

RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

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

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Fire Destroys Home... A fire in Andover Tuesday night destroyed a Burnap Brook Road home. No one was injured in the blaze. See story on page 7.

Todt Family Members Were Found Stabbed

by Karla Santos

While the official cause of death is still pending, preliminary Florida medical examiner's reports released Thursday indicates three of the four Todt family members found dead last week had been stabbed.

The reports indicated Megan Todt, 42, and her sons Aleksander, 13, and Tyler, 11, were found by police dead with stab wounds to their abdomen. Her daughter Zoe, 4, had no evidence of injury.

The bodies of all four were found to be in early putrefactive decomposition, the reports said.

Anthony Todt, 44, was arrested and charged by Florida police last week with murdering his wife and three children, as well as the family dog. According to *The Day* of New London, two Florida media outlets have filed a motion asking the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court in Osceola County, Fla., to unseal the affidavit for the warrant that led police to arrest Todt on Jan. 13 and find the bodies of his family in their Celebration, Fla., home.

The Day reported that a hearing on whether the warrant should be made public is scheduled for today.

Meanwhile, a closer look at a health care fraud warrant, unsealed last week, shows Todt allegedly bilked the federal government out of tens of thousands of dollars, charging Medic-

aid for hundreds of patient visits at his Colchester practices that simply never took place.

The warrant also claims that Todt admitted the fraud to investigators, saying that it was a means to pay back loans he had taken out from various lenders. The warrant claims Todt – who was allegedly living in his Colchester physical therapy practice during the week and going home to Florida on the weekends – flatly told investigators he was living beyond his financial means.

The warrant shows that a federal investigation into Todt, a physical therapist with two practices in Colchester, began last April.

The warrant provides a detailed investigation that includes the testimony of at least six witnesses, proof from various insurance companies, evidence from his business' website and information from the computer software he used to manage patient records and appointments.

Todt is the owner of Performance Edge Sports LLC, which does business as Family Physical Therapy. The business has two locations, both in Colchester, one at 7 Park Ave., suite 4 and the second office at 744 Middletown Rd.

According to the warrant, Todt was charging insurance companies for an outstanding num-

See Todt page 2

Taking a Cold Dip For a Cause

by Jack Lakowsky

YMCA Camp Ingersoll raised just over \$14,000 at its sixth annual Chill for Change fundraiser held Saturday, Jan. 18 at Jobs Pond on the campground.

According to Camp Ingersoll Director Benjamin Silliman, this figure represents the highest amount raised in the event's six-year history.

"We aim for around \$15,000, so we just about reached it," Silliman said. "We usually get donations afterwards, so we're confident we'll reach that this year. There's growth every year. This is our big kick-off for the year and it shows we have such a devoted base of people."

Silliman said about \$12,700 was raised last year.

Silliman said that 27 people plunged through the paper-thin layer of ice and into the 33-degree water to show their support for the camp and the service it offers. Plungers helped raise money through donations and sponsorships. Each plunger raised a minimum of \$100. Participants were allowed to dress in costume—everything from penguins, pirates and campfire snack foods. Awards are given to Best Costume and Best Team Theme. The plunger who raised the most money received a free session of camp.

Silliman said that all the moneys raised go towards financial assistance for families who want their children to enjoy camp but need help paying for it.

"The truth is, it's expensive. Families should be able to send their kid to camp for at least a day," Silliman said. "Our goal is to make camp as accessible as possible."

The \$14,000 raised at Chill for Change will be added to the assistance provided to families by the camp. Silliman said the camp usually distributes about \$130,000 in financial aid to families through grants like the My Time fund, which assists cover the costs of campers whose families are afflicted by cancer. Silliman added that children whose families are dealing with cancer could experience tremendous stress. He said camp could alleviate children of such a strenuous situation.

"Part of our mission is create growth," Silliman said. "We teach kids how to manage their emotions and resolve conflicts."

Silliman stated the importance of having such a robust, 77-acre camp in a small-town like Portland.

Silliman said the \$14,000 would be distributed amongst about 50 campers. In total, the Chill for Change event has raised more than \$50,000 for campers.

According to the camp's parent handbook, Ingersoll's day camp program is broken down into two categories. "Traditional Day Camp" is described in the handbook as the most well-rounded experience, exposing campers to all camp activities. The other category is a specialty camp, designed for campers with a spe-



The Middlesex YMCA held its annual Chill for Change last weekend, raising more than \$14,000 for Camp Ingersoll. Pictured is the "Y Nots" team, which claimed the Best Theme Award for its s'mores costumes.

cific interest.

Silliman extended thanks sponsors Redi-Rooter and Prime Source, who provided the

bathrooms and T-shirts, respectively, and Butler Construction. The Portland Volunteer Fire Department also volunteered its services.

Todt cont. from Front Page

ber of services that were never rendered, some including children.

Todt was a licensed physical therapist from 1999, until Sept. 2019, when his license expired.

One of the witnesses interviewed for the investigation is the mother of two children that received physical therapy at Todt's business. According to the warrant, one of the children was scheduled for 208 appointments, with the last appointment April 30, 2018. However, Medicaid paid Todt for services provided to this child on 391 different dates of service between Jan. 1, 2015 and May 16, 2018.

"In other words, Medicaid paid Todt and Family Physical Therapy for 163 dates of service [when there was no record of the child] having had any appointment," the warrant states.

Meanwhile, the woman's second child was scheduled for a total of 220 separate appointments – but Medicaid paid Todt for 395 different dates of service.

The woman told investigators her children never had more than two appointments per week, and never on the weekend. But, the warrant states that Todt and Family Physical Therapy billed Medicaid for having provided three or more dates of services in one week for one of the two children for 62 separate weeks. On 29 of those weeks, Todt billed for four or more dates of service provided to this child in one week. On three weeks, Todt billed Medicaid for having provided physical therapy services for five days, every day Monday to Friday, to this one child.

The woman also told investigators, according to the warrant, that sometime in 2018, Todt

informed her his office no longer had a pediatric physical therapist on staff and that she "would have to find a different physical therapy practice for her children."

The woman told investigators she started to take her children to a practice in Lisbon; she said it took Todt's business about four months to provide her two children's records to the new therapist, and that when Todt finally provided those records they appeared to have been made up.

"The records for [the children] appeared to be mirror images of each other, as if Todt had performed the same service to both children, which did not make sense, because the children had different abilities," the warrant states.

In addition, these records also included notes for additional dates of service that did not match with the actual appointment dates for the woman's children, the warrant states.

The woman also told investigators that Todt told her he worked at his business in Connecticut on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and spending the rest of the week in Florida, where he lived with his family. Todt also told her that while in Connecticut, he was living at his business, showering at the gym, and then returning to the business to sleep.

Another witness interviewed by investigators said her child was injured playing basketball and as a result had surgery. A few weeks after the surgery, the child began to receive physical therapy from Family Physical Therapy at the 7 Park Ave. office.

The physical therapy sessions allegedly ended Oct. 25, 2017, but, according to the warrant, Todt and Family Physical Therapy billed Medicaid for physical therapy services purport-

edly provided to the child on 172 dates between Nov. 1, 2017, and Dec. 5, 2018.

The woman also told investigators that, while she was a Medicaid member, sometimes her son was also covered by a Cigna health plan that was held by the woman's ex-husband. According to the warrant, on 51 of the 2018 dates Todt submitted to Medicare for payment – dates where allegedly there was never an appointment to begin with – he also billed Cigna for service.

Even after the woman and the child moved to North Carolina in the summer of 2018, the warrant states, Todt continued to bill Medicaid for services allegedly provided.

There was still another witness investigators talked to, who told them her child received services from Family Physical Therapy and was scheduled for 47 separate appointments between Jan. 25, 2018 and May 30, 2019. Medicaid and Anthem paid Todt for services purportedly provided to the child of the third witness on 169 different dates of service between January 2018 and April 2019. These insurance companies paid Todt for 122 dates of service without record of the child of the third witness having any appointment.

The warrant goes on to mention still more cases – including one where Todt billed Medicaid for services he allegedly provided someone despite the person being a patient at Boston Children's Hospital during that time, and several instances where Todt billed insurance companies for weekend appointments that never occurred, as the offices were closed weekends.

One of the most blatant cases of fraud, however, came when Todt allegedly billed Medicaid for physical therapy services he claimed to have provided to 16 different children on Sat-

urday, Aug. 3, 2019. Todt billed Medicaid for providing about two hours of physical therapy for each of the 16 children in that single day – for a total amount of hours well in excess of 24.

But not only is that total physically impossible, investigators reviewed the patient schedule for the business on its computer software and it showed no patients at all were scheduled for physical therapy that day.

In addition, Medicaid claims data indicates that from Jan. 1, 2017 to Oct. 17, 2019, Medicaid paid Todt for services allegedly provided on eight different Saturdays. Todt was paid \$20,833 for allegedly rendering services to 33 patients in a total of 148 appointments on those Saturdays. Todt was also paid by Medicaid for services supposedly provided on two Sundays in 2017. Todt was paid \$1,657 for alleged services to nine patients for 13 appointments on those two Sundays.

During the course of the investigation, federal agents interviewed Todt, who told them he was the only individual responsible for billing and also that no one else knew of his fraudulent practices.

Agents asked why he was committing this fraud and Todt's answer was that he had been borrowing money from lenders, and that he was billing for services that were not rendered "to keep pace with the personal loans he took out."

Todt and his business have taken loans or advances from over 20 commercial lenders, the warrant states.

There will be a memorial vigil in honor of the Todt family on the Town Green tonight at 6 p.m.

*From the Editor's Desk***Observations & Ruminations**

by Mike Thompson

Questions still remain in the Todt family murder case, and indeed, news outlets in Florida have been petitioning the court to unseal the warrant into the investigation. There's still no motive, still no cause of death.

As often happens in high-profile cases like these, speculation has run rampant on Facebook. There are people hypothesizing as to the cause of death, when the murders took place, the motive, and so on. As the *Rivereast* reported on last week and is doing so again this week, Anthony Todt was in a heap of money troubles, and was in the process of being evicted from his business up here as well as his condo in Florida. I've seen people wondering aloud on Facebook as to whether Todt suffered from any addiction problems, or gambling problems, to justify his dire financial straits.

I thought one commenter put things quite well, writing: "Some people need a vice to blame it on for it to fit in their American Judeo-Christian narrative. There are way worse things than drugs, sex and gambling. The reality is greed in and of itself is a huge vice but one we embrace because we think it drives people to work hard, but it can come at a cost when it spirals out of control."

The writer continued, "When someone has their whole sense of self-worth wrapped up in what kind of house they live in, what kind of car they drive, etc., they can be driven to anything to keep it and fall into the deepest darkness if they're about to lose it."

True, this is just more speculation – but it stood out to me. The writer, I feel, made a very good point. Society very much teaches us that, in the words of *Wall Street's* Gordon Gekko, greed is good. True, in recent years perhaps that mes-

sage has been deemphasized a bit, but it's still there. You see it every day – the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

And when you see the lives of those rich – lives that are sometimes shoved down our throats, via the internet and celebrity news shows – the urge to be one of them, one of the *crème de la crème*, can be tough to ignore. If you're not careful, keeping up with the Joneses can become a full-time job. Todt himself had told investigators in Connecticut that he was living beyond his means.

Now obviously, not everyone living beyond his or her means is a murderer. As I wrote last week, something inside Todt clearly snapped for him to kill his entire family. The truth may come out and it may very well be that he had some sort of addiction problem.

But the answer may be more complicated – and it may be that the socially-accepted addiction to money played a part.

Now, I'm not being as pedantic as to say "money is the root of all evil." Money can, and does, accomplish many great things. But maybe we, as a society, need to look at what we're doing with this money. Maybe the millionaires and billionaires can spread the wealth a little more, rather than continue to buy bigger and shinier things with it.

As the writer on Facebook posited, people can sometimes fall into the deepest darkness in their quest to achieve or maintain financial gain. Perhaps if people weren't taught from a young age that "the one with the most toys wins," they might be able to avoid falling into that dark despair.

* * *

See you next week.

East Hampton Senior Center Advocacy Group Raises Concerns

by Jack Lakowsky

The East Hampton Senior Center Advocacy Group raised concerns about transportation, nutrition and staffing at the center in a meeting on Tuesday.

Group members expressed these concerns to Town Manager David Cox.

Joyce Biondi, chairperson of the group, wrote a letter to the town manager articulating the main concerns of the senior community in Belltown.

"We have done extensive research on the transportation system, in particular MAT Dial-A-Ride/ADA Transportation," the letter reads. The group's letter goes on to say that the main complaints from riders have been scheduling concerns and the expense of using the service.

According to the letter, there is a \$3.50 fee for each ride on a bus, making for a \$7 round trip.

"If you need to use this every day, that's almost \$50 a week," Biondi said. "A lot of people cannot afford that."

Bob Atherton, group member and chairman of the town's Commission on Aging, affirmed Biondi's statement.

"I know people who have to choose between their medicine and a meal," he said. "I've seen people in tears – right here in town – because either they're only taking half their meds, or they've had to stretch a meal delivery over a few days that was only meant to last one day."

The letter also lists several recommendations coming from both the group and Senior Center

Director Jo Ann Ewing, including: purchasing another handicapped accessible vehicle, bringing the total to two; hiring a back-up driver and; a medical car.

"We're behind our neighbors on transportation," group member Donna Long said. "This is a serious need. We've studied this for years and haven't been able to get a conclusion [from the town]."

"We must improve services to our less fortunate neighbors," said Rowland Rux, who serves in both the advocacy group and on the Planning and Zoning Commission. "The senior center's budget will meet these goals." Rux explained that, when his wife was ill, he had to bring her to Middlesex Hospital in Middletown because East Hampton services did not provide transportation there. He said that, were he not retired-the case for many seniors- he would have had to sacrifice valuable work time to bring her to the hospital.

Atherton lambasted the center's nutrition program. The Community Renewal Team (CRT), a public service program based out of Hartford, provides food for the center.

"They need to go," Atherton said. "CRT could not possibly be less cooperative."

Atherton listed inconsistent pricing and delivery schedules as further grievances. He also said that CRT's café staff has a high turnover.

"Who wants to commute to here from Hartford for minimum wage?" Atherton posted to the group.

Biondi's letter also addresses concerns about the lunch program. It reads that CRT took more than a year to hire "...one very part time person."

Atherton and Biondi suggested the town should take over employment of a café manager.

"There has to be a way to fund a food program," Biondi said. "I won't lie, it will mean more time and effort."

CRT communications director Jason Black addressed the concerns raised by East Hampton. He said that they are making every effort to best serve the large area they cover, which extends from Enfield to the shoreline.

Black said that he and CRT would love to be able to provide five-day meal service to East Hampton, but with the rapidly increasing demand for senior services across the state, coupled with CRT's own budgetary restrictions, meeting this need would be a great challenge.

Black suggested that CRT and the town manager should meet to discuss the possibility of East Hampton finding resources to offset the cost of providing a five-day meal plan.

"Not only are nutritious meals important, but the communal feeling seniors get from just hanging out together," Black said. "Social experience is so important. That's why we're asking to work with the town."

Staffing was another concern raised by the group in the meeting. The letter reads the center needs to add a full-time program assistant

to its employment roster.

"We need extra staff, we need a full-time person," Biondi said in the meeting. "There are too many duties for part-time staff."

The letter reads that staff is often caught up covering for volunteers who were unable to come in. The letter also states the need for two drivers; one for regular transportation and the second for back up and scheduling.

"There are all the bare necessities," Rux said. "Every year, \$3,700 of my taxes go to the Board of Education. This is a very small percentage of the town's overall budget to help protect vulnerable people. There will be transparency and we will meet needs. We are making a joint plea."

Rux and the East Hampton PZC provided a memorandum stating that the demand for senior services in town will only increase because of its aging population.

"Data suggests that approximately 22% of our population are over the age of 65," the memorandum reads. This is a jump of 10% from 2010. According to the memorandum, this figure is only going to grow.

"In the past, this town has been adept at kicking the can down the road," Cox said. "The town is focusing on issues like this that have been left on the table."

Cox added that, given that one-fourth of East Hampton's population now falls into the older-adult developmental category, these are no longer issues to be procrastinated.

East Hampton VFW Teacher of the Year Award

by Jack Lakowsky

Kate Tietjen, library media specialist at East Hampton High School, was awarded with the Connecticut VFW's 2019-20 Teacher of the Year Award.

"I'm so honored," Tietjen said. "I don't know what else to say. I'm just so, so honored."

Tietjen has worked at EHHS for 11 years. Previously, she taught English in Old Saybrook.

Tietjen said that Principal Eric Verner and Vice Principal Matthew Warner nominated her for the award because of her seamless and rewarding collaborations with every department in the school, helping to design lessons and curriculum, especially in the English and Social Studies departments.

"They really understand my breadth of involvement," Tietjen said.

Tietjen will officially be honored at the East Hampton VFW Post in February.

The VFW Award is another of Tietjen's many accolades. She has received the Pellerin Class Teacher Award and the Carlton W.H. Erickson Award-which is given to new librarians who start their positions with an "auspicious beginning." She has also received the in-district honors of the Good Apple award and a Teacher Appreciation award.

"I've really tried making the library a hub of the school," Tietjen said of her work. Tietjen has strived to integrate new technologies. She is involved with the Senior Capstone Project. Students intern at the library under her supervision. She and her interns organized and "genre-fied" the school's library and are currently working on expanding their fiction section.

Tietjen said she also collaborates with the East Hampton Public Library to work together on enhancing student literary and educate them on all the uses a library can offer.

"We all work really well together," Tietjen said. "I really want to get kids reading."

Tietjen's background as a classroom educa-



Kate Tietjen

tor helps her design units and curriculums with her colleagues at the high school. She recently designed a unit with the professor of a college-level family and consumer sciences course on teaching higher-education quality essay writing to students enrolled in that class.

Another project Tietjen expressed pride for was helping an English teacher design a final project for a recently reinstated speech class. Tietjen and the teacher assigned this sophomore-level class a project requiring research and presentation of unsolved mysteries. Students researched topics ranging from the Loch Ness Monster to the murder of JonBenét Ramsey.

"I've never seen sophomores so excited about research," Tietjen said.

"I feel so lucky to work with such a dynamic, collaborative team," Tietjen added.

Portland School Board Approves 4.46% Budget Increase

by Jack Lakowsky

The Portland Board of Education unanimously approved Tuesday the Superintendent's requested budget increase of 4.46%, about \$1 million more than last year.

The budget will now be submitted to the Portland Board of Selectman and is subject to its approval.

The total proposed budget was \$22,204,376, up \$1.03 million from the current year's \$21,176,970.

The most significant increase between major budget categories was in the buildings and equipment section, with a more than 26% proposed increase. In the proposal, this hike is attributed to the impending end-of-life cycle of the school system's Chromebooks, which are needed to keep Portland's curriculum current.

Another increase of about \$143,000 was in the special education department. The increase is to add support staff and teachers. Director of Student Services Dawn Davis said that this will

actually result in savings to the town because special education students will remain in Portland, rather than be outplaced to another town. The cost of outplacing a student can reach \$100,000 per student, according to Davis.

According to Board of Education member Christopher Darby, certified Portland schools teachers and staff will receive a contractual increase this year of about 2.56%. This will increase contractual obligation costs by about \$249,292.

School board chair Sharon Peters provided an update on the search for a new schools superintendent to fulfill the position after the current superintendent, Phillip O' Reilly, retires.

"We've completed the first round of interviews," she said. "We'll be announcing the candidate by the end of February."

The town's budget referendum will be held on May 4.

Andover Home Destroyed by Fire

by Sloan Brewster

A structure fire in Andover has left a home destroyed.

In a phone call Wednesday, Andover Fire Chief Ron Mike said the call for a fire at 90 Burnap Brook Rd. came in at approximately 8:30 p.m. Tuesday.

When firefighters arrived at the scene there was heavy fire racing through thru 75% of the residence, he said. No one was hurt during the fire and there were no pets in the home.

"Everybody got out, no firefighters were injured," he said.

Firefighters got the fire under control by about 10:30 p.m. and remained on scene until 12:05 a.m. doing overall cleanup, such as digging for and putting out hot spots and making sure the fire was completely out.

Andover was joined initially by the Columbia and Bolton Departments, the chief said. The Willimantic Rapid Intervention Team

[RIT], a crew designed for firefighter rescue, was also on hand.

"They are there strictly for firefighters, to make sure all firefighters are safe and to rescue any if necessary," he said.

Hebron and Coventry fire departments each sent a tanker for the operation and Tolland sent two, the chief said. There was a dry hydrant a half mile down the road but it was tough to shuttle water up and down the narrow road.

While the fire marshal is investigating what caused the fire, according to the initial report the cause was related to a woodstove, the chief said.

The house was a total loss, Mike said. There was a single man living in the home, according to the chief.

"I asked if he needed assistance and he said he would be staying with his son," he said.

Andover Fire Dept Hopes to Use Local Home for Training

by Sloan Brewster

The Andover Fire Department is hoping to use a home in town for a training exercise.

The homeowner of 40 Townsend Rd., who wants the home demolished in order to build a new one on the property, approached the department with the idea of doing a controlled burn at the residence, said Chief Ron Mike in a phone call Monday.

Mike called it a “huge opportunity” for the department.

“Training, it’s a very big word. It’s all about the training. We don’t have much opportunity to do live training” Mike said. “This was an opportunity for us go into an unknown environment to train in.”

While the department does train at a Bloomfield Fire Department facility and in Willimantic at the Eastern Connecticut Fire School, those are familiar settings.

Mike said he could probably go through the Bloomfield building blindfolded, while the Townsend house “has that element of surprise.” Getting acclimated to working in an unknown environment is crucial as firefighters must navigate through unknown spaces at structure fires.

“The fire department is looking at it strictly for us to use a house that’s not the same square block we use every other time,” he said. “This guy’s house, I have no clue what the rooms are

laid out like and where the doors are.”

The department has used other residences for training operations, including the one across the street from the Townsend Road home, Mike said. A past fire chief looking to demolish his house to make room for a new one, the owner offered it for a live burn a couple years ago.

The department has also used a home on Route 6 for a controlled burn

Training takes on a lot of faces in those situations, the chief said. The department can do search and rescue, forcible entry, start fires and put them out one at a time in individual rooms and, ultimately, it will burn the house to the ground.

The process can take several weekends over the course of two to three months and there may be an opportunity to bring in departments from other towns, Mike said.

“It is kind of interesting in a lot of different ways,” he said. “It’s an opportunity for us to be able to use a building that’s going to be demolished anyway for training.”

Using the house for a training op will not cost taxpayers anything, unlike going to the Bloomfield facility, which costs \$300 a day and the department also has to bring its own pallets, which hikes the price up to \$500, Mike said. The department has used the facility twice

with the Bolton Fire Department, splitting the cost between the two.

He added that an in-town training op could take place on a weekday, which may be more doable for some members, who may have a tough time making it on a Sunday, when the department tends to schedule trainings in Bloomfield.

The National Fire Prevention Association [NFPA] recommends one live fire training per year for all fire fighters, Mike said.

Homeowner Janusz Jandzinski has applied to the Inland Wetlands and Watercourse Commission for permission to do the controlled burn. At the January 6 meeting, the commission discussed concerns about Saddle Brook, which is near the house, and potential runoff from the operation.

Mike’s son Ben Mike, head of training for firefighters and emergency medical technicians [EMT] explained to the commission that very little water is used in a controlled burn.

Water will run through the home and over time will filter through the earth, he said, according to the minutes.

He also said that a water curtain would be used to protect the barn near the home from catching fire and that the thousands of gallons

of water that would be used on the barn would come from the stream.

In the case of high winds, which would cause a hazard, the burn would be rescheduled.

If the commission denies the application, the homeowner has said the department would still be able to use the home for other training, such as forcible entry and practicing with ladders, the chief said.

“We’ll hopefully get to use is for some type of training, whether it’s live fire training or putting holes in the roof,” he said.

The commission is scheduled to approve or deny the application at its meeting on Feb. 3. So far, it has determined the operation is not a significant activity to the wetlands. Chairman Meghan Lally and member Jed Larson were opposed.

During discussion, Lally, an employee of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, said she was concerned that runoff from burn water would cause fish kills and believes there is potential for the operation to be a significant activity, according to the minutes.

Had the operation been deemed significant, a public hearing would have been required.

The homeowner could not be reached for comment before this story went to press.

Colchester | Marlborough | Colchester

Area Residents Offering Assistance to Australian Animals

by Karla Santos

A small Colchester knitting group has been working hard to help animals injured by wildfires in Australia – while in Marlborough, students have also taken up the cause of the affected animals.

Tana Handwerk, of Colchester, was contacted by her daughter – a veterinarian with a (wildlife) rescue rehab at a Massachusetts hospital – for help gathering items needed in to help the animals. A member of the Westchester Congregational Church’s knitting group, Handwerk reached out to the group for help.

Among the needed items were bird nests that can be knit or crocheted.

Australia is asking for bird nests because they can be used for a variety of small animals, Handwerk said.

“They are called bird nests, that’s originally what they were made for but we are finding that the wildlife rehabilitators and vets can use them for any animals that are small enough, that they rescue, to put in there,” Handwerk said.

She talked to the group about knitting the nests and members started to work on the project. First, they created a flyer announcing what they were doing.

“I was going to ask the Senior Center’s knitting group and the library’s knitting group if they would help us,” group member Mary Jane Slade said. “So I made up a little flyer and I put it up at town hall because I do a lot of the church fund raisers there.”

According to Slade, community members started to share the post on social media. People locally and from out of the state started to reach out to the group to offer their help by either donating yarn or helping to knit the nests.

“What’s happened is the phone is just ringing off the wall,” Slade said. “The church also received over 200 e-mails of people offering help.”

Slade, who sent out the patterns to people who asked for them, said the group has received offers to help not from only local people, but also from out of state, including California, Illinois, and Ohio.

“I’m just amazed,” Slade said.

The Westchester Congregational Church’s knitting group collected the nests at Thursday’s meeting. They will be sent to Handwerk’s daughter, who will provide them to the distribution center that will send them to Australia.

“We never expected this, never anticipated that it would go nationwide,” Handwerk said. “People are so generous and willing to help the animals. We are definitely overwhelmed but in a good way. It’s just so wonderful to see people

reaching out in this day and age to help.”

The efforts of helping Australian animals started after not only animals, but people and homes, have been destroyed by the wildfires since September.

Various agencies have estimated that a billion animals have scorched in Australia’s wildfires. These fires have also been responsible for the death of 28 people and more than 2,600 homes have fought the blazes. The size of the area destroyed by the wildfires – 25 million acres – has been compared to the size of the state of Indiana.

The Westchester Congregational Church’s knitting group was started in the spring of 2018 by Slade. The group had about nine active members, but more have joined after the bird nests effort was started. Most of the creations of the group are made for a cause and are donated. Before embarking on the project to make bird nests, the group had planned to start knitting chemo hats for the Helen & Harry Gray Cancer Center. The group also knits items such as hats for premature babies and blankets.

“We just want to make a difference,” Handwerk said. “We want to help.”

Marlborough Elementary Also Pitching In

Pattie Uccello, fourth-grade teacher at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School in Marlborough, and her students are making bat wraps to help Australian animals rescued from wildfires.

The project is also raising awareness among students, according to the teacher.

A few weeks ago, Uccello said, her class read an article in *Scholastic News* about saving the “ugly animals” since people mostly show support to the “cute animals” when giving funds for their protection.

Uccello said that soon after her class read the article, she heard that Kensington Bird & Animal Hospital was taking donations to distribute to a variety of Australian animals including koalas, joeys and bats.

The teacher said she started thinking about how bats are considered the “more ugly” animal on the list and should also be protected.

“The bats weren’t getting as much and there was really an overwhelming need for the bat wraps,” Uccello said. “They are such an important part of our ecosystem and the wraps seem to be something that a fourth-grade student was able to easily handle.”

Uccello said she started to make some wraps on her own and told her class that she had taken on a challenge of making at least 100 bat wraps. The students became excited and wanted to participate.



Westchester Congregational Church’s knitting group members, Mary Jane Slade, left, and Tana Handwerk, right, hold samples of the birds’ nests they’ve been knitting in the hopes of helping Australian animals rescued by wildfires.

She added that the project is “a great learning opportunity for them” because they would learn about giving back. She told the class that while it can be easy to make monetary contributions people still need to help out with physical work.

“Sometimes that becomes more important, that labor of love type of work,” she said.

The project started with students giving up their recess and staying in to help make the wraps. As interest grew, they created an afterschool club around the endeavor.

The club, which is only open to fourth graders and meets for the first time this week, will be active for the next two weeks, with students spending an hour after school volunteering to make, cut, sew and stuff the wraps.

Uccello said some students even asked if they could bring their own sewing machines.

“They want to somehow contribute,” Uccello said.

They spend the time folding, cutting, measuring and finding out the best way to make the most wraps they can out of the material they have, she added.

“There’s a lot of mathematical skill in-

involved,” Uccello said. “Parents have jumped on board too, willing to come in to help out. The students are really enjoying doing it and is meaningful to them.”

Uccello even said she has a feeling they will exceed the 100-wrap challenge she initially set for herself.

Students are also funding the project and have been donating materials – specifically 100% cotton, mainly flannel – for the wraps. School staff members have also provided donations.

Students also use sheets, thread, towels and fleece to make bedding for some of the animals. Some wraps also include pillows or a liner, according to Uccello, who did the research to assure the wraps were properly measured.

“This is the beginning where they are really starting to give up their own time for things,” Uccello said. “I thought this was a really good way of them getting involved on a volunteer basis on a small scale that they would be comfortable with.”

The bat wraps will act as the mom’s wings to the bat.

The hospital will take donations up to Jan. 31.



At left, Lois Carlson and Jean Gagnon on right do some weeding in garden beds in front of Old Town Hall, where later this year, a pollinator garden will be created. At right is a raised bed at Douglas Library will be converted into a demonstrator for pollinator pathways. In the photo on the right, Lois Carlson, left, and Jean Gagnon do some prep work to make the garden ready for the transformation come spring.

Planting with a Purpose in Hebron

by Sloan Brewster

Pollinator Pathways attract bees and butterflies and allows people to engage in their landscapes.

“You can be within them,” Michele Sinkez, of Hebron, said. “You don’t just sit in the distance and look at the landscape; you engage with the landscape.”

According to Sinkez, who is a member of the Green Committee, a Pollinator Pathway consists of gardens a short distance apart with native plants and bushes that attract pollinators, such as bees. The gardens serve as “stepping stones,” allowing the insects to fill up on fuel during their travels.

“Because the bees run out of steam,” Sinkez said. “They need nectar; they need energy.”

Sinkez and Lois Carlson, members of the Green Garden Gang, have been working to bring several such gardens to Hebron in the endeavor to create a corridor for bees and other pollinators, she told the Board of Selectmen at a meeting earlier this month. She asked the board for guidance on getting funding to invite speakers to town and for marketing to spread the word encouraging the creation of gardens that encourage bees and butterflies to come around.

Plantings that attract the tiny insects include *Rudbeckia fulgida* – also known as black-eyed Susan, *Echinacea* – or purple coneflower – *Agastache* – or hyssop – *Monarda* – or wild bergamot – *Eutrochium purpureum* – or Joe Pye weed – *Chelone obliqua* – or Turtlehead – and *Symphoricaricium novae-angliae* – or New England Aster.

“It’s more than just wildflowers; it’s shrubs and trees. A lot of people think, oh my God, I’m just going to have all these weedy looking things but there are particular shrubs that are good for the pollinators,” Sinkez said. “A red maple, a pussy willow, the serviceberry – I have that, those are fabulous – winterberry – everyone knows what winterberry is – hazelnut.”

To attract monarch butterflies in particular,

Sinkez said to plant *Asclepias syriaca* – or milkweed – without which the butterflies cannot exist.

“Milkweed is a big attractor for monarch butterflies,” she said. “It’s a really neat thing because the caterpillar eats the plant but it’s also the place where the monarch becomes the butterfly.”

Katherine Kosiba, advanced master gardener and president of the Colchester Garden Club, who redesigned and brought new life to an abandoned butterfly garden at Cohen Meadows in the Ruby Cohen Preserve in Colchester and has assisted folks from various towns in creating gardens for pollinators, encourages people to plant milkweed. The Colchester Garden Club gives out milkweed and distributes brochures on butterfly gardens, she said.

Beyond the benefits of attracting pollinators, the butterfly garden at Cohen Meadows has positively impacted people, Kosiba said. Folks approach her as she works in the garden and tell her that they have done something similar in their own yards or that they bring their children there. One woman told her she meditates in the spot. An elderly gentleman from Hebron, who said his grandchildren taught him how to take pictures on his cell phone, takes pictures of the butterflies there and a young man with cancer said he gets comfort from a butterfly garden he created at home.

Sinkez is working with Richard Calarco, director of Parks and Recreation, on getting the gardens in town. Calarco said he will provide her with plants and has suggested locations in town to develop the gardens, including a 900-square-foot spot at a parking lot on Kinney Road for the Raymond Brook Preserve trailhead.

In a phone call Wednesday, Calarco said he was also working with folks from the University of Connecticut Extension College and that all the plantings at Burnt Hill Park were native. The overall goal is to change all the town gar-

dens so that not only attract pollinators but are also sustainable and bring color all year.

In the fall, Sinkez started work at the Kinney Road site, shearing vegetation, laying down large sheets of cardboard and topping it with grass, leaves and mulch. The emphasis of that particular garden will mostly be for attracting monarch butterflies

Sinkez, who said she’s also getting lots of help in the endeavor from master gardener Jean Gagnon, will also create pollinator gardens at Old Town Hall and the Douglas Library, where she plans to create a demonstrator garden in a raised bed previously used for vegetables.

A couple local business owners have also told her they want to put pollinator gardens at their businesses, she said. True pollinator pathways involve town property, business owners and residents.

Sinkez is hoping to get funding to purchase environmental films to play at the library and senior center, such as *The Pollinators* to educate people on the importance of pollinator gardens. She also hopes to handout saplings, such as of a *Cornus florida* – or the dogwood tree – which is native to northeastern Connecticut and host to more than 100 different insects that provide nutrition to bees and other insects.

The *Cornus florida* is a better option than the Kousa Dogwood – also known as the Chinese, Korean or Japanese Dogwood – she said.

“It’s not a host to anything,” she said of the Kousa. “It’s only purpose is to look good.”

Sinkez wants to bring about a mind shift so that people move from planting only for appearance and instead make sure they are also planting “what is beautiful for the earth.”

The gardens are a response to the decline of bees and other pollinators, including butterflies, as well as a response to the decline of open space in “our industrial-agricultural system,” she said.

“There’s a decline [in pollinators] because

America loves the green lawn,” she said. “They have an obsession with this massive green space. There’s a decline because of invasive species that are overtaking native species. There’s a decline because of chemical insect pesticides – the misuse of them, the overuse of them. All of these factors affect these little insects.”

Sinkez is hoping to create a corridor of pollinator gardens connecting nearby towns and Kasiba is looking into what can be done on contiguous open space parcels in Colchester.

The pathways in Wilton have spread throughout Fairfield County and into New York State, Sinkez said. H2H, the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership, includes more than 80 municipalities. “I mean that’s a big corridor.”

Sinkez happened upon the idea of Pollinator Pathways in September, when she attended the Sustainable Living Fest in Glastonbury and saw a presentation about a pathway project in Wilton.

The women who launched the project had heard about a pathway in Norway, where folks put pollinator friendly plants on porches, yards and businesses and about Sarah Bergmann, who created a pollinator pathway in Seattle, Washington.

An artist and “traditional gardener,” Sinkez returned home after the presentation and rethought her stance on gardening.

Standing in front of goldenrod beside her barn, she saw 13 bees and was amazed that upon close observation she was able to make out tiny pollen sacks on their hips.

“I realized I was missing the point,” she said. “I was like, ‘What am I doing?’ I was just making these little sculptures, little shapes [with flowers] and they don’t do anything. They just satisfy my ego that I could do it, that I can control it. It was all about the surface quality of colors.”

Colchester Police Commission Reaches Needed Quorum

by Karla Santos

The Colchester police commission has reached the needed quorum to be active again, after two new members were recently appointed to the commission by the Board of Selectman.

The new members are Jim Stavola and Beatrice Farlekas, who have joined to serve the commission along with Debi Marvin, Christopher Cameron and Carroll Vailancourt, chairman of the commission.

First Selectman Mary Bylone said she's excited the commission is back because it functions as "the eyes and ears of the community" as well as the other town commissions.

The commission wasn't active because it didn't have a quorum in "quite some time" which prevented its members from having monthly meetings, Bylone said.

"Now every slot is filled and they have a couple of people on there that have police background, which I think brings real value to the conversation," Bylone said. "They've presented me with a list of things that they feel are some areas that they could be working on and to improve the situation with everything from morale to just some processes."

Bylone said that because Colchester has a resident trooper, having a commission could work well to help the department with community involvement.

"They want to do some programs with the school and public education and things like that," Bylone said. "They are not just focused on what can they do for the trooper's life in his department. They are looking at the services that the police department can provide for the

community and they have a lot of focus on that. The resident trooper might not have time to be exploring that stuff but the commission is looking at it."

The role of the commission is to serve as an advocate between the community and police department, Bylone added.

"But an advocate in both directions," she said. "An advocate for what the community needs as well as an advocate for what the police officers need."

All of the Colchester commission and board members are volunteers.

"I'm amazed at the work that volunteers are willing to do to make our community the best it can be," Bylone said.

Vailancourt said she has been the chairman of the police commission for a little over a year and is "extremely pleased" to have more commissioners.

The police commission was a three-member team previously, but now with two more members, they will have enough quorum for their meetings even if one of them can't attend on occasion.

Vailancourt also said that the experience of the two new members will help the commission move forward.

"We haven't really had a quorum in some time because of our normal jobs and quorum takes three people. It's a pleasure to finally have a quorum to start to move forward," Vailancourt said.

She described the commission as the

liaison between residents and the police department. She said the commission works together with the police department within the Connecticut state statute and the commission bylaws.

Vailancourt as a chairman brings the meeting together and coordinates the times and dates with the town, she said. She also acts as the mediator if a vote that has to take place.

Resident Trooper Sergeant Michael Rondinone is not part of the police commission but he works in conjunction with the group.

"Our common goals are to make Colchester a better place for the community," he said.

In addition, Rondinone said he acts as a liaison between the police commission and the selectman's office with regard to common goals and issues that may come up at hand.

"It's just another voice that advocates for us to address concerns that we have, to help spread the message of things we want to disseminate to the public like a neighborhood watch program," he said about the commission.

Stavola, one of the new members said the commission has been in place since the inception of the police department in the 1990's.

Stavola said that other duties of the commission is to assure the Colchester Police Department has proper equipment and proper training.

He said although the resident trooper oversees all that operationally, the commission is also there to help with that.

Members of the police commission have a

two year term and then they can be reappointed or not by the Board of Selectmen at the end of their term.

Stavola was a member of the commission previously.

He said in 2008 he was removed from the commission.

"Thrown off because I talked to a newspaper person on behalf of the police commission and they threw me off because I violated the policy of speaking before getting permission from the First Selectman," he said.

The police commission meets on a monthly basis and their meetings are open to the community.

The Colchester police commission is not the only one welcoming new members as Dominic Sullivan, a Colchester resident, graduated Thursday from the police academy and will be joining the town's police department.

Commission members, the resident trooper and Bylone went to show him support at his graduation ceremony.

"We are excited about him coming to join our police force," Bylone said.

She said the town has been supporting him to go through the program at the Connecticut Police Academy.

"He's a young guy with a bright future," Bylone said. "He's really excited about being a police officer."

The Colchester Police Department had about 10 officers before the new graduate joined them yesterday.

East Hampton Police News

1/13: Joshua Krywinski, 20, of 59 Barton Hill Rd., was issued a summons for passing in a no-passing zone, failure to carry insurance, failure to renew registration and possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana, East Hampton Police said.

1/13: Gary Sousa, 49, of 63 Park Rd., turned himself in pursuant to an active warrant and was charged with failure to be registered as a new home construction contractor, police said.

Also, from Jan. 6-12, officers responded to 20 medical calls, eight motor vehicle accidents and 13 alarms, and made 16 traffic stops.

Obituaries

Marlborough

Ellen Friedman

Ellen Marie Crosby Friedman (1954-2019) of Lobeco, S.C., passed away Saturday, Dec. 28, with her husband Ira, her daughter Sarah, her daughter Michelle, and her sister Annette by her side.

She was born in Rockville March 10, 1954. She grew up in Marlborough, attended Marlborough School, and graduated from RHAM High in 1972. She was a member of the RHAM Band. After graduating she worked for CBT Bank.

She later married and moved to South Carolina where she worked and raised her family.

Ellen enjoyed sewing, cooking or baking, especially whoopee pies. She collected Barbie dolls and nutcrackers. She enjoyed going to the flea markets and antique places where she always found a treasure. She enjoyed going to the races at Daytona but her passion was the ancestry digging she did. She found many interesting facts.

Ellen was predeceased by her daughter, Tamara Lynn Crosby; her father, Andrew Crosby; and her brother, Frank Crosby.

Ellen is survived by her daughter, Sarah Friedman, and grandson Jaylen of Lobeco, S.C.; her daughter Michelle Griffin and grandson Nicolos of Beaufort, S.C.; her grandson, Michael James Soloski and great-grandson, Michael James Jr. of Beaufort, S.C.; her mother, Edith Crosby of Marlborough; her sister, Annette Perniciaro and husband Robert of Conway, S.C., her sister, Sheila Tasker and husband Richard of Atlantic Beach, Fla.; a brother, Philip Crosby of East Hartford; brother, Donald of Marlborough; an aunt in Southwick, Mass.; an uncle in Woodland, Maine; eight nieces, four nephews and numerous cousins.

Ellen will be greatly missed by her family and all that knew her.



Amston

Barry Fredrick Azia

Barry Fredrick Azia, 82, of Amston, formerly from Edgewater, Fla., received his angel wings Monday, Jan. 13, at Hartford Hospital. Born July 11, 1937, in Hartford, he was a son of the late Samuel and Ester (Goldstein) Azia.

Barry grew up in West Hartford and was a graduate of Hall High School. He later attended the University of Hartford. In 1956, Barry enlisted in the United States Army where he served our nation as a Medic corpsman. In 1990 he married his soulmate, Leona Azia. The couple shared 30 years of marriage as they moved from Bloomfield to Newington while raising their family. For years he worked as a sales representative at Joseph H. Bertram & Co in Bloomfield. After his retirement, Barry and Lee moved to Florida in 2003 where they resided in the town of Edgewater. He was a member of the Masons, Lodge #140 in Newington.

His family will always remember him as a soft-spoken and very thoughtful man, a great father, and a devoted grandfather who lived his life according to his infamous high school yearbook quote: "Happy go lucky, easy go free, and nothing on earth bothers me."

He will be forever loved and remembered by his wife, Lee; his sister, Gail Azia; his children, Stacy Azia and Susan Azia; his stepchildren, Patricia and her husband John Devin, Alice and her husband Nick DeMaine, Ernest LaVoie, Charles and his wife Martha LaVoie, Maryann LaVoie, Theresa Kuraz; 23 grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren, extended family members and friends.

In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by his stepson, Robert LaVoie Jr., and grandson, Kyle Azia.

Calling Hours will be held on Saturday, Jan. 25, from 1-3 p.m., at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A celebration of Barry's life, Military Honors and Masonic service will follow.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.



Hebron

David C. Bland

David C. Bland, 80, of Hebron, passed away peacefully in the home he built with the love of his life by his side, in the early morning Sunday, Jan. 19. Born Nov. 16, 1939, in Hartford, he was the son of the late Robert and Helen (Carley) Bland.

David grew up in East Hartford, and as a boy he was a member of Boy Scout Troop 61 in East Hartford, and was the first Scout in this troop to earn the rank of Eagle Scout in May of 1955. Upon graduating from East Hartford High School, he went to UConn, where he obtained his bachelor's degree in English. He then went on to obtain his master's degree in social work from Case Western University in Cleveland, Ohio.

While a UConn student, David met the love of his life, Dale Drummond. The couple married in 1964. In 1972 the couple built their own home in Hebron, where they went on to raise their family. Although he was a successful social worker, David decided to make a career change, following his passion and entering into the world of antique dealing. With his family by his side, David was able to successfully own and operate two Connecticut antique shops, Horace Porter in South Windsor and Wellington Antiques in Willington. Besides his lifelong love of antiques, David was a UConn basketball fanatic, and an avid sailor who belonged to the Shennecossett Yacht Club in Groton.

David will be remembered by those who loved him as a hardworking and dedicated family man.

In addition to his wife of over 55 years, David leaves behind his two beloved daughters, Jennifer (Fredrick) Hamm and Roberta Featherstone, and numerous extended family and friends.

David's family would like to thank Dr. Bilgrami for the care and compassion he has shown throughout this journey.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be sent to the Smilow Cancer Center at St. Francis Hospital, or Habitat for Humanity, or the Gilead Congregational Church.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, Jan. 25, at 11 a.m., directly at Gilead Congregational Church, 672 Gilead St., Hebron.

The Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester has been entrusted with arrangements. For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

Edward E Cull Jr.

Edward E Cull Jr., 61, of East Hampton, formerly of Colchester, passed away at home Friday, Jan. 17. Born Oct. 20, 1958, in New Haven, he was the son of Edna (O'Reilly) Cull, and the late Edward E Cull Sr. In 1980, he married the love of his life, Lisa (Franz) Cull.

For years, Edward worked as the vice president of commercial banking at Citizens Bank, where he was awarded the Small Business Association Advocate. He was a huge sports fan and enjoyed watching his favorite team the Boston Red Sox and the men's and women's UConn basketball teams. When his children were growing up, he spent countless hours volunteering as a coach for their sports teams. He was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather who loved to read and play with his grandchildren.

He will be forever loved and remembered by his wife Lisa Cull of East Hampton; his mother Edna Cull of Hamden; his son Brian and wife Teresa, of Southington, his daughter Laura and husband David Murtagh of Cortlandt Manor, New York; his sisters and their spouses Margaret (Michael) Fitzgerald of New Milford, Edna (Ralph) Karanian of Wethersfield, and Jeanne (John) Stobierski of North Branford; grandchildren Kylie, Elijah, Zoey, and one expected grandchild; his dog Brogan; and numerous extended family and friends.

Calling hours will be held today, Jan. 24, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, from 3-5 p.m.

In lieu of flowers the family asks that donations be made to the Christopher Potvin Scholarship Fund (chrispotvinfund.com) – Ed always supported and shared a passion for their purpose.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.



Colchester

Tina Marie Ashley

Tina Marie Ashley, 54, of Colchester, passed away peacefully at home surrounded by her beloved family Thursday, Jan. 16, after a valiant and courageous battle with cancer. Born May 29, 1965, she was the only daughter of Roland Theriault and the late Bernice (Daigle) Theriault. She attended the Ona M. Wilcox School of Nursing, becoming a registered nurse.

On Aug. 21, 1988 in Middletown, Tina married her soulmate, Scott Ashley. The couple made their home and started their family in Colchester.

Known to be kind, gentle, caring and compassionate, Tina had a gift for soothing people, which greatly helped throughout her career as an RN. She worked for Apple Rehab, Harrington Court, the VNA and Middlesex Hospital. Tina was a devout woman of faith and fully embodied what it means to be a servant of Christ. She truly enjoyed serving others and would always try to help anyone with whatever they were going through, seeking out resources to support them in difficult times. Tina established the Parish Nurse program at the Colchester Federated Church through their Ministry of Wellness. She also dedicated countless hours and resources to support the Colchester Special Olympics. Tina touched the lives of everyone she met, and her loss will impact so many.

Above all, Tina's greatest joy in life was her family; she was a dedicated wife, mother, and grandmother. She will be forever loved and missed by her husband of over 31 years, Scott; her sons; Nicholas and his wife Mohini, Christopher, Timothy, David and Matthew; her daughter, Victoria and her husband Isaac Bjorbekk; her grandchildren, Cassidy, Josephine, Melanie and Liyan; her brothers, Theodore Theriault and Mark along with his wife Julie Theriault; and numerous extended family members and cherished friends. She was predeceased by her mother, Bernice Theriault.

Calling hours will be held today, Jan. 24, from 4-7 p.m. On Saturday, Jan. 25, a memorial service and celebration of Tina's life will be held at 10:30 a.m. Both services will be directly at Colchester Federated Church, 60 S. Main St., Colchester. Burial will take place after the service Saturday at Linwood Cemetery and then family and friends will be welcomed back at the church for a reception lunch and time of fellowship to share memories.

The Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester has been entrusted with care of arrangements. For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.



Portland

Natalie Bevis

Natalie Sue (Field) Bevis, 82, of Portland, wife of Stuart F. Bevis for 59 years, passed away Monday, Jan. 20, at Middlesex Hospital. Born in Keene, N.H., she was the daughter of the late Winfred and Ruth (Blandin) Field.

Along with her husband, Natalie is survived by her daughter, Susanna; a sister, Cynthia; a daughter-in-law, six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. She was predeceased by her son, Jon.

Family and friends may call Saturday, Feb. 1, from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m., at the Doolittle Funeral Home, 14 Old Church St., Middletown. Services and burial will be private and at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Natalie's memory may be made to the Portland Library, 20 Freestone Ave., Portland, CT 06480.

To share memories or send condolences, visit doolittlefuneralservice.com.

Colchester

Richard Paul Jansson

Richard Paul Jansson, 83, of Colchester, passed away at home Tuesday, Jan. 21. Born in Yonkers, N.Y., on July 23, 1936, he was the son of the late Sven and Violet Jansson. He enlisted in the Navy and proudly served our country.

As a young man, Richard met the love of his life, Joan Ogden, and married her May 19, 1956. The couple spent over 63 years together until Joan passed away in 2019. Richard enjoyed skeet shooting, hunting, and bowling. He worked as a firefighter for Electric Boat for many years. After his retirement, Richard enjoyed spending time at the Colchester Senior Center playing cards and Pinnacle.

He will be forever loved and missed by his daughters Brenda and Deborah; his grandchildren, Terrence, Ricky, Amber, and Brandon; his great-grandchildren, Brittany, Ricky Jr., Julian, Jennifer, Bentley, Jesse, Riley, and Erica; his siblings, Wesley, David, Ernest (Cathy), and Edith; and numerous extended family members and friends.

In addition to his parents and his wife, he was predeceased by his brother, Bill, and his sister, Florence.

In accordance with his wishes, services will be private.

In lieu of flowers the family asks that memorial donations be made in his name to the Disabled American Veterans (dav.org/donate).

The Aurora McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester has been entrusted with care of arrangements. For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.



Colchester

Megan Denise Todt

Megan Denise Todt, 42, of Celebration, Fla., formerly of Colchester, recently passed away unexpectedly, with her darling angels, Aleksander, 13, Tyler, 11, Zoe, 4, and their loyal canine companion, Breezy.

A memorial service in Megan's hometown of Montville is planned for later this month. Service details, along with a full obituary, will be forthcoming.

The Woyasz & Son Funeral Service of Uncasville has been entrusted with the arrangements.