

RIVEREAST

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Bridge Work to Start... Motorists will be affected when a construction project on the Arrigoni Bridge starts Feb. 27. Work will include replacing bridge decks, superstructure steel upgrades and repairs as well as substructure repairs designed to improve overall structural capacity, reliability and integrity of the bridge. For more on the project, see a story on page 12.

Medical Marijuana Moving Out of Portland

by Jack Lakowsky

Connecticut Pharmaceutical Solutions, Inc. (CTPharma), Portland's local medical marijuana grower, producer and research firm will move from its current location on Lower Main St. to a larger facility in Rocky Hill.

But the relocation is hardly a harbinger of bad business news for Portland.

The pharmaceutical company will move its operations to the 216,532-sq.-ft. McKesson building in Rocky Hill over the course of the next 18 months, according to Portland First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield.

CTPharma has done business in Portland since opening in 2014. According to information provided by Portland's Economic Development Coordinator Mary Dickerson, the property pays a little over \$9,100 per year in taxes.

Dickerson said the town will coordinate with CTPharma owners to determine the best course of action for the property's future.

According to a press release provided by CTPharma, the company was reluctant to leave Portland. Prosperity, however, leads to growth. The medical marijuana provider has outgrown its Portland location, and the town did not have space available to meet their needs.

In an email to Bransfield, Gary Berner, government relations official for CTPharma, said the company "has only good things to say about your beautiful town, its citizens and especially its government officials."

Berner added that, during this transition period, there will be no significant changes to the Portland operation.

In a recent interview, Bransfield said CTPharma tried everything it could to remain in Portland. She said that the company did not make the decision lightly and that throughout the process CTPharma communicated frequently with Bransfield and Dickerson.

CTPharma officials did not return a call for comment for this story.

Dickerson said the company considered an expansion of its Portland property, but its demand meant it needed access to municipal water, which is unavailable to the industrial zone it currently occupies. This zone uses wells, according to Bransfield.

"We're still a small town," Dickerson said. "We have limited industrial space."

She added that this cycle is seen throughout communities of Portland's size - a new business arrives and prospers in town. To meet demand, expansion is necessary.

"Businesses usually start small," Dickerson said. "As they grow, they need more space."

Bransfield added that buying an existing building is more cost effective than constructing a new structure or expanding.

"This is a friendly town," Bransfield said. "People here have a strong belief in free enter-

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Long, Winding Road Leads to New Music Minister

by Sloan Brewster

The serendipitous happenstances that led to the appointing of a new music minister at Gilead Congregational Church prove that God is still moving, according to the Rev. Denise Esslinger.

"I know from a faith perspective I would say that's how God moves in the world and it really feels like that's how God was moving," Esslinger, the pastor at the Gilead church, said of how the situation fell together.

Danielle Hoehn of East Hampton started in the role on Jan. 5 but the meandering story of how she got there - a story that includes a life-altering head injury - began when she was still a toddler.

Depending on if it's her mother or herself talking, Hoehn was either three or four when she started singing hymns after returning home from church on Sundays, she said. Her childhood musical affinity gave her parents the idea to enroll her in music lessons. Even at that young age she knew what instrument she wanted to conquer.

"I wanted the organ because I loved the sound; I loved the sound in the church when it rumbled," Hoehn said in an interview Tuesday. "I love how you can feel it. So many people learn in so many different ways. It's almost that all-sensory experience, so you're hearing it, you're feeling it, it's not that one sense."

Hoehn, who studied the organ throughout childhood, likens how it reverberates with multiple senses to the myriad ways people experience worship.

By the time she was 10, she was already impressing church leaders at the Catholic school she attended and they asked her parents if she could play at a holiday Mass. They agreed.

Shortly after, she was playing during weekly Masses and at weddings and funerals.

In the endeavor for mastery, Hoehn went through three different teachers in the Ithaca, N.Y. area, where she was raised. Then when she was 12, Dr. Rich Shaw, of the Mark Twain School of Music in Elmira, N.Y., told her that to become a better organist she needed to play the piano, so she took on that instrument as well.

Having learned the piano, Hoehn became an accompanist for the entire school district where she went to school and once broke her finger playing the piano. The spring concert schedule had to be postponed until it healed.

"It was a really fast passage," she said. "Slippery keys."

In her high school junior year, she decided to embrace singing as well.

"To the great dismay of my piano teacher, I said I want to go to school as a vocal major," she said. "Stabbed him right in the heart."

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Danielle Hoehn of East Hampton started as the new music minister at Gilead Congregational Church on Jan. 5. The meandering story of how she got there began when she was still a toddler.

Medical cont. from Front Page

prise. It's a great place to come in and build your strength. Then you can invest in another part of the state, which is beneficial if you look at [the state] as a composite. Something else will come [to Portland] and flourish."

CTPharma CEO Tom Schultz said the company's workforce will double as it moves. Currently it employs about 50 people, according to a company press release.

CTPharma and the Yale School of Medicine are undertaking a federal Food and Drug Administration approved clinical study at the University of Connecticut's School of Agriculture.

In a statement, Schultz said the goal of the study is to "unlock the foundation" of establishing a biotech industry in Connecticut.

CTPharma is one of four licensed medical marijuana businesses in the state.

'Really Busy Summer' for Portland Business

CTPharma's move out of Portland, however, does not appear to align with a trend.

"This is going to be a really busy summer," Dickerson said, alluding to the myriad ongoing economic development – and conservation – projects throughout Portland.

Dickerson said a Starbucks location would be opening in the Elmcrest development project on Marlborough Street when work there is completed.

"I got serious 'mom points' for that one," Dickerson said.

The Elmcrest project will add a mix of retail and commercial properties along with 240 one-and-two-bedroom apartment units aimed at attracting a mix of younger and older adults who want to downsize their living space, but also want to remain in Portland.

The property will also feature a CVS Pharmacy, Dickerson said. Dickerson recently received drafts of the signage that Starbucks and CVS want to display, respectively.

Further businesses will be added as construction moves closer to completion, Dickerson said.

Dickerson said virtual golf is also now available in Portland.

Chris Cote's Golf Shop offers virtual golf for golfers who don't winter in Florida but still want to enjoy an outdoor sport.

According to the golf shop's website, Virtual Golf at Chris Cote's is home to four indoor hitting bays equipped with simulation technology.

"This is the forefront of a changing sport," Dickerson said, citing recent reports that the golf industry has seen declining revenues and attendance. Virtual reality, Dickerson said, is a major step Cote's has taken to meet modern market demands.

Dickerson said that players can choose from a selection of more than 250 courses. She added the technology also offers advice to players on form and stroke.

"That's our other big, new project," Dickerson said. "They're revolutionizing the sport."

A "new" Dairy Queen Grill & Chill is presently under construction on Gospel Lane. It will be a larger, updated version of the current restaurant on Portland/Cobalt Road.

The new restaurant will feature drive-through windows on both Gospel Lane and Route 66. It is the first in a two-phase project on the 12-acre parcel, Dickerson said. Details for the second phase of this property's development have yet to be specified.

The new Dairy Queen is slated to open summer 2020.

Yet another Portland development project for this year is the opening of Concentric Brewing. It will be Portland's first local brewery.

In a January interview with the *Rivereast*, Concentric principal David Peichert said he has planned an "ambitious" opening to take place in December of this year.

"We're committed to a 2020 opening and we'll be full steam ahead," Peichert said in January. "The town economic development commission has been really great. Everybody has been really helpful. We're thrilled to have a place in Portland. It's a convenient location in the center of the state."

Dickerson said she recently received site

plans from Opticonx, a Putnam-based manufacturer of fiber optic cables and interconnected hardware components.

Dickerson named several incoming businesses, including: a new yoga studio on Main Street; Peg Arch, an architectural firm, also coming to Main Street and; God's Loving Actions, LLC, a service assisting families with children experiencing neurological disorders.

Bransfield and Dickerson named a new yoga studio, new restaurants and an architecture firm as businesses coming in to Portland. Dickerson also said that a service offering support to families with children experiencing neurological disorders will take over space in the three-suit Agostino's Plaza across from Cumberland Farms.

Another major redevelopment effort in Portland will be conducted by the Brownfields Redevelopment Focus Group, which was created by the first selectwoman and the Portland Board of Selectmen. The group will evaluate three town-owned brownfields along Brownstone Avenue, an area totaling about five acres. The group is also tasked with communicating their efforts to the public.

After remediation, the properties will be zoned for commercial use. Occupied, these parcels can produce up to \$16,000 a year in tax revenue. Dickerson said that, once redeveloped, tax revenue to the town would exceed previous figures.

Dickerson said in a January meeting of the focus group that the group has the advantage of offering riverfront property to prospective businesses. She said that, because the Brownstone properties rest on land that offers what Dickerson considers to be some of the most scenic riverfront along the Connecticut River. She said that maintaining this pristine area is also a goal of this project.

Dickerson said these projects are a few of many steps taken as a part of a development campaign that has been pursued since the start of the millennium.

"Things don't just happen," Bransfield said. "There's a lot of planning ahead."

"Redevelopment has to be smart," Dickerson said. "It will always be what is best for the town."

Bransfield, Dickerson and other town officials must balance between economic progress and conserving Portland's semi-rural character, something the economic coordinator and the first selectwoman both believe is a great source of pride and identity for Portland's residents.

To ensure this, all projects align with Portland's Plan of Conservation and Development, according to Dickerson.

To the end of maintaining – and growing – Portland's agricultural heritage, Dickerson said she plans to promote Portland's farmers to the more than 80,000 tourists who visit Portland's Brownstone Discovery Park in the summer months. The benefits of local eating, like a reduction in pesticide use and in the emissions from trucks shipping foodstuffs, will be communicated to both tourists and residents.

Eating locally-sourced products has gained popularity among consumers.

"We're committed to keeping with trends," Bransfield said. She added that, along with economic progress, Portland is also committed to sustainability and utilizing renewable energy sources, evidenced by the state awarding its "Sustainable CT" award to Portland in 2019.

Bransfield described plans for a new riverfront town park to be created on Route 17.

"Our older parks are just not suitable for modern needs," Dickerson said.

Dickerson said the park would feature ample parking and a pavilion with restaurants.

"[The new park] still has an economic development component," Bransfield said. "When people leave, they might use our gas stations. They could get something to eat."

Dickerson added that a well-maintained, well-attended park increases local home values.

"This is all a part of a master plan to keep up with people's needs," Dickerson said.

New Minister cont. from Front Page

She attended the University of Hartford Hartt School of Music, where she decided to become what she had always wanted to be: a church musician.

After receiving her Bachelor of Arts in vocal performance, she got a job as director organist at the Wethersfield United Methodist Church and started working toward her master's degree at the Yale Divinity School.

With a Master of Arts and Religion degree from Yale, she worked at various churches, including the one in Wethersfield, Golden Hill United Methodist, Simsbury United Methodist, First Church in Simsbury and Windsor Locks Congregational Church.

Then, in 2008, at the age of 40, she decided she wanted a career to better help support the family and save for her children's college tuition. After researching several options, including nursing, paramedics, personal training and teaching, she chose police work.

At the time, a state trooper friend said she should add policing to her options and offered to bring her out and show her what it was like.

"I went on a ride-along with him and within 20 minutes I was hooked," she said.

That night, the trooper came upon a disabled motorist who was deaf. Between him and Hoehn, they figured out what he needed and got him help, Hoehn said. They also received a call for a shoplifter that turned out to be a teenager with mental health issues and were able to help in that situation as well.

Hoehn was also there to witness the trooper on a domestic call.

All the different scenarios they encountered in a single night made her realize she wanted the job and she applied at a few different departments. The Manchester Police Department was first to complete her background checks and offered her a job. She accepted.

'A Piece of Ice Took Me Out'

Hoehn was with Manchester Police for 10 years until, as she put it, "a piece of ice took me out."

It was New Year's Eve 2017 and Hoehn was on midnight patrol.

Driving by Manchester Town Hall, she heard an audio alarm and she and two other officers checked it out. They found the building secure. While radioing dispatch to tell them the situation, she stepped on a piece of ice and fell, landing head first, or as she worded it, "I stopped my fall with my head."

Her injuries included blowing out several discs in her neck and back, post-concussive syndrome, difficulty processing thought, and memory loss – including the entire three months after the fall. She has had several spinal cord compressions and underwent vestibular therapy for balance, speech therapy, physical therapy [PT] and osteopathic manipulation therapy to help with the daily headaches.

"I still have headaches every day," she said. "The severity depends on what's going on in my neck and shoulders and back."

Despite trying for nearly two years to get her body to a place where she could return to the work she loved, she was also forced to give up being a cop.

"I had a two-year window and I was doing everything possible to the point that me and my husband turned one of our bedrooms into a PT room," she said.

Last fall, during her last visit to her neurosurgeon, she learned the bad news.

"He said to me that I would never be a police officer again because of the limitations, the physical limitations," she said. "I had to figure out what I was going to do with the rest of my life."

Most of the options she and her husband Michael discussed, such as teaching first responders, were also off the table due to her ongoing problems processing thought.

But while she was working through recovery, she had also relearned to play the piano.

After the fall she could no longer play because her mind could not make her fingers fol-

low the sheet music.

"I couldn't process it; I couldn't make the connection of what I could see," she said. "I couldn't get my hands to do what I saw on the page."

Her speech therapist – who had helped her relearn to swallow, process thought, and work on her memory – told her relearning the instrument was a good idea.

"So I relearned how to play the piano and singing, and all that, and my husband said it was too precious a gift that I needed to share it," he said. "Although he loved the personal concerts I gave him."

That was when she decided to consider returning to work in music. At the same time, Hoehn went to give blood, something she does every eight weeks. For the first time though, she was rejected due to low iron levels.

After a week of eating iron rich foods and vitamins, she found a blood drive at Gilead Congregational Church and went.

It was her first time at the church.

"Everyone was fabulous," she said. "So fabulous, so kind and you kind of felt like, even though you don't know them, that you've known them your whole life."

She decided she wanted to look into working there, checked online for postings and "Lo and behold, Gilead Congregational Church is looking for a minister of music," she said.

With the help of her daughters – 15-year-old Nathalie and 23-year-old Kasey – she submitted a resume. She got a response from Esslinger and a week later had an interview with several members of the congregation.

"I loved the fact that ... they didn't want just a musician," she said. "They wanted somebody who would integrate the music with the scripture and the sermon."

With her divinity school background, she has that ability.

"She has a real sense of worship and really gets the message for the day," Esslinger said. "It all ties in together."

The pastor gives Hoehn the title for her weekly sermons and the scriptures she will reference. Hoehn then studies the scriptures and chooses music based on her interpretation of the scriptures and title.

Even when the sermon ends up having little or no connection with the title, the music still seems to connect it all together, Esslinger said.

During her first service on Jan. 5, Hoehn moved the congregation to tears.

"She has an amazing and beautiful voice," Esslinger said. "She sang a piece in worship that just had many of us in tears because of the song and the beauty of her voice."

When Bruce Gale, former music minister, retired in August after five years, Esslinger said she thought she would never be able to replace him.

"He was wonderful," she said. "We felt that loss and just thought we weren't going to be able to replace him."

Then Hoehn came into the picture.

"I really do feel that God was moving," Esslinger said. "I can't say enough about the whole entire story."

Even the fact that there was a blood drive at that particular time was indicative of God's involvement in the situation, according to Esslinger.

The event was held in honor of recently-passed church member Dave Bland. When folks from the church asked his wife Dale Bland what they could do, she said hold a blood drive because she wanted to replenish all the blood he had taken through blood transfusions.

"That's why we even had the blood drive, because of her sense of community and Danielle wants to give to the community," Esslinger said, "That's another layer whether you want to call it serendipity or God's movement. I just truly believe that we're all connected."

Portland Schools, Community Inspired New Superintendent

by Jack Lakowsky

Portland's new superintendent of schools Charles Britton said the school community, and the town-at-large, inspired him to apply as chief of Portland's schools.

"This is such a nice community," Britton said in a recent interview. "Neighbors are concerned for each other. You get a sense that people pull together. Teachers here are part of a family. It's such a great district, with high-quality administrators, families and staff."

Britton currently serves as director of curriculum, instruction and technology for Portland Public Schools. He will begin his term on July 3. He replaces Phillip O'Reilly, who retires at the end of June.

Britton received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Hartwick College. He earned a master's degree in teaching from Quinnipiac University, a sixth-year degree in educational leadership from Southern Connecticut State University and a Doctorate of Educational Leadership from the University of Connecticut Neag School of Education.

Britton has worked in education for more than two decades, and has served Portland for three. He said he has served as a teacher, high

school principal and professor of educational leadership. Britton has served in his current role for three years.

Britton said he is in an ideal position to begin the superintendent's job.

"Starting this position is daunting," Britton said. However, he added, because of his current job within the district, he has keen insight into Portland's academia. Britton said that he has been involved with many of O'Reilly's initiatives since starting in Portland. Therefore, he said, he will be able to continue seamlessly any ongoing efforts by the board and the schools.

According to the news release announcing his appointment, since starting in Portland, Britton has helped to implement research-based programming, new math and English curricula, introduced an online curriculum-mapping platform and designed instructional practices to maximize the efficacy of the "one-to-one" student-to-device ratio initiative.

"Technology drives everything," Britton said of the student-device ratio initiative. "It has saturated every aspect of academic life."

Britton added that he agrees with the visions and goals laid out by his predecessor. Britton

said he plans to continue the O'Reilly's work engaging the entire Portland community, like in the development of a Vision of the Graduate.

"I'm not coming in with a 'big change' agenda," Britton said. "We're on a good course that Dr. O'Reilly has spent five years building."

"We're going to continue making incremental improvements," Britton said.

One such effort Britton said he supports is introducing policy language for a Portland schools social media campaign, something the board has been researching for some time. Britton said that he believes social media to be an excellent way of communicating with the town and parents, but that a policy for conduct must be written before this can be undertaken.

Timing, Britton added, has also worked to his favor.

O'Reilly had originally planned to retire at the end of the 2018-19 fiscal year last June. The board, however, convinced O'Reilly to stay on another year to fulfill his three-year contract. Britton said this additional year with O'Reilly as chief gave him time to seriously consider the position.

An issue that Britton said is prevalent in Portland-and school districts across the country – is preparing students for an uncertain future. High school and college graduates are entering a perpetually fluctuating job market and must take on the unimaginable task of resolving climate change.

"The days of working for [General Electric] for 35 years have changed. Lifelong employment is going to contract work," Britton said. "We're figuring out the skills, knowledge and dispositions need for a market that changes every hour. That's very hard. Success in the U.S. is going to be defined very differently than when I was young. Generation Millennial and Generation Z are going to be very different Americans."

Britton said that his salary would be less than that of O'Reilly's, which is currently \$199,700 per year, with a \$20,000 annuity. An exact figure for Britton's figure has yet to be determined by the Board of Education, according to Jennifer Gochee, payroll manager for Portland Public Schools.

Britton and his family live in Wallingford.

Portland Bridge Reconstruction to Start Next Week

by Jack Lakowsky

The state Department of Transportation announced the start of work on the rehabilitation of the Arrigoni Bridge connecting Portland and Middletown over the Connecticut River.

Construction was awarded to Mohawk Northeast, Inc. as one contract at a cost of \$46,289,385.04 on Jan. 13.

Construction will begin on Feb. 27. This work is one part of a larger project slated to continue through February 2022 and will coincide with work on the Saint John's Square/Main Street intersection operational improvement project in Middletown.

The Arrigoni Bridge has connected the two communities for more than 80 years. Residents often cite it as one of Portland's most prominent landmarks.

Portland First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said residents can expect a few delays. She advised that leaving for work a few minutes earlier than usual – and a little patience – can help ease traffic delays.

Bransfield said the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce will oversee a safety committee for both Middletown and Portland. Public safety officials and first responders will coordinate to ensure residents are updated on traffic. Bransfield said cameras will be installed so residents can view traffic conditions before starting their drive, as has been done during previous bridge construction efforts.

Work on the Arrigoni Bridge includes replacing bridge decks, superstructure steel upgrades and repairs as well as substructure repairs to improve overall structural capacity, reliability and integrity of the bridge, according to the DOT.

A new protective fence system of between 8 and 12 feet will be installed on both the approach and main spans, according to the DOT. These are to act as a suicide deterrent to individuals looking to take their own lives by jumping from the bridge.

Attention was turned to suicide prevention

after a man named Tony Moreno threw his infant son into the Connecticut River in 2015. The child drowned. Moreno was convicted of murder and sentenced to 70 years in prison in 2017.

Construction activities will be completed in three separate stages to help maintain traffic flow through the project limits while providing the contractor with adequate space to complete construction, according to DOT.

In each of the three construction phases, traffic for routes 44 and 17 will be reduced to one lane in each direction with the use of temporary precast concrete barriers (TPCB). These barriers will be used for a maximum of 540 days, DOT said in a press release.

This is the second DOT project on the Arrigoni Bridge since 2012. In November of that year, the DOT finished a \$19 million renovation over an 18-month work period. This work replaced the central deck, or where cars travel over the bridge.

Motorists should be aware that modifications or extensions to the work schedule might become necessary due to weather delays or other unforeseen conditions. Motorists are advised to maintain a safe speed when driving in this vicinity. The road closing schedule is:

Route 66 (Main Street): Monday-Friday from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. and 6 p.m.-6 a.m.; Saturday and Sunday from 9 p.m.-9 a.m.

Route 66 (Washington Street): Monday-Friday from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. and 6 p.m.-6 a.m.; Saturday and Sunday from 9 p.m.-9 a.m.

Route 17 (Hartford Avenue): Monday-Friday from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. and 6 p.m.-6 a.m.; Saturday and Sunday from 9 p.m.-9 a.m.

Route 17/66: Monday-Friday from 8 p.m.-6 a.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 9 p.m.-9 a.m.

SR 545 (Washington Street): Monday-Friday from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. and 6 p.m.-6 a.m.; Saturday and Sunday from 9 p.m.-9 a.m.

Big Y Drives Grand List Increase in Marlborough

by Karla Santos

Thanks to the new supermarket in town, Marlborough's 2019 Net Grand List increased 2.02%, or \$11,855,835 from the 2018 net grand list, totaling \$599,518,045.

The town attributed the increase "largely due to the completed construction of the Big Y," which is now the fourth largest taxpayer in town. In addition, the town saw the construction of 370 Jones Hollow Road – a residential care home – and a five-lot subdivision on Saner Road.

The Grand List is a report that represents the net value of assessments in town including real estate, personal property and motor vehicles. All categories in the list saw an increase from 2018.

First Selectman Greg Lowrey said he was pleased with the increase.

"If the mill rate remained static, this would

provide additional revenue of more than \$300,000," he said. "This is favorable and will mitigate the effect of growing education budgets."

Real estate increased \$6,209,095, going from \$522,070,770 in 2018 to \$528,279,865 in 2019. Personal property increased from \$11,708,740 in 2018 to \$15,984,180 in 2019; and motor vehicles saw an increase of \$1,371,300, going from \$53,882,700 in 2018 to \$55,254,000 in 2019.

According to the report, the personal property increase of \$4,275,440 is due to the personal property in Big Y and Connecticut Light and Power or Eversource.

Marie Hall, Marlborough's town assessor, said these kinds of increases are normal especially after projects such as Big Y or after a revaluation year if the market is up.

"I'm happy with the outcome," Hall said. "It isn't often Marlborough sees such a climb."

The Grand List is used by the Board of Finance to help set the mill rate for the upcoming fiscal year, which runs July 1 to June 30. The mill rate is used to calculate a resident's taxes. One mill is equal to \$1 in tax per \$1,000 of assessed property. Under the current mill rate of 37.25, a resident with a home assessed at \$250,000 would pay \$9,313 in taxes.

The top 15 taxpayers in 2019, according to the Grand List, were: M3-5/OM Village, LLC/MV Green, LLC (Schwartz) at \$11,112,430, Eversource Energy (listed as Connecticut Light & Power Co.) at \$6,053,790, Both LLC (Medical Bldg, & Middlesex Health Clinic) at \$3,214,610, Big Y Foods, Inc. at 3,011,340, Marlborough Health Care Realty Co., at \$2,791,810, Bridle Brook Estates, LLC at

\$2,017,830, Knes, Leandra at \$1,820,890, C&B Marlborough Assoc, LLC at \$1,166,550, Country Barn Properties at \$1,152,970, Jones Hollow Associates at \$932,540, TKS Holdings LLC at \$880,390, Morytko, Tamara M & Bryan T at \$820,720, McMahan, Richard R & at \$791,140, Meadowbrook Farm, LLC at \$750,730 and Conlon, Peter B. & Michele B. Trustee at \$750,260.

The number of accounts also slightly increased in the 2019 Grand List. The list had a total of 9,520 accounts – 2,710 were real estate, 358 were personal property and 6,452 were motor vehicles. The 2018 grand list had a total of 9,515 accounts.

Hall said Marlborough's taxpayers were able to file an appeal in writing with a Feb. 1 deadline.

Colchester Teacher Raises Awareness of Heart Disease

by Karla Santos

Soon after Donald Levine's father died of heart disease in 1985, he decided to take up the cause of fighting it – and has fundraised over \$120,000 in the past five years alone in support of the American Heart Association.

For the past 27 years, Levine has not only raised funds for the American Heart Association, but he has gone out of his way to teach students how to prevent heart illnesses.

Levine has taught health and physical education classes at Colchester Elementary School for the past 31 years.

He is now getting ready for this year's Kids Heart Challenge – a fundraising opportunity that goes on for various weeks at participating schools. The Kids Heart Challenge ends with a day of events that serves as an opportunity for children to experience what they have been learning about in the past weeks – healthy eating and exercising to prevent heart illnesses.

The fundraising challenge at Colchester Elementary School has already started and Levine is encouraging his students to start raising funds.

Thanks to Levine's efforts, the school has been the top contributor of this cause for two years in a row.

The purpose of the program is to donate to the American Heart Association, which works to keep physical education in schools, to provide access to healthy foods for children and to pass laws requiring cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to be taught in schools.

The Kids Heart Challenge has been going on for about 40 years. Levine is in its 27th year of hosting it at Colchester Elementary School.

This year's goal at Colchester Elementary School is to get more children involved and to exceed last year's donations of \$33,345, Levine said.

"Over the last five years, we've raised over \$120,000," Levine said.

He added that the school has donated between \$200,000 and \$250,000 during the 26 years that he has been involved in the event.

According to Levine, the event has grown significantly in the last years throughout Colchester Elementary School.

He said that initially in 1993, students raised about \$1,200. One child alone last year raised \$1,200.

"My goal always was to get to \$10,000," Levine said.

Five years ago, the school raised "a little over \$10,000," he said. Then the goal became \$13,000.

In 2017, the school raised about \$25,000, ranking in second place in Connecticut.

At that point more people including parents became excited and got involved, Levine said. The next goal was to be number one in the state – which the school has kept for the past two years in a row.

"The great thing is over 200 kids are involved," Levine said. "Probably close to 50% of the kids participated in the event last year."

Colchester Elementary School serves as the learning institution for children in pre-kindergarten through second grade in town.

"I just think that it's amazing that this little, small town [and] small school, has competed with schools that are K-5 and we are raising that kind of money," Levine said.

Levine said he thinks the fundraiser has grown because of the relatively new online system, which allows children to raise money through e-mails, allowing people to use their credit cards.

That online system is directly through the American Heart Association Kids Heart Challenge. Each participating child can customize a webpage including a photo or video that can be emailed to friends and family members for support. Donations are made directly to the child's Kids Heart Challenge web page.

Levine said that as part of the fundraising process, they make sure to warn children about being safe and not to send emails to strangers.

Now most donations are done through this web feature, Levine added.

Children who don't have access to the online system can take an envelope home and bring back cash or a check.

Levine said the online system "takes a burden off of me" because in the days that they didn't have this feature he had to collect the money, put it in a safe and then do a deposit for the American Heart Association.

Levine told the *RiverEast* earlier this month kids are already signing up.

"We don't have the event until late March so I get started pretty early to get everybody excited about it," Levine said.

Up until about three years ago, the event that concludes the Kids Heart Challenge at Colchester Elementary School was one day

only.

More than 200 children were at the school gym at the same time and Levine decided to split up the event in different days.

"We have three events after school for our kindergarten, first- and second-graders," Levine said. "Each includes an exercise and healthy eating session. Our pre-k celebrates with an in-class variety of jumping activities."

Everybody is involved in the school, he added.

"My colleague Kelly McAlpine has been very helpful in our success for I believe now 14 years," Levine said. "Irene Stanavage, a kindergarten teacher, has helped for many years organizing the health snacks portion of the event. My latest principal, Judy O'Meara, and past ones have been very supportive. Countless parent volunteers, local stores, and the Board of Education have been so supportive. Without the children and their families our success would not have occurred."

Teachers from the other schools have also donated during past years. Levine said there is a number of people that somehow contribute for the success of the event.

"It's just a matter of good team effort," he added.

And through it all, Levine honors his father.

"In his memory I want to do this myself and make the kids aware that families have heart issues," Levine said, adding that for some individuals, the heart issues can be smaller, but for others it might mean major operations.

He said that through the fundraiser, "children are learning the lessons of the reasons to give donations."

The Kids Heart Challenge at Colchester Elementary School will take place during March 23, 26 and 27.

Neil Como, Youth Market Director for the American Heart Association, said the Kids Heart Challenge is a national program and the organization works with "a few hundred schools" in Connecticut.

"It's a truly amazing thing to see how they run the program, the great values it teaches the students and the lessons the students are actually able to take home with them," Como said.

The money raised through the program also goes back to research and funding for projects that help with heart related illnesses, Como said.



Donald Levine

He added that Levine "does an amazing job." "He does the lion's share of the work and he presents it to the students," Como said.

Como said that the words "caring", "teacher", "determined", "focused" and "engaged" come to his mind when thinking of Levine and his work.

"Caring-for students, families, and many more," Como said. "Teacher-of both classroom lessons and lessons that can last a lifetime. Determined- [to] help others. Focused-on teaching his students both in and out of the classroom. Engaged- with both his school community and the community of Colchester."

Levine has 26 years of banners displayed on the walls of the Colchester Elementary School, representing the Kids Heart Challenge, formerly the Jump Rope for Heart.

Levine was chosen as Coordinator of the Year by the American Heart Association in 2017. Also in 2017, the Connecticut Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, under the umbrella of SHAPE America, named Levine Connecticut's Elementary School Physical Educator of the Year.

To donate or to learn more about the event, call Levine at 860-537-0717.

East Hampton Police News

1/30: Sarah Selavka, 27, of 230 Main St., Portland, was arrested and charged with failure to drive right, operating an unregistered motor vehicle, driving under the influence, possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia and improper storage of a controlled substance, East Hampton Police said.

1/31: Richard Tassmer, 66, of 41 E. High St., was arrested and charged with driving under the influence, drinking while driving, carrying a firearm while under the influence and failure to drive right, police said.

East Hampton Police News

1/29: Kris Pawlak, 50, of 32 Viola Dr., was issued a summons for evading responsibility and failure to drive right, East Hampton Police said.

1/30: Sarah Selavka, 27, of 230 Main St., Portland, was arrested and charged with failure to drive right, operating an unregistered motor vehicle, driving under the influence, possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia and improper storage of a controlled substance, East Hampton Police said.

1/31: Richard Tassmer, 66, of 41 E. High St., was arrested and charged with driving under the influence, drinking while driving, carrying a firearm while under the influence and failure to drive right, police said.

2/1: Jonathan Bennett, 35, of 59 Williams Dr.,

2/1: Jonathan Bennett, 35, of 59 Williams Dr., was arrested and charged with traveling unreasonably fast, failure to drive right and driving under the influence, police said.

2/2: After an investigation into a one-car rollover on Barton Hill Road, Chrisovalanda Sialas-Giagios, 34, of 87 Main St., was arrested and charged with failure to drive right and operating under the influence, police said.

Also, from Jan. 27-Feb. 2, officers responded to 21 medical calls, two motor vehicle crashes and 10 alarms, and made 19 traffic stops, police said.

Colchester Police News

2/4: State Police said Bernard Wagner, 43, of 37 Senate Brook Dr., Amston, was arrested and charged with violation of probation.

2/7: State Police said William Gonzalez Nunez, 26, of Lebanon, was arrested and charged with violation of probation.

2/9: State Police said Juan Hernandez, 34, of 107 Nutmeg Ln., Colchester, was arrested and charged with speeding.

2/13: State Police said Peter Edward Kevorkian, 35, of 44 Brainard Rd., Colchester, was arrested and charged with second degree failure to appear.

Hebron Police News

2/4: State Police said James McCann, 60, of 193 Lake Rd., Andover, was arrested and charged with second-degree breach of peace and second-degree threatening.

Andover Police News

2/6: State Police said Evan Andrew Gouger, 29, of Enfield, was arrested and charged with improper use of marker, driving without insurance, driving under suspension, drug paraphernalia and possession of less than half an ounce of cannabis.

2/9: State Police said David Bickford, 31, of 58 Elizabeth Dr., Hebron, was arrested and charged with driving under suspension, driving under the influence and failure to drive in the proper lane.

2/10: State Police said Thomas Nichols, 60, of 41 Route 87, Andover, was arrested and charged with violation of home improvement contract requirements.

Marlborough Police News

2/16: State Police said Carey Fraulino, 48, of 122 Saner Rd., was arrested and charged with driving and unregistered vehicle, driving under the influence and making an improper turn or stop.

2.89% Increase Proposed for Colchester School Budget

by Karla Santos

Superintendent of Schools Jeffrey Burt proposed a 2.89% increase to the 2020-21 school budget – bringing it up \$1,192,966 to a total of \$42.43 million.

As is normally the case, salaries and benefits account for the majority – more than 75% – of the proposed budget.

Out of the \$42.43 million in the proposed budget, \$26.59 million will go towards salaries. That's a 4% increase from the 2019-20 budget.

Salaries include certified and classified personnel salaries, additional staff hours and classified overtime.

Employee benefits account for \$6,741,091 of the proposed budget. That's a 2.91% decrease from the 2019-20 budget.

Employee benefits include employee related insurance, social security, Medicare, retirement, unemployment compensation, worker's compensation insurance and other employee benefits.

Supplies account for \$948,596 of the proposed budget. That's a 35.96% increase from the 2019-20 budget.

Supplies include postage, instructional supplies, maintenance supplies, grounds maintenance supplies, textbooks, library books, periodicals, other supplies and materials.

Travel, training and dues account for \$2,732,689 of the \$42.43 million budget. That's a 10.62% increase from the 2019-20 budget.

Travel, training and dues include professional development, instructional program improvements, pupil services, regular education transportation, special education transportation, vocational education transportation, travel, dues and fees.

Contractual and professional services account for \$3,053,701 of the proposed budget. That's a 10.96% decrease from the 2019-20 budget.

Contractual and professional services account for legal, professional and other services, financial management, property insurance, liability insurance, auto insurance, advertising, printing, vo-ag tuition, public tuition, private tuition, state agency tuition, magnet tuition, other purchased services, curriculum implementation and software licensing and support.

Utilities and taxes account for \$1,393,956 of the proposed budget. That's a 1.78% decrease from the 2019-20 budget.

Utilities and taxes include water and sewer, telephones, heating oil, electricity, propane, gasoline and diesel.

Repairs and maintenance account for \$406,264 of the proposed budget. That's a 7.74% increase from the 2019-20 budget.

Repairs and maintenance include recycling, cleaning and repairing maintenance, equipment contracts, maintenance contracts and vehicle maintenance.

Capital outlay accounts for \$110,750 of the proposed budget. That's a 4.53% increase from the 2019-20 budget.

Capital outlay includes instructional equipment, non-instructional equipment, furniture and fixtures and capital outlay.

Transfers to other funds account for \$446,049 of the proposed budget. That's a 39.57% increase from the 2019-20 budget.

Transfers to other funds include transfer to Board of Education's capital reserve, transfer to education grants fund and transfer to debt service fund.

Because the budget was a collaborative effort, some of the things included in it are requests from principals and directors.

One of the programs Burt said was "a great addition" to the district and wants to continue to offer it, is the 18-to 21-year-old program, known as Community Transition Academy of Colchester (CTAC).

"We are actually looking to increase that program and partner with a local district to see if we can increase the offerings as well as add more social interaction for the students," Burt said. "We want to make sure we are going to maintain that."

At Bacon Academy, Burt plans to add a reading coach and a math coach. He said coaches work directly with teachers in the classroom providing feedback in a "collaborative and supportive manner." The total cost of this request is \$102,012.

At Jack Jackter Intermediate School, Burt plans to add a math interventionist. The cost of this request is \$51,006.

"This is to increase our capacity on intervening with students that have a skill deficit specifically at math," Burt said.

A technology integrationist will also be added to the district. The cost of this request is \$51,006.

"You saw the wonderful technology plan we

have, but a lot of teachers don't know how to use this to really enhance my instruction," Burt said. "We want to make sure that as we are spending this money on this technology, that we are actually spending the time and money on personnel to help our teachers to learn to do that."

In addition, the district is also looking into adding Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) in ninth grade. The cost of that request would be \$3,500.

Furthermore, the proposed budget includes "support for community" providing drug counselling services and the C3 program – which supports children from birth through age eight.

"We want to make sure that we are supporting the community," Burt said.

He said that the drug counselling services that are "used widely" in Colchester schools were "essentially at no cost to the district" but are now increasing.

"I heard from the principals that this is a valuable resource for our students that are struggling with drug use," Burt said. "We are to support that through a small increase in our budget to make sure that we can continue those services."

Burt said the "support for community" request is not an add-on but it's "supporting something that would be missing if we didn't put the money in the budget."

With this request, the "support for community" would include the substance abuse counselor for \$15,480 and an additional \$10,000 for C3, which is currently \$35,000.

Burt is also looking to add a human resources assistant for \$50,000 and two greeter positions for a total of \$35,858.

In addition, Burt is looking to spend \$9,000 on the district's website and a webmaster stipend for \$2,808.

Part of Burt's plan is to do long term planning for the facilities to start implementing technologies such as solar power and LED lighting.

That's why he is looking to have a facilities supervisor to increase the capacity to maintain the facilities and allow the director of educational operations to work on long-term planning.

The idea is to take one of the four head custodians, increase their responsibilities and salary to become the facilities supervisor. The fa-

cilities supervisor request would cost \$70,721, an increase of approximately \$20,000 from the current position.

"We are here for our students, we are here for our schools and the guiding thought behind this budget really is our new mission statement," Burt said.

The Colchester Public Schools mission statement is "we create innovative thinkers for a dynamic world."

This mission statement is meant to help develop strategies, improvements, plans and the budget, Burt said.

Burt said the process of creating the proposed budget started in October and some of the initial questions were "what are the things that we need to continuously improve?"

Then Burt said he had more specific conversations with each of the principals and directors in order to include their input in the budget.

"The key was that those items had to be tied to their school improvement plan," Burt said. "In other words, how does this help enhance what you plan to do with your building?"

In addition, the budget preparation process included long term plans or plans that would not only impact the schools and their capacity over the next year, but over several years, Burt said.

Part of the goal of the budget is to support the new mission statement and the new district goals. Goals also include sustaining and strengthening instructional and operational programming and to balance the needs of the district with stewardship are items that Burt has identified as goals of the budget.

One of the areas of focus of the budget was strength, Burt said.

"We want to strengthen, we just don't want to maintain the status quo," Burt said.

Board of Education Chairman Mary Tomasi said she had no comments on the budget because it was just proposed this week.

"I'm sure the Board of Education will have questions; as well as, the public weighing in," Tomasi said. "The bottom line being what is in the best interest for the children of Colchester."

There will be budget workshops on Feb. 25 and March 3.

For more information and questions about the budget, email budget@colchesterct.org.

Colchester Grand List Climbs 1.4 Percent

by Karla Santos

Colchester has released its 2019 Grand List, reflecting a 1.4% or \$17,032,700 increase from the 2018 Grand List.

The net total of Colchester's 2019 Grand List is \$1,259,399,500.

According to the report, the additional \$17 million in assessment equates to an additional \$560,000 in tax dollars.

First Selectman Mary Bylone said she's "happy" to see the increase in the grand list.

"This is a reflection of capturing the value of the properties in our town," Bylone said. "We have seen some new development of single-family dwellings, but the remaining increase comes from beginning to develop properties through both new growth as well as improvement."

The Grand List is a report that represents the net value of assessments in town including real estate, personal property and motor vehicles. These three categories saw an increase from 2018.

Real estate property increased \$9,568,600, going from 1,044,162,100 in 2018 to \$1,053,730,700 in 2019.

Motor vehicles increase was \$5,417,200, going from \$128,046,900 in 2018 to \$133,464,100 in 2019.

While personal property is the smallest of the three categories, it also saw an increase of \$2,046,900, going from \$50,857,800 in 2018 to \$52,904,700 in 2019.

The Colchester Grand List also includes the

categories of prorates and motor vehicle supplement. Prorates did not see an increase or a decrease from 2018 – staying at \$1,900,000 both in 2018 and 2019.

Motor vehicle supplement was also in the same situation as it didn't increase or decrease, staying at \$19,900,000 both in 2018 and 2019.

According to Town Assessor John Chaponis, the Grand List is as of Oct. 1 each year. Prorates are for any newly-constructed real estate after Oct. 1 and motor vehicle supplement is for any motor vehicles that were purchased after Oct. 1. Chaponis said that both categories get added based on the number of months they were there or owned.

The Grand List serves as a guide to the Board of Finance to help set the mill rate for the upcoming fiscal year – July 1 to June 30 – determining resident's taxes.

A mill rate is the amount of tax payable per dollar of the assessed value of a property.

One mill is \$1 in taxes per \$1,000 of assessed property.

The current mill rate in Colchester is 32.84 but it is subject to change after a new town budget is presented and approved.

The top 10 Colchester real estate tax payers in 2019 were Country Place of Colchester LTD Partners at \$9,896,800, SS1 Colchester LLC at \$8,337,700, Norwich City OF at \$4,835,900, CV Colchester I LLC + at \$4,070,000, Sharr Realty LLC at \$3,804,300, Genesis Health Ventures of Bloomfield IN at \$3,570,000, GND Too

of Colchester LLC at \$3,547,000, S+S Worldwide INC at \$3,533,100, Park Place Holdings LLC at \$3,369,300, and Keystone Shoppes LLC at \$3,080,000. Those top 10 Real Estate tax payers, combined held a total of 41 accounts and paid \$48,044,100 in taxes.

The top 10 Colchester personal property tax payers in 2019 were Eversource Energy (listed as Connecticut Light & Power Co.) at \$20,832,080, Alpha Q INC at \$3,345,920, Stop & Shop Supermarket Co. at \$2,295,160, S&S Worldwide Inc. at \$1,502,260, Cellco Partnership at \$1,007,850, Colaccino Frank – President at \$962,500, Hillandale Farms Conn LLC at \$943,890, International Cordage East LTD at \$719,610, Baldi, Richard P. Jr. at \$694,750 and Beebe, Michael J. at \$631,780. Those top 10 personal property taxpayers, combined held a total of 11 accounts and paid \$32,935,800.

Chaponis said the results of this grand list were not a surprise to him.

"It is exactly what we were expecting based on the nature and volume of new construction going on in town," Chaponis said.

Chaponis also called the increase in this Grand List "a little better than normal" because it is the grand list with the largest increase in the past seven years.

While the 2019 Grand List presented a 1.4% increase, in 2018, the increase was only a .8%. In the 2017 Grand list the increase was a 1.2% and in 2016 it was a 1.1% increase.

But Chaponis said the 2016 increase "can-

not be considered" because it was a "town wide revaluation year when every property got a new assessment."

The 2015 Grand List also saw a 1.1% and the 2013 and 2014 Grand List both saw a .6% increase.

Bylone said that as the town moves forward with its strategic plan and the vision of the residents, the idea is to continue to grow while expanding the small to medium sized manufacturers as well as looking to support growth in the existing businesses.

"This is the path that will take us to success where we can sustain growth and maintain our gains, while we lessen the burden to the residential tax payer," Bylone said. "I am very excited and appreciate all of the support I have received from the community."

In addition, Bylone told the *Rivereast* that she's thankful for Chaponis and his team, who worked "long hours and weekends" to "create an accurate account of this revenue stream" and to meet the deadlines.

"This work sets the stage for determining the impact of the budget on the taxpayer," Bylone said. "After all, taxes are based on how much we say we need to spend and then taking into account the value of the property in the town which can contribute to the revenue. This is so important as we move forward, not only in maintaining what we already have but also in investing in growth, which is important for our future."

Obituaries

Marlborough

Joan Fries

Joan Fries, 74, of Marlborough, formerly of Wethersfield, passed away peacefully Sunday, Feb. 16. Joan was born Aug. 13, 1945, and was the daughter of the late Joseph and Dorothy (Bublitz) Bonin. Joan attended Wethersfield schools, graduating Wethersfield High School in 1963.



A dedicated nurse, Joan started her career as a volunteer “candy striper” at Hartford Hospital. She received her nursing degree at Hartford Hospital School of Nursing and began her 45-year career there. Over the years she worked in several departments her favorite being the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. She loved caring for “her babies” and was always a devoted advocate for them.

Throughout her career and her life, Joan was very passionate about everyone being treated properly, fairly and with the utmost respect. As a result, she spearheaded the process of forming the nurses’ union at Hartford Hospital that exists to this day. She was a leader in speaking for those who could not advocate for themselves and was well respected in the nursing community for her dedication. Joan was instrumental in creating a psychiatric program, North Central Mental Health, which served five communities.

All of these communities would have otherwise not received care for themselves had it not been for Joan’s determination. Joan also had the opportunity to work with state Rep. Linda Orange. She was a member of the American Legion Auxiliary Post 197, the NRA 2957810, the Marlborough Board of Education, along with the Lake Terramuggus Association.

Joan lived her entire adult life in Marlborough. Her passion for protecting the lake went above and beyond. Because of her love of children, Joan was the co-director for many years at Camp Hemlocks in Hebron where she worked with special needs children. Joan was especially devoted to her family, in addition to the love she had for her own children, her family will always remember how much fun she was and they all have such wonderful memories of her.

Joan will be missed by her son Kevin and his wife Dawn of Colchester; her sister Elizabeth (Bonin) Hence and her husband Phillip of South Windsor; her brothers Jack Bonin and his wife Joan of Marlborough, Robert Bonin and his wife Mary Anne of Wethersfield, Timothy Bonin and Pam Singarella of Sturbridge, Mass.; her cherished grandchildren, Adam, Tyler and Alissa Cafro, Emma, Scott and Ryan Fries; and her great-granddaughter, Piper.

In addition, she leaves numerous nieces and nephews and her great-grand nieces and nephews whom she adored. Joan also leaves several cousins and many dear friends including George Birner, Sr. of Bennington, Vt.

In addition to her parents, Joan was predeceased by her daughter, Mary Ellen Fries, and her brother, Donald Bonin.

Joan’s family would like to thank her special neighbor Jan who Joan considered her “angel.” In addition she leaves her former husband Craig Fries.

Memorial donations in Joan’s memory may be made to the High Hopes Therapy Horseback Riding, c/o Emma Fries, 36 Town Woods Rd., Old Lyme, CT 06371 or the Hartford Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, 80 Seymour St., Hartford, CT 06102.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated Saturday, Feb. 22, at 10:30 a.m., at Christ the King Parish (Corpus Christi Church), 601 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield. Burial will follow at Holy Cross Cemetery, 1318 Hebron Ave., Glastonbury. At Joan’s request, there will be no calling hours.

For online expressions of sympathy to the family, visit desopofuneralchapel.com.

Portland

Robinson Gilbert

Born Jan. 15, 1926 in Glastonbury to Ruth Tyler Gilbert and Louis Sylvester Gilbert, Robinson Gilbert was known as Robinson, Bob, Bobbie, RT and Buttercup. He died Monday, Feb. 17. He was 94.



A detached retina in childhood prevented Bob from enlisting with U.S. forces in World War II, but with characteristic determination and as a member of the “great-est generation” he joined up as an ambulance driver for the American Field Service of Great Britain, seeing the war mostly in Italy and Holland. In 1968-69 his association with AFS brought Laura Gardiner to the family from South Africa as an exchange student and beloved second daughter.

After the war Bob met Arline Hale – “Leeney” to all her friends – at UConn and they married in 1949. They enjoyed 59 years of marriage before her passing in 2008, during which time Bob moved from purchasing agent to executive vice-president, operations at Fuller Brush Co. Later, via his own company International Products, Bob and Arline traveled to South America, Africa, Europe, Canada and the Middle East.

Bob was known for his fierce dedication to his principles, which lead him to lifelong involvement in wetlands conservation, Ducks Unlimited, and vigorous dinner table conversations. Even into his 80s, Bob could be found jogging for miles in a polo shirt, Keds, and khakis and had no use for comforts like “gloves” in winter. Though he loved all dogs, Chesapeake Bay Retrievers were his companions, constantly with him as he raised pheasant, ducks and built and hung wood-duck boxes. After retirement, and thanks to the generosity of his neighbors, the Goodriches, who lent him almost a half-acre of fertile land, he planted, tended and harvested a huge vegetable garden that fed many in Portland for years.

Bob is survived by his daughter Rebecca Caldwell of Glastonbury; his son Mitchell and wife Susan (Montgomery) of Portland; granddaughter Jodie Gilbert and her sons Robinson “Benjy” Hoke and Henry Hoke of Louisville, Colo.; grandson Tyler and his wife Bria and their sons, Archer and Everett Gilbert of Oakland, Calif.; and grandson Matthew Gilbert and wife Dana and their daughter Eleanora of Glastonbury.

Bob was predeceased by his parents, his wife and his brother Henry Stiles Gilbert of New Jersey.

NO FLOWERS. If you are inclined, a donation in his memory may be made to The Nature Conservancy of Connecticut, 55 Church St, Floor 3, New Haven, CT 06510-3029 or Trinity Church, 345 Main St., Portland CT 06480.

Special thanks to Nate and Maxwell from Companions and Homemakers. And tremendous gratitude to the staff of South 7 Comfort Care Unit and the Emergency Department, Middlesex Hospital, Middletown.

A memorial celebration will be held Saturday, Feb. 29, at 10 a.m., in the Trinity Episcopal Church, 345 Main St, Portland. Burial will be private.

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

“Perhaps they are not stars, but rather openings in heaven where the love of our lost ones pours through and shines down upon us to let us know they are not unhappy.” ~Eskimo Proverb

Portland

John R. Rotteck

John R. “Jack” Rotteck of Branford and East Hampton, husband to the late Carolyn Macdowall Rotteck, died peacefully February 10, 2020 at St. Mary’s Hospital in Waterbury.



Born August 22, 1943 in Derby to the late E. Raymond and Elizabeth Towne Rotteck, John was a 1961 graduate of Ansonia High School, then a member of the first graduating class from St. Raphael’s School of Inhalation Therapy in 1967. He was a supervisor and retired as a respiratory therapist at St. Raphael’s Hospital in 2011. John also gratefully volunteered his time and knowledge of medicine and care to area schools, including Ansonia High, educating his son’s classes on the effects of smoking. He earned a bachelor’s degree from Quinnipiac College while working and raising his children along with Carolyn, who also was a respiratory therapist.

Collecting stamps and singing were two of John’s big interests. A lifetime member of the New Haven Philatelic Society, he enjoyed sharing his hobby with so many in this organization. John followed his parents’ passion for barbershop, as he was a longtime member of the Elm City Chorus, which had served as the New Haven chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society. Along with performing in several concerts, including many at Woolsey Hall, John appreciated their charitable work and fought to include women in their organization. He also greatly loved the Towne family reunions – which have annually occurred for over 130 years – and staying on Lake Bomoseen in Vermont.

John is survived by his children: Debi Rotteck of East Hampton, Leslie Deldin (Chris) of Milford, and Jeffrey Rotteck (Melissa) of Ansonia. John’s greatest love was being the proud “Pow” of Christopher John (CJ), Samantha, Daniel, Madeline, and Benjamin. He’s also survived by his sister, Susan Kitchens (Tim Zither) of Green Bay, Wis.; brother-in-law, Nick Cannata, and nieces Bethany Nimons (Jeff and daughter, Chloe) and Elyse Cannata.

John is predeceased by his sister, Elizabeth Cannata.

Our family would like to thank Dr. Perrotti, Dr. Reed, and Dr. Kortmansky for their care of John. We also appreciate Dr. Tsao, Mary, Desiree, and the entire staff of Vitas, who gracefully cared for John over the last seven months.

In lieu of flowers, we request donations be made to Vitas, 199 Park Road Ext., Suite 102, Middlebury, CT 06762, and the Branford Ambulance Service- 45 North Main St., Branford, CT 06405. And a special loving thank you to Kathy Briggs, who was there for both John and Carol til the end. We forever love you, Kathy.

Family and friends are welcome to gather for a memorial luncheon in John’s honor at La Luna Restaurant, 168 North Main St., Branford, on Saturday, Feb. 22, from 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

For directions and online guestbook, see wsclancy.com.

Colchester

Michael M. Healy Jr.

Michael M. Healy Jr., 39, of Colchester, passed away unexpectedly Wednesday, Feb. 12, in Marlborough. Born March 12, 1980, in Groton, he was the son of Michael Healy of Salem and the late Karen (Siggins) Healy.



Mike married his beloved wife Jaclyn Colangelo in 2007. The couple made their home in Colchester where they raised their two young sons, Alexander and Benjamin. Those who knew Mike will remember him as a dedicated father and husband. There was nothing he loved more in this world than his family. He will also be remembered for his sharp wit and his artistic mastery of sarcasm. Mike could always be counted on to give you his honest opinion and make you laugh while he did it.

Though his wife and children were the greatest loves of his life, the Boston Red Sox may very well have been his first. Mike was an avid Red Sox fan, finding inspiration in the Sox’s underdog spirit; he drew upon that very spirit to face a cancer diagnosis in 2013. His love of cars began at a young age. As a kid, he could usually be found in the driveway tuning up a car with his father, and later, in his own driveway working on his 1974 Satellite and 1957 Chevy. He turned his encyclopedic knowledge of car repair into career in the automotive industry, doing something he loved every day.

He was a man of many passions who curated his collections out of a genuine respect and enthusiasm for the things he loved. If you needed to know David Ortiz’s batting average in 2005 or which issue marked Wolverine’s first appearance in “X-Men,” Mike was your guy. Some of his happiest moments were sharing his extensive Transformers collection with his sons, who grew to love his treasured childhood toys as their own. In his younger days, Mike could often be found at a concert.

Though he saw his favorite group, Dave Matthews Band, more than 50 times, Mike had an appreciation for all music. He had a deep affinity for classic rock in particular, especially the song “Simple Man” by Lynyrd Skynyrd. It was this song that defined Mike’s approach to living — to be rich in love and friendship, to be a devoted husband and father, to never shy away from the hard work of living an honest life.

Mike will be sadly missed, but always remembered with love by his beloved wife, Jaclyn; sons, Alexander and Benjamin; father, Michael and his partner, Katrina Zickwolf of Salem; sister, Meghan McHugh and her husband Michael of Attleboro, Mass.; grandmother, Nancy Murphy of Groton; in-laws, Bob and Sue Colangelo of East Haven, Dave and Jessica Colangelo of North Clinton, Bobby and Renee Colangelo of North Branford; nephews, Kieran and Daniel McHugh, Dominic and Anthony Colangelo; numerous extended family and friends.

In addition to his mother, he was predeceased by two uncles, Thomas and Daniel Healy, and his grandfather, Don Murphy.

Calling hours were held Monday, Feb. 17, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A funeral service followed that morning. A private burial at Salem Green Cemetery in Salem will follow at a later date.

Donations in Mike’s memory can be made to The Jimmy Fund at jimmyfund.org.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Obituaries continued

East Hampton

Shannon Hebert

Shannon Lee (Kneeland) Hebert, 43, of Middlefield, beloved wife of John P. Hebert for thirteen years, passed away Monday, Feb. 10, at Middlesex Hospital. Born in Godfrey, Ill., she was the daughter of Jacqueline Cascio of Glastonbury, Patrick Kneeland and his wife, Julia Marsh of East Hampton and Paul



Smouse and his wife Karen of Godfrey, Ill.

Shannon graduated from East Hampton High School Class of 1995 and went on to receive her certificate from cosmetology school. She worked at Cost Cutters in Cromwell for twelve years. In 2006, Shannon married her best friend and started a family which was the center of her world. She was a member of Victory Church in Middlefield. She transformed many women's lives with her testimony of recovery and faith. Shannon had a driving spirit that could move mountains and that will live on in the lives she touched.

Along with her parents, Shannon is survived by a son, Kyle J. Hebert of Middlefield; daughter, Ashlee R. Hebert of Middlefield; her paternal grandmother, Joanne Kneeland of Haddam; three brothers, Mark Kneeland of Middletown, Bryan Kneeland of Middletown and Sam Marsh of East Hampton; three sisters, Amie Kulp of South Carolina, Kelly Kneeland of Enfield and Stella Marsh of East Hampton and many cousins.

Funeral services were held at Victory Church. Burial will be at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Shannon's memory may be made to offset medical costs to gofundme.com/f/264wy-help-shannon-beat-cancer.

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

Portland

Maria Lisicki

Maria Anna Theresia (Buhl) Lisicki, of Portland, passed away peacefully Saturday, Feb. 1, at the age of 92. She was born Nov. 8, 1927, to Ernst and Maria Buhl, in Ergoldsbach, Germany. Maria lost both her parents very young and while raised by family, she grew up a fiercely independent woman and took great pride in doing everything herself.

She married her one true love, Karol N. Lisicki, on Dec. 30, 1950, and the two of them migrated to the U.S. on New Year's Day 1957, to pursue their American dream. She taught herself to read, write and speak English once they arrived and continued to read and learn daily up to her passing. They succeeded with their dream through constant hard work, eventually retiring and purchasing a home in 1980. She and Karol returned to Germany many times over the years to vacation as well as visit friends and her half-sister's family. After her husband's passing in 1991, Maria continued to take great care of her home, property, Dachshund Nicky and several stray cats that were blessed by her kindness.

To those who were not fortunate enough to spend time with this amazing woman; as a child she ate off what the land and forest offered, she lived through world wars, watched (with unhappiness) what Hitler did (Karol was a survivor of a "working concentration camp"), survived cancer in the late 80s, worked countless jobs, often two or three in a day all over Middletown and Portland, walked everywhere as she never wanted her driver's license, was an amazing cook with an insatiable appetite for recipes, could speak intelligently about any topic, was in full control of her life to the very end and loved her husband with all her heart.

Maria Anna Theresia Lisicki Lived, Loved, Learned and Succeeded!

I thank you Maria for all the life lessons you have taught and continue to teach me and for allowing me to be a part of your Life. I am FOREVER GREATFUL for our time together..... Your "Bad Penny" AKA Michael.

Funeral services and burial will be private.

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

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Goodness knows, he's said worse, and will continue to say worse, but last week when President Trump attacked Michael Bloomberg by calling him "Mini Mike," it sent me into a bit of a rage.

Trump had bestowed his Democratic rival with such a moniker because he is, in Trump's view, short. He said Bloomberg is 5'4 – he's not, he's 5'8, but when does Trump ever let facts get in his way? – and therefore he dubbed Bloomberg "Mini Mike." Really, I guess Bloomberg should take it as a compliment, as Trump only uncorks his insipid nicknames once you've landed on his radar. There's "Crazy Bernie," "Sleepy Joe," "Pocahontas" and of course who can forget "Crooked Hillary," who Trump continues to be quite obsessed with despite the 2016 election being three and a half years ago.

But "Mini Mike" struck a chord. It took me a while to realize why. Was it because I'm a little short in stature myself, so "Mini Mike" hit perhaps a little too close to home? No, that seems silly. And while I've got a soft spot for New York City, I'm not a particular Bloomberg fan; if the primary were held tomorrow I'd vote for either Sanders or Warren.

Was it the fact I was in kind of a crappy mood when I read Trump's "Mini Mike" tweet? Well, that probably didn't help matters, but I don't think that was it either.

Then it hit me. It was just one more childish, bullying epithet from Trump, and I'm sick of it.

I've known for quite some time Trump is a bully. He was a bully throughout his presidential campaign, and he continued to be a bully after taking office. He seems to delight in it. And I find it pathetic for a president of the United States to behave in such a manner. But it's taken me a while to realize why the childish, bullying taunts make me so angry.

I've been there. I've done that. I very much never want to be there again.

Like a lot of people, I was the victim of some pretty harsh bullying in middle school. It was rough. Very little of it was physical; the vast, vast majority was verbal bullying. And it was hard. I tried to be tough, tried to employ the old adage "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me," but the way I saw it, whoever came up with that old chestnut never had to go through middle school. Because the words did hurt. A lot.

Due to some reconfiguration my town's school system was going through in the early '90s, I spent only two years in middle school, as opposed to the three the older kids and the younger kids had to endure. But two was enough – more than enough. The hellish experience did a number on my self-esteem; it took me many, many years to crawl out from under it.

When I graduated middle school, I never looked back. For high school that fall, I started attending the local Catholic school – happily leaving most of my middle school classmates behind. Things did get better. But the emotional scars ran deep.

So that may be part of why Trump's bullying makes me so angry. I hear him lob his childish insults and nicknames and I'm right back to those torturous middle school years. And believe me, I have no desire to relive those years ever again.

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By the way, while I'm on the subject of bullying: Thank goodness the line of thinking that being bullied "toughens kids up" seems to have fallen by the wayside. It's a bunch of crap. No child should have to endure it.

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On a completely different subject: I was in my car over the weekend and put on the '60s on 6 SiriusXM satellite radio channel. The channel happened to be playing a special: the 60 greatest love songs of the 1960s, as voted on by listeners. Unfortunately, the special was nearing its end by the time I tuned in – but I was able to catch the No. 2 and No. 1 songs in the countdown.

No. 1 was "Can't Help Falling in Love" by Elvis Presley – and, as is often the case on '60s on 6, some interesting trivia prefaced the playing of the song. It was recorded for the soundtrack of the movie *Blue Hawaii* and, upon listening to the demo, neither the producers of the movie nor Elvis's associates liked it. But Elvis insisted on recording it, so it was included in the film – and the rest is history. It went on to become a colossal hit for Elvis, and actually has the distinction of being the last song he ever played in concert, in June 1977, less than two months before he died.

No. 2 was "Unchained Melody" – which also was accompanied by some trivia. The version of the song everyone knows, and indeed the version featured on the countdown, is the Righteous Brothers' rendition. But that's actually a cover; the original was recorded back in 1955 for the little-known film *Unchained*, about a man debating whether to serve out his prison sentence or try to escape. Now you know why the song's title has little if anything to do with its actual lyrics.

Here's some more song trivia you might not know, courtesy of the folks at *Reader's Digest*:

— The first commercial CD pressed in the United States was, fittingly, Bruce Springsteen's *Born in the U.S.A.*

— Bob Marley gave songwriting credits on "No Woman No Cry" to his childhood friend Vincent Ford, who ran a soup kitchen in Jamaica. Royalties from the song helped keep the kitchen running.

— The iconic whistle in "(Sittin' on) The Dock of the Bay" was improvised when Otis Redding forgot what he was supposed to sing during the outro.

— Michael Jackson was so absorbed in writing "Billie Jean" on a ride home from the studio one day that he didn't even notice his car was on fire. A passing motorcyclist alerted him – saving his life.

— Paul McCartney woke up one morning with the tune to "Yesterday" in his head but not the lyrics. The placeholder words he worked with: "Scrambled eggs ... oh, my baby, how I love your legs ..."

— The BBC banned Bing Crosby's "I'll Be Home for Christmas" during World War II, worried its "sickly sentimentality" would lower the morale of homesick troops.

— One of Barry Manilow's hits was "I Write the Songs," except he didn't actually write it. It was penned by occasional Beach Boy Bruce Johnston.

— Aerosmith's "Dude (Looks like a Lady)" was inspired by Mötley Crüe frontman Vince Neil, whose long blond hair Aerosmith mistook for a woman's at a bar one night.

— The Caroline in Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline" is none other than Caroline Kennedy, whom Neil saw in a magazine photo in the '60s. "It was a picture of a little girl dressed to the nines in her riding gear, next to her pony," he recalled.

— "Girls Just Want to Have Fun" was written by ... a guy. Philadelphia singer Robert Hazard wrote the song, and sang it from a male point of view, four years before Cyndi Lauper made it one of the signature songs of the 1980s.

— Queen and David Bowie wrote "Under Pressure" in one night (then got pizza).