three-fourths of them are male, but I want to be them so badly when I get older," Deslaurier said.

She went on to cite how those faculty made her feel like she was learning for a "purpose" as opposed to learning new material for the sake of simply learning.

"They gave education meaning," she said. "They were always excited and willing to make connections."

The pair shared memorable moments with the faculty, which included eating what Savage called "the best fish of my life," cooked by Hage, to attending a gathering at the house of Juhl and Christianson, to leaving Bacon Academy with sage advice from Juhl.

"Mr. Juhl told us to be like a three-legged dog," Deslaurier said. "They have a dog that has three legs and when he runs around, he falls, face in the dirt and then he gets up and he's smiling – he's like that's what you need to do all year."

Savage said the four teachers "all took the

time to learn the personal stories of the students that they're teaching – and that's what made the greatest impact on me, the fact that they went out of their way to try and form personal relationships with the students."

She added that U.S History teacher Michael Mal was another favorite of hers among the faculty. Mal is also faculty advisor of the school's First Day Committee, of which Savage is chairperson.

"He's there all summer with me working with the student heads and he does it voluntarily just for his students – he definitely cares so much for his students," Savage said.

In an email, Mal called Savage "an exceptional student, with drive and passion that is beyond her years."

He cited her enthusiasm and dedication in heading the First Day Committee, where she managed nearly 1,000 students, faculty and staff while raising \$10,000 for the event and working over 100 hours in preparation of the first day celebration.

"It was the most successful first day in the history of Bacon Academy (founded 1803)," Mal wrote. "This speaks volumes to the level of maturity that Jessica exemplifies."

And both girls will continue their successful academic careers at the University of Connecticut in the fall.

Savage said this week she will be majoring in physiology and neurobiology on the pre-med track in the honors program.

"So hopefully all goes well and I'll get accepted into medical school," she said. She added she's "not sure which one I want to go to, any one would be good, and I'm not sure what type of doctor I want to become. I'm hoping to figure that out in medical school."

After completion of medical school, Savage said she's hoping to be a part of Doctors Without Borders for a couple years before returning home to "settle down, find an actual job and have a family."

Deslaurier, on the other hand, will be attending UConn to look into the two majors of marine science and English.

"I might end up dual majoring I haven't de-



The Bacon Academy Class of 2019 valedictorian and salutatorian are Jessica Savage (left) and Amber Deslaurier, respectively.

cided yet," she said.

Deslaurier said ideally she would combine the areas of science, as it relates to the environment, and English to write about science related issues.

"People are story people," Deslaurier said. "We need stories for us to learn things which help people connect to environmental issues. It's one thing to see stats; it's a completely other thing to read a story and learn about people who work directly to combat those environmental issues. So I want to do something that combines those two disciplines."

Graduation was scheduled for Thursday night, after press time, where both students delivered speeches to their fellow 2019 graduates.

Colchester Voters Approve \$56.39 Million Budget

by Allison Lazur

After a quiet budget season, Colchester voters decisively approved the \$56.39 million spending package for the 2019-20 year.

Separate questions for the town and education budgets passed by similar margins. Residents approved the town budget in a 1136-719 vote and the school budget in a 1,100-757 vote.

Board of Finance Chairman Rob Tarlov said he was also thrilled with the results because "it wasn't a close vote."

"A good margin of people came out and supported the budget," he said.

The 2019-20 budget will result in a mill rate of 32.84 mills for residents, up .56 mills from the current mill rate of 32.28, an increase of 1.73%.

One mill is equivalent to \$1 in tax per \$1,000 of assessed property, meaning a 32.84 mill rate would result in a resident paying about \$8,210

in taxes on a home assessed at \$250,000, an increase of \$140.

The town budget totaled \$15.16 million, an increase of \$334,555, or 2.26%, over current year spending.

Items such as general government contributed \$3.73 million to the overall town budget—a \$85,888 increase over the current year. The budget also includes \$3.73 million for public works, a \$181,699 increase, and \$2.97 million for public safety, a \$47,165 increase.

The education budget totaled \$41.24 million, an increase of \$687,778, or 1.70%.

Only about 18% of the town's 10,100 registered voters came out to cast a vote Tuesday night, up slightly from last year's 15%.

Despite the slight increase in voter turnout, Tarlov commented on the low attendance at budget meetings throughout the last few

months.

"The turnout was a little low. Typically we have less participation at a first referendum," he said. "It was so quiet during the budget season; there were no letters to the editor, no Facebook activity and not a lot of attendance at our meetings – you don't know what to expect."

First Selectman Art Shilosky said Wednesday he was happy to learn of the wide margin between the 'yes' and 'no' votes.

"It's not like it was a difference of 50 votes," he said. "For the last two years it's been around 700 ['no' votes] because you don't keep everybody happy. I'm happy right now, all my department heads are happy; it's a great thing for the town of Colchester to pass it on the first time around and I thank my boards and my department heads."

Salaries totaled \$25.57 million of the total

budget, an increase of \$76,730 over current year spending, while employee benefits totaled \$6.94 million, an increase of \$533,108.

The school's spending package also includes a long-term sustainable technology plan. While a total of \$274,843 has been earmarked for the plan, a large chunk will come from unexpended funds in the schools' 2017-18 capital budget.

The Board of Finance made the decision to use \$200,000 from the current education capital budget to offset the total cost of technology in the coming year.

Superintendent of Schools Jeffrey Burt said Wednesday his focus for next year will be a long-range capital plan.

"We can now move forward. "We can start planning for next year and continue to grow the district while looking for efficiencies," he said.

EHHS Valedictorian, Salutatorian Look Back

by Elizabeth Regan

East Hampton High School's two highest-ranking students have a lot in common.

Besides being academically accomplished, they are both soccer players who were sidelined due to ACL injuries – twice.

Class valedictorian Katherine Nikolov and salutatorian Molly Conklin, both 17 years old, played together on a youth soccer team called the Blue Jays from third to eighth grade before entering high school.

“That was one of my favorite parts of childhood,” Conklin recalled this week in an interview with the *Rivereast*.

Nikolov was the first to tear the major knee ligament in eighth grade, and again during her sophomore year.

Conklin injured her knee in tenth grade and at the end of her junior year.

Lessons learned on the field and on the sidelines – where Conklin spent her entire senior year as captain while recuperating from her second ACL surgery – helped them grow academically.

Conklin credited sports with promoting collaboration, responsibility and a good work ethic.

Nikolov agreed those skills, honed through so many practices and games, carry over into the classroom.

“It teaches you a lot about perseverance and teamwork, because you can’t do it alone in soccer,” she said.

The girls, who both plan to pursue careers in the sciences, pointed to Advanced Placement physics and biology to illustrate their point.

Conklin said the teamwork approach came in handy during the Advanced Placement biology labs that called on students to dissect a squid, a pig and a shark, while Nikolov remembered making floating concrete boats during a physics lab.

“It’s super fun, and you get to apply what you’re learning, but you’re also in a group with other people, so you have to take everyone’s ideas and try to mold them into one final product that hopefully works,” Nikolov said.

The strenuous Advanced Placement science curriculum will benefit the girls as they begin their undergraduate studies in the fall. Nikolov will be pursuing a degree in engineering at Northeastern University in Boston, Mass.; Conklin will be heading off to the University

of Vermont in Burlington.

Conklin cited the University of Vermont’s respected nursing program as the main draw for her. She said a hospital on the campus provides a convenient place for the clinical rotations students must complete to gain firsthand experience in all the different aspects of nursing.

Conklin, who goes to work every weekday at the My School daycare center in town, said she’s not entirely sure what type of nursing career she envisions for herself – but she is particularly excited about the pediatric clinical rotation.

“I’ve been thinking about working with kids, but I can’t be 100% sure until I do the clinical,” she said.

Nikolov is looking to meld her two main interests in order to become an engineer.

“I’ve always loved math and science,” she said. “I wasn’t sure how I was going to apply that at first, but then I realized that you could use both of those – and kind of work in some problem solving – and learn to make new things.”

The girls credited supportive – but not pushy – parents with helping them to succeed.

Nikolov is the daughter of Stoyko and Deborah Nikolov. She has a 15-year-old brother named Alex.

Conklin’s parents are Tom and Amy Conklin. Her sister, Abby, is 19 years old.

Both students said their parents taught them that the results aren’t as important as how hard they work for them.

“If you put the effort in, most of the time you’re going to get a good result,” Conklin said. “And if you don’t get a good result, then go back and fix what you did wrong.”

Nikolov described her parents’ advice as a winning strategy.

“Usually when I adapt that mentality to something, it ends up coming out pretty well,” she said. “I think that’s taken off some pressure over the years, but it’s also helped me grow as a student.”

Nikolov clinched the valedictorian title with a 4.83 GPA; Conklin earned a 4.53.

With a continued emphasis on teamwork, Conklin described a support network that included not only her parents, but teachers and fellow students.



Katherine Nikolov, left, and Molly Conklin are the respective valedictorian and salutatorian of the East Hampton High School Class of 2019.

Conklin’s fifth grade teacher, Jonathan Baine, played a crucial role in her academic success by emphasizing the importance of education and instilling good study habits, she said. That’s when she really became motivated to succeed.

Baine, reached at Center School this week, said he couldn’t pat himself on the back too much for his role in Conklin’s academic achievements since she was naturally easy to motivate.

“She didn’t just care about the end result; she actually enjoyed the process,” he said.

He recalled her close friendship with two other highly-motivated girls he referred to back then as “the Triplets.”

“The three of them were just wonderful kids and I always remember those three girls; they all stick out in my mind because they all enjoyed that process,” he said.

Nikolov singled out French teacher Emily Frederick as one of her most influential teachers.

ers.

“She has always been for me more than just my teacher,” Nikolov said. “She’s been so supportive of everything I’ve wanted to do. She’s always there to give advice or just to talk to. She’s a great role model and someone I really look up to, as more than somebody who teaches me French, but somebody that I can grow up to be like when I’m older.”

Frederick in an email this week recalled asking Nikolov when class rankings came out whether she’d secured the top spot.

“She looked me in the eye, nodded subtly, and smiled slightly,” Frederick wrote. “I was not surprised, yet her response made me even more impressed with Katie as a person. It is rare to find such a combination of ability and modesty in a young person. She is truly an outstanding student, extremely talented and hard-working, and she is also a worldly, practical, and kind person.”

Referendum Next Week on East Hampton, School Budgets

by Elizabeth Regan

Against the backdrop of a state budget approved by lawmakers earlier this month, voters in East Hampton will have a better idea how much municipal aid to expect when they head out to the polls on Tuesday to vote on the local spending plan.

And the Board of Education is hoping that an unexpected \$155,303 in education aid from the state – which resulted after the state legislature authorized a higher grant amount than East Hampton officials factored into local revenue projections when crafting the town budget – will allow for the restoration of the 1-to-1 Chromebook program in the middle school.

Tuesday’s vote will ask taxpayers to weigh in on a \$46.40 million spending plan that represents an increase of \$953,531, or 2.1%, over current year spending.

The \$31.18 million proposed education budget is an increase of \$536,525, or 1.75%, over current spending. The general government budget proposal comes in at \$15.22 million, an increase of \$417,006, or 2.82%.

If approved, the mill rate is projected to rise to 33.27 mills – an increase of 1.06 mills, or 3.29%, over the current mill rate.

The reductions came after the failed general government budget proposal went down by 83 votes, while the education budget proposal failed by 19 votes. Advisory questions showed a majority of voters thought both budget proposals were too high.

The entire budget planning season leading up to the May 21 local budget referendum occurred before the state budget was approved – which left town officials to guess about how much funding the state would provide for education and roads, and whether or not Gov. Ned Lamont’s plan to require most cities and towns to pay for a portion of teacher retirement costs would come to fruition.

East Hampton’s revised budget proposal up for a vote next week represents a cut of \$305,965 from the initial spending plan shot down at the polls, including a \$77,280 reduc-

tion in the town government budget and a \$77,500 reduction in the school budget. Officials at that time also got rid of the \$151,000 they had initially set aside in the event that Lamont’s teachers’ retirement plan came to fruition.

As it turns out, the legislature passed the state budget without the teachers’ pension provision – which means the cost-sharing arrangement will likely not be instituted in the coming year.

Lamont is expected to sign off on the state budget.

The \$36,000 Question

School board Chairman Chris Goff told the *Rivereast* Wednesday that school officials need \$36,000 in order to be able to continue the Chromebook program, which gives each student in the middle and high school a dedicated tablet computer to use throughout the school day in what is rapidly replacing the textbook-based learning framework.

Cuts to the capital budget ordered by the Town Council back in April led school officials to eliminate the program from the middle school.

Goff said the state budget is more favorable to municipalities than a proposal from Lamont that was used as the basis of local revenue projections. That means what officials thought would be a \$263,925 decrease in education aid compared to the current year will actually be a decrease of \$108,622.

Goff emphasized the board is asking the Board of Finance and Town Council for “a tiny portion” of what he described as a \$155,000 “surplus.”

In a June 12 letter to the finance board and council, Goff said officials could reinstate the Chromebook program at the middle school while using the rest of the unanticipated education funding from the state to further reduce the projected 1.06 mill increase to the mill rate.

“The funding of the Chromebooks still allows the mill rate to be set at under 1.0 mills and maintains an important program for the

children of East Hampton,” Goff wrote.

Council Chairman Melissa Engel, before receiving the Board of Education letter, told the *Rivereast* she can’t support reinstating the Chromebooks or any other items reduced over the course of the budget process – like a second police officer that would have been hired mid-year along with one new officer that remains in the budget.

Engel cited the results of the advisory questions at last month’s referendum, which showed 825 of 1,638 responding voters thought the general government budget proposal was too high and 906 of 1,648 responding voters thought the education proposal was too high.

“I have to go with what the people say, and that’s what they said. That was like an enormous number,” she said.

Engel acknowledged the middle school Chromebooks and an additional police officer are expenses residents would love to support, but said the implications for taxpayers remain a real issue going forward.

“Any extra money should be reducing the mill rate, or we ought to be looking at next year – and what the state might be taking away from us – and be prudent about it,” she said.

Goff argued that the budget has been lowered since the failed referendum and that the projected increase to the mill rate has been lessened as well. Applying the \$36,000 for Chromebooks and using the rest to lower the mill rate even further means “everyone could win,” according to Goff.

“I would think there would be overwhelming support of the budget if they did that,” he said.

Finance board Chairman Richard Brown told the *Rivereast* he was approached last week about the Chromebook proposal by Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith. But Brown said conversations with some members of the finance board yielded no support for the idea.

Brown, like Engel, cited the results of the advisory questions at the last referendum.

“Adding additional funds seems to go against the voters’ wishes,” he said.

He described the education cost sharing grant as the state’s way of reimbursing municipalities for a portion of the money spent on education.

“That’s taxpayer money that should go to taxpayers to help offset the high taxes that we’re seeing. So to siphon the money off to increase the school budget is counterintuitive,” Brown said.

When asked what he thinks might happen if the general government budget fails on Tuesday, he said it’s his personal opinion that any further cuts would have to come out of the capital budget.

“I don’t think there’s any slack in the operational budget of the town. That’s been pared as much as it could be, I believe. That just leaves capital. Education is part of the capital budget, and we will approach it fairly,” he said.

The school board’s initial \$432,000 request for capital funding has already been reduced to \$132,500. The amount that remains to date would cover the 1-to-1 Chromebook program in the high school, the replacement of one HVAC unit and asbestos abatement as needed.

The situation unfolding now is reminiscent of last year’s divisive budget season, during which an unexpected \$715,415 in education funding came through from the state. The fight ended in October after four referendums when a compromise between Brown and Town Manager Michael Maniscalco paved the way for a \$140,000 transfer from the town’s capital reserve fund to reinstate two of the eight teaching positions that had been cut earlier in the budget process.

Brown said he hopes this year is not “a replay” of that prolonged and contentious budget season.

“Last year, we had such animosity between the boards, and this year we cooperated and worked together. I would hate to see that undermined by a handful of activists,” he said.

New Top Dog is a Pastor's Pooch in Hebron

by Sloan Brewster

This year's Top Dog may have won through divine intervention.

According to the results of the 19th annual Top Dog Contest, Gracie, a 9-year old rat terrier owned by the Rev. Denise Esslinger, pastor at Gilead Congregational Church, is the number 1 Top Dog and will wear the number 1 tag all year, said Town Clerk Carla Pomproicz.

The number 2 tag went to Oscar – a 10-year-old English Labrador retriever and “the best dog in the world,” according to his owner Linda Waitkus – and the number 3 award went to Molly, who is owned by Michelle Waters.

The winners were announced last week.

Pomproicz reserves the first three tags she distributes every June with dog licenses for the winners of the annual contest.

The contest is held at the Russell Mercier Senior Center, where Pomproicz puts up photos of all the contestants and leaves a ballot box. This year, there were 12 pups vying for the winning tags. Pomproicz said she gets entries from folks who send in their dog's photos, all of which are entered into the contest.

She then instructs people interested in voting to go to the senior center to vote by paper ballot.

“Gracie's very famous up there,” the town clerk said.

Perhaps. But two seniors at the center Monday who said they voted in the contest, voted for Cricket, another dog in the contest.

“It's just the way he looks, his facial hair, his grooming,” said Barbara Nowak. “But they're all very cute and the owners must be so proud.”

Pat Carter – who also voted for Cricket – and said the pooch's “mommy” brought him to the center and did some campaigning at the door –

had another take on how Gracie won.

“Gracie had divine intervention,” she said.

Gracie was a rescue puppy in a litter from a rat terrier rescue in Nashville, Tennessee, Esslinger said. She was there on a conference and the foster mother met her at the airport before she headed home.

“So being such a small dog, Gracie came home on the plane with me,” Esslinger said.

Esslinger started looking for a new dog when George, another rat terrier she had, was getting old. She chose the name Gracie in memory of Gracie Allen, who was married to George Burns and with whom Allen shared the stage as a comedy team.

Allen was also known for a saying that hits close to Esslinger's heart.

“She said, ‘Never place a period where God has placed a comma,’ she said. “Gracie Allen said that to George – and God is still speaking.”

Esslinger attributes Gracie's victory in the Top Dog Contest to a little-known fact.

“She had a campaign manager,” she said.

Janet and David Kline have been working with the little pooch on some issues, namely a fear of wearing a leash, Esslinger said.

“[Janet] was the one who said, ‘You have to put Gracie in for the number one dog; she's the sweetest dog,’” Esslinger recalled.

Esslinger agreed and Kline hit the campaign trail. She put up posters promoting the dog's cuteness and told everyone she met how sweet the dog was, encouraging them to go to the senior center and put a ballot with her name on it in the box.

“Dogs have a way of sharing that unconditional love and I think that is reflective of God's love for us and I think Gracie touched them

with that love,” Esslinger said.

Indeed she did, according to Janet Kline. Kline called Gracie “an angel,” and said that just by looking into her eyes it's apparent she has “something more” going on than the typical dog.

“She just understands,” Kline added.

“In her own way she helps people get through terrible times,” Kline continued. “She's just the sweetest little dog.”

According to Kline, Gracie had a scare when she was younger, and was leery of leashes because of that. She and her husband – who each are members of Gilead Congregational Church – offered to work with the dog.

After working with David Kline for a short time, Gracie got used to wearing a leash, Kline said. She credits her husband with the success, saying he's known as “The Dog Whisperer” because of his way with canines. She said her husband, on the other hand, gives all the kudos to the dog, claiming she trained herself.

The first time she and her husband took Gracie, Kline recalled, she was timid and shook in the car, seemingly afraid of the world. Still, they brought her to their house and did the impossible.

“We slipped a collar on her and we would always say, ‘I know a secret, Gracie has a collar and she doesn't know it,’” Kline said.

They took her on two or three leash-free walks, just allowing her to explore and see how fun it was outside, and then put on the leash. Now the dog not only lets folks put a leash on her, she gets excited to go when the Klines come to get her and happily sits on Kline's lap for the ride.

The Klines lost their dog in October and



The Rev. Denise Esslinger, pastor at Gilead Congregational Church, poses with Gracie, her 9-year-old rat terrier, who is Hebron's 2019 Top Dog.

weren't ready for another, Kline said. Now they fill the void with Gracie, when they need a “puppy fix.”

“We have her every Tuesday,” she said. “We call it Gracie Tuesday.”

Hebron BOS Approves Extra Police Coverage at Schools

by Sloan Brewster

The Board of Selectmen last week voted to hire an additional part-time school resource officer to augment a plan that will provide two-part time officers at each of the town's elementary schools.

Ultimately, the plan will supplement the town's police force – which currently includes three part-time officers and one Resident State Trooper – with a total of four more part-time officers.

At last Thursday's Board of Selectmen meeting, Selectman John Collins presented recommendations from the Public Safety Task Force that included the additional part-time officer. The board voted to spend \$50,400 to fund the recommendations.

Selectmen had originally planned to hire three more part-time officers for the local force. One of those part-time officers would have been a school resource officer (SRO) shared by both elementary schools, while the others would provide local patrol.

The three part-time officers were included in the 2019-20 budget approved by voters last month.

The new plan reduces the additional patrol hours from 20 to 12 and will put two part-time school resource officers at each school, Collins said. The new part-time officer will bring the total police budget from \$130,297.00 to \$180,697.00.

Local patrol hours were changed in light of the task force's review of crime in town, Collins said.

“Crime in Hebron is very low, probably amongst the lowest crime rates anywhere,” he said. “However, we have between 3,500 and

4,500 service calls a year.”

A spike in vehicle theft in town, which was one of the reasons for increasing the amount of patrols, is not exclusive to Hebron, according to Collins.

“[It] turns out to be regional, statewide and national,” he said at the meeting.

The Public Safety Task Force, which met four times, included “an expert panel with citizens with law enforcement backgrounds,” Collins said in his presentation. The nine members and two alternates included representation from the boards of selectmen and education, a juvenile prosecutor, a retired state police sergeant, a Hartford police sergeant, a local parent and a Hebron fire fighter.

The task force met four times, with presentations and discussions by professionals including Glastonbury Police Chief Marshall Porter.

Formed by selectmen in April, the group was charged with looking at data and advising selectmen on ways to staff the police department in town, reduce crime and protect local schools.

Collins called the presentations about school resources “very eye opening.” He said the consensus was SROs were becoming increasingly necessary in the changing school climate.

Selectmen's next task will be to determine a job description for the SROs and look at the financing.

Board of Finance member Malcolm Leichter in a phone call Tuesday said the finance board will discuss where the funds will come from at its June 27 meeting.

More state revenue will be coming to the town in the 2019-2020 fiscal year than was anticipated, he said, adding that some of the funds

could be used to cover the expense of the additional SRO.

In the 2019-2020 budget, the town set aside \$600,000 to cover an anticipated decrease in the Educational Cost Sharing [ECS] grant from the state based on a preliminary proposal from Gov. Ned Lamont in February.

“We budgeted for the worst case,” Leichter said. “We're getting more money from the state than what we planned on.”

The ECS funding, now that a state budget has been approved by lawmakers with more favorable numbers, is set to come in \$187,873 lower than the current year's grant amount, according to Leichter. Since local officials budgeted for a much deeper cut, that means there's about \$434,000 of additional funds in the budget.

The town also set aside \$71,039 it will not have to spend to cover teacher retirement obligations – a response to a proposal by Gov. Ned Lamont to shift 25% the cost of retirements from the state to municipalities.

“That did not come through,” he said.

There may also be some additional funds leftover from the resident state trooper's benefits, Leichter said.

“My understanding is that the legislature passed something that will require the state to pay 50% of that,” Leichter said.

He said his recommendation to the finance board will be to fund the additional part-time officer using the unexpected revenue from the state.

“It's in the budget anyway. Just reallocate it, that's what I'm going to say.”

In other school news, the Board of Education has appointed an interim superintendent ahead of the departure of Superintendent of Schools Timothy Van Tassel, who has taken a job as superintendent of Suffield Public Schools.

The board unanimously agreed to appoint Lynne Pierson, of Glastonbury, to the position.

Pierson was referred to the board by the board's legal team, said Erica Bromley, adding that that's often where boards of education get the names of interim superintendents.

“She has phenomenal experience and a variety of experience,” Bromley said. “She's been in different kinds of districts. She has a really amazing humor that we all really liked and she also has had experience with building projects.”

In light of the upcoming project to replace the pipes at Hebron Elementary School due to lead in the water, the board thought Pierson's building experience was important, Bromley said.

Bromley said she thought Pierson “was super knowledgeable.”

“She was very personable,” she said. “I think she really did her homework; she was familiar with the district and the work that we had done.”

Board member Heather Petit added that the entire board was pleased with Pierson.

“Every answer [she gave] was spot on,” Petit said. “All of us agreed, and that doesn't happen.”

Pierson will start on June 24, and will have some time working with Van Tassel, Bromley said.

Obituaries

East Hampton

Ricky Joseph Garofalo

Ricky Joseph Garofalo, 60, of East Hampton, passed away Friday June 7, at Marlborough Health Care. Born Jan. 13, 1959, in Middletown, he was the son of Rosemary (Anderson) Garofalo and the late Guy Garofalo Jr.

Ricky was a lifelong resident of East Hampton and had worked in the construction industry for many years. Ricky was a NASCAR racing fan and loved watching basketball and football games.

Besides his mother, Ricky is survived by his brother, Justin Garofalo and sister-in-law Madalyn of East Hampton; a sister, Laurie Taylor of East Hampton; a sister-in-law, Cathie Garofalo of East Hampton; and many nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by his brother, Guy Garofalo III, and his sister, Gina Garofalo.

Funeral arrangements are private. To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

John E. Bard

John E. Bard, 58, died Sunday, June 9, at L&M Hospital. He was born in Norwich Jan. 9, 1961, to Winfred "Red" and Rachel (Lisee) Bard.

John was a member of the Arc New London County. He enjoyed bowling, arts and crafts, and attending dances; he loved to dance. When John was younger, he was an avid Special Olympian, with a focus on track and field.

John is survived by his mother, Rachel Bard of Colchester; his sisters, Linda Clarke and her significant other Mark Duso of Michigan, Lorie Trott of Colchester and Lisa Berryman and husband Michael of East Hampton; a nephew, Richard Trott of Norwich and niece Amanda Trott of Colchester; great-nephew and niece Brandon Liggett and Brianna Liggett; he is also survived by many aunts, uncles and cousins.

John was predeceased by his father Winfred "Red" Bard.

Calling hours were held Thursday, June 13, at Belmont Funeral Home, 144 S. Main St., Colchester. A 10:30 a.m. Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated today, June 14, at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave. Colchester; burial will immediately follow at New St. Andrew's Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations in John's memory may be made to the Special Olympics or The Arc New London County (thearecct.org/donate).

Visit belmontfh.com to leave condolences to the family.

Portland

Rocco J. Marone Jr.

Rocco "Rock" Marone, 76, of Portland, peacefully passed away on Wednesday, June 5. He is survived by his loving wife of 55 years, Mary "C o o k i e" (B i n e z e w s k i) Marone. Rock was born on May 16, 1943, the son of Rocco J. Marone, Sr. and Mary Lou (McClure) Marone.

He was predeceased by his beloved son Jeffrey J. Marone.

Rocco was retired from Pratt & Whitney in Middletown after 40 years of service. He loved the New York Yankees, NASCAR races and his John Deere tractor. He also enjoyed spending time with his many nieces and nephews. Rock also had a special relationship with his nephew Paul Binezewski where they created many special memories together.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held in his honor in St. Mary Church, Portland, 51 Free-stone Ave., at 11 a.m. Saturday, June 15. Burial will follow at St. Mary Cemetery. There will be no calling hours.

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

East Hampton

Claire Cora Belair

Claire Cora (Heroux) Belair, 83, of East Hampton, wife of the late Eugene Maurice Belair, Sr., passed away Friday, June 7, at Hartford Hospital. Claire was born in Woonsocket, R.I., and was the daughter of the late Albert and Marie (Parenteau) Heroux.

Claire lived in Middletown for 40 years where she worked as a waitress at Ford News Diner for over 20 years and as a cook at the Elks Club for many years. She was a member of St. Patrick Church in East Hampton. She loved puzzles, chocolate, crocheting, and gardening. Claire was a devoted wife, mother, and *mémère* whose grandchildren were the light of her life.

Claire is survived by her five sons, Eugene M. Belair Jr. of New Britain, Michel D. Belair and his wife Susan of Cromwell, Stephen R. Hinkel-Belair and his wife Roberta of Middletown, Jerome A. Belair and his wife Susan of East Hampton; Jeffery T. Belair and his wife Cheryl of Meriden and her two daughters, Roxanne C. Belair of Middletown and Joslyn L. Strong and her husband Stephen of East Hampton; a brother, Roger Heroux of South Carolina; two sisters, Jackie Dorval of Fort Myers, Fla., and Madeline Grondines of South Carolina and her twelve grandchildren.

Besides her husband and parents, Claire was predeceased by a sister, Pauline Heroux and two brothers, Ronald and Albert Heroux.

A graveside service will be held Friday, June 14, at 9 a.m. at the State Veterans Cemetery, 317 Bow Ln., Middletown.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Claire's memory may be made to Saint Jude Children's Research Hospital, P.O. Box 1000 Dept. 142, Memphis, TN 38101-9908.

To share memories and condolences to the family, visit doolittlefuneralservice.com.

Hebron

Michael J. Federico

"I did it my way" characterizes the life of Michael J. Federico, 62, of Westerly, R.I., and Hebron, who passed away at Hartford Hospital on Wednesday, May 29. Born in Westerly, RI, he was the son of Irma Federico of Westerly, R.I., and the late Rudolph Federico.

A graduate of Westerly High School, Michael continued his education at the University of Rhode Island where he studied political science and psychology. While enrolled as a full-time student, he ran for the Westerly Town Council as an independent and won, setting the record for youngest town councilman at the age of 22.

With an entrepreneurial spirit, Michael started several businesses in Rhode Island. Subsequently, he served as a tax practitioner for over 30 years and was a certified financial planner in the Manchester area for over 25 years. It wasn't uncommon for him to donate his services to single mothers and active duty military.

In addition to his mother, he leaves behind his beloved wife of 32 years, Karen (West) Federico; two daughters and son-in-law, Hillary R. Federico (Matt Andrew) of Westerly, R.I., and Courtney A. Federico of Troy, NY; eight siblings and 25 nieces and nephews.

To best honor him, he would ask you to do one good deed for someone today.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his honor to the Westerly Land Trust. Checks may be mailed to P.O. Box 601, Westerly, RI 02891, and online donations can be made at westerlylandtrust.org. Please include Michael's name on the memo line if donating by check or in the comments section if donating online.

We invite friends to join family in celebrating Michael's life on Saturday, June 15, his 63rd birthday, from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at Gaffney-Dolan Funeral Home, 59 Spruce St., Westerly, R.I.

To express condolences, visit gaffneydolanfuneralhome.com.

Colchester Police News

6/4: Colchester Police said Maryann Q. Powell, 60, of 120 Blydenburg Ave., New London, was arrested and charged with drug paraphernalia and possession of a controlled substance.

Andover Police News

6/3: State Police said Max Schletter, 25, of 19 Boulder Lane, Mansfield Center, was arrested and charged with DUI and carrying a dangerous weapon.

6/5: State Police said Carlamarie Goulet, 55, of 10 Shoddy Mill Rd., was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and third-degree assault.

Hebron Police News

6/2: State Police said Roman Paprocki, 58, of 16 Settlers Path, Amston, was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct, interfering with an emergency call and third-degree assault.

6/2: State Police said William T. McGlynn, 56, of 106 Hunt Rd., Columbia, was arrested and charged with DUI and following too closely.

East Hampton Police News

5/27: Kyle Cone, 58, of 94 Abbey Rd., was arrested and charged with violation of a protective order, East Hampton Police said.

Also, from May 27-June 2, officers responded to eight medical calls, two motor vehicle crashes and four alarms, and made 33 traffic stops.

